



The Ark Of Salvation

“**A**nd suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Lord, save us! We are perishing!’”
Mat 8:24-25.

To be saved from the storms and tribulations of our life here on earth, we must place ourselves on the boat with Christ. This boat is the Orthodox

Christian Church. For Orthodox Christians the Church is a life-saving boat. The Nave (from the Greek word ναῦς meaning ‘ship’) is the central part of the Church building where the faithful gather to worship God communally. This is a reference to Noah's Ark, which, as recounted in the book Genesis Chapters 6 to 9, was built by the Righteous Noah at God's command to save himself, his family and all the earth's creatures from devastation. Since the name Noah means ‘Rest’, his entering into the ark signifies the ‘rest’ which the people of God obtain from this world by entering into the Church. According to St Peter the Apostle, it also signifies baptism (1 Pet 3:20-21); for the baptismal water is symbolised by the waters of the flood, and the grace of the Holy Spirit by the dove bringing the olive branch to Noah after the waters had subsided (Gen 8:11).

The Church has always been seen through the ages as the company of faithful Christians struggling through the storms of life with all the temptations and persecutions that assault us, be they physical, spiritual or moral in



nature, or heresies that undermine the teachings of the Church from the Apostolic times till now. St Nikolai Velimirovich writes: “The flood of madness and sin continues incessantly. Therefore, the Lover of Mankind constructed the ark of salvation. Ask for His ark, and you will soon be entering it. Do not let yourselves be led astray by the multitude of variegated vessels, decorated and adorned on the outside. Ask about the power of the engine and about the skill of the captain. The most powerful engine and the most skilled helmsman are to be found in the ark of Christ. This is the all-seeing, all-powerful, Holy Spirit himself.” (*The Faith of Chosen People*).

As the waves of passions, temptations and persecutions confront us and threaten to throw us against the rocks, it is good to remember that as long as we remain on board the ship of the Church we are safe. We sail aboard a ship that is piloted by Christ Himself and we are comforted with the knowledge that this ship is headed for the safe harbour which is the eternal Kingdom of God.



Πορεία ζωής “Εν Πνεύματι”

Την ημέρα της Πεντηκοστής πραγματοποιείται η μεγάλη υπόσχεση της Καινής Διαθήκης που είναι ο ερχομός του Αγίου Πνεύματος.

Το Άγιο Πνεύμα με τον ερχομό Του στον κόσμο, μας αποκαλύπτει στο χώρο της Εκκλησίας, το μεγαλείο της πνευματικής ζωής που όταν την ακολουθούμε σωστά σωζόμαστε.

Αυτή η πνευματική πορεία του πιστού προϋποθέτει πως ο άνθρωπος δέχεται και φιλοξενεί μέσα στη ψυχή του το Άγιο Πνεύμα. Είναι απαραίτητη η ολοκληρωτική συγκατάθεση του ανθρώπου για να «σκηνώσει» ο Παράκλητος μέσα του.

Οι πατέρες της Εκκλησίας προβάλλουν ως απαραίτητη την ενέργεια του Αγ. Πνεύματος για την οικειοποίηση της σωτηρίας. Γι'αυτό και καταλήγουν στο γενικό συμπέρασμα πως σκοπός του κάθε ανθρώπου σε τούτη τη ζωή είναι η απόκτηση του Αγ. Πνεύματος.

Η αλήθεια βέβαια είναι πως η πραγματοποίηση τέτοιου υψηλού σκοπού δεν είναι πράγμα εύκολο και απλό. Η πνευματική πορεία είναι έργο δύσκολο. Γνωστή η Άγιοπατερική φράσις: «Δώσε αίμα και πάρε πνεύμα». Είναι πορεία επίμονη, κοπιαστική, ασκητική. Είναι αγώνας ενάντια στην **«εϋπερίστατον άμαρτίαν» (Εβρ. ΙΒ' 1)** προσπάθεια επίμονη να τηρήσει ο πιστός τις ευαγγελικές εντολές στη ζωή του. Μια συνεχής πάλη εναντίον των πονηρών πνευμάτων.

Μα, σ'όλες αυτές τις αντίξοες καταστάσεις, ο πιστός έχει μαζί του ακαταμάχητο σύμμαχο και προστάτη. Τον «Παράκλητο» που σημαίνει ο παρηγορητής. Το Άγιο Πνεύμα, μας παρηγορεί στους πολυποίκιλλους αγώνες μας ενάντια στα πάθη μας και την αμαρτία.

Τι ευλογία για κάθε πιστό! Όλοι εμείς που βαπτισθήκαμε στην Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας, μαζί με το μυστήριο του Βαπτίσματος, λάβαμε και το μυστήριο του Χρίσματος. Δεν ενδύομεθα μόνο το Χριστό **«Όσοι εις Χριστόν έβαπτίσθητε, Χριστόν ένεδύσασθε» (Γαλ. Γ' 27)**, αλλά ενδύομεθα και το Άγιο Πνεύμα **«ένδύσησθε**



δύναμιν έξ ύψους» (Λουκ. ΚΔ' 49).

Έτσι παρήγγειλε ο Χριστός στους μαθητές Του. Μέσα στην Εκκλησία Του, με τα μυστήριά της, το ίδιο και εμείς, «ενδύομεθα» το Άγιο Πνεύμα σαν κάποια πνευματική πανοπλία για να πολεμήσουμε τον εχθρό. Δεν είναι μιά απλή φώτιση της διάνοιας, αλλά μεταμόρφωση ολόκληρης της ύπαρξής μας. Η ενέργεια του Αγίου Πνεύματος αγιάζει, φωτίζει, ενθουσιάζει και φλογίζει όλο το είναι μας.

