



AN OUTPOURING OF LOVE

Why would Jesus take three of His closest disciples to the top of Mt Tabor, forty days before His passion to miraculously change His appearance and be seen with two long-gone figures of antiquity? Would it be a sort of show, a self-indulgent final stand? Nothing of that kind, of course, but instead another outpouring of His infinite love, power and wisdom.

Jesus' earthly life was one of humility and condescension, of persecution and tribulation. The epitome of this would be His upcoming Divine Passion. Would His disciples, His closest friends and followers, be able to stand such a stress? Or would they be scandalised, in hurt and in fear, beyond what they could cope with?

One of the hymns of the feast, the Kontakion, gives us a powerful insight into the meaning of the event:

You were transfigured on the mountain, and Your disciples saw Your glory as much as they could bear; so that when they saw You crucified, they would consciously understand Your passion, and that they would declare to the world that You are truly born of the Father.

Jesus acted in love to strengthen His disciples' faith. His incredible radiance was but a ray of His glory, showing only "as much as they could bear". The memory of this event would give them the strength to endure the pain of the Crucifixion and the inspiration to proclaim the Good News to the world.

His clothes shining as white as light remind us of His previous words: "I am the Light of the World". It is the same glow that emanated from the saints as they were transfigured through their climb to virtue and purity; it is this light that the halos signify in all our icons.


His face, the same face that did not turn away from the spittings and blows at His passion, shone as with all the brightness of the sun. And just as the sun, having its own energy, energises and sustains the world, the Creator of the sun, the Sun of Righteousness, enlightens and sustains His people.

If this spectacular revelation was not enough, the transfigured Son of God was surrounded by two revered men of the Old Testament. With their presence, they affirmed that He is indeed the fulfilment of the Law and the expectation of the Old Testament.

This was no ordinary scene. The disciples, in ecstasy, lived but a small taste of the kingdom of Heaven. They



did not want it to end. It was amazing, beautiful, indescribable. Amongst this the voice of the Father yet again affirmed that Jesus, in what He had already done and what He was about to endure, was acting in complete harmony with the will of the Father, for no other reason than our illumination and salvation.

The Transfiguration of Christ was not merely a show. It was an outpouring of love and comfort, a taste of things to come, a promise of communion with His followers who are prepared to follow Him on the steep mountain climb of life. 

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THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ELEMENTARY ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

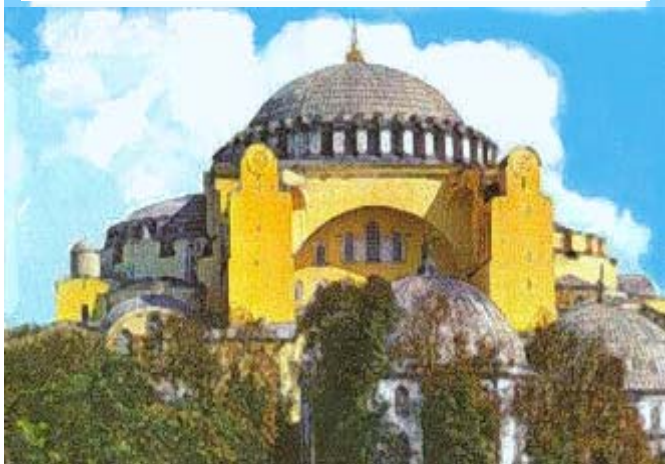
10. GOD REACTS TO THE FALL OF MAN

For God, the Fall of the original man (Adam and Eve), was a heart-rending event. As a loving Father, he was following every step of the fallen men with great interest and deep seated sadness in His divine heart. Such was His love for His fallen creatures, that He could not remain aloof, but react from time to time in various ways, such as:

1. Complaining - We see this frequently, and mostly early in the Old Testament, God stating His grievances about the apostasy of the people. Especially the Prophets, describe graphic pictures to demonstrate how justifiable are the complaints of God. (Isaiah 1, 2-10).

2. Asking for His rights - Men could have denied to have any form of relationship with God, but this does not make Him bereft of any right on His rational creation. Again, we find in the Old Testament vivid expressions, which describe the rights of God, which emanate from the exclusive and unbreakable relationship that God has with men, not least by being their Creator. God describes Himself as a friend of men, and their rejection of Him as fornication and adultery (Isaiah 1, 21; Hosea 2, 15; 4, 12).

