THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

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ABOUT THE PARISH:

KIMISIS THEOTOKOU
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
224 18th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215
☎ 718-788-0152
Fax: 718-788-2774
http://www.kimisisbrooklyn.org
E-mail:
KimisisTheotokou@gmail.com

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Rev. Fr. George Kazoulis
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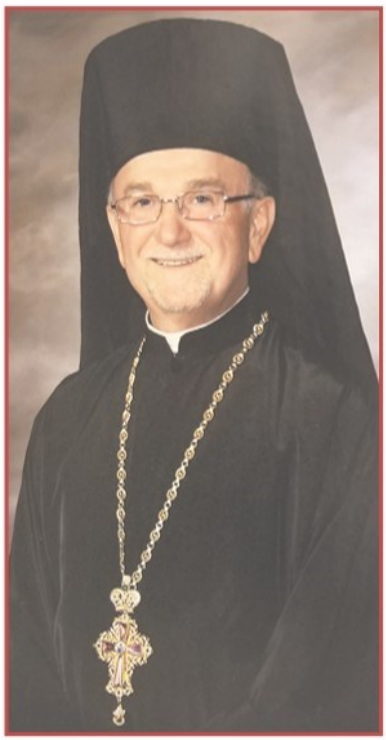
Note from the Editor

Welcome to our fifth issue of ***The Hope of the World***. We hope you find this newsletter informative, inspiring, and spiritually nourishing. May God bless you and your families and may our Panagia keep you under Her protection.

The Hope of the World is the newsletter of our community, Kimisis Theotokou Greek Orthodox Church. The name reflects the presence of our *Panagia* in whom all Orthodox Christians place their hope and look to for strength and protection. As a caring and loving mother, the *Panagia* leads us to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is what makes Her, truly, the hope of the world. This sentiment is also echoed in the hymnology of the Church, **"O Theotokos, thou hope of all Christians; keep and shelter and preserve them that set their hope in thee."**

(Ninth Ode Katavasia of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple)

ΜΗΝΥΜΑ ΠΡΟΪΣΤΑΜΕΝΟΥ



Το μήνυμα μου εις το μηνιαίον δελτίον του μηνός Μαΐου είναι συνέχεια του κηρύγματος της Κυριακής του Θωμά, όπου ο Απόστολος ομολόγησε με πίστη «ο Κύριος μου και ο Θεός μου», της Κυριακής των Μυροφόρων και των κρυφών μαθητών του Ιωσήφ και Νικοδήμου που επίστευσαν στον Αναστάντα διδάσκαλο Τους και εκτέλεσαν ένα ιερόν καθήκον με θάρρος και ευγνωμοσύνη στον Αναστάντα Κύριο.

Του Παραλύτου όπου εκφράζεται η βαθιά πίστης των τεσσάρων στην Καπερναούμ, την Σαμαρείτιδος που ομολογεί και πιστεύει ότι είναι πράγματι ο Μεσσίας ο συνομιλητής της, και τέλος το θαύμα του εκ γενετής Τυφλού κάτι πρωτάκουστο που ετέλεσε ο Χριστός.

Συνεπώς στα βασικά καθήκοντα ενός καλού Χριστιανού είναι οπωσδήποτε και η ομολογία της πίστεως. Απλά και φυσικά παρουσιάζει σε κάθε ευκαιρία τον πλούτο της ψυχής του, το θησαυρό της πίστεώς του.

Ξέρει πόσο ανεκτίμητο δώρο του Θεού γι' αυτόν είναι να πιστεύει. Μέσα του υπάρχει όλος αυτός, ο πνευματικός θησαυρός, που δίδει περιεχόμενο και νόημα στη ζωή του. Και την εκτίμηση του αυτή την παρουσιάζει με λόγια και με έργα. Αυτή η αρμονική συνεργασία λόγων και έργων φέρει το αποτέλεσμα: την ομολογία, την ζωντανή ομολογία της πίστεως.

Καθήκον λοιπόν κάθε Χριστιανού είναι να γνωρίσει το θέλημα του Θεού. Και θα το πετύχει αν ακούσει αν μελετήσει, αν φροντίζει, να διασαφηνίσει ορισμένα θέματα, που του φαίνονται δύσκολα. Αν τα έχη τακτοποιημένα στο μυαλό του και στην καρδιά του, είναι δυνατό να γίνουμε ομολογητές, θαρραλέοι και άφοβοι. Π.χ. ο Κύριος λέει: «Εγώ ειμή το φώς του κόσμου». Μόνιμο, σταθερό και σωτήριο είναι το δικό Μου φώς. Αν όμως αυτό που κηρύττει ο Κύριος, δεν το δοκιμάσουμε στη ζωή μας, αν ζούμε στα σκοτάδια της αμαρτίας, πως θα πούμε στους άλλους για το φώς του Χριστού; Αν η ζωή μας δεν είναι φωτεινή, πως θα καλέσουμε τους άλλους να ζήσουν και αυτοί τη ζωή της αρετής και της αγιότητος; Πως θα διακηρύξουμε με θάρρος και παρρησία ότι ο Χριστός είναι το « Φώς του κόσμου»; Επίσης ο Χριστός είπε «ο τρώγων μου το σώμα και πίνων μου το αίμα, εν εμοί μένει καγώ εν αυτώ». (Ιωαν. 6,56). Άραγε το έχει συνειδητοποιήσει και το έχει γευθεί, έτσι ώστε να μπορεί να το γνωστοποιήσει και στους γύρω του;

Πώς όμως θα ομολογήσει ο πιστός αυτή τη αλήθεια αν δεν την γνώρισε και προ πάντων αν δεν την έζησε; Αν δεν έγινε μέτοχος των πνευματικών δωρημάτων αυτής της ουρανίου τροφής;

Είναι αλήθεια ότι τότε θα μπορέσει να ομολογήσει ο Χριστιανός την πίστη του, όταν τη γνωρίζει και όταν την ζει. Τότε έχει πλούσια τη χάρι του Θεού. Τότε μόνο ελπίζει στην προστασία και την ευλογία του, ώστε να διώξει κάθε φόβο, κάθε απελπισία. Ιδιαίτερα την περίοδο αυτή που ζούμε δύσκολες στιγμές με την πανδημία που δεσπόζει στον κόσμο.
Η ελπίδα μας και η ομολογία μας είναι ο Χριστός και μόνον ο Χριστός.

«Χριστός Ανέστη»
«Αληθώς Ανέστη»

Με αγάπη Χριστού,
☩ ***Αρχιμ. π. Δαμασκηνός Γκανάς***

FATHER GEORGE'S MESSAGE

Christ is Risen my beloved brothers and sisters!

My heartfelt wish to you is that your souls are always filled with the joy of Our Lord's Resurrection, as we experience the Feast of Feasts in our lives! In the 7th Ode of the Resurrection Canon, we hear the beautiful hymn "We celebrate that Death has been put to death, Hades has been overthrown, and another, everlasting life has begun." Through the Resurrection all Orthodox Christians live the triumph and joy of the destruction of death. Jesus Christ showed us His strength with His Resurrection and gave us hope that everything and anything is possible. Furthermore, He shows us "that He who can overcome death in His own body has power over all human flesh." In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, this message of our Lord gives us hope and comfort. We must never forget that our Lord can heal us, and transform all that "which is infirm and lacking."

The past few weeks have been a true struggle for many of us as we deal with challenging and painful times. We have been deprived of our daily routines and activities, our jobs, our friends, our schools, our outings at a nice restaurant, our family gatherings, our health, and so much more. As Orthodox Christians however, perhaps our greatest deprivation has been our Church services and Holy Communion, which is the Body and Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is Life and can free us and heal us from any illness or weakness. Throughout our daily struggles, we have learned to cope in different ways and are patiently waiting and hoping for a sense of normalcy and a return to what we knew as "normal."

This pandemic has allowed us, however, to try to look at the bright side of things. It has changed our hearts and provided us with new ways of living, understanding others, and appreciating what we have. These days have been days of awareness, reflection, and self-knowledge for all of us. We were able to understand what is ultimately most important in our lives. We have been able to spend more quality time with our families, read a book, watch a movie together, bake cookies, cook dinner, play games, and enjoy various activities with our children. We now appreciate the hard work and patience of our dedicated teachers more than ever. We acknowledge the tremendous value of our doctors, nurses, pharmacists, first responders, researchers, and scientists who have led the courageous fight against the coronavirus. Above all, however, these trying times have called us to turn to our Christ even more than what we may have been used to. It has led us to call upon the name of Jesus, our Panagia, our Angels, and our Saints more than ever. It has showed us the power of love, prayer, forgiveness, compassion, and repentance. It has taught us to appreciate and enjoy each other, life, and the simple things and blessings which we once took for granted.

