



A Spiritual Journey Through Great Lent



For many people Great Lent is just a cycle in their yearly calendar where they “must” abstain from certain foods, temporarily cut out some bad habits, attend a few extra Sunday Liturgies and then Commune on Holy Thursday before going back to the same old “normal life” after Pascha. However if we wish to take Great Lent seriously, we should consider it a spiritual journey rather than a religious obligation. If someone therefore undertaking a long journey makes careful arrangements, plans a specific route, gathers provisions, sets out a schedule and follows it, the same care and effort (if not more) should also be applied when engaging on the spiritual journey of Great Lent.

To assist us, in the *Vespers of Forgiveness*, which officially marks the commencement of Great Lent (Sunday evening before Clean Monday), a certain atmosphere is created which will permeate all of the Lenten period. It is characterized by a *bright sadness* (*χαρμολύπη*) and is aesthetically obvious from dimmer lights, darker altar coverings and clergy vestments, and slower mostly monotonous services of the Compline and Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts. At first all this can seem rather boring, services are lengthened and movement is minimised, but this is exactly what is required to slow us down in order to experience a mysterious reaction inside us, triggered by a sadness in our heart. It reminds us of Adam and Eve’s exile from Paradise, realising that we too – through our own personal sins – are far from God, and provoking a desire in us to return. As this *sadness* takes hold in us, it initiates the process of *repentance* and directs us on a journey which ultimately transforms us, making us free of anxiety by carrying us away from the daily noises of life, making us lighter, lifting us upward. It is here where we start to understand that the monotony brings peace, and the *sadness* is indeed *brightened* by the smallest glimpse of true joy – the hope of the Resurrection.¹



As with physical journeys, Great Lent also includes stopovers, or stations, to give rest and rejuvenate. These commence on Friday evenings with the Akathist Hymn and continue with the Eucharistic Saturdays and Sundays, wherein services acquire their joyfulness again and fasting is relaxed, permitting consumption of wine and oil.² It is here where we realise that abstaining from food during the week helps us to rediscover its sweetness, and we learn again how to receive it with gratitude from God. It is also here where we rediscover the value in our relationships, having spent the week calming the noise of the world, entertainment and superficial socialising.

Finally, as all journeys have a final destination, the same is true with Great Lent, which intends to take us back home, away from our exiled existence. A mistake which the Israelites who left Egypt made was to lose sight of their destination, and so they spent 40 years wandering in the Sinai desert, never to set foot in the Promised Land. We too are in great danger of sharing the same fate if we choose to wander through Great Lent simply fulfilling religious obligations while remaining the same unchanged person, not having allowed the spiritual journey to transform and bring us closer to our ultimate destination – the Kingdom of God.



¹ This is exactly what the Great Canon of St Andrew aims to do (read partially on the first four days of Great Lent and completely on the 5th Thursday) by exploring the depth and breadth of sin and its consequences, while making almost every Biblical story relevant to “me” the reader, with every shortfall or mistake becoming “my” shortfall and “my” sin, whereby I plead for God’s mercy and forgiveness.

² Each Sunday has a special significance which may either give us a historical appreciation of the Church’s development (e.g. first Sunday is *The Sunday of Orthodoxy*, triumph over Iconoclasm), or a specific spiritual meaning (e.g. third Sunday – half way through lent – is *The Veneration of the Precious and Life Giving Cross*).

Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή και ο Πνευματικός Αγώνας

Καμμιά άλλη περίοδος της Εκκλησίας μας δεν βρίσκεται πιο κοντά στο χαρακτήρα και τη φύση της Ορθόδοξης πίστης μας όσο η Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή. Είναι η περίοδος που όλοι οι ορθόδοξοι καλούμεθα να εκφράσουμε έμπρακτα στη καθημερινή ζωή μας, **το ορθόδοξο φρόνημα**.

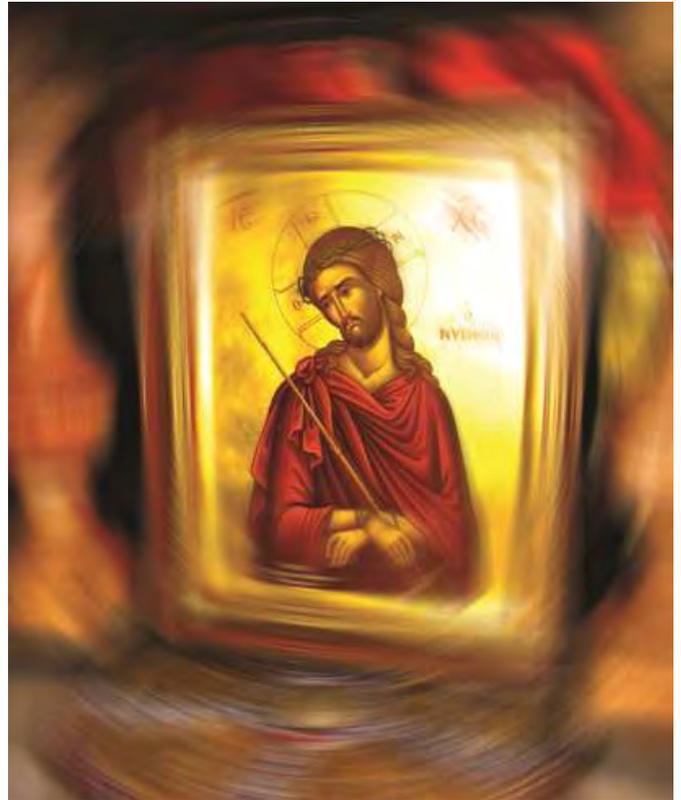
Οι ευκαιρίες που η μητέρα Εκκλησία μας δίνει είναι πάμπολλες. Τα Μεγάλα Απόδειπνα, οι Προηγιασμένες Θείες Λειτουργίες, οι Χαιρετισμοί της Υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου, οι Κατανυκτικοί Εσπερινοί, και γενικά ολόκληρη η εκκλησιαστική ζωή έχουν ρυθμιστεί με τέτοιο τρόπο ώστε οι ψυχές των πιστών να ανάγονται από τα γήινα και εγκόσμια προς τα πνευματικά και ουράνια. Από τη λύπη για την αμαρτία προς τη μυστική χαρά της συγχώρησης. Από τη νέκρωση των παθών στην Ανάσταση όλης της ύπαρξής μας.

