

# 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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## THE NATIVITY SERMON

By St. John Chrysostom.

Behold a new and wondrous mystery. My ears resound to the Shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but chanting full forth a heavenly hymn. The Angels sing. The Archangels blend their voice in harmony. The Cherubim hymn their joyful praise. The Seraphim exalt His glory. All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead here on earth, and man in heaven. He Who is above, now for our redemption dwells here below; and he that was lowly is by divine mercy raised.

Bethlehem this day resembles heaven; hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices; and in place of the sun, enfolds within itself on every side, the Sun of justice. And ask not how: for where God wills, the order of nature yields. For He willed; He had the power; He descended; He redeemed; all things yielded in obedience to God. This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man, nor through increase became He God from man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassability, remaining unchanged.

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing

with Him Angels, nor Archangels, nor Thrones, nor Dominions, nor Powers, nor Principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Since this heavenly birth cannot be described, neither does His coming amongst us in these days permit of too curious scrutiny. Though I know that a Virgin this day gave birth, and I believe that God was begotten before all time, yet the manner of this generation I have learned to venerate in silence and I accept that this is not to be probed too curiously with wordy speech.

For with God we look not for the order of nature, but rest our faith in the power of Him who works.

What shall I say to you; what shall I tell you? I behold a Mother who has brought forth; I see a Child come to this light by birth. The manner of His conception I cannot comprehend.

Nature here rested, while the Will of God labored. O ineffable grace! The Only Begotten, Who is before all ages, Who cannot be touched or be perceived, Who is simple, without body, has now put on my body, that is visible and liable to corruption. For what reason? That coming amongst us he may teach us, and teaching, lead us by the hand to the things that men cannot see. For since men believe that the eyes are more trustworthy than the ears, they doubt of that which they do not see, and so He has deigned to show Himself in bodily presence, that He may remove all doubt.

*The Brotherhood of St. POIMEN wishes our readers a blessed and prosperous 2019. We completed our sixteenth year of publication, in spite of the challenges we have faced and ONLY through the prayers, ideas, feedback and monetary support of our many readers worldwide. We humbly wish to remind you that this publication is made possible through your donations and thus ask that you not forget your 2019 subscription contributions. Please refer to the top of the next page for contribution and payment information.*

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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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Christ, finding the holy body and soul of the Virgin, builds for Himself a living temple, and as He had willed, formed there a man from the Virgin; and, putting Him on, this day came forth; unashamed of the lowliness of our nature.

For it was to Him no lowering to put on what He Himself had made. Let that handiwork be forever glorified, which became the cloak of its own Creator. For as in the first creation of flesh, man could not be made before the clay had come into His hand, so neither could this corruptible body be glorified, until it had first become the garment of its Maker.

What shall I say! And how shall I describe this Birth to you? For this wonder fills me with astonishment. The Ancient of days has become an infant. He Who sits upon the sublime and heavenly Throne, now lies in a manger. He Who cannot be touched, Who is simple, without complexity, and incorporeal, now lies subject to the hands of men. He Who has broken the bonds of sinners, is now bound by an infant's bonds. But He has decreed that ignominy shall become honor, infamy be clothed with glory, and total humiliation the measure of His Goodness.

For this He assumed my body, that I may become capable of His Word; taking my flesh, He gives me His spirit; and so He bestowing and I receiving, He prepares for me the treasure of Life. He takes my flesh, to sanctify me; He gives me His Spirit that He may save me.



Come, then, let us observe the Feast. Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the Nativity. For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, the speech of kindness diffused, and spreads on every side, a heavenly way of life has been planted on the earth, angels communicate with men without fear, and men now hold speech with angels.

Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh. He did not become God. He was God. Wherefore He became flesh, so that He Whom heaven did not contain, a manger would this day receive. He was placed in a manger, so that He, by whom all things are nourished, may receive an infant's food from His Virgin Mother. So, the Father of all ages, as an infant at the breast, nestles in the virginal arms, that the Magi may more easily see Him. Since this day the Magi too have come, and made a beginning of withstanding tyranny; and the heavens give glory, as the Lord is revealed by a star.

To Him, then, Who out of confusion has wrought a clear path, to Christ, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, we offer all praise, now and forever.

Amen.



## NOTHING IS FEARFUL TO THOSE WHO RELY ON THE LORD

*A sermon by Saint John the Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco, to his Orthodox flock in Shanghai, 1937, from "Word of the Church" Issue 4, May-June 2000.*

*Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? And from Thy presence whither shall I flee? If I go up into heaven, Thou art there; if I go down into Hades, Thou art present there. If I take up my wings toward the dawn, and make mine abode in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand guide me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.*

[Pss 138:6-9]

† † †

These divinely inspired words of David the Psalmist should be particularly kept in mind today when the entire world is wavering, as it were, and the news about all kinds of tribulations, perils and disasters are brought to us daily.

No sooner does one's attention stop to consider what is happening in one country, than it is deflected by even more severe events which have unexpectedly flared up in another place; before one has time to grasp them, still new events draw one's attention to a third place making one forget the two former ongoing disasters.

Useless are the conferences where the representatives of different countries try to find the cure for common disasters. They keep reassuring themselves and the others, *saying: peace, peace! when there is no peace.* (Jer 8:11).

Calamities show no sign of stopping in the countries where they are raging, but they suddenly strike in places where it was considered to be safe.

Those who escape from some perils run into others, which are often even worse. *It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him* (Amos 5:19), or as another prophet said: *And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken.* (Isa 24:18).

Similar things happen in our days. Those setting out to work at peace suddenly become the victims of military actions, which arose where they were least expected.

Those escaping from the dangers of war suffer from natural disasters of earthquakes or hurricanes.

Many find their death where they hoped to be safe from it. The others, however, are prepared to better expose their life to danger, than to languish in the places considered to be safe, in anticipation of some other calamities which might strike there.

It seems there is no place on the earth, which could be regarded a peaceful refuge from the world disasters. People are faced with political, economic and social woes. *In perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst false brethren,* said Apostle Paul (II Cor 11:26). To these perils, today we should add the particularly terrible *perils in the air*.

When the Preeminent Apostle himself was exposed to all the perils named by him, he had a great consolation. He knew that he was suffering for Christ, and that Christ would reward him for his endurance: *For I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed*

*to Him until that day.* (II Tim 1:12). He knew that the Lord, if need be, will give him strength to endure even greater perils, and bravely said: *I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.* (Phil 4:13).

Our present day disasters are terrible for us because they befall us not as a result of the strength of our faith but because we do not endure them for Christ. Hence we do not set our hopes on being crowned for them. We are made helpless in the struggle with adversities because we are not strengthened by the power of Christ, and rely not on God, but on human power and means. We forget the words of Holy Scripture: *Trust ye not in princes, in the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation ... Blessed is he of whom the God of*

*Jacob is his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.* (Pss 145:3, 5), and: *Except the Lord build the house, in vain do they labour that build it.* (Pss 126:1).

We try to find a firm foundation apart from God, and the prophet's words come to pass: *Therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant.* (Isa 30:13). Woe to those who lean on such walls! Just as the falling wall crushes those who are leaning on it, so are perishing, along with their false hopes, those who relied on them. Those hopes turn out to be *a staff of reed*.

Things are different with those who seek God's help. *Our God is refuge and strength, a helper in afflictions which mightily befall us. Therefore shall we not fear when the earth be shaken,*



*nor when the mountains be removed into the heart of the sea.* (Pss 45:1-2).

He fears nothing who relies on God. He will not fear an evil man. *The Lord is my light and my Saviour; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?* (Pss 26:1).

He is not afraid of the horrors of war. *Though a host should array itself against me, my heart shall not be afraid; though war should rise up against me, in this have I hoped.* (Pss 26:3).

He is calm when living at home. *“He that dwelleth in the help of the Most High shall abide in the shelter of the God of Heaven”* (Ps. 90:1).

He is ready to travel by sea. *In the sea are Thy byways, and Thy paths in many waters.* (Pss 76: 19).

Daringly, as if on wings, he will fly through the air into distant lands, saying: *Even there shall Thy hand guide me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.* (Pss 138:9).

He will not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the thing that walketh in darkness, nor for the mishap and demon of noonday. (Pss 90:5-6).

He is not afraid of death, *for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* (Phil 1:21). *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.* (Rom 8:35-39).

The Lord says: *Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’* (Isa 58:6-9).

O Lord, teach me to do Thy will and hear me on the day when we will call on Thee! Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us according as we have hoped in Thee.

Amen.



Oh, we are unworthy, and unfortunately we lose everything because of our lack of faith—and I am the first amongst those of little faith. But we hope that the Lord’s mercy will strengthen us, so that we, too, may humbly bear a small cross for our solace.

**Elder Ephraim of Filotheou and Arizona**

## ECUMENISM IS AN INSIDIOUS SATANIC MOVEMENT

*Met. Jeremiah of Gortyn of the Greek Orthodox Church, Greece.*

Metropolitan Jeremiah of Gortyn has addressed his congregation with a special message. The hierarch paid special attention to the issues of ecumenism and the preservation of an Orthodox identity.

“My brethren,” he writes, “you are Orthodox Christians, received in the font of holy Baptism from an Orthodox priest.” Expressing his zeal for the purity of the Orthodox faith, he exhorts his flock, “Hold fast to the Orthodox faith just as we received it from our fathers; that which our grandfathers and grandmothers followed.”

“There is an insidious Satanic movement that wants to mix our true Faith with false beliefs, change it, and lead us into deception,” the metropolitan warns his people. “This movement is called ‘Ecumenism.’ It’s not just a heresy, it’s a malicious thinking that embraces all heresies and errors. It’s a ‘Pan-Heresy,’” Met. Jeremiah affirmed, echoing the words of the great 20<sup>th</sup> century Serbian theologian St. Justin Popović.

“Ecumenism is supported and promoted by the Pope of Rome,” the Orthodox bishop stated, expressing the conviction of many Traditional Orthodox Hierarchs and faithful throughout the world.

“Christians, let us hold fast to the Orthodox faith, let us defend it from the attacks of heretics, who come to our diocese; but to do this, you must know our faith, know its dogmas and great truths,” he said, encouraging his Orthodox faithful. Met. Jeremiah also exhorts his flock to read the Gospel daily, regularly attend Divine Liturgy, keep the Wednesday and Friday fasts, and to keep their homes full of prayer. Met. Jeremiah constantly urges his flock to go deeper into the glorious Orthodox faith they received from their fathers.

“Do not leave me, my Christians! Do not leave me to struggle alone. This is not only my faith and not only my motherland. This is our common Orthodox faith and our common motherland—Greece. Our glorious nation, which has enjoyed thousands of years of glory, now is in decline, because we have turned away from the God of our fathers. And the Lord will finally take His grace from us, because we are trampling Divine law underfoot and surrendering the status of law to abomination,” said the metropolitan at the end of a December 2015 sermon, after homosexual civil partnerships were legalized.

He has also spoken out about the controversial documents of the 2016 Crete Council, asking, “When and where did the Holy Fathers call Heresies and Schisms ‘Churches?’ Nowhere and never!” Elsewhere, he stated, “The Crete Council should have clarified the situation (to protect believers from temptation) and should have publicly condemned the two main heresies of our times—Papism and Ecumenism.”

## THE ORPHAN AND CHRISTMAS

*A Christmas Eve story for all, translated from Pravoslavnaya Rus, No. 23, 1998, where it was reprinted from the book, Khristos-zhizn nasha (originally compiled by S. Symarokov, Harbin, 1942).*

Life was hard, but they did have a mother. The young widow wore herself out trying to keep food on the table for her three children. The family was well acquainted with misery, but life had its happier moments. Even after a hard day's work, when the mother would come home dead tired, she would caress her children and speak tenderly to them, and they would feel that all was well. One would plant himself at her feet and smile at her gentle words. Another would climb onto her lap and, throwing back her curly head, would gaze into her mother's deep, pensive eyes; while the third would stand behind and embrace her neck with his thin arms, exclaiming repeatedly, "Mama, dearest mama!" Those were wonderful times for the children, and the mother, too, for she could enjoy a rest from her arduous labors.

There came a day, however, when the widow had worn herself down completely and could not even rise from her bed. Soon her body was laid to rest in the grave. Now the children were orphans indeed! They had lost their dearly beloved mother. Vanya remembered the anguished shrieks of his younger brother and sister: "Mama's dead, our dear Mama is dead!" He remembered how she was placed in a coffin, how she was carried out of the house, the funeral in the church, and, finally, the dreadful "thud, thud, thud," made by clumps of frozen earth being thrown onto the lid of the coffin after it had been lowered into the ground. Their dear mother was now in the grave, gone from them forever.

The orphans went home. There they huddled together, clinging to one another for comfort. And so they stood, not wanting to move, until one of them suddenly remembered, "The day after tomorrow is Christmas" he exclaimed. "Yes, Christmas," echoed the others. But their voices were sad. When their mother was alive, they would shout merrily, "Christmas! Christmas!" But now... The orphans were entrusted to the care of one of their relatives, a man who already had a number of his own children. He and his wife were not unkind, but the family was quite poor and they could barely feed their own children. The orphans sometimes had to go hungry because the family that sheltered them went hungry, too.

"Ah! Ours is a wretched lot," sighed the uncle from time to time. "You can bend over backwards, and still nothing comes of it. And now we've been saddled with these little ones..." Vanya, on hearing this, felt within his child's heart that his uncle was not angry at them, but rather that his words came from sorrow. As if to confirm his feelings, he heard his aunt: "Enough, Filipich!" she said to her husband. "It's a sin to complain about one's lot in life, and it's still more sinful to offend an orphan. Orphans are God's children." And she stroked

Vanya tenderly on his head. Her words relaxed her husband's mood. He took their youngest son and swung him above his head. "Ai, children. Hurry and grow up. When you're old enough to work, then we'll have a better life, God willing."

One day came and weeping and wailing could be heard from Uncle Filipich's cottage; and with good reason. Their horse had died. And what is a peasant without a horse? He's like a man without arms. The whole family was drowning in tears. "God will not abandon us, Filipich," said his wife. "But what am I to do without a horse?" he replied. "You can go work in town as a day-laborer," she said. "That brings in next to nothing!" was his quick reply. "Uncle," piped up Vanya, "I know now how to weave baskets. We can sell them." "That's good thinking, lad," responded his uncle and, waving his hand, he went out of the cottage.

Filipich began working in town as a hired man. He'd work all day, and in the evening he'd come home to his village, only two miles' distance. All of his pay would go towards feeding the family and the orphans. His nephew kept his word and sold the baskets he wove in town. Still, the money that the uncle and his nephew made together was only enough for food. Winter was approaching, and one child needed a coat, another needed a hat, a third something else... Altogether they needed quite a few things. Filipich was aware of this. He walked home, thinking to himself: "Here it is almost winter; we have to get in a supply of firewood, but to do it we need a horse. And the wife's coat is in tatters; how can she possibly go out to fetch water in the cold weather? Ai, poverty is bitter!" Filipich knit his brow, trying to think of some solution. Meanwhile, at home there awaited him news of a fresh calamity. Whether from poor feed, or because she was old, their last cow died. Filipich threw up his hands in despair.

"What's to be done?! We'll have to send the children out into the world," he thought. And indeed, no matter how much Filipich exerted himself, no matter how industriously his nephew worked weaving baskets, there was nothing to be done but to send the older lads out into the streets to beg. Again there were tears. And it was not only the children who cried; mother and father wept, too. They dressed their ten-year old son, Petya, and their orphaned nephew, Vanya, as warmly as possible. Then, blessing them with the sign of the Cross, they sent them off to town to ask alms "for Christ's sake."

Again, the Feast of Nativity drew near. Filipich spent the whole week in town working, not even coming home for the night; he wanted to earn as much as possible before the Feast in order to buy some presents. At last, the day before the Feast, he came home bearing his inexpensive purchases. There at home, the children awaited him eagerly. And what kind of gifts did he bring? If children of wealthy parents saw them, they would have walked away from them, but these poor children were glad even of such shabby and paltry gifts. The eldest son tugged on a worn, patched coat that barely reached his knees;



a younger brother put on an old hat that almost covered his nose; their sister tried on a pair of boots that were closer to the size of her mother's. The food treats for the Feast day were of the same poor quality, but the children rejoiced even in these. They gave thanks to God, and went to bed.

Here it was, the eve of Christ's Nativity and Petya and Vanya went to town to ask for alms. Around the time of major feasts, people were especially generous. In general, all kind Orthodox Christians have compassion for their less fortunate brethren in Christ, and each gives as he is able. At the bakery they gave generous loaves of white bread to the poor; at the gateway to homes belonging to the wealthy, the poor were given money; everywhere along the streets one could see passersby thrusting coins into the open hands of those reduced to poverty.

Petya and Vanya received their share. By midday Petya's bag was full, and he made his way home to the village. Vanya stayed later, wanting to bring back as much as he could for the family. Before he realized, the pale winter light had faded. The weather turned and it began to snow. As he hurried to go home, the storm picked up... Vanya trudged along through the growing darkness. He was tired, and the bag pulled on his shoulders. His hands grew numb. Overtaken by cold and fatigue, the boy sat down in the snow to rest. He was not afraid of the dark; it was not the first time he was making his way home so late. But the snow... Vanya got up and again pushed himself on his way. He shivered as the icy wind cut his cheeks. How tired he was. His legs felt as though they would buckle under him at any moment. Indeed, just then a strong gust of wind toppled him into the snow. "I'm going to freeze," he thought, "but I don't have much farther to go. I think I see lights..." Vanya tried to get up, but he had no strength. "Oh, how I wish I could go to sleep," he thought. "But if I go to sleep, the snow will cover me, I'll freeze and tomorrow is Nativity." Again Vanya made an effort to get up, and again he collapsed. "I'll fall asleep... I'll freeze... Nativity... Petya is at home..." His mind wandered. Another minute and he would fall asleep—and never wake up. Providentially, a troika (a three-horse drawn sled) was just then dashing along the same road. In his half-conscious state, Vanya heard the tinkling of the harness bells. "They must have gone by," he thought dreamily.

But the driver's sharp eyes had caught sight of him. "Sir!" he shouted to his passenger. "We just passed some dark shape." "Get along, keep going and make it quick. We'll be late for the party." "We'll make it, sir; the troika, God willing, will get us there in time. Do allow me to take a closer look. What if it should be some person?" "Well, all right, but step lively." "So it is," announced the voice of the driver through the snow. "A pauper lad; the poor thing, he was probably going home for Nativity."

The passenger, a baron, shuddered. He thought of his own children, at home, warm. "Quick, bring him here!" he shout-

ed to the driver. "Can we save him? That would be the best Christmas present for the children." He wrapped the boy in his fur coat. "Let's get a move on. I see lights ahead; there must be a village."

As the horses raced through the snow, the baron rubbed the boy's temples and hands and breathed warm air into his face. The horses flew into the street. "Stop at the first cottage!" The door opened, and the baron carried in the boy. He had some wine, and he began to rub the boy vigorously with the alcohol. He also employed other remedies, and within an hour Vanya opened his eyes and began breathing more normally. While the baron was bringing the boy around, the old women of the cottage fluttered about, doing what they could to help and whispering among themselves, "It's the orphan Vanya! The poor boy! And on the eve of Nativity! God saved him." The baron learned where Filipich lived and took Vanya there himself. While they were driving to the other side of the village, Vanya kept looking to the right of the baron, where he saw a beautiful woman holding in her arms an equally beautiful child. "How is it," Vanya thought to himself, "that he is so little and he doesn't even look cold. I'm much bigger, and I nearly froze."

