



Dialogues of Love

Great Lent is a time of spiritual ascent; a refuge of love and solace, a pit stop of renewal of strength to fight the temptations and hardships of this life.

A group of young people embarking on this journey escaped to a nearby monastery to receive strength and inspiration. As they sat in the spacious courtyard, the abbot, full of love, was answering their questions.

“Why, father, is the fast before Easter called *Great* Lent? Is it to distinguish it from the other 40-day fast of Christmas?”

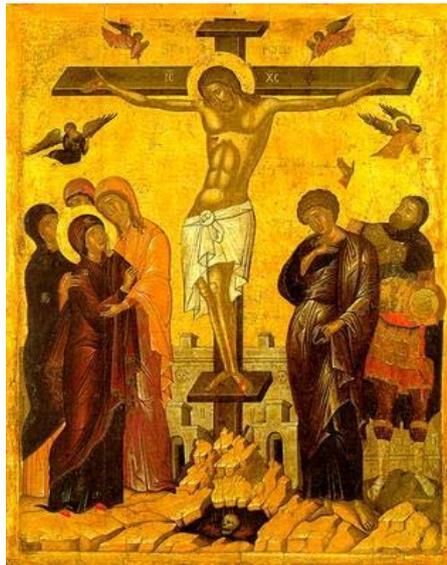
“That as well, but also because Great Lent leads us to the Resurrection. The Resurrection is not a spectacle or just a feast, but a reality – a reality that we are all called to live. We need to climb the difficult Calvary with fasting and prayer, and most importantly, repentance. Without repentance everything else is superfluous. With the Christmas fast, which is easier and more achievable, we are preparing to see the newborn Christ in the manger. With Great Lent, which is stricter, harsher, and therefore more redeeming, we are preparing to undertake the sacrificial journey to Calvary and reach the peak of the Resurrection, which is the major task of our faith and the purpose of our earthly existence.”

These words had the small audience in deep thought and silence. Realizing this, the abbot added:

“St Dorotheos in one of his homilies explains that Great Lent is the ‘tithe’, the offering of a tenth of the year to the Lord, as an offering of repentance. Of course, that does not mean that we can sin the rest of the year thinking that we can repent with this ‘tithe’. Instead, we should all try to offer our ‘tithe’ of the soul as well as we can, and continually seek our Lord’s mercy. We should be diligent in our fasting and prayer and sincere in our repentance.”

“Thank you, father – your words are very helpful. I wish they could be broadcast on television to the whole world”.

“St John Chrysostom had said something similar. He wanted to be on the top of the highest mountain and from there proclaim the saving word of God, but some-



thing like that is impossible. Even by using television and radio it cannot happen, not because of practical difficulties, but because of many people’s lack of faith or interest. God speaks to us constantly, but most people do not want to hear. If our hearts were clean enough, we would see not one, but myriads of dialogues between humans and God, between pain and salvation. All of us look for relief from our difficulties, but we often look in the wrong places.”

“But how do these dialogues happen? Do they happen with prayer or by other ways?”

“They start with prayer. But they can be dialogues of works or tears of re-

pentance. They can also be through obedience to the word of God. In short, they happen through the spiritual efforts that are intensified during Great Lent. My own geronda* used to say that during Great Lent the heavens of divine Grace open up and there is a constant dialogue with faithful souls, which flicker like candles in the darkness, as they offer to the Lord the gift of their struggle. Together with prayer, they lift up to offer their fasting, charity, longsuffering, forgiveness, meekness, humility and their transformation from bad to good.”

These and other words were exchanged that strengthened the hearts of the visitors, thus leaving the monastery with the strength and purpose to start the journey of Lent towards the peak of the Resurrection.

* In Greek, γέροντα = a spiritual father, usually a priest or monk who acts as a spiritual guide for monks and lay people.



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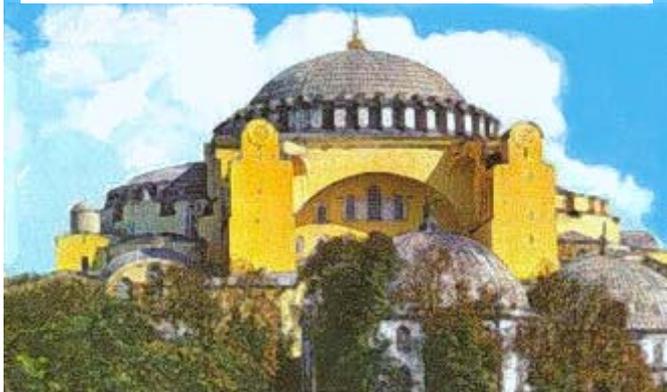
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THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ELEMENTARY ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

7. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE “FALL” ON HUMAN NATURE

The “Fall” of the original man (Adam and Eve), created enormous problems in their lives. They soon realised that their choice to live independently, without the support of God, was thoroughly wrong. The advice of the devil proved to be a poisonous vaccine, which slowly but surely was changing their human nature for the worse. The consequences of the “Fall” were that :-

- a) Man became “invisible” to God. - Whilst man was in communion with God, he was constantly bathed in the Divine Light. This acted as a brilliant garment that covered his body; making man unaware of his physical nakedness. Initially, man was visible to God as His own image and was in constant communion with him. The other created beings seeing man in the Divine Glory, respected and obeyed him as king of creation. The “Fall” acted as a descent of man to the depths of almost non-existence. He ceased emitting the Divine Light he had before, and whilst he could still be seen by God, he was not recognised any longer by Him as His own image.
- b) Man was stripped of Divine Grace. - As man ceased living in communion with God, he began enjoying the earth in a manner which the Fathers of the Church call “autonomous”. That is, he never referred to, nor thanked God for what he was enjoying. This attitude made God withdraw His Divine Grace from man, as It was not appreciated by him. Man became bereft of anything divine, and realised his nakedness (*Gen. 3’7*), both of the flesh and of the spirit.
- c) Man became disorientated. - Having lost his communion with God, man no longer received the messages of Divine Truth. He received the deceptive advice of the devil, and so, man took a direction opposite to the one he was intended to go. Having lost his orientation, he was proceeding to his own destruction. ☩



SAINT OF THE MONTH

ST THEODORE THE RECRUIT Commemorated 1st Saturday of Great Lent

Saint Theodore was born in Pontus, Turkey, and was a recruit (tiron) in the Roman legionary at the time of Christian persecution under Caesar Maximian in 303. The Saint confessed his faith at a military camp: when the commander of his cohort ordered a sacrifice to the gods of the Empire, Theodore remained in his tent and declared “I am a Christian”. The governor had him thrown into a dungeon.



That night, Christ appeared and promised that His grace would shield him. Comforted, Theodore spent his time chanting hymns.

The Saint was offered the post of high priest of the idols, at which he laughed, and assured the governor that he was ready to be cut in pieces for the love of Christ. He was then hung by his heels while his body was lacerated with iron claws. But faced with the Saint’s resolution, the tormentors laboured in vain, and the governor, fearing lest this example encourage other Christians, decided to be done with him; and he condemned him to be burned to death.

When they reached the stake, the Martyr took off his clothing and sent up a fervent prayer that God would strengthen the other confessors. He walked freely into the flames, which surrounded him but left him untouched. In the midst of this triumph, Saint Theodore gave back his soul to God with thanksgiving.

In 361, Julian the Apostate was doing his utmost to restore pagan customs. Knowing that the Christians were accustomed to fasting during Lent, Julian ordered the Prefect of Constantinople to have all of the food set out for sale in the markets sprinkled with the blood of animals sacrificed to the gods, so that no one in the city would escape the contagion of idolatry. Appearing in a vision to Patriarch Eudoxius (360-364), Saint Theodore informed him of what was happening and told him to instruct the Christians not to buy food from the markets but instead to eat kolyva made from grains of boiled wheat. Thus, thanks to his intervention, the Christian people were preserved from the stain of idolatry. The Church has commemorated this miracle ever since on the first Saturday of Great Lent, in order to remind the faithful that fasting and temperance have the power to cleanse all the stains of sin. ☩

Για Μικρούς και Για Μεγάλους

ΝΑ ΔΙΑΒΑΣΤΕΙ ΑΠ' ΟΛΗ ΤΗΝ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑ

Το άρθρο αυτό γράφτηκε από τον Αείμνηστο π. Θεόδωρο Χρυσόπουλο, ιερέα της Ιεράς Αρχιεπισκοπής Αυστραλίας, ο οποίος υπηρέτησε ως ιεροψάλτης στο Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο. Το αρχικό κείμενο το διατηρήσαμε όπως γράφτηκε, και το αφιερώνουμε στη μνήμη του.