Στην Άγια αυτή περίοδο της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής, πιο συγκεκριμένα, μας καλεί η Εκκλησία μας σε νηστεία που εξαγνίζει, σε αγρυπνία που μας εξιλεώνει, σε προσευχή συντετριμμένη που ελκύει το έλεος του Θεού. Πάνω απ' όλα, προβάλλει μπροστά μας την **Ύψοπιό Μετάνοια**, με πολλαπλά συγκινητικά παραδείγματα και πρωτοφανή γλαφυρότητα, σκοπώντας να βοηθήσει στην παραδοχή και ομολογία των δικών μας αμαρτιών στο μυστήριο της Ιεράς Εξομολογήσεως.

Κοντολογής, η Εκκλησία μας με τη Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή καλεί τους πιστούς σε **αγώνα πνευματικό**.

Αυτή η Μετάνοια, είναι αγώνας πνευματικός. Αγώνας που απαιτεί ιδρώτα και δάκρυα, κάποτε και αίμα. Δεν ξεριζώνονται εύκολα τα πάθη, ούτε αλλάζουν γρήγορα χρόνιες αμαρτωλές συνήθειες. Για τούτο, πάντα, μα ιδιαίτερα αυτή τη περίοδο, παρακαλούμε το Χριστό, τη Παναγία Μητέρα Του και τους Αγίους Του να μας βοηθήσουν να κατανοήσουμε την αμαρτωλότητά μας, να μας δυναμώσουν στην επιστροφή μας στο δρόμο του Θεού, να αλλάξουμε τρόπο σκέψης και ζωής.

Δυστυχώς οι σημερινοί χριστιανοί, περικλειομένων και ημών των Ορθοδόξων, δείχνουμε πως τα πράγματα του κόσμου και οι καθημερινές μέριμνες κυριαρχούν στη ζωή μας. Μας καθηλώνουν σε πνευματική απραξία που οδηγεί σε ψυχική αδιαφορία και απομόνωση.



Χωρίς ζήλο για το Θεό και τα πνευματικά, η ψυχή μας χάνει την ειρήνη της, μιά απροσδιόριστη λύπη την κυριεύει και ο άνθρωπος χωρίς καν να το καταλάβει αρρωσταίνει ψυχικά, φοβάται, αγωνιά υποφέρει.

Στις μέρες μας, μιλούμε για διάφορα είδη κρίσεων που μας μαστιάζουν, είτε προσωπικά, είτε σε παγκόσμια κλίμακα. Όπως οικονομική κρίση, οικογενειακή κρίση, πολιτική κρίση κ.τ.λ. **Φρονούμε πως η πνευματική κρίση της κοινωνίας που σήμερα βιώνουμε, είναι η πιό βαθειά και η πιό ξεθεμελιωτική από ποτέ άλλοτε.** Ζούμε σε ένα κλίμα ηθικής ασωτείας που νεκρώνει τη ψυχή και δηλητηριάζει ολόκληρη τη ζωή μας.

Να γιατί η Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή προβάλλει όχι απλά σαν μιά χρονική περίοδος στη ζωή των Ορθοδόξων, αλλά μάλλον σαν ένας αγώνας. Σαν ευκαιρία για αλλαγή πορείας. Σαν αντίδοτο στην ασυδοσία και την κραιπάλη της φιλήδονης κοινωνίας μας. Σαν τροχοπέδη στην απιστία και την ασέβεια της εποχής. Σαν απάντηση στις σύγχρονες κρίσεις της ζωής μας. Σαν λύτρωση και θεραπεία της υπόδουλης ψυχής που περιμένει με πόθο **«την έλευθερίαν τής δόξης τών τέκνων του Θεού» (Ρωμ. Η' 21).**



Current Issues

The Information Highway - is it worth the Risk?

Where are you Wisdom? We abandoned you for the sake of Knowledge! Where are you Knowledge? We lost you in the pursuit of Information! (TS Elliot).

There is little doubt that in our times, the most expensive item is an item of information. For its discovery, collection, and transmission, we spend enormous amounts of money. Dealing with items of information has become one of the most popular and profitable industries, whilst at the same time it has acquired a significant degree of influence in our society. So, we now have the mass media (television, radio, printed press, internet, etc), supported by an enormous number of information agencies, which collect, compose, censor, and even manufacture the information items they prefer to distribute.

In the past, information was spread by word of mouth, arriving many times altered or distorted - though not always on purpose - but compared to our times, quite delayed. Today, we can access any event, in any part of the globe, at will and instantly, whilst sitting at home. You can say, that our generation is really privileged. *But are we? Most probably NOT!*

The access of information that abounds in our days has many negative aspects. The information "*superhighway*" is not uncommonly a source of anxiety and stress. "How is an international or national event, a political decision or the appearance of a new social philosophy, going to develop? What effect can it possibly have on my life or that of my children?"

The anxiety generated by excess information, many times irrelevant to the vast majority of people, frequently creates unanswered problems. New items of information become necessary, requiring a more "objective" study of the problem. The result is that man becomes lost in a maze of information items, which are of no use to him at all!

On the other hand, the information highway creates a "false" truth. This type of truth is thought to be identical to the "new", the "necessary", and "pure knowledge". As



a result, for many, truth is nothing more than knowledge of what is happening. The result is that such mentality transposes the meaning and purpose of life. For many, it appears to serve the truth. In reality, it mostly distorts and destroys it.

If we ask ourselves, "how does excess information serve the truth?", we shall hear the words of our Lord saying: **"Know the truth, and the truth shall set you free!"** (John 8:32). Only the truth, as revealed by our divine Lord is real truth. Anything else is useless distortion, which alienates one from reality, to the extent that "I exist" is equated to "I am informed", "I know"!

On listening to the news these days, the thinking person cannot help but be confused, because information released by the mass media concerns only **what** is happening, but hardly ever **why** it happens. We hear only what is ephemeral and spectacular, which deprives one of the ability to delve into the deeper meaning of life.

We have created for ourselves the situation where no spiritual value has any meaning, though we well know that no society can survive without values. The advice Benjamin Disraeli (former British Prime Minister) gave to Queen Victoria on the subject of education is pertinent, **"We should be teaching not facts, but values!"**

The Christians find themselves facing a problem, for which no one is offering an answer. But an answer exists. There will be more about this in the next issue. ❌



**Gospel Reading March 1st
Sunday of Orthodoxy
(John 1:43-51, Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael)**



In this passage we meet Nathanael, the man Christ praises for having no conceit or guile.