Through God's mercy and grace, all of the negativity and pain of this virus will pass. We will again return to what we consider normal, we will be able to gather again, to eat together again, and to enjoy each other's company. The true winners of this fight will be the ones who will try to have a new beginning in their lives, a fresh start, with the foundation rooted in Jesus Christ and not in their own actions or abilities. Our Lord is waiting for us to trust Him, love Him, and to let go of fear. As St. John the Theologian tells us in 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect loves casts out fear." Once we realize that God is in control, our lives will change. Through this ordeal, God reminds us that He is the anchor of our life and our hope. In doing so, we show humility, and this humility will give us the Wisdom of God, peace, and much joy in our lives.

In the words of Saint Porphyrios, "I pray that the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ may raise up in your souls every noble and beautiful sentiment. And may it lead us all to holiness and to triumph over our "old self" together with the passions and the desires. This is what the Lord asks. This is why we pray that His Resurrection may help us, that it may give us grace to become worthy of His Church. So we pray for the Lord to help us. The greatest miracle worked by Christ is His Resurrection."

Let us therefore, have faith and believe that the Light of the Resurrection will give us the healing we desire and the courage to stand firm in our faith. As long as we humbly ask the Risen Lord to be the ruler of our lives, He will then grant us the precious gift of joy and together we can all rejoice and proclaim from the depths of our souls, "CHRIST IS RISEN!"

In the love of our Risen Lord,

Rev. Fr. George Kazoulis

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Xristos Anesti to you and your families!

I hope everyone is well during these turbulent times.

Due to Covid-19 we have all had to face extraordinary challenges which we could not have anticipated until God put this challenge before us. As all of you know, due to the stay at home order from our Governor and the order of the Archdiocese, we were unable to share in our Church services during Holy Week. This was extremely difficult for all of us, because during these troubled times there is no better place to be than in our beloved Church. Every year Holy Week is very special for each one of us, as we get to see one another in church and celebrate Christ's resurrection together. However, this year we had to do it virtually through our YouTube live stream. Even though our YouTube live stream started off quite primitive, we learned by necessity and kept improving it every week. We hope that everyone enjoyed the Liturgy from the Night of Anastasi and continues to enjoy all our live streamed Liturgies going forward.

I was fortunate enough to be able to be in our church the night of Anastasi to help with the candle lighting program we have set up. I want to share my emotions from that night. As each of you can imagine it was a very strange feeling to be in our Church and it being empty the night of Anastasi. I wasn't with my wife and children, and it was quite sad that the night of Anastasi was like this because of this horrible pandemic. We had coordinated that those of us at Church would receive a text message each time one of you requested that we light a candle on your behalf. There came a time when my phone was constantly buzzing because so many people were making light a candle requests. It truly made me feel as if our church was full and I stopped feeling alone. Although we weren't all there physically, I truly felt everyone was there spiritually. When our Lord arose and Father Ganas sang Xristos Anesti, I truly felt as if every one of you were at the church with me. And at the end of the night when I was informed on how much our parishioners donated I was heartened – not because we raised some much needed funds to support the works of our Church – rather because, as always, our parishioners, regardless of any tough times they are going through, supported our Church. This pandemic shall pass, and we will all see each other again in Church, but until then I send each of you the love and best wishes of the entire parish council. Xristos Anesti.

Konstantinos Mallas

President, Executive Board of Trustees

Spiritual Inspirations

Words of wisdom from Saints of our Church whose memories we commemorate and feast days we celebrate during the month of May.

"For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord. "They are plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
-Jeremiah 29:11 (Prophet Jeremiah, May 1)

"I will work many miracles, and I will help many people, before the evils come."
-Saint Ephraim of Nea Makri (May 5)

"May you be well. May you have joy! Repent, my children...May you have prayer...day and night...wherever you walk, wherever you are found, wherever you are standing, always you should say: 'My Christ, have mercy on me!' with a sweet tongue speak to God, that your payer might reach Him."
-Saint Sophia of Kleisoura (May 6)

"The fear of God makes a person wise. What is the fear of God? Not that one should be afraid of God, but to be afraid to sadden someone, to harm someone, to do them no wrong, and to not make accusations. This is wisdom. After all this, God will illumine you as to what to do in your life."
-Saint Sophia of Kleisoura (May 6)

"I have often repented of having spoken, but never of having been silent."
-Saint Arsenios the Great (May 8)

"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."
-John the Theologian (May 8)

"By keeping the Divine faith, I am made a partaker of the light of truth: guided by the light of truth, I advance in the knowledge of the Divine faith. Hence it is that, as my actions themselves evince, I profess the most holy religion; and this worship I declare to be that which teaches me deeper acquaintance with the most holy God. This God I confess that I hold in unceasing honor and remembrance; this God I delight to contemplate with pure and guileless thoughts in the height of his glory. This God I invoke with bended knees…His only demand from man is purity of mind and an undefiled spirit; and by this standard he weighs the actions of virtue and godliness. For his pleasure is in works of moderation and gentleness: he loves the meek, and hates the turbulent spirit: delighting in faith, he chastises unbelief: by him all presumptuous power is broken down, and he avenges the insolence of the proud. While the arrogant and haughty are utterly overthrown, he requires the humble and forgiving with deserved rewards: even so does he highly honor and strengthen with his special help a kingdom justly governed, and maintains a prudent king in the tranquility of peace. I cannot, then, my brother believe that I err in acknowledging this one God, the author and parent of all things: whom many of my predecessors in power, led astray by the madness of error, have ventured to deny… Hence, I am fully persuaded that everything is in the best and safest posture, since God is vouchsafing, through the influence of their pure and faithful religious service, and their unity of judgment respecting his Divine character, to gather all men to himself.
–Saint Constantine the Great (May 21)

Saint Porphyrios and the Joy of the Resurrection

The following story was told by the cardiologist of Elder Porphyrios, Dr. George Papazahos, when he visited the Elder in his cell one Bright Tuesday following Pascha.

I went to see him as a doctor. After the cardiological examination and the usual cardiogram, he asked that I not leave.

I sat on the stool near his bed. His face was shining with joy. He asked me:

"Do you know the hymn which says, 'Let us celebrate the death of death…?'"

"Yes Elder, I know it." "Say it."

I began to say it quickly. "Let us celebrate the death of death, the destruction of hades, the beginning of eternal life. And leaping for joy, we celebrate the Cause, the only blessed and most glorious God of our fathers."

"Did you understand it?"

"Of course I understood." I thought he was asking me about its interpretation.

He made a sudden movement with his hand and told me:

"You understood nothing, George my man! You said it like a hurried chanter. Listen to what fearful things this hymn says: Christ by His Resurrection did not cross us over a lake, over a crack in the earth, over a canal, over a river like the Red Sea. He brought us over an abyss, of which it was impossible for man to cross alone. For centuries we awaited this Pascha, for this passage. Christ brought us from death to life. This is why today we 'celebrate the death of death, the destruction of hades'. Death is lost. Do you understand? Today we celebrate 'the beginning of eternal life', a life near Him."

He spoke with enthusiasm and conviction. He was moved. He paused for a moment then continued more loudly:

"Now chaos, death, and hades do not exist. Now there is all joy, thanks to the Resurrection of our Christ. Together with Him human nature was resurrected. Now we can be resurrected and live eternally near Him. What happiness is in the Resurrection! 'And leaping for joy, we celebrate the Cause.' Have you ever seen the little goats now in the Spring who jump on the grass? They eat a little from their mother and begin to jump again? This is what it means to leap – to jump. This is how we should also jump for unspeakable joy at the Resurrection of our Lord and our own."

He stopped speaking again. I breathed in a joyous atmosphere. He continued:

"Can I give you some advice? In your every sorrow, in your every failure, concentrate for a moment within yourself and say this hymn slowly-slowly. You will see that the greatest thing in your life – and in the life of the whole world – happened. The Resurrection of Christ, our salvation. And you will realize that everything that is upside down which is occurring will seem to you very small to spoil your mood."

He squeezed my hand saying:

"I pray that you leap for joy, looking at the chaos behind you from which the Risen Christ crossed you over, 'the only blessed of our fathers'. Chant now 'Christ is Risen!'"

My postscript: Truly, He is Risen!

+ George Papazahos, Professor of Cardiology

Great and Holy Feast of Pascha

Introduction

On the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha, Orthodox Christians celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast of feasts is the most significant day in the life of the Church. It is a celebration of the defeat of death, as neither death itself nor the power of the grave could hold our Savior captive. In this victory that came through the Cross, Christ broke the bondage of sin, and through faith offers us restoration, transformation, and eternal life.