Αυτός που ντύνεται με το Άγιο Πνεύμα και τρέφεται με τα άγια μυστήρια μέσα στην Εκκλησία μας, ζει την οσιακή ζωή. Δεν σταματά να παλεύει, να αγωνίζεται, να υψώνεται πάνω από τα γήινα, πάνω από κάθε φιληδονία, φιλαργυρία, φιλοδοξία και εγωκεντρικότητα.

Με την διαρκή μετάνοια καθαρίζει την καρδιά του από τα πάθη. Κρατά τη ψυχή του ειρηνική από πονηρούς λογισμούς. Στα χείλη του αδιάλειπτα η προσευχή της καρδιάς: **«Κύριε Ίησού Χριστέ, Υιέ και Λόγε Τοῦ Θεοῦ, έλέησόν με».**

Μακάρια μιά τέτοια ζωή. Αρχίζει στη γη, μα με οδηγό το Άγιο Πνεύμα πορεύεται σίγουρα και αταλάντευτα προς τον ουρανό.



Current Issues

The Resolution of Conflict

Human civilisation has a history of several thousand years, and has contributed enormously to the wellbeing and happiness of man. However, conflict of some form or another has never been absent from the scene of history, either in a large scale, such as a war, or conflict among individuals, small or large groups of people, concerning moral, political or philosophical views current at the time.

However, the 21st Century appears to stand out in history, because of its many, and widely varied reasons for conflict among groups of people, and which appear to have affected nearly every aspect of the life of modern man.

Whereas in the past, disturbances in Society were mainly caused by minorities of people, and usually young, these days disturbances tend to involve people of many and different social levels: young, old, middle aged, rich or poor, or with different levels of education. If we look for the real reason of such a state of affairs, the research will identify that alienation of people from one another, caused by lack of compassion, kindness, tolerance and all those qualities included in the Christian concept of love. This is the root cause of the problem, where the individual lives alone, in a world of his own, oblivious of the presence of others, and for whom he harbours a cold contempt and maintains a superficial relationship with them.

The resolution to every problem in Society, is the other person! Someone else to talk to and be with, expose your inner self, enjoy doing things together, laugh together, help one another: in fact offering help provides the greatest pleasure and satisfaction, than anything else. Living in a Society and mixing with people, extends our knowledge, expands our personality and cultivates our character. However, there is one form of personal relationship, which can contribute most to one's social



life and happiness, particularly that of young persons, and that is friendship.

If you ask what is *friendship*, Aristotle will tell you: "it is the bond between people of about the same age, who have similar ideals and similar aspirations." In his book "Moral Nikomaheia", Aristotle describes true *friendship* as "...friendship begets friendship and this creates the bond between two people". It is not a quick acquaintance, but a sincere, pure bond, established with a lot of care. Both Socrates and Plato state that *friendship* "is a psychological need, and therefore should be sincere, without ulterior motive, within correct boundaries, and in which friends are faithful to one another". True friendship

is the one between people of virtue and moral principles, and as such is lifelong, as long as both friends remain alive (Aristotle). It also remains an important factor of social development for the young person, where he can open his heart and expose with confidence to his friend the secrets of his conscience, his success and failures, his sufferings and his happiness. This unloading or exteriorisation of one's inner self, is enormously beneficial to the peace of conscience and the health of character.

If the facts and sentiments we have described are true, and they certainly are, then where else can a young person find in our times a friend or friends, apart from the Christian environment we have been blessed by God to live in. *Friendship, and particularly Christian friendship, provides the enthusiasm, for one to attain in life, things much greater and significant he ever imagined.* Then he understands what Saint Paisios has advised: *Without enthusiasm, Christian life is not possible*, but is only possible with it.

Remember what the Word of God says: « φίλος πιστός σκέπη κραταιά, ὃ δὲ εὐρῶν αὐτὸν εὗρεν θησαυρόν » - **A faithful friend is a strong shelter, and he who finds one finds a treasure (Sirach 6:14).**





St Paisios the Great Commemorated June 19

St Paisios was born in 320 AD in the village of Shansa, Egypt. Younger to six other brothers, he was weak and frail. One night his mother saw an angel in a vision asking her to give God one of her children and pointed at Paisios. When the mother tried to offer one of her stronger children, the angel insisted that Paisios was the chosen one.

At the age of twenty, Paisios went to the wilderness of Scetes and became a monk by the hand of St Pambo. When St Pambo died, an angel guided Paisios to the site of the present Monastery of St Paisios where he lived as a hermit. At this time, he became the spiritual father of many monks who gathered around him. He was famous for his love, wisdom, simplicity and kindness, as well as his extremely ascetic life. Such was the quality of the Saint's spiritual struggle that the Lord deemed Paisios worthy to see and hear Him on several occasions.

On one occasion the Lord appeared and said to Paisios: "Do you see this desert which is boundless? One day I will fill it through you with monks who will glorify My name".

Paisios then fell on his knees saying: "O Lord, all are within Your power and at once through Your will they shall be accomplished. But I beg of Your divine goodness, how will so many souls survive in this desert and how will they provide for their needs?" And the Saviour replied: "Believe Me, My son, that if those who shall live here will have love amongst themselves, which is the mother of all virtues, and will keep My commandments, I will care for them and provide for their needs". Then Paisios said to the Lord again, "Once more, I shall entreat thy goodness: how will the monks be able to overcome the snares of the enemy and be freed from evil temptations?" And the Saviour said: "If they keep, as I told you, My commandments with humility and justice and a meek heart, not only will I liberate them from the assaults of the enemy and from evil snares, but I will make them inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven".