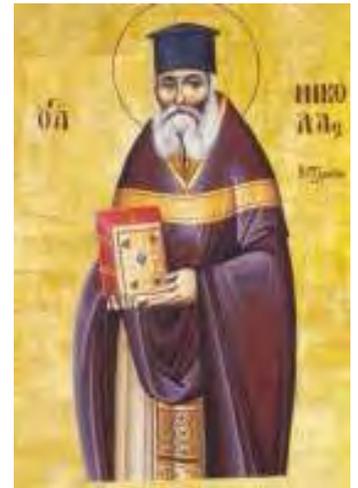
The Old Testament had foretold that the Messiah would be of Bethlehem (Micah 5:1). According to St John Chrysostom, Nathanael had knowledge of the prophecies, and therefore doubted Philip when he told him the Messiah was from Nazareth: “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (v. 45). However, at the same time, he was so eagerly awaiting the coming of the Christ that he was willing to believe that Philip was mistaken about the city. Nathanael exhibits no pride in knowing more about the prophecies than Philip. His only thought was that perhaps Philip had mixed up the city, meaning to say “Bethlehem” instead. Nathanael's reaction was not to ridicule Philip. In contrast, his question was a positive one: “can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (v. 46). Nathanael teaches us with this considered question that man should not be deceitful or needlessly negative: Christians should be disposed to looking for positive meanings in every aspect of life.

Christ praises Nathanael for his lack of guile (i.e. not being cunning or deceptive), but Nathanael is not quick to follow blindly on account of the praise. He pays attention to the more important task of finding out who precisely this Man is; how He could possibly know anything about Nathanael. Nathanael is filled with eagerness but is more concerned to determine the truth about the Man before him and exposes some caution: “How do You know me?” (v. 48). The answer of Christ took him completely by surprise: “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (v. 48).

Nathanael follows with a remarkable confession of faith: “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel” (v. 49). However, unlike Peter's similar confession (Mat 16:16), Nathanael's is somewhat inferior, because he declares that He is the King of Israel, limiting Christ to an earthly kingdom. So Christ lifts Nathanael further up, telling him that he will see the “heavens open, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (v. 51), persuading him to receive Him also as Lord of the angels. ❖

**St Nicholas – Papa Planas of Athens –
a modern day Saint
Celebrated on March 2nd**

Saint Nicholas was born on the island of Naxos in 1851 and from a young age was devout and kind in conduct. He refused to allow himself to become attached to material possessions, instead leading a simple life. He married and had a son, but his wife died early and Nicholas committed himself into service to the Lord. After becoming a priest in Athens, his reputation grew as he liturgised daily in



churches all over the city. These liturgies were the focal point of Nicholas' dedication to God, the purest form of his identity within the life of the Church, the Body of Christ. Many witnessed the Saint raised above the ground in church. The names of every person he encountered, of those living and dead, were read out during liturgy every day from a bundle of notes he accumulated and kept throughout his life, so that liturgy often stretched to six hours in duration!

Despite growing attention, Nicholas stripped himself of the world by distancing himself from offensive conversation and praying everywhere he went. Enraptured in prayer as he walked, he once did not realise it was raining torrentially. The man who invited him under his shelter noticed in astonishment that the Saint's cassock was in fact perfectly dry, although he had walked some distance!

Every obstacle Nicholas faced was conquered by his sincere love of all people. Due to his simplicity and humility he often saw Saints and Angels who appeared to him in aid, though he was deemed naïve by worldly standards. Those seeking his advice were met with great insight and meekness so that he became a true shepherd of Christians; patient in all matters, forgiving and easy to approach.

Saint Nicholas reposed on 2nd March 1932 with a smile on his lips. Huge crowds gathered to venerate him for three days. He was canonized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2002. ❖

Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

What does it mean to be a Christian?

Some people think to be a Christian, it is enough if you do no seriously bad things. Other people think that being a Christian means going to Church once a week. Unfortunately, too many of us are lazy Christians.

The real meaning of Christian life is to be one with God. It means to be thinking of Him all the time, to be wondering what more you could do to please Him, to learn more of His secrets, to be at peace knowing that He is finding rest and comfort in your heart.

The truth is “it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). It is “the God of peace Himself who sanctifies you completely” (1 Thess 5:23).

If you don't feel this spark for God, if you think your relationship with Him has no energy, if you do not have this desire to please Him, to speak with Him, to be in Him, one with Him, energised by Him and overflowing together with Him towards others, then you have lost what it means to be a Christian. Like the eldest son in the parable of the prodigal son, you may feel that you are just working for Him, like a wage earner, and getting nothing in return. So that when God opens his arms to you and says come into the Feast, you turn your back to Him, angry, because you can't even understand what all the joy is about. You do not know His love. You refuse the Kingdom of Heaven!

If these words ring true to you, then perhaps you do not have a relationship with God. Perhaps you are a lazy Christian who has taken God's love for granted. Perhaps you have become misguided, self-centred, seeing yourself as a wage earner rather than an heir.

Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2). We are His joy! Change your mind and heart. Change your life and look to Him.

Start with a little bit of prayer and a little bit of spiritual reading. Get into some holy habits such as fasting and performing acts of love to those around you. Go to Christian fellowship. Start attending Confession and begin clearing out that mess in your heart. Immerse



yourself in the Liturgy. Receive Holy Communion. Ask Him to help you!

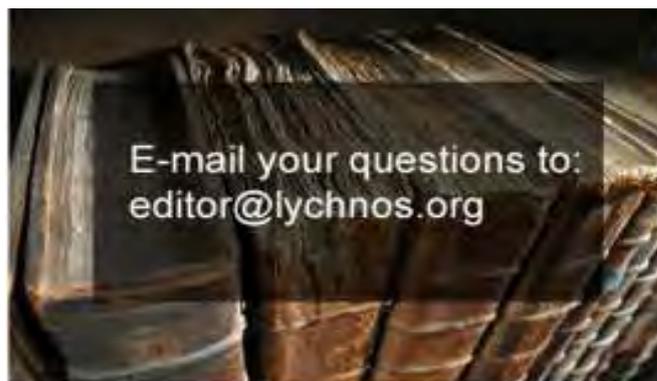
Step-by-step, God's love will grow in your heart, and you will grow in your love for God. Your life will change and you will see and feel God working in you and around you. You are now slowly, but surely, developing a relationship with God. Don't stop! It's a life journey.

