

# ✝ THE SPIRITUAL WATCH

Η Πνευματική Εγρήγορση



"Stand fast on spiritual watch, because you do not know when the Lord will call you to Himself"

«Παραμένετε ακλόνητοι ἐν πνευματικῇ ἐγρήγορσιν, γιὰτὶ δὲν γινώριζετε πότε ὁ Κύριος θὰ σας καλέσει ἐμπρὸς Του»

+St. John Maximovitch / +Άγιος Ἰωάννης Μαξίμοβιτς

## St. Nicholas of Myra: The Saint of Compassion



Sermon by St. Philaret of New York, the New Confessor,  
on the Feast of St. Nicholas, 1972

Tonight, begins the celebration of the Feast of the holy hierarch and wonderworker, St. Nicholas. The Holy Orthodox Church commemorates him with special festivity, and his feast-day is reckoned as one of the great feasts of the ecclesiastical year.

As we have said before, St. Nicholas left behind no additions to the Church's sacred literature, to the sublime treasure-chest of the writings of the holy fathers of the Church. Let us recall St. John Chrysostom, let us bring to mind St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory the Theologian along with the rest of the mighty chorus of those giants of theological thought and word. Each of these surrendered to us a tremendous treasure, and the Church celebrates their feast-days, glorifying them as the ecumenical teachers, as hierarchs who through their spiritual influence and authority crossed the borders of their own dioceses and became in fact bishops of the entire universe. Though the sacred services in their honor are very solemn and festive, still they do not exhibit the touching and jubilant character of the service to St. Nicholas, to him who is called among our Russian people "Nicholas the Merciful".

*Cont'd on p.15*

## Murmuring Against God?

A Sermon by His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America

As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:31-36)

In today's Gospel passage, our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us how we should behave toward those with whom we engage, that is, our fellow human beings.

But this endeavor has preliminary steps. First, we need to see God's image in our fellow man. The holy fathers teach us that first and foremost, we see Christ in our spiritual leaders, that is, the bishops of the Church. Then, we see the image of Christ in the priesthood; we see it in the diaconate; we see it in monasticism; and, finally, we see it in every human being.

We must stress that the more one possesses God in himself, the more he sees God in others.

Naturally, the more a person is a servant of God, the more he possesses the Grace of God. When we mistreat the servants of God, we are sinning directly against God himself in a very real way. Thus, the Holy Prophet Moses said to the ungrateful Israelites: "Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." (Exodus 16:8) When we murmur against our spiritual leaders--

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### About The Spiritual Watch

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The Spiritual Watch is mailed to the homes of faithful by request only. Please see request information on p. 7

"Be Careful! Watch out for your soul! Turn your thoughts away from what will soon pass, and turn towards what is eternal. Thus you will find the happiness that your soul seeks!"  
«Πρόσεχε! Φρούρησε την ψυχή σου! Στρέψε τις σκέψεις σου μακριά από αυτά που σύντομα θα περάσουν, και στρέψου προς τα αιώνια. Έτσι θα βρεις την ευτυχία που λαχταρά η ψυχή σου»

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+St. John Maximovitch / +Άγιος Ἰωάννης Μαξίμοβιτς

# Elder Theologos: An Extraordinary Life

During the 1990s, the elder Theologos would attend services at our Church of the Annunciation in Kolonos—those of you who were parishioners there at that time will remember him—he was an old man who had lost his sight. The Nun Xenia took care of him then, and led him by the hand. This was, of course, the future Abbess Mother Xenia who, today, is the Hegumeness of the Holy Dormition of the Theotokos Convent in the Thrakomakedones of Attica, where the holy relics of St. Chrysostom formerly of Florina are kept. So, this Elder Theologos had an amazing story which had been printed into a booklet at one time, but since have likely all sold out. We received a blessing to republish a booklet on his life, which will be brief and interesting, but also extremely beneficial. I will say a few words now about the elder Theologos.

Although his heritage was from Crete, the elder Theologos was born and raised in the Kolonos region, in Athens. He was born sometime in 1913 or 1914 to pious parents. His family was very large; his parents had 17 children and he was the youngest, the seventeenth. In holy baptism, they gave him the name “Nicholas,” and even from a young age he was hard working and very devoted to prayer. The light of God burned brightly in Nicholas’s soul. When the calendar change occurred in Greece in 1924, he was already about 10 years old. He remained, together with his parents and siblings, who were much older than him, of course—the whole family remained in the Patriotic Old Calendar, as did many other people who did not follow this innovation. Why did they not follow? Because of their Orthodox intuition. Did anyone instruct them on the proper course? In the early years, those who kept the Old Calendar did not have Shepherds. In the beginning, there were no systems of organized hierarchs and priests that remained. Later, little by little, the priestly structure was solidified amid persecutions. The people kept the traditional calendar on their own. Who taught the people to do that? God did, Who spoke to their souls, to those who were pure of heart.

Nicholas, therefore, remained since early childhood in the Old Calendar, diligently observing all the teachings of the Church, attending the services, praying, keeping the fasts. Since boyhood, he also worked at a certain factory. Back then, especially in such a large family, children had to help make ends meet. They placed him in a position at this factory, and his older co-workers consistently noticed that Nicholas would keep all the fasts with the Old Calendar, not with the New. One day, the man-

ager’s brother, who was a Theology professor, came to visit his brother at the factory, and the manager said to him, “We have a kid here who is with the ‘Old’ he says... Who knows what that is, old-new?” “Well,” the theologian responded, “Let this young man come here, so that we can enlighten the poor thing a bit, so that he will not remain backwards...” So they summoned Nicholas, telling him that the brother of the manager, the theologian, wants to give him a lesson. Young Nicholas made the Sign of the Cross and calmly presented himself before them. He greeted them, and they were seated in the manager’s office to begin their discussion. At one point, Nicholas noticed that, while it was a fast day, either a Wednesday or a Friday, there was a plate of savory non-fasting snacks in front of the professor, of which he partook. At once, Nicholas said, “Forgive me, Professor, but if you invited me here to enlighten me, when you, today, partake of non-fasting items, then there is no need to tell me anything, thank you. Keep your theology for yourself, Sir. I do not need it.” The professor became irate, of course, and as usual, began to ridicule tradition, saying, “You all care about the letter of the Law, but we go to the substance!” But without taking the beginning steps, is it possible to advance to the later ones? Without respecting the Way, can you arrive at substance? It is not possible to approach substance



*Scene from the glorification of St. Chrysostomos, formerly of Florina, at the Convent of Holy Dormition in Attica, Greece, where Mother Xenia is the Abbess.*

while ignoring the laws of the Church. Thus, Nicholas exposed his shame, and he departed humiliated, because he was proven a transgressor of the most basic commands of God.