Commemoration of The Great and Holy Feast of Pascha

Holy Week comes to an end at sunset of Great and Holy Saturday, as the Church prepares to celebrate her most ancient and preeminent festival, Pascha, the feast of feasts. The time of preparation will give way to a time of fulfillment. The glorious and resplendent light emanating from the empty Tomb will dispel the darkness. Christ, risen from the dead, cracks the fortress of death and takes "captivity captive" (Psalm 67:19). All the limitations of our createdness are torn asunder. Death is swallowed up in victory and life is liberated. "For as by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:21-22). Pascha is the dawn of the new and unending day. The Resurrection constitutes the most radical and decisive deliverance of humankind.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth and absolute fact of the Christian faith. It is the central experience and essential kerygma of the Church. It confirms the authenticity of Christ's remarkable earthly life and vindicates the truth of His teaching. It seals all His redemptive work: His life, the model of a holy life; His compelling and unique teaching; His extraordinary works; and His awesome, life-creating death. Christ's Resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation. Together with His Ascension it brings to perfection God's union with us for all eternity.

The Resurrection made possible the miracle of the Church, which in every age and generation proclaims and affirms "God's plan for the universe, the ultimate divinization of man and the created order." The profound experience of

and the unshakable belief in the risen Lord enabled the Apostles to evangelize the world and empowered the Church to overcome paganism. The Resurrection discloses the indestructible power and inscrutable wisdom of God. It disposes of the illusory myths and belief systems by which people, bereft of divine knowledge, strain to affirm the meaning and purpose of their existence. Christ, risen and glorified, releases humanity from the delusions of idolatry. In Him grave-bound humanity discovers and is filled with incomparable hope. The Resurrection bestows illumination, energizes souls, brings forgiveness, transfigures lifes, creates saints, and gives joy.

The Resurrection has not yet abolished the reality of death. But it has revealed its powerlessness (Hebrews 2:14-15). We continue to die as a result of the Fall. Our bodies decay and fall away. "God allows death to exist but turns it against corruption and its cause, sin, and sets a boundary both to corruption and sin." Thus, physical death does not destroy our life of communion with God. Rather, we move from death to life - from this fallen world to God's reign.

Source: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

ICON OF THE MONTH

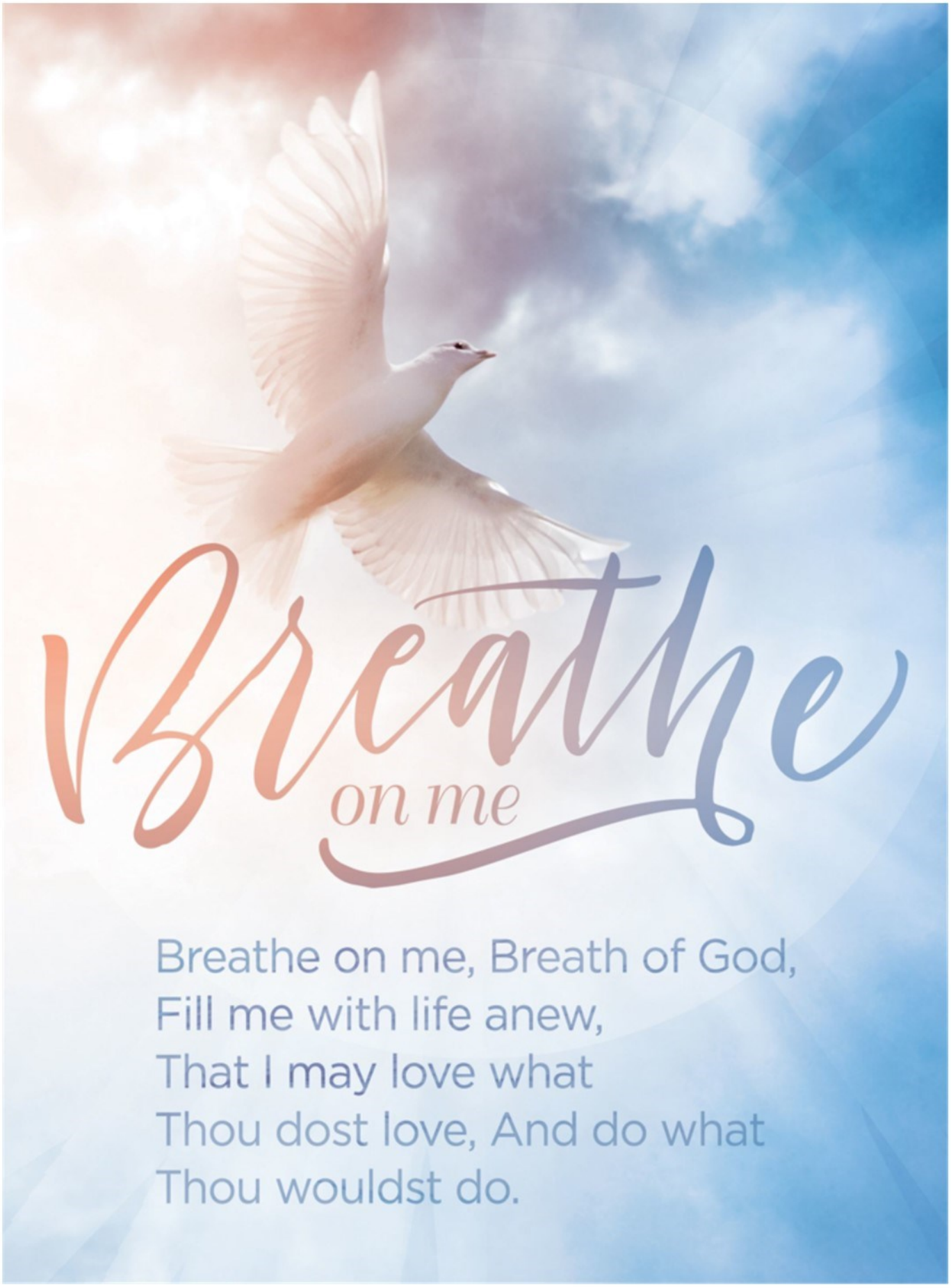
The Ascension of Our Lord

The icon of The Ascension of Our Lord is a joyous icon. It is painted with bright colors. Christ is shown ascending in His glory in a mandorla A mandorla is a design which is almond-shaped or round. Inside the mandorla is the figure of a holy person. Christ blesses the assembly with His right hand. In His left is a scroll. The scroll is a symbol of teaching. This icon shows that the Lord in heaven is the source of blessing. In addition, Jesus is the source of knowledge. The icon reminds us that Christ continues to be the source of the teaching and message of the Church, blessing and guiding those to whom He has entrusted his work.

The icon of the Ascension includes some who did not witness the Ascension. St. Paul is shown to the left of the Theotokos, but we know that he was not present at the Ascension. At that time, St. Paul did not yet believe in Jesus. But he became a Christian and one of the greatest Apostles and missionaries of Church.

The icon expresses the sovereignty of Christ over His Church; He is its Head, its guide, its source of inspiration and teaching; it receives its commission and ministry from Him, and fulfils it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Theotokos occupies a very special place in this icon. She is in the center of the icon, immediately below the ascending Christ. The gesture of her hands is gesture of prayer. She is clearly outlined by the whiteness of the garments of the angels. The Theotokos is depicted in a very calm pose. This is quite different from the appearance of the Disciples. They are moving about, talking to one another and looking and pointing towards heaven. The entire group,
the Theotokos and the disciples represent the Church.


Breathe
on me
Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what
Thou dost love, And do what
Thou wouldst do.

ΑΓΙΑ ΜΟΝΙΚΑ
(εορτάζει στις 4 Μαΐου)

Μία μητέρα που ήξερε να δακρύζει και να γονατίζει!

του Αθανασίου Κοτταδάκη

Γράφει για την στάση της μητέρας του Μόνικας ο ιερός Αυγουστίνος στις «Εξομολογήσεις» του: «Η μητέρα μου έχυνε για εμένα περισσότερα δάκρυα από όσα χύνουν οι μητέρες επάνω στα νεκρά τέκνα τους. Με την θέρμη της πίστης, η οποία της χάριζε η μεγάλη της ευσέβεια, με έβλεπε ηθικώς νεκρό. Και Συ Κύριε εισάκουσες την δέησή της και δεν περιφρόνησες τα δάκρυά της, με τα οποία πότισε το έδαφος, παντού όπου προσευχόταν. Οι πόνοι της να με αναγεννήσει διά του Πνεύματος ήταν σκληρότεροι από αυτούς τους οποίου υπέφερε να με γεννήσει διά της σαρκός».