Being a Christian means that you are changed on the inside - not controlled from the outside. It does not mean that you are required to go to church, required to help the

poor, required to be good. It means you **desire** to do those things because you've been changed.

In today's fast-paced, secular world, there is more work to do than ever. It is easy to spend hours upon hours absorbed in work, or tasks that offer no benefit to our relationship with God and do not produce things of eternal value. If we are not careful, we can fall into the same self-centred habits again and lose touch with God. So then, what if I slip up again? Acknowledge that you have strayed and fix it. Being a Christian means that you undergo changes in your heart and soul as you learn more about yourself and more about God. So that at the end of your life, you can run, with open arms and bright eyes, into the embrace of Our Father, knowing that this is where you belong.

† Fr N. S ✠



‘Εκαστος δὲ βλέπῃ πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ (Α΄ Κορ. Γ΄ 10)

Το φετινό μας σύνθημα ελέγχει την προσωπική ευθύνη μας σαν εργάτες της Εκκλησίας. Είναι παρμένο από την Πρώτη Επιστολή του Αποστόλου Παύλου προς τους Κορινθίους, τρίτο κεφάλαιο στίχο 10: «*Κατὰ τὴν χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, ὡς σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων θεμέλιον τέθεικα, ἄλλος δὲ ἐποικοδομεῖ. Ἐκαστος δὲ βλέπῃ πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ.*» Δηλαδή, σύμφωνα με τη χάρι του Θεού, που μου δόθηκε για να θεμελιώνω τις διάφορες Εκκλησίες μεταξύ των εθνών, σαν έμπειρος αρχιμάστορας έχω θέσει θεμέλιο στέρεο. Ὑστερα ἄλλοι συνεχίζουν το κτίσιμο. **Αλλά ο καθένας από τους κτίστες ας προσέχει πῶς οικοδομῇ πάνω στο θεμέλιο.** Ο Απóstολος Παύλος απευθύνει τα λόγια αυτά στους διδασκάλους και εργάτες της Εκκλησίας της Κορίνθου. Γιατί; Διότι βρήκε τους χριστιανούς της Κορίνθου να έχουν κοσμικό φρόνημα το οποίο επηρέαζε: πρώτον, την ενότητα τους σαν σώμα Χριστού και δεύτερον, την ηθική τους κατάσταση. Αυτό το κοσμικό φρόνημα τους εμπόδιζε να διακρίνουν την αληθινή και Θεία Σοφία από την κοσμική Σοφία. Απευθύνει τα λόγια αυτά προς τους διδασκάλους και εργάτες της Εκκλησίας διότι αυτοί ήταν υπεύθυνοι τόσο για την οικοδόμησή της όσο και για την πνευματική διαγωγή των χριστιανών. Τους λέει τρία πράγματα:

1. Ὅτι τα θεμέλια της οικοδομῆς ἔχουν χτιστεῖ ἀπο τον ἴδιο και εἶναι βασισμένα στον Ἰησοῦ Χριστό.
2. Ὅτι η προσφορά του καθενός εἶναι να χτίσει πάνω σε αὐτα τα θεμέλια ἀλλὰ να προσέχει πῶς χτίζει.
3. Ὅτι η ἀξία του ἔργου του καθενός θα φανερωθεῖ την ἡμέρα της κρίσης. *Ἄς κοιτάξουμε τα τρία αὐτά σημεῖα.

1. Τα θεμέλια

Ο Απóstολος Παύλος έβαλε τα θεμέλια της Εκκλησίας σαν σοφός ἀρχιτέκτονας. **Το θεμέλιο που έβαλε ήταν ο Ἰησοῦς Χριστός.** Το κοσμικό φρόνημα των χριστιανών της Κορίνθου έδειχνε ότι οι **δασκαλοὶ τους** δεν είχαν πνευματικότητα. Σαν θεμέλιο θεωρούσαν τους ανθρώπους και όχι τον Χριστό. Η διχόνοια που δημιουργήθηκε είχε τη βάση της στην υπερηφάνεια και τον εγωισμό. Η ιδέα ότι ανήκω σε ένα κόμμα που ξεχωρίζει ἀπο ένα ἄλλο δε συμβαδίζει με τον τρόπο ζωῆς του Χριστοῦ. Ο υπηρέτης δεν έχει ανεξάρτητη θέση. Την ἀξία του την παίρνει ἀπο τον κύριό του. Χωρίς το Θεό κανένας Απóstολος δε θα είχε επιτυχία. Για τη σωτηρία των πιστών εργάστηκαν και ἔχτιζαν την κάθε Εκκλησία. Το κτίριο του Χριστοῦ οικοδόμησαν.

2. Οι Οικοδόμοι

Ο Απóstολος Παύλος μιλάει απευθείας στους δασκάλους και διακόνους της Εκκλησίας οι οποίοι χτίζουν ἐπάνω ἀπο τα θεμέλια που έβαλε, τα θεμέλια της Εκκλησίας. Τους προτρέπει να οικοδομούν πάνω στον ακρογωνιαῖο λίθο που εἶναι ο Χριστός. Να μαρτυρήσουν το Χριστο. Επίσης τους προτρέπει να προσέξουν με ποιὰ υλικά χτίζουν. Τα πολυτελή ἀνάκτορα χτίζονται με χρυσό, ἀσήμι, μάρμαρα και πολύτιμες πέτρες. Τα φτωχόσπιτα με ἀχυρα και καλάμια.

Σε αὐτή την περίπτωση τα υλικά ἀναπαριστούν τις διάφορες ἀρετές.

Αὐτός που καλλιεργεί μια σωστή πνευματική ζωή με το ἔργο του ἐποικοδομῇ με πολύτιμα υλικά. Αὐτός που εργάζεται μονο ἐξωτερικά και ἐπιπόλαια οικοδομῇ με καλάμι. Ο διάκονος του ευαγγελίου παραμερίζει τον εαυτό του και προσπαθεῖ πάντα να έχει ὁδηγό του το Χριστο, και σκοπός της ὅλης δράσης του εἶναι η δόξα του Χριστοῦ.

