



ΛΥΧΝΟΣ

A GREEK ORTHODOX PERIODICAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

«Λύχνος τοῖς ποσί
μου ὁ νόμος σου
καὶ φῶς ταῖς
τρίβοις μου»

Ψαλμ 118, 105

Volume 33, Issue 2

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2018

The Three Stages Of

Repentance

Repentance is the central theme of Christianity. It is the teaching of St John the Forerunner in preparation for the coming of the Lord and it is also the starting point of our Lord's teaching: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" (Matt 3:2, Matt 4:17).

Repentance, therefore, is in truth the beginning of the life in Christ.

What is Repentance and how are we to achieve it? We may be assisted to understand and to undertake Repentance by breaking it down into three stages:

1. Contrition

Contrition, the feeling of remorse and sorrow for our actions, is a first step in the healing of our souls, especially when accompanied by tears. Contrition is the opening of our wounds and the clearing away so that the antiseptic can be applied. To do otherwise is to risk that the wound will fester and spread causing us great damage.

However, although a good start, contrition is not enough. Judas, after betraying our Lord, felt deep sorrow for his actions. So sorrowful was he that he returned the blood money and went out and hanged himself. His sorrow stopped there and did not flower into Repentance. Peter also fell and felt sorrow, but he did not stop there. He returned to Christ.

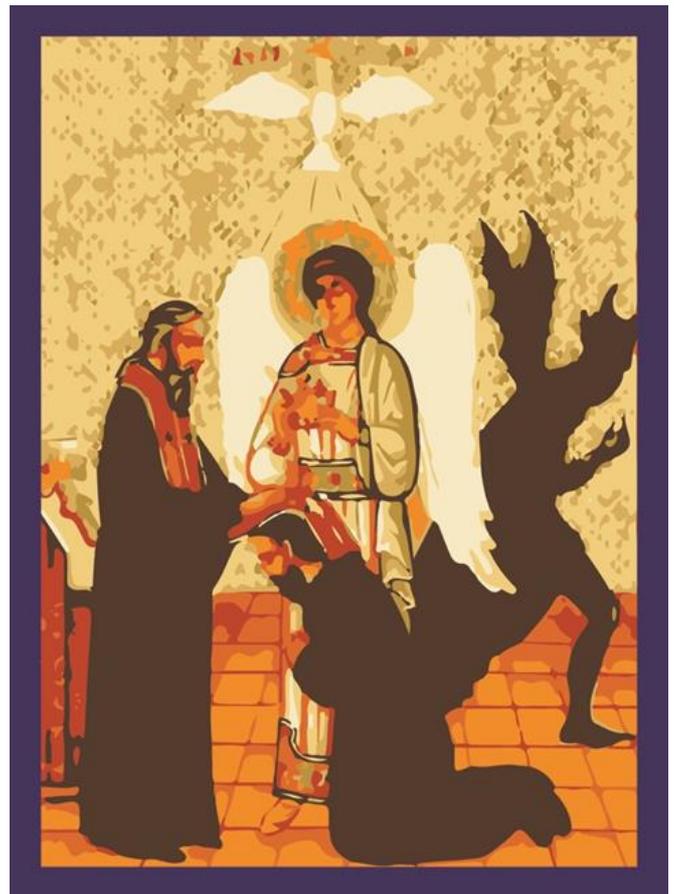
2. Decision to return

This is the core element of Repentance, the decision to turn around. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, this is described by the expression, "He came to himself" (Lk 15:17): that is, he came to his senses and realised how far he had fallen. He remembers the beauty of his father's house. He does not excuse himself. He does not blame his father or someone else for his predicament. He accepts that he is the author of his own downfall.

There is no doubt that it takes real courage to repent, much more courage than it took for us to sin. St John Chrysostom says: "Pay attention carefully. After the sin comes the shame; courage follows repentance. Did you pay attention to what I said? Satan upsets the order; he gives the courage to sin and the shame to repentance".

3. Actions – the fruits of Repentance

The decision to change, to abandon our former way of



life, is not merely a mental exercise but must have material consequences if it is to be real. There must be a struggle to avoid falling again. In the parable of the prodigal son, this is exemplified by the journey from that foreign land back towards his father's house.

Repentance for us Orthodox is not a once off event but rather a way of being. Since we are sinners, and we will continue to be sinners until the end of our earthly lives, we are called to live in a state of Repentance. The Church prays in this way when we hear our Priest calling on God with these words "That the remainder of our lives may be spent in peace and repentance we ask of the Lord", and we as the people of God respond: "Grant this our Lord".

May God grant us to live in a state of Repentance during this blessed Lent and throughout the remaining days of our lives.

Η ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΕΣΣΑΡΑΚΟΣΤΗ

Η μητέρα μας Εκκλησία πάντοτε, μα ιδιαίτερα τώρα, τη περίοδο της Μ.Τ., μας καλεί σε εντατική πνευματική καλλιέργεια και εγρήγορση. Πρέπει να ετοιμαστούμε για να δεχθούμε την πιο μεγάλη εορτή των Ορθοδόξων, την Ανάσταση του Κυρίου.

Μας καλεί λοιπόν η Εκκλησία, μέσα από τις πέντε Κυριακές των Νηστειών, τις Προηγιασμένες Λειτουργίες, τα Απόδειπνα, τους Χαιρετισμούς της Θεοτόκου, τους Κατανυκτικούς Εσπερινούς, κ.α., σε πνευματική περισυλλογή, μετάνοια, κατάνυξη, προσευχή και νηστεία, για να αξιωθεί να δεχθεί τον Αναστάντα εκ τάφου Χριστόν τον Ζωοδότην.

Την περίοδο αυτή, η Εκκλησία πενθεί. Σκούρα χρώματα καλύπτουν την Αγία Τράπεζα και τα άμφια των ιερέων μας. Πένθιμο το μέλος των βυζαντινών ύμνων του Τριωδίου. Κατανυκτική η απαγγελία των Αναγνωσμάτων. Πένθιμη η περίοδος γιατί μας οδηγεί στη Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα των Παθών του Κυρίου μας.



Η Μ.Τ. μας θυμίζει πως όλα αυτά τα δεινά τα έπαθε ο Χριστός για τα δικά μας πολλά και αμέτρητα αμαρτήματα. Πώς λοιπόν να μη στενάξουμε και να μη συντριβεί η καρδιά μας με την ειλικρινή μετάνοια;

Βέβαια κάθε στιγμή της ζωής μας πρέπει να είναι καιρός μετάνοιας «**ἰδοὺ νῦν καιρὸς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἰδοὺ νῦν ἡμέρα σωτηρίας**» (Β' Κορ. ΣΤ' 2). Όμως αυτή τη περίοδο ακόμη πιο πολύ, η Αγία μας Εκκλησία μας προσφέρει ένα συνεχές κήρυγμα για μετάνοια, κατάνυξη και επιστροφή. Κάθε Κυριακή στα αυτιά μας πάλλει ο ύμνος «**Τῆς μετανοίας ἄνοιξόν μοι πύλας Ζωοδότα**» (Ἄνοιξέ μου τις πόρτες της μετάνοιας, Ζωοδότα Χριστέ μου).