The baron carried Vanya onto the warm stove and was appalled by the family's poverty. He questioned Filipich about everything, and said, "Tomorrow is Christmas. For Christ's sake, accept this as a gift," and he handed him a hundred-ruble note. Filipich was about to fall at the baron's feet, but the baron rushed out the door, and his horses sped along the snow, carrying the baron home for his family's Christmas party. Tomorrow, on the Feast of Christ's Nativity, he would tell his dear children how he had saved a poor orphan from death. "Today," reflected the baron, "is the happiest day of my life: God granted me to save a human life."

On the Feast of Nativity, Vanya described to all how beautiful the baron's wife was, and her adorable child. "But the baron was alone," he was told. "No, no," insisted Vanya. "I saw the baroness and the child." Then, he thought for a moment. "The baroness and the child looked a lot like the Mother of God and Christ that we have in the church." Then everyone understood just what Woman and what Child Vanya had seen. Filipich, thanks to the assistance of the baron, is now living more comfortably. His children and the orphans have grown up and are able to help him. For his part, Filipich has managed to put aside a hundred rubles. "These are the orphans' monies," he said to his wife. "God sent this money to them, and through them, to me, a sinner. As soon as they are out on their own, I'll give them these hundred rubles." "And you took it into your head to grumble at your fate," his wife said with a smile. "Yes, that was sinful of me. Who knows what would have become of us if it hadn't been for orphan Vanya!"

Each Christmas, the Filipich family has a *moleben* (a service of prayers) served for the health of their benefactor.

## THE PASSION OF HOMOSEXUALITY ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

By Archimandrite Sarantis Sarantou, parish priest of the Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church in Marousi, Greece; published on the official website of the Holy Metropolis of Kifisia, Amoros and Oropos on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

[Rom 1:26-27]

† † †

Our holy Apostle Paul, according to the Holy Fathers, is the voice of Christ, and divine Chrysostom is the mouth of Apostle Paul. Commenting on the very important epistle to the Romans, St. John Chrysostom gives a divinely inspired analysis of homosexuality, among other issues.

All passions degrade humanity, but especially the mania of men for men. He summarily characterizes homosexuality as an unforgivable passion; this is not just because it really is, but also because the entire male personality becomes so distorted that a chronic allegiance to this abomination sets in; it thus becomes an immensely difficult passion to restrain by the fallen.

The golden words of Chrysostom are remarkably balanced. His unshakable logic, which he uses to spiritually support his flock, is universally acknowledged to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Not even foreign rationalist Protestant researchers challenge him. It is precisely his rock of faith and deep love in Christ that are needed for all of us, in these difficult days that we are going through; thus, it is vital that we very carefully listen to him. Here is the order he chose for his compelling argument:

1. The holy Apostle first places the entire problem of homosexuality on a spiritual basis. In the twenty-fifth verse of the Epistle to the Romans of chapter one, he writes: *They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever...* The divine Chrysostom points out that there was a distortion in the cre-

ation of God. God did not prevent the natural relationship between the sexes, so they “justifiably” fall into the strange madness of *males having left the natural use of the female*.

In the deep psyche of the homosexual world there is an autonomy of individual and selfish choice against the truth of God, a deep preference towards falsehood. It is for this reason that the way homosexuals display and advertise their “diversity” is very provocative. Arrogant attitudes and cocky appearances are displayed on television, and inaccuracies and falsehoods are spread about their demonic way of life. This is exactly why St. John Chrysostom boldly states: “Their ideology is satanic, and their life demonic.” Thus, God abandons these people, who twist the truth concerning the creation of man and present falsehood with offensive boldness, namely that their perversion is an issue of genes or free sexual choice. And, “when God abandons, everything is turned upside down.” A person’s entire

mental state is flipped, his entire psychology and bodily existence transgress towards a psychopathological state. And it is exactly for all these reasons that the problem of homosexuality is primarily of a spiritual nature.

2. Moreover, says St. John Chrysostom, God put before them, the homosexuals, the “world” and “the mind of man.” The vast majority of people accept, admit and deterministically are given over to the physical attraction between sexes and enjoy a lawful and proper relationship. This is what is meant by the “world.” The prototype of the “mind of man,” from his initial creation (and as implanted by his Creator), can distinguish the natural relationship of man and woman and takes rest in it. The other mental choice is one characterized by a

voluntarily intentional misunderstanding of what is natural; its resulting impact is quite tragic. Man is dragged into the most dishonorable of passions, rejecting natural relations with a woman and frantically seeking to be satisfied through another man, autonomously, selfishly, without any preconditions, and entirely unblessed. This is why according to the holy Father this passion is unforgivable, because homosexuals do not engage in the natural human experience and the God-given inclination of the mind.

It is very sad today that young boys and girls are lured into silly and provocative so-called “homosexual programs” on television that selfishly allege to want to “break away,” as they say, from their traditional parents, some of whom cannot hide the panic



before such havoc “choices” of their sons or daughters. No news channel lately mentions, however, the ever lurking dangers of the AIDS disease. As a matter of fact, what were frequently reported news stories have nowadays completely disappeared.

3. What is even more dishonorable and disgraceful for mankind is that this degrading passion has infected women in equally frightening proportions. Even though they should be ashamed, today under the propaganda of the New Age, women find themselves more empowered than men, becoming more confused and callous than ever, while concurrently insisting upon their God-creating power of motherhood. The divine Father relies on the archetypal creation of the couple, as is divinely inspired and emphatically recorded in the Old Testament book of Genesis. God’s intent has been defiled; man, as the wise head, first and foremost ought to help woman think wisely and act correctly. Instead, he drags her to the godless and inhuman passion of sodomy. From the outset in Paradise, he degenerates this blessed relationship with abominable hostility. Though man was appointed a teacher of woman, and woman a helpmate of man, in the end they ended up outside the Church and outside the blessing of God, hostile on many levels and partaking in the shameful works of darkness.

4. The divine Chrysostom claims that prudence according to Christ dictated that the holy Apostle Paul was to speak humbly, candidly and chastely, but his words must also sting the ears of his audience. The divine Father says: “He does not say that they were enamored of, and lusted after one another, but, ‘they burned in their lust one toward another.’” The verb “burned” does not denote a strong erotic desire, but indicates an unrestrained and unsatisfied burning. This vague verb is passively used to signify the constant unsatisfied erotic homosexual desire among women. Later he uses it towards men to complete the word “unseemly,” thus indicating the violation of God’s law and the insult done to the male sex as well as the opposite sex. Homosexual acts by both sexes demean, for these relationships are completely perverted. They transgress God’s elect laws for natural eroticism, bringing shame to their own and to the opposite sex which they despise. It is for this reason that they are completely abandoned by God, reaching the worst, the most unheard of and lamentable, supposedly erotic sexual behaviors.

According to St. John Chrysostom, not even wild animals go beyond their heterosexual boundaries. They live according to their erotic nature and compulsion which was granted to them by the Creator, for the purpose of perpetuating their species. A relative reduction in their ferocity is achieved during commingling, a certain intimacy, tameness and relief.

5. According to the *in the image and likeness* creation of the first couple by the personal will of God, they should have lived in perfect marital unity. This most philanthropic will of the Triadic God was envied by the devil and, when presented with the opportunity (and ever since the time of the fall of man) he has

zealously pursued unforeseen obstacles in every married couple, for the sole purpose of overwhelming this blessed union. As an extreme consequence of this deep hatred towards mankind, there has appeared among men and women this disgraceful and ingrained passion of homosexuality; consequently, those men and women who are subdued to this evil passion do not come forward to the blessed sacrament of Marriage and thus exclude themselves from the divine plan of creation, which is fulfilled in the birth of children. (*Ed.*, with the recent legalization of “marriage” among homosexuals, the plans of the evil one are reaching new levels of “legalized immorality.”)

6. According to St. John Chrysostom, homosexuals should be the most unhappy and pitiable of people even if they were successful in all other levels of life. But their self-awareness is so deficient and their conceit so inflated, that they consider themselves and put themselves forward as the happiest of all, while others, those who live normally, are according to them ill and oppressed. St. John Chrysostom unequivocally argues that they already live in hell existentially and certainly the fire of Gehenna awaits them. He has the deep and broad experience of the sacred confessional, in which, no matter how much they want to pretend, eventually they cannot hide their deep pain and blood which drips from every section of their heart. And when sincerity finds them during their confessions, they easily and willingly admit that this deceptive homosexual companionship has proven to be impossible and unrealizable.

So that the Saint becomes more believable, he describes two examples of two very strange people. Suppose I saw, he says, a young man running around naked besmeared with mire and exulting that he is clean and well washed. He also spoke of a young virgin, if she was enclosed in a house and condemned to have intercourse with an animal, and afterwards rejoiced in it. The one who compelled her, argued the Saint, is worse than a murderer because he ruined her soul and her body. How truly twisted man becomes when he distances himself from the true Triadic God and His saving Church!

Young people today (as well as men and women of older age groups) are trapped in mindless ways, in the nets of charming people, who sneakily lead them into sodomy. There is no more terrible thing than such an attack, says the Saint. “And that you may learn what the real force of this is, if any one were to come and assure you that he would make you a dog instead of being a man, would you not flee from him as a plague? But, lo! You have not made yourself a dog, but an animal more disgraceful than this. For a dog is useful for service, but he that has thus given himself up is serviceable for nothing.” If somebody threatened men that he could make them able to conceive, to become pregnant, to give birth, to go through the time of postpartum, what would you do, how would you react? Would you turn yourself upside down with your screams due to the strangeness of it, or would you bask passively, with fears and complexes? What is then your



reaction my man, to all that you observe the homosexuals enable within your society?

7. In the inspired Old Testament, the terrible situation that was created in the society of Sodom and Gomorrah is described articulately and vividly, just before the pouring out of the just wrath of God and the complete destruction of these ancient cities that once flourished. Below we will provide excerpts that exemplify the level of alienation for any homosexual, as well as their erotic companions, and the entire social environment which tolerates, accepts or admits with every readily available communication means with them and cooperates accordingly at all levels of life. The defilement of it is contagious, if it is accepted for reasons of “politeness” so that we are not considered bigots. The “immune system” in Christ is sickened, the psychology of our youth is affected, and the demonic convention finds grounding to corrupt places, souls, mentalities, and easy companions.

Genesis 19:1-11

*And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.*

*But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter. And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.*

*And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.*

*And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.*



Saint John Chrysostom persistently stands before the exemplary catastrophe of Sodom and Gomorrah and guides his flock through education to strengthen their moral immune system in Christ; he aims to accomplish this in a timely manner so that his spiritual children escape this defilement before it takes on epidemic proportions. The fiery rain of Sodom and Gomorrah was so catastrophic that it made their land barren and unable to produce anything that could contribute to new life flourishing, a new human society, a new civilization.

8. For educative purposes we should distinguish homosexuals who have not fallen into carnal sin, and those men or women who have “freed themselves from the taboos of the past” and are having carnal relations and perhaps have even entered into a modern homosexual cohabitation.

The first group struggle very hard to get rid of the demon of homosexuality. The demon engages into a fierce battle with the struggling homosexual, and his efforts are focused upon strong thoughts in the mind of the struggling man or woman, to blacken his or her soul and thus tear down his “competitor.” The second, who have entangled themselves by consent in carnal homosexual sin, should ask with inner pain for the mercy of God, should go to confession frequently and with honesty, and eventually they will benefit from Divine mercy. They will accomplish, together with the Lord, in disbanding the “machinations of the enemy” and shake off the abominable carnal homosexual

sin and thus annul the wiles of the devil. The support of a spiritual father beside them is needed, guiding them in Christ until they are able to understand that correction and the straight path is not impossible, for *what is impossible with man, is possible with God.*

I humbly agree that in this contemporary “sinful and adulterous” generation, in which homosexuality seems to be celebrated, spiritual fathers are the only ones who show true understanding to those who sin heavily, and they help them come to the knowledge of their situation, to repent, and to become living members of the Church and be saved.

9. It is understood that, in the circle of priests, homosexuality is unthinkable. Even the simplest carnal sins are obstacles to priesthood. The saints of our Church believe that even the smallest hair in the eye of a person causes tingling and pain and it takes many tears to remove it from the eye. It is likewise for any clergy candidate, and much more for the active clergyman; if there is the slightest carnal sin, he cannot rest in his priestly ministry, but is tormented and suffers.

Homosexuality is the greatest of sins, which irrevocably prevents one from entering priesthood (and of course the Church

does not allow any homosexual to be elevated to priesthood, even if he has stopped the sin for years). St. Basil the Great considers homosexuality or lesbianism a beastly sin: “Abusers of themselves with mankind and with beasts, just as is the case with murderers, wizards, adulterers, and idolaters, are deserving of the same punishment” (Canon 7 of St. Basil the Great). Saint Gregory of Nyssa characterizes homosexuality as “unnatural” in his 4<sup>th</sup> Canon. Saint John the Faster observes in his 19<sup>th</sup> Canon, according to the compilation of *The Rudder* by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, the following: “A boy who has been ruined by any man cannot come into the holy priesthood. For although on account of his immature age he did not sin himself, yet the vessel of his body was rent and became useless in connection with the sacred priesthood.”

10. Unfortunately there exists within our Holy Orthodox Church an organized group of homosexual clergy. These men, by their provocative behavior and by their obscene insistence on mortally sinning, take others by the neck and drag them to hell from this life, preparing them, alas, for eternal hell, even though they ought to grab them from the abyss of destruction and reconcile them once again with Christ.

The psychology of clergy possessed by the deadly passion of homosexuality mutates essentially into having a persecution mentality by the Church. The residual, ingrained faint voice of their conscience cries out for them being on the wrong course and for their daily exemplification of a loud but degraded persona. Incredible nervousness bifurcates their personality, and there is obsessive antipathy towards specific individuals, terrible negligence in their liturgical and pastoral duties, disregard for their family (if by chance they are married), and a substantial annihilation of their angelic schema (if they are unmarried). Manic behaviors, with various sophistries regarding the sacred Canons and with hypocritical and pious excuses, they endlessly try to modernize the Church.

Unfortunately within such a group of homosexual clergymen there has developed an illusory and deceptive climate of supposed love and support for one another. Young inexperienced candidate clergy, if not guided by an experienced spiritual and pious Orthodox mindset, are likely to be ensnared by the exaggerated zealous protectionism indicated above. They are bound emotionally, and through a “friendship” with these patrons of theirs (and if there is some tendency towards homosexuality) they basically become victims of this homosexual network with devastating consequences, ultimately for the former and the latter. The evil of these organized groups, or the ones that are less methodical (i.e., more individualized), continues with scenarios and pitfalls set up across the world by the wicked and cunning serpent, the devil. If the candidate or young clergyman joins and stays within the circles of homosexuals, he will certainly suffer the consequences of the corresponding associative uniqueness of the homosexual circle as well as the terrible alienation against the measures

and molds which experienced and knowledgeable homosexual patrons are imposing.

There are also rare exceptions of repentant or remorseful homosexual clergymen, who are suffering spiritually, psychologically, existentially and perhaps physically; nothing can grant them rest and quiet from the relentless torture of their conscience. **If they do not deeply repent and give up their high pastoral office, they will never rest and acquire the inner experience of complete forgiveness by God.**

11. The holy elder Paisios often spoke of the power of spiritual laws. Because homosexuality is an abominable sin before the Triune God and offends His all-wise and personal creative care for people, the counsel of God allows, in the operation of spiritual laws, to deregulate the immune system of the human body, resulting in dire health consequences, which in time often leads to death. Why does the media minimize the high risk of AIDS and over-advertise homosexuality? Or do they not know the exponential increase of bearers and patients of AIDS across the world?

Disappointing are the descriptions made to us in Holy Confession by homosexual patients with AIDS. Dissolved personalities, sad ruins struggling to survive, alternating heavy treatments, remorseful for reckless impassioned homosexual intercourse that have brought them down to pathetic skeletons. Avid seekers of perversion, they lured into demonic pleasure others as their supposed erotic partners, whom they initially completely trusted and in the end were left miserably cheated, all alone, in their existential loneliness.

For all of the above corruption to not occur, with its terrible pathogenesis and unimaginably tragic side-effects, St. John Chrysostom suggests active use of spiritual drugs in Christ. His primary therapeutic guideline is awareness of the omnipresence of God. Nothing destroys people more than unawareness and the criminal forgetfulness of God. But nothing saves him more than seeing the All-good Lord noetically, Who was crucified for us and rose from the dead, and to call upon His All-holy Name. Only in this way will the corruption of homosexuality be forgiven...



An Elder said the following concerning thoughts: *The mere entry of thoughts into our minds is not reprehensible. The misuse of thoughts is reprehensible. It is possible for a soul to be spiritually shipwrecked by thoughts, just as it is possible to be crowned victor (against them).* With this opinion, the holy Elder teaches us that we are able to quash a bad thought by opposing it; or even transform bad thoughts into good ones, having been given this opportunity by the opposing thoughts themselves.

From “The Evergetinos”



## UNDISTRACTED PRAYER, DEPRESSION & FEAR, AND THE FALSEHOOD OF HERETICS

Source: "The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It," by St. Theophan the Recluse, translated by Alexandra Dockham, *The Holy Monastery of St. Paisius, AZ* (1996), Letter Sixty-Nine, pp. 185-187 and 269-273.

### Undistracted Prayer

How correct is your conclusion: "Everything comes down to prayer!" Indeed it does. Prayer is a spiritual barometer for self-observation. A barometer tells how light or heavy the air is, and prayer shows how high or low our spirit has gone in its petition to God. Keep praying in the manner in which you have begun. Stand a little more often in front of your icons during the day, making prostrations both from the waist and all the way to the ground. Getting down on your knees and making prostrations is even better. No one will see this except the Lord. Morning and evening prayers take their normal course. At those times it is necessary to do a little more, just as you have been told to do. Regarding partial prostrations to the Lord, do them slightly, but not in the way we usually do when we meet an acquaintance—nod the head and that is it. Perseverance, which you are encouraging in every way possible, will teach you everything.

Do not ever forget, however, that *the essence of prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God*, for God is everywhere. The holy Prophet David taught his soul, *In every place of His dominion, bless the Lord, O my soul!* (Pss 102:20). As I have already written, remembrance of God, or as you put it even better, love for God, more than anything else inclines us toward this. May the Lord give you a blessing in exceptional love for Him. However, even in love for the Lord there is remembrance of Him, with a deepened awareness of His divine characteristics and activity. You must train yourself in remembrance of God, and the means for doing this, as I have written, is short prayer, in which you continually repeat the thought, *Lord have mercy! Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner!* You have already begun using this prayer; continue it, whether you are sitting, walking, doing some task, or talking. In every situation and at every moment, keep in mind that the Lord is close by, and call out to Him from your heart, *Lord have mercy!*



You say that your thoughts stray. This is straightaway forbidden; you must work a little harder until you have firmly established the habit of dwelling inside the heart before the Lord. It seems I have already told you that as soon as you notice your thoughts have wandered off, you must bring them back, and that you must make a deliberate and conscious effort never to let them wander. You must do this; not only when you are praying, but at all times. Make this your rule: *Always be with the Lord in mind and heart, never allow the thoughts to wander, but when they do, call them back again and force them to stay at home in the house of the heart and speak with the most sweet Lord.* Once you have made this your rule, you must force yourself to carry it out faithfully. You must scold yourself when you violate it, imposing some sort of penalty on yourself, and you must pray to the Lord to help you in this most necessary matter. If you persevere at this, you will soon be successful.

There are conditions for success; these are:

(1) *Uninterrupted continuity of such undertaking*—persistence in it. Do not keep starting and putting it aside over and over; rather, once you have begun, keep at it until success comes. In any case, success depends on the persistence of labor.

(2) To bring this about, you need to arm yourself with *patience and self-discipline*. Uncertainty will come, desire will weaken, and even

doubt will arise; you must drive all this away, as you set out to do, and force yourself to continue in your labors.