Άγιος Παΐσιος ο Μέγας 19 Ιουνίου

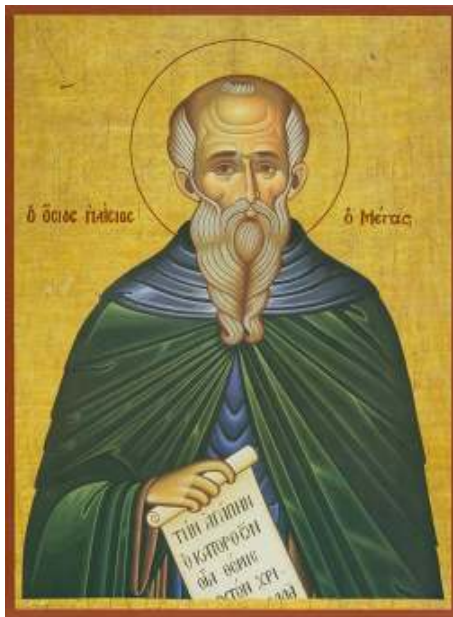
Ο Άγιος Παΐσιος ο Μέγας (μη τον συγχύζετε με τον πρόσφατο άγιο Παΐσιο τον Αγιορείτη), ανήκει στους ασκητές της ερήμου της Αιγύπτου. Το συναξάρι του μας λέγει ότι γεννήθηκε στη Σάνζα της Αιγύπτου το 320 μχ, ότι ήταν ο τελευταίος γιός από τα έξη αγόρια της οικογένειας, λεπτός και με αδύνατη υγεία. Ένα βράδυ παρουσιάσθηκε στη μητέρα του ένας άγγελος, και την ζητούσε να δώσει ένα από τα παιδιά της στο Θεό, συνάμα δείχνοντας τον Παΐσιο. Η μητέρα προσπάθησε να δώσει ένα από τα πιο δυνατά αγόρια της, αλλά ο άγγελος επέμενε ότι ο Παΐσιος ήταν εκείνος που ήθελε.

Σε ηλικία 20 ετών ο Παΐσιος πήγε στην έρημο της Σκήτης και εκάρη μοναχός από τον άγιο Πάμπο.

Όταν ο άγιος Πάμπος πέθανε, άγγελος οδήγησε τον Παΐσιο στο μέρος που κτίστηκε αργότερα το Μοναστήρι του αγίου Παΐσιου, και εκεί ζούσε σαν ερημίτης. Η αρετή του έγινε γρήγορα γνωστή, και πολλοί μοναχοί ήρθαν στο Μοναστήρι του, και ήταν ο πνευματικός τους πατέρας. Έγινε γνωστός για την αγάπη του, την σοφία του, την απλότητα του, την καλοσύνη του και την ασκητική του ζωή. Είχε δε φτάσει σε τέτοια ύψη πνευματικής προόδου, που αξιώθηκε να δει και να ακούσει τον Θεό πολλές φορές.

Μια μέρα ο Κύριος εμφανίστηκε και λέγει στον Παΐσιο, «Βλέπεις αυτή την έρημο που είναι απέραντη; Θα έρθει καιρός που θα την γεμίσω με μοναχούς που θα δοξάζουν το όνομα Μου». Ο Παΐσιος έπεσε στα γόνατα και είπε, «Κύριε, όλα είναι στην εξουσία σου, και όταν το θε-

λήσεις, όλα είναι δυνατόν να γίνουν αμέσως. Αλλά ερωτώ την θείκή σου Αγιότητα, πως είναι δυνατόν να επιζήσουν τόσες ψυχές σ' αυτήν την έρημο, και πως θα ικανοποιούνται οι ανάγκες τους;». Και ο Σωτήρας απάντησε: «Πίστευε με, παιδί μου, εάν αυτοί που θα ζήσουν εδώ, έχουν αγάπη μεταξύ τους, που είναι η μητέρα όλων των αρετών, και υπακούουν στις εντολές μου, εγώ θα φροντίσω για όλες τις ανάγκες τους». Τότε ο Παΐσιος ερώτησε πάλι τον Κύριο, «Τολμώ και πάλι να ρωτήσω την Αγιότητα σου: πως οι μοναχοί θα μπορούν να ξεπερνούν τις παγίδες του εχθρού, και να παραμένουν ελεύθεροι από τους πειρασμούς του πονηρού;» Και ο Σωτήρας απήντησε: «Εάν, όπως σου είπα, τηρούν τις εντολές μου με ταπεινώση, με ειλικρίνεια, και με πραότητα, όχι μόνο θα τους ελευθερώσω από τις επιθέσεις του εχθρού και όλες τις πονηρές παγίδες του, αλλά θα τους κάνω και κληρονόμους της Βασιλείας των Ουρανών».



Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

Why did Jesus say on the Cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"?

When Jesus uttered these words, whilst hanging on the Cross, he was quoting the first line of Psalm 22. This Psalm is a remarkable prophecy of Christ's saving passion, describing His pain and His utter *kenosis* (κένωσις, self-emptying) in a vivid prophetic description:

*For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;
I can count all My bones.
They look and stare at Me.
They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots (v. 16-18).*

By repeating the first verse of this psalm, Christ was not merely repeating it mechanically: He was **fulfilling** the prophecy.

However, these words have led people to question whether God the Father actually deserted Jesus. Some non-Orthodox faiths would say that Jesus was deserted and punished by God as a scapegoat; providing an outlet for God the Father's anger, who is angry at all of us for living sinful lives. This is certainly not what we believe as Orthodox Christians. We do not believe in an angry, vindictive God. Jesus accepted his passion voluntarily: becoming the perfect sacrifice, and through His Resurrection, becoming the master of our salvation. In the Great Anaphora Prayer in the Divine Liturgy, we hear:

He came and fulfilled all the divine plan for us, and on the night he was given up, or rather gave himself up, for the life of the world, he took bread in his holy, pure and blameless hands...

Therefore, as stated, God the Father did not abandon Jesus. Indeed, as the Ecumenical Councils testify, it was not possible for God the Father to forsake His Son in any real or factual sense, because the Father and the Son are united in one Godhead. The Trinity is indivisible.