Άλλο σπουδαίο στοιχείο της Μ.Τ. είναι η εντατική προσευχή. Ο Άγ. Γρηγόριος Θεολόγος μας λέγει «**μνημονευτέον γὰρ Θεοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀναπνευστέον**» (δηλ. να προτιμάς να θυμάσαι τον Θεό, παρά να αναπνέεις). Πάμπολλες οι ευκαιρίες που μας δίδονται για προσευχή κατά την αγία αυτή περίοδο.

Μας καλεί επίσης η Εκκλησία μας σε αγώνα πνευματικό που ιδιαίτερα αυτή την περίοδο γίνεται πιο έντονος. Η μετάνοια, η κατάνυξη, η συντριβή της καρδιάς, η εντατική προσευχή, δεν αποκτούνται εύκολα. Την ίδια στιγμή ο εχθρός μας διάβολος, μας πολεμά με μεγαλύτερη μανία. Γνωρίζει ο μισόκαλος πως αυτές οι αρετές που η μάνα μας Εκκλησία ζητεί να τις ζήσουμε, μας οδηγούν στη σωτηρία. Προσπαθεί λοιπόν να ξυπνήσει τα πάθη μας, που ο παλαιός άνθρωπος πάντα κουβαλά μέσα του. Μηχανεύεται τα πάντα ο πονηρός για να ρίξει τον Χριστιανό στην αμαρτία.

Ο Απ. Πέτρος λέγει ότι ο διάβολος «**ὡς λέων ὠρυόμενος περιπατεῖ ζητῶν τίνα καταπιῆ**» (Α' Πέτρ. Ε' 8) (δηλ. ο διάβολος σαν λιοντάρι που βρυχάται περπατεί με μανία και ζητεί ποιόν να καταπιή). Γι' αυτό το λόγο απαιτείται να συγκεντρώσουμε το νου μας, να μη σκορπίζεται η σκέψις, να έχουμε συγκροτημένους

λογισμούς. Με άλλα λόγια, **η Μ.Τ. είναι περίοδος πνευματικής περισυλλογής**. Χρειάζεται προσοχή και έλεγχος στον εαυτό μας. Να αποκτήσουμε αυτοσυγκέντρωση και αυτογνωσία.

Μη ξεχνάμε πως ο κόσμος που ζούμε πάει αντίθετα σε ό,τι έχει να κάνει με πνευματική περισυλλογή. Προάγει την ακαταστασία, την επιπολαιότητα, το σκόρπισμα του νου σ' ένα σωρό άλλες μέριμνες και φροντίδες.

Ποιός σήμερα «χάνει» το καιρό του με το να επισημάνει τα πάθη του, να παραδεχθεί τα σφάλματά του, να αντιμετωπίσει τα ελαττώματά του;

Μόνο η Εκκλησία μας ενδιαφέρεται για τη πνευματική μας πρόοδο. Αυτή μας παρέχει και τις οδηγίες και τα κατάλληλα φάρμακα - τα ιερά της Μυστήρια. Αυτά μας θεραπεύουν, μας εξαγιάζουν και με ασφάλεια μας οδηγούν σε συνάντηση και κοινωνία με τον Κύριο και Θεό μας.

Καλή Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή.

Current Issues

Digital Technology, Quantum Physics and Artificial Intelligence

In our times, most of our machines and instruments used both at our work and our homes, in addition to those used in research, are powered by digital technology. In the first half of the 20th century, a scientific revolution took place. Eminent physicists, mostly Europeans, discovered what is now known as Quantum Physics theory, which provides information on how atoms work. The theory helps us make sense of the smaller things in nature (like protons, photons, neutrons and electrons). **Quantum** is a Latin word meaning “how much”, so a quantum of energy is a specific amount of energy.

The Australian of the Year 2018, British born Professor Michelle Simmons, and her team created the world’s first transmitter from a single atom, the smallest particle that can exist independently. Lately, they created the thinnest wire possible from two atoms joined together, one fiftieth the thickness of a human hair, and which could conduct electricity.

On the night when the award was presented to Professor Simmons, she mentioned the following areas where she sees Quantum Physics could easily be applicable and most useful:

1. Creation of a Silicon Quantum computer - which would solve problems in seconds, which otherwise would take years.
2. Improve drug design - most appropriate for a patient’s current illness.
3. Self-driving cars (driverless cars) – for the brave hearts.
4. Weather forecasting, with pin-point accuracy.
5. Artificial Intelligence – a frightening concept.

Two other digital-quantum Robots made their appearance lately, and were used on humans to assess their responses:

1. 2017 - Robot with thinking powers was used in Boston (USA), in the University Hospital, to help people

prepare themselves for the end of their life. It helps them to prepare and write their Will, details of their Funeral, provides them with psychological support, helps them with their emotions, discusses religion if they wish and gives advice about prayer, or even how to think constructively at this time of their life. The statement from the Hospital was that the majority felt better after the robot interview.

2. 2018 - from The Guardian newspaper. At the web site BlessU-2, a Protestant Minister in Wittenberg,

Germany (the town of Luther), the local priest, was replaced by a talking Robot for a short period. The organiser said “we want to find out, what the reaction of the faithful would be, and to see if human presence is necessary in a Divine Liturgy! In fact we wanted to start a discussion as to what is the standing of religion today in our Society?”. Of course they would be interested in Robot priests, since they are not capable in attracting young men to the priest-

hood, in the absence of dedicated priests in active service, who are alive and work, obedient to their divine calling.

In the last two examples, we see what happens, when uncontrolled Artificial Intelligence (Item 5, Professor Simmons’ list) invades and manipulates the sensitive emotional, aesthetic, psychological and spiritual realms of the human being, substituting the human presence with a clever, but without soul, Robot.

It has been calculated by experts that in 30 years, Artificial Intelligence will be superior to that of the then humanity. But how sensible is it for humans to create Artificial Intelligence, with the prospect of human beings becoming its slaves, possibly leading to the extinction of humanity from the face of the earth?

Finally, what are they trying to achieve, those involved with the development of Artificial Intelligence? Do they aim to supersede their humanity, and like the original man, eat from the forbidden fruit and end up as gods?