(3) To make this happen, be *inspired with the hope* that the Lord, seeing your labor over prayer and the diligence with which you seek to make it habitual, will at last grant you this prayer, and that *once it has become consolidated in the heart, it will flow from it on its own like a fountain*. This most blessed fruit is the fruit of prayerful labor! The expectation of it has inspired all those who pray, and the receiving of it has been for them a source of continual spiritual bliss, joy, and a peaceful heart in God. May the Lord bestow this fruit on you! But without persistent, self-disciplined, patient, and hopeful labor, He will not bestow it. Have courage!

I am sending you a little book about this subject entitled "Letters on the Spiritual Life." It is directed toward the consolidation of the mind in the heart with attentiveness toward the Lord and prayerful disposition. For the labor of prayer, you need to select and read such books or articles



that discuss everything about prayer and prayerful frames of mind.

The more you become confirmed in the remembrance of God, or in mental expression to God in the heart, the calmer you will be, and the less your thoughts will wander. The inner condition and success in prayer go together.

Remember that we have been speaking about the spirit since the very beginning of our correspondence? Now we have the restoration of it to its proper place. Once it has been restored, cleansing activity begins; this is a fundamental re-working of soul, body and outward relationships. Then you will become a real person.

### Depression and Fear



Your depression mixed with dread is somehow unclear. What is wrong with you? You have everything in order, both at

home and in your soul. You will overcome it; what should you do? Pray to God and entrust your fate and that of everyone close to you to Him. This is the most reliable way to peace! You should have but one concern—to not do anything that would anger God. You will have firm hope and lasting peace from this.

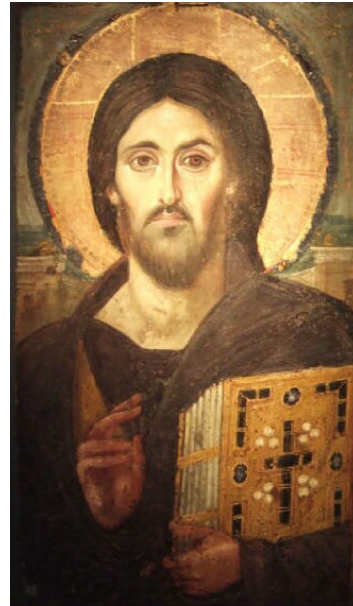
That you have some family amusements is fine. Just do not get carried away. Do not forget God, and thank Him for every comfort, accepting such comfort as coming from His hands. Then when you seclude yourself, fall down before the Lord more diligently, asking Him to give you understanding and indicate life's paths. It happens that amusements, especially pleasant ones, give rise to depression, because while they are not sinful, they are unable to content the heart. Generally speaking, the inconstancy of the emotions is characteristic to us. It is necessary to discard and overcome this, being concerned that one thing does not change; that is, that your most important decision, the goal of life you chose for yourself, always remain in force.

Can this really be? God is asking your heart once and for all, and the heart desires God. For without God it is never satisfied, it is bored; examine yourself from this aspect. Maybe you will find the door to the peace of God there.

That you broke off with one of your friends is a very good thing; her charming and ingratiating manner influenced you in a way that was not at all conducive to the goal of life you planned for yourself. You made mention of this influence at one time, but I neglected to tell you to watch out. Well, thank God! Now the affair has taken a turn for the better of its own accord. It is not proper, of course, to allow all kinds of hostile things into the heart. Do not

permit yourself to trust her any more or take her pleasant words to heart. Behave equably, and do not upset peaceful relations.

### Falsehood



You ask what to think about some English "apostle." Your own words tell what to think about him. He says that the Lord appears to him and tells him what to do and what to say. Don't you and those around you see that he is a deceiver? If the Lord appeared to him, He would not have sent him to us, but to the Turks, for instance, or some other non-believers. The Lord Himself has repeatedly confirmed and continues to confirm our faith through miracles, the holy relics and the ap-

pearances of Him and His saints. There is nothing to teach us. On the contrary, he needs to learn from us.

This "apostle" does not come from the traditional English church, but from some peculiar one that appeared recently. A Pentecostal sect recently appeared there. Someone got it into his head that what happened to the Apostles must be repeated in the church of Christ; that is, that the Holy Spirit descended visibly and acted visibly in believers. Some people, mostly women, believed him. They began thinking how to achieve this. They thought and thought, and came up with something. Somehow they became convinced that the Holy Spirit was acting in them specifically, and they began convincing others of this. They fabricated a few suspicious miracles and began trumpeting them everywhere. Quite a few gullible people gathered around them. They separated from the others and established their own ecclesiastical order. There is a sect for you!

This is the sort of milieu your "apostle" comes from. He explains everything about the Holy Spirit, that everyone must without fail be filled with His grace to be saved. This idea is totally correct. I revealed this to you in our first letters. But this is the only true thing he says. Everything else is a lie! He cries, "Believe, believe, and the Holy Spirit will come." This is his biggest lie! Faith is indeed an indispensable condition for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the very receiving of the gift comes about not from faith alone, but from faith through the divinely-established Mysteries. This is how it was even in Apostolic times.

Here is a case in point. St. Paul arrived in Ephesus, and after encountering several believers there, he asked them

whether they had received the Holy Spirit. They answered they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. It turned out that they were baptized only with the baptism of John. St. Paul then baptized them with the baptism of Christ, and after that he laid his hands on them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been renewed by Baptism, but they had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was imparted to them through the apostolic laying on of hands, while Baptism only gave them the ability to receive the gift and made them worthy of it. As it was with these believers, so has it been for all believers, both during Apostolic times and afterward. That is how it has been to this time in the Divine Church, namely through Holy Chrismation, which the Apostles themselves introduced in place of the laying on of hands.

All of us who have been baptized and chrismated have the gift of the Holy Spirit. Everyone has the gift, but it is not active in everyone. How to make it active is explained in my previous letters. Take some time to review them again. I would add here only that there is no other way to this gift.

Go and ask the English “apostle” whether he himself has the gift of the Holy Spirit. He does not. For the English do not have the Mystery of Chrismation, without which, just as without the laying on of the Apostolic hands, the Holy Spirit never descended and never will. The English have only two “Mysteries,” that of Baptism and Communion, but they have no Mystery of Chrismation. Consequently, they also do not have the gift of the Holy Spirit. This “apostle” also does not have it. Therefore, he is talking about something he does not know about and preaches about receiving something that he himself does not have. You will not observe in his speeches even a mention of how the Holy Spirit is received. He talks only about the necessity for having Him, and then Cries out, “Believe!” This is like saying, “Open your mouth and the Holy Spirit will fly in.”

How appropriate are the Lord’s words for this apostle, *Physician, heal thyself!*

Be convinced, if you will, and pass my ideas on to others, especially that fellow who enjoys discussing religious subjects at your place. Such a view of the apostle may become more widely dispersed through him.



Our starting point is always wrong. Instead of beginning with ourselves, we always want to change others first and ourselves last. If everyone would begin first with themselves, then there would be peace all around! St. John Chrysostom said that no one can harm the man who does not injure himself—not even the devil. You see, we are the sole architects of our future.

**Blessed Elder Thaddeus of Serbia (+2002)**

## THE FOUR FORMS OF WISDOM & VIRTUES OF THE SOUL

*By St. Peter of Damascus, from G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Bishop Kallistos Ware, “The Philokalia: vol. III,” (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), pp. 100 - 101.*

There are four forms of wisdom: first, moral judgment, or the knowledge of what should and should not be done, combined with watchfulness of the intellect; second, self-restraint, whereby our moral purpose is safeguarded and kept free from all acts, thoughts and words that do not accord with God; third, courage, or strength and endurance in sufferings, trials and temptations encountered on the spiritual path; and fourth, justice, which consists in maintaining a proper balance between the first three. These four general virtues arise from the three powers of the soul in the following manner: from the intelligence, or intellect, come moral judgment and justice, or discrimination; from the desiring power comes self-restraint; and from the incensive power comes courage.

Each virtue lies between the unnatural passions. Moral judgment lies between craftiness and thoughtlessness; self-restraint, between obduracy and licentiousness; courage, between overbearingness and cowardice; justice between over-frugality and greed. The four virtues constitute an image of the heavenly man, while the eight unnatural passions constitute an image of the earthly man (I Cor 15:49).

God possesses a perfect knowledge of all these things, just as He knows the past, the present and the future; and they are known to some extent by him who through grace has learned from God about His works, and who through this grace has been enabled to realize in himself that which is according to God’s image and likeness (Gen 1:26). But if someone claims that, simply by hearing about these things, he knows them as he should, he is a liar.

Man’s intellect can never rise to heaven without God as a guide; and it cannot speak of what it has not seen, but must first ascend and see it. On the level of hearsay, you should speak only of things that you have learned from the Scriptures, and then with circumspection, confessing your faith in the Father of the Logos, as St. Basil the Great puts it, and not imagining that through hearsay you possess spiritual knowledge; for that is to be worse than ignorant. As St. Maximos has said, “To think that one knows prevents one from advancing in knowledge.” St. John Chrysostom points out that there is an ignorance which is praiseworthy: it consists in knowing consciously that one knows nothing. In addition, there is a form of ignorance that is worse than any other: not to know that one does not know. Similarly, there is a knowledge that is falsely so called, which occurs when, as St. Paul says, one thinks that one knows but does not know (I Cor 8:2).



## Χριστούγεννα χωρίς Χριστό;

**Ξέρουμε Σε Τί Μέρη Βρισκόμαστε;;;**

Πηγή: «Δι' Ευχῶν τῶν Ἁγίων», Δεκέμβριος 2009.

**Α**ὐτὲς τὶς ἁγίες μέρες ποὺ πορευόμαστε γιὰ τὴν γέννηση τοῦ Μοναδικοῦ Σωτήρα μας...

Οἱ περισσότεροὶ ὅμως δυστυχῶς, ἀπὸ μᾶς τοὺς «Νεοέλληνες Ὁρθοδόξους Χριστιανούς», θὰ γιορτάσουν, ἢ μᾶλλον θὰ περάσουν Χριστούγεννα χωρίς Χριστό.

Πολλοὶ πάλι ἔχουν κανονίσει νὰ πᾶνε κάποιο ταξίδι σὲ κάποια ἄλλη χώρα νὰ περάσουν τὰ «Χριστούγεννά» τους. Ἄλλοι πάλι περνᾶνε τὶς μέρες τους σὲ κάποιο τουριστικὸ μέρος στὴν Ἑλλάδα. Στὴν Ἐκκλησία ὅμως δὲν πατᾶνε τὸ πόδι τους, βρῖσκουν ἕνα σωρὸ δικαιολογίες.

Ἄν εἶναι γιὰ κανένα ταξιδάκι, καμμιὰ ἐκδρομούλα, κανένα ψάρεμα ἢ κυνήγι, τότε ἀπὸ τὰ ἄγρια χαράματα ξυπνᾶνε, γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία ὅμως δὲν μποροῦνε τί νὰ χάσουνε τὸν χρόνο τους γιὰ τέτοια... Αὐτὰ εἶναι γιὰ τὶς γριουῦλες καὶ τοὺς γέροντες, ἔτσι λένε.

Τὰ Χριστούγεννα θᾶναι γι' αὐτοὺς μία κοινή ἡμέρα κοινῆς ἀργίας, ἕνα εὐχάριστο πρωινὸ γιὰ ὕπνο. Ὅταν ὅμως ξυπνήσουν, ὅλα γύρω τους καὶ ὅλα μέσα τους θὰ εἶναι ἔρημα, θά... εἶναι μαῦρα, θὰ εἶναι σκοτεινά.

Ἦδη ἄρχισαν νὰ ζοῦνε ἀπὸ τώρα τὴν Κόλαση. Δὲν τοὺς σώζουν τὰ λαμπάκια, οἱ χιονάνθρωποι, οἱ στολισμένες αὐλές, τὸ γλέντι καὶ ὁ χορὸς, ἢ μέθη ἢ τὸ τυχὸν πλούσιο τραπέζι.

Δυστυχῶς σήμερα γιὰ τοὺς περισσότερους Χριστούγεννα σημαίνουν μελομακάρονα, κουραμπιέδες, μπακλαβάδες, κανταΐφια, «χριστουγεννιάτικα» δέντρα, ξενόφερτους «Σάντα Κλάους», στολίδια καὶ μιχλιμπίδια.

Πρέπει νὰ γνωρίζουμε ὅμως ὅτι... **Χριστούγεννα χωρίς Χριστό, δὲν εἶναι Χριστούγεννα.**

Τὰ Χριστούγεννα τὰ γιορτάζουμε μόνον μὲ τὸν Χριστό, διότι ὁ Χριστὸς σώζει. Αὐτὸς χαρίζει τὸ φῶς, τὴ ζωὴ, τὴ χαρὰ, τὴν εὐτυχία, τὴν εἰρήνη, καὶ τὴν γαλήνη τῆς ψυχῆς. Αὐτὸς χαρίζει καὶ τὰ ἀληθινὰ Χριστούγεννα. Μαζὶ Του νὰ τὰ ζήσουμε, μαζὶ Του.

**Ὁ Κόσμος Ξεγελιέται...**

**Μὲ Δεντράκια καὶ Λαμπιόνια, μὲ Γλυκίσματα καὶ Ψεύτικες Συνήθειες,  
Μὲ Χριστούγεννα χωρίς Χριστό...**

Τοῦ Μητροπολίτη Μεσογαίας καὶ Λαυρεωτικῆς Νικόλαου, Δεκέμβριος 2014.

**Α**γαπητοὶ μου ἀδελφοί,  
Τί εὐλογία ἡ σημερινὴ ἡμέρα! Τί ὠραία γιορτή! Πόσο βαθειὰ καὶ πόσο ἀληθινὴ! Ὅποιος νοιώθει τὴ μικρότητά του, τὴν ἁμαρτωλότητά του, ὅποιος ταυτόχρονα ζεῖ ταπεινὰ τὴν αἰώνια διάστασή του, ὅποιος διατηρεῖ ζωντανὴ τὴν πίστη μέσα του, δὲν μπορεῖ σήμερα νὰ μὴ ζεῖ τὴ χαρὰ τῆς ἐκπληρωμένης προσδοκίας, τὴ χαρὰ τῆς αἰωνίας λυτρώσεως *«Σήμερον*



*πᾶσα φύσις ἀγάλλεται καὶ χαίρει ὅτι Χριστὸς ἐτέχθη ἐκ τῆς παρθένου κόρης».* Χαρὰ καὶ ἀγαλλίασή μας ἡ γέννηση τοῦ Κυρίου, ἡ ἐνανθρώπησή Του, ἡ παρουσία Του ἀνάμεσά μας: *«Μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός. Ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει, ἴδε φῶς μέγα, ὅτι μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός».*

Μέσα στὸν ἀρχέγονο παράδεισο τῆς Ἐδέμ ψάχνει ὁ Θεὸς τὸν χαμένο, τὸν πεσμένο στὴν ἁμαρτία ἄνθρωπο: *«Ἀδάμ, ποῦ εἶ;»* (Γεν 3:9), ἀντηχεῖ βροντώδης ἡ φωνὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Μέσα στὴν ἐξορία τῆς ἱστορίας, *«Θεέ μου, ποῦ εἶσαι;»* ἀκούγεται ἀγωνιώδης ἢ κραυγὴ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὁ Μωϋσῆς, ὁ Δαβὶδ, οἱ προφῆτες, οἱ προπάτορες, τὰ ἔθνη καὶ οἱ λαοὶ τὸν... Θεὸ προσδοκοῦσαν: *«Καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκία ἐθνῶν»* (Γεν 49:10). Ζοῦσαν περισσότερο τὴν ἀπουσία Του καὶ τὴν ἁμαρτία τους καὶ λαχταροῦσαν τὴν παρουσία Του καὶ τὴ λύτρωσή τους. Αὐτὸ τοὺς ἔλειπε, αὐτὸ στεροῦνταν.

Αὐτὸ ποὺ σήμερα γιορτάζουμε εἶναι ἡ κατάργηση τοῦ προηγούμενου δράματος, τοῦ χωρισμοῦ ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό, καὶ ἡ ἀνατολὴ τῆς Θεϊκῆς παρουσίας στὸν κόσμο. *«Ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ὤφθη καὶ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις συναναστρέφη»* (Βαροὺχ γ' 38). Καὶ ὄχι μόνον. Ὁ Κύριος ἔρχεται στὸν κόσμο καὶ εἰσέρχεται στὴν ἱστορία *«ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπου γενόμενος»* (Φιλιπ. 2:7), ἔρχεται ὡς ἄνθρωπος. Καθὼς ὁ Χριστὸς γεννᾶται ἐκ τῆς Παρθένου, τιμᾶ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη φύση καὶ τὴν ἀναγεννᾶ. Τί τιμὴ νὰ εἶσαι ἄνθρωπος! Τί εὐλογία νὰ κληρονομεῖς τὴν Θεοεἶδεια, τὴ δυνατότητα τῆς ὁμοιώσεως, τῆς κοινωνίας, τῆς ἐνώσεως μαζὶ Του,



της θεώσεως! Αὐτὴ εἶναι ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη θεολογία καὶ ἀνθρωπολογία, ὅτι γίνεται ὁ Θεὸς ἄνθρωπος, γιὰ νὰ κάνει θεὸ τὸν ἄνθρωπο.

Καὶ τί φοβερὸ! Ὅλο αὐτό, ἡ προοπτικὴ τῆς θεώσεως, παραμένει ἄγνωστο στὸν κόσμο δυὸ χιλιάδες χρόνια μετὰ τὴ Γέννηση τοῦ Κυρίου. Ἴσως καὶ μετὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν. Δὲν ἀποτελεῖ καύχημα οὔτε ἐπιθυμία οὔτε στόχο καὶ ἐπιδίωξη. Ἀντίθετα, αὐτὴ ἡ ὑπέροχη ἀλήθεια ἐπιμελῶς ἀγνοεῖται καὶ συστηματικὰ περιφρονεῖται καὶ πολεμεῖται. Ἡ ἐποχὴ μας ἔφτιαξε ἕναν ἄνθρωπο μὲ εὐδαμονία δίχως εὐτυχία, μὲ χαρὲς δίχως ὄμως χαρά, μὲ ἀνάγκες δίχως πίστη, μὲ καρδιὰ χωρὶς αἶμα, μὲ σῶμα δίχως ψυχὴ, μὲ ὑπαρξὴ χωρὶς ζωὴ. Τσαλάκωσε τὸν κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ ἄνθρωπο, ξέσχισε τὸ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν καὶ στὴ θέση του ἔβαλε αὐτὸν ποὺ μοιάζει μὲ τὰ ζῶα καὶ συγγενεῦει μὲ τὸ τίποτα. Τί κρῖμα! Γι' αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ ἐρώτημα τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ—ποῦ εἶναι;—ἀντικαταστάθηκε μὲ αὐτὸ τῆς ὑπαρξῆς Του—ἄραγε ὑπάρχει; **Ἡ ἐποχὴ μας, ἀντὶ νὰ μᾶς προτρέψει στὴ συνάντησή Του, δυστυχῶς μᾶς ἀμφισβητεῖ καὶ τὴν ὑπαρξὴ Του.**

Μέσα στὴ θύελλα αὐτοῦ τοῦ κόσμου, μέσα στὸν παραλογισμό τῆς κοσμικότητος, μέσα στὴν τρικυμία τῆς ἀπιστίας, κάπου βρισκόμαστε κι ἐμεῖς πάνω στὸ εὐλογημένο καὶ ἀσφαλὲς σκάφος τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Καὶ ἐνῶ ὁ κόσμος ξεγελιέται μὲ δεντρᾶκια καὶ λαμπιόνια, μὲ γλυκίσματα καὶ ψεύτικες συνήθειες, μὲ Χριστούγεννα χωρὶς Χριστό, ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ μαζί της κι ἐμεῖς ἀγρυπνοῦμε ψάλλοντας «μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός, γνῶτε ἔθνη καὶ ἠττάσθε», διότι ὁ Θεὸς εἶναι μαζί μας. Δὲν ὑπάρχει μεγαλύτερη ἀλήθεια, δὲν ὑπάρχει μεγαλύτερη χαρά. «Δεῦτε, λοιπόν, ἀγαλλιασώμεθα τῷ Κυρίῳ τὸ παρὸν μυστήριον ἐκδηγούμενοι».