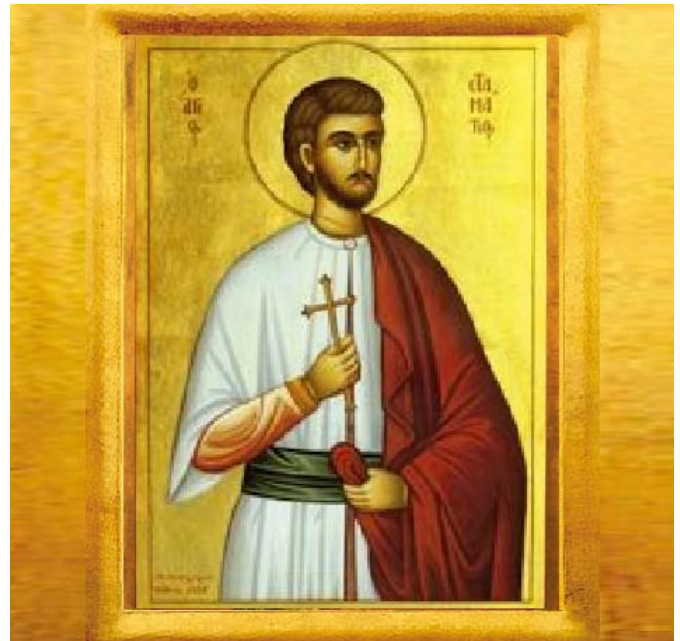
3. Criticises the decadence of men - The one thing the fatherly heart of God cannot tolerate is the plight of the fallen man. God, the Creator, condemns the depravity of the pinnacle of His creation, that is the rational man, and as Father is deeply hurt at the drama of His own children. Specifically, He abhors the arrogance and insolent behaviour of men (Gen. 3, 22; Isaiah 2, 12), the state of corruption leading to death (Ps. 81, 7-8), and the fact that they elected to live independently and without reference to their Creator (Ps. 2, 1-4; Isaiah 6, 9-10)



SAINT OF THE MONTH

ST STAMATIOS THE NEOMARTYR

Commemorated August 16



Saint Stamatios was born in the 1600s in the village of St George in Volos, Greece, during the Ottoman occupation. At that time, Greece was oppressed and taxed excessively by the Turks. St Stamatios led a group of villagers in presenting their case against this tyranny to the Sultan in Constantinople.

Most saw this as a waste of time that could end in death. St Stamatios, however, was undeterred.

The group reached Constantinople but did not go further than the outer offices of the Sultan. Those who accompanied the Saint saw it as a hopeless situation and fled but St Stamatios insisted on seeing the Sultan, producing a list of grievances to substantiate his claim of unfair treatment.

As a result of St Stamatios's persistence, he was condemned and thrown in jail for many weeks where the Turks tried to persuade him to become a Muslim. A series of tortures ensued, designed to break both his spirit and body. St Stamatios was also promised riches and a high place in society if he succumbed and became a Muslim. Throughout all these ordeals, St Stamatios remained firm in his Orthodox Faith.

As a result, the authorities demanded the death penalty. He was taken outside the great church of Agia Sophia in Constantinople. Before one of its massive doors he was beheaded on the 16th August 1688, joining the many ranks of new martyrs of our Holy Orthodox Faith.



Για Μικρούς και Για Μεγάλους

ΝΑ ΔΙΑΒΑΣΤΕΙ ΑΠ' ΟΛΗ ΤΗΝ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ

Η Πολυύμνητη

(Από λόγους «Εις την κοιμήσιν» των Αγίων Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Νικολάου Καβάσιλα και Νικοδήμου του Αγιορείτου).

«**Τ**η ένοξη κοιμήσει σου, ουρανοί επαγállονται ... πάσα η γή δε ευφραίνεται ...» (Δηλ. Στην ένδοξο κοιμήσή σου οι ουρανοί χαίρονται και ολόκληρη η γη γεμίζει από χαρά και ευφροσύνη).

Η κτίση, η επίγεια και η ουράνια, σαλεύονται. Οι χοροί των Αγγέλων κατέρχονται. Προφήτες και Πατριάρχες προϋπαντούν τους Αποστόλους, που καταφθάνουν για να τιμήσουν τη Παρθένο Μαρία.

Άνδρες και γυναίκες, μικροί και μεγάλοι περικυκλώνουν το «ερό κρεβάτι της Θεοτόκου και προπέμπουν χαρούμενοι την αιεπάθενο Θεομήτορα». Πανηγυρίζει όλη η ανθρωπότητα στη Κοίμησή της γιατί η Παναγία μητέρα μας ανεβαίνοντας στα Βασίλεια του Υιού της γίνεται Μεσίτρια για όλους μας.

Ποιά είναι αυτή η πολυύμνητη;

Ποιός μπορεί να ζωγραφίσει το ωραιότατο άνθος που φανερώθηκε σ' όλους τους αιώνες για όλες τις ανθρώπινες φυλές;

Ποιός μπορεί να περιγράψει τη θεόφωτη καλλονή του προσώπου της;

Αυτή είναι η δόξα όλων των επιγείων και το στολίδι όλης της κτίσεως. Αυτή το στήριγμα μαζί και η παρηγοριά. Αυτή έκανε τη γη ουρανό και εθέωσε το ανθρώπινο γένος.