The authorities waged a persecution against the Old Calendar struggle of Confession that was especially fierce, and from the beginning, Nicholas stood against their attempt to exterminate the True Church in Greece. Especially near the end of the 1920s and into the 1930s, the confessors of the Faith were most severely persecuted by the State church. Nicholas was always at the forefront of the struggle, in rallies, protests, etc. This does not mean that our people sought to create unrest; it was only when the authorities arrested our Priests and defrocked them, or when unjust courtroom trials took place against us—then they would go to protest. Nicholas was one of the leaders of the struggle, and he was frequently beaten by the authorities. Imagine, back then, before the war, the police had great power. They carried clubs and gave severe beatings. When the authorities received a command from their superiors, “Go and dismantle the fanatics!” they went indeed and would leave nothing standing, destroying everything in their wake. Now, to beat crimi-

*Cont’d on page 12*

St. Gennadius of Constantinople:

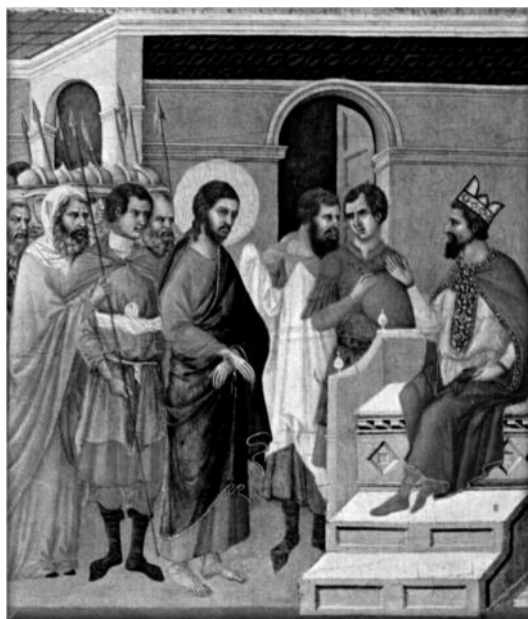
To judge sins is the business of one who is sinless, but who is sinless except God? Whoever thinks about the multitude of his own sins in his heart never wants to make the sins of others a topic of conversation. To judge a man who has gone astray is a sign of pride, and God resists the proud. On the other hand, one who every hour prepares himself to give answer for his own sins will not quickly lift up his head to examine the mistakes of others.

# Murmuring Against God? *Cont'd from front cover*

especially if they are true servants of God-- we are murmuring against God Himself.

Saint Basil the Great says that, if we speak against the priests, we are putting coals of fire on our head. Obviously, this saying applies much more to the hierarchs of the Church.

St. Dorotheos of Gaza says that we are doing the work of the devil when we pass on our temptations to another person. It is like Eve passing on the temptation to Adam, after she was tempted by Satan himself. When we understand these basic teachings of our faith, then we will also better understand and better apply the words of today's Gospel passage, namely, to love our enemies. In the above aforementioned cases, we show that we have no love for our fellow men or even our leaders. In today's Gospel passage, we are taught to love even those who hate us. It is in this that we prove ourselves to be true Chris-



tians.

Lastly, we should challenge ourselves by asking: Have I even made a beginning in the spiritual life? Most well-intentioned people will come to understand that we need to begin to take baby steps. Let's start by not "doing the work of the devil," as Saint Dorotheos of Gaza puts it, by passing on the venom of our warfare to others. For truly, this is a grave sin, especially if we are wrong. This venom is often passed on through complaining or judging or gossip or slander or other forms of soul-destroying communication. How can we undo the damage that we have caused, after the venom has passed from one person to another?

May our Lord help us to look inwardly, at ourselves. Time is passing, and death is at the door.

Let us pray that we not waste this precious life which God has given us in prideful ways but that we may apply ourselves unto every good work which will bring us salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom is due all glory unto the ages. Amen.

## Μουρμούρα κατά Του Θεού;

Λόγος του Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτη Αμερικής Δημητρίου

Στην σημερινή Ευαγγελική περικοπή, Ο Κύριός μας Ιησούς Χριστός μάς διδάσκει πώς θα πρέπει να συμπεριφερόμαστε προς αυτούς με τους οποίους συναναστρεφόμαστε, δηλαδή προς τους συνανθρώπους μας.

Αυτή όμως η προσπάθεια έχει προκαταρκτικά βήματα. Κατ' αρχήν, είναι ανάγκη να δούμε την εικόνα Του Θεού στον συνάνθρωπό μας. Οι Άγιοι Πατέρες μάς διδάσκουν ότι πρώτον και κύριον, βλέπουμε Τον Χριστό στους Πνευματικούς μας ηγέτες, δηλαδή στους Επισκόπους της Εκκλησίας. Έπειτα, βλέπουμε την εικόνα Του Χριστού στην Ιεροσύνη, την βλέπουμε στην Διακονία, την βλέπουμε στον Μοναχισμό, και τέλος την βλέπουμε σε κάθε άνθρωπο.

Πρέπει να τονίσουμε, πως όσο περισσότερο έχει κάποιος Τον Θεό μέσα του, τόσο περισσότερο βλέπει Τον Θεό στους άλλους.

Φυσικά, όσο περισσότερο ένας άνθρωπος υπηρετεί Τον Θεό, τόσο περισσότερο έχει την Χάρη Του Θεού. Όταν κακομεταχειριζόμαστε τους υπηρέτες-λειτουργούς Του Θεού, αμαρτάνουμε στην πραγματικότητα, ευθέως εναντίον Του Ίδιου Του Θεού.

Γι' αυτό ο Άγιος προφήτης Μωυσής, είπε στους αγνώμονες Ισραηλίτες: "Η μουρμούρα σας δεν είναι εναντίον ημών, αλλά εναντίον Του Κυρίου (Εξοδος. 16:8)

Όταν μουρμούραμε κατά των Πνευματικών μας ηγετών - ιδιαίτερος εάν πρόκειται για αληθινούς κληρικούς Του Θεού- μουρμούραμε κατά Του Ίδιου Του Θεού.

Ο Άγιος Βασίλειος ο Μέγας λέει πως, εάν μιλήσουμε εναντίον των Ιερέων, βάζουμε κάρβουνα στο κεφάλι μας. Είναι προφανές, πως αυτό ισχύει ακόμη περισσότερο για τους Ιεράρχες της Εκκλησίας.

Ο Άγιος Δωρόθεος Γάζας λέει πως κάνουμε την δουλειά του διαβόλου, όταν δίνουμε τους πειρασμούς μας σε κάποιον άλλον. Είναι όπως έκανε η Εύα, όταν έδωσε τον πειρασμό της στον Αδάμ, αφού είχε πειραχτεί πρώτα η ίδια από τον σατανά.

Όταν καταλάβουμε αυτές τις βασικές διδασκαλίες της Πίστεως μας, τότε θα καταλάβουμε καλύτερα και θα εφαρμόσουμε καλύτε-

ρα τα λόγια της σημερινής Ευαγγελικής περικοπής, συγκεκριμένα να αγαπούμε τους εχθρούς μας. Στις προαναφερόμενες περιπτώσεις, δεν έχουμε αγάπη για τους συνανθρώπους μας, ούτε καν για τους Ιεράρχες μας.

Στην σημερινή Ευαγγελική περικοπή, διδασκόμαστε να αγαπούμε ακόμη και αυτούς που μας μισούν. Μέσα από αυτό ακριβώς, αποδεικνύουμε ότι είμαστε αληθινοί Χριστιανοί.

Και εν τέλει, θα έπρεπε να αναρωτηθούμε: Έχω άραγε κάνει αρχή στην πνευματική ζωή; Οι περισσότεροι καλοπροαίρετοι άνθρωποι θα καταλάβουν πως χρειάζεται να κάνουμε μικρά βηματάκια. Ας αρχίσουμε από το να μην "κάνουμε την δουλειά του διαβόλου", όπως λέει ο Άγιος Δωρόθεος Γάζας, δίνοντας το δηλητήριο των πειρασμών μας στους άλλους. Γιατί πράγματι αυτό είναι ένα πολύ βαρύ αμάρτημα, και ιδιαίτερα όταν κάνουμε λάθος. Αυτό το δηλητήριο συχνά μεταδίδεται μέσω παραπόνων ή κουτσομπολιών ή συκοφαντίας ή άλλων μορφών ψυχοφθόρου επικοινωνίας. Πώς μπορούμε να ανατρέψουμε την ζημιά που προξενήσαμε, όταν το δηλητήριο θα περάσει από τον έναν στον άλλον;

Ας μας βοηθήσει Ο Κύριός μας να κοιτάξουμε τους εαυτούς μας. Ο καιρός περνά, και ο θάνατος βρίσκεται στην πόρτα μας.