Εὐχόμαι ὁ Θεὸς νὰ μᾶς ἀξιώνει νὰ εἴμαστε κι ἐμεῖς μαζί Του καὶ νὰ χαρίζεται σὲ ὅλους σας:

Ἀληθινὰ καὶ ἀγιασμένα Χριστούγεννα,

Καλὴ καὶ εὐλογημένη χρονιά!

Μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ τεχθέντι ἀγάπης,

Ὁ Μητροπολίτης

† Ὁ Μεσογαίας καὶ Λαυρεωτικῆς Νικόλαος



**Ὅ**πως ἡ βροχὴ, ὅσον περισσότερο πέφτει πάνω στὴ γῆ, τόσον τὴν μαλακώνει, ἔτσι καὶ τὴν γῆ τῆς καρδιάς μας τὴν χαροποιεῖ καὶ τὴν εὐφραίνει τὸ ἅγιον ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅσον περισσότερο τὸ φωνάζουμε καὶ ὅσον συχνότερον τὸ ἐπικαλούμεθα.

**Ἅγιος Ἡσύχιος ὁ Πρεσβύτερος**

## Ἀπὸ Κεῖ Μπήκαν οἱ Ἐχθροί

**Ἀπὸ τὴν κερκόπορτα τῆς ὑπεροφίας μας, ποῦ στὴ θέση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἔβαλε τὶς στοές, ποῦ ἀντικατέστησε τὸν γάμο μὲ συμβολαιογραφικὴ πράξη...**

*Ἀπόσπασμα ἀπὸ τὸ βιβλίον «Ἐν μέσῳ κρίσης» τῆς Μαρίας Μουρζᾶ τῶν Ἐκδόσεων «Ἄθως».*



**Δ**ιατελοῦμεν ἐν μέσῳ κρίσης! Ἐκεῖ ποῦ πρὸς στιγμὴν μένουμε ἐνεοὶ καὶ ἀποσβολωμένοι. Ἐκεῖ ποῦ κόβουμε ταχύτητα, χαμηλώ-

νομε τοὺς τόνους καὶ ρωτᾶμε: Γιατί; Πῶς ἔγινε καὶ φτάσαμε στοῦ γκρεμοῦ τὸ χεῖλος; Ποιὸς εὐθύνεται γιὰ τὴ στραβοτημονία; Ποιὸς θὰ χρεωθεῖ τὸ ἀτύχημα; Ποιὸς θὰ χρεωθεῖ τὴν ἐθνικὴ συμφορὰ;

Κοιτᾶς καὶ λές: Ποῦ εἶναι ἡ Ἑλλάδα μας; Ποῦ εἶναι οἱ Ἕλληνες; Ποῦ μᾶς πούλησαν; Ποιοὶ μᾶς ἀγόρασαν; Ποιοὶ θὰ δώσουν λόγο γιὰ τὴν ἀγοραπωλησία; Χιλιάδες ἀπελπισμένες κραυγὲς σὰ σεισμικὲς δονήσεις... Προεόρτια μεγάλου σεισμοῦ;

Διατελοῦμε ἐν μέσῳ κρίσης, βιώνοντας ἕνα σκληρὸ παιχνίδι, πίσω ἀπὸ τὴν πλάτη μας καὶ πάντα σὲ βάρος μας. Εἰσπράττουμε τὴν προδοσία σὰ γεύση ἀπὸ χῶμα, σὰν ὀργὴ καὶ σὰν ἀπελπιστικὴ διαπίστωση: βρισκόμαστε ὑπὸ ζυγόν! Καὶ ὁ πόνος τοῦ ζυγοῦ εἶναι τόσο δυνατὸς ὥστε ἄλλος γρήγορα καὶ ἄλλος ἀργὰ ξυπνάει! Ξυπνάει σὰν ἀπὸ βαρὺ ὕπνο. Μᾶς ξυπνάει ὁ ἥλιος τῆς νύχτας... Τὸ φῶς ποῦ γεννιέται ἀμέσως μετὰ ἀπ' τὸ πυκνότερο σκοτάδι. Μᾶς ξυπνάει καὶ βλέπουμε πῶς δὲν εἴμαστε ἄμοιροὶ τῆς τύχης μας, πῶς σαφῶς ἔχουμε κι ἐμεῖς, ὁ καθένας τὴ δικὴ του εὐθύνη. Ἔχουμε κι ἐμεῖς, ὁ καθένας τὸ δικό του μερίδιο στὴ... συμφορὰ.

Καὶ φωτίζεται ὁ νοῦς μας καὶ μᾶς γίνεται ὁρατὸ πῶς δὲν φταίνει μόνον οἱ ἐχθροὶ ποῦ μπήκαν ἀπ' τὴν κερκόπορτα. Φταῖμε καὶ ἐμεῖς ποῦ ἀπαξιώσαμε τὴν κερκόπορτα καὶ... ἐν γνώσει μας τὴν ἀφήσαμε ἀφύλακτη. Φταῖμε ὅλοι... καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῆς Πολιτείας καὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ ὁ λαός. Διαπράξαμε ὅλοι τὸ ἴδιο λάθος τῆς ὕβρης: Καταργήσαμε τὸν Θεό!

Εἴτε θέλουμε νὰ τὸ παραδεχτοῦμε εἴτε δὲ θέλουμε, ἀπὸ κεῖ μπήκαν οἱ ἐχθροὶ: ἀπὸ τὴν κερκόπορτα τῆς ὑπεροφίας μας..., ποῦ στὴ θέση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἔβαλε τὶς στοές, ποῦ ἀντικατέστησε τὸν γάμο μὲ συμβολαιογραφικὴ πράξη, ποῦ ἀντικατέστησε τὴ μάνα μὲ τὴν τηλεόραση, ποῦ ἀντικατέστησε τὰ παιδιὰ μὲ τὰ σκυλιὰ.

Ἀπὸ κεῖ μῆκαν οἱ ἐχθροί: ἀπὸ τὴν κερκόπορτα τῆς ὑπεροψίας μας, πού ἀντικατέστησε τὸν Πνευματικὸ μὲ τὰ μέντιουμ, πού ἀντικατέστησε τὴν Λειτουργία μὲ κολυμβητήρια, μὲ φροντιστήρια καὶ ἐκδρομές, πού ἀντικατέστησε τὴν προσευχὴ μὲ γιόγκα, τὴ νηστεία μὲ δίαιτες, καὶ τὸν Χριστὸ μὲ τὸν χρυσό!...

Ἀδελφοί μου, ἡ κρίση ἢ βαθιὰ καὶ ὀδυνηρὴ δὲν εἶναι πὸν ἀδείασαν τὰ ταμεία μας. Εἶναι πὸν ἀδείασε ἢ ψυχὴ μας! Ἀδείασαν τὰ σπίτια μας. Ξεκρεμάσαμε τὶς εἰκόνες, σβήσαμε τὸ καντήλι καὶ ἀνοίξαμε τὶς πόρτες. Τώρα μπορεῖ ἐλεύθερα νὰ μπαινοβγαίνει ὅποιος θέλει, ὅ,τι ὥρα θέλει γιὰ ὅποια σχέση θέλει.

Ἀδελφοί μου, ἡ κρίση ἢ βαθιὰ καὶ ἡ ὀδυνηρὴ εἶναι τὸ κλάμα τῶν παιδιῶν πὸν δὲν ἀφήσαμε νὰ γεννηθοῦν!... καὶ τὸ κλάμα τῶν παιδιῶν πὸν ἐγκαταλείψαμε.

Ἡ κρίση ἢ βαθιὰ καὶ ἡ ὀδυνηρὴ εἶναι πὸν γεμίσαμε παιδιὰ πὸν δὲν ἔχουν κατὰ πὸν νὰ κοιτάξουν. Γεμίσαμε παιδιὰ-τορπίλες! Ἔτοιμα νὰ ἐκραγοῦν. Παιδιὰ γνωστῆς ἢ ἀγνώστου πατρότητος πὸν δὲν τὰ θέλει κανεὶς, παρὰ μόνον αὐτοὶ πὸν θὰ τὰ ἐμπορευτοῦν. Ἀδελφοί μου, γεμίσαμε ἐμπόρους πὸν μαζεύουν ἀργύρια τριάκοντα, ἀλλοίμονο γιὰ νὰ ἀγοράσουν τὸν ἀγρὸ τοῦ Κεραμέως;

Κρῦο... Τόσο πολὺ κρῦο... Κι αὐτὴ ἡ κρίση... ἡ βαθιὰ καὶ ἐπώδυνή μας μαζεύει ἀπ' τοὺς δρόμους καὶ γυρίζουμε μέσα μας. Ἐκεῖ πὸν ἀρχίζει νὰ πάλλεται ἡ καρδιά μας ἢ πέτρινη καὶ νὰ δίνει ξανὰ σημεῖα ζωῆς, ζωῆς ἄλλης, ζωῆς ἀληθινῆς. Ἐκεῖ πὸν δυναμώνει λίγο-λίγο ἢ φωνὴ τῆς χαμένης συνείδησης καὶ ἀρχίζεις νὰ διακρίνεις ἀνάμεσα στὶς χιλιάδες φωνῆς τῆ φωνὴ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος! Κι ἀρχίζει ἢ ψυχὴ μας νὰ ψάχνει τρόπους ἀποκατάστασης: ποῖα «αὐθαίρετα» νὰ γκρεμίσουμε καὶ ποῖα «νόμιμα» νὰ ξαναχτίσουμε...

Ἀρχίζει ἢ ψυχὴ μας καὶ διψάει τὴν ἄφηση. Ἀφήνει τὶς χώρες τῶν ἀλλοφύλων τὶς ἀλλότριες συμπεριφορὲς καὶ ξαναπαίρνει ἢ πολὺπαθη ψυχὴ μας τοὺς πατροπαράδοτους δρόμους... γιὰ τὸ πετραχίλι τὸ ἅγιο, γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Ἀδελφοί μου, ἡ κρίση ἢ βαθιὰ καὶ ἐπώδυνη εἶναι καὶ σωτήρια καὶ ἱαματικὴ. Ἀρχίζεις καὶ νοιάζεσαι καὶ μοιράζεσαι τὸ τριμμένο παλτό σου μ' αὐτὸν πὸν κρυώνει! Ἀρχίζεις καὶ πονᾷς καὶ συμπονᾷς... Καὶ ὁ ἄλλος ἄνθρωπος γίνεται συνάνθρωπος, ὁ κάτοικος συγκατοικος, ὁ πατριώτης συμπατριώτης, καὶ ὁ ἄλλος Ἕλληνας γίνεται συνέλληνας, ἐγγενῆς καὶ συγγενῆς καὶ ὄμμας καὶ ἀδελφός!

Ἀδελφοί μου, ὁμοιοπαθεῖς καὶ συμπένητες, ἡ κρίση ἢ βαθιὰ καὶ ἡ ὀδυνηρὴ εἶναι γι' αὐτοὺς ἢ ἀσωτία καὶ γι' ἄλλους ἢ ὑποκρισία. Ἡ στεῖρα θρησκευτικότητά μας. Ἡ ἠθικὴ μας αὐτάρκεια.... Κανεὶς δὲν κλαίει... Καὶ ἡ κρίση ἐντείνεται καὶ κάνει κρῦο, πολὺ κρῦο!

Χωρὶς μετάνοια, πῶς νὰ τὸ διαχειριστεῖς; Χωρὶς ἐλπίδα στὸ ἀμέτρητο ἔλεος τοῦ ἀγαπῶντος Θεοῦ, χωρὶς τὴν ἐμπειρία τῆς Παρουσίας Του, πῶς νὰ βγοῦν οἱ χειμῶνες; Πῶς νὰ βγοῦμε ἀπ' τ' ἀδιέξοδο χωρὶς θύρα ἐξόδου;

Ἀδελφοί μου, ὁμοιοπαθεῖς καὶ συμπένητες, ἡ κρίση ἢ μεγάλη δὲν εἶναι πὸν δὲν εὐημεροῦμε. Εἶναι πὸν δὲν μετανοοῦμε. Ἡ κρίση ἢ μεγάλη δὲν εἶναι πὸν ἀλώσαμε τὴν ψυχὴ μας. Εἶναι πὸν τὴν παραδώσαμε μόνονι μας. Πρέπει νὰ περάσει καλὰ καὶ γιὰ πάντα στὸν πυρήνα τοῦ εἶναι μας: ἡ κρίση ἢ μεγάλη, ἢ μέγιστη τῶν συμφορῶν, δὲν εἶναι ἢ ὀφειλὴ τῶν δανειῶν. Εἶναι ἢ ὀφειλὴ τῶν δακρῦων... Ἀδελφοί μου, ἔτσι παραγράφονται ὅλα τὰ χρεῖ: μὲ δάκρυα! Καὶ θὰ δοῦμε τὴν ἀνοιξὴ νὰ πετάγεται κάτω ἀπ' τὰ μάρμαρα... Καὶ τὰ δένδρα νὰ ἀνθίζουν... Καὶ θὰ ῥθεῖ ἢ Ἀνάστασι!



## Ἡ Παρουσία τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ Εἶναι Ὁμολογία Πίστεως

— Γέροντα, τὰ διάφορα κινήματα, οἱ διαμαρτυρίες πὸν γίνονται ἀπὸ τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ἔχουν κάποιο ἀποτέλεσμα;

— Ἡ παρουσία τῶν Χριστιανῶν εἶναι πλέον ὁμολογία πίστεως. Μπορεῖ κανεὶς μὲ τὴν προσευχὴ νὰ βοηθήσει περισσότερο, ἀλλὰ τὴν σιωπὴ του θὰ τὴν ἐκμεταλευθοῦν οἱ ἄλλοι καὶ θὰ ποῦν: «Ὁ τάδε καὶ ὁ τάδε δὲν διαμαρτυρήθηκαν, ἐπομένως εἶναι μὲ τὸ μέρος μας» συμφωνοῦν μαζί μας». Ἄν δὲν ἀρχίσουν μερικοὶ νὰ χτυποῦν τὸ κακό, νὰ ἐλέγχουν δηλαδὴ αὐτοὺς πὸν σκανδαλίζουν τοὺς πιστοὺς, θὰ γίνῃ μεγαλύτερο κακό. Ἔτσι θὰ τονωθοῦν λίγο οἱ πιστοὶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ θὰ ἐμποδισθοῦν λίγο ὅσοι πολεμοῦν τὴν Ἐκκλησία. Ἡ Ἐκκλησία δὲν εἶναι δικό τους καίκι, νὰ κάνουν βόλτες εἶναι τὸ σκάφος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Αὐτοὶ εἶναι κατακριτέοι. Τὸ μόνον πὸν τοὺς ἐνδιαφέρει εἶναι νὰ ἔχουν μεγάλο μισθό, πολυτελεῖς αὐτοκίνητο, νὰ τρέχουν στὶς διασκεδάσεις... Καὶ ὕστερα κάνουν νόμο νὰ πατρεύονται μὲ... πολιτικὸ γάμο, νομιμοποιοῦν τὶς ἀμβλώσεις... Τὶ θὰ κάνῃ ὁ Θεός, ἄλλο θέμα.

Γέροντος Παΐσιου Ἀγιορείτου  
Λόγοι Β', Πνευματικὴ Ἀφύπνιση



## Ἡ Ἀρχαία Ἑλληνική Καταγωγή τῶν Ρωμαίων

Πρ. Ιωάννης Ρωανίδης.

### Οἱ Ἀρχαῖοι Ἑλληνες Ρωμαῖοι

Ἀὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴ ἡ ὑπαρξη τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἑλλήνων Ρωμαίων ἀγνοεῖται ἐντελῶς ἀπὸ τοὺς ἱστορικοὺς ποὺ ἐξακολουθοῦν νὰ ὑποστηρίζουν τὸ Ψέμα τοῦ Καρλομάγνου τὸ 794 στὸ ὁποῖο ὀφείλεται τὸ ἱστορικὸ δόγμα ὅτι ἡ ρωμαϊκὴ γλῶσσα ἦταν καὶ εἶναι τὰ Λατινικά. Παρόλο ποὺ οἱ πηγές μαρτυροῦν ὅτι ἡ πρώτη γλῶσσα τῶν Ρωμαίων ἦταν τὰ Ἑλληνικά. Ἀὐτὴ ἡ πλαστογράφηση τῆς ἱστορίας ἀπὸ τὸν Καρλομάγνο τὸ 794 ἔγινε στὰ πλαίσια τῆς ἀνάγκης νὰ ἀποκοποῦν οἱ δυτικοὶ ὑπόδουλοι στοὺς Φράγκο-λατίνους Ρωμαῖοι ἀπὸ τοὺς ἐλεύθερους Ρωμαίους τῆς Ἀνατολῆς. Ὁ Φράγκος αὐτοκράτορας Λουδοβίκος II (855-875) ὑποστηρίζει καθαρὰ τὸ Ψέμα τοῦ Καρλομάγνου τὸ 794 μὲ τὰ ἀκόλουθα λόγια.

Τὸ 871 ἔγραφε στὸν αὐτοκράτορα τῶν Ρωμαίων Βασίλειο τὸν 1<sup>ο</sup> (867-885) τὰ ἑξῆς λόγια: «...μὰς ἔχει δοθεῖ ἡ διακυβέρνηση τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς Αὐτο-κρατορίας λόγω τῆς ὀρθοδοξίας μας. Οἱ Γραικοὶ ἔπαψαν νὰ εἶναι αὐτοκράτορες τῶν Ρωμαίων λόγω τῆς κακοδοξίας τους. Ὅχι μόνον ἐγκατέλειψαν τὴν πόλη (Ρώμη) καὶ πρωτεύουσα τῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας, ἀλλὰ παράτησαν καὶ τὴ Ρωμαϊκὴ ἐθνικότητα ἀκόμη καὶ τὴν Λατινικὴ γλῶσσα. Μετανάστευσαν σὲ ἄλλη πρωτεύουσα καὶ ἀπέκτησαν ἐντελῶς διαφορετικὴ ἐθνικότητα καὶ γλῶσσα.»

Ἄς συγκρίνουμε αὐτὴ τὴ φράγκικη ἀνοησία μὲ τὴν ἱστορικὴ πραγματικότητα καὶ... τὴν πορεία μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν ὁποία ἡ Ρώμη ἔγινε Αὐτοκρατορία ὀλόκληρου τοῦ Ἑλληνόφωνου κόσμου.

Οἱ ἀρχαῖοι Ἑλληνες Ρωμαῖοι ἦταν τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα τῆς ἔνωσης τῶν ἑλληνόφωνων φυλῶν τῆς Ἰταλίας. Αὐτὲς οἱ ἑλληνόφωνες φυλές ἦταν οἱ ἑξῆς: Οἱ Ἀβοριγίτες ποὺ ἦρθαν στὴν περιοχὴ τῆς Ρώμης ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀχαΐα τῆς Ἑλλάδας, ἀρκετὲς γενιές πρὶν τὸν Τρωικὸ πόλεμο. Αὐτοὶ οἱ Ἀβοριγίτες ἀφομοίωσαν

στὴ φυλὴ τους ὅ,τι εἶχε ἀπομείνει ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἑλληνες Πελασγοὺς τῆς Ἰταλίας ποὺ εἶχαν ἀποδεκατισθεῖ ἀπὸ μίαν μυστηριώδη ἀσθένεια. Ο Ροrcius Cato εἶναι ὁ μοναδικὸς ποὺ ἀναφέρεται στὴν ἱστορία τῶν Πελασγῶν τῆς Ἰταλίας καὶ στὴν ἔνωσή τους μὲ τοὺς Ἀβοριγίτες στὸ De Origines, καὶ ἐπαναλαμβάνεται κατὰ λέξη ἀπὸ τὸν Διονύσιο. Οἱ Ἀβοριγίτες καὶ οἱ Πελασγοὶ ἐνώθηκαν μὲ μερικοὺς ἀποίκους ἀπὸ τὴν Τροία καὶ ἔτσι προῆλθαν οἱ ἀρχαῖοι ἑλληνόφωνοι Λατίνοι τῆς Alba Longa.

