



THE GREAT COMMISSION

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mat. 28:19-20)

With these words St Matthew closes his Gospel. He opened his Gospel with the genealogy of Christ, but curiously, this genealogy did not start with Adam. Rather, St Matthew starts his genealogy with Abraham.

Why does he start with Abraham? We may find a clue in what God says to Abram, as Abraham was then known, whilst he was in his father’s city of Ur in Mesopotamia: *And the Lord said to Abram, Go forth out of thy land and out of thy kindred, and out of the house of thy father, and come into the land which I will show thee. And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and magnify thy name, and thou shall be blessed. And I will bless those that bless thee, and curse those that curse thee, and in thee shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed.* (Gen. 12:1-3)

God asks something of Abraham and makes promises to him. He asks that Abraham come out from his society, from his comfortable surrounds, and that he goes to where God will take him. The promises are that Abraham himself will become a great nation and that in Abraham, all the nations will be blessed.

This calling and these promises are fulfilled with the coming of our Lord and more particularly, with the commissioning of the Apostles. The Apostles themselves were first called by the Lord and are then sent out by Him just as was Abraham. This calling and sending out are the fundamental characteristics of every single true

member of our Lord’s Holy Church.

We are not members of His Church because we made a decision to join it, as we might with a man-made institution. Rather, we are members of His Church because we have heard His call and have responded to it.

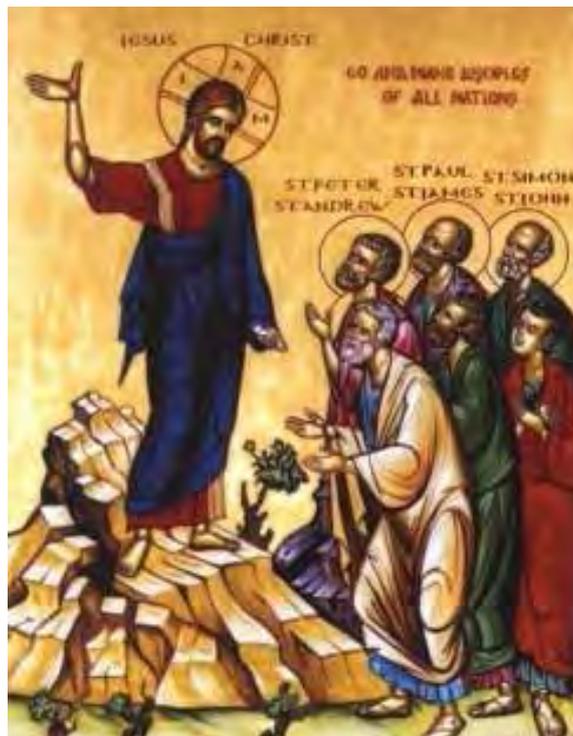
This, after all, is the very nature of the Church. The Greek word ἐκκλησία reveals that it is a body of those called out by God.

We too, if we truly want to be members of the Church are called to separate ourselves from the ways of the world and worldly people. However, this calling out is not done with the intention of abandoning those left in the world. Rather in God’s plan for salvation, it is the basis for the salvation of the world and all in it.

The Apostles can only become apostles, that is those who are sent, if they first have heeded the call to come out and be separate. They would be powerless to help the world and to heal it if they were “of

the world”. They must not be of the world and yet they are called to be in the world.

Each and every member of the Lord’s Church has the same two callings, firstly a move away from the world towards Christ and, at the same time, a move towards the world to bring the Light of Christ into the lives of all of our fellow men and women. Let us accept the calling of God to be different from the world as did Abraham, Moses, the Holy Apostles and all of God’s Holy Saints, allowing God’s Holy Spirit to make us vessels for shining His Light and Truth into the hearts of our fellow men and women.



Απόστολος Παύλος

Η «δύναμη» της «ασθενείας» του

Δύσκολο να περιγράψει κανείς τη ζωή ενός Αγίου. Δυσκολότερο να ασχοληθεί με έναν Απόστολο του Χριστού που έλαβε κατ'ευθείαν από τον Κύριο τη κλήση του: **«πορευθέντες μαθητεύσετε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη...» (Ματθ. ΚΗ'19)**

Το έργο όμως αυτό δυσχεραίνει απείρως πιά πολύ όταν κάποιος τολμά να γράψει για τον μεγαλύτερο Απόστολο το **«σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς»**, τον Απόστολο των εθνών, τον ουρανοβάμονα Παύλο.

Είναι όμως ο ίδιος ο Απόστολος που μας βοηθεί σύμφωνα με αυτά που γράφει στη Β' Επιστολή του στους Κορινθίους, να αγγίζουμε μόνο μιά πτυχή της πολύπλευρης ζωής του. Εκεί μας αποκαλύπτει τον αληθινό εαυτό του που κατευθύνεται αποκλειστικά από τις ενέργειες του Αγίου Πνεύματος.