Ας προσευχηθούμε, να μην χάσουμε σπαταλώντας την πολύτιμη αυτήν ζωή που Ο Θεός μας έδωσε, μέσα στην υπερηφάνειά μας, αλλά να μπορέσουμε να αφοσιωθούμε σε κάθε καλό έργο που θα μας οδηγήσει στην σωτηρία μας, εν Τω Ιησού Χριστώ, Τον Κυρίο μας, Στον οποίον πρέπει πάσαν δόξαν εις τούς αιώνας. Αμήν.



# Ο Γέροντας Θεολόγος: Μια Εκπληκτική Ιστορία

Τη δεκαετία του '90, ο Γέροντας Θεολόγος ερχόταν και εκκλησιαζόταν στον Ναό μας, του Ευαγγελισμού στον Κολωνό -θα τον θυμόσαστε όσοι πηγαίνατε εκεί τότε- ένα γεροντάκι ήταν, που είχε χάσει και το φως του. Η Μοναχή Ξένη τον περιποιόταν τότε, και τον κρατούσε από το χέρι. Πρόκειται για τη μελλοντική Γερόντισσα Ξένη, η οποία σήμερα είναι Ηγουμένη στην Ιερά Μονή της Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου στους Θρακομακεδόνες Αττικής, όπου βρίσκονται και τα ιερά λείψανα του Αγίου πρώην Φλωρίνης Χρυσοστόμου. Αυτός λοιπόν, ο Γέροντας Θεολόγος έχει μια εκπληκτική ιστορία που κάποτε είχε τυπωθεί σε βιβλιαράκι, τα αντίτυπα του οποίου όμως πρέπει να έχουν εξαντληθεί. Πήραμε ευλογία να εκδώσουμε αυτό το βιβλίο, το οποίο είναι σύντομο και χαριτωμένο, πλην όμως εξαιρετικά ωφέλιμο. Θα σας πω λοιπόν, δυο λόγια τώρα, χωρίς πολλές λεπτομέρειες, για τον Γέροντα Θεολόγο.

Ενώ ήταν Κρητικής καταγωγής, ο Γέροντας Θεολόγος ήταν γέννημα - θρέμμα της περιοχής του Κολωνού, στην Αθήνα. Γεννήθηκε γύρω στο 1913-14 από ευσεβείς γονείς. Η οικογένεια του ήταν υπερπολύτεκτη - οι γονείς του είχαν δεκαεπτά παιδιά, κι αυτός ήταν ο μικρότερος, ο δέκατος έβδομος. Στο Άγιο Βάπτισμα του έδωσαν το όνομα «Νικόλαος», κι από πολύ μικρό παιδί ήταν προκομένος και πολύ της προσευχής. Ο Νικόλαος ήταν πολύ φωτισμένο παιδί, είχε εκ Θεού φώτιση. Όταν έγινε η αλλαγή του ημερολογίου το '24, ήταν ήδη δέκα ετών. Αυτός, οι γονείς και τα αδέρφια του (πολύ μεγαλύτερα απ' αυτόν φυσικά), η οικογένεια ολόκληρη παρέμεινε στο Πάτριο εορτολόγιο, όπως άλλωστε και πάρα πολλοί άλλοι άνθρωποι που δεν ακολούθησαν τον νεοτερισμό. Από ποια αιτία ορμώμενοι δεν ακολούθησαν; Από διαίσθηση Ορθόδοξη. Μήπως τους δίδαξε άραγε κανείς; Στα πρώτα χρόνια, αυτοί που κράτησαν το παλαιό δεν είχαν Ποιμένες. Δεν παρέμειναν από την αρχή -οργανωμένα- Αρχιερείς και Ιερείς στο Πάτριο. Μετά, σιγά-σιγά μερικοί προσχώρησαν. Ο κόσμος «κράτησε» μόνος του. Ποιος το δίδαξε αυτό στον κόσμο; Ο Θεός, που μίλησε στις ψυχές των ανθρώπων, σε αυτούς που ήταν καθαροί τῇ καρδίᾳ.

Ο Νικόλαος έμεινε από μικρό παιδί στο Πάτριο, τηρώντας επιμελώς όλα τα της Εκκλησίας, ακολουθίες, προσευχή, νηστείες. Δούλευε δε, σε ένα εργαστήρι από μικρός. Καταλαβαίνετε, τέτοια μεγάλη οικογένεια, για να τα βγάλουν πέρα τότε, τα παιδιά τα έστελναν από νωρίς στη δουλειά. Τον έβαλαν λοιπόν, σε ένα εργοστάσιο και εκεί, στη δουλειά, παρατηρούσαν οι μεγαλύτεροι πως ο Νικόλαος τηρούσε -έφηβος ακόμη- με ακρίβεια όλες τις νηστείες με το Πάτριο, και όχι με το νέο. Μια μέρα λοιπόν, ήρθε ο αδερφός του Διευθυντού του εργοστασίου, που ήταν Καθηγητής θεολόγος στο επάγγελμα, σαν επισκέπτης στο εργοστάσιο, και ο Διευθυντής του είπε: «Έχουμε εδώ κι ένα παιδί που είναι με το παλιό, λέει... τι είναι αυτό, παλιό-καινούριο;». Ο αδερφός του ο Καθηγητής του είπε τότε: «Ε, ας έρθει αυτός ο νεαρός εδώ, να τον διαφωτίσουμε λίγο τον καημένο, να μη μείνει καθυστερημένος...». Τον ειδοποίησαν λοιπόν τον Νικόλαο, ότι τον ζητά ο Διευθυντής, διότι έχει έρθει ο αδερφός του, ο Καθηγητής της θεολογίας, και θα του κάνει «κατήχηση». Ο νεαρός Νικόλαος έκανε το Σταυρό του και χωρίς να ταραχθεί, παρουσιάστηκε στον Διευθυντή. Τους χαιρέτησε, εφόσον ήταν όλοι συγκεντρωμένοι, και εκεί που κάθισαν στο γραφείο του εργοστασίου, παρατήρησε ο Νικόλαος πως, ενώ ήταν ημέρα νηστείας, Τετάρτη ή Παρασκευή, μπροστά στον Καθηγητή υπήρχε ένα πιάτο με αρτύσιμα μεζεδάκια. «Συγγνώμη, κ. Καθηγητά», του είπε ο Νικόλαος, «αν με φωνάξετε για να με διαφωτίσετε στα περί της Πίστεως, τη στιγμή που εσείς σήμερα, έχετε μπροστά σας φαγητό και τρώτε αρτύσιμα, δεν χρειάζεται να μου πείτε τίποτα, ευχαριστώ. Την θεολογία σας κρατήστε την για το ζαντό σας. Δεν την έχω ανάγκη». Ο Καθηγητής περάχτηκε, φυσικά, και άρχισε να ειρωνεύεται, ως συνήθως, λέγοντας του: «Εσείς δίνετε σημασία στον τύπο, εμείς πάμε στην ουσία!». Μα χωρίς να διανύσεις τα αρχικά βήματα, γίνεται να προχωρήσεις στα επόμενα; Χωρίς τον

τύπο, μπορείς να φτάσεις στην ουσία; Μα δεν μπορείς να προσεγγίσεις στην ουσία, αγνοώντας τον τύπο. Τέλος πάντων, ο Νικόλαος τον ντρόπιασε και αυτός έφυγε διότι απεδείχθη παραβάτης βασικών εντολών Του Θεού.