Ἐνα τμῆμα αὐτῶν τῶν ἑλληνόφωνων Λατίνων τῆς Alba Longa, ὀδηγούμενο ἀπὸ τὰ ἀδελφία Ρωμύλο καὶ Ρῶμο ἱδρυσαν τὴ Ρώμη στοὺς Λόφους τοῦ Παλατίνου καὶ τοῦ Καπιτωλίου.

Συνεργάστηκαν ἐπίσης μὲ μερικοὺς ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἑλληνες Σαβίνες τῆς Ἰταλίας ποὺ εἶχαν ἐγκατασταθεῖ στὸν γειτονικὸ Λόφο Quirinal. Οἱ Σαβίνες εἶχαν μεταναστεύσει στὴν Ἰταλία ἀπὸ τὴ Λακωνία τῆς νότιας Ἑλλάδας. Οἱ Ρωμαῖοι συνέχισαν τὴ διαδικασία καθυποταγῆς καὶ τῆς πλήρης ἀφομοίωσης τῶν ὑπόλοιπων Ἑλλήνων Λατίνων καὶ Σαβίνων στὸ



**Ἡ Μεσόγειος Θάλασσα ὡς λίμνη στὸ κέντρο τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας**

πολιτικὸ τους σύστημα.

Μερικοὶ Κέλτες ἀπὸ τὸν Δούναβη εἰσέβαλαν στὴ Βόρεια Ἰταλία καὶ πίεζαν τοὺς Ἑτρούσκους ποὺ στράφηκαν πρὸς τὴ Ρώμη γιὰ βοήθεια. Ἀλλὰ οἱ Κέλτες νίκησαν τὸν ρωμαϊκὸ στρατὸ ποὺ προσπάθησε νὰ τοὺς σταματήσει, προχώρησαν ἐναντίον τῆς Ρώμης καὶ συντρίψαν τὸν ρωμαϊκὸ στρατὸ εἰσβάλλοντας στὴ Ρώμη τὸ 390 π.Χ. Κατέλαβαν ὀλόκληρη τὴ Ρώμη ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὸν ἀπόκρημνο λόφο τοῦ Καπιτωλίου. Ἐκεῖ οἱ Ρωμαῖοι εἶχαν συγκεντρώσει τὴ νεολαία τους καὶ ὄλους τοὺς θησαυροὺς καὶ τὰ ἔγγραφά τους. Οἱ γεροντότεροι παρέμειναν στὰ σπίτια τους. Οἱ Κέλτες ἀφοῦ πῆραν ἱκανοποιητικὴ ποσότητα λύτρων ἀποσύρθηκαν. Γιὰ νὰ ἐξασφαλιστοῦν οἱ Ρωμαῖοι κατέκτησαν τὴ Βόρεια Ἰταλία. Ἐπίσης οἱ Ρωμαῖοι ἐνσωμάτωσαν στὴν ἐπικράτειά τους, τοὺς Ἑλληνες Ἰταλοὺς τῆς Μεγάλης Ἑλλάδας, τὴ Σικελία, Σαρδηνία καὶ Κορσική. Αὐτὴ ἦταν ἡ ἔκταση τῆς ρωμαϊκῆς ἐπικρατείας τὸ 218 π.Χ.



Οἱ Καρχηδονιακοὶ πόλεμοι ὑπὸ τὴν ἀρχηγία τοῦ Ἀμίλκα καὶ ἰδιαίτερα τοῦ Ἀννίβα, ἔγιναν ἡ μεγαλύτερη ἀπειλή γιὰ τὴ Ρώμη μετὰ τὴν Κελτική κατοχή. Ὁ Ἀννίβας εἰσέβαλε στὴν Ἰταλία μὲ τοὺς περίφημους ἐλέφαντές του καὶ μὲ σύμμαχο τὴ Μακεδονία. Ἡ Μακεδονία κυρίευσε τοὺς Ἕλληνας συμμάχους τῆς Ρώμης. Ἡ Ρώμη ἔφτασε μέχρι τὴν Ἰσπανία στὴν προσπάθειά της νὰ ἐκριζώσει τὰ φρούρια τῶν Καρχηδονίων καὶ τελικὰ πυρπόλησαν τὴν ἴδια τὴν Καρχηδόνα.

Οἱ Ρωμαῖοι πέρασαν στὴν Ἑλλάδα γιὰ νὰ ἐλευθερώσουν τοὺς Ἕλληνας συμμάχους τοὺς ἀπὸ τὴ Μακεδονία καὶ τελικὰ κατέλαβαν τὴ Μακεδονικὴ Αὐτοκρατορία καὶ τὴν ἐνσωμάτωσαν στὴν Ρωμαϊκὴ Αὐτοκρατορία. Ἐπίσης ἡ Ρώμη ἔσπευσε σὲ βοήθεια τῶν συμμάχων τῆς Γαλατῶν καὶ Καππαδοκῶν καὶ τοὺς ἐλευθέρωσε ἀπὸ τὸν Βασιλιὰ τοῦ Πόντου Μιθριδάτη τὸν 60 (121/120-63 π.Χ.) μὲ ἀποτέλεσμα τὴν ἐνσωμάτωση τῆς Ἀρμενίας, Ἀσσυρίας καὶ Μεσοποταμίας στὴ Ρωμαϊκὴ Αὐτοκρατορία ἡ ὁποία ἐκτεινόταν πλέον σχεδὸν μέχρι τὴν Κασπία Θάλασσα. Κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο ἡ Μεσόγειος Θάλασσα ἔγινε λίμνη στὸ κέντρο τῆς Ρωμαϊκῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας.

Θὰ πρέπει νὰ τονιστεῖ ὅτι οἱ Ἕλληνας Ρωμαῖοι τῆς Ἰταλίας ἦταν αὐτοὶ ποὺ τελικὰ ἔνωσαν τὶς ἑλληνόφωνες φυλὲς σὲ ἓνα ἔθνος ποὺ χρησιμοποιοῦσε ἐπίσης καὶ τὴ Λατινικὴ γλῶσσα.

### Οἱ Πρῶτοι Ρωμαῖοι Ἱστορικοὶ Ἐγραψαν στὰ Ἑλληνικὰ καὶ Ὄχι στὰ Λατινικὰ. Γιατί;

Οἱ πρῶτοι τέσσερις Ρωμαῖοι χρονογράφοι ποὺ ἔγραψαν στὰ Ἑλληνικὰ ἦταν οἱ **Quintus Fabius Pictor**, **Lucius Cincius Alimentus**, **Gaius Acilius** and **Aulus Postumius Albinus**.

Τὸ πρῶτο κείμενο στὰ ἀρχαῖα Λατινικὰ ἦταν ὁ κώδικας τῶν Δώδεκα Δέλτων ποὺ δημοσιεύθηκε τὸ 450 π.Χ. ἀποκλειστικὰ γιὰ τοὺς Πληβείους. Τὰ γένη τῶν Ἑλλήνων συνέχισαν νὰ διατηροῦν τοὺς δικούς τους κρυφοὺς νόμους ποὺ ἀποστήθιζαν ἀπὸ τὴν παιδικὴ ἡλικία. Αὐτὸ συνέβη ἐπειδὴ ἡ παράδοση τῶν ρωμαϊκῶν λαϊκῶν νόμων στὰ Λατινικὰ ἦταν ἀποτέλεσμα τῆς συνεργασίας μεταξὺ τῆς συνέλευσης τῶν εὐγενῶν καὶ τῶν ἀντιπροσώπων τῶν πληβείων. Μὲ τὸν καιρὸ τόσο πολλοὶ πληβεῖοι ἔμαθαν Ἑλληνικὰ ποὺ ἔγιναν τμῆμα τῆς διοίκησης τῶν ἑλληνόφωνων ἐπαρχιῶν.

### Οἱ Πρῶτοι Ρωμαῖοι Ἱστορικοὶ ποὺ Ἐγραψαν στὰ Λατινικὰ

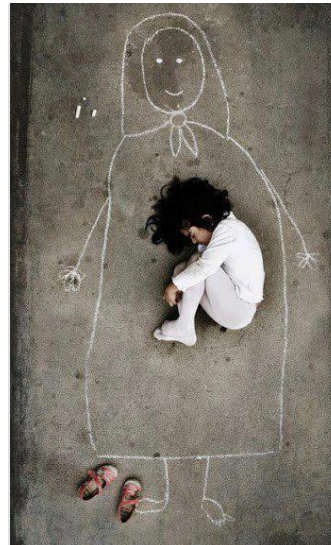
Σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν Κικέρωνα ἓνας ἀπὸ τοὺς πρῶτους Ρωμαῖους ποὺ ἔγραψαν περὶ κείμενα στὰ Λατινικὰ ἦταν ὁ **Sabine Claudius**, **Appius Caecus** ὁ ὁποῖος ἦταν Ὑπατος τὸ 307 καὶ τὸ 296 π.Χ. Αὐτὸς ἐκφώνησε λόγο

στὰ Λατινικὰ στὴ Σύγκλητο ἐναντίον τῆς σύναψης εἰρήνης μὲ τὸν Βασιλιὰ τῆς Ἠπείρου Πύρρο.

Ὁ πρῶτος Ρωμαῖος ἱστορικός ποὺ ἔγραψε στὰ Λατινικὰ ἦταν ὁ **Porcius Cato** (234-140 π.Χ.) καὶ ὁ **Lucius Cassius Hemina** (γύρω στὸ 146 π.Χ.).

Λοιπὸν ποια γλῶσσα μιλοῦσαν καὶ ἔγραφαν οἱ Ρωμαῖοι ἂν ὄχι Ἑλληνικὰ;

Ὅλα τὰ προηγούμενα συμφωνοῦν μεταξὺ τους στὴ γενικὴ σκιαγράφηση τῶν ἀρχῶν τῶν Ρωμαίων. Ἡ αἰτία γι' αὐτὸ εἶναι ὅτι βασιζόνταν στὶς ἐπίσημες ρωμαϊκὲς «Ἱερὲς Δέλτους» τὶς ὁποῖες οἱ ἱστορικοὶ ἀπλῶς ἐπαναλάμβαναν. Μὲ ἄλλα λόγια, ἦταν αὐτοὶ οἱ ἴδιοι χρονογράφοι. Ὡστόσο τίποτε δὲν ἔχει σωθεῖ ἀπὸ αὐτὲς τὶς Δέλτους χρονικὰ ἐκτὸς τῶν ἐπαναλήψεων στοὺς Ρωμαῖους ἱστορικούς. Ἀλλὰ λίγα ἀπὸ αὐτὰ τὰ ἔργα ἔχουν διασωθεῖ, ἐκτὸς καὶ ἂν παραμένουν κρυμμένα γιὰ νὰ διευκολύνουν τὸ Ψέμα τοῦ Καρλομάγνου.



Ἡ φωτογραφία αὐτὴ ἔχει κάνει τὸ γῦρο τοῦ διαδικτύου τοὺς τελευταῖες μῆνες.

Δείχνει ἓνα κοριτσάκι ποὺ ἔχασε τὴ μητέρα του στὸν πόλεμο. Στὴν αὐλὴ τοῦ ὄρφανοτροφείου ὅπου φιλοξενεῖται, ζωγράφισε τὴ μητέρα της μὲ κιμωλία καὶ κουλουριάστηκε στὴν ἀγκαλιά της. Ἐβγαλε καὶ τὰ παπούτσια τῆς ὅπως ὅταν μπαίνουμε σὲ ἱερὸ χῶρο.

Συγκλονιστικὸτατο! Ἡ ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ ἀγκαλιά τῆς μανας εἶναι ἓνας ἀπὸ τοὺς πιὸ ἱερούς μας τόπους...



**We wish to remind our readers to not neglect sending us their annual contribution to help us cover the costs associated with our humble publication. In addition, we kindly request of those who have the financial ability, that they consider sending us an amount over the requested annual contribution of \$24 to assist us with our educational and philanthropic activities.**

## Ἡ Σωτήριος Δύναμη τοῦ Κομποσχοινοῦ Καὶ μετὰ τὰ Κομποσχοῖνια Σώζονται οἱ Κολασμένοι

Τερομόναχος Χαράλαμπος Διονυσιάτης.

Κάποτε ἓνας ἀδελφός, ὅταν βρισκόμασταν στὴν Νέα Σκήτη, περιέπεσε σ' ἓνα ἀμφίβολο λογισμό: «Προσευχόμαστε, ἀγρυπνοῦμε..., ὠραία αὐτά. Ὅμως κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπο βοηθοῦμε καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἢ μόνον τὸν ἑαυτὸ μας». Ἐνῶ ἐτοιαζόταν νὰ ἐξομολογηθεῖ αὐτὸν τὸν λογισμό στὸν Γέροντα, τὸν πρόλαβε ὁ δεῦτερος καὶ μετὰ πρόσωπο ποὺ φαινόταν βαθιὰ συγκινημένο, λέγει στὸν ἀδελφό.

—Ἀπόψε παιδί μου, ὁ Θεός μου ἔδειξε τὸ ἔξης φοβερὸ θέαμα: Ἐνῶ προσευχόμουν, γιὰ μία στιγμή μου φάνηκε ὅτι βρισκόμουν σὲ μία πολὺ μεγάλη τράπεζα.

Στεκόμουν μπροστὰ σὲ μία πόρτα ποὺ ἔμοιαζε σὰν τὴν ὠραία πύλη τῆς ἐκκλησίας. Μέσα ἐκεῖ σ' αὐτὸν τὸν χῶρο, ἀμέτρητα πλήθη περιέμεναν σειρὰ. Ἐγὼ ἔμοιαζα σὰν ἀρχιστοιχοῦς. Μέσα σ' αὐτὸν τὸν χῶρο διέκρινα καὶ σὰς νὰ βρίσκεστε κοντά μου. Κόβατε κάτι μεγάλα σὰν πρόσφορα καὶ μου τὰ φέρνατε. Ὁ ἄλλος κόσμος περνοῦσε σὲ δύο σειρές, στὴν μία οἱ ζωντανοί, στὴν ἄλλη οἱ πεθαμένοι. Τοὺς μοίραζα ὅλους ἀπὸ μία μερίδα εὐλογία καὶ φεύγανε ὅλοι χαρούμενοι. Διέκρινα μέσα πάρα πολλοὺς γνωστούς μου, ὄσους εἶχα γραμμένους, ζωντανούς - πεθαμένους, στὸ μνημονοχάρτι.

Καὶ ὁ ἀδελφός μετὰ τὴν σειρὰ του:

—Γέροντα, αὐτὸ γιὰ μένα ἦταν. Μοῦ ἔλυσες τὴν ἀπορία μου. Τώρα κατάλαβα, τί προσφέρουν οἱ προσευχῆς καὶ τὸ μνημόνευμα στὴν προσκομιδὴ γιὰ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον.

—Ἀφοῦ παιδί μου ἐνδιαφέρεσαι, νὰ σοὺ πῶ καὶ κάτι γιὰ τὸ κομποσχοῖνι πιὸ φοβερό, γύρω ἀπὸ τὴν ζωὴν τοῦ Γέροντά μου. Ὁ Γέροντάς μου, εἶχε στὸν κόσμον μία ἐξαδέλφη. Ἄν καὶ ἡ ζωὴ της δὲν ἦταν τόσο καλή, ὁ Γέροντας ὅμως τὴν ἀγαποῦσε πολὺ. Κάποτε τὸν εἰδοποίησαν ὅτι ἡ ἐξαδέλφη του πέθανε καὶ μάλιστα ὄχι καλά. Ἐκαμνε διάφορους μορφασμούς, θεατρνισμούς-μιλοῦσε ἄσχημα κλπ. καὶ σ' αὐτὰ τὰ χάλια πάνω ξεψύχησε. Μόλις τὸ μαθαίνει ὁ Γέροντας, ἄρχισε τὰ κλάματα. Ἐγὼ παραξενεύτηκα: τόση εὐαισθησία: νὰ κλαίει τόσον πολὺ. Ὅμως κατάλαβε ὁ ἴδιος τὸν λογισμό μου καὶ μετὰ προλαβαίνει: «Ἐγὼ δὲν κλαίω παιδί μου ποὺ πέθανε· ἀλλὰ κλαίω γιατί κολάστηκε».

—Ὅστος ὅσο ἀπ' ἐκείνη τὴν ἡμέραν ὁ Γέροντας δώστου συνέχεια νηστεία καὶ προσευχὴ γιὰ τὴν ἐξαδέλφη του. Ὑστερα ἀπὸ ἀρκετὲς ἡμέρες, βλέπω τὸν Γέροντα πολὺ χαρούμενο. «τί συμβαίνει Γέροντα;». «Νὰ σοὺ πῶ παιδί μου. Ἀφοῦ ὅλες αὐτὲς τὶς μέρες δὲν ἠσύχασα νὰ προσεύχομαι καὶ ν' ἀγρυπνῶ μετὰ νηστεία καὶ δάκρυα γιὰ τὴν ξαδελφούλα μου, σήμερα εἶδα τὸ ἔξης εὐχάριστο καὶ θαυμαστὸ ὄραμα. Ἐνῶ προσευχόμουν βλέπω ζωντανὰ

τὴν ξαδελφούλα μπροστὰ μου καὶ μοῦ φωνάζει μετὰ πολλὴ ἀγαλλίαση: «Σήμερα εἶναι ἢ μέρα τῆς σωτηρίας μου. Σήμερα γλίτωσα ἀπὸ τὴν κόλασιν. Σήμερα πηγαίνω στὸν παράδεισο».

Ξαφνικὰ τὴν ἴδια στιγμή βλέπω τὸν μακαρῖτη τὸν παπα-Γιώργη μπροστὰ μου. Αὐτὸς εἶναι ἓνας σύγχρονος ἅγιος. Ὅταν ἤμουν στὸν κόσμον τὸν πρόλαβα. Ἔβαλε στὸ μυαλό του, εἶναι δυνατόν, νὰ βγάλει ὅλους τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς ἀπὸ τὴν κόλασιν. Κάθε μέρα λειτουργοῦσε καὶ μνημόνευε χιλιάδες ὀνόματα. Κατόπιν γυροῦσε τὰ μνήματα καὶ ὅλη μέρα διάβαζε τρισάγια καὶ μνημόσυνα στοὺς πεθαμένους. Ἀφοῦ λοιπὸν ἐν ὄραμα τὸν εἶδα μπροστὰ μου, τὸν ἀκούω καὶ μετὰ μεγάλο θαυμασμό μου λέγει: «Βρὲ-Βρέ... ἐγὼ μέχρι τώρα νόμιζα ὅτι οἱ πεθαμένοι σῶζονται μόνον μετὰ λειτουργίες καὶ μνημόσυνα. Τώρα ὅμως εἶδα καὶ κατάλαβα ὅτι καὶ μετὰ τὰ κομποσχοῖνια σῶζονται οἱ κολασμένοι». Καὶ ξανὰ μετὰ θαυμασμό: «καὶ μετὰ τὰ κομποσχοῖνια σώζεται ὁ κόσμος...!». Μ' αὐτὸ τὸ ὄραμα πληροφορήθηκα ὅτι ἡ ξαδελφούλα σώθηκε, ἀλλὰ μοῦ ἔδειξε ὁ Θεὸς καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ κομποσχοινοῦ ὥστε καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν κόλασιν νὰ βγάξει ψυχὴν».