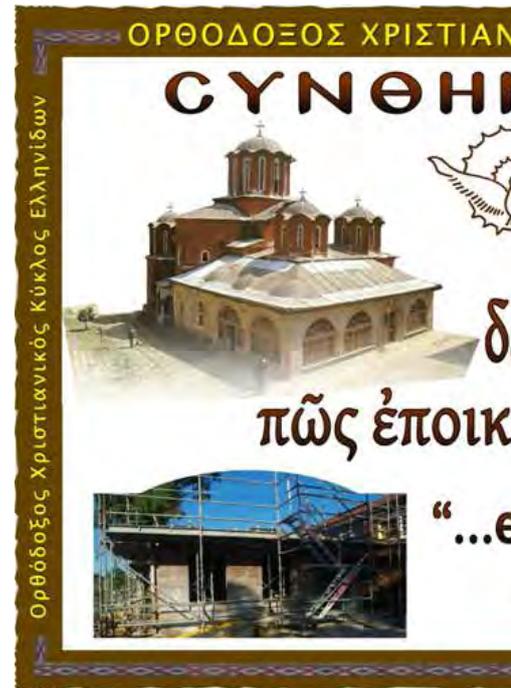
3. Το ἔργο

Γιατί εἶναι σημαντικά τα υλικά; Διότι, την Ἡμέρα της Κρίσεως θα φανούν ὅλα. Τότε η δίκαιη κρίση του Θεοῦ θα ξεχωρίσει κάθε ἔργο με τη φωτιά. Διότι το χρυσό θα ἀντισταθεῖ στη φωτιά και θα γυαλίζει ἀκόμα πιο πολυ ἐνῶ το ξύλο θα καεί. Αὐτοὶ που εργάστηκαν με φρόνηση και ἀρετή θα λάμψουν. Αν ὁμως τα υλικά εἶναι νοθευμένα με ἐγωισμό, διχόνοια και κοσμικό φρόνημα, το ἔργο θα χαθεῖ.

Το συμπέρασμα;

Να ξανασκεφτοῦμε για ποιο στόχο εργαζόμαστε; Πού βασιζεται το ἔργο μας; Πῶς εργαζομαι. Με ποιὸ φρόνημα; Τι χτίζω και με ποιὰ υλικά;

Το θέμα ἐπείγει: «Ἐκαστος δὲ βλέπῃ πῶς ἐποικοδομεῖ».



“each one take care how he builds”

(1 Cor. 3:10)

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Apostle Paul is addressing a people who are in danger of making a drastic mistake with their choices. They are building their Christian Community – the Church - upon an insecure foundation. They are building upon the foundation of

human wisdom, human resource and human effort. As a result, their lives are filled with imbalance and instability. So Apostle Paul addresses them with the following verse (3:10) “*According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it.*”

Over the years, Apostle Paul had laid the foundations of the Church in many cities. He would often come

into a city, preach the Gospel and then leave. Others would come in and take over building on the foundation of the growing Church. Indeed, we are still building upon that foundation today. But that foundation is not centered upon Paul. The Church is not Paul’s Church, neither is it Peter’s Church. It is Christ’s Church. The foundation is Jesus Christ.

In this verse, however, Apostle Paul expresses a warning to all who work in the Church. You might think: ‘hang on. This doesn’t apply to me. After all, I am not a Bishop, Priest, preacher, or a leader of people’. However, in truth, if we are Christian, then we are one of God’s workers. We have joined the ranks of the army of God. We are an ambassador for Christ. We are heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are the children of the living God. Whether we like it or not, we have engaged in God’s building project.

There are however two questions:

- On what foundation are we building?
- What building materials are we using?

Let us look at the foundation. We read in 3:11, “*For no*

man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid which is Jesus Christ”. The foundation is the most important part of the building, it determines the size, shape and strength of the structure. A ministry may seem successful for a time, but if it is not founded on Christ, it will eventually collapse and disappear.

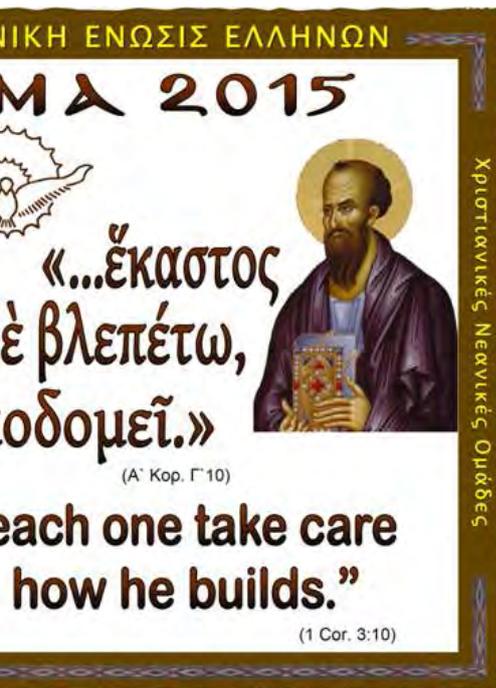
Having secured an adequate foundation in Christ, the next question we face is the choice of building materials. Apostle Paul writes about six different materials in 3:12-13: “*Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear*”. In fact there are two kinds of material – costly or cheap, imperishable or perishable, permanent or temporary. In light of the Apostle’s concerns, “gold, silver and precious stones” are quality materials, fit for construction on the foundation of Christ crucified. Conversely “wood, hay, straw” are inferior materials, unfit for construction. They are the perishable stuff of human wisdom that finds the Gospel foolish.

Let us look at some examples of these two kinds of materials:

A heart of service to other is like gold, silver and precious stones. While spiritual laziness and the attitude of “let others do it” is like wood, hay, or straw in God’s sight. Generosity with the Lord and His people is gold, silver and precious stones. While self-centeredness and stinginess are wood, hay and straw. Coming to church with a heart of worship is the former; coming to impress others is the latter.

There is a beautiful story – A wealthy woman died one day and went to heaven. An angel then took her to her heavenly abode, which was a plain old ordinary building. Right next door to her was a palatial mansion. “Who does that belong to?” she asked the angel. “Your gardener” the angel replied. “How did my gardener get a mansion and I get a plain, old ordinary building?” The angel then said “Well, we only build with the materials you send us!” If you’re sending to heaven junk, junk is then what God uses. He only uses what you send Him!

Thus, **the time to prepare for tomorrow is today.** Let us therefore take to heart the words of Apostle Paul throughout our whole life: “Let each one take care how he builds.” Amen. 