Ο Νικόλαος από την αρχή συμμετείχε και στον ομολογιακό αγώνα του Πατρίου, εναντίον του οποίου ο διωγμός ήταν ιδιαίτερος σκληρός. Δριμύ διωγμό υφίσταντο οι ομολογητές προς το τέλος της δεκαετίας του '20, καθώς και κατά τη δεκαετία του '30. Ο Νικόλαος πρωτοστατούσε πάντοτε σε ό,τι γινόταν: συλλαλητήρια, εκδηλώσεις κ.α. Αυτό δε σημαίνει πως οι δικοί μας άνθρωποι δημιουργούσαν ταραχές απλώς, όταν τα όργανα της Πολιτείας συλλαμβάνανε Ιερείς και τους αποσημάτιζαν, ή όταν γίνονταν άδικο δικαστήρια εναντίον μας, τότε πήγαιναν για να διαμαρτυρηθούν. Ήταν, λοιπόν ο Νικόλαος ένας από τους μπροστάρηδες ανθρώπους του αγώνα, και συχνά ξυλοκοπείτο από τα εν λόγω όργανα. Τότε φανταστείτε, προπολεμικά, η αστυνομία είχε μεγάλη εξουσία. Τα όργανα της Τάξεως κρατούσαν ρόπαλα (γκλομπς), και ξυλοκοπούσαν... όχι αστεία. Όταν κάποιοι ανώτεροι τους έδιναν εντολή, «πηγαίνετε εκεί και διαλύστε τους, τους φανατικούς!», πήγαιναν όντως εκεί, και δεν άφηναν τίποτα όρθιο, ρήμαζαν τα πάντα. Τώρα, να χτυπούν κακοποιούς, πάει κι έρχεται..., να χτυπούν όμως αθώους Ορθόδοξους Χριστιανούς; Πολύ απάνθρωπο. Αυτούς τους διωγμούς πραγματικά τους βίωσαμε τότε. Ο Νικόλαος ξυλοκοπήθηκε τόσο πολύ από παιδί, κατά τους διωγμούς αυτούς, που κι ο ίδιος απορούσε πως επέζησε, κι έλεγε: «Επρεπε να φύγω ως μάρτυρας, αλλά φαίνεται ότι ο Θεός είχε κάποιο σχέδιο για μένα και με κράτησε...».

Μια φορά, λίγο πριν τα Εισόδια της Θεοτόκου με το παλαιό, το 1935, οι αστυφύλακες με τα ρόπαλα τους τον είχαν κάνει κατάμαυρο από το ξύλο. Δεν είχε μείνει πάνω του τίποτα που να μην ήταν μελανιασμένο. Είχε πρηστεί ολόκληρος και όταν επέστρεψε στο σπίτι του ήταν εντελώς μελανός. Το ίδιο βράδυ, γινόταν Αγρυπνία στο Μοναστήρι της Παναγίας, και επέμενε να παραβρεθεί, ακόμη και τραυματισμένος, όπως ήταν. «Μα έτσι θα σε πάμε στην Αγρυπνία; Με το φορείο», του έλεγαν οι δικοί του, αλλά επέμενε ο

Νικόλαος. «Ναι, ακόμη, και με φορείο, στην Αγρυπνία θα πάω και θα παρακαλέσω την Παναγία, επειδή ξυλοκοπήθηκα για την Δόξα Του Υιού Της, να με κάνει καλά». Παρ' ότι η οικογένεια του ήταν πιστοί άνθρωποι, ούτε εκείνοι τον πίστεψαν, και τον κορόιδευαν. Κι όμως! Μέχρι το πρωί, η υγεία του είχε αποκατασταθεί πλήρως, είχε ξανά βρει το χρώμα του! Οι μελανίες, τα οίδημα, τα πάντα είχαν εξαφανιστεί! Επέστρεψε πίσω λοιπόν, καμαρωτός και ένδοξος, λέγοντας στα αδέρφια του: «Ακουμπήστε με, εξετάστε με! Θυμάστε πως ήμουν το βράδυ; Ε, δείτε λοιπόν πως είμαι τώρα!». Σε όποιον έχει, βλέπετε, ήλιο ισχυρό, πόσο μεγάλα θαύματα παρουσιάζει ο Θεός! Εμείς δεν έχουμε τόση πίστη, κι έτσι δεν βλέπουμε τέτοια θαύματα.

Αν και ο Νικόλαος ήταν φιλομόναχος, οι γονείς του -την εποχή εκείνη οι γονείς τα αποφάσιζαν αυτά- του βρήκαν μια καλή κοπέλα από το Μενίδι (Αχαρναί Αττικής), το όνομα της οποίας ήταν Κωνσταντίνα. Αφού την γνώρισε ο Νικόλαος, της είπε: «Εγώ είχα άλλες βλέψεις, ήμουν δοσμένος στον Θεό και ήθελα να Του αφιερωθώ. Θα προχωρήσουμε ωστόσο σε γάμο, εφόσον οι γονείς μου τα κανόνισαν έτσι, αλλά έχω τους όρους μου. Πρώτον και κύριο: Ακολουθούμε η οικογένεια μου κι εγώ, το λεγόμενο «παλαιό». Και εσύ, αν θες, είσαι με το παλαιό από σήμερα. Αν δεν θέλεις, να εξηνούμαστε εξ αρχής ώστε να μην ταλαιπωρωόμαστε». Και συνέχισε ο Νικόλαος, περιγράφοντας της και τα ακόλουθα: «Θα κάνουμε Χριστιανική ζωή, πνευματική, θα εκκλησιαζόμαστε κάθε Κυριακή και γιορτή, θα τηρούμε τις νηστείες όλες απαρεγκλίτως, θα ζούμε γενικά σε μια σεμνοπρεπή κατάσταση, Χριστιανική κι ωραία. Θέλεις;». Η κοπέλα κοντοστάθηκε με όλα αυτά. Ο κόσμος τότε δεν είχε εκτροχιαστεί ακόμη στο βαθμό που

Συνεχίζεται στη σελ. 14



Λείψανα Αγίου πρώην Φλωρίνης Χρυσοστόμου στην Ιερά Μονή Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου, όπου είναι Ηγουμένη η Μητέρα Ξένη

# Accredited! Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary

*"A Key Institution for the Future of our Church"*

We all sat quietly in the waiting room. Sitting to my left was Father Patapios, the Dean of Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary (SPOTS). To my right was Gabrielle Asgarian, the Seminary's Registrar. As an intern at the Seminary, my job was simple: film and photograph Father Patapios and Gabrielle as they travel across the country from California to Florida to participate in an interview that would decide if the Seminary would receive accreditation.

Before going on this trip, I didn't know what it meant to be an accredited school. Since the end of 2019, I had been filming a documentary about the Seminary, and often, when I would interview a faculty member, the ongoing accreditation process and its significance for the Seminary would come up. Accreditation for a school means that the school is nationally recognized by the government and other universities as having an accepted general standard of quality. It would mean that a Seminary graduate could check mark the box corresponding to a Bachelor's degree on a job application; that an undergraduate degree from SPOTS would be accepted as a qualification for graduate level studies in universities across the country; and the potential for the Seminary to grant visas and sponsor international students to attend in the future.

We had just completed the final interview conducted by the accrediting agency. Quickly fumbling through my bag, I grabbed my video camera to ask Gabrielle to describe the interview and how she was feeling about it. Before she could finish answering, there was a knock at the door, and a gentleman kindly asked us to follow him.