«Παντρεύτηκε τον ειδωλολάτρη πατέρα μου, άνθρωπο οξύθυμο μα αγαθό, του αφοσιώθηκε σαν στο Χριστό... Αντιμετώπισε με σεβασμό την άλλη πίστη του, δεν επέτρεψε να γίνει το θέμα αυτό αφορμή φιλονικίας μεταξύ τους... Δεν αντιδρούσε με λόγια ή έργα σε ώρα οργής, αλλά την κατάλληλη στιγμή με αγάπη καί λεπτότητα εξηγούσε το λάθος... Δεν έλεγε ούτε μετέφερε λόγο κακό, δεν υποδαύλιζε διχόνοιες, υποβοηθούσε τη συμφιλίωση, την ειρήνη... Προσευχόταν νύχτα καί μέρα, εκκλησιαζόταν τακτικά, τιμούσε τους λειτουργούς της Εκκλησίας, πρόσεχε την ελεημοσύνη... Κέρδισε έτσι γρήγορα την αγάπη, την τρυφερότητα, το σεβασμό του πατέρα μου καί τον ίδιο στη χριστιανική πίστη»!«Αυτά συνέβησαν γιατί είχε Εσένα επιστήθιο φίλο καί διδάσκαλο στο σχολείο της ψυχής», εξηγεί ό Αυγουστίνος καί προσθέτει ότι ή επιστροφή του πατέρα του είναι «το πρώτο δώρο του Θεού στη μητέρα μου, ό αρραβώνας της δικής μου επιστροφής, πού όμως επρόκειτο να αργήσει»! Με το τελευταίο ρίχνει τη γέφυρα πού μας περνά από τη Μόνικα αληθινή χριστιανή σύζυγο τή Μόνικα αληθινή χριστιανή μητέρα, στην περιπέτεια της δικής του αποστασίας καί επιστροφής.

Και είναι μια μεγάλη αποστασία η πρώτη φάση της ζωής του. ***«Ή μητέρα μας ανάθρεψε γεννώντας μας με ώδίνες τοκετού κάθε φορά πού έβλεπε να ξεμακραίνουμε από Σένα...»***, γράφει για τη χριστιανική αγωγή της μητέρας του στα τρία παιδιά της. Για τον εαυτό του ειδικά προσθέτει: ***«Από την τρυφερή ηλικία είχα ακούσματα για την αιώνια ζωή. Η μητέρα με σφράγισε με το σημείο του Σταυρού τη στιγμή που μ' έβγαλε άπ' την κοιλιά της. Με πότισε την Αλήθεια του Θεού με το μητρικό της γάλα... Μικρό παιδί κι εγώ, πρίν Σέ γνωρίσω, σε Σένα εύρισκα στήριγμα καί καταφυγή όταν με μάλωναν οι γονείς ή οι δάσκαλοι μου...Αρρώστησα βαριά καί ζήτησα με λαχτάρα να βαφτιστώ... Η μητέρα με μύησε στο Μυστήριο της λυτρώσεως, μου έμα-θε την ομολογία που έπρεπε να απαγγείλω... Καλυτέρεψε όμως ή υγεία μου κι ανέβαλα τη βάφτιση μου. Νικήθηκα από την ιδέα πώς θα ξαναπέσω στην αμαρτία... Ή μήπως καί πήρα αυτή την απόφαση για να είμαι ελεύθερος να την απολαύσω»!*** Καί με την εμπειρία της επιστροφής πια την ώρα αυτού του «εκ βαθέων» του παρατηρεί:

«Ίσως το επέτρεψε ό Θεός για να δώσει στην αγνή καρδιά της μητέρας μου τη χαρά να κυοφορήσει μακροχρόνια κι επώδυνα τη σωτηρία μου»!

Miracle of Saint Ephraim of Nea Makri (commemorated May 5)

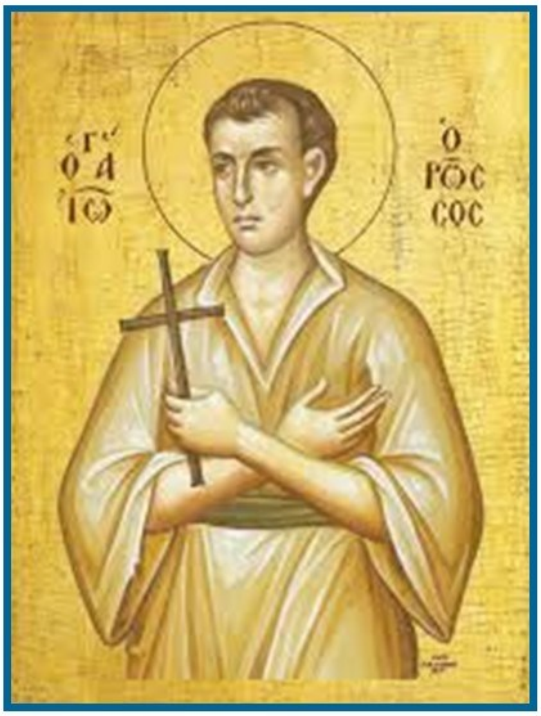
My son found peace and tranquility which no psychologist could give him

I work in a regional hospital. Outside there is a small chapel of Spyridon. Because the faithful have filled it with icons of various Saints, the priest tried to hand them out to others. One of these icons I received; it was the icon of St. Ephraim, who was totally unknown to me. I was impressed that the icon smelled of incense for many hours. Then I thought to give It to my son who is a police officer. When my son saw the icon of St. Ephraim, he told me that His body is in Nea Makri. I decided that some day I would visit the monastery, but for various reasons, we never were able to make it. After four years my son faced a very serious personal problem. We immediately headed to Athens and the next day we came to the monastery of St. Ephraim. My son said that the whole monastery smelled like incense. I didn't experience this gift, neither did his father. My son would visit the Saint continuously and always would return home peaceful. Slowly he began to overcome his problem, with the great help which he received from St. Ephraim. In the meantime he had to take tests for promotion. Because of his problem, he couldn't study his lessons. St. Ephraim, however, gave him some help. He took his tests two months later. Because he wrote well, he had a good result and his grades improved. I thank St. Ephraim for this, for my oldest son near Him found peace and tranquility, which no psychologist could give him in such a short period of time. Furthermore I should say that when I came to our Saint I bought some books. One evening I read His paraklesis. Afterwards I went to sleep. Near 3:30AM I woke up and sensed that in the house incense was burning, as if someone had burned incense at that instant. I thank St. Ephraim very much, who came to my house and gave such a great honor to me who am such a sinner.

Saint John the Russian,the New Confessor of Prokopion and Evia

Commemorated on May 27

by Photios Kontoglou



The righteous John was **born in a village in southern Russia**, of pious Orthodox parents, **around 1690**, during the reign of Peter the Great.John was taken prisoner by Tartars along with thousands of other Russians. The Tartars sold him to a Muslim cavalry officer who lived in Prokopion (modern-day Ürgüp) in Asia Minor, near Caesarea of Cappadocia, and this Aga carried John to his village.

John would even silently chant psalms while he followed the horse of his master **as hostler** when the master rode in the country. The holy stable boy – besides the **prayers** and **fasting** which he carried on day and night, winter and summer, inside that stable while lying upon the dung like **another Job** – would **go at night and keep vigil** in the narthex of the **Chapel of Saint George**, which was built in the hollow of a rock near the house of his master. John would go there secretly at night, and **every Saturday he partook of the immaculate Mysteries**. Greek Orthodox clergy were living in Prokopion serving the local native Greek population as well as the Russian slaves of the Turks. The Lord, who examines the hearts and the reins, looked upon his faithful slave and caused John's fellow slaves and other believers who had previously done so to cease mocking and insulting him...