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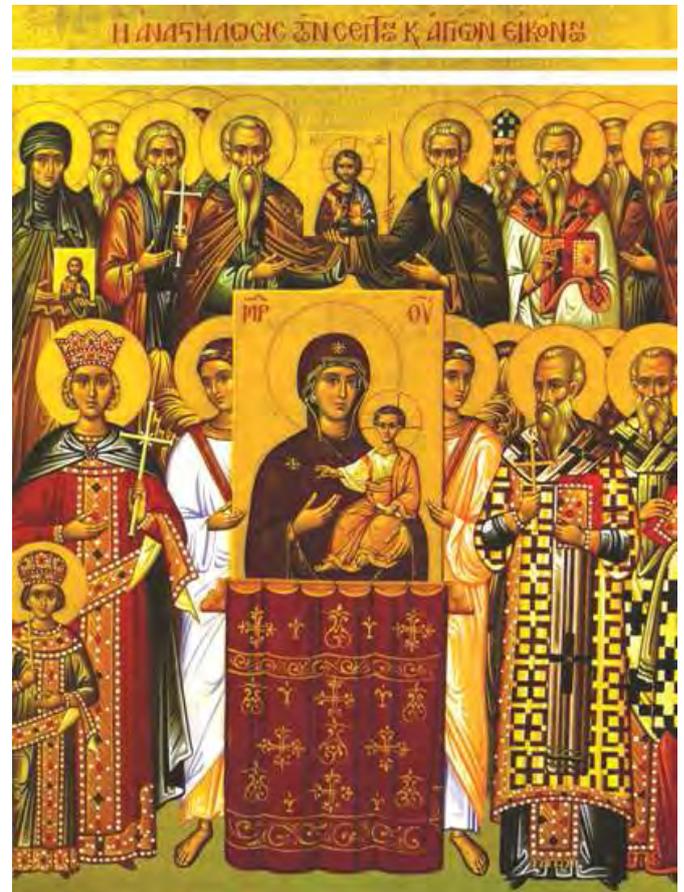


Κυριακή της Ορθοδοξίας

Κυριακή της Ορθοδοξίας! Εορτή χαρμόσυνος και πανήγυρις λαμπρά δια τα πλήθη των Ορθοδόξων. Διότι αυτή την Κυριακή η Εκκλησία αγάλλεται εν τω Χριστώ. Δεν είναι μόνον η χαρά δια την αναστήλωσιν των αγίων εικόνων. Είναι ακόμη και η ευγνώμων ανάμνησις και η ευχαριστία προς τον Θεόν δια την νίκην της Εκκλησίας κατά των ποικίλων αιρέσεων, δια τον θρίαμβον τον ένδοξον και περιφανή, τον οποίον η Εκκλησία του Χριστού δια μέσου των αιώνων κατήγαγε.

Αλλά ο Θρίαμβος αυτός της Χριστιανικής πίστεως δεν είναι μόνον εκείνος, τον οποίον συνήθως αναφέρομεν, ο Θρίαμβος ο εμφανής εναντίον της υλικής βίας, παρά τους σκληρούς διωγμούς, παρά τους ποταμούς των αιμάτων των καλλινίκων του Χριστού Μαρτύρων. Δεν είναι απλώς και μόνον ο Θρίαμβος της Ορθοδόξου πίστεως κατά των ποικιλώνυμων αιρέσεων και των διαφόρων παλαιότερων και νεωτέρων αντιχρίστων Θρησκευτικών συστημάτων. Είναι και ο θρίαμβος ο μυστικός, α αφανής, αλλά ο οποίος, διότι είναι μυστικός και αφανής, δεν είναι ολιγώτερον αξιόλογος και εις τον οποίον οφείλεται ο εμφανής. Είναι ο Θρίαμβος της χριστιανικής διδασκαλίας, της χριστιανικής πίστεως, ο οποίος πραγματοποιείται εις το εσωτερικόν του ανθρώπου. Είναι ο θρίαμβος της κατακτήσεως της ανθρωπίνης ψυχής αφ' ενός, και της αναγεννήσεως αυτής αφ' ετέρου.

Ιδού διατί το μέλλον ανήκει εις τούς Χριστιανούς. Ιδού διατί η νίκη του Χριστού θα συνεχίζεται από γενεάν εις γενεάν. Ιδού διατί ο Θρίαμβος της Εκκλησίας είναι μοναδικός και υπέρλαμπρος. Διότι οι πιστοί ανταποκρινόμενοι εις την φωνήν του Αρχηγού των, του Κυρίου Ιησού, ακολουθούν τον Δυνατόν, τον



Άγιον, τον Αιώνιον.

Ακολουθούντες δε τον Χριστόν εις την παρούσαν ζωήν, θα τον ακολουθήσουν ένδοξοι και πανευτυχείς και θα είναι μαζί του και εις την ατελεύτητον αιωνιότητα!



Greek Orthodox Sunday Schools

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

Dear Parents,

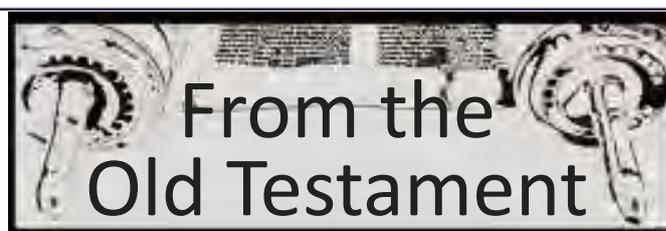
All of us wish to see our children grow up to be happy and able to face life's challenges. Sunday School can help.

Sunday School provides a variety of activities your children will enjoy. It is a place where they can find good friends. Most of all it develops in your child a love for God and His Church, which is the basis for a happy and successful life.

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

Classes for children aged 4-16 are held every Sunday morning at all Parishes, either from 9-10 am or immediately after the Church Service.





Psalm 117:27 (118:27)

«Θεὸς Κύριος καὶ ἐπέφανεν ἡμῖν»

“God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us”

Throughout every Service of the Orthodox Church are scattered verses from the Psalms. At the beginning of every Matins (Orthros) Service, the Orthodox faithful proclaim with the Psalmist: “God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Ps 117:27,26). This simple yet profound phrase is the core of Christian teaching: God has indeed revealed Himself to us. This is what makes Christianity unique and separates it from all other man-made faiths. St Paul writes in his Epistle to the Galatians that “the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to man” (Gal. 1:11).

In what ways has God revealed Himself to us?