I began retracing the thread of events, one following the other, which ultimately led up to this milestone and my being here. I moved to Etna in the fall of 2020 to volunteer as a Media and Communications Intern. Being immersed in the daily rhythms of Seminary life was a big adjustment from my past experiences in college, but a welcome one. One of my main jobs as an intern was to film a documentary that would tell the story of the Seminary's humble beginnings, and show the world what life is like for a student who goes there. I was given the opportunity to sit-in on classes, such as Old Testament and Church History. These were classes taught by two local monastic communities who run the Seminary, and when the lectures were finished I often found myself excited to tell others about what I had learned that day. For the documentary I was making, I interviewed a number of the students and faculty. I asked one particular student why someone would come to the Seminary, and he responded by saying, "You are coming here to pursue the truth." This is a statement I strongly agreed with. The students would often walk to either the convent or monastery for services. On their way, they would be surrounded by epic mountain ranges and a beautiful sunrise. When classes were no longer in session, sometimes they would take hikes to the nearby waterfall for a picnic. I followed them doing all of this, often with a camera in hand to capture the moments.

Many people believed that the idea of establishing a traditionalist Orthodox Theological Seminary in a small, secluded town in North-



*Left to right: Fr. Patapios, Dean of SPOTS; Gabrielle Asgarian, Registrar; Timothy Schenone, Digital Media & Visual Marketing Specialist*

ern California was a far-fetched idea. However, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, of Blessed Memory, had long dreamed that something like this could happen in Etna. Established in 2015 with the providential support of two visionary co-founders, the Seminary has continued to grow and fulfill its mandate with the determination of two small monastic communities and the generous donations, enthusiasm, and prayers of its ever-growing number of supporters and benefactors. Before heading off to Florida to meet the accrediting agency, His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America, released a video

asking all to pray for the Seminary. Soon, more and more people from around the world started hearing about our Seminary's meeting with the accrediting agency. Zoom prayer meetings were being organized by our faithful from the United States and Canada to get as many people as possible involved in this important and historic milestone.

Finally, we reached the room where we would be informed of the accrediting agency's decision, and the man in the suit opened the door for us. The room was just as we had left it. Over a dozen people, dressed in professional business attire stared at us from every direction. We were told to sit at the front of the room. To the back of us was a large screen signed into Zoom. The screen was filled with the faces of all the people who couldn't join in person, including His Eminence, Bishop Auxentios, the Rector of the Seminary. Immediately after sitting down, I realized that everyone was smiling. The tension that had filled the room earlier was replaced by joy, peace, and a sense of genuine gratefulness. Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary was now an officially accredited school!

Fast forward a few minutes later, and we were taking a group photo with the people of the accrediting agency. As I began to take photos, I couldn't help but think of what this moment meant to our Church, and what a privilege it was to be there when it happened. It dawned on me just how important the accreditation would be for our Seminary, the only Seminary under the jurisdiction of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece. There was now a place where people who feel called to serve the Church to become clergy, to teach, or just to learn more about their faith could go. It's an achievement that may not have happened without the continuous prayers of our faithful around the world. For that we are more than grateful.

The documentary about the Seminary is available to watch for free on the Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary YouTube Channel. When I finished filming the documentary and came back home from Florida, I realized that this wasn't the end of the story, but rather, the beginning of an entirely new one. It's a story that needs to be told, since, as His Grace, Bishop Maximus of Pelagonia said when asked about the Seminary, "This is a key institution for the future of our Church."

*by Timothy Schenone*





# Monastic Tactics

Lessons for All Orthodox Christians, out of the Spiritual Battlefield of Monasticism

*"The beam in thine own eye..."*

If you see a man who has sinned and you do not pity him, the grace of God will leave you. Whoever curses bad people, and does not pray for them, will never come to know the grace of God.

*-St. Silouan the Athonite (Writings, VII.4, VIII.6)*

As soon as condemnation comes into your head, immediately say with attention: "Lord, grant me to see my sins and not condemn my brother."

*-Saint Nektary of Optina*

Whoever with fear of God corrects and directs a sinner gains virtue for himself, that of opposition to sin. But whoever insults a sinner with rancor and without good will falls, according to spiritual law, into the same passion with the sinner.

*-St. Mark the Ascetic (Homilies, 2.183)*

A discerning man, when he eats grapes, takes only the ripe ones and leaves the sour. Thus also the discerning mind carefully marks the virtues which he sees in any person. A mindless man seeks out the vices and failings ... Even if you see someone sin with your own eyes, do not judge; for often even your eyes are deceived.

*-St. John of the Ladder (Ladder, 10.16-17)*

Do not lose your temper with those who sin. Do not have a passion for noticing every sin in your neighbor and judging it, as we usually do. Everyone will give an answer for himself before God. Especially, do not look with evil intention on the sins of those older than you, with whom you have no business. But correct your own sins, your own heart.

*-St. John of Kronstadt (My Life in Christ, 1.6)*

A brother asked an elder: If I see my brother fall into sin, is it good to hide him? The Elder answered: When, out of love, we hide the sin of our brother, then God also hides our sins; but when we show our brother's sin before others, then God also makes our sins known to people.

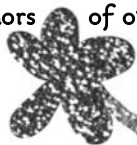
*-Ancient Patericon (9.9)*

Love sinners, but hate their deeds, and do not disdain sinners for their failings, so that you yourself do not fall into the temptation in which they abide... Do not foster hatred for the sinner, for we are all guilty... Do not be angry at anyone and do not hate anyone, neither for their faith, nor for their shameful deeds... Hate his sins, and pray for him, so that you may be made like unto Christ, who had no dislike for sinners, but prayed for them.

*-St. Isaac the Syrian (Homily 57,90)*

One who strictly prosecutes the misdemeanors of others will not find condescension towards his own.

*-St. John Chrysostom (On the Statutes, 3.6)*



# Vlad-itude: Saint Xenia Camp's Gratitude to Vlad Mihailoff

## 18 Years of Leadership, Caring, and Tireless Dedication

As many know, 2021 marked Vlad's final year as St. Xenia camp director. Vlad was involved in camp leadership for 18 years, and was camp director for 13 seasons! His selfless intensity and pure joy at seeing all who volunteer and attend camp each year is an inspiration to all. Simply put, his love for camp is contagious. Vlad has been much more than a director- he has become the face and voice of St. Xenia Camp. As such, we need others to take up his baton during camp week, so in recognition of Vlad's service, we have instituted a "Vladitude" award to be given out each year to one camper and counselor in each group who best embody the following qualities:

- **V**-ivacious (enthusiastic for all activities)
- **L**-oving (encourages and cares for others)
- **A**-ttentive (to services and staff)
- **D**-edicated (putting others before oneself)



While Vlad continues to support St. Xenia camp in other ways, the passionate leadership that has guided the growth of such an important experience for so many of our Orthodox youth will be sorely missed. Those who have worked closely with Vlad know that he struggles to accept expressions of gratitude for the work he has done, often responding with "no, thank YOU." On behalf of all the campers and staff who have been part of St. Xenia camp over the years...



...thank YOU Vlad!

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## The Giant in the Storm: The Old Nun's Tale

A long time ago in Jerusalem, when I was young, I heard an old nun say: "We must get ready for the service because the Great ones are arriving shortly." I was puzzled by these words, so later I asked her what she meant. Stern as she was, she replied: "Who are the 'Great ones?' The Hierarchs and priests of God! Here in Jerusalem we have the ancient tradition of referring to them as 'the Great ones', because that's how it is! They sanctify us and give us the Holy Mysteries..." she told me with an intense look in her eyes. "However, the world has forgotten, my child, and has become irrational..." the old nun continued. "I will tell you a story that will help you understand the truth of things..."