ΑΓΙΟ ΜΥΡΟ

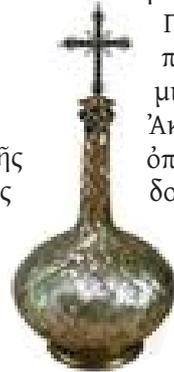
Αγιο Μύρο, άνεκτίμητο, πανεύσομο, Ίερώτατο. Έρχεται με την πνοή του άγερα από το κλεινό Φανάρι, και καθαγιάζει της ψυχές όλου του Όρθοδόξου κόσμου.

Τις Άγιες μέρες του Πάσχα - όχι κάθε Πάσχα - γίνεται η Ρέφηση του Άγιου Μύρου στο κέντρο της Όρθοδοξίας στο Οίκ. Πατριαρχείον, όπου χιλιάδες πολίτες από την Ελλάδα και από άλλα μέρη του έξωτερικού ταξιδεύουν με τά φτερά της ψυχής, δια νά παραβρεθούν στην παρασκευή και καθαγιασμό του Άγιου Μύρου.

Τό Φανάρι γιορτάζει. Άκτινοβολεί στον κόσμο όλη την Οικουμενικότητα της Όρθοδοξίας. Λαμπρές στιγμές, ανεπανάληπτες ώρες βαθύτατης κατάνυξης, έποικοινωνία του ανθρώπου με τον Θεόν. Μέσα στον Ίερό Ναό του Οίκ. Πατριαρχείου, με χοροστασία της Α. Θ. Π. του Οίκ. Πατριάρχου και Συνοδικών Άρχιερέων, και ένω το ευλαβικό έκκλησίασμα γονατίζει, πέρα από τις γονυκλισίες ώρισμένων στιγμών γίνεται η Ίερά Άκολουθία των Προηγιασμένων της Μ. Δευτέρας, της Μ. Τρίτης και της Μ. Τετάρτης. Στο τέλος κάθε ακολουθίας έν πομπή, και ένω προπορεύονται ψάλλοντας οι διαλεκτοί ιεροψάλτες του Οίκ.

Πατριαρχείου, οι Α. Θ. Π. ο Οικουμενικός Πατριάρχης, Συνοδικοί Άρχιερείς, εκπρόσωποι Έκκλησιών από την Ελλάδα, την Εύρώπη και άλλα μέρη του έξωτερικού, ο Ίερός Κλήρος του Οίκ. Πατριαρχείου, οι Άρχοντες, Μεγάλοι Όφφικιάλιοι, κ.λ.π. έκκλησίασμα, μπαίνουν στο ιερό κουβούκλιο στο περίπτερο πού είναι δίπλα στον Πάνσεπτο Πατριαρχικό Ναό, στον περίβολο πού και αυτός κατακλύζεται από πλήθος κόσμου. Στο ιερό κουβούκλιο, θά πραγματοποιηθεί η έψηση του Άγιου Μύρου. Ο Άρχων Μυρεφός φέρει λέντιο, ένω οι βοηθοί του έπιστήμονες, λευκούς χιτώνες. Την προηγούμενη Κυριακή των Βαΐων μετά τή δοξολογία, ο Οίκ. Πατριάρχης εύλογεί τον Άρχοντα Μυρεφό και τους συνεργάτες του, και προσφέρει τους χρυσούς σταυρούς με κόκκινη κι' άσπρη κορδέλα πού φέρουν επί του στήθους.

Τήν Μ. Δευτέρα εύλογείται η έναρξη της παρασκευής του Άγιου Μύρου με τέλεση άγιασμοϋ, και κατόπιν ο Πατριάρχης ραντίζει με τό άγίασμα όλα τά σκευή και τους λέβητες πού θά χρησιμοποιηθούν, και ανάβει με αναμμένη λαμπάδα τις παλαιές ιερές εικόνες και τά φρύγανα των 7 λεβήτων.



Μετά διαβάζει κεφάλαια από τό Ευαγγέλιο και συνεχίζεται η δέηση και η ανάγνωση περικοπών της Καινής Διαθήκης από τους Άρχιερείς και τους κληρικούς της Πατριαρχικής αύλης και άλλων κληρικών, διαδοχικά, πράγμα πού διαρκεί ολόκληρη τήν Μ. Δευτέρα, Μ. Τρίτη, και Μ. Τετάρτη.

Τήν Μ. Τρίτη πάλι μετά την Θεία Λειτουργία των Προηγιασμένων, ο Πατριάρχης με όλη την πομπή προσέρχεται στο κουβούκλιο, όπου ψάλλεται ο μικρός παρακλητικός κανών της Θεοτόκου. Άκολουθεί η ιεροτελεστία της Μ. Τετάρτης μετά την οποία ο Οίκ. Πατριάρχης βάζει με μικρά ειδικά δοχεία στους λέβητες ροδέλαιο, τον μόσχο και άλλα εύωδιασμένα έλαια. Μιά σύντομη, πληροφοριακή μονάχα δίνω εικόνα και έπαφίεμαι στην δεκτικότητα των άναγνωστών, στην συγκίνηση των στιγμών πού μόνο από την πίστη μπορεί νά αναβρύση.