Jesus' cry, therefore, does in no way indicate that there was a true abandonment. Instead, the prayer conveys that as human, He experienced that God the Father was



distant. The abandonment was psychological, not ontological (that is, not a true separation of the Trinity). God never abandons those close to Him, much less His Son. Nevertheless, it happens that even His closest followers can *feel* abandoned.

Therefore, in uttering these words, Jesus was also identifying Himself with every human being who has ever felt himself to be a great distance from God. It was the ultimate way to empathise with our predicament. As we read further in Psalm 22:

*For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard (v. 24).*

Furthermore, by identifying with us in every way possible and then resurrecting in His human body, He opened up the way for our corrupt nature to be resurrected, with a new body and a new mode of existence. As Psalm 22 continues, this new existence carries to eternity:

*The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever! (v. 26).*

These words of Jesus on the Cross were uttered at the pinnacle of His suffering and self-emptying. That moment may have humanly felt too hard to bear, but by remaining obedient to the Father's will, He has elevated to glory not just Himself, but also all of us. Glory be to God!



Gospel Reading June 19th (John 7:37-52, 8:12) Sunday of Pentecost

On the Sunday of Pentecost we hear in the Gospel reading how Jesus stood up on "the last day of the feast, the great day" and He gave a great promise to all who believe in Him: "Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water" (v. 38). St. John the Evangelist goes on to explain that Christ's words here refer to the promise of the Holy Spirit which "in the last days shall be poured out on all flesh" after the glorification of Christ, as foretold by the Prophet Joel (Joel 2:28).

On the day of Pentecost the promise is fulfilled, and the Spirit descends upon the Apostles with the sound as of a mighty rushing wind and divided tongues as of fire (Acts 2: 2-3). In the new age of the Church which began on that day, the words of Christ likening the Spirit to rivers of living water and the light of life are fulfilled. The grace of the Spirit is like living water which is always active, always energizing, a river springing from a gushing well that is never exhausted. The grace of the Spirit is the living water that flowed through the wisdom of Stephen, the tongue of Peter, the vehemence of Paul, against which no obstacle could stand as they washed all away before them like mighty rivers.

The flaming light of the Spirit revealed the Apostles as heavenly lights set above the whole world, carrying the words of eternal life, and through whom the world was illuminated. And as the light of a single burning lamp is passed on to other lamps in succession without diminishing, so the light of the Holy Spirit has been passed on through the ages and enlightens all the faithful. This day of Pentecost which we relive every year is a feast of the divine Spirit, Who of His unimaginable love descended for our salvation, just as the only-begotten Son of God, because of this same love and for the same purpose, bowed the heavens, came down and assumed our flesh. ✠



Visit to Sumbul

In December 2014, with the blessings of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos and His Eminence Metropolitan Chrysostomos, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece Society travelled to Medan, Indonesia, on their second missionary visit there at the request of Fr Chrysostomos.

After the heat, humidity and pollution of our visit to 'Αγιος Νικητας Primary School and 'Αγιος Ιωαννης Προδομος Junior High School'. Sumbul is a small town in the mountains of Indonesia's 'food bowl'. For us, it was an incredible contrast to the city of Medan. In the mountains, it was cooler and quiet. As with much of Indonesia, the locals showed patience for many things that we took for granted.



Children of St John the Baptist Junior High School in Sumbul, Indonesia.

Yet crumbling infrastructure, craterous potholes and crawling traffic meant that our visit felt much shorter. The respect and dignity of the Indonesian people had already made an impression on us. We travelled to Sumbul to visit the "Αγιος Ιωαννης Προδομος Junior High School". Sumbul is a small town in the mountains of Indonesia's 'food bowl'. For us, it was an incredible contrast to the city of Medan. In the mountains, it was cooler and there was peace and quiet.

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As we had done elsewhere, we set up a clinic in the classrooms so that our three doctors could see the children. Parents and children came to the clinic wearing their best clothes. Some of the cases included an ankylosing spondylitis, a young female farmer with a paralysed arm due to polio and a young child with a congenital heart defect. Meanwhile, some of us took over a classroom at the request of eager students. Their interest in geography, maths, and were very interested in our personal backgrounds. The school students sang «φεγγαράκη μου λαμπρό» sung by local Indonesians. It was incredible to hear the resurrection and to St John the Baptist. They inspired us with their maturity, enthusiasm and deep sense of the faith. Our experience in Sumbul offered a change in scenery and a welcome respite from the heat and humidity of downtown Medan. The experience was a change in scenery and a welcome respite from the heat and humidity of downtown Medan. The experience was a change in scenery and a welcome respite from the heat and humidity of downtown Medan. The experience was a change in scenery and a welcome respite from the heat and humidity of downtown Medan.



Metropolitan Konstantinos of Singapore, nine men from the Greek Orthodox Christian Apostles of Manado, an Orthodox priest of Indonesian background.

In the slums of Medan, we travelled to Sumbul to visit the “Agiostan ranges of Medan. Famed for its produce, the mountains serve as the mountains, the air was cleaner, the weather cooler and there was peace we take for granted. The 150km road from Medan to Sumbul looked like a disaster area. Poor infrastructure, craterous potholes and crawling traffic meant the journey was long on the way, the trip felt much shorter.

Local people had already made an impression on us, and the school was not far from the city. It was a school run by excited schoolchildren, together with their English teacher Henry. The school was well-provided resourceful and showed pride in what little they had. The school had a small garden planted by the students. A makeshift soccer field was nearby and the ground was waterlogged due to recent rains. This didn't stop an excited group of children from playing soccer. It was only halfway through that we noticed that some weren't playing with skill.

A medical clinic in the classrooms so that our three doctors, two dentists, and a nurse could see the people. Parents and children came to the clinic wearing their best. We saw an adolescent girl with a paralysed arm due to forceps trauma at childbirth, a young child with a corneal ulcer due to malnutrition.