Μας λέει λοιπόν στο ΙΒ' Κεφάλαιο της Β' προς Κορινθίους επιστολής του ότι ηρπάγη **«ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ»**. Παρά ταῦτα σπεύδει να προσθέσει πως με μεγάλη του ευχαρίστηση θα καυχηθεί όχι για τις αποκαλύψεις που έλαβε από το Θεό, αλλά μάλλον για τις αδυναμίες του, γιατί έτσι έρχεται και επισκηνώνει στη ζωή του η δύναμη του Χριστού.

Δηλ. έναντι **«τῆ ὑπερβολῆ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων»** που θα μπορούσε δικαιολογημένα να καυχηθεί, ο Παύλος τοποθετούσε και πρόβαλλε τον ασθενικό εαυτό του. Ενώ βίωνε το θησαυρό της Χάρης του Θεού, είχε τη ίδια στιγμή βαθειά εμπειρία του **«ὄστρακίνου σκεύους»** για να γίνει γνωστό σε όλους πως η μεγαλειώδης δύναμη που νικά όλα τα εμπόδια και τους κινδύνους της ζωής μας, είναι του Θεού και δεν προέρχεται από εμάς τους ασθενείς και αδύνατους.

Δεν ξέρουμε ποιά ήταν η αρρώστεια του Απ. Παύλου. Όποια και νά'ταν, ο Απόστολος την λογαριάζει σαν το αντίβαρο έναντι των αποκαλύψεων του Θεού, ώστε



κάθε φορά να θυμάται πως είναι ένας ασθενής άνθρωπος. Στη παράκληση του Αποστόλου να του αφαιρέσει ο Θεός τον **«σκόλοπα»**, πήρε την απάντηση **«Ἄρκει σοι ἡ Χάρις Μου»**.

Η δύναμη του Θεού λάμπει και φαίνεται σ'όλη της τη λαμπρότητα μέσα από την ανθρώπινη αδυναμία και ατέλεια. Αυτό το Ευαγγέλιο κηρύχθηκε στον κόσμο όχι από σοφούς και ικανούς, αλλά από τα **«μωρὰ τοῦ κόσμου... τὰ ἀσθενῆ... τὰ ἀγενῆ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὰ ἐξουθενημένα»**, που ο Θεός **«ἐξελέξατο... ἵνα καταισχύνῃ τὰ ἰσχυρά... ὅπως μὴ καυχῆσθαι πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ» (Α' Κορ. α'27-29)**.

Η Αγία μας Εκκλησία δεν μένει στον αιώνα επειδή την υπηρέτησαν άνθρωποι άξιοι, ευφυείς και με ικανότητες αποκλειστικά ανθρώπινες, αλλά γιατί το Άγιο Πνεύμα συγκροτεί τον θεανθρώπινο θεσμό της, ώστε να υπερβαίνονται οι ατέλειες της ανθρωπίνης οργανώσεώς της.

Οι άνθρωποι συνηθίζουμε από τον «αδύναμο» εαυτό μας να προβάλλουμε την υπεροχή και την αξιωσύνη μας. Γι'αυτό και δεν έχουμε υπομονή στις θλίψεις και τις δοκιμασίες και δεν υπακούουμε στο θέλημα του Θεού.

Ο Απ. Παύλος με τη προσωπική εμπειρία της αιωνιότητος και της ασθενείας του μαζί, μας βοηθεί να βαδίσουμε το δρόμο προς συνάντηση με τον Σωτήρα Κύριό μας. Σ'αυτό το δρόμο μας παροτρύνει να αποδεχθούμε το θέλημα του Θεού όπως και να εκφράζεται (θλίψεις, δοκιμασίες, αντιξοότητες). Μέσα απ' αυτούς τους πολυποίκιλλους πειρασμούς – **ασθένεια** – οδηγούμεθα στην ταπείνωση και την Μετάνοια. Τώρα είμαστε έτοιμοι να αναζητήσουμε το έλεος του Θεού που μας προσφέρει με τη ζωή της Εκκλησίας και μας οδηγεί στην αιώνια Σωτηρία. ✠

SOCIAL MEDIA TODAY AND OUR ORTHODOX FAITH

Social media is defined as the social interaction in which people create, share or exchange information, ideas, and images/videos in virtual communities and networks. People have always interacted and engaged in social activities, and for many of us this has meant face to face interaction or «πρόσωπο με πρόσωπο». Today however, many

people mainly interact through social media in a virtual world, and whilst this enables them to connect with anyone, anywhere in the world from the comfort of their home, they are still often left feeling lonely or isolated.

There are thousands of social media sites around the world with the most popular network being Facebook, with 1.2 billion users worldwide. In Australia, which has a population of 22.2 million, 81% use the internet, 57% use Facebook and 110% use mobile phones, which is more than one phone per person. This equates to 73% of the population using social media to communicate, with the average time users spend on social media each day being 2 hours 5 minutes.

With so much time spent using social media it's important to be safe: it is reliant on users to ensure their information security is complete. This entails using a strong password with at least 8 characters. Don't leave your full name, birthdate or address in your profile. In particular, your date of birth makes you an easy target for identity thieves. Become familiar with privacy controls and avoid clicking suspicious links, even from a trusted source. Do not reveal sensitive information about yourself such as schedules and event locations, and avoid mentioning that you will be away from home.