After the Aga had become wealthy, he determined to go on the annual pilgrimage to Mecca to give thanks to God for his blessings, which he actually received through the intercessions of Saint John and not from any devotion to the Islamic religion, and to offer sacrifice for his sins. The Hadj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, is commanded of Muslims to make at least once in their lifetime. After leaving Prokopion, and enduring the hardships suffered in those times by pilgrims, he arrived at the holy city of the Muslims. Meanwhile, some days after his departure, the Aga's wife gave a banquet, at which she invited her husband's relatives and friends to rejoice and to pray that he might return safe from his journey. Blessed John served at table. Pilaf, a dish favored by the Aga, was placed on the table. Then the mistress remembered her hus-band and exclaimed to John, "How much pleasure your master would have if he were here now and could eat this pilaf with us!" **John then asked for a plate of the pilaf, saying that he would send it to his master in Mecca.** Upon hearing these words, the guests laughed. The mistress told the cook to give John a plate of the food, thinking that he would either eat it himself or carry it to some poor Christian family as was his custom. **Taking the dish, the saint went to the stable where he knelt and prayed from the depths of his heart that almighty God would send the food to his master in whatever manner he might choose. In his simplicity the blessed one had faith that the Lord would hearken to his prayer and that the food would arrive in Mecca by supernatural means. He believed "without doubting," according to the word of the Lord that God would perform this miracle.** As the great ascetic Saint Isaac the Syrian writes, "These supernatural things will occur for those who are simple in mind and

fervent in the hope." Indeed the plate of food vanished from before John's eyes. Then the holy one returned to the dining room and told his mistress that he had sent the pilaf to his master.

"Some time later the Aga returned from Mecca, and to the amazement of his household brought with him the very copper plate that had held the food. Only blessed John was not surprised. The Aga told his household, "On that exact day (that is, on the day of his wife's banquet in Prokopion) as I was returning from the Great Mosque to the house where I stayed, **I found this plate filled with pilaf on the table in a room that I had locked.** I stood pondering who could have brought it. Above all, I could not understand how the door which I had locked well had been opened. Not knowing how to explain this mystery, I examined the plate of steaming pilaf. I saw with amazement that my name was engraved in the copper just as all such vessels in our house. Despite confusion from that unexplainable circumstance, I sat down and ate the pilaf with great relish. Observe the plate which I have brought back. It is truly ours. For the sake of Allah, I do not understand how it came all the way to Mecca, or who brought it."

When the Aga's household heard this, they marveled. The wife told how John had asked for the plate saying that he would send it to Mecca, and how they had laughed to hear him say that he had sent it. Behold, what he had said was true! This miracle was soon made known to the whole village and surrounding area, **and from now on John was considered righteous and beloved of God.** No one any longer dared to bother the holy one but rather looked upon him with fear and reverence. His master and his master's wife esteemed him all the more, and entreated him again to leave the stable and occupy a more comfortable dwelling. Even so, John refused to change his residence and continued to live as an ascetic, laboring as before to care for the animals and eagerly obeying the commands of his master. **Saint John spent his nights in prayer and psalmody**, according to the word of the Lord who says, **"Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's."**...

John approached the end of his life after several years of fasting, prayer, and sleeping on the ground. .. The date of his falling asleep was **May 27, 1730**.In this manner, then, reposed **Saint John the Russian, a new Job who passed his life upon a dung heap, a second Lazarus who endured the mockings of his fellow servants** and whose wounds his master's dogs licked.

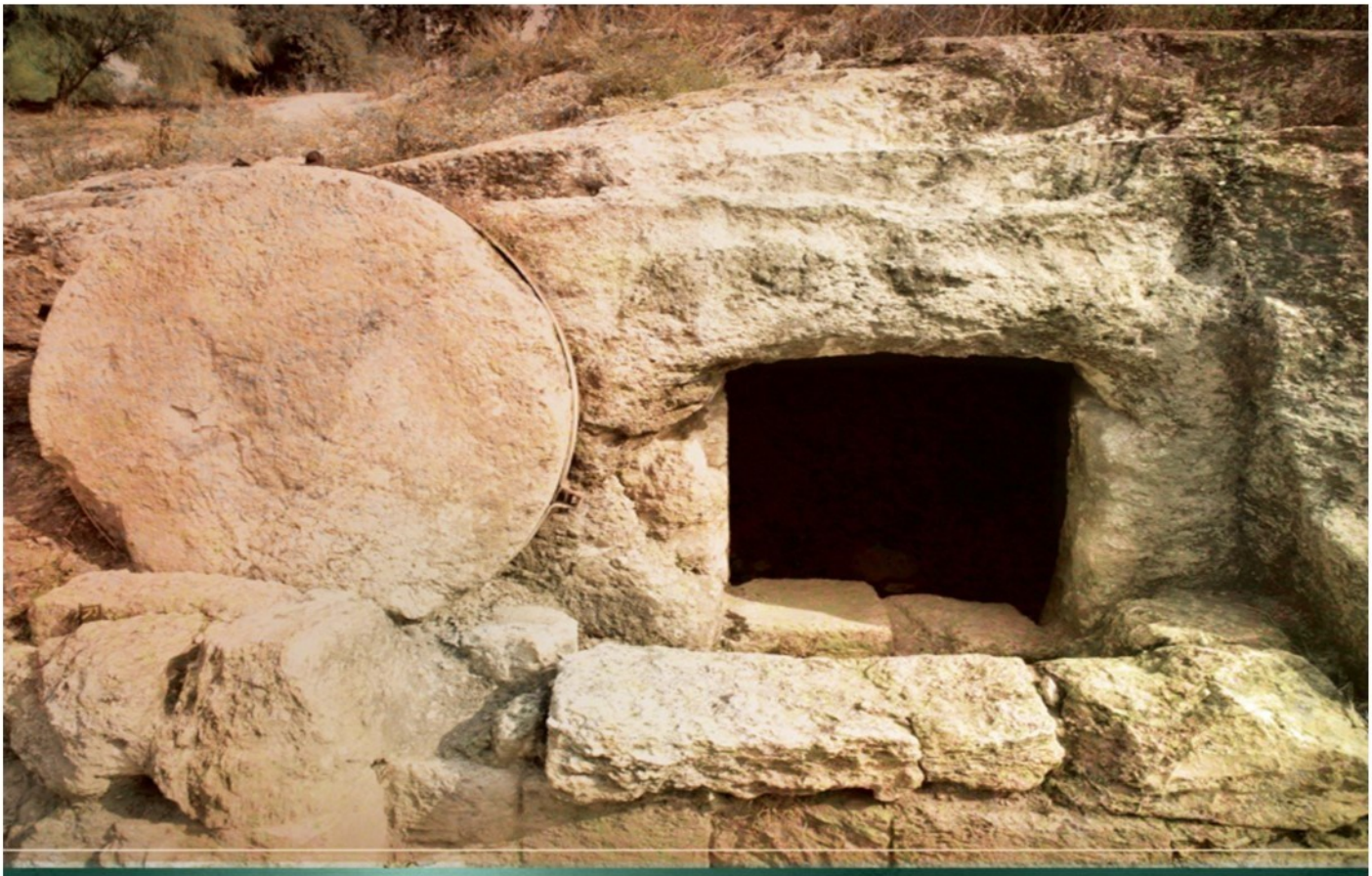
John was about forty years old at the time of his repose. Because he was beloved by God, the Lord brought John quickly near his throne that he might suffer no more torment in this sinful world, and that he might rejoice in the tents of the righteous where there is neither pain, nor sorrow, nor sighing, but the untroubled sound of those that keep festival and cry unceasingly, "O Lord, glory to thee!" ...In Jerusalem on high, the dwelling of the First-born where there are found the blessed souls of the saints who endured privation in this world as to pass through **"the narrow and afflicted way that leadeth unto life,"** there rejoices also the humble John whom we celebrate today, brother to animals, new Job, and second Lazarus.

In the other life, those who grieved the saint and those who indulged their passions are groaning. Behold what the Prophet King Solomon says concerning the righteous man and his persecutors, when they open their eyes after death, then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labors. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for....

(Based on a Life of the Saint **by Photios Kontoglou**.)

Troparion, in Tone IV

He that hath called thee from earth unto the heavenly abodes doth even after thy death keep thy body unharmed, O righteous one; for thou wast carried off as a prisoner into Asia wherein also, O **John**, thou didst win Christ as thy friend. Wherefore do thou beseech him that our souls be saved.



COME SEE

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.
Come, see the place where the LORD lay.