The children in the classroom at the request of eager students. Their innocent inquisitiveness was evident. They asked questions on Australian geography, maths, and were very interested in our personal stories. They sang songs, not only in their local Bahasa Indonesian, but in Greek too! It was a joy to hear the “Kyrie Eleison” sung by local Indonesians, word perfect, in Greek. They were enthusiastic and to St John the Baptist. They inspired us with their respect.

The experience in scenery and a welcome respite from the heat and humidity of Medan was deeply memorable, from the beauty of the school community in trying to understand the Orthodox Church. We pray that God may strengthen the faith of our visit to Άγιος Νικόλαος Primary School in the slums of Medan, we visited a small town in the mountain ranges of Medan. Famed for its scenic beauty, the contrast to the city of Medan. In the mountains, the air was cleaner, the weather was cooler, and we take for granted.

The 150km road from Medan to Sumbul looked easy enough. The journey took almost 5 hours! Chanting hymns along the way, the trip was long on the way, the trip felt much shorter.

Local people, and the school was no different. On arriving we were swarmed by excited schoolchildren, together with their English teacher Henry. The school proved resourceful and showed pride in what little they had. The school had a small garden planted by the students. A makeshift soccer field was strewn with broken concrete and was waterlogged due to recent rains. This didn't stop an excited group of children from playing soccer. It was only halfway through that we noticed that some weren't playing with skill.

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The experience in scenery and a welcome respite from the heat and humidity of downtown Medan. The experience was deeply memorable, from the beauty of the school community in trying to understand the incredible simplicity and kind-heartedness of the locals, to their hospitality and His Church in Indonesia.



The Art of Salvation, by Elder Ephraim Saint Nektarios Monastery Publications, Roscoe, New York, 2014

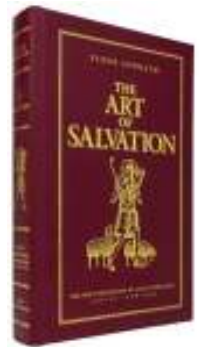
The Art of Salvation is a collection of thirty-three homilies given by Elder Ephraim, the father of American monasticism and spiritual child of Elder Joseph the Hesychast. The original audience of the first twenty-three homilies comprised lay people, and the latter ten homilies were delivered to the monks of the Holy Monastery of Philotheou, on Mt Athos.

This is a beautiful book in both its physical and spiritual content. The publishers have designed a high-quality book with Byzantine icons scattered throughout the pages, immediately drawing the reader into the deeper meaning of the text. The text itself is illumined by the spiritual strength of the Elder, compelling the reader to self-reflection.

Each homily provides wise and practical counsel on a range of significant and relevant topics, including abortion, almsgiving, the conscience and suffering. The discursive style of the text makes it easy to read; the Introduction states that the homilies were delivered informally, with little preparation on the part of Elder Ephraim. Yet, each homily masterfully composes a journey, seamlessly weaving together the fundamental elements of Orthodox life.

Repentance, humility, prayer and watchfulness comprise the central, recurring themes of the homilies. The temptations of laziness, self-indulgence and pride are addressed repeatedly, with reference to the life of Christ, the Saints and anecdotes from the Holy Mountain (Mt Athos). Because Elder Ephraim resides in modern-day America, his advice is offered with an awareness of contemporary issues. The intensity and complexity of spiritual struggle is discussed with simplicity and sincerity. Real techniques to conquer egotism and distracted thoughts during prayer are detailed. For example, during prayer, he advises to “limit the mind to thoughts of the name of Christ, the hour of death, the beauty of Paradise, and the love of God” (p. 281).

The tone of the homilies simultaneously challenges and encourages the reader. Elder Ephraim urges us to struggle daily, to fight our passions and to turn to God, pleading Him for mercy. The soul that has fought “like a warrior” will rejoice in the “eternal and incorrupt Kingdom” (p. 328).



Οι Άγιοι Πάντες

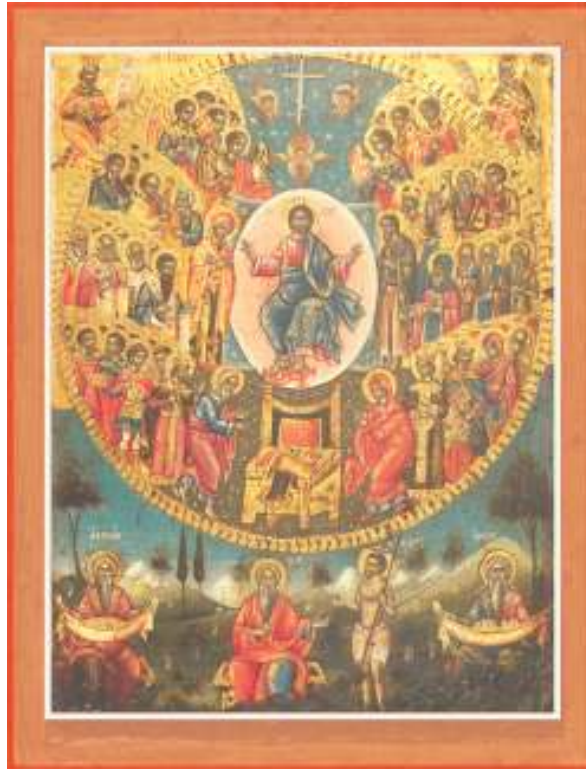
Σαν μετανάστες καταλαβαίνουμε τη σπουδαιότητα της ενότητας με την πατρίδα μας, την Εκκλησία και τους συμπατριώτες μας. Όταν φτάσαμε σε αυτή τη φιλόξενη χώρα η παραπάνω ενότητα μας βοήθησε να κρατήσουμε την ταυτότητά μας.