For young people in particular, protect your reputation on social networks by thinking twice before posting remarks and pictures you wouldn't want your parents or prospective employers to see. Remember, what you post on line stays on line. Recent research has found that 70% of job recruiters rejected candidates based on information



they found on-line. There are many benefits of social media, such as staying connected with friends and family, making new friends, sharing and exchanging ideas, providing opportunities for community engagement through raising money for charities and volunteer work to name just a few. However, there are also many

negatives to beware of, such as cyber bullying, on-line grooming of young children, fraud, extortion and identity theft. Did you know that social media today has replaced money as the number one contributor to marriage problems?

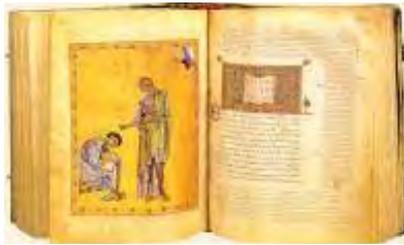
Finally, social media and how it relates to our Orthodox Faith is very important to us as Orthodox Christians. Technology and the internet are valuable tools which allow us to spread the word of God and our Faith, particularly to isolated parts of the globe, as well as learning more about our Faith and what is happening around us. Social media and technology are used by many Orthodox parishes and monasteries including Mt Athos to inform, contact and educate us in our Orthodox Faith. It's not technology or social media which are the enemy, but often our imaginations and thoughts lead to bad choices. Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica, Serbia, stated: "our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, meek and kind then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and we can have neither peace nor tranquillity"¹.

Are we incorporating social media into our spiritual life OR are we incorporating our spiritual life into social media? Technology and social media are all around us; how do we manage the time we spend on them? How do we limit the time spent on them by our children? Particularly whilst living in a society of impulsiveness and immediacy.

¹ Our Thoughts Determine our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica. Published by St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2009.



Gospel Reading July 19th (Matthew 5:14-19)



This Gospel reading forms part of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. In this homily, Jesus outlines the kind of life that must be led by those who seek the Kingdom of God.

The Sermon on the Mount begins by detailing how those who belong to Jesus are poor in spirit; they mourn, they hunger, are peacemakers and thirst for what is right. Christ then continues and says to his Disciples: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel. Instead they put it on a stand, so let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father, who is in Heaven" (v. 14-16).

Light is a symbol of God who is the true uncreated light. The central revelation of this passage is that when people see the good and light-giving works of Christians, they give glory to the Father who is in Heaven, not to us. We are called to be the light of the world so that if people see us, they do not glorify us, they glorify God instead, since God manifestly inspires people of such spiritual quality and forbearance.

The miracle is that in this fallen world, where people are often at war with each other, God produces saintly people who love everyone without qualification; saintly people who are poor, who are mourning, who are meek, who are thirsting for what is right, who are merciful, who are pure in their heart, who are making peace, who stand persecution, ridicule, and reviling without reviling in return.

The existence of such people is a phenomenon. But we should remember that this is what we are called to be. Christian virtues then have not only a personal but public function. By living according to the gospel, *doing* the truth, we will bear good works and show the goodness of the Father to every person. ❖



Saint Macrina the Younger Celebrated on July 19th

Saint Macrina the Younger was the granddaughter of Saint Macrina the Elder, and sister of St Basil the Great.

Born in 327, she was the eldest of ten children. Macrina grew into a very beautiful woman, with many men asking for her hand in marriage. When she came of age, she was betrothed to a good man. However

God took him before they were married, and Macrina then dedicated the rest of her life to Christ as a virgin.

Macrina showed her love for Christ firstly through her unyielding service to her family, assisting with the education of her siblings, and managing the family's vast estate once her father had died. She became the family's material and spiritual protectress. She kept her brothers on the difficult path to Sainthood, urging them to distance themselves from secular indulgences, and complementing her advice with unceasing prayer and perfect faith. Through all the hardships the family experienced, Macrina remained steadily focused on eternal life.

Macrina's virtue and example convinced her mother Emelia to join her in leading an ascetic life, and together they turned the family home into a monastery. Christ allowed Macrina to perform many miracles, such as when she developed a tumour on her breast. After spending the night in prayer, she took mud from the ground that her tears had made, spreading it over the lump. She then approached her mother to make the sign of the cross over her, after which the tumour miraculously disappeared, leaving only a scar. Another example was during a famine in Cappadocia in 368, when her prayers miraculously replenished the community's grain stock, which had all but depleted.

At the end of her earthly life, Macrina grew steadily ill, but again she used this as an opportunity to contemplate God's works and mysteries. Her brother, Gregory of Nyssa, was at her side in her last days, and they spoke together of their brother Basil. Instead of grieving, they discussed the resurrection of the body and the meaning of creation. As Macrina felt her end approaching, she murmured this prayer: "It is You, Lord, who has banished for us the fear of death... remit my sins so that once separated from this body, I may appear before You, with an irreproachable and immaculate soul". ❖



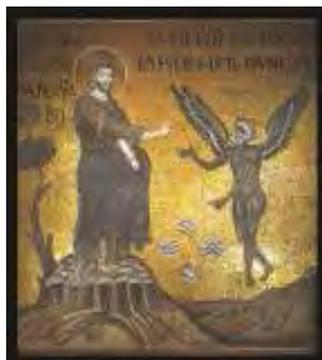
Questions & Answers

A clergyman of our Archdiocese answers ...