Από Τους Αγίους Της Εκκλησίας Μας

**Ο Άγιος και Δίκαιος Συμεών
που κράτησε στα χέρια του τον Θεό**
(η μνήμη του τιμάται 3 Φεβρουαρίου)

Η Ιερή Παράδοση της Εκκλησίας μας, διδάσκει, ότι ο Συμεών ήταν ένας από τους εβδομήντα Εβραίους σοφούς, που ανέλαβαν το έργο να μεταφράσουν την Παλαιά Διαθήκη από την Εβραϊκή στην Ελληνική γλώσσα. Αυτή η μετάφραση είναι γνωστή ως η ΠΔ των Εβδομήκοντα, και αυτήν χρησιμοποιεί η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μέχρι σήμερα. Τον Συμεών του δόθηκε το έργο να μεταφράσει το βιβλίο του Ησαΐα. Όταν έφτασε στον στίχο που προφήτευε την ενανθρώπιση του Χριστού, «Τότε η Παρθένος θα μείνει έγκυος και θα γεννήσει αγόρι, και θα του δώσεις το όνομα Εμμανουήλ» (Ισαΐα Ζ' 14), ο Συμεών ήθελε να σβήσει τη λέξη «παρθένος», και να την αντικαταστήσει με τις λέξεις «νέα γυναίκα». Ενώ ήταν έτοιμος να κάνει αυτό, άγγελος Κυρίου τον εμπόδισε να προχωρήσει, εξηγώντας τον την αλήθεια ότι πράγματι θα ερχόταν ο Χριστός στον κόσμο. Ο άγγελος υποσχέθηκε στον Συμεών ότι θα δει και θα κρατήσει τον Χριστό που θα γεννηθεί από την Παρθένο, προτού πεθάνει.

Πολλά χρόνια μετά αυτή την αποκάλυψη, το νήπιο-Χριστός όταν έγινε 40 ημερών, τον έφεραν οι γονείς του στο Ναό. Το Άγιο Πνεύμα πληροφόρησε τον Συμεών ότι ήρθε η ώρα να εκπληρωθεί η υπόσχεση που του ειπώθηκε στο παρελθόν. Ο Συμεών πήγε στο Ναό, αγκάλιασε το νήπιο-Χριστό και είπε στον Θεό: «Τώρα, πάρε τον δούλο σου Κύριε ειρηνικά από αυτή την ζωή, αφού είδα τον Λυτρωτή του κόσμου, όπως μου είχες υποσχεθεί» (Λουκ. Β' 29).

Η Παράδοση μας πληροφορεί ότι ο Συμεών έζησε μέχρι βαθειά γηρατειά, και δεν ήταν ούτε ιερέας, ούτε Φαρισαίος, αλλά μόνο ένας πιστός και δίκαιος άνθρωπος.

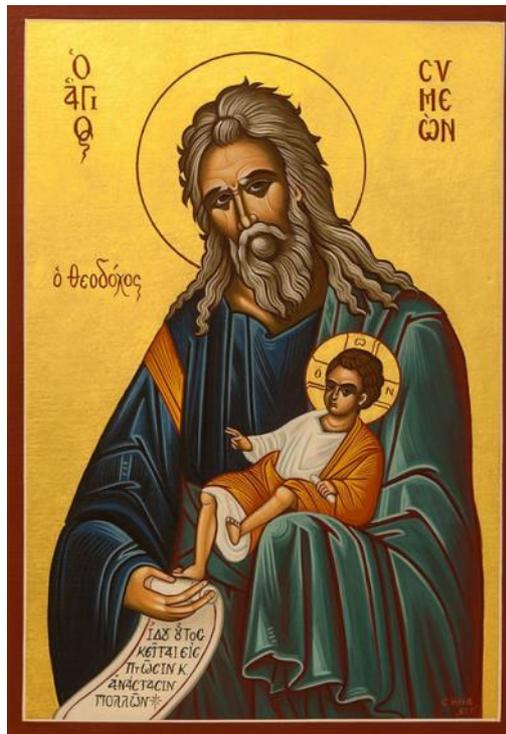
Το λείψανο του μεταφέρθηκε στην Κωνσταντινούπολη τον 6^ο αιώνα από τον Αυτοκράτορα Ιουστινιανό.

From the Saints of our Church

**The Holy and Righteous St Symeon
the God-Receiver**
(Commemorated 3rd February)

Holy Tradition teaches that Symeon was one of the seventy Jewish scholars chosen for the task of translating the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, also known as the Septuagint, used to this day by the Orthodox Church.

Symeon was specifically assigned the task of translating the book of Isaiah. When he came to the verse foretelling the Incarnation of Christ, 'Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (Is. 7:14), he wanted to cross out 'virgin' and replace it with 'young woman'. As he took his pen, an angel appeared and prevented him, explaining the truth of the coming of Christ. The angel promised that Symeon would see and touch Christ, born of the Virgin, before his death.



Many years after this revelation, the young Christ-child was brought to the Temple by Panagia, 40 days after His birth. The Holy Spirit revealed to Symeon that the time had come for the promise to be fulfilled. Symeon made his way to the Temple and embraced the child, praying: 'Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation' (Luke 2:29).

Tradition notes that Symeon had reached a very old age at this time, neither a priest nor a Pharisee, but a faithful and righteous man. His relics were transferred to the church of St James in Constantinople in the 6th century, built during the reign of Emperor Justin.

Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

Does Hades exist?

In ancient Greek mythology, Hades was the god of the underworld. When people died, mourners would place a coin under the tongue of the deceased to pay Charon, to take them across the river into the underworld. There they were assigned to one of the different areas of the underworld, ranging from the pitch darkness of Tartarus, where the souls were being punished for their sins, to the Fortunate Isles, where the souls lived in eternal bliss. Hades, as the ruler of the underworld, would maintain a relative balance, and ensure that no one escaped or was kidnapped into the upperworld. Living people would dread Hades' name or anything about him, out of fear that they would be punished after their death.