Ταυτόχρονα μάθαμε να συζούμε με ανθρώπους από άλλες φυλές και άλλα κράτη, Άγγλους, Ρώσους, Ιταλούς κλπ, και ανοίξαμε την αγκαλιά μας και την καρδιά μας και σε αυτούς.

Με ορισμένους από αυτούς έχουμε κοινή και την πίστη μας όπως τους με τους Ρώσους και τους Σέρβους. Είναι εξ ίσου όμως ωφέλιμο να θυμόμαστε ότι υπάρχει

κοινός παρονομαστής που μας ενώνει και με τους μη Ορθόδοξους Χριστιανούς. Υπήρξε μια περίοδος που η Εκκλησία δεν ήταν χωρισμένη, από την οποία αναδείχθηκαν άγιοι που κανονικά θα πρέπει να τους τιμούν όλοι οι σημερινοί οπαδοί του Κυρίου μας. Αν φέρνουμε στις μνήμες μας αυτό το γεγονός η εν Χριστώ ένωσή μας με τους ετερόδοξους αδελφούς μας θα γίνει πιο φυσιολογική.

Η εορτή των Αγίων Πάντων μας προσφέρει μια μοναδική ευκαιρία για αυτό το σκοπό. Μας δίνει την



αφορμή να θυμηθούμε τους μυριάδες κοινούς αγίους ανά τους αιώνες με τους οποίους είμαστε ενωμένοι, μέσα σε Μία, Αγία, Καθολική και Αποστολική Εκκλησία, με κοινό αρχηγό μας τον Χριστό και αυτό το γεγονός μας καθιστά πνευματικά αδέρφια έστω και αν καταγόμαστε από εκατοντάδες εθνότητες και φυλές. Παρά τα διάφορα σχίσματα που κατάφερε να δημιουργήσει μεταξύ μας ο μισόκαλος διάβολος έχουμε, σε τελική ανάλυση, την ίδια ελπίδα σωτηρίας στο πρόσωπο του Θεανθρώπου Κυρίου μας. Ας έχουμε πάντα στο νου μας την αναμφισβήτητη αλήθεια πως όλοι μας, Ορθόδοξοι, ετερόδοξοι και αλλόθρησκοι είμαστε εικόνες του

Δημιουργού μας και στο πρόσωπο του κάθε συνανθρώπου μας βρίσκεται ο ίδιος ο Χριστός. Η αγάπη και αλληλεγγύη μας λοιπόν προς όλους ανεξαιρέτως θα πρέπει να συνοδεύεται με μια ειλικρινή ευχή και καρδιακή προσευχή: να τα φέρει έτσι ο πανάγαθος Θεός και να γνωρίσουν και να ζήσουν όλοι την Αγία Ορθοδοξία μας και έτσι να γίνουμε όλοι άξιοι της τιμής να ενωθούμε κυριολεκτικά μαζί Του και να γίνουμε πραγματικοί Άγιοι Πάντες.



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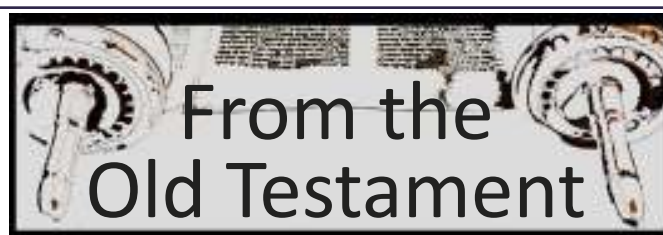
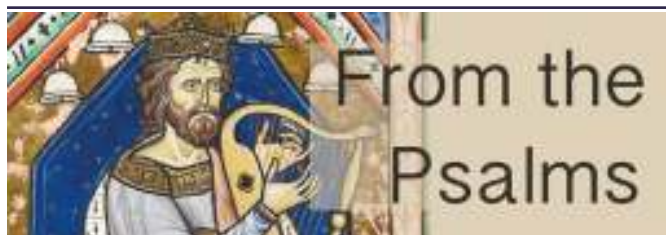


GREEK ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

Home About Us Resources Chanting School Bookstore Youth Sunday School Calendar Lychnos What's New? Q

- Who are we?
- Lives of Saints
- On-line access to Orthodox Bookstore
- Lychnos Issues
- News and Events

- Information on Fellowships
- Sunday School
- Saints of the Day
- Orthodox Christian Resources
- Byzantine Chanting School



Θαυμαστός ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις Αὐτοῦ
(Ψαλμὸς ΕΞ' 36)

God is Wonderful in His Saints (Ps 68:36)

This verse is used as the Prokeimenon, which precedes that Epistle reading on the feast days of our Saints. The Orthodox Church places a special emphasis on the Saints, teaching us that they are our brethren, who dwelling near us, are ever ready to help us by the Grace of God. St John of Kronstadt explains how we live with the Saints in the same house of our Heavenly Father. We live in the earthly, while they live in the heavenly half, but we are always able to converse with them, and they with us.

The psalmist expresses God being “Wonderful” in His Saints. By their Holy way of life, the Saints attracted God’s Grace and allowed Him to perform great things through their humility and purity. All Orthodox Christians are called to be saints, and we can only achieve this by cleansing our souls through the Mysteries of the Church and aligning our will to God’s Will. Everyone who has been baptised in Christ must live in such a way that Christ lives within us. “Do you not know,” Saint Paul asks, “that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).

St Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews, encourages the faithful by saying: “since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). We are so blessed to have such support, not merely overlooking us, but “surrounding” us as we strive to

imitate their lives. poor, sing for your consolation Psalm 102, and use the two that follow it 103, 104) to lift your heart in thankful praise to God, as in and through all circumstances we should always do. Psalms 105, 107, 113, 117, 135, and 146 to 150 not only show the reasons why God should be praised, but tell you how to do it...”