- God has revealed Himself to us through creation. Fr George Florovsky writes that creation is “a manifestation of God”.
- God has revealed Himself to us through the Scriptures, both the Old Testament (God’s revelation through the chosen people of Israel) and the New Testament (the revelation of Jesus Christ, the divine Word of God in human flesh). Indeed, Jesus Christ is the one truly “blessed... who comes in the name of the Lord” as the Psalmist states.
- God has revealed Himself to us and continues to reveal Himself to us in the lives of the Saints throughout the ages, in the wisdom and insight of the Church Fathers, in the Divine Liturgy and every Mystery of the Orthodox Christian Church.
- God can also reveal Himself to us in our own lives. If we want God to reveal Himself, we must purify our minds and hearts and humble ourselves to make room for God to act. Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica



says: “God is a mystery to all beings... God reveals Himself only to the meek and humble. He is present everywhere...”

In this way we can come into living communion with God who has revealed Himself to us and continues to reveal Himself to those who love Him.



The Leadership of Moses

Exodus 3:1 - 4:31 records the events by which God called Moses to deliver the Israelites from their Egyptian captivity. A commentary on this passage is provided by theologian Professor Trembelas in his book “Moses, the Liberator of Israel”¹.



Moses was selected and prepared by God from birth to challenge Pharaoh and to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. It is important to note that God did not call Moses to this task while he was still living in the palace of Pharaoh as a “prince of Egypt”. According to Trembelas, God waited until Moses had spent forty years living as a shepherd in Midian before he was called. This was done in order to ensure that Moses was well-grounded in the virtue of humility, and would not succumb to the temptation of pride once he became leader and governor of the people of Israel.

Moses’ response to God, once God had made known to Moses His intentions, confirms his humility. Moses asks God: “Who am I to go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt?” (Exodus 3:11). In fact Moses, because of the low consideration he had for himself, was quite reluctant to undertake the mission and required much convincing of God’s support before he finally agreed.

Moses’ response contrasts sharply with those who, in the pursuit of glory and honour, push to have themselves appointed to leadership and positions in the Church. Such persons rush in, overestimating the extent of their strength to carry out the requirements of the position they seek, as well as failing to give due consideration to the extent of the responsibility involved.

If we do indeed wish to serve God and His Church in some special task, we need to follow the example of Moses. Rather than relying on our own limited strengths and capabilities, we must be completely dependent on the strength and support of God. With our own strength we can do nothing. God has to help us if we are to succeed, and the more we humble ourselves before Him, the more help He gives us, thus ensuring the success of whichever task He has entrusted to us.



¹ Available only in Greek: Μωσής ο Ελευθερωτής του Ισραήλ, published by the Brotherhood of Theologians Sotir, ISBN 33092



What we Hear in Church



Triodion Hymn of the Matins Service

Τὰ πλήθη τῶν πεπραγμένων μοι δεινῶν, ἐννοῶν ὁ
τάλας, τρέμω τὴν φοβερὰν ἡμέραν τῆς κρίσεως·
ἀλλὰ θαρρῶν εἰς τὸ ἔλεος τῆς εὐσπλαγχνίας σου, ὡς ὁ
Δαυΐδ βοῶ σοι· Ἐλέησόν με ὁ Θεός, κατὰ τὸ μέγα σου
ἔλεος.

As I ponder the multitudes of dreadful things that I
have done, wretch that I am, I tremble for the fearful
day of judgement. But confident in your merciful compas-
sion, like David I cry to you, 'Have mercy upon me, O
God, in accordance with your great mercy'.

In the four weeks leading up to Great Lent, there is a
discernible shift in the hymnography of the Church.
This is because from the Vespers service of Sunday of the
Tax Collector and the Pharisee and up to Holy Saturday,
the chanters use the service book titled, the Triodion.
During the preparatory period up to and during Great
Lent, this hymn is chanted after the recitation of the 50th
Psalm, during the Sunday Matins Service. Psalm 50 is
attributed to King David who wrote it after having
committed adultery and murder. In its closing refrain, the
hymn makes a direct link to the opening verse of the
psalm. It opens with a woeful cry of fear at the multitude
of sins committed by us, composed by the hymnographer
on our behalf as a personal plea to God. In itself, this
emotive phrase sets up some interesting questions. Are
we judged less harshly if we commit fewer sins? Is it
better to sin a little and feel fearful than to commit many
sins and feel unapologetic? This is a legalistic and fatal
way of thinking. St Paul says in Romans 3:23, "For all have
sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Professor Mantzarides clarifies further: "The Gospel, as is
easily confirmed, does not divide men according to their virtues or
vices, but according to their disposition either to repent or to persist
in sin. Christ did not call man to become more virtuous or less
sinful, but to repent and to accept the grace which He offers them. In
so far as men do not repent, they are far from the true source of life
and are slaves to decay and death".

All we have that are ours alone are our sins, offered to
God in repentance and confession. Every other thing we
may have, be it virtue, be it talents, be it good health, etc,
is seen by the Orthodox Christian as a blessing from
God. It is only if we feel the heavy weight of our sins that
we can cry out for God's great mercy together with King
David, with the Prodigal Son, the tax-collector, the harlot
and the many other examples of repentance put forth
before us by the Church during Great Lent. ❖

¹ Giorgios I. Mantzarides, Orthodox Spiritual life, HCOP, Brookline
Massachusetts, 1994 p.37

FROM THE HOLY FATHERS...

St John Climacus on Repentance

“The Ladder of Divine Ascent” by St John Climacus
is one of the most studied books in Orthodoxy.
St John (579-649 AD) entered the monastic life at a
young age, later becoming abbot of the central monastery
on Mt Sinai. He wrote the “Ladder” as a spiritual guide
for monks in a neighbouring monastery, which helps
explain the uncompromising tone of the “Ladder”.
Although written for monks, it has nonetheless been
treasured by lay people for hundreds of years. The
“Ladder” is divided into 30 steps, or chapters, to guide
the spiritual life. Step 1 is the renunciation of worldly life,
whilst step 30 pertains to faith, hope and love.