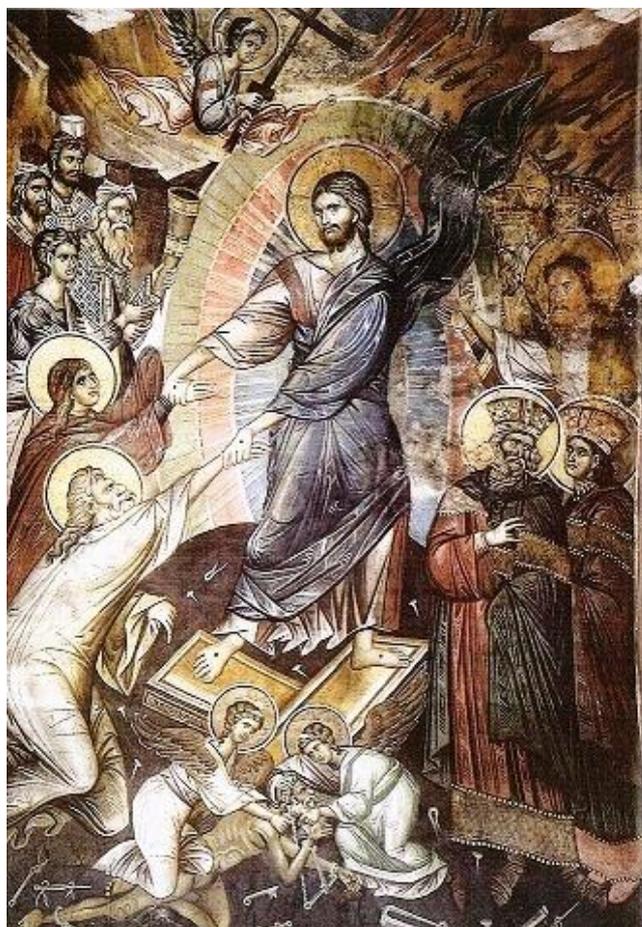
The name 'Hades' appears in Scripture as well, although in a completely different context. For example, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), translates the Hebrew word 'Sheol' into the word 'Hades' (e.g. Isaiah 38:18). Both words refer to the abode of the dead. They are *not* synonymous with the state of torment, or hell/Gehenna.

In the book of Psalms, we read, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption" (Psalms 16:10). This verse is quoted twice in the Acts of the Apostles, once by St Peter (Acts 2:25-31) and once by St Paul (Acts 13:35-37). In both cases, the Apostles stated that the Holy One mentioned by David was a prophetic reference to Jesus Christ, who indeed, tasted death but did not taste corruption - He escaped corruption, by resurrecting from the dead and thus defeating Death/Hades/Sheol.

Jesus Himself also refers to Hades. On one occasion, to Peter, He says, "and I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of *Hades* shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). In other words, it is not just Christ who defeats death and escapes corruption, but all living members of the Church, by being in living communion with the victor Christ.

Orthodox Christians believe that death is the natural consequence of sin. No mortal human can escape death. This absoluteness of death is personified in the figure of Hades. Jesus was the one who defeated Hades through His crucifixion and resurrection, thus shattering death for all of us.

All this is encapsulated in the Orthodox icon of the Resurrection. In the centre of the icon is the triumphant



Christ. He is standing on the shattered doors of Hades. The keys and chains of the door of Hades are flying everywhere. The person of Hades is bound and gagged, beneath the shattered doors. Jesus is lifting two people out of graves – those two people are Adam and Eve, which represent all of us.

In the Paschal Homily of St John Chrysostom, the victory of Jesus over Hades is articulated so eloquently that no further comment is required:

Hades is angered because it has been mocked, it is angered because it has been destroyed... It seized a body, and, lo! it encountered heaven; it seized the visible, and was overcome by the invisible. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen and you are abolished. Christ is risen and the demons are cast down... Christ is risen and the tomb is emptied of the dead: for Christ, being risen from the dead, has become the Leader and Reviver of those who had fallen asleep. To Him be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

† Fr G. L.



Ἡ Κατ' Οἶκον Σου Ἐκκλησία

(Φίλμ. Α' 2)

Η χριστιανική οικογένεια απειλείται σήμερα από πολλούς εχθρούς:

- Από αντιχριστιανικές ιδεολογίες όπως ο γάμος ομοφύλων, και όπως το ότι τα παιδιά μπορούν να διαλέξουν αν θα είναι αγόρια ή κορίτσια.
- Από μία ανεξέλεγκτη τεχνολογία που έχει εισβάλει δυναμικά στο σπίτι, που καταστρέφει αγνές ψυχές και έχει διαλύσει την επικοινωνία μεταξύ των μελών της οικογένειας.
- Από συναναστροφές που βγάζουν σε λανθασμένους δρόμους, όπως τα ναρκωτικά και άλλες εξαρτήσεις.
- Από ένα κοσμικό και υλιστικό πνεύμα, τελείως αντίθετο στην πνευματική πρόοδο.

Ζούμε γενικά σε μία μετα-χριστιανική εποχή. Πως θα μπορέσουμε να κρατήσουμε τις οικογένειες μας στο σωστό δρόμο του Θεού; Ο Άγιος Ιωάννης ο Χρυσόστομος μας δίνει απλά την απάντηση: «Κάνε το σπίτι σου εκκλησία!»

Η οικογένεια πρέπει να βασιστεί και να θεμελιωθεί πάνω στον ακρογωνιαίο λίθο του Χριστού και της Εκκλησίας. Σώζεται όταν καλλιεργείται η Εκκλησιαστική και Μυστηριακή ζωή μέσα της, δηλαδή η κοινή λειτουργική ζωή, νηστεία και προσευχή. Η επικοινωνία προς τον Θεό να γίνεται απ' όλη την οικογένεια μαζί, και να έχουν όλοι τον ίδιο Πνευματικό οδηγό στον οποίον εξομολογούνται τακτικά. Με την ευλογία του Πνευματικού, όλοι να μετέχουν συχνά στα Μυστήρια της Εκκλησίας. Τότε η οικογένεια δεν ζει σαρκικά αλλά πνευματικά, και η Χάρις του Θεού αναπαύεται επάνω της. Τότε η οικογένεια θα αντλήσει την αγιότητα!

Μέσα στην κατ' οίκον εκκλησία τα μέλη εξοπλίζονται για τον πόλεμο που η κάθε ψυχή έχει να αντιμετωπίσει. Τα παιδιά ασκούνται μαζί με τους γονείς ώστε να αυξήσουν τις πνευματικές τους δυνάμεις. Μαθαίνουν από τους γονείς πως να πολεμήσουν τον εχθρό, πως να αντισταθούν στις αμαρτωλές απαιτήσεις του κόσμου. Παίρνουν ανακούφιση και στοργή από τους γονείς όταν έρχονται σπίτι πληγωμένα.