The Ten Commandments

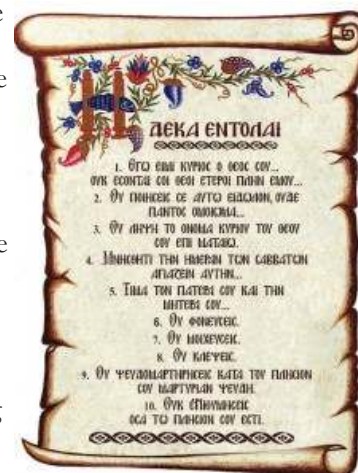
In the Old Testament we read how God’s chosen people, the Israelites, were subjected to a great many years of slavery under Egyptian rule. This oppression continued for many generations until the Lord, through Moses, freed His people from their slavery so that they may journey to the Promised Land. On being freed, the Lord did not leave them unguided.

After a time, God spoke to Moses in order to gift the people with the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments are a list of governances to guide the people towards a proper society, one that leads towards God. The ten items, ranging from honouring God, to respect for one another, create a very basic ethical and Christian foundation for one’s life. Rather than a negative listing as some may see it, as listing what is forbidden, the commandments were designed as St Paul writes, to be “tutor to bring us until Christ” (Gal. 3:24), until the coming of Christ, where the true faith would be made complete for “after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal 3:25).

This faith St Paul writes of is the True Faith, of which we are enlightened of through the Holy Spirit. In much the same way as the Israelites lived under an oppressive rule, the human race was enslaved by sin and death before the coming of the Messiah. Through the act of the Crucifixion, mankind was set free from these bonds. And so, in the same way that the ten commandments were gifted a time after the Israelites has experienced freedom, sometime after the Resurrection, on the feast of Pentecost, the new Law was gifted – that is, the Holy Spirit.

This new gift overshadows the ten commandments since, through having God in us, we grow beyond the basic ethical guidelines and are now guided to a true understanding of what it means to be a Christian and to fulfil God’s will.





What we Hear in Church



Paschal Homily of St John Chrysostom

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Πατρὸς καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος εἶν μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

This blessing, chanted by the clergy at the beginning of the second main part of the Holy Liturgy, commonly known as the Holy Anaphora, is a direct quote of St Paul's final blessing from his 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor 13:14).

Every Divine blessing, in fact every Divine action, is a common act of the Holy Trinity. St Gregory of Nyssa explains that, *"every operation which extends from God to the Creation, and is named according to our variable conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit."* (St Gregory Nyssa, "On Not three Gods").

St Nicholas Cabasilas explains the meaning of this benediction in an extended passage from his Commentary on the Holy Liturgy: *"It (this prayer) procures for us the benefits of the Holy Trinity... and it asks from each of the Divine Persons his special gift: from the Son grace, from the Father love, from the Spirit fellowship."* He goes on to explain that Jesus Christ, through giving Himself as Saviour to us even though we had given nothing to Him, shows us that, *"His care of us then is in the truest sense of grace."* He continues: *"The Father, through the sufferings of his Son, was reconciled to mankind, and showered His love upon His enemies, so that His goodness to us is given the name of love."*

Furthermore, through His descent on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit *"wished to give to His enemies who had now become His friends the best of Himself... that is why His goodness to men is called fellowship."*

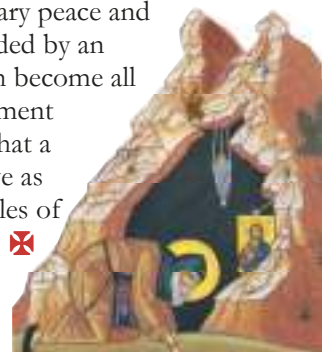
He then asks rhetorically: *"what need is there to pray for that which we have already received?"* and answers himself: *"we pray thus in order that we may not lose that which we have received, but may keep it for ever."*

Ultimately, every Holy Liturgy is the communion of man in the Grace of the Holy Trinity. the joy and beauty of Pascha. ❖

FROM THE HOLY FATHERS...

On the Acquisition of the Holy Spirit

In his conversation with Nicholas Motovilov¹, St Seraphim of Sarov instructs that the aim of the Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit. Practising the virtues should not be the goal of our spiritual life; rather the virtues should be the means by which the goal is achieved. He explained this through the parable of the ten virgins, showing that the five foolish virgins had practised the supreme virtue of purity, that is virginity, yet they had no oil in their lamps. In their spiritual ignorance they assumed that Christian duty was only in doing good works, but had neglected the necessary fruit of virtue, which is acquiring the grace of the Holy Spirit. How then is it possible to practise virtue and not receive grace? St Seraphim notes that only good deeds done for Christ's sake attract the Holy Spirit. Everything else we do, however good it may seem, if it is not done for the love of Christ, does not impart grace on us (e.g. fasting as a diet, or praying mechanically while the mind wanders). In the same parable, the market place, where the five foolish virgins were to acquire the necessary oil, is our present life. The Saint urges us to trade wisely, not merely to buy and sell, but to trade in such a way that will generate the most spiritual profit by utilising the time we have to acquire the most abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit. Does fasting generate the most grace? Then fast. Does giving alms? Then give and do not hold back. Does teaching or chanting? Then do these and spend your time wisely in this market place so as to acquire as much Grace as possible before the door of the bridal chamber is shut, that is, before death finds us suddenly and we are locked outside the bridal chamber, the Kingdom of God. The acquisition of the Holy Spirit may seem foreign to us, however St Seraphim explained that the Bible is full of concrete examples where the Holy Spirit guided, enlightened and advised the Prophets and Apostles in their everyday lives (Acts 13:2,4,9-11,52; 16:6-10; 21:4,11). This was demonstrated at the end of the conversation, where St Seraphim and Nicholas actually received the Grace of the Holy Spirit. In this timeless encounter, both remained in complete soberness of mind, their hearts were filled with an extraordinary peace and sweetness, they were surrounded by an unearthly scent, and they both become all light, as though wearing a garment weaved by the Holy Spirit. What a wondrous goal indeed we have as Christians – to be living temples of the Holy Spirit! (1 Cor 6:19). ❖



¹Published online at <http://orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/wonderful.aspx>



The Godparent

The most important person in a child's life, after their immediate family and their spiritual father, is the Godparent.