Πατέρες και διδάσκαλοι της Εκκλησίας, ασκητές και μοναχοί, μελωδοί και ρήτορες αυτήν έχουν πηγή και την αιτία των ύμνων τους.

Σ' αυτή ανήκει κάθε έπαινος και εγκώμιο, γιατί αυτή μόνη φανέρωσε **ποιός** πλάστηκε και **ποιός** μπορούσε να γίνει ο άνθρωπος.

Από αυτήν, όπως λένε οι Άγιοι υμνηταί της, προήλθε η "νέα κτίση" και αυτή άλλαξε το παν στο κόσμο. Ο ουρανός δέχτηκε νέους αναγεννημένους πολίτες. Κι αυτούς τους μετέφερε από τη γη η Παρθένας.

Σαν άνθρωπος με την αρετή της η Θεοτόκος μεγαλώνει το ανθρώπινο γένος. Αφού βρέθηκε άξια του Θεού μπορεί να υπερασπίζεται και να ελκύει την αγάπη του Θεού προς τον άνθρωπο εξ αιτίας του δικού της κάλλους.

Και δεν περιορίστηκε να ευεργετήσει μόνο τους ανθρώπους, αλλά έγινε σαν φως και γι' αυτούς τους Αγγέλους, που έγιναν σοφότεροι, αναγνωρίζονται στο πρόσωπό της καλύτερα τη σοφία και την αγαθότητα του Θεού.

Όλοι, Άγγελοι και άνθρωποι, σαν να χρησιμοποιούσαν τα δικά της μάτια, μπόρεσαν να δουν πιο καθαρά και έγινε η Παρθένας η μοναδική οδηγός κάθε ψυχής και κάθε νου



προς την αλήθεια του Θεού.

Στο Ευαγγέλιο του Παρακλητικού Κανόνα που ψάλλουμε το δεκαπενταύγουστο, ακούμε, πως μια γυναίκα από το πλήθος που δίδασκε ο Χριστός έβγαλε φωνή μεγάλη και είπε: «Μακαρία η κοιλιά που σε βάστασε και οι μαστοί που θήλασες». Αυτός δε ο Ιησούς απάντησε: Αλήθεια, μακάρια είναι η μητέρα μου, αλλά μη ξεχνάτε ότι μακάριοι κυρίως είναι εκείνοι, που ακούνε το λόγο του Θεού και φυλάσσουν αυτόν.

Φανερώνει έτσι ο Χριστός στους ανθρώπους πως δεν τίμησε τη Μητέρα Του με μεγαλύτερα από τους άλλους βοηθήματα, ούτε δημιούργησε ο ίδιος την αρετή της. Η αρετή είναι προαιρετικό αγαθό και έργο της προσωπικής μας εκλογής. Αλλά η Πανάμωμη νίκησε τη πρωτάκουστη και θαυμαστή νίκη με **τα όπλα που έδωσε ο Θεός σ' όλους τους ανθρώπους**, με τη υπερέχουσα αγάπη που είχε προς το Θεό.

Απέδωσε στο Θεό αναγεννημένη την ωραιότητα που Εκείνος χάρισε στην ανθρώπινη φύση μας.

Η Παναγία Μητέρα μας. Η Πολυύμνητη.



NEWS and VIEWS

Visit to Cairns

With the blessings of his Eminence Archbishop Stylianos, members of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society along with their families visited the Greek Orthodox Parish of St John the Baptist, Cairns, on the weekend of June 22nd-24th. Their visit coincided with the Feast of the birth of St John on Sunday, 24th June. They were warmly welcomed by the parish priest Fr Constantine Tsakalos, the parish president and committee. As part of their visit, they delivered sermons, talks, a play, poems, songs, a Byzantine choir performance, held Sunday School lessons, and sold Christian books.



The Greek Orthodox Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Cairns.



Members of the Greek Youth Christian Society and their families, along with Fr Constantine Tsakalos, in front of the church at Cairns.

Winter Retreats

On the 3rd- 5th July and the weekend of 6th-8th July, the boys Omathes of Paramatta and Kogarah respectively, held their mid-year camps at Koori Cabins, Central Mangrove, where they practiced their survival skills in the freezing cold weather and in the 'war games'. More importantly, they benefited from the spiritual elements of the camps, such as the bible study sessions, and particularly the Divine Liturgy Service at the monastery of Our Lady, Panagia Pantanassa. The camps were opportunities for the boys to learn more about their Orthodox Faith, and in forming strong and lasting bonds in Christian friendship. ✠



Above and below.
The boys Omatha of Kogarah at their mid-year camp at Koori Cabins, Central Mangrove.



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