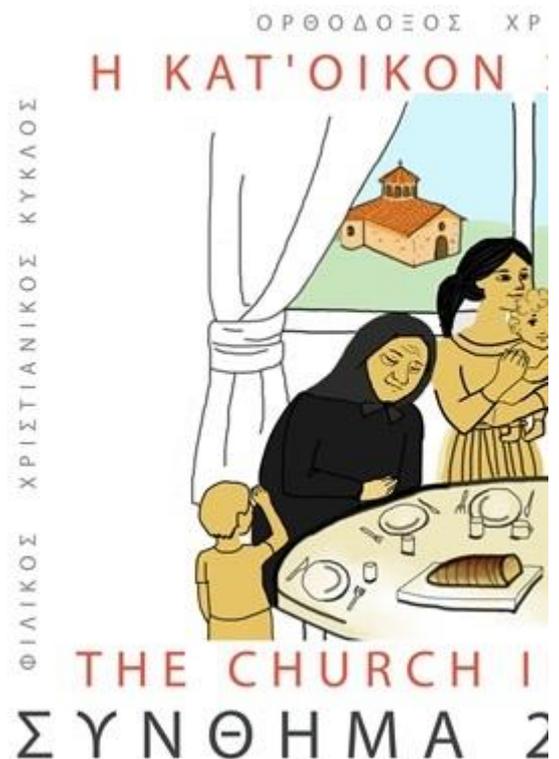
Οι γονείς πρέπει να καταλάβουν μέσα σε τι συνθήκες τα παιδιά τους μεγαλώνουν, σπουδάζουν και εργάζονται. Μόνο τότε θα μπορέσουν να τα αγκαλιάσουν με εμπάθεια.

Η κατ' οίκον εκκλησία λέγει «όχι» στο κοσμικό πνεύμα. Τα μέλη της οικογένειας υψώνονται σε αγωνιστικά επίπεδα, αναδεικνύονται ασυμβίβαστοι χριστιανοί προς κάθε κακό. Αγαπούν τις ρίζες τους, τους αγίους και μάρτυρες, την ελληνική ιστορία, την ιερή μας γλώσσα και παράδοση - οι βαθιές αυτές ρίζες που ποτίστηκαν με το αίμα των προγόνων μας. Αυτές θα μας κρατίσουν όρθιους όταν τα δυνατά ρεύματα του κόσμου μας καλούν να υποτάξουμε κάτω το φρόνημα.

Όλα αυτά ακούγονται δύσκολα, αλλά, με την βοήθεια του Θεού όλα κατορθώνονται. Ευτυχώς δεν είμαστε μόνοι στο δρόμο της οικογενειακής ζωής – η Εκκλησία είναι η μητέρα μας!

Υπάρχει επείγουσα ανάγκη να βοηθήσουμε τις οικογένειες μας να γίνουν πραγματικές κατ' οίκον εκκλησίες.

Οι καιροί το απαιτούν.



The Church in your House

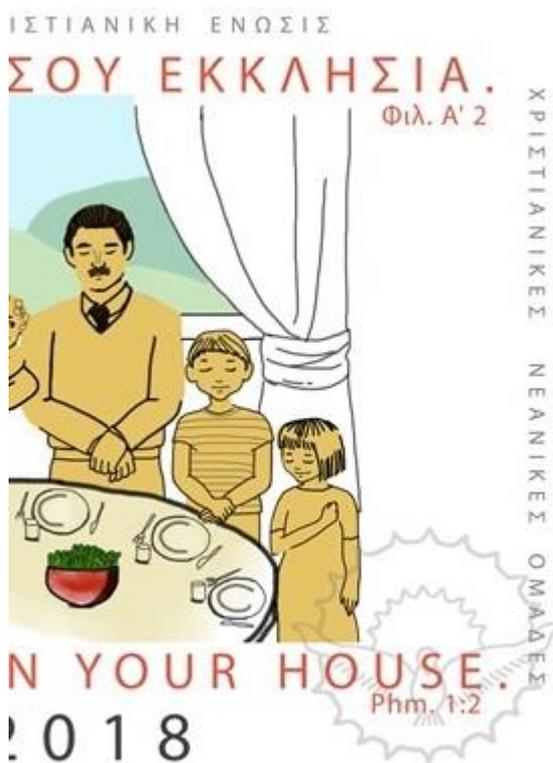
(Phm. 1:2)



Our motto this year, “the church in your house”, is a phrase taken from several of Apostle Paul’s Epistles, where in the early Church, groups of Christians gathered in homes to pray and worship together and partake of Holy Communion. This was a time when Christians felt they weren’t part of the world anymore, that is, they had rejected a world full of idolaters, people that sacrificed animals and children to the hundreds of gods they believed in, or people who had rejected the Messiah. Christians wanted to live God’s promise - they wanted to live heaven on earth. This they did in their houses.

Today when we think of the Church, we often think of it in the big picture sense, something greater than us, encompassing all Christians. The expression “the church in your house”, brings it back from that all-encompassing image, to the everyday, to the personal. It is not just a place we come and go from whenever there is a Divine Liturgy, it is a church in our house... it is our own home as a church. Every day and always.

This is the invitation of this year’s motto. **For our home to be sanctified, to be sacred, and our family to be a little Church of Christ.**



To understand what this means, we can ask ourselves what defines a church? Firstly, we think of buildings filled with icons, smelling of incense. We think of priests and bishops and rules that govern everyone. We think of all the Christians baptised into the Church. When we think about this, most of us would agree that our family home does bear some similarities to this.

Our families are baptised Christians. We fill our home with icons, we light candles and burn incense. We also have rules that govern us and we set spiritual rules to help us be more vigilant. Most of all, we try to make our home a place where God is not only present, but He rules as Lord and King.

Our homes are places where our families find sanctuary from the world we live in. The home is a place where we are nurtured and where we nurture. It is both a place of rest, but also of spiritual struggle. St John Chrysostom describes our home as “a tournament and an arena of virtue, so that there, being well exercised with much knowledge, we attend to those in the marketplace.” In other words, our training as Christian athletes begins in the home, or rather the church in our house, which prepares us to deal with the world, to know how to behave and respond as Christians in our studies and in our jobs.

It is well known that the family forms the foundations of a healthy and moral society. The enemy of our salvation understands this and is doing his best to destroy in our minds and hearts the sanctity of true family life. Only one example is the recent desecration of marriage by the legalisation of same-sex unions. In our Orthodox Christian

teaching however, marriage, in which a man and a woman become mystically one in the image of the oneness of God, is also the very image of the Church: “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church” (Eph 5:32). Husband and wife, along with their entire family, are called to be one with God, to be part of His Church.

Let us not just hang icons in our houses, but let the Saints be living members of our families and let us also become Saints. Let us not simply light candles, but ourselves becoming candles melting with love for God. Let us not just burn incense, but have the scent of holiness fill our homes and our lives. Then, not only will we be more complete members of our families, but more complete members of humanity.

As a contemporary monk on Mount Athos said: “When we learn to overcome our ego, we become true members of our families, and when we learn to become true members of our families by overcoming our ego then we become true members of the whole human race of Adam and then we will be able to pray for all humanity. Of course this is simply the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts. It is not at all by chance, that behind the three Great Heirarchs [St Basil, St Gregory and St John Chrysostom] were saintly mothers, saintly fathers, and saintly families. If we want the world to improve, let us first correct ourselves and our families.”

May this year be a new beginning for us and our family!