Why doesn't God destroy the devil?

The devil does exist. One of his many tricks is to fool us into believing he does not exist. There are people in our community who make money out of fortune telling, sorcery, astrology, séances, and other satanic practices - it is very important that we keep well away from such things. A much more common situation we all face is being tempted by the devil. The temptation is not the sin; it is not our fault. But if we give in to it, if we allow that passion to remain in us, then this is our fault. There are many examples we can give. Someone does us an injustice, and we allow bitterness and resentment, even anger and hatred, to become bigger and bigger in our heart. Or we are constantly finding fault in others, judging them, and making excuses for ourselves, refusing to acknowledge we are at fault as well. Or we give in to desires of the flesh: we know it is wrong but we still give in to the devil's temptation and watch pornographic material, or commit other such sins. Another example is spiritual laziness: we become slack with our spiritual duties, such as fervently participating in the Liturgy, the Sacraments, spiritual reading and prayer, and slowly drift away from the spiritual life. The devil often leads us astray with pride and self-love, but sometimes he uses another tactic - he uses despair: we feel there is no hope, that we cannot defeat our problems, that it is all too hard.

So why does not God destroy the devil? Some people, as part of their question about why does God allow suffering; ask this question as well. They point out that a lot of suffering is due to the wrongs of people. It is true that the greed of some leads to poverty in others, pride can result in enormous hurt in others, as can anger and hatred. Laziness or lack of diligence in their work can lead to mistakes: if such a person is a doctor, or engineer, or car mechanic, this can be a disaster. A teacher or nurse, who just does not care, can create problems and hurt. Those that have not learnt to struggle against desires of the flesh can one day not be strong enough to resist temptation, and may be unfaithful in marriage, or commit rape, and this can scar others greatly for life. It is true that if we were all very loving, caring, forgiving, pure, patient, etc; then there would be much less suffering in the world. So why does not God destroy the devil? Why



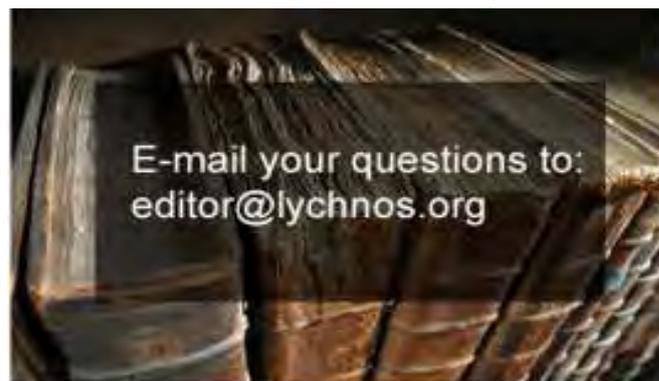
could he not pre-program all of us to be full of kindness and virtue?

The only answer I can give is that God wants us to be free. If he made us like robots, programmed to only do good, if there was no devil and therefore we were incapable of any of the evil passions, then our goodness would have no value. If there was no sacrifice and struggle involved in doing good, then there would be no beauty.

If an atheist was to read what I just wrote he/she would probably become very angry. By far the commonest reason why atheists do not believe in God is because they feel that the enormous suffering that occurs in the world is incompatible with a God of love. An atheist once wrote: "What sort of loving God would value human freedom so much that out of respect for Hitler's freedom he allowed so many to die a cruel death in the holocaust?" Atheists who say such things are making a value judgment. God sees things infinitely clearer than we do. For God our freedom is enormously important, and He sees clearly that the only thing that really matters in the end is for us to reach Heaven. For an atheist, the greatest evil imaginable is suffering on this earth. For a Christian who has experienced the love of God, the greatest evil imaginable is to be far from God's love for evermore. If you have this perspective of eternal life, then it changes how you view suffering. If through our patience in suffering in this life we grow spiritually and come closer to God, then it is worth it.

God is infinitely wise: out of enormous love for us he arranged things as He has, waiting for us to willingly respond to His love and reject the devil.

† Fr D. K. ✠



E-mail your questions to:
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The Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles

On 30 June each year, the Church honours the Synaxis (a celebratory gathering) of the Twelve Holy Apostles. The commemoration of this group of Saints in the major feast preceding the Synaxis. For example, the Church holds a Synaxis in honour of St John the Baptist. The feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles follows the feast of the pre-eminent apostles Peter and Paul (29 June). Each year is a collective commemoration of the Twelve Holy Apostles. This, because the group of Twelve Apostles, fulfilled the Lord's commission



Apostle Peter

Simon, the son of Jonah, was an uneducated fisherman. His brother Andrew brought him to Christ who told him, *"Thou art Simon, the son of Jonah; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone"* (Jn 1:41-2). Peter was a man of strong faith and assumed the leadership of the apostles after Pentecost. It was Peter who began preaching to the masses on that holy day. Peter was filled with zeal for God and travelled to Corinth, Rome and Antioch, among other places, to establish churches and baptise the faithful.