Και τήν Μ. Πέμπτη ο καθαγιασμός του Άγιου Μύρου. Ύστερα από τον Όρθρο στο Πατριαρχικό παρεκκλήσι του Άποστόλου Ανδρέου, και την άμφιση του Οίκ. Πατριάρχου, αρχίζει η κάθοδος της πομπής προς τον Πάνσεπτο Πατριαρχικό Ναό έν λιτανεία, κι' οι καμπάνες ήχοϋνε μελωδικά και δεικτικά μαζί. Μεγαλειώδης η Πατριαρχική πομπή, θαμπώνει τά μάτια σαν ένα θείο όραμα, σαν μία ούράνια χάρη πού καθοδεύει προς τον Πάνσεπτο Ναό του Οίκ. Πατριαρχείου. Ήχοϋν ρυθμικά οι καμπάνες, άκούγεται η Βυζαντινή ψαλμωδία του Άρχοντος Πρωτοψάλτου, του Λαμπαδαρίου, και όλου του χοροϋ, και επιβλητική, κατανυκτική η πομπή καθοδεύει προς τον Ναό. Μετά την Θεία Λειτουργία και ένω γονατίζει ο συμπροσευχομένος λαός, ο Πατριάρχης καθαγιάζει στο Ίερό τό Άγιο Μύρο και κατόπιν με την ίδια τάξη της καθόδου από τό Πατριαρχικό παρεκκλήσι, μ' όλη την πομπή των Συνοδικών Άρχιερέων, εκπροσώπων Άρχιερέων Έκκλησιών, οδεύει προς τό Πατριαρχικό Μυροφυλάκιο όπου τοποθετούν τά άλάβαστρα και τά δοχεία πού περιέχουν τό καθαγιασμένο Μύρο. «Άίγο Μύρο» άστειρευτο, αιώνιο Μύρο, κλείνει κανείς στην ψυχή του πάντα, όπου κι' άν βρίσκεται. Είναι τό Άγιο Μύρο της βάπτισής του, όταν πραγματικά συνειδητοποιήσει την Όρθόδοξη Χριστιανική πίστη. Όταν διατηρήσει τό Άγιο Χρίσμα με την ίδια του την ζωή. Άγιο Μύρο τότε εύσομο, καθαγιασμένο, λύτρωση, κάθαρση ψυχής.

Άγιο Μύρο πανεύσομο, ιερώτατο, έρχεσαι με την άνάλαφρη πνοή του άνέμου, από τό κλεινό Φανάρι, νά μυρώσεις τις σκέψεις και τή ζωή του Όρθοδόξου κόσμου, Σέ προσκυνούμε.



NEWS and VIEWS

Summer Retreats

During January and February, three separate retreats were held at the Marist Centre in Mittagong for the boys' Omathes, girls' Omathes and the men of the Greek Orthodox Christian Society of Sydney. Participants at this year's retreats included some individuals from as far away as Melbourne and Adelaide! One of the participants at the boys' retreat wrote the following account:

On 15-20th January, the annual Omatha camp was held at Mittagong. It was an opportunity to learn about this year's Synthima – “Let all things be done for edification”.

We considered this through various lessons, Bible Studies and discussions. There were many activities too, and were enjoyed by all. The highlight of the camp was the Divine Liturgy held on Thursday where we had the opportunity to partake in Holy Communion.

All present had an enjoyable and enlightening week and it will remain a highlight of the year.

C.S.

We pray that all participants at this year's retreats continue to grow spiritually throughout the whole year by sustaining, with God's help, the insights and blessings they received at their retreat. Καλή Κατασκήνωση!



Participants at this year's Girls' Omatha retreats
21st - 25th January .



Participants at this year's Boys' Omatha retreats.
15th - 20th January.



Participants at this year's Greek Orthodox Christian Society's
retreat, held on the 2nd - 4th February.



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« ΛΥΧΝΟΣ » is a bimonthly publication of the
Greek Orthodox Christian Society,
31a Enmore Rd, Newtown, NSW, 2042,
under the auspices of the
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.
For subscriptions and inquiries,
phone: (02) 9567 3542. e-mail: editor@lychnos.org