—Λέγοντας στὸν ἀδελφὸ συγκινημένος ὁ Γέροντας αὐτά, τοῦ ἔδωσε τὴν εὐλογία του καὶ τοῦ εὐχήθηκε: **«Ἄντε στὴν εὐχὴ μου καὶ κοίταξε νὰ βιαστής ὅσο μπορεῖς στὴν ὑπακοὴ καὶ στὴν εὐχὴ, ἂν θέλεις καὶ τὸν ἑαυτὸ σου καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους νὰ βοηθήσεις».**



Ὁ τυφλοπόντικας ζῆ κάτω ἀπὸ τὴν γῆ διαρκῶς. Ἐξ αἰτίας τοῦ τρόπου αὐτοῦ τῆς ζωῆς του, κατέστη τυφλὸς καὶ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ δῆ τὸ φῶς τοῦ ἡλίου καὶ τῶν ἀστέρων ἀκόμη. Κάτι ἀνάλογο συμβαίνει καὶ μετὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ποὺ δὲν ἔχει ἐμπιστοσύνην στὸν Θεὸν γιὰ τὴν παροχὴν τῶν προσκαίρων ὑλικῶν πραγμάτων. Αὐτὸς ἀσφαλῶς δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ πιστέψῃ οὔτε περὶ τῶν αἰώνιων ἀγαθῶν, ποὺ ὑπεσχέθη ὁ Θεὸς σὲ ὄσους τὸν ἀγαποῦν. Ἡ πραγματικὴ γνώση εἶναι μιὰ μικρὴ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ, ποὺ προσφέρεται στὸν ἄνθρωπο πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν μεγαλειώδη χάριν τῆς αἰωνίου δόξης τῆς Βασιλείας τῶν Οὐρανῶν. Αὐτὴ ἔχει δωρηθῆ ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, γιὰ νὰ διδάξῃ σαφῶς αὐτούς, ποὺ τὴν κατέχουν, ὅτι πρέπει νὰ ἔχουν ἐμπιστοσύνην στὸν Θεὸν γιὰ ὅλα τὰ ζητήματα.

**Ἅγιος Ἡσαΐας**



## Υπάρχει «Μεταπατερική» Θεολογία;

Τοῦ Σεβ. Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου κ. Γεροθέου, ἀπὸ τὴν ἐφημερίδα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μητροπόλεως Ναυπάκτου «Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβαση», τεύχος 177 Ἀπρίλιος 2011.



**Ἡ** Θεολογία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι ἡ προφητικὴ, ἀποστολικὴ καὶ πατερικὴ Θεολογία καὶ γι' αὐτὸ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀποδοθῆ μὲ ἄλλους ὅρους, ὅπως μεταπροφητικὴ, μετααποστολικὴ καὶ μεταπατερικὴ, οὔτε βέβαια καὶ μὲ τὸν ὄρο μεταορθόδοξη. Συνήθως, ἄλλα οὐμανιστικὰ ρεύματα λαμβάνουν τέτοια ὀρολογία, ὅπως νεωτερικὴ καὶ μετανεωτερικὴ ἐποχὴ.

Οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι διάδοχοι τῶν Ἀποστόλων στὴν Θεολογία καὶ τὴν πράξη, μετέχουν τῆς ἴδιας ἀποκαλυπτικῆς ἐμπειρίας. Βεβαίως, οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, γιὰ νὰ διαφυλάξουν τὴν ἀποκαλυπτικὴ ἐμπειρία ἀπὸ τὶς ἀλλοιώσεις τῶν αἰρετικῶν καὶ νὰ καθοδηγήσουν τοὺς Χριστιανούς, χρησιμοποίησαν τὴν ὀρολογία τῆς ἐποχῆς τους, γιὰ νὰ ἐκφράσουν τὴν ἴδια παράδοση, ποὺ εἶχαν, χωρὶς νὰ τὴν ἀλλοιώσουν. Ἔτσι, ἡ δογματικὴ ὀρολογία καθιερώθηκε ἀπὸ τὶς Οἰκουμενικὲς Συνόδους καὶ ἔγινε πιά μέρος τῆς παραδόσεως, ὁπότε κανένας «νέος Πατέρας» δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ τὴν παραθεωρήσῃ ἢ νὰ τὴν παρακάμψῃ. Ὅποτε, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ γίνῃ λόγος γιὰ μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία.

Διαφορετικὸ εἶναι τὸ θέμα ὅταν ἀντιμετωπίζουμε τὰ σύγχρονα ρεύματα μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν Ὁρθόδοξη Θεολογία, ποὺ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀποκληθῆ «μεταπατερικὴ» καὶ δὲν ἀναφέρεται στὴν ἀλλαγὴ τῶν δογμάτων. Ἡ λεγόμενη μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία συνδέεται μὲ τὶς θεωρίες τοῦ Ρώσου Ἀλέξη Χομιακῶφ (1804–1860), ὁ ὁποῖος στὴν ἐποχὴ του ἔπαιξε σημαντικὸ ρόλο στὰ ρωσικὰ θεολογικὰ γράμματα. Δὲν εἶναι κατάλληλος ὁ χῶρος γιὰ νὰ ἀναπτυχθοῦν οἱ ἀπόψεις του, ἀλλὰ μόνον νὰ σημειωθῆ ὅτι σύμφωνα μὲ τὸν Χομιακῶφ, οἱ Πατέρες τῆς πρώτης χιλιετίας ὁμίλησαν στὴν ἐποχὴ τους, καὶ ἔχουν ἀξία, ἀλλὰ ἡ σχολαστικὴ θεολογία (9ος–13ος αἰώνας) ὑπερέβη τὴν Πατερικὴ Θεολογία, ὅπως καὶ ἡ μεταγενέστερη ρωσικὴ θεολογία ξεπέρασε καὶ τὶς δύο προηγούμενες (Πατερικὴ καὶ σχολαστικὴ).

Τὸ λάθος τοῦ Χομιακῶφ εἶναι ὅτι συνέδεσε στενὰ τὴν Ὁρθοδοξία μὲ τὸν πολιτισμό. Ὅμως ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Θεολογία παράγει πολιτισμό, ἀλλὰ δὲν εἶναι πολιτισμός. Πάντως, ἡ θεωρία τοῦ Ἀλέξη Χομιακῶφ ἐπηρέασε κατὰ διαφόρους βαθμοὺς τοὺς Ρώσους

θεολόγους τῆς Διασπορᾶς στὸ Παρίσι καὶ γι' αὐτὸ σήμερα γίνεται λόγος γιὰ «μεταπατερικὴ» θεολογία. Ὁ Ρώσος φιλόσοφος Kireevski (Κιρεέφσκι) καὶ φίλος τοῦ Χομιακῶφ, ἔλεγε: «Εἶναι ἀδύνατον νὰ ἀνανεωθῆ ἡ φιλοσοφία τῶν Πατέρων στὴν μορφὴ, ποὺ εἶχε κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴ τους. Αὐτὴ ἀπαντᾷ σὲ ἐρωτήματα τῆς ἐποχῆς καὶ τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ μέσα, στὸν ὁποῖο ἀναπτύσσεται». Ὁ π. Ἰωάννης Ρωμανίδης γράφει ὅτι «ὁ Χομιακῶφ συμφωνεῖ καὶ μὲ τὴν παρατήρηση τοῦ φίλου του γιὰ τὴν ἀνάγκη νὰ ἀναπτυχθῆ μιὰ Ρωσο-Χριστιανικὴ φιλοσοφία, ἡ ὁποία νὰ ἀπαντᾷ στὶς κοινωνικὲς καὶ θρησκευτικὲς ἀπαντήσεις τῆς σύγχρονης κοινωνίας».

Ὁ π. Γεώργιος Φλωρόφσκι ἔχοντας ὑπ' ὄψη του αὐτὴ τὴν θεολογία ἔκανε λόγο γιὰ «ἐπιστροφὴ στοὺς Πατέρες», δηλαδὴ «ἐπιστροφὴ στὶς πατερικὲς πηγὲς καὶ στὰ πατερικὰ θεμέλια», καὶ μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν προοπτικὴ αὐτὴ ὁμιλοῦσε γιὰ τὶς λεγόμενες ἑλληνικὲς κατηγορίες σκέψεως, ποὺ δὲν μποροῦμε νὰ ὑπερβοῦμε. Ἐγράφη: «Ἡ ἀπομάκρυνση ἀπὸ τὸν Χριστιανικὸ Ἑλληνισμὸ δὲν εἶναι καθόλου πρόοδος, ἀλλ' ὀπισθοδρόμηση, ἐπιστροφὴ πρὸς τὰ ἀδιέξοδα καὶ τὶς ἀμηχανίες τοῦ ἄλλου Ἑλληνισμοῦ, ἐκείνου, ποὺ δὲν εἶχε μεταμορφωθῆ καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν ὁποῖον δὲν ὑπῆρχε καμμιά διέξοδος, παρὰ μόνον μέσω τῆς πατερικῆς ὀλοκληρώσεως». Ἄν δὲν δοῦμε τὶς ἀπόψεις τοῦ π. Γεωργίου Φλωρόφσκι μέσα ἀπὸ τὴν προοπτικὴ αὐτὴ, ὅτι δηλαδὴ δὲν συμφωνοῦσε μὲ τὶς ἀπόψεις τῶν Ρώσων ἔμιγκρέ, τὸν ἀδικοῦμε.

Αὐτὸ τὸ γνωρίζει ὁ Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης κ. Βαρθολομαῖος, γι' αὐτὸ στὸν χαιρετισμὸ του στὸ γνωστὸ συνέδριο στὴν Θεολογικὴ Ἀκαδημία τοῦ Βόλου, ἀφοῦ ἀναφέρθηκε στὸ ὅτι ἡ θεολογία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀγνοῆ τὸν σύγχρονο πολιτισμὸ, γράφει: «Τὸ μέλλον ἀνήκει εἰς μίαν αὐθεντικὴν “πατερικὴν” θεολογίαν, πέραν ἀπὸ τὸν νεοπατερισμὸν καὶ τὸν μεταπατερισμὸν, εἰς μίαν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν θεολογίαν, ἡ ὁποία ζωογονεῖται ἀπὸ τὴν ἔντασιν μεταξὺ τοῦ “ἤδη” καὶ τοῦ “ὄχι ἀκόμη” τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ». [Ἐπιζήτουμε ὅτι ὁ Παναγιώτατος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως διατηρεῖ αὐτὴ τὴν γνώμη μετὰ τὸ αἶσχος τὸ ὁποῖον πραγματοποιήθηκε τὸ 2016 καὶ ὀνομάσθηκε «Σύννοδος Κρήτης», ὅπου οἱ τιλοῦχοι ἀρχι-ποιμένες σεργίρισαν τὸν λαὸ μίαν νέα αἴρεση, τὴν αἴρεση τῆς νέας Ἐκκλησιολογίας, **Ἐκδ.**]

Ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Θεολογία εἶναι ἐκκλησιαστικὴ, δηλαδὴ φωνὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ οἱ Πατέρες ὁμιλοῦσαν καὶ ὁμιλοῦν αὐτὴν τὴν γλῶσσα. Ὅποτε, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ὑφίσταται ὁ ὅρος «νεοπατερικὴ», «μεταπατερικὴ» θεολογία, ἀφοῦ ἡ Ὁρθόδοξη Θεολογία εἶναι προφητικὴ, ἀποστολικὴ καὶ πατερικὴ καὶ ὅπωςδήποτε ἐκκλησιαστικὴ.



## ARTABAN'S GIFTS: A STORY

Source: "Orthodox America," issue no. 111, October 1991.



In the days of Herod the king, when the Saviour of the world was born in a poor cave near Bethlehem, an enormous star suddenly lit up the sky over the countries of the East. The star shone with a bright, dazzling light and slowly but steadily moved in one direction, towards the land of the Hebrews. The astronomers, or magi as they were called, took note of this new light. They thought it was a sign from God that somewhere had been born the Great King, whose coming had been foretold in the Hebrew books, the King of Righteousness, the Deliverer of people from evil, the Teacher of a new, righteous life. Several of them, who devoted themselves especially diligently to the study of God's truth on earth, and were grieved by the extent of men's wickedness, decided to go seek for the newborn King, to worship Him and serve Him. Just where they would find Him, they did not know; perhaps they would have to travel a long time. At that time, the route towards the Hebrew land was dangerous. They decided to gather first in a specified place, and then to proceed together in a caravan, following the star in search of the Great King.

Together with the other magi, the great Persian wise man Artaban prepared for the journey. He sold all his possessions, his elegant home in the capital, and with the money he bought three precious gems: a sapphire, a ruby and a pearl. These jewels were extremely costly; a whole fortune was paid for them. Indeed, they were each uniquely beautiful. One shone like a piece of blue sky in a starry night; another burned brighter than a brilliant sunrise; the third surpassed in whiteness the snowy mountain peaks. All of this, together with a heart full of the most fervent, unreserved love, Artaban was going to lay at the feet of the newly-born King of righteousness and goodness.

In his house Artaban gathered for the last time with all of his close friends, said his good-byes and departed on his journey. It was several days' ride to the gathering place, but Artaban was confident he would not be late. He had a strong, swift horse; he had precisely calculated the time it would take, and each day he covered the appointed distance. The last twenty-four hours arrived with only a few dozen miles to his destination, and he chose to ride all night in order to arrive by dawn. His faithful horse was still far from worn out; the night breeze was

cool; in the infinite sky above shone the new star, like a bright lamp burning before the altar of God.

"There it is, God's sign!" said Artaban to himself, keeping his eyes fixed on the star. "The Great King is coming to us from the sky, and soon, Lord, I shall see You."

"Faster, my friend! Increase your pace!" he encouraged his horse, gently slapping the reins.

The horse responded, his hooves pounding louder and faster along the road through the forest of palm trees. The darkness began to dissipate; here and there came the chirping of awakening birds. One could sense the nearness of morning. Suddenly the horse drew up short, snorted and started to move backwards. Artaban peered into the half-light and there, almost under the horse's very hooves, he saw a man lying. He quickly dismounted and inspected the prostrate figure. He turned out to be a Jew, exhausted by a raging fever. One could have taken him for dead but for the weak, barely audible groans which broke intermittently from his cracked lips. Artaban deliberated: to pass by, to hasten to the meeting place, leaving the sick man was something his conscience would not allow; but to remain with the Jew in order to revive him would take several hours, and he would be late for the rendezvous; the caravan would leave without him. What shall I do? Thought Artaban. I will go on, he decided, and he lifted his foot into the stirrup. But the sick man, sensing that his last hope was about to abandon him, groaned so pitifully that its pain resonated in the magus's heart.

"Great God!" he prayed. "You know my thoughts. You know my efforts to see you. Direct my steps! Is it not your voice of love that is speaking in my heart? I cannot pass by; I must help this unfortunate Jew."

With these words the magi returned to the sick man; he loosened his clothing and brought him some water from a nearby stream. He refreshed the man's face and moistened his dry lips. From a pack attached to his saddle he obtained some medicine, mixed it with some wine and poured it into the Jew's mouth; he rubbed his chest and hands, gave him something to sniff, and so spent many hours with the sick man. Dawn had long ago come and gone, the sun already stood high in the sky; it was approaching noon when the Jew was finally able to get to his feet. He did not know how to thank the kind stranger.

"Who are you?" the Jew asked Artaban. "Tell me for whom I and my family should pray to God until the last of our days? And why are you so sad? What grief afflicts you?"

Artaban told him who he was and where he was going. "My friends have certainly left without me," he said sorrowfully, "and I shall not see the King of my desires."

The Jew's face lit up.

"Do not be sad, my benefactor. I can repay you in a very small way for your kindness. In my sacred scriptures, it is

said that the King of righteousness promised by God will be born in the city of Bethlehem of Judah. Even if your friends have left, you can make your way to Bethlehem and, if the Messiah has been born, you will find Him there.”

The Jew thanked the Persian magi once again and the two men went their separate ways. Artaban turned back; it would be folly to attempt the journey through the desert alone; he needed to hire some men for protection, to buy some camels and load them with provisions and water. A week went by. He was obliged to sell one of the gems in order to equip his caravan, but Artaban did not sorrow too much; he still had two gems. The main thing was not to be late in reaching the King. He hurried the servants, and the caravan moved as quickly as possible. Finally, they reached Bethlehem. Tired, dusty, but happy, he rode up to the first house. He went in and showered the host with questions.

“Did some men from the East come here to Bethlehem? Where did they go? Where are they now?”

The mistress of the house, a young woman, was nursing a baby and at first shied away from the stranger, but then she calmed down and related that a few days earlier some foreigners had come in search of Mary of Nazareth and had brought her baby some expensive gifts. Where they had gone, she did not know. That very night Mary together with Joseph and the Baby had left Bethlehem to go into hiding.

“People say they went to Egypt, that Joseph had a dream and that the Lord ordained that they should flee from here.”

While the mother spoke, the baby fell asleep and a pure smile played on his pretty, innocent face. Artaban had not had time to think about this news, about what he should do next, when a commotion broke from the street: wild cries, the clanging of weapons, women wailing. Half-dressed women, their heads uncovered, their faces contorted with fear, ran through the settlement carrying their infants and crying:

“Flee to safety! Herod’s soldiers are killing our children!”

The face of the young mother paled, her eyes grew large. Pressing the sleeping infant to her breast, she could only say, “Save the child! Save him, and God will save you!”

Without a moment’s thought, Artaban rushed to the door; there just beyond the threshold stood the troop’s captain, and behind him could be seen the bestial faces of the soldiers, their swords red with the blood of innocent children. Artaban’s hand as if automatically reached into his chest; he

produced a bag from which he extracted one of the remaining gems and gave it to the captain.

The latter had never seen such a treasure; he clutched it greedily and rushed his soldiers away to continue their dreadful business.

The woman fell to her knees before Artaban. “May God bless you for my child! You are seeking for the King of righteousness, of love and kindness. May His face shine before you and may He look upon you with the love with which I am now looking at you.”

Artaban carefully raised the woman to her feet; tears of mixed joy and sadness ran down his cheeks. “God of truth, forgive me! For the sake of this woman and her child, I gave away the precious stone which was meant for you. Will I ever see your face? Here once again I am late. I shall follow after you into Egypt.” The poor magus walked for a long, long time, seeking the King of Righteousness. He traveled through many countries, he saw many different

peoples, but nowhere did he find the desired object of his wanderings. His heart ached and more than once he wept bitter tears.

“Lord,” he thought, “how much grief, suffering and unhappiness there is everywhere. How soon will you reveal yourself and bring consolation to people’s lives?”

He helped the poor, cared for the sick, consoled the unfortunate, visited prisoners. From the sale of the first gem

he had money, and he spent this on helping his neighbor. The last gem, however, he carefully guarded near his heart, thinking that at least this gift he could some day bring to the King, when he found Him.

Thirty-three years had gone by since Artaban had left his homeland. His figure had become stooped, his hair white, but his heart still burned with love for the One Whom he sought so long.

One day the elderly magus heard that the Anointed One of God had appeared in Judea, and that He was performing many wondrous deeds—by a word He healed the sick, raised the dead, made saints of sinners and hopelessly wicked men. Artaban’s heart began to race with joy.

“At last,” he thought, trembling with emotion, “I shall find you and be able to serve you.”

Arriving in Judea, he discovered that everyone was going to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. There, too, was the Prophet Jesus whom the magus so desired to see. Together with crowds of the faithful Artaban reached the Holy City.





He found a great commotion; great multitudes of people were surging along the streets. "Where are they hurrying?" asked Artaban. "To Golgotha. It is a hill on the outskirts of the city where today, together with two thieves, Jesus Christ of Nazareth is to be crucified. He claimed to be the Son of God, the King of the Jews."