Matthew 28:6

The Professor and The Student

Professor : You are a Christian, aren't you, son ?
Student : Yes, sir.
Professor : So, you believe in GOD ?
Student : Absolutely, sir.
Professor : Is GOD good ?
Student : Sure.
Professor : Is GOD all powerful ?
Student : Yes.
Professor : My brother died of cancer even though he prayed to GOD to heal him. Most of us would attempt to help others who are ill. But GOD didn't. How is this GOD good then? Hmm?
(Student was silent.)
Professor : You can't answer, can you ? Let's start again, young fella. Is GOD good?
Student : Yes.
Professor : Is satan good ?
Student : No.
Professor : Where does satan come from ?
Student : From … GOD …
Professor : That's right. Tell me son, is there evil in this world?
Student : Yes.
Professor : Evil is everywhere, isn't it ? And GOD did make everything. Correct?
Student : Yes.
Professor : So who created evil ?
(Student did not answer.)
Professor : Is there sickness? Immorality? Hatred? Ugliness? All these terrible things exist in the world, don't they?
Student : Yes, sir.
Professor : So, who created them ?
(Student had no answer.)
Professor : Science says you have 5 Senses you use to identify and observe the world around you. Tell me, son, have you ever seen GOD?
Student : No, sir.
Professor : Tell us if you have ever heard your GOD?
Student : No , sir.
Professor : Have you ever felt your GOD, tasted your GOD, smelt your GOD? Have you ever had any sensory perception of GOD for that matter?
Student : No, sir. I'm afraid I haven't.
Professor : Yet you still believe in Him?
Student : Yes.
Professor : According to Empirical, Testable, Demonstrable Protocol, Science says your GOD doesn't exist. What do you say to that, son?
Student : Nothing. I only have my faith.
Professor : Yes, faith. And that is the problem Science has.
Student : Professor, is there such a thing as heat?
Professor : Yes.
Student : And is there such a thing as cold?
Professor : Yes.
Student : No, sir. There isn't.
(The lecture theater became very quiet with this turn of events.)

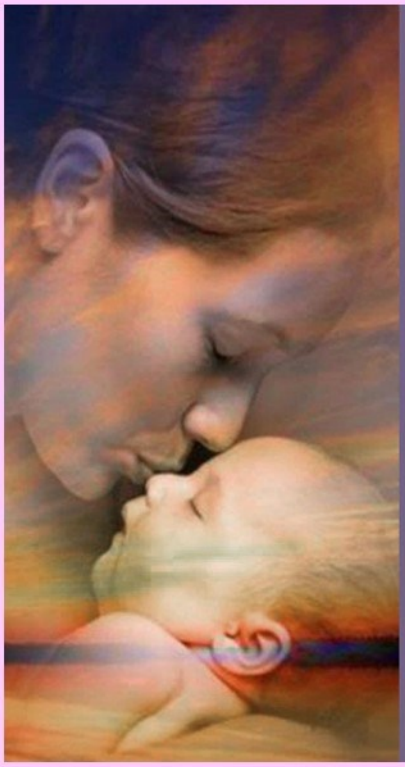
Student : Sir, you can have lots of heat, even more heat, superheat, mega heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat. But we don't have anything called cold. We can hit 458 degrees below zero which is no heat, but we can't go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold. Cold is only a word we use to describe the absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, sir, just the absence of it.
(There was pin-drop silence in the lecture theater.)
Student : What about darkness, Professor? Is there such a thing as darkness?
Professor : Yes. What is night if there isn't darkness?
Student : You're wrong again, sir. Darkness is the absence of something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing light. But if you have no light constantly, you have nothing and its called darkness, isn't it? In reality, darkness isn't. If it is, well you would be able to make darkness darker, wouldn't you?
Professor : So what is the point you are making, young man ?
Student : Sir, my point is your philosophical premise is flawed.
Professor : Flawed ? Can you explain how?
Student : Sir, you are working on the premise of duality. You argue there is life and then there is death, a good GOD and a bad GOD. You are viewing the concept of GOD as something finite, something we can measure. Sir, Science can't even explain a thought. It uses electricity and magnetism, but has never seen, much less fully understood either one. To view death as the opposite of life is to be ignorant of the fact that death cannot exist as a substantive thing. Death is not the opposite of life: just the absence of it. Now tell me, Professor, do you teach your students that they evolved from a monkey?
Professor : If you are referring to the natural evolutionary process, yes, of course, I do.
Student : Have you ever observed evolution with your own eyes, sir?
(The Professor shook his head with a smile, beginning to realize where the argument was going.)
Student : Since no one has ever observed the process of evolution at work and cannot even prove that this process is an on-going endeavor. Are you not teaching your opinion, sir? Are you not a scientist but a preacher?
(The class was in uproar.)
Student : Is there anyone in the class who has ever seen the Professor's brain?
(The class broke out into laughter.)
Student : Is there anyone here who has ever heard the Professor's brain, felt it, touched or smelt it? No one appears to have done so. So, according to the established Rules of Empirical, Stable, Demonstrable Protocol, Science says that you have no brain, sir. With all due respect, sir, how do we then trust your lectures, sir?
(The room was silent. The Professor stared at the student, his face unfathomable.)
Professor : I guess you'll have to take them on faith, son.
Student : That is it sir … Exactly ! The link between man & GOD is FAITH. That is all that keeps things alive and moving.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Panagia as a Perfect Model of a Mother

The Panagia is an eternal model of a mother, who sympathizes and co-suffers with every person in pain and is both a shelter and comfort for all the persecuted. The sad icon of the sword that pierced her as she watcher her Son suffer for humanity, makes her a person *par excellence* of compassion and philanthropy.

She is the archetypal mother, aching and caring for her children for the grief and injustice which prevails in the world, continually sighing for suffering man. In her person mothers primarily find a unique assistant and absolute understanding in their concern for the future of their children and that of the whole world.



The love of a true *Mother* comes nearer to being like the *Love of God* than any other kind of love!

THE DIFFERENCE...

Mother – Son, What If I Lose My Vision?

Son – I'll Take You To The Best Eye Hospital in The Country.

Mother – And What If I Don't Get My Vision Cured There?

Son – I'll Take You To The Best Eye Hospital in The World.

Mother – I Love You my son!

Son – Mum, What If I Lose My Vision?

Mother – **I' ll Give My Eyes To You...**

ORDINATION OF FATHER GEORGE KAZOULIS

On Saturday, March 21, 2020, we had the great joy to welcome His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America to our community for the Ordination to the Holy Priesthood of our beloved Father George. AXIOS!

Parent TO Parent

CREATE YOUR PARENTING PLAN

ANASTASIA LEONDIS

We have bookstores and libraries filled with parenting books and manuals about how to raise, discipline and guide our children. The internet provides a plethora of information, both helpful and not. Community centers, hospitals and schools offer classes to tell us how to be a good parent. Even with all of these resources, the responsibility lies with us to create and execute our own effective parenting plan.

An effective Orthodox parenting plan dismisses worldly falsehoods such as the virtue of material possessions—wealth and the "child with the most toys wins" attitude—and instead brings forth a kingdom-focused approach that concentrates on eternal truths. By placing the proper focus with our families on humility, forgiveness and holiness, we are preparing them for God's kingdom.

So how do we do this? First and foremost, we create a Christ-centered home: one where we experience the "liturgy after the liturgy" where families pray together, practice forgiveness and model Christ-like love. By including our Lord in every aspect of our homes and our children's lives, the process of creating our parenting plan begins.

Here are five fundamental steps to help your family begin to build your unique parenting plan.

1. SET FIRM BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are the acceptable and unacceptable limits that each family can comfortably maintain—the Family Rules. Consider and discuss what those boundaries are and be firm about keeping them. This means letting children know in advance what behavior is unacceptable and what the consequences will be if that boundary is breached. It is important that boundaries are clearly communicated and reinforced on a regular basis. Keep in mind that boundaries will and should change as children grow, mature and reach new developmental benchmarks.

"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established."

(Proverbs 16:3, NRSV)

2. BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AMONG FAMILY MEMBERS

It is of the utmost importance for children to have quality relationships with parents, siblings and the extended family. Simply stated, it is about finding quality one-on-one time with each child. This serves as an invaluable tool to attend to each child's specific needs through engaged listening, nonjudgmental reactions and empathetic responses. Try asking an open-ended question and just listening!

3. ALLOW CHILDREN TO FAIL

Many parents do not want their child to fail and thus attempt to rescue them at the first sign of a challenge. When children are faced with a task that they are physically, emotionally and developmentally capable of completing, it is important that parents allow them to try to succeed. Unless the task is dangerous, developmentally premature or spiritually harmful, a successful family plan allows children to attempt the task at hand. We want them to feel empowered to handle the challenge, even if it is difficult. We must allow them to fail, so that they can continue the attempt until they are successful. This is what builds real confidence in children.

4. MODEL CHRIST FOR YOUR CHILDREN

One of the most difficult things in parenting is modeling Christ for our children. Often we seem to have two standards: the way we expect our children to behave and the way we actually live. It is our responsibility and calling to model Christ-like behavior in all of our daily interactions. Our children need to see parents respond to particular situations with honesty, integrity, patience and love. We cannot give our children mixed messages about Christian living; rather, we must model for them what the Lord expects from all of us.

5. SET FAMILY GOALS

One of the most overlooked methods for creating a family parenting plan is goal setting. Setting goals for and with our children is an essential component of growth. Goals can be as specific as individual milestones or accomplishments or as broad as long-term familial hopes and dreams. By properly planning, we have both individual and family objectives to walk toward. Have each child come up with at least one goal and review together periodically.