Σήμερα της Σωτηρίας ημών το Κεφάλαιον

Την 25η Μαρτίου, γιορτάζουμε τον Ευαγγελισμό της Θεοτόκου, δηλαδή την καλή είδηση που έφερε ο Άγγελος στην Παναγία ότι θα φέρει στον κόσμο τον Σωτήρα Χριστό. Η γιορτή αυτή είναι μία από τις μεγαλύτερες και σημαντικότερες γιορτές της Χριστιανοσύνης, γι' αυτό και η Εκκλησία στο Απολυτίκιο του Ευαγγελισμού ψάλλει:

«**Σήμερα τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν τὸ Κεφάλαιον**». Δηλαδή, σήμερα είναι η αρχή και η σημαντικότερη ημέρα της σωτηρίας μας. Είναι η φανέρωση σε αγγέλους και ανθρώπους του μυστικού σχεδίου που υπήρχε ανέκαθεν στο νου του Θεού, για να σώσει τον άνθρωπο. Σήμερα, γίνεται ορατή πραγματικότητα «**τὸ ἀπ' αἰῶνος Μυστήριον**», που αιώνας, παρέμενε αφανέρωτο στις γενεές των ανθρώπων που πέρασαν.

«**Σήμερα, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, Υἱὸς τῆς Παρθένου γίνεται**». Ο Κύριος των όλων προσλαμβάνει μορφή δούλου, ταπεινώνεται, χωρίς να εγκαταλείψει την Ὑψιστη θέση Του, για να εξυψώσει τον ταπεινό άνθρωπο!

Ας χαρεί λοιπόν κάθε ανθρώπινη φύση, επειδή σήμερα ανοίγεται η πύλη του Παραδείσου την οποία έκλεισε του πρωτοπλάστου Αδάμ η παρακοή. Ας χαρεί, γιατί σήμερα μπορεί να απολαμβάνει την ατελείυτη



μακαριότητα που της στέρησε η απάτη του διαβόλου. Σήμερα η θεότητα ενώνεται με την ανθρωπότητα και ο άνθρωπος λυτρώνεται.

Και το «**σήμερα**» αυτό που προπορεύεται «**τῆς σωτηρίας**», είναι το αιώσιο προσκλητήριο για την Βασιλεία του Θεού στον καθένα από εμάς σήμερα, γιατί η σωτηρία της ψυχής μας δεν είναι κάτι που αφορά το αύριο, ή που έχει να κάνει με όσα πράξαμε χθες. **Το σήμερα είναι αυτό που μας ανυψώνει ή μας μειώνει στα μάτια του Θεού.**

Η κατάσταση στην οποία βρισκόμαστε στο κάθε «σήμερα» της ζωής μας, αυτή είναι που θα μας σώσει ή που

θα μας καταδικάσει, από τη στιγμή που κάποιο από όλα τα επόμενα «σήμερα» της επίγειας ζωής μας, θα είναι και το τελευταίο.

Για το μοναδικό και χαρμόσυνο αυτό γεγονός της σαρκώσεως του Θεού Λόγου, ο υμνωδός μας καλεί να φωνάξουμε κι εμείς δυνατά, μαζί με τον Αρχάγγελο, προς την Θεοτόκο, το «**Χαίρε Κεχαριτωμένη, ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ**»! Χαίρε, εσύ που είσαι γεμάτη από τη Χάρη του Θεού. Εσύ που μας πλούτισες με τόσες τιμές και χάρες, σπλαχνίσου μας και πρέσβευε υπέρ ημών των ταπεινών και αναξίων δούλων σου. Αμήν.

Greek Orthodox Sunday Schools

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:14)

Dear Parents,

All of us wish to see our children grow up to be happy and able to face life's challenges. Sunday School can help by fostering in your child a love for God and His Church, which is the basis for a happy and successful life.

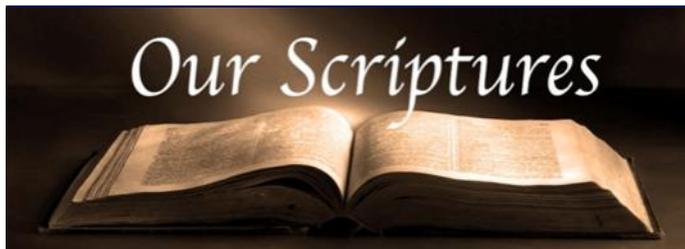
It provides a variety of activities your children will enjoy, and is a place where they will find good friends.

Even if your children receive Scripture education at School or attend our Greek Orthodox Colleges, they will still benefit enormously from Sunday School.

Classes for children aged 4-18 are held every Sunday morning at all parishes. For more information, contact your local parish priest.



Our Scriptures



The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

This parable shows us how to be Christian. The father in the parable has two sons, and at certain times we are one or the other.

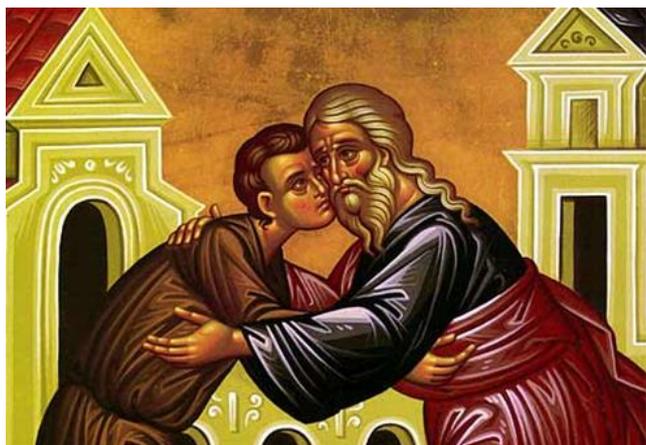
We can sometimes be like the younger son, who in taking his share of the inheritance and living prodigally, is when we fall into sin. The solution to the problem is also shown in this parable when the son humbled himself and returned to the father. We too must humble ourselves, repent, cease from sin, and return to our Heavenly Father.

At other times, we can be like the older son who stayed with the father. He, despite remaining at home and dutifully obeying his father, became jealous and envious because of his pride. He showed how little love he had for his younger brother, when at the moment of his return after many years, his first thoughts were of his own importance. The parable reminds us that we should not be jealous of those around us and we should not have pride for any reason.

This can be difficult for us Christians, especially those of us who regularly attend Church Services, when we see people who do not conform to the same standards of behaviour or dress or any other standard we might hold dear. We are told, both here and elsewhere in the Gospels, not to judge one another.

Instead, we are called to be like the father in this parable. We are to allow people their freedom, but at the same time we always seek their return to the fold and rejoice when it happens. We too love all equally without judgment.

In short, we are called to imitate God. What we see in the two sons are examples of traps to avoid on our path of imitation and ways by which we might pick ourselves up when we fall.