Artaban fell to the ground, weeping bitterly.

"Again... again I am late. I never had the opportunity to see you, Lord, to serve you." But perhaps it is not too late after all. I'll go to His torturers and offer them my last remaining gem. It may be that I can buy His freedom.

Artaban arose and hastened after the crowd to Golgotha. Suddenly, at one of the cross-streets, a contingent of soldiers barred his way. They were dragging a girl to prison. Recognizing Artaban as a fellow-countryman, she seized a corner of his clothing.

"Pity me!" she begged. "Free me. I too am from Persia. My father came here to trade; he brought me and then fell ill and died. For the debts he incurred they want to sell me into slavery, for a life of shame. Save me. Save me from dishonor, save me, I beg you!"

The old magus shuddered. The former battle again broke out in his heart—to keep the gem for the Great King or give it away for the sake of the unfortunate girl? Pity for the girl won out. Artaban reached into the pouch at his breast and took out his last treasure; he gave the gemstone to the girl.

"Here, buy with this your freedom, my daughter. For thirty-three years I have guarded this treasure for my King. Evidently I am unworthy of bringing Him a gift."

While he spoke, the sky grew clouded. It was midday and yet it was dark as night. The earth shook and groaned heavily, as it were. Thunder crashed, lightning ripped the sky from end to end; a great cracking was heard; houses shook, walls rocked and stones showered down. A heavy slate tore off the roof and hit the head of the old man. He fell to the ground and lay there, pale and streaming with blood.

The girl bent down to help him. Artaban moved his lips in a barely audible whisper. His face was radiant. The dying man was looking at Someone standing invisibly before him. *Lord*, he uttered, *but when did I see you hungry and fed you? When did I see you thirsty and gave you to drink? Thirty-three years I looked for you and not once did I see your face; never was I able to serve you, My King.* Like the slight evening breeze which caressed the hair of the dying man, there came from above a tender, unearthly voice: *Truly I say to you, all that you ever did for your needy brothers you did for Me.*

Artaban's face became transfigured. His heart at peace, he lifted his eyes thankfully to heaven and fell asleep unto all ages.

The prolonged journeying of the old magi had come to an end. He had found at last the Great King, the Saviour; his gifts had been accepted.

## CHOOSING THE GOOD PART

By St. John the Cassian.

This should be our main effort, and this steadfast purpose of heart we should constantly aspire after; specifically, that the soul may cleave to God and to heavenly things. Whatever is alien to this, however great it may be, should be given the second place, or even treated as of no consequence, or perhaps as hurtful. We have an excellent example in the case of Martha and Mary; when Martha was performing a service which was certainly a sacred one, since she was ministering to the Lord and His disciples, and Mary being intent only on spiritual instruction was clinging close to the feet of Jesus which she kissed and anointed with the ointment of good confession, she is shown by the Lord to have chosen the better part, and one which should not be taken away from her. For when Martha was toiling with pious care, and was cumbered about her service, seeing that of herself alone she was insufficient for such service, she asked for help of her sister from the Lord, saying: *Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone: bid her therefore that she help me*—certainly it was to no unworthy work, but to a praiseworthy service that she summoned her: and yet what does she hear from the Lord?

*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things: but few things are needful, or only one. Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her* (Lk 10:40-42). You see then that the Lord makes the chief good consist in divine contemplation. Whence we see that all other virtues should be put in second place, even though we admit that they are necessary, and useful, and excellent, because they are all performed for the sake of this one thing. For when the Lord says: *You are careful and troubled about many things, but few things are needful, or only one*, He makes the chief good consist not in practical work however praiseworthy and rich in fruits it may be, but in contemplation of Him, which indeed is simple and *but one*; declaring that *few things* are needful for perfect bliss, that is, that contemplation which is first secured by reflecting on a few saints: from the contemplation of whom, he who has made some progress rises and attains by God's help to that which is termed *one thing*, that is, the consideration of God alone.

*Mary therefore chose the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* And this must be most carefully considered. For when He says that Mary chose the good part, although He says nothing of Martha, and certainly does not appear to blame her, yet in praising the one, He implies that the other is inferior. Again when He says, *which shall not be taken away from her*, He shows that from the other her portion can be taken away (for a bodily ministry cannot last forever), but teaches that this one's desire can never have an end.

## THE PENITENT'S APPROACH TO THE MYSTERY OF HOLY COMMUNION

Source: "The Path to Salvation," by St. Theophan the Recluse, fourth edition, published by St. Paisius Monastery, Safford, AZ (2016), pp. 37-42.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father, having received his penitent son who has returned to him, falls on his neck and kisses him as a sign of forgiveness; after this he orders that he be dressed and a bright, joyful feast be prepared. His parental heart was not satisfied with only forgiving—it wanted to decisively assure his son of his peace with him and express more strongly his joy at seeing him after being so sorrowfully separated from him. His fatherly love gave his son what he had not even hoped for. What sinner could expect something grand after receiving forgiveness? But he is nevertheless invited to the Lord's Supper, where the Lord Himself gives him His Body to eat and His Blood to drink. This is the crown of compassion for the returning sinner; however, it is not an overabundance, but an essential requirement for uniting with the Lord.

The Christian life is life in the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer puts on Christ and lives through Him. He who falls after baptism loses this grace; when rising up from his fall and returning to the Lord, he has to become worthy of it again, and this he does through Holy Communion. *He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him,* says the Lord (Jn 6:56).

This is the beginning of life in Christ Jesus for the penitent. The Lord said that He is the Vine, and those who believe in Him are the branches. (Jn 15:1-6). The branch does not live unless it is on the vine; so the faithful do not live unless they live in the Lord. There is no true life anywhere except on this Vine. Whatever is not on it is dead.

Therefore, whoever wants to truly live should cultivate it in himself, receive its life-giving juices and live on its nourishment. This cultivation is done through Holy Communion—here the Christian becomes one with the Lord. When the Lord guided the sinner to complete repentance, he only knocked at the door of his heart. When it is opened by contrition and repentance, He enters in and feasts with the communicant.

Now the man is born again. An entirely new life begins for him. Life cannot continue without food, and it must be customary food at that. Such food is the Body and Blood of the Lord. He himself said: *My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.* (Jn 6:55). One who is beginning a new life should begin with this. It is especially necessary to taste this Food at the outset, at the first, so to say, movements of his new life. They say that the first food an infant eats has an effect on the character of his physical life, and from then on comprises his continual bodily requirements. What should be the character of the life of a penitent? A life in Christ Jesus our Lord. What should be his constant requirement? The need for communing with the Lord. Let him hasten in the first movement of this life to taste the Body and Blood of Christ, so that he might lay the foundation of a Christ-like life and generate a true need for constant communion with Him by means of this partaking. The partaker, after tasting the sweetness of this heavenly Manna, will ever more hunger and thirst to partake again.



Thus, having received mercy and forgiveness in repentance, come forward to Holy Communion for full revivification of your inner man.

There is no need to prescribe any particular rule of preparation for this. The repentant sinner has already done everything necessary, and he naturally continues on to Communion. Whoever has wept over his sins and confessed is ready to

approach this great Mystery. The Apostle also has nothing more to prescribe. *He says only: But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* (1 Cor 11:28). It could be said this way: Have what there is, or, do not lose what you have, and that is enough.

According to our established order, there is usually little time between Confession and Communion, most often only evening, morning and Liturgy. During this time it is important to carefully preserve the good frame of mind with which you left the church after Confession, and apply it to your communion with the Lord in Holy Communion.

(1) Preserve your attention undistracted and your heart undisturbed. Take care not to become scattered or anxious over cares, and remove yourself from everything; go within and remain there with one thought about the Lord, Who is able to come to you. Put away all thought processes, and, concentrating on the One Lord, pray to Him with undistracted prayer of the heart.



(2) If your thought cannot reside only in this, occupy it with thoughts of Communion itself; and so that it will not stray too much, bind it with the words of the Lord and the holy Apostles about this Sacrament.

(3) Contemplate a saying of the Lord or the holy Apostles; glean some edification from them and dispose yourself to contrite prayer. When prayer comes, fall down before the Lord and do not abandon the prayer as long as it is present.

(4) Occupy the evening in this way until sleep closes your eyes. Morning comes. As soon as you come to yourself upon awaking, first of all resurrect your awareness of the greatness of the dawning day. But do not bustle about, do not be distracted with many things, and keep your attention focused on that which is necessary to be with you and in you. Beware! The enemy will be trying to tempt you in every way, to put your soul in a bad mood, to either scatter your thoughts, or generate some worry or dissatisfaction with something, or inspire some displeasure against someone. Attend to yourself, praying to God, and you will escape these stumbling blocks.

(5) Entering the church, feel as though you were in the upper chamber at Zion, where the Lord communed his holy Apostles, and heed more than ever what is being sung and read, directing everything to the thought that the Lord Himself is preparing a Supper of salvation for you.

(6) Warm your faith in the actual presence of the Lord and Savior Himself in the Mysteries. Going from this faith and concentrating on the Lord Himself as if already approaching you, in self-abasement call out: *I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under the roof of my house.* From self-abasement pass to the fear of the Prodigal Son, not cutting you off, but bringing you to a state of reverent soberness. Inasmuch as the Lord Himself invites you and asks you to approach, be ready to approach with good hope, desire and thirst, like the deer panting after the fountains of water, and longing with assurance to receive the Lord Himself, together with all the treasure of life that is hidden within Him. From this longing, which will not be put to shame, again turn to yourself in readiness to meet the Lord, and fan ever stronger the flame of heartfelt *contrition*, repeating the *promise* to turn away from sin, even if you have to die doing it.

(7) Work hard to stand through the whole service, passing from one of these feelings to another. In this good state finally approach the chalice of the Lord, and upon seeing it, make a bow to the Lord Who approaches you. Opening your lips and heart, receive Him, humbly and reverently calling out with the Apostle Thomas: *My Lord and my God!*

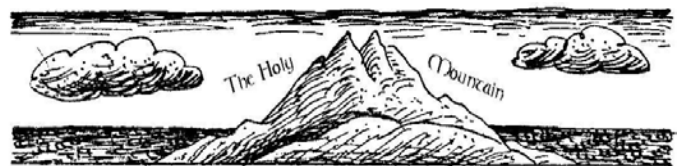
Glory to Thee, O God! Glory to Thee, O God! Glory to Thee, O God!

Having approached the chalice of the Lord with such a disposition, and stepping away from it, you will feel in your heart: *It is truly said, that having communed of divine grace, I*

*am no longer alone but with Thee, my Christ, the three-sunned Light that enlightens the world.* From this moment you will begin to bear Christ within yourself. Take care to zealously guard Him there and hold Him within yourself. If Christ is in you, who can be against you? And you will be able to do anything in the Lord Who strengthens you.

This completes the journey for the Christian who has fallen into sin and then returns again to a God-pleasing life.

The order of conversion is a long process and it includes several turning points that the convert must make, with the mutually dependent actions of freedom and grace. Everything we have said as part of this conversion discussion happens to every converting sinner, but to what degree depends upon each one's personality and circumstances. For one it may happen in several minutes, during which he is awakened, repents and rises in resolve. Spiritual manifestations are instantaneous. Incidentally, this kind of conversion is very rare; most conversions happen not suddenly, but gradually. Although the inner transformations themselves may be instantaneous, penitents do not always come to them so quickly, but sometimes only after long labors on themselves. That is why for some a complete conversion may take years. The main points where they are stymied are those where self-love must suffer, at overcoming, for example, the obstacles of the inspirers of sin, at confession, and others. The final state that must be reached is a complete renunciation of the sins and the dedication of oneself to the Lord. From this minute begins the fully true Christian Life, because then the person has reached his aim—hidden in God. Everything depends on the zeal with which he gets ahold of himself, and the conviction that he must do what is necessary. Now or later, he must—better of course to do it now. So he begins to work, and soon disposes himself to change. And disposing oneself to change is the chief work of conversion.



Faith is the key of God's treasury. She dwells in simple, kind, loving hearts. *All things are possible to him that believeth.* Faith is a spiritual mouth, the more freely it opens the greater the stream by which the Divine springs enter into it; let this mouth freely open, as your bodily one does; do not let your lips be compressed by doubt and unbelief: if you compress them by doubt and unbelief, the treasury of God's blessings will be closed to you. The more openly, the more heartily you believe in God's omnipotence, the more bountifully will God's heart be opened to you. *What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them.*

**St. John of Kronstadt**

## CURING THE ILLNESS OF PHARISAISM

*Transcript of a homily by Metropolitan Athanasios of Limassol, Cyprus (as transcribed by the Orthodox Center for Dogmatic Enquiries—translated by the staff of “Orthodox Heritage,” edited for length).*

Having promised yesterday, I will say a few words on the topic of Pharisaism.

All these things that take place—everything that we do—our pilgrimages, our candles, our night-vigils, our prayers, our fasts, our gestures of charity—everything that we do in our life—are for what purpose and what is the reason that we do them? The answer to this question is very important, because correctness about our spiritual life is dependent on it.

Let me give you an example: I ask children at our summer camps: “what is God’s greatest commandment? What is God’s most important commandment, my children?” And all the children—all of them—quote various commandments: do not steal... do not lie... do not be unjust to your fellow-man... respect your parents... love your neighbor... However, none of the children suspect that not a single one of these is God’s first commandment. I suspect that the same is likely true among most grown ups as well.

God’s first and only commandment—all others are in reality the result of this first one—is to love God with all of your heart. Christ Himself said that the first commandment is: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.* (Mk 12:30)

And a second commandment, similar to the first—which springs from within the first commandment—is the one that says *love thy neighbor*. Everything else is a result of these. If you love your neighbor, you will not rob him, you will not lie to him, you will not be unjust with him, you will not take his things, you will not tamper with his wife, you will not interfere with his home, you will not censure him... That is what we mean by “it springs from the first commandment.” The *love thy neighbor* is likewise a result of the first commandment. If you truly love God, it is impossible to not love your neighbor. Therefore, the first and only commandment by God is to love God Himself with all our heart. Subsequently, whatever we do in church, has that precise purpose. And that is why we go to pilgrimages, why we fast, why we pray, why we go to confession, why we light candles, why we read the lives of saints, ... It is our way of loving Christ.

Now, where is our mistake? The mistake is that, unfortunately, we say that we do all these things in order to just become good people... and that is where the big hoax lies. It is the step that we all stumble over. Because, if the purpose of the church was just to make us better people, then there wouldn’t be any need for a personal relationship with Christ,

nor would there be any reason for Christ to have come to the world. Why do you think we aren’t able to understand the saints? Or, to ask it in a simpler manner, why is it that we cannot understand those who love God?

We often ask whether it is necessary to do certain deeds in order to be saved, to be near to God. Is it necessary, let’s say, to depart to the mountains or the desert (as some saints did)? Of course not. If we could understand that our relationship with God is not only for the sake of salvation, but is a relationship of love, only then will we understand the saints and why they did the things they did (much of which cannot be interpreted rationally). This is because love transcends logic. Even secular love—the way that one person loves another person—for example when one wants to get married, he loves the young lady that he will wed, and the same applies to the young lady—then they do things that seem totally irrational. If, for example, you were to ask her or him who is the most beautiful or handsome one in the world, they will probably say it is their beloved. Naturally, they are seeing the other through their own eyes... Our eyes see something entirely different... The prospective bride will describe her man with the finest words. She sees no flaws in him, no faults... she can’t see anything bad about him, because love transcends all these things. And, of course, the same holds true for the groom as well.

Love cannot be forced into the molds of logic. Love is above logic. That is how God’s love is. God’s love surpasses human logic. That is why we can’t judge with logical criteria those people who love God. That is why the saints reacted with a logic of their own; they had a different kind of logic, and not the logic of humans; because their logic was the “logic” of love. So, the church does not teach us just to become good people, not in the least. It is only natural, that we have to become good people, because if we don’t, then what have we succeeded in doing? Our Church teaches us to love Christ, to love the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Inside the church, a relationship develops. It is a personal relationship between man and Christ; not with the teaching of Christ and not with the Gospel. The Gospel is something that helps us to reach the point of loving Christ. When we reach that point of truly loving Christ, the Gospel “will no longer be needed.” Nothing will be needed... all these things will cease... only man’s relationship with God will remain. That is the difference between the church and religion.

Religion teaches you to do your duties, the way the idolaters did. An example: let’s say that we went to our pilgrimage sites, paid our respects, left some money in the charity box, left some lit candles, some oil, or even our entreaties, our names, our offering-bread, everything. All these things are religious duties, but our heart has not changed in the least. The hour of duty ends, and we are the same as we were before: we are ready to attack the other, ready to protest about the other,



ready to be sour again, the way we were before.... Our heart has not changed. And thus, we do not acquire that relationship with Christ, because we simply confine ourselves to duties—to religious duties.

And you must know that such people—you know, “religious” people—can become the most dangerous kind in the church. May God protect us from them... Once, when I was officiating in church and we were citing the words *Lord, save the pious...*; a Holy Mountain monk jokingly remarked: “Lord, save us from the pious...” In other words, God save you from those “religious” types, because their behavior often implies a warped personality, which has never had a personal relationship with God. These types [of persons] merely perform their duties towards Him, but without any serious relationship involved and that is why God says nothing about this type of person. And I too, must confess, that—from my own experience—I have never seen worse enemies of the church than this type of “religious people.”

Whenever the children of religious people, or of priests and theologians—or even of those who in church act like theologians and with self-importance—tried to become monks or priests, they [the parents] became even worse than demons. They would become exasperated with everyone. I remember parents who would bring their children to our homilies, and when their child progressed spiritually, they became the worst among all and found faults with all others. And I would say to them: “But you were the ones who brought the child to the homily; I didn’t bring him...” One other time, I told a father whose daughter I could tell had a zeal for the church: “Make sure you don’t bring her again to any homily. Don’t bring her to talk with me, because your daughter will become a nun and afterwards you will say that I was to blame.” He replied: “Oh no, father, far be it! We adore you!” And his daughter did in fact become a nun... It has been seven years now, and he still isn’t talking to me...

People who wouldn’t miss a single homily, all those who were always the first to show up at homilies, night-vigils, Bible studies... they would also bring their children along; however, when the time came for the children to exercise their freedom—to decide by themselves which path to choose—then those people would move to the extreme opposite camp, thus proving that Christ had never spoken to their hearts. They were merely “religious people.” That is why religious people are the toughest kind in the church. Because you know what? Sometimes, people like these will never be cured, because they only think they are close to God.

Sinners, on the other hand—the “losers,” so to speak—at least they are aware of their sinful nature. That is why Christ said that publicans and prostitutes will go to the Kingdom

of God, whereas to the Pharisees He had said: *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.* (Mt 15:8). They had merely adhered to the observance of religious formalities.

Therefore, we should all pay close attention and understand that the church is a hospital that cures us and helps us to love Christ, and our love for Christ is a flame that ignites inside our heart so that we can examine ourselves, to see if we are within God’s love. If we discern all those forms of malice and selfishness and wickedness inside us, then we should be concerned, because it is not possible for Christ to be in our heart when we are full of “vinegar” inside. How can you be praying and at the same time be full of bile towards another person? How is it possible to read the Gospel and not accept your brother? How is it possible to be part of the church for so many years—either as a monk or a priest or whatever—and yet, where is the alpha and omega of our faith, which is love? Where is that patience towards your brother? By not embracing true love, it means that you have accomplished absolutely nothing.