Once upon a time there was a place where there was no land, but only a stormy sea. Many people were trying to swim and survive in this deep ocean, constantly fighting with the waves to stay afloat and save themselves from drowning. In that sea there was also a giant floating about, who, while the people were sinking, he was able to keep his head out of the water. As the giant was able to enjoy relief from the waves, with his head dry, he noticed that the people around him were suffering and sinking into the salty depths. The giant took pity on them, seeing that they needed help, and he made a big decision: he decided to make a profound sacrifice in order to help the people...but it was a self-sacrifice that would permanently change his life. What did the giant do? He lay down on his back, on the waves, so that his body became a sort of raft, like a small floating island for the people. And the people climbed upon the giant and thus found safety, escaping the fury of the waves.

But the giant knew that his decision to lie on his back in the stormy sea was final. He would never again be able to lift his head out of the waves, because the people depended on him. He would never again enjoy a dry and carefree head, since he became an island for the people to stand upon.

So, the people dried out and found peace upon the giant, and eventu-

**"St. Ieronymos said that only if someone can lift the isle of Aegina on his shoulders, only then should he become a clergyman! This is how difficult the path is of the Hierarchs and their priests...they are greatly burdened with spiritual weights that the laity does not comprehend."**

ally began to forget, and take the giant's sacrifice for granted, even as the giant was half submerged in the water. As the giant lay on his back in the salty sea, the waves would hit his head and get into his eyes, causing them to sting from the salt. A nice lady who walked upon the giant would bend down, every now and again, and wipe the saltwater out of his eyes, and thus relieve his pain a bit. However, with the passage of time, the nice lady forgot herself, and began to complain, "Look at what a sacrifice I have to make for you, giant, to labor and bend down to wipe the seawater from your eyes all the time!" she indignantly told him one day. "I can't believe I have to constantly sacrifice my time and labor for you!"

"Do you understand?" the nun then asked.

"Genuine Hierarchs and priests of the Lord are like the giant," she explained. "Is it not absurd to fail to see how



obliged we are to our Hierarchs and priests of God? Instead of murmuring, should we not be eagerly seeking ways to support them and their work for the Church?" she continued. "It is for us that they put on the black. They sacrificed their worldly lives for us, they put on rasa and long beards for us, they have stood out like strangers in the world for us, they turned their backs on the lucrative professions or profitable businesses that they could have had, and why all this? To become rafts for us—hearing God's voice, they agreed to become islands

for us in the stormy sea of sin and perdition.

St. Ieronymos said that only if someone can lift the isle of Aegina on his shoulders, only then should he become a clergyman! This is how difficult the path is of the Hierarchs and their priests, with their hearing of confessions, celebrating the services before the Angels, and their most heavy spiritual responsibility. Do you know why, since ancient times, rasa have wide sleeves? So that we remember that Hierarchs and priests should not be burdened with physical labor, because they are greatly burdened with spiritual weights that the laity cannot comprehend. Still, especially in our days, we see our Hierarchs and priests burdened by physical labors in addition to their spiritual ones; and worse yet, they endure today's lack of respect and piety among the people. And then we often see them lose their health, God forbid!

It has been said that if you see an Angel of God walking on one side of the road, and a priest on the other, first you should go and get a blessing from the priest, and then from the Angel, because the priest handles the Immaculate Mysteries. But now a days, we have relaxed our standards and we have lost our respect. It mentions in the Gerontikon that there was once a priest who used to make an error in the order of preparation of the Proskomidie in the Holy Altar. Then, the local Bishop visited that parish, and seeing the error, corrected his priest and showed him the proper way. Indeed, the next time there was to be a Liturgy, the priest completed the Proskomidie the correct way, and immediately the voice of the Holy Angel, the Guardian of the Holy Table, was heard saying to the priest 'I rejoice seeing you prepare the Proskomidie correctly today.'

The priest marveled, asking the Angel, 'But why, all these years, did you not tell me that I was doing it wrong?' and the Angel responded, 'Permission has not been given to me by God to correct His priests.' That permission was given to the Hierarch."

"But as for us..." the old nun concluded with sadness, "we do not honor them, but instead we elevate ourselves in rank to not only equal them, but even fancy ourselves superior, when we disobey and criticize them! What must the Angels think of this..." I never forgot the words of the old nun.





# Kid Korner

## Pious Puzzles

- Down:**
- 1. The Seminary is now \_\_\_\_.
  - 5. Christ Is \_\_\_\_!
  - 7. The Lenten season
  - 8. We are told to give this to others.



### Spiritual Word Scramble Key, previous issue

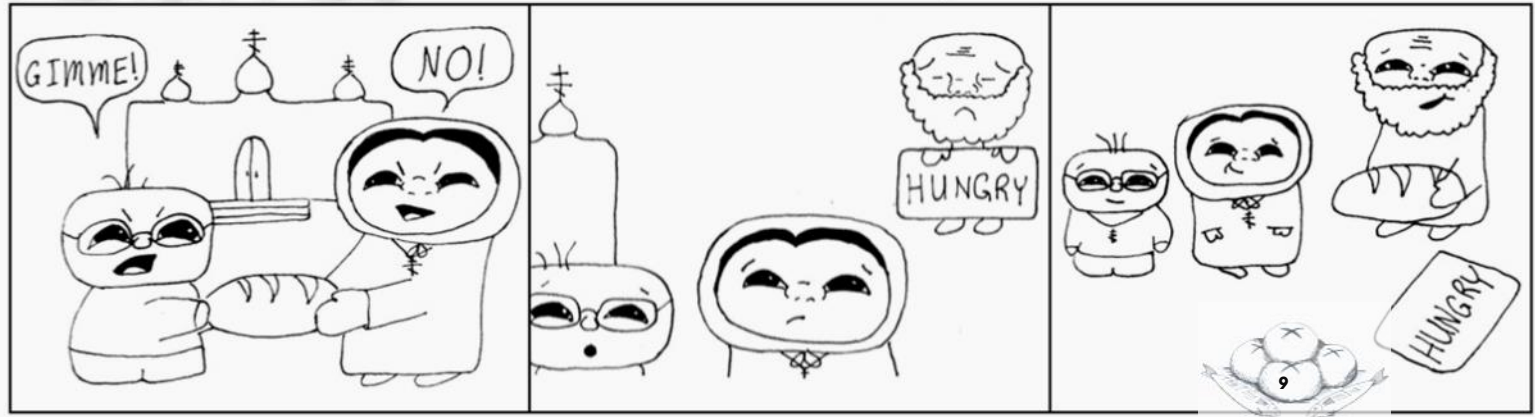
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		3							

- Across:**
- 2. Feast of Feasts
  - 3. St. \_\_\_\_ Camp
  - 4. Waiting on the Lord, we must have this.
  - 6. We ask this from others on the Sunday before Lent.
  - 9. Cannot see
  - 10. "Wondrous is God in His \_\_\_\_."
- Final Word: CANDLE**

## Story Korner

One morning, a girl woke up to discover that her prayer rope was missing from her wrist. She looked everywhere, but couldn't find it. She prayed that she would be able to find it eventually, even though it seemed unlikely to happen. Three days passed, and on the third morning, she sat up in bed and her elbow knocked one of her icons off the wall where it had been hanging. She reached down by the side of her bed to retrieve the icon, but to her astonishment, she grabbed her prayer rope instead! Her icon, which was of St. Nektarios, lay next to it. The girl thanked the Saint for finding her prayer rope, and more importantly, for reminding her that the Saints intercede for us in things both great and small.