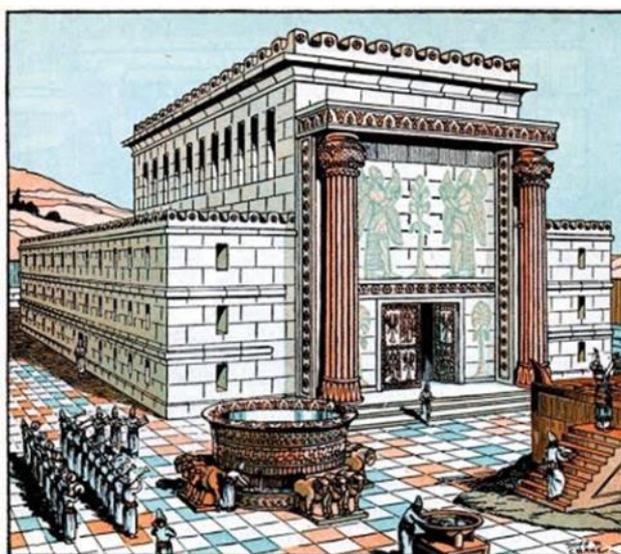


From The Old Testament



2 Kingdoms¹, Chapter 24

In verse 1 of this chapter, we read that God incites David against his people of Israel. It is not saying that God caused him to sin. Rather, it represents a reflection of the sinful state of David's soul, since, against God's wishes, David decided to conduct a census and count his people. This stirring of David bears parallels to the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 4:21. Much like Pharaoh, it was David's decision to harden his own heart, rather than God interfering with free will.



The decision to take a census does not seem altogether bad in our modern context - we have one every five years in Australia! However, in the Mosaic law, carrying out a census was strictly forbidden (Ex 30:12). David was taking the census out of pride, to see the extent of his worldly power and know the number of men that could serve under him.

His pride was subsequently punished: God gave David the hard choice of either three years of famine, three months of invasion or three days of plague (v 13)!

David chose the plague, and when it was about to hit Jerusalem, he and all the people wore sackcloth, pleading with God for their lives. This plea and the humbling of David was heard, and the plague did not destroy Jerusalem.

As a result, David went up to Mount Zion and bought the property of the thresher, Orna, to build a Temple at the spot where the angel who was destroying the people stopped. Orna was a Jebusite, one of the original tribes which inhabited Jerusalem before the Israelites arrived. A key feature of verses 18-25 is the bargaining between Orna and David. This is important for David's repentance and rehabilitation. In not taking the threshing floor for free, but paying 50 shekels of silver, David personally bears the cost of his sin, just as we do when we miss the mark. However, it was not ordained for David to build this Temple on this location. That honour was saved for his heir, Solomon.

¹In some Bibles, 2 Kingdoms is referred to as 2 Samuel.



Elder Arsenios the Cave-Dweller (1886-1983)



A paragon of Orthodox monasticism and an icon of humility, Elder Arsenios the Cave-Dweller is best known as the dedicated spiritual child of the ever-memorable Elder Joseph the Hesychast. The two met as zealous youths at the summit of the Holy Mountain and remained inseparable until the repose of Elder Joseph. At that time, the future Elder Joseph was still a layman, but the young monk Arsenios perceived such great spiritual gifts in him that he said: 'From now on, you are the eye and I am the ear'. He said this, despite being 10 years more senior and having already received his tonsure. After the brotherhood had formed, Elder Joseph would call Arsenios his brother and fellow ascetic, while referring to the other monks in his obedience as his children or disciples.

Elder Arsenios dedicated himself to a life of obedience, hard labour, vigil, unceasing prayer and fasting. He would endure 3,000 prostrations each night and remained standing in what time was left, deep in prayer. The two elders were renowned for walking everywhere barefoot, regardless of the season or the depth of the snow. Strict asceticism and absolute obedience formed a monk teeming with Christian virtue. His humility was so great that he even refused to meet St Silouan because he did not feel at ease speaking whilst his elder only listened - Arsenios spoke Russian, having spent some of his childhood in Russia.

In 1983 this holy man departed the world for the splendour of God's Kingdom. Arsenios' life was that of struggle and simplicity. He was as guileless as Nathanael and as devoted as Peter. Together with his Elder, he left a legacy of authentic Orthodox spirituality for Mt Athos, echoing lives lived in the deserts of Palestine and Egypt centuries ago. His life is recorded in detail by Monk Joseph Dionysiatos, a fellow struggler, in a book titled "Elder Arsenios the Cave-Dweller (1886-1983)".

From the Holy Fathers...

St John Climacus - On Love

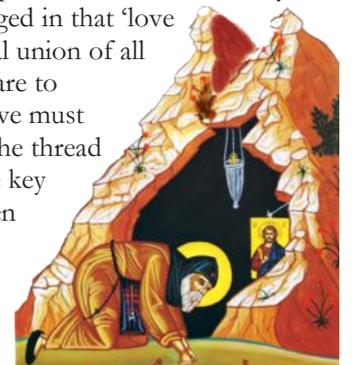
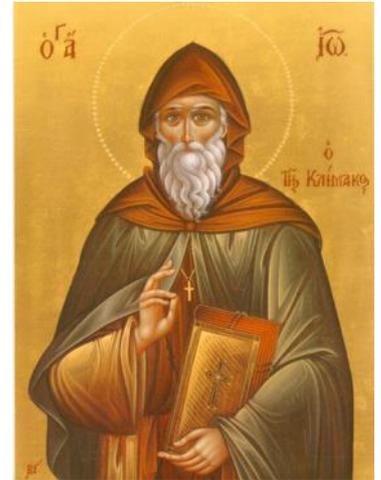
In *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, St John describes the spiritual life as a thirty step ladder of virtues and passions. Each step is one chapter, and when successfully dealt with, raises the Christian one step closer to Christ who awaits at the top of the ladder.

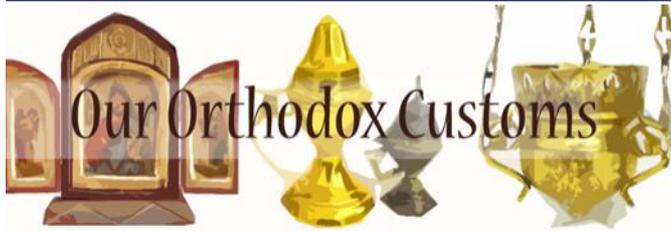
The top step of the Ladder (Gr. Κλίμαξ) is that of Faith, Hope and Love. This trio is

metaphorically described as an increasing concentration of light with the greatest of the three being Love. In its essence, Love is 'a resemblance to God insofar as this is humanly possible', and so the promise that awaits the heart of the person who climbs to the top is the presence of God Himself.