While creating a family parenting plan may seem trivial to some and daunting to others, I assure you it is worth the effort. We read in the Book of Proverbs, "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established" (Proverbs 16:3, NRSV). To be committed to our Lord means to be steadfast in faith, devoted to doing His will and enduring the challenges set before us. By being committed to Him, we are guiding our families to Christ and allowing Him to guide us.

Presvytera Anastasia Leondis (MA, LMHC, NCC) holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and is a licensed mental health counselor in Florida and New York. She is a nationally certified counselor and has worked in the field of mental health counseling for over twenty years. Presvytera Anastasia currently has a private practice in Boca Raton, Florida, where she works with individuals, couples, kids and families, and she serves as an instructor at Nova Southeastern University, where she supervises graduate students in their counseling program. You may contact her at anastasia.leondis@gmail.com.

Συζητώντας "περί Θεού" με έναν κουρέα.

Ένας κύριος πήγε σε ένα κουρείο για να κουρέψει τα μαλλιά του και να ξυρίσει τα γένια του ως συνήθως.

Εν τω μεταξύ άρχισε μια ενδιαφέρουσα συζήτηση μεταξύ αυτού και του κουρέα που τον περιποιόταν…

Μίλησαν για πολλά θέματα, όμως, κατέληξαν να συζητούν για το θέμα της ύπαρξης του Θεού!

Είπε ο κουρέας: «Κοίτα, άνθρωπέ μου, εγώ δεν πιστεύω στην ύπαρξη του Θεού, όπως εσύ μου λες».

«Και γιατί το λες αυτό;» ρώτησε ο πελάτης.

«Μα είναι πολύ απλό, φτάνει να πας έξω στους δρόμους και θα καταλάβεις ότι Θεός της Αγάπης δεν υπάρχει. Πες μου, αν ο Θεός υπήρχε, θα υπήρχαν τόσοι άρρωστοι άνθρωποι στον κόσμο; Θα υπήρχαν τόσα εγκαταλελειμμένα παιδιά; Αν ο Θεός πράγματι υπήρχε ούτε πόνος θα υπήρχε ούτε δυστυχία παντού. Δεν μπορώ να διανοηθώ έναν Θεό της αγάπης, που να επιτρέπει όλα αυτά τα κακά που συμβαίνουν στον κόσμο μας». Ο πελάτης σταμάτησε για μια στιγμή, σκέφτηκε, αλλά δεν συνέχισε την συζήτηση γιατί δεν ήθελε να τσακωθεί με τον κουρέα. Ο κουρέας εντωμεταξύ τέλειωσε την δουλειά του και ο πελάτης βγήκε από το μαγαζί του για να φύγει.

Λίγα βήματα πιο κάτω από το κουρείο, είδε έναν μαλλιαρό άντρα στους δρόμους με μακριά μαλλιά και γενειάδα (φαίνεται ότι είχε πολύ καιρό να κουρευτεί και γι΄ αυτό φαινόταν τόσο απεριποίητος).

Τότε ο πελάτης γύρισε ξανά πίσω στο κουρείο και είπε στον κουρέα: «Ξέρεις κάτι; Εγώ νομίζω ότι δεν υπάρχουν κουρέες».

«Πως μπορείς να ισχυρίζεσαι κάτι τέτοιο; Απάντησε ο κουρέας. «Εγώ είμαι η ζωντανή απόδειξη γι΄ αυτό και είμαι μπροστά σου».

«Όχι», επέμενε ο πελάτης. «Δεν υπάρχουν κουρέες. Αν υπήρχαν τότε δεν θα κυκλοφορούσαν μαλλιαροί άνθρωποι με μακριά μαλλιά και γενειάδες στους δρόμους…»

«Αααα, οι κουρέες υπάρχουν... Αυτό που βλέπεις συμβαίνει γιατί οι άνθρωποι αυτοί δεν έρχονται σε μας».

«Μάλιστα! Έτσι είναι.» Κι ο πελάτης συμπλήρωσε «Αυτή είναι η ουσία στο θέμα μας. **Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣ ΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ!** Το πρόβλημα βρίσκεται στο ότι οι άνθρωποι δεν πάνε σ΄ Αυτόν… Στη ζωή τους δεν Τον αναζητούν για να σωθούν, να λυτρωθούν ή να βοηθηθούν στα προβλήματά τους. Γι΄ αυτό υπάρχει τόσος πόνος και δυστυχία στον κόσμο μας!»

Kimisis Theotokou Greek Orthodox Church

Lighting a Candle for a loved one as a long held tradition in our Church. We invite you to light a virtual candle and to spend a few moments in prayer at

There is no charge for lighting a virtual candle. You will have the opportunity to provide a voluntary donation when you complete the request but it is not required. 100% of your donations will go to fund continuing efforts on keeping the church functioning in this turbulent time.

BAPTISMS AND 40 DAY BLESSING

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST AND YOUNGEST MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCH WHO BECAME ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS DURING THE MONTH OF MARCH. MAY GOD BLESS THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES AND GRANT THEM MANY HAPPY, HEALTHY YEARS!

Μαρτίου 1η :
Γιός Οικ. Γεωργίου Λεονάρδου.
Κουμπάρα: Μαρία - Ευαγγελία Λεονάρδου

Μαρτίου 22:
Γιος Οικ. Παντελή Ντίλης
Σαραντισμός

Ο χρόνος της ζωής μας

(Άγιος Ιουστίνος Πόποβιτς)

Οι χριστιανοί ζουν «εν σοφία», εάν ζουν κατά το Ευαγγέλιο του Κυρίου Ιησού Χριστού, ο Οποίος είναι «η σοφία του Θεού» (Α' Κορ. 1. 24, 30). Έξω απ' Αυτόν υπάρχει «η των αφρόνων ανθρώπων αγνωσία» (Α' Πέτρ. 2. 15). Οτιδήποτε δεν είναι από το Χριστό, ο Οποίος είναι η μόνη και αληθινή και αιώνια σοφία, πράγματι είναι και μωρία και ανοησία. Και οι άνθρωποι γίνονται ανόητοι και παράφρονες από την αμαρτία και τα πάθη. Στην ουσία της η αμαρτία είναι η κύρια παραφροσύνη της ανθρώπινης ψυχής. Η φιλαμαρτησία είναι πάντοτε παραφροσύνη της ψυχής εμπρός στο Θεό. Μόνο η αγάπη για το Χριστό γεμίζει την ανθρώπινη ψυχή με την ένθεη σοφία.

Μόνο όταν ζουν «εν σοφία» οι άνθρωποι επωφελούνται το χρόνο της ζωής τους που τους δόθηκε από το Θεό, «τον καιρόν εξαγοραζόμενοι». Με την αμαρτία και τα πάθη σκορπίζουμε το θεόσδοτο χρόνο, τον παραδίνουμε στο θάνατο και στην παραφροσύνη του κακού. Ο χρόνος της ζωής μας μάς έχει δοθεί για να κερδίσουμε την αθανασία και την αιώνια ζωή. Αλλά μόνο ζώντας «εν σοφία», δηλαδή με το Χριστό, «εξαγοράζομεν» το χρόνο μας, που έχει και αυτός δημιουργηθεί από το Θεό Λόγο και για χάρη του Θεού Λόγου (πρβλ. Ιω. 1. 3. Κολ. 1. 16). Η λογικότητα του χρόνου συνίσταται στο να υπηρετεί το Θεό Λόγο, τον Κύριο Ιησού Χριστό, να οδηγεί και να παραδίνει σ' Αυτόν καθετί που έχει και φέρνει μέσα του. Ο χρόνος μάς έχει δοθεί, για να τον μεταβάλλουμε σε αιωνιότητα ζώντας «εν σοφία», δηλαδή εν Χριστώ και διά του Χριστού. Με τη λογικότητά του ο χρόνος εισήλθε στο θεανθρώπινο σώμα του Χριστού, στην Εκκλησία, και εκεί βρήκε την αιώνια καταξίωσή του και τη θεία του πραγμάτωση. Διαμέσου των αγίων μυστηρίων και των αγίων αρετών στο χώρο της Εκκλησίας ο χρόνος μεταβάλλεται σε αιωνιότητα. Διότι η Εκκλησία είναι το θαυματουργό θείο εργαστήριο στο οποίο το χρονικό μεταβάλλεται σε αιώνιο, το θνητό σε αθάνατο και το πεπερασμένο σε άφθαρτο.