## Parish Pals



### Always remember...



## Ο Γίγαντας στη Θύελλα: Το Διήγημα της Καλόγριας

Κάποτε, όταν ήμουν παιδί στα Ιεροσόλυμα, άκουσα μια καλόγρια να λέει: «Πρέπει να ετοιμαστούμε για την ακολουθία γιατί σε λίγο φτάνουν οι Σπουδαίοι.» Απώρησα μ' αυτά τα λόγια, και αργότερα την ρώτησα τι εννοούσε. Έτσι ανστηρή που ήταν, μου απάντησε: «Ποιοι είναι οι σπουδαίοι; Οι Αρχιερείς και οι ιερείς Του Κυρίου! Εδώ στα Ιεροσόλυμα έχουμε την αρχαία παράδοση να τους αποκαλούμε Σπουδαίους, γιατί έτσι είναι! Μας λειτουργούν και μας κοινωνάνε...» μου είπε με έντονη ματιά. «Ο κόσμος όμως έχει ξεχαστεί, παιδί μου, και έχει παραλογίσει...» συνέχισε η καλόγρια. «Θα σου πω ένα παραμύθι για να καταλάβεις την αλήθεια των πραγμάτων...»

Μια φορά κι έναν καιρό ήταν κάποιο μέρος όπου δεν υπήρχε ξηρά πουθενά, παρά μόνο μία θυελλώδης θάλασσα. Μέσα στη βαθιά και άγρια αυτή θάλασσα κολυμπούσε κόσμος πολύς που, θαλασσοδαρμένος, πάλευε με τα κύματα να μην πνιγεί. Ενώ ο κόσμος καταποντιζόταν, ήταν μέσα στη θάλασσα και ένας γίγαντας ο οποίος κατάφερνε να κρατήσει το κεφάλι του έξω από το νερό. Αλλά εκεί που ανακουφιζόταν ο γίγαντας, με το κεφάλι του στεγνό, παρατήρησε γύρω του τον κόσμο που πάλευε με τα κύματα και βούλιαζε στα αλμυρά βάθη. Σπλαχνίσθηκε ο γίγαντας, και βλέποντας την ανάγκη των ανθρώπων, πήρε μια μεγάλη απόφαση: να κάνει ο ίδιος μια θυσία για να βοηθήσει τους ανθρώπους... αλλά ήταν μια αυτοθυσία που θα του άλλαζε μονίμως τη ζωή. Τι έκανε λοιπόν ο γίγαντας; Ξάπλωσε ανάσκελα, μέσα στα κύματα, για να γίνει το σώμα του σχεδία, σαν ένα πλεούμενο νησάκι για τον κόσμο. Ο κόσμος, λοιπόν, σκαρφάλωσε πάνω στον γίγαντα και βρήκε έτσι την ασφάλεια, και ξέφυγε κάπως από την οργή των κυμάτων.

Ο γίγαντας όμως ήξερε πως η απόφαση του αυτή, να βρίσκεται ξαπλωμένος ανάσκελα στην άγρια θάλασσα, ήταν οριστική. Ποτέ πια δεν θα μπορούσε να ξανασηκώσει το κεφάλι του από τα κύματα, γιατί ο κόσμος στηριζόταν πια πάνω του. Ποτέ πια δεν θα είχε στεγνό και ξένοιαστο το κεφάλι, εφόσον έγινε ο ίδιος νησί για να στέκονται πάνω του οι άνθρωποι.

Έτσι στέγνωνε ο κόσμος πάνω στον γίγαντα, και ξεχνιόταν, ενώ ο γίγαντας ήταν ο μισός βουτηγμένος στο νερό. Εκεί που ξάπλωνε ανάσκελα στην αλμυρή θάλασσα, τα κύματα τον χτυπούσαν στο κεφάλι και έμπαιναν και μέσα στα μάτια του, που έτσουζαν από το αλάτι. Μια καλή κυρία που περπατούσε πάνω στον γίγαντα, που και που, έσκυβε και του σκούπιζε τα μάτια, και τον ανακούφιζε μια στάλα από το θαλασσινό νερό. Όμως, με το πέρασμα του χρόνου, η καλή κυρία ξεχάστηκε, και άρχισε να διαμαρτύρεται: «Κοίτα τι θυσία που κάνω εγώ για σένα, γίγαντα, να κουράζομαι να σκύβω για να σκουπίζω το θαλασσινό νερό από τα μάτια σου!» του λέει, αγανακτισμένη κάποια μέρα. «Συνέχεια χρειάζεται να θυσιάζω την ώρα μου και τον κόπο μου για σένα!»

«Κατάλαβες;» ρώτησε τότε η καλόγρια. «Οι γνήσιοι Αρχιερείς και οι ιερείς



του Θεού είναι σαν τον γίγαντα,» μου εξήγησε. «Δεν είναι παραλογισμός να μην βλέπουμε την υποχρέωση που έχουμε απέναντι στους Αρχιερείς και τους ιερείς του Κυρίου; Δεν θα έπρεπε να ψάχνουμε συνέχεια Θεάρεστους τρόπους να τους ανακουφίζουμε και να τους ενισχύουμε στο έργο της Εκκλησίας;» συνέχισε. «Για μας τα κάνουν όλα. Θυσίασαν τη ζωή τους για μας, φόρεσαν τα μαύρα και τις γενειάδες για μας, χώρισαν από τον κόσμο και ξεχώρισαν, απήφησαν τα προσοδοφόρα επαγγέλματα που θα μπορούσαν να είχαν, και γιατί; Για να γίνουν σωσίβια για μας, ακούγοντας Την Φωνή Του Θεού, συμφώνησαν να γίνουν νησίδες για μας, μέσα στα θυελλώδη κύματα της αμαρτίας και της απώλειας.

Ο Άγιος Ιερώνυμος είπε πως μόνο αν μπορεί κάποιος να σηκώσει την Αίγινα στους ώμους του, μόνο τότε ως γίνει κληρικός! Είναι τόσο δύσκολος ο βίος των Αρχιερέων και των κληρικών τους, με τις εξομολογήσεις, τις Ακολουθίες ενώπιον των Αγγέλων, και τις βαρύτατες πνευματικές ευθύνες. Ξέρεις γιατί, από τους αρχαίους αιώνες, τα ράσα έχουν πλατιά μανίκια; Για να θυμόμαστε πως οι Αρχιερείς και οι ιερείς δεν πρέπει να επιβαρύνονται με σωματικές εργασίες, διότι επιβαρύνονται με πνευματικά βάρη που δεν τα διανοούνται οι λαϊκοί. Εντούτοις, ειδικά στις ημέρες μας, βλέπουμε τους Αρχιερείς και τους ιερείς μας να επιβαρύνονται και με σωματικές εργασίες, και με την ασέβεια του λαού, και να αρρωσταίνουν, Θεός φυλάει.

Κάποιος Άγιος είπε: 'Αν δεις από την μια μεριά του δρόμου Άγγελο Κυρίου να περπατά, και από την άλλη μεριά ιερέα, πρώτα θα ασπαστείς τον ιερέα, και μετά τον Άγγελο, γιατί ο ιερέας χειρίζεται τα Άχραντα Μυστήρια.' Εμείς όμως έχουμε οικειωθεί, και έχουμε χάσει τον σεβασμό. Αναφέρει στο Γερωντικόν πως ήτανε μια φορά ένας ιερέας που συνήθιζε να κάνει ένα λάθος στη σειρά όταν ετοίμαζε την Προσκομιδή μέσα στο Ιερό. Κάποια φορά, επισκέφτηκε την ενορία αυτή ο Δεσπότης του, και βλέποντας το λάθος, έδειξε στον ιερέα τον σωστό τρόπο. Πράγματι, την επόμενη Λειτουργία, ο ιερέας έκανε σωστά την Προσκομιδή, και αμέσως

ακούστηκε η φωνή του Αγίου Αγγέλου, του φύλακα της Αγίας Τράπεζας, να λέει στον παπά: 'Χαίρομαι που έκανες σωστά την Προσκομιδή σήμερα.' Απορεί τότε ο ιερέας, και ρωτά τον Άγγελο: 'Γιατί τόσα χρόνια δεν μου είχες πει πως το έκανα λάθος;' και απαντά ο Άγγελος: 'Δεν μου έχει δοθεί άδεια από Τον Θεό να διορθώνω του ιερείς Του.' Στον Αρχιερέα είχε δοθεί η άδεια αυτή.»