But this poses a slight problem in that 'the man who wants to talk about love is undertaking to speak about God', and this is no simple task. St John expresses elsewhere that 'plain words cannot precisely or truly or appropriately or clearly or sincerely describe the love of the Lord... such matters will [not] mean anything to someone who has never experienced them'. The point is to encourage us to taste and see for ourselves, to lead us from merely following Christ, to becoming like Him, Christ-like, and radiating His Divine Love.

After this step, there is no higher virtue, no more rungs to climb, 'love has no boundary, and both in the present and in the future age we will never cease to progress in it'. Such is the aim and the struggle in ascending the ladder, that is, to try and experience this perfect Love, but in order to do so one would have to uproot all the passions with 'a fountain of faith, an abyss of patience, a sea of humility'. Nevertheless, we are encouraged in that 'love never fails', being 'the spiritual union of all the virtues'. Therefore, if we are to struggle against any passion, we must begin with a spirit of Love - the thread binding all the virtues and the key which unlocks them - and then proceed with Faith, Patience, Humility and all the other virtues until we ascend to Perfect Love.





Adorning the Epitaphio

Holy Week is an intense week of services, day and night. We live the Passion of our Lord and Saviour, His trials, mockings, the Cross, His death, burial and Resurrection.



On Good Friday, we commemorate the death and burial of Christ. There are three services: firstly, the Royal Hours which are read on Friday morning, consisting mainly of readings from the Psalms and prophecies.

Immediately after this, it is the tradition for women and girls to prepare the funeral bier, known as the

Kouvouklion. They adorn this wooden structure with beautiful flowers as it will hold the Epitaphios. This is a large icon richly embroidered on a cloth that depicts Christ after he has been removed from the cross, accompanied by Panagia and others as told in the Gospel account.

The name, Epitaphios, literally means ‘winding-sheet’. It is common for the troparion of the day to be embroidered around the edges of the icon:

The Noble Joseph, taking down Thy most pure Body from the Tree, did wrap it in clean linen with sweet spices, and he laid it in a new tomb.

The Kouvouklion is placed in the middle of the solea in front of the Holy Doors. During the afternoon service, known as the Apokathelosis, which commemorates Jesus’ burial, the priest proceeds around the church holding the epitaphios above his head and laying it down inside the Kouvouklion. He places the Gospel next to it and the faithful approach reverently one by one to bow down deeply and venerate both.

A hymn on this day tells us: *Come, let us see our Life, lying in the tomb. He is there so that He may give life to those who lie in the graves.*

Also, another: *O Christ, who holds the whole world in Your hand, You accepted to be held in the sepulchre, so that You might rescue humanity which was swallowed by Hades, and, as immortal God, give us life and immortality.*

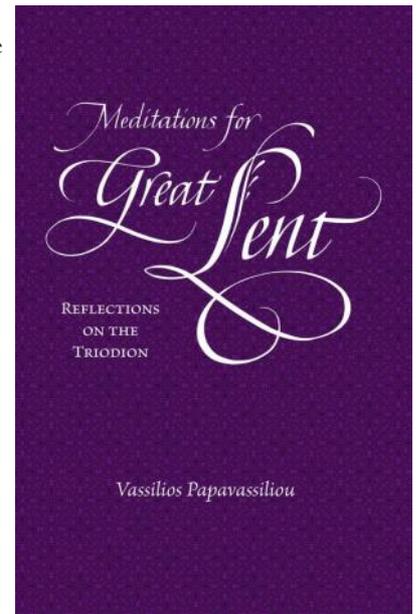
Meditations for Great Lent: Reflections on the Triodion, by Vassilios Papavassiliou. Published by Conciliar Press, 2013 (1st edition)

Meditations for Great Lent focuses on the key Gospel readings for pre-Lenten weeks of preparation, which serve to exercise our minds before we focus on our bodies and our spirits. It covers the Sundays of the Publican and Pharisee, Prodigal Son, Last Judgment, and Forgiveness and their respective themes of humility, repentance, ascetic love, fasting from sin, forgiving and return to Paradise.

These are linked to relevant services in the Lenten period: “The purpose of our fasting is spiritual. Spirituality must not be viewed as something that does not concern the body, but as something that is made possible through and within the body. We all too often find within ourselves a conflict between body and soul. The desires and needs of the flesh can all too often overpower the spirit. Fasting is a means of restoring the balance between soul and body, a means of bringing the flesh under the control and will of the mind and spirit.”

The author addresses the passions and virtues through the Prayer of St. Ephrem, particularly the attainment of the virtues of humility, chastity, patience, and love. The Clean Week is examined through the virtue of joy, and the importance of Sunday of the Cross and the canon of St Andrew in the journey to Pascha are explored as well.

The author seeks to assist us so that we travel through Lent with the right spiritual mindset adopted by the Fathers of the Church. He advises that, “it would be a mistake to think of the sacrifices of Lent in purely negative terms — in terms of struggle and deprivation. We are to think of Lent as liberation. Lent calls us to sacrifice many of those things which, while they tend to occupy such a central position in our lives, while they seem to us to be so important, they are in reality things that we can do without. Lent is thus the rediscovery of that which is most essential in our lives. In this rediscovery, we return to God and to the very meaning of life”.



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NEWS and VIEWS

Summer Retreats

During the Months of January and February, the Boys and Girls Ομάδες (13 to 18 years of age) as well as the Men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society held their annual retreats at Mangrove Mountain, north of Sydney. The Boys retreat was held at Wesley Vision Valley, Arcadia from the 15th - 20th January, with 55 boys and 15 leaders attending. The program included talks and Bible studies, as well as sport, group and other recreational activities.

The Girls retreat was held from the 15th - 19th January, with 45 girls and 10 leaders in attendance. They commenced with a Παράκλησις (Compline) Service to the Mother of God at Holy Cross Monastery, and their retreat included activities such as time of friendship, spiritual reading, group games, along with much singing and chanting.

The Mens retreat was held from the 2nd - 4th February, with the added blessing of a large group of interstate visitors from Adelaide.

Highlights of all three retreats were the Divine Liturgy Services officiated by Fr Eusebios of Pantanassa Monastery, along with many spiritual opportunities for renewal in a Christian atmosphere based on the theme: "The Church in your house" (Phm 1:2), as expanded on pages 6-7 of this issue.



The Boys Ομάδα Retreat at Pantanassa Monastery, with Abbot Fr Eusebios



Visitors from Adelaide also attended the Mens Retreat



Participants of the Girls Retreat, with Fr Eusebios



The men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society at their Annual Retreat

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

κάθε Κυριακή:

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

« ΛΥΧΝΟΣ »

is a bimonthly publication of the
Greek Orthodox Christian Society,
under the auspices of the
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.

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