Στην ενότητα της πίστεως και της επιγνώσεως του Χριστού ερχόμαστε μόνο με την «κοινωνία συν πάσι τοις αγίοις», μόνο με την καθολική ζωή «συν πάσι τοις αγίοις», με την υπέρτατη χειραγωγία των αγίων Αποστόλων, Προφητών, Ευαγγελιστών, Πατέρων, Ποιμένων και Διδασκάλων. Και αυτούς τους οδηγεί και τους χειραγωγεί το Πανάγιο Πνεύμα, από την Πεντηκοστή και πέρα διαμέσου των αιώνων μέχρι τη Δευτέρα Παρουσία. Εν τω Αγίω Πνεύματι και από Αυτό υπάρχει και η ενότητα της πίστεως και η επίγνωση «του Υιού του Θεού», του Κυρίου ημών Ιησού Χριστού. Κάθε ειλικρινής και αληθινή πίστη στο Χριστό και επίγνωση του Χριστού δίνεται από το Πνεύμα της Αληθείας, το Οποίο μας οδηγεί εις «πάσαν την αλήθειαν» τη μόνη και μοναδική (Πρβλ. Ιω. 16, 13' 15, 26' 14, 26). Το Άγιο Πνεύμα ενώνει την αίσθησή μας με την καθολική καρδιά της Εκκλησίας και την επίγνωσή μας του Χριστού με την καθολική επίγνωση που έχει η Εκκλησία για το Χριστό. Το σώμα της Εκκλησίας είναι ένα και έχει «μίαν καρδίαν» (Πράξ. 4, 32). Σ' αυτή τη μία καθολική καρδιά της Εκκλησίας —τη μία καθολική ψυχή της Εκκλησίας — εισερχόμαστε και ενωνόμαστε με τους Αγίους με την ενέργεια της χάρης του Αγίου Πνεύματος, και μάλιστα ταπεινώνοντας το νου μας εμπρός στον άγιο καθολικό νου της Εκκλησίας, το πνεύμα μας εμπρός στο Άγιο Πνεύμα της Εκκλησίας. Και έτσι αποκτούμε μέσα μας την άφθαρτη αίσθηση και επίγνωση, ότι είμαστε κοντά σε όλους τους αγίους Αποστόλους, Προφήτες και Δικαίους, ότι έχουμε μία και την ίδια πίστη «εν Χριστώ Ιησού».

Την ίδια πίστη και την ίδια επίγνωση εν Κυρίω.

Η χριστιανική ζωή, η ζωή εν Χριστώ, στην Εκκλησία Του, είναι καινή ζωή και καινός τρόπος ζωής: όλος ο άνθρωπος ζει διά του Θεού και εν τω Θεώ. Πράγματι, αυτή είναι αιώνια ανθρώπινη ζωή, ζωή θεία, τέλεια, που έχει αναρίθμητες βαθμίδες. Εδώ ο άνθρωπος γνωρίζει το Θεό και την αλήθεια του Θεού και ζει εν αυτή και γι' αυτήν. Εδώ ο άνθρωπος γνωρίζει τον εαυτό του και πολιτεύεται ως ύπαρξη θεοειδής, αθάνατη και αιώνια. Σε αντίθεση βρίσκεται η άθεη ζωή, η ζωή έξω από το Χριστό και το χριστιανισμό. Όλη ρέει «εν ματαιότητι του νοός» του ανθρώπινου. Όσοι δεν γνωρίζουν το Θεό, αναζητούν τη ζωή και όλες τις δυνάμεις της από το δικό τους και με το δικό τους νου τον ανθρώπινο. Αλλά ο ανθρώπινος νους δεν περιέχει «εν εαυτώ» ούτε την πανγνωσία ούτε την υπερ-δύναμη, για να μπορέσει να εφοδιάσει τον άνθρωπο με αυτές τις αλήθειες και με αυτές τις δυνάμεις, που του είναι απαραίτητες για μια γνήσια ζωή «εν δικαιοσύνη και αληθεία και αγαθότητι»· και πολύ λιγότερο για μια αθάνατη και αιώνια ζωή. Ο ανθρώπινος νους περιέχει μέσα του λογισμούς, νοήματα, ιδέες. Αλλά αυτά είναι σκιές και φαντάσματα, ώσπου να πληρωθούν με το Θεό και τη θεία Αλήθεια.

Μακριά από τη ζωή με τον Θεό παντού είναι θάνατος, λήθαργος, θνητότητα, σκοτάδι. Γι' αυτό υπάρχει και η αδράνεια της διάνοιας για κάθε υγιή δράση. Η διάνοια χωρίς τον Θεό ψυχορραγεί, θανατώνεται και πεθαίνει. Και έρχεται η «πώρωσις της καρδίας» στους άθεους. Καρδιά στην οποία δεν υπάρχει Θεός είναι σαν την πέτρα· δεν αισθάνεται τίποτε όπως πρέπει, ούτε όσο πρέπει. Όλη η αίσθηση του ανθρώπου έχει στεγνώσει ολοκληρωτικά, είναι ρηχή, μυωπική, φοβισμένη και ανάπηρη. Και στην «εσκοτισμένην» διάνοια των αθέων όλες οι σκέψεις στεγνώνουν και απομένουν χωρίς ζωή και ψυχή και δύναμη. Μόνο με την εν Θεώ πολιτεία «ζωούται» η καρδιά με την αληθινή ζωή και γίνεται θείο εργαστήριο, το οποίο αδιάκοπα παράγει αθάνατα αισθήματα, άγια, καθαρά, και αισθάνεται και διαισθάνεται την αλήθεια του Θεού και για τους ανθρώπους και για τα πράγματα.

(Αγίου Ιουστίνου Πόποβιτς, "Οδός Θεογνωσίας", εκδ. Γρηγόρη, Αθήνα 1985, σσ. 308-310, 291, 292, 293)

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GEORGAKLIS & MALLAS PLLC
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

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Kostantinos Mallas

❖

Steven Smith
Gregory S. Lombardi
Chris Hatgipetros
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MAIN OFFICE:
9118 Fifth Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11209

120 Broadway
18th Floor
New York, NY 10271
by appointment only

Phone: 718-238-2400
Phone: 212-779-2400
Facsimile: 718-238-2116
Attorneys@gmlawny.com

WWW.GMLAWNY.COM

"...to Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever." Amen - Ephesians 3:21

The year 2020 marks the 88th Anniversary of our beloved Parish of Kimisis Theotokou. A Community that is our spiritual home, offering a strong foundation in our Greek Language, Faith, and Culture, where young and old, work together to sustain and cultivate our community for future generations to come.

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It is with great joy that we welcome the publication of the Kimisis Theotokou newsletter *The Hope of The World*, that will bring to us the community's news and activities. It will nourish us spiritually while helping us preserve the Greek Orthodox faith and traditions.

Wishing our community and our children continued progress and success!

MIKE, ANNA & BILLY MALLAS

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A 7-DAY CORONAVIRUS PRAYER GUIDE

PRAY FOR THE SICK

Pray for those who are sick, and their families,
that the Lord would heal and comfort them.

PRAY FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Pray for those on the frontlines treating those who are sick,
that the Lord would protect and strengthen them.

PRAY FOR THE VULNERABLE

Pray for those who are especially vulnerable to disease,
that the sickness would pass over them and
that they would rely on others for help.

PRAY FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Pray for those who have lost work, that God would
provide through their families and communities.

PRAY FOR OUR LEADERS

Pray for national and local government leaders,
that they would have wisdom to do what is best for all.

PRAY FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Pray for students who are out of school, and their families,
that the Lord would give them patience and discipline.

PRAY FOR CHURCHES

Pray for churches and ministry leaders, that they would
know how to best show the love of Christ in this time.

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives.
Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful."
JOHN 14:27

Ο καλός ο λόγος...

Αλήθεια, τι δύναμη έχει ο λόγος!

Ένας πικρός λόγος μας απογοητεύει.
Ένας γλυκός λόγος μας ενθαρρύνει.

Ένας φλύαρος λόγος μας κουράζει.
Ένας φειδωλός λόγος μας προβληματίζει.

Ένας απειλητικός λόγος μας τρομοκρατεί.
Ένας γαλήνιος λόγος μας καθησυχάζει.

Ένας χυδαίος λόγος μας αηδιάζει.
Ένας ευγενικός λόγος μας μαγνητίζει.

Ένας πρόστυχος λόγος μας κολάζει.
Ένας φωτισμένος λόγος μας στηρίζει.

Ένας αδιάκριτος λόγος μας διαλύει.
Μια Σ Υ Γ Ν Ω Μ Η στον Θεό
...μας σώζει!