As baptisms in the Orthodox Church are traditionally conducted when the child is very

young the Church has seen fit that each child has a sponsor. Adults seeking to enter the Church must also have a Godparent. The practice of having a sponsor has existed since the first century.

To serve as a Godparent is a special honour, a sacred task, and it comes with many responsibilities. Along with the parents, the Godparent is responsible for the spiritual development of the child and leading them to salvation. Therefore the choice of a Godparent must be made with a great deal of thought and prayer, as this will be a lifelong relationship.

Godparents must be Orthodox Christians who are in full sacramental communion in the Church and ideally know the main tenets of the Faith, as well as **understand** the **mystery** of baptism, the **vows** that are made on behalf of the baptised and the reading of the Nicene Creed. They also need to be over 12yrs old traditionally.

On the day, the Godparent provides a christening box which includes a complete change of clothes for the child, which are traditionally white to express the 'purity and cleansing' of the child as he/she receives the Holy Spirit and has been cleansed from sin. Also included are a cross on a chain, a bottle of olive oil, two candles, hand and bath towel, a sheet and soap.

The Godparent is required to commune the newly baptised child for three consecutive Sundays after the baptism. The gifts that a Godparent gives will reflect his commitment to the Faith and these should include a Bible, prayer book, books on the lives of Saints etc. As the child will be given the name of a Saint, it is important for the Godparent to highlight the importance and assist in the celebrations of the Godchild's name day.

The Godparent and Godchild should develop a close and loving relationship, which means much prayer, time and effort is required for this to nurture and grow. Every Godparent becomes **accountable** to God as to whether or not he has discharged his duties to the child he has baptised.



On the Holy Icons: St Theodore the Studite.

Published by SVS press, 1981.

'On the Holy Icons' was written by St

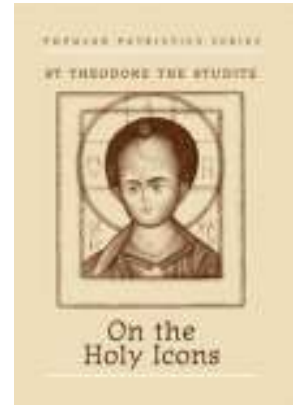
Theodore the Studite as a defence of icons during the second iconoclastic period of the 9th century. These were historic periods of great tumult, where many icons were taken down from churches and destroyed by the iconoclasts, who regarded their veneration as idol worship. St Theodore's important patristic text is a step

-by-step refutation of the arguments against the Holy Icons, covering every theological angle. He writes in the form of a debate, raising each specific argument of the heretics and answering them clearly and with respect to the Orthodox view.

To help us understand the veneration of icons and come to terms with the depiction of Christ (something which many non-Orthodox consider idolatry, even to this day), St Theodore explores broader theological concepts, such as Holy Tradition, Scripture, the Holy Eucharist, and Christology.

For example, St Theodore tackles the problem of the commandments of God explicitly forbidding the veneration of images (Exodus 20:4-5). He explains that this law was given to the Israelites because they had 'fled the abyss of polytheism', and because God had not yet been revealed in the flesh. He uses the example of Moses setting a bronze serpent on a pole, so that 'if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.' If God was formerly symbolised by a bronze serpent 'how could it not be pleasing to Him and appropriate to set up the image of the bodily form which has been His since He became man?'

St Theodore's writings perfectly capture our Orthodox teachings, and it is easy to see why he is one of the greatest figures of the Iconoclast controversies. 'On the Holy Icons' is clear and accessible, and is a valuable read among patristic writings.



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NEWS and VIEWS

Sunday School Picnic

On the long-weekend of Monday 13th June, the Sunday Schools of Sydney held their combined annual Sunday School Picnic at Lachlan Reserve, Centennial Park. The event was blessed with the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, as well as clergy, parents and children who all thoroughly enjoyed the day! His Eminence was especially moved when the Sunday School children from various parishes sang in individual groups, and in his address to all included the following words:

So we can understand that we are all brothers, with one Father who is in heaven. Then our life will become like a song, just like the songs you sang today from the various parishes, which I confess was for all of us exceedingly precious, exceedingly joyful, exceedingly instructional. You teach us with your quiet when you look at us with your pure eyes, and then we understand what treasure the Church has when it has children who go to Sunday School, who hear its lessons and learn its songs: that their whole life is illumined by the light of the Sun of Righteousness, which is Christ. ... All good things, all blessings are given to us by Sunday School, by the Christian

family, but above all by the Church, in which I, who am the eldest among you, as much as you who are angelic children, all of us are the same united in the common struggle – to show how great God's love is for man, for the world, for the whole world, for all people, for mankind.



✠ His Eminence (centre) addressing the Sunday School children, teachers and parents.



His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos (seated at centre) listens to Sunday School children from various parishes sing songs.



Sunday School children and their parents gather to hear His Eminence speak at this year's annual Sunday School picnic.



His Eminence distributing icons as a blessing to the children.

**Ακούτε το ραδιοφωνικό πρόγραμμα
«Η ΦΩΝΗ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑΣ»**

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10:45 π.μ. στο 2MM-AM 1665

11:00 π.μ. στο 2ERA-FM 151.675 (scanner)

5:30 μ.μ. στο Galaxia FM 151.850 (scanner)

κάθε Πέμπτη:

3:30 μ.μ. στο Radio Club AM 1683

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