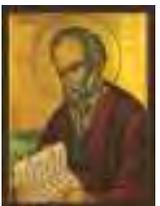
Apostle Andrew

Andrew was the first-called of the apostles. He lived a pious life in celibacy and became a disciple of John the Baptist. Upon hearing John say, pointing to Christ, *"Behold, the Lamb of God!"* he followed Christ faithfully and brought Peter (his brother) to Him. Andrew preached the Word of God in the areas around the Black Sea until his arrest and crucifixion in Patra. He was crucified on an "X" shaped cross. His feet and hands were bound and not affixed to the cross by nails to ensure a slow death.



Apostle James, the Son of Zebedee

James was the brother of John the Evangelist. He was called with his brother by Christ who found them mending their fishing nets. Along with Peter and John, James was chosen to witness Christ's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. James wrote the first epistle to the Christians of the diaspora. He was also the first of the apostles to martyr. The Jews in Jerusalem persuaded Herod Agrippas to have him beheaded.



Apostle John the Theologian and Evangelist

John, the beloved disciple of Christ, alone remained with Christ at the time of His trial and crucifixion. Jesus entrusted John with the task of caring for His all-pure Mother. After the Dormition of the Theotokos, John began his missionary work, travelling through Asia Minor in accordance with the lot he drew. The Church bestowed on him the title "Theologian" because of the theological depths he revealed in his Gospel, and because of his authorship of the Book of Revelation. He is the only one of the Twelve not to have died a martyr's death.



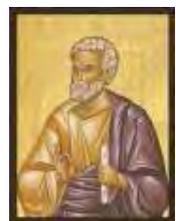
Apostle Philip

Like Andrew and Peter, Philip was also from Bethsaida. However, he was not a fisherman. Philip immersed himself in learning, studying the Scriptures from his youth. When Christ asked Philip to follow Him, Philip could not keep the good news to himself. He ran to his friend Nathanael and announced that he had found the Messiah. Like Peter, Philip was crucified head downward, whilst his persecutors cast stones at his body.



Apostle Simon the Zealot

It was at Simon's house that Jesus performed the first miracle. Simon left the feast to follow Christ instead. He was called "the Zealot" because of his zeal for the law and the regions surrounding Jerusalem. Church records claim that he also visited



Apostle Matthias

Matthias was a student of the law and was well-acquainted with the law of God. He was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.

Η Σύναξις των Αγίων Δώδεκα Αποστόλων

tion of a Synaxis is commonly observed on the day following a major feast day. It recognises the participation of a Saint or a baptist on the day after the Theophany.

of the Twelve is honoured on separate dates of the Church calendar. However the Church, in its wisdom, also established a tion to "*Go... make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Mat 28:19).



the Zealot

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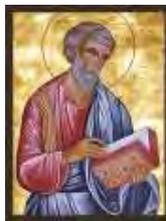
Apostle Bartholomew

Bartholomew travelled with Philip and Philip's sister, St Mariamne, through Syria and Asia Minor. He was crucified with Philip but as they were suspended on their crosses, an earthquake shook the earth and the persecutors decided to take Bartholomew down. Philip had already given up his spirit. Bartholomew went on to preach in India. Finally, his skin was flayed from his body and he was beheaded.



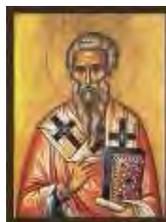
Apostle Thomas

Thomas is perhaps best known for his initial doubt of the Lord's Resurrection. He became, however, a faithful Apostle, journeying to the far east, including the regions of Persia and India. There he preached the Word of God and baptised the faithful in the Holy Spirit.



Apostle Matthew the Evangelist

Matthew was a tax collector; a man of wealth and standing. Despite this, he immediately heeded the request Jesus made of him, "Come, follow me!". He wrote his gospel about eight years after the Lord's Ascension and then departed to his ministry in Macedonia, Syria, Persia, Parthia, Media and Ethiopia.



Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus

James was the brother of Matthew. After Pentecost he travelled, fighting idolatry and performing miracles. He came to be known as the "Divine Seed" because he sowed the Word of God in the hearts of so many men.



Apostle Jude, the Brother of our Lord

Jude was the son of Joseph and brother of James, the first bishop of the Church in Jerusalem. He wrote an Epistle, which is counted among the books of the New Testament. Pagan priests seized Jude in the time of his ministry and after torturing him, they suspended him on a cross and speared him to death.



Άγιο Πνεύμα και Σωτηρία

Ο Θεός Πατήρ είναι φύσει φιλόανθρωπος. Το ίδιο και ο Υιός και το Άγιο Πνεύμα. Και αυτό είναι φύσει φιλόανθρωπο, ως ομοούσιο του Πατρός και του Υιού. Φιλόανθρωπο, λοιπόν, το Άγιο Πνεύμα, και σαν φιλόανθρωπο, έχει ως ευρύτατο πεδίο δράσεως τον άνθρωπο.

«Οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐστίν;» (Α Κορ. ΣΤ' 19). Το σώμα μας είναι ναός του Αγίου Πνεύματος: ναός που ανήκει στο Πνεύμα.

Το ίδιο φυσικά ισχύει και για την ψυχή. Είναι κι' αυτή ναός του Αγίου Πνεύματος. Άρα ολόκληρος ο άνθρωπος ανήκει στο Άγιο Πνεύμα. Είναι κτήμα Του και περιουσία Του. Είναι το χωράφι που εργάζεται, που οργώνει και καλλιεργεί, φέρνοντας τον γλυκύτατο καρπό της σωτηρίας. Ο Χριστός «πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι» (Α Τιμ. Β' 4).

Όμοίως καί τό Άγιο Πνεύμα, «πάντας θέλει σωθῆναι». Η αιτία Του να σώζονται ολοι οι άνθρωποι συνυπάρχει εις το Άγιο Πνεύμα.

Δια της αυτού παντοδυναμίου ενεργείας και χάριτος, δίδει την σωτηρίαν εις όλους. Αφ' ου γαρ ο άνθρωπος παρέβη την εντολήν του Θεου μέσα εις τον παράδεισον, εχωλάνθη η προς το καλόν θέλησις και το αυτεξούσιόν του. Όταν και μόνος δεν ημπορεί να θελήση το καλόν και την σωτηρίαν του, χωρίς να βοηθηθή από την χάριν και την ενέργειαν του Αγίου Πνεύματος.

Ο Κύριος εἶπε: «Τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ' οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται



καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει» (Ιωαν. Γ' 8). Πνεύμα, λέει κάποιος ἅγιος, εἶναι ἀέρας, πού πνέει ὅπου θέλει. Ὁ Τό Πνεύμα ὡς «λεπτόν, εὐκίνητον, ὄξύ, ἀκώλυτον» μπορεῖ νὰ πάει ἐκεῖ που εσὺ οὔτε καν το υπολογίζεις: νὰ επισκεφθεῖ τον Ιεχωβάτη, τον Μασσώνο, τον ειδωλολάτρη. Δια της μετανοίας νὰ τους οδηγήσει στο «Φῶς τὸ Ἀληθινόν», νὰ τοὺς ζωοποιήσει, καθότι εἶναι «ζωῆς χωρηγός». Ἐτσι καὶ τὸ Ἅγιο Πνεύμα εργάζεται στον ἄνθρωπο ἀθόρυβα καὶ σιωπηλά. Σώζει, φωτίζει καὶ ζωοποιεῖ (ιεροκρυφίως). ❌

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 7:1

«Κύριε ὁ Θεός μου, ἐπὶ σοὶ ἤλιψα· σῶσόν με ἐκ πάντων τῶν διωκόντων με καὶ ῥύσαι με»

“O LORD my God, in You I put my trust; save me from those who persecute me and deliver me”

The first verse of this Psalm seems to be a very simple prayer: one that can be offered up to God by anyone. However, when this prayer is understood in its totality, we see it pre-supposes in the believer absolute trust in God’s providence. It is impossible to say to God: “in You have I put my trust”, when our behaviour and choices we make everyday indicates that, in actual fact, we have placed our trust in other people, or in worldly pursuits such as power and possessions.

Our Orthodox Faith teaches us that it is only Christ we should worship and it is Him that we should trust, for as Jeremiah says: “cursed be the man who trusts in man” (Jer 17:5). Further, King David does not say that he trusted in God, or would trust Him in the future, but that he trusts Him in the present moment.

This seemingly simple prayer then teaches us that God is to be trusted in at all times; especially in times of persecution and temptation. Persecution is not new to the people of God: David, the Jews in Jeremiah’s time and the Saints from the early Church right up to contemporary times, have endured hardships brought upon by persecutions. Everyone that lives according to the commandments of God must expect persecution in some shape or form.

Why does David pray first to be saved and then delivered? The reason is that if we are weak, we need saving, and this can occur through our faith, for as Christ says: “your faith has saved you” (Luke 7:50). If however, we are in captivity and live a life enslaved to our passions, then we need God’s deliverance from our state of spiritual death. When we recognise that we are in this state, we cry with David: “O LORD my God, in You I put my trust”, save me from my weakness and deliver me from the captivity caused by my sin, which can only be overcome by your boundless mercy.



Christ the Conqueror of Hell: The Descent into Hades from an Orthodox Perspective

By Archbishop Hilarion Alfeyev
Published by St Vladimir’s Seminary (SVS) press, New York, 2009

In this scholarly book, Archbishop Hilarion addresses the origins of our understanding of Christ’s descent into Hades following His death on the Cross, compiling the writings of the New Testament, Church Fathers and the various liturgical texts that refer to this topic.