The “Ladder” is not a manual or formula, but a way of
life: a path of initiation into the spiritual life. It
emphasises what is natural and unnatural, what is
immortal and corrupt. Step 5 on repentance is a
challenging chapter for many contemporary readers. It
portrays the “prison” at an Alexandrian monastery, where
repentant monks voluntarily submitted to harsh measures
as a means of correcting spiritual faults. The images are
harsh and confronting. However, in its entirety,
repentance is not negative, but positive. The following
words of St John from Step 5 demonstrate this point:

*“Repentance is the daughter of hope and the refusal to despair.
Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the performance of
good deeds which are the opposite of the sins. It is the purification of
conscience and the voluntary endurance of affliction”.*

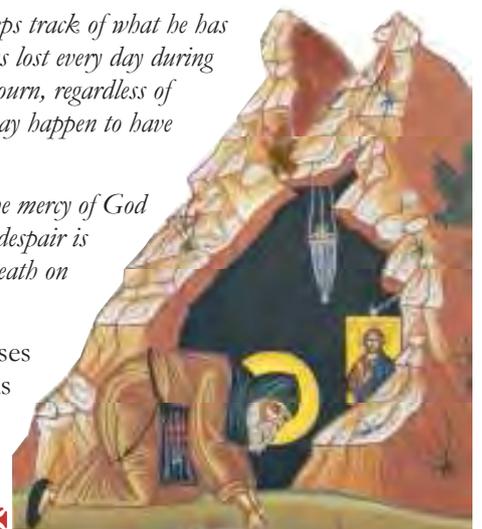
*“It seems [to me] that those who have fallen and are penitent are
more blessed than those who have never fallen and who do not have
to mourn over themselves”.*

*“Do not be surprised if you fall every day ... do not surrender.
Stand your ground bravely. And you may be sure that your
guardian angel will respect your endurance”.*

*“He who really keeps track of what he has
done will consider as lost every day during
which he did not mourn, regardless of
whatever good he may happen to have
done”.*

*“Nothing equals the mercy of God
or surpasses it. To despair is
therefore to inflict death on
oneself”.*

St John emphasises
that repentance is
a renewal of our
baptism and a
source of hope
in God. ❖





Incense

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling fragrance”. (Eph 5:2)



Anyone who walks into an Orthodox church cannot remain unmoved by what they encounter. All their SENSES will be heightened as they take in the iconography, the sound of chanting, the lighting of candles and oil lamps, the taste of the Bread and Wine and the sweet smell of incense filling their being. The use of incense is traced back to the Old Testament when God commanded Moses to make an altar and burn incense upon it (Ex 30). Incense is made up of a mixture of spices, oils, resin and gum from particular trees. In essence, it is an offering of earth's treasures back to their Creator. Incense was one of the gifts offered by the Magi at Christ's birth, a symbol of His Priesthood, in the same way that gold was a symbol of His Kingdom and myrrh a symbol of His sufferings. In the New Testament (Rev 8:3), Christ is likened to the burning ember, and as the charcoal burns so should our hearts be aflame with prayer.

Incense use in worship today symbolizes our prayers rising heavenward to God: “Let my prayer be set forth before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” (Ps 14:2), as chanted at the vespers service.

Everybody and everything is being censured during the service to emphasise the essential unity of those in heaven and on earth, as well as our participation in heavenly things during services.

The priest censures the Holy Altar, relics, the icons, and the faithful. He censures the artoclasia and the kolliva (and the departed) so that God may receive the prayers and petitions offered up for their souls.

When being blessed by the priest with incense, a person simply bows their head and acknowledges that we are living icons as we are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we too are called to be Saints.

At home (the family church) we should cense daily. First the icon corner, each family member, each room, making the sign of the cross with the incense burner over the children's icons, beds, study tables, saying a special prayer for the wellbeing and enlightenment of that family member. The ashes and charcoal used should be gathered together and discarded in an appropriate place or buried.

May God make our prayers acceptable. AMEN

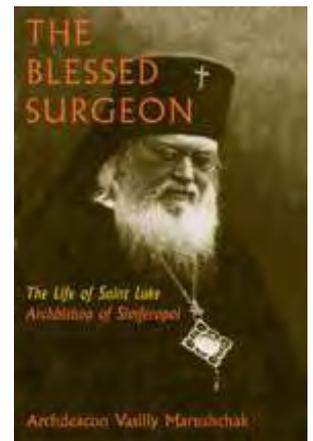


The Blessed Surgeon: The Life of Saint Luke, Archbishop of Simferopol

by Archdeacon Vasiliy Marushchak

Published by Divine Ascent Press, Second Edition, 2008.

The Blessed Surgeon is a biography of St Luke, Archbishop of Simferopol and the Crimea (1877-1961), a Bishop doctor who lived during the harsh Communist regime of the Soviet Union, and who is considered a Holy Unmercenary Saint of the Orthodox Church. Saint Luke was ordained a priest at the age of 44 after his wife passed away, then served as a Bishop, professor, surgeon and father, who faced many struggles with not only balancing these roles, but doing so while facing the severe persecutions against Christians at that time. His life serves as an example to all Christians living in the world.



The Bishop's deep faith was always present in his life and work; and the book details many his struggles for the Faith. An inspiring example shows St Luke's courage when he refused to attend his work at the hospital, unless he was permitted to hang an icon of the Mother of God in the operating room. The executives of the hospital, recognising their need of St Luke's unmatched surgical skills, eventually yielded in their opposition, and the icon was allowed.

Other persecutions were more severe, with St Luke arrested on three occasions (with one leading to imprisonment and interrogation for two years) and exiled three times by the authorities.

As a Bishop, St Luke was truly a pillar of the Church, strengthening his parishes against not only the persecutions of the government, but also from the false teachings of the heretical 'Living Church', a denomination propagated by the Communist regime.

St Luke can be credited with many sermons (most of which are preserved in 12 volumes), a Stalin award for contributions to science (and prize money from which he donated to war affected children) and even a textbook titled *Essays on Purulent Surgery*. He is commemorated by the Church on June 11th.



NEWS and VIEWS

Summer Camps

During the month of January, the Boys and Girls Omathes (Youth Fellowships) and the Men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society held their separate annual Camps at Mangrove Mountain, about 90 minutes north of Sydney. The Boys' and Girls' Camps were held on the same week from the 14-18th January, whilst the Men's Camp was held on the weekend of 30th January – 1st February. The theme of the Boys' and Girls' Camps was "Give me your heart" (Prov. 23:26) and that of the Men's Camp "Each one take care how he builds" (1 Cor 3:10). A blessing of all the Camps was the Divine Liturgy Services officiated by Fr Eusebios, Abbot of Pantanassa Monastery, as well as the Compline Service at Holy Cross Monastery for the Girls. The Camps were also privileged to have among their participants interstate visitors from Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane.



Participants of the Boys' Camp at Landmark Retreat Centre with Fr Eusebios.



Participants of the Girls' Camp enjoying the outdoors.



Participants of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society Men's Camp.

**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.

Phone: (02) 9787 9779.

E-mail: editor@lychnos.org

Internet: www.greekorthodoxchristians.org