We saw how Christ reached the point of telling those virgins that He would have nothing to do with them. He threw them out of the wedding hall even though they had all the virtues; what they didn’t have was love. It is as if He was telling them that “you may have external virtues, you may have remained virgins, you may have done a thousand things, but you didn’t achieve the essence of that which is the most important.” What’s the use, whether I consume olive oil today, or I don’t? I may [fast and] not eat olive oil, for example, but I devour my brother from morning to night... They used to say on the Holy Mountain “don’t ask if I eat fish; as long as one doesn’t eat the fisherman, he can eat fish”; or, “as long as you don’t eat the oil-bearer, you can have a drop of olive oil to eat.” To “devour” someone with a sharp tongue is far worse than consuming a spoonful of olive oil. And yet, we focus on things like that: we eat oil, we don’t eat oil; we eat fish, we don’t eat fish...

You can see how ridiculous these things are and how the demons make fun of us, as well as all those who are outside of the Church. And when such non-Orthodox minded folks approach us, instead of seeing the people of our Church transformed into Jesus Christ—into sweet-natured people and mature people, well balanced, fulfilled people, full of harmony inside them—they instead observe us driven by all of our passions and the sourness that accompanies them; and they will inevitably say: “What? And become like one of them? I’d rather not!”

You, who are a churchgoer, tell me how the church has benefited you. You have visited several pilgrimage sites, you saw the fathers, you saw the holy relics, you saw the Holy Mountain, the Holy Mother at Tinos Island. What was the end benefit of all these experiences? Was your

heart transformed? Did you become humbler people? Did you become sweet-natured? Did you become meeker people in your homes, your families, your monastery? Or at your place of work? That is what truly counts. If we did not achieve those things, let us at least become humbler, with true repentance. And, if we did not manage that either, then we are worthy of many tears—we are truly pitiful...

When asked how many years he had lived on the Holy Mountain, Elder Paisios used to say: "I came here the same year as my neighbor's mule." (His neighbor, old Zitos, had a mule—and you know how every cell on Mount Athos has an animal, a mule, for carrying their things. That animal has a long life span; you don't buy a mule every day—they are too expensive). "Well, the year that I came here, to the Holy Mountain, my neighbor purchased his mule in the same year. We have the same number of years on the Holy Mountain, and yet that poor beast remained a mule, but then so did I. I didn't change at all."

So, we quite often say "I've been here for forty years;" and we, priests and monks, tend to say these words: "I have been in the monastery for forty years." But what we do not realize is that all these years are not in our favour. God will say to us: *Forty years, and you still haven't managed to become something? You are still angry after forty years, you still censure, you still contradict, you still resist, you still are not submissive to your Elder? You've had forty years, and you still have not learnt the first thing about monastic life and about Christian life. What am I supposed to do with your years? What am I to do with you, if you have spent fifty years with frequent confessions and you cannot respond to another person with a kind word? What use are all these things to Me?*

All of these facts weigh against us. And I am saying all these things first about myself. Because they apply to me first... And because I know these things from myself, that is why I am telling you about them (and why you must also think I am saying them to each one of you). People think that I'm referring to them, but it is not so. It is first about me that I mentioned these things... about me first... We need to consider these things to at least humble ourselves; let's keep our mouth shut, as all those egotistically-driven behaviors ridicule us and make us look foolish in the presence of the Lord.

If we humble ourselves and cease to have grand ideas about ourselves, maybe then can we begin to correct ourselves, gradually, through true repentance, which is born out of true humility. He who does not strive to justify his actions truly repents. He who keeps justifying himself will never repent; and that person who always justifies himself—either externally or internally—will never learn the meaning of repentance. That is why we should always examine ourselves. As the Apostle says, let us test ourselves, to see if there is a

love of God inside us, if we are living within the realm of repentance, so that God can cure our existence; this kind of association with the Church can heal us, and thus we can become people who have been cured of their passions and their sins.

Many ask how we can reach this point. How do we get there? Well, we do it by leaving ourselves in the hands of the Good Physician—God; when we leave ourselves trustingly in His hands; because when we are in various circumstances, in difficulties, God knows what is best for each one of us and will lead us along those paths that will slowly, over the years, perfect us. All we need to do is give ourselves to God with trust, the way we give our trust to a doctor, or the captain of a ship. We show trust. He leads us, and we do not worry about the destination and the arrival time; we know that the one steering the ship is mindful, vigilant; he knows the way and is careful.

Another important element that I would like to discuss a little further with you (also because some of you have asked me to do so) is on the issue of time.

Did you notice during these days that we have been spending on this ship, how we had no external distractions? We had nothing to draw our attention elsewhere, like at home, for example our televisions. Did you see how much time we had available? We even conversed among ourselves. You who are married had time to talk to each other. The children played together, they talked amongst themselves, and we had lots of time to ourselves and we communicated with each other, and that is the most important element of all: that we could communicate. The most tragic thing is at home, when everyone is sitting in front of the television and they don't talk to each other... time slips away and people do not communicate with each other. Even worse than this are the programs we see on television! They are the source of the worst corruption for us, for our children and for our souls.

One day, when we had disembarked and were walking about, I noticed in one of those refreshment cafes, that a television was on; even though nobody was paying attention to it, the TV was still on. So I stood there for a moment, to see what it was showing: I guess it was some people who were chasing after some other people all the time, and there was a constant chase, there were guns, bullets, cars, explosions, jumping from one house to another, etc. These are things that your children, your young children, sit and watch; so much violence... and I'm not even discussing the obscenities that can be heard, which have destroyed even elderly folks. I hear about such things during confession. Elderly people, very old people, who are otherwise very respectable, have been ruined by television, from all that vulgarity that they are exposed to every day. I'm not referring to that specific damage right now; I am



referring to all the other things—all the violence that the television projects. Our children become over-familiarized with violence and will naturally become unruly and disobedient; they will do things that are entirely foreign to their human nature!

Have you any idea what an ugly sight it is, when you see young children mimicking older people? They mimic adults, and they destroy their innocent childishness. Sometimes, when I am invited to an event, they bring along tiny toddlers and tell them to dance. And you see these little girls or boys, ten or twelve years old, full of innocence, making dance moves that they have seen older men and women do, entirely disgraceful, with another morality altogether. You can actually see how those children are being destroyed, with their emulations of the adults that they see on television, doing all sorts of things and entertaining themselves with choices that are catastrophic. I am not saying this from the spiritual aspect only, but from every aspect—psychological, social and family.

Keep your children as far away as possible from such things. Help your children to not be dependent on television, because they will be filled with obscene images, and so will you. If you don't allow your children to watch obscene movies, but you the adult does, then what's the use? And what about those silly warnings that they write on screen—that the movie is not suitable under 17 or 13 or... Does that mean that if they turn 13 this sight becomes a suitable one? Of course those warnings only arouse the youngsters' curiosity, and every one of them will inevitably watch the film. They think to themselves that if this movie is forbidden for those younger than 13, it must have something that is deserving of every curiosity...

In my opinion, the destruction that is inflicted on people's inner world is incalculable. All positive and good images that one absorbs are extremely beneficial in one's spiritual life. The same applies in reverse; the bad images that a person observes create damage that is literally extreme, and sometimes, we cannot tell if it can be cured.

If someone would study this phenomenon, he would see just how great a catastrophe television can wreak on a person's psyche, and especially in younger people. But that is only the beginning; one evil will bring on another. It will be a whole chain of evils, because it destroys communication, it destroys time, it destroys the innocence of a person's soul, and then man becomes exhausted; and being exhausted, he has no desire to do anything, especially anything spiritual. His soul gets filled with things that wearied him, and then he wonders why he is tired—he cannot understand why... Try eliminating television and the like (or at least minimize these evils), and you will see how much more relaxed you will become and how much free time you will have at your disposal.

Naturally, these things are not unrelated to our spiritual life, because a person's spiritual life is a product of all the activities that a person does. By this, I don't mean to say stop watching television altogether. I am not against it per se; it's just that things like these make our life more difficult instead of making it easier, and they destroy it, the way it was destroyed by technological "progress" which has—otherwise—facilitated our lives. You catch a plane, and you are there. You get on a ship, and you get there quickly... or a thousand other conveniences. In the long run, such conveniences may have facilitated our lives, but they also trapped us and made us lose ourselves; they made us lose the beauty of our life and we eventually destroyed the world we live in, and now we want even more sciences and discoveries, to see if we can salvage what is left of it...

All these things that constitute the tragedy and by-product of our Fall make it abundantly clear just how impossible it is to humanly tackle this problem; and yet, if one turns to God, then we will see that which Christ had said: *With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.* (Mt 19:26). We can see around us that miracle by God, which, even in our day, with all the information and all these provocations taking place around us, and the accessibility to sin, still, there are people who love God and from among the thorns, we see roses spring forth.

Roses blossom from among the thorns, and the immense miracle of man's salvation becomes reality, regardless of our own human weaknesses, our wretched state, our problems, the difficulties with our self, our church, our family, our society and the other elements that unfortunately bombard every person. That is why, to return from all these things, we need to return where we started from, when we said that the solution and the answer to all problems is for man to turn towards loving God, and that when man loves God, then God will cure him; God will resurrect him—even if that person is dead and decomposing—God will restore him, provided man discards from inside him all that is useless and put in his heart a love for God, and build his life around that love for God. And atop that love for God, to build his life, his marriage, his family, his path, his studies, his course in life. If man does that, then he will truly come to enjoy life and his life will become a paradise, because paradise is nothing more than God's love, whereas "hell" is nothing more than the absence of God's love.

So, it is my wish, as a conclusion to this homily, that the love of God will always accompany all of you, and that we should not forget that everything we do, we must do for that reason, and not just to be religiously behaving people. We must become God-loving people, so that our lives can be transformed correctly and we ourselves be transformed into Jesus Christ our Lord.

God be with you.

## CEASELESS PREACHING

Source: "Sparks from the Apostles," by Bishop Augoustinos N. Kantiotes of blessed memory (+2010).

*Go stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.*

[Acts 5:20]

† † †



Who should expect it, beloved! People who were uneducated and who didn't attend schools and universities—people to whom the world paid no attention—how does it happen that these people, poor and powerless, the Apostles, who hid in fear on Holy Friday and didn't dare come out to visit the tomb of Christ, now appeared in public and preached Christ with power? How did the timid become

brave and fearless? How did these illiterate people become orators and wise men? How did this change take place?

It cannot be explained unless we accept the fact that two great happenings affected their lives. One was the resurrection of Christ, the other was the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles saw Christ, Who arose from the grave, with their own eyes. They believed in Christ absolutely. There was no doubt whatsoever in their souls. Then, in fulfillment of Christ's promise, they received *power from on high*, or the Holy Spirit, and the rabbits became lions. "Such is the change at the right hand of God".

We see today in the excerpt that was read how successfully the Apostles preached the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel has never had as much success as it had during the days of the Apostles. Don't you see? Those base and unbelieving people—the people who hated Christ and who got together on Holy Friday and shouted: *Crucify him, crucify him*—they heard the Apostles who were preaching, they repented and were baptized by the hundreds and thousands.

The growth of the first Church is another miraculous event. To what, we wonder, is the astonishing growth of the first Church attributed? It is attributed to the preaching of the Apostles, the preaching that came out of their mouths like fire, illuminating and warming frozen hearts. **Those who heard them understood that the Apostles believed what they preached and were ready to shed their last drop of blood for Christ.** Without the Apostle's preaching, would the Church have grown? Preaching is the life of the Church—not just any kind of preaching but the kind of preaching that the true

preachers of the Gospel, people who believe and are ready to make every sacrifice, do.

So now we know that the major reason that the first Church was able to progress and grow was the preaching of the Apostles. However, something else contributed to the growth and progress of the Church, and that was the miracles of the Apostles. As today's Epistle lesson says, *By the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.* (Acts 5:12). What miracles? Wherever the Apostles happened to pass in Jerusalem, the people brought the sick in their beds and waited in the streets and squares of the city. They waited for the Apostles to pass. The Apostles had so much power to cure the sick that it was only enough for Peter's shadow to fall on them and they became well. Even the sick who came from the neighboring cities and villages, and even those possessed by demons, were cured by the miraculous power of the Apostles. Thus, the preaching of the Apostles, in combination with the miracles they performed, took on an unprecedented brilliance and made the people believe and repent. Oh, if only today's preachers had the power to perform miracles!

The progress of the Gospel and the rapid expansion of the Church did cause considerable anxiety. The Jewish authorities certainly were not pleased. They had killed Christ, thinking that by doing so the troublesome preaching would stop. However, after Christ's death, the preaching did not stop, but rather continued with great success. The Jewish authorities did not expect this, and they became enraged. They arrested the Apostles and threw them in jail. They thought this action would silence the name of Christ; again they were mistaken. A new miracle took place: God intervened. An angel unlocked the door of the jail at night and told the Apostles: ***Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.*** That is to say, the angel told them: *Go and stand there where you preached. Stand fearlessly and courageously and preach the words that bring life to dead souls. Preach to the people. Yes, to the people, the angel emphasizes, which means that, if the leaders who have the power and are full of egotism and pride don't want to hear the preaching, don't be influenced by their denial or be afraid of their persecutions. Talk to the people, women and men, young and old people. There are people out there who are not egotistical and who want to hear the preaching. The preaching of Christ, which the greatest of all the preaching of the world, can't help but motivate people who are tired of hearing the dull preaching of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.*

*Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.* This voice of the angel crosses the centuries and reaches us. It is also directed to today's preachers and apostles of Christ because preaching can never stop. No one can stop it, just as no one can stop the rushing waters of a river with fences. The river will knock down the fences and continue



on its way. The purpose of the river is to run. The word of God also has its purpose to run. Yes, the word of God will run; it will be preached in all times and in all centuries. It will bring divine blessings everywhere, and it will perform the greatest of miracles. Spiritually uncultivated and waterless places will change into exceptional gardens of God's grace.

**Oh bishops, priests, theologians, and preachers of Orthodoxy: listen to the voice of the angel and with heroic conviction preach the Gospel to our people.**



## ACCEPTANCE OF THE REVELATION VS. DELUSIVE CONTEMPLATION

*From "On Prayer" by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) p.168-170.*



The way of our Fathers requires strong faith and longsuffering, whereas our contemporaries attempt to acquire spiritual gifts, including even direct contemplation of the Absolute God, through pressure and in a brief space of time.

Often one can remark a disposition in them to draw a parallel between prayer in the Name of Jesus and yoga or "transcendental meditation" and the like.

I think it necessary to point out the dangers of this delusion, the danger of looking on prayer as a very simple, easy "technical" means leading to direct union with God. I consider it essential to emphasize the radical difference between the Jesus Prayer and all other ascetic theories.

All those are deluded who endeavor mentally to divest themselves of everything that is transitory, relative, in order in this way to cross some invisible threshold, to realize their being "without beginning," their "identity" with the Source of all that is. Ascetic efforts of this kind enabled some strugglers to a certain extent to rise to metalogical contemplation of being; to experience a certain awe; to know the state when the mind is stilled, when it goes beyond the bounds of time and space. In like states man may feel the peace of divestment of the constantly changing manifestations of the visible world: may uncover in himself freedom of spirit and contemplate mental beauty.

The ultimate development of such impersonal asceticism has led many ascetics to perceive the divine origin in the very nature of man; to a tendency to the self-divinization that lay at the root of the great Fall; to see in man a certain "absolute-

ness" which in essence is nothing else but the reflection of the Divine Absoluteness in the creature created in His likeness; to feel drawn to return to the state of peace which man knew before his appearance in this world.

In any case, experience of some such form of mental aberration may arise in the mind. I am not setting myself the task of listing all the various types of mental intuition but I will say from my own experience that **the True, Living God, the I AM, is not here in all this.** This is the natural genius of the human spirit in his sublimated impulses towards the Absolute. All contemplation arrived at by this means is self-contemplation, not contemplation of God. In these circumstances we open up for ourselves created beauty, not First Being. **And in all of it there is no salvation for man.**

The source of real deliverance lies in unquestionable, wholehearted acceptance of the Revelation, *I am that I am ... I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.* God is Personal Absolute, Trinity One and Indivisible. Our whole Christian life is based on this Revelation. This God called us from non-being into life. Knowledge of this Living God and discernment of the manner of His creation releases us from the obscurity of our own ideas, coming from beneath, about the Absolute, rescues us from our attraction unconscious but for all that ruinous to withdrawal from existence of any sort.

We are created in order to be communicants in the Divine Being of Him Who really is. Christ indicated this wondrous way: *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.*

Apprehending the depths of the Creator's wisdom, we embark on the suffering through which Divine eternity is to be attained. And when His Light shines for us we unite in ourselves contemplation of the two extremes of the abyss: on the one side, the darkness of hell, on the other, the triumph of victory. We are existentially introduced into the province of Uncreated Divine Life. And hell loses power over us. We are given grace to live the state of the Incarnate Logos Christ Who descended into hell as Conqueror. Then by the power of His love we shall embrace all creation in the prayer: *O Jesus, Gracious Almighty, have mercy upon us and Thy world.*

Revelation of this Personal God imparts a wondrous character to all things. Being is not some determined cosmic process but the Light of the indescribable love between Divine and created persons. It is the free movement of spirits filled with wise knowledge of all that exists, and consciousness of self.

Without this there is no sense in anything but only death. But our prayer becomes a living contact of our created persona and the Divine Person that is, something absolute. And this is expressed when we address the Word of the Father: *O Lord Jesus Christ, UnOriginate Word of Thine UnOriginate Father, have mercy upon us. Save us and Thy world.*

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## NOW IS CHRIST BORN!

*By Archbishop Antony (Bartoshevich) of Geneva and Western Europe (+ 1993).*

*Christ is born, give ye glory, Christ comes from heaven, meet ye Him.*

The words of this joyous Nativity hymn, calling us to meet Christ Who is come from heaven, do not say that Christ was born nearly two thousand years ago, but that He IS BORN, that is, they tell us of His birth in the present time. How is it that Christ IS BORN now, this year, in our lifetime? Here lies the Mystery of His Church.

All that Jesus Christ accomplished for our salvation in the thirty three years of His life on earth, years which long ago became history, takes place also today, in reality and in actuality, in His Church. All of His life's events on earth must be perceived by us with a greater sense of reality, awareness and joy than His contemporaries. Those who witnessed Christ's life were, after all, still outside the Church; they did not partake of the grace of God—the Holy Spirit; with the exception of the Apostles, they did not partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, and even the Apostles only did so in the last hour; they were in no position to be able to understand the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God; for them, Jesus Christ was but a Man.

But we, as Church members, receive the grace of the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Baptism and Chrismation; we partake of Christ in the Mystery of the Eucharist; through the Church there are opened to us the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. We have been given more..., and more is to be expected of us.

For this reason, the yearly cycle of the Great Feasts of the Church cannot be for us simply a remembrance of some histori-

cal events which took place long ago and which have no bearing on us today. The very manner in which we are called to prepare for the Feasts testifies to their importance and their reality in the present. Ordinarily, we prepare to commemorate a historical event by enriching our knowledge of the causes, the details and the results of the event. For the great Feasts of the Church, however, we must prepare ourselves every year with **prayer** and **fasting**, which means to battle with our fallen human nature, to quash our sinful egotism, and to purify our hearts and minds. Only after such preparation will the Feast truly become for us the greatest reality in this present life; a reality which overshadows all other reality in the world surrounding us; a reality which is beyond this world and beyond time. And it is not only for those children of the Church who fast, but for the whole world, that the holy night appears each year as a living and eternal recurrence of that night when the angels first sang: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.*

Regardless of the passing of time, the same wickedness of Herod seeks to kill the Christ Child, to kill Him there where He IS BORN, in pure hearts, in souls cleansed by fasting and prayer. Just as centuries ago when the children of Bethlehem were killed, we continue to see today martyrs for Christ. And just as before, Christ IS BORN for very few, for those who love and seek Him; He remains unseen and unrecognized by the world which lies in evil and which has forgotten its Creator.

In this way, Christ IS BORN even today in His Church. He IS BORN in my life, for my sake, loving me. Make haste, O Christian, to delight your heart with His love, to find your Saviour in the manger, and there also to find the joy of true communion with Him.