“Christ the Conqueror of Hell” answers any questions an Orthodox Christian might have on this subject, drawing from teachings throughout Church history, starting with the Apostles and early Apocryphal literature, through to the eighth century Church Fathers. The book also heavily references Church poetry and hymnography, as Archbishop Hilarion writes: *“To theologise...meant to glorify God rather than talk about or reflect on God.”*

In their writings, the Church Fathers answered important questions on this issue: Did Christ liberate all the souls in Hades when he destroyed death, or only those of the Old Testament righteous? Should we understand this descent as metaphorical and merely symbolic of our salvation?

In the various denominations of the Christian world, Christ’s victory over Hell is understood in various ways. Among the Protestants, there is a common acceptance that Christ’s descent did not happen; that the verses that refer to this in the Scriptures are merely symbolic. Catholics, however, believe that the descent did happen, but only the righteous from the Old Testament were saved. The Orthodox Church, however, emphasises that Christ’s descent into Hell opened the way to salvation for all people, as St John Chrysostom, quoted in the book, says:

“The entire human nature which is God’s treasure, was robbed by the devil... So Christ, by his death bound the chief of robbers and the jailer, that is, the devil and death, and transferred his treasure, the entire human race, to the royal treasury.”

Despite its theological nature, “Christ the Conqueror of Hell” is a book for all Orthodox Christians. By introducing the reader to the writings that have defined Orthodox doctrine, it gives true insight about this important aspect of Orthodox theology and the salvation God has prepared for all.





What we Hear in Church



Divine Liturgy Hymn of Praise of the Anaphora

Σὲ ὕμνοῦμεν, σὲ εὐλογοῦμεν, σοὶ εὐχαριστοῦμεν
Κύριε, καὶ δεόμεθά σου, ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν.

We praise you, we bless you, we give thanks to
you Lord, and we entreat you, our God.

This Hymn is chanted during the Anaphora¹ at the climax of the Holy Liturgy, in anticipation, during and in response to the consecration of the Holy Gifts into the Divine Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In most Parishes as the Hymn is chanted, the Priest says the prayers of the *Epiclesis* (calling down from above), an earnest plea to God the Father to send down the Holy Spirit to change the gifts we offer into the Divine Gifts of Christ's own Body and Blood.

According to St Germanos, this is a hymn to the Holy Trinity: "*Thus becoming eyewitnesses of the mysteries of God, partakers of eternal life, and sharers in divine nature, let us glorify the great, immeasurable and unsearchable mystery of the dispensation of Christ God, and glorifying Him let us cry, "We praise you" - the God and Father, "We bless you" - the Son and Word, "We give thanks to you" - the Holy Spirit, "O Lord...our God" - the Trinity in unity, of the same essence and undivided*"²

Archimandrite Vasileios of the Monastery of Iveron notes with reverence that: "*During the moment of the epiclesis, our offering made to God in every way and for everything, attracts the grace and constitutes the supplication, entreaty and prayer to the Father to send down the Holy Spirit*"³

At this moment, we are united to one another and to God. It is the true Pentecost because the Holy Spirit makes known to us the Divine Flesh of our Risen Lord. We are in complete awe of God's Love and can only respond with an almost inexpressible sense of gratitude. St Nicholas Cabasilas tries to express this common gratitude, wondering whether "*the perfect communion with God which it (Christ's Body and Blood) effects, ought to be called worship, or adoption of sons, or both. It makes us more akin to Christ than birth makes us akin to our parents.. It is not, like our parents, the cause of life, but life itself.*"⁴

Indeed, at every Divine Liturgy and foremost during the moment of epiclesis, "*we learn how to give thanks.*"⁵ ❖

¹ Eucharistic prayer of the Holy Liturgy.

² *St Germanus of Constantinople, "On the Divine Liturgy" Crestwood NY, SVSP, 1984, p. 99.*

³ Archimandrite Vasileios, "Hymn of Entrance", Holy Monastery Iveron, 1996, p. 91.

⁴ St Nicholas Cabasilas, "The Life in Christ", SVSP 1987, p. 165.

⁵ Archimandrite Vasileios, op. cit. p. 93.

FROM THE HOLY FATHERS...

St Basil the Great on the Holy Spirit

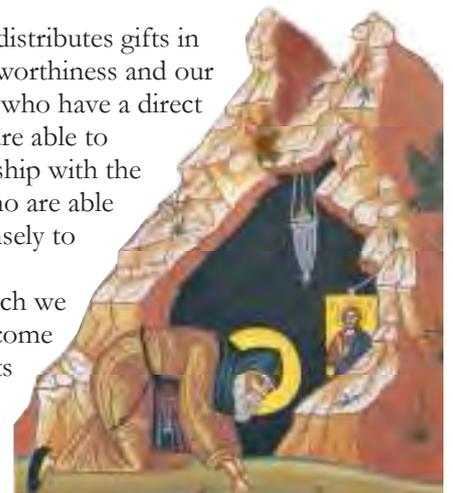
At the time St Basil wrote his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, controversies abounded concerning the divinity of both Christ and the Holy Spirit. St Basil compared the state of the Church under siege to a naval battle being fought in the midst of a raging tempest, in which the two fleets are so broken up by the dark storm that banners can no longer be seen, signals are no longer recognised, and one cannot distinguish one's ally from one's foe.

St Basil denounces these errors as the end-product of vanity and pride in those who do not love truth in their hearts. He assembles all the evidence from Scripture, as well as the baptismal and liturgical tradition of the Church, and states that the 'same honour' is due to the Spirit as to the Father and the Son, since the Holy Spirit is divine in nature:

If wherever God is, the Spirit is present also, what nature shall we presume Him to have? An all encompassing nature, or a nature confined to particular places, as we have described the nature of angels. No one would say the latter. He is divine in nature, infinite in greatness, mighty in His works, good in His blessings; shall we not exult Him; shall we not glorify Him?

St Basil points out there is a diversity of manners in which creation participates in the Holy Spirit, since the gifts of the Holy Spirit are many and varied for each human person. There are two kinds of participation in God: an indirect participation, characteristic to those who remain in the passions, and a direct participation by those leading an ascetic struggle against their passions. The degree of the direct participation of the Holy Spirit depends on His Grace, and our purity of heart, our thirst for holiness, our struggle in the life of virtue, our faith and our worthiness.

As the Holy Spirit distributes gifts in accordance to our worthiness and our struggle, it is those who have a direct participation who are able to maintain a relationship with the Holy Spirit, and who are able to grow more intensely to become, with His assistance, that which we were created to become - transformed Saints in the image and likeness of God.





Kneeling



A mother was worried about her child. She asked St Porphyrios (recently canonized) for his prayers and counsel. His response surprised her: “show me your knees”. He pointed out that there were no callouses and that more prayer for her child on bended knee was required!

Prayer, which is our lifeline to God, can be done either standing, kneeling or sitting, be it at home or in church. The stance we take during prayer can be telling of our spiritual state.

In the Old Testament, there are many references to bowing, kneeling and prostrations. King David wrote: “O come let us worship and fall down before Him” (Ps 94:6). The Prophet Daniel “knelt upon his knees and prayed and gave thanks before His God”(Dan 6:10), as did Moses and Aaron beseeching God, “having fallen on their faces”(Num 16:22).

Christ himself sanctified this custom by His own example praying on bended knees, such as before His Passion in the garden of Gethsemane (Mat 26:39). We have many examples of Saints of the Church, such as St Seraphim of Sarov, who spent 1,000 days on bended knees in deep prayer.

There is an **innate longing** for man to have union and communion with his Creator, and this is achieved through prayer. It is a natural state for the creature to bend its form in worship of the awesome mystery of the Divine. Kneeling is an expression of repentance and godly sorrow for our fallen nature. In kneeling, we fall down to the earth to show our sinful state, crying out for God’s mercy. St Ambrose of Milan tells us that “beyond the rest of the ascetic labours, kneeling has the power to lessen the wrath of God and to evoke His mercy”.

It is appropriate for us all to **fall on bended knees** and worship the Triune God! ❖

This is a true story as told by a pious Christian...

“While I was still a very young child, my father died. My mother quickly remarried and she and my stepfather put me into an orphanage. Later on, when I was older, they brought me out of the orphanage to live with them. My stepfather sent me out to sell lottery tickets to make money. At the end of each day he would take the money that I had earned, then he would abuse me and beat me badly. At one stage I felt much despair and said to myself “does God not exist for me”? I went to church to pray. Inside I went to venerate and kiss the feet of the icon of the Crucifixion. I am telling you this, and it still makes my hair stand on end... I felt I was kissing real feet, flesh!”



Source: Translated from the Greek book «Ασκητές μέσα στον Κόσμο, Τόμος Α» (Ascetics in the World, Volume 1), by the Monastery of St John the Forerunner, Mount Athos Press, 2008. ❖

NEWS and VIEWS

From the Fall of Constantinople to the Revolution

On Sunday 24th May, as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society, the young men and women of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society, Orthodox Ladies Groups and Youth Fellowships (Ομάδες), staged a theatrical production at Marrickville Town Hall titled “From the Fall (of Constantinople) to the Revolution”. In attendance were His Grace Bishop Seraphim (representing His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos), His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Dr Stavros Kyrimis, numerous Clergy of our Archdiocese, as well as hundreds of people who filled the Hall to capacity. The production captured the enormous struggles of the Greek people to maintain their Faith and Identity under the dark years of Ottoman rule. The climax was the events surrounding the Siege of Messolonghi: with few dry eyes remaining in the Hall! At the end of the production, His Grace warmly thanked all the participants, and congratulated the work of the Society over the past 60 years. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all those who worked tirelessly on this moving production, which made us all immensely proud of our Greek Orthodox heritage.



Above: Scenes from the theatrical production “From the Fall of Constantinople to the Revolution” at Marrickville Town Hall.

Sunday School Picnic

On the long-weekend of Monday 8th June, the Sunday Schools of Sydney held their annual picnic at Centennial Park, Randwick. Also present was His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, His Grace Bishop Iakovos, several Clergy of our Archdiocese, as well as numerous Sunday School children across Sydney, along with their teachers and families.



His Eminence addressing the children, parents and teachers at this year’s Sunday School picnic.

**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 »

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