«Εμείς όμως...» μου είπε τελικά λυπημένη η καλόγρια, «...δεν τους τιμούμε, παρά κάνουμε τους εαυτούς μας όχι μόνο ίσιους και όμοιους, αλλά και ανώτερους όταν τους παρακούμε και τους κατακρίνουμε! Πώς άραγε να βλέπουν οι Άγγελοι τις συμπεριφορές μας αυτές...» Ποτέ δεν ξέχασα τα λόγια της καλόγριας.



## Pious Poetry

# Ode to Self



Soul, Soul!

### **Wake up!**

You are stuck in a putrid pit of vipers but  
perceive yourself as basking in righteousness  
It's a trick!

They say, "Denial ain't a river in Egypt..."

Well, delusion ain't a winter Olympic sport!

### **Wake up!**

Soul, Soul!

### **Learn her M.O.:**

The shrewdest of the devious daughters of pride

Delusion

Whose first symptom is

Utter blindness, but worse

A blindness that replaces true vision with a reel of exalted imaginings

A feel-good movie, as it were,

A hollow sense of greatness

Where you're the star, the righteous judger

The wise analyzer of the follies of others

Marveling at your own verdicts

So you embrace the fiction, dance with it, in a dizzying demonic waltz

while in the throes of a sugar high

from guzzling the cool aid as the demons laugh

But you can faintly feel the toxic tremors

In your suffocated soul

And the hollowness in your gut:

Your Guardian Angel trying to warn you but

His voice wanes in your soul because

The second symptom is

Utter deafness

### **Learn to recognize her!**

Soul, Soul!

### **Run!** It is a trap!

That obscene green light you have given yourself

To observe the errors of others

Seated on your dung-heap throne in your spiritually noxious pit—  
a trap!

A sweet-tasting poison

A well-camouflaged virulent disease

Silent, while it eats away your innards

A malignant lesion spreading, consuming

How can you escape?

Who calls the Doctor

When they think that they're the picture of health

As their soul languishes for breath

Oh believe, Soul,

That faint voice warning you

Something is not right

The voice of your Guardian Angel

Calling you to

Humility

### **Run!**

\*M.O. = Mode of Operation



Soul, Soul!

### **Remember**

The great antidote

Humility

Don't believe the demons' incessant suggestions, disguised as

Your own thoughts

But let your mind grab on to the chance to escape their snare:

Understand, know, remember

And remind yourself a million times a day

You are indeed worse than the harlot

You are indeed the lowest wretch

Believe it

It is true!

This understanding will save you!

### **Remember!**

Soul, Soul!

### **Open the eye of your mind**

And see yourself as you are, where you are

In the depths

Of the dark, raging sea of passions

And as you lift your head and gaze upwardly

You see the bottoms of the shoes of sinners who have offended you

There in the depths with you

But above you

And looking up passed them, way-way up

You see the Light

And you call to Him, as Saint Peter did,

"Lord, save me!"

And even though you have sunk so low

So much deeper than the Apostle had when

The Godman reached out His Holy Hand and pulled up His creature

Still, He can pull you up, even now

But you must call Him every day, every hour

Will you call Him, soul?

No you will not

If you cannot see where you truly are

The dark depths of delusion

### **Open the eye of your nous!**

Soul, Soul!

### **Save yourself**

Cooperate with Him Who longs to save you

While there is still time

The hourglass is emptying, dumping her sand without pause.

Unlike this life,

Eternity will not end

And as sure as you read these words now

You will be lowered into the ground

You will face judgment

And stare down the horror of horrors—

The very real possibility of darkness forever

for you

God forbid!

### **Save yourself!**



# Elder Theologos: An Extraordinary Life Cont'd from p. 2

nals is one thing. But to beat innocent Orthodox Christians? Completely inhuman! These persecutions are something that we lived, day-to-day, back then. Nicholas received such severe beatings, since childhood, during these persecutions that even he wondered how he survived, and he would say, "I should have departed as a martyr, but it seems that God had a plan for me, and He kept me..."

Once, before the Feast of the Entry of the Theotokos with the Old Calendar, in 1935, the policemen had beaten Nicholas with their clubs to the point where he was black and blue. Every inch of his body was bruised. By the time he returned home, he was swollen everywhere. That same night, there was a Vigil at the Monastery of the Theotokos, and Nicholas insisted that he would attend it, even with his injuries. "But is this how we will take you to the Vigil? In a stretcher?" his family protested, but Nicholas insisted. "Yes, even in a stretcher, I will go to the Vigil and I will beseech the All Holy Lady to heal me, since I was beaten for the Glory of Her Son." Even though his family was faithful, even they did not believe him, and they laughed at him. But lo! By morning, his health was completely restored, and his color was back. The bruises and swellings had completely disappeared! He returned home from church with a proud and glorious stride, and said to his brothers, "Touch me, examine me! Do you remember how I was last night? Well, look how I am now!" You see what great miracles God shows to all those who have strong zeal! We do not have as much faith, and therefore we do not see such miracles.

Although Nicholas was inclined toward monasticism, his parents—in those days, the parents decided these things—found for him a good girl from Menidi of Acharnai in Attica, named Konstantina. After he met her, Nicholas said to her, "I had other thoughts, as I considered myself given over to God and wanted to dedicate myself to Him. However, we shall proceed to marriage, since my parents arranged things this way, but I have my terms. First and foremost: My family and I follow the so-called 'Old Calendar.' You also, from today, are with the Old, if you wish. If you do not wish, let us clarify now, as to avoid any more needless steps." And then Nicholas continued, describing the following, "We will live a Christian life, focused on the spiritual, attending Church on all Sundays and Feast days, keeping all the fasts, and we will generally live a modest life, nice and Christian. Do you want to proceed?" With all this, the young lady was taken aback. The world had not gone down hill yet, to the degree that is happening today—we're talking about 1940. However, these conditions seemed a little extreme to the girl. "Old Calendar? Constant Church services? What does he intend to do, make me a nun?" Konstantina thought. "I will think about it," she replied.

Konstantina was a well-intentioned young lady, so God deigned to show her a sign. What sign? Today, we heard in the Gospel that Christ went and brought light to "those sitting in the region and shadow of death..." Here is what God showed Konstantina, to establish her: That night, as she considered what answer to give, she saw in her sleep that she and her family, together with her close relatives, were in a dark place, wherein they could barely see one another, as it was dim and everything was blurry. A little higher, however, she could see an upper level, as though that house had an invisible ceiling, and in that upper level she saw Nicholas with his family and other acquaintances, basking in abundant light, in joy and blessedness. Then she heard a voice saying to her, "If you want to be there also, where Nicholas is, then accept all that he described to you. If you accept, then you will find yourself there, with him. Otherwise, you will remain here, where you are. Choose." The dream was so vivid that Konstantina awoke, jumped out of



*"Only over our dead bodies will you arrest our priest!" The prophetic words of the young mom, New-Martyr St. Katerina Routis, who, like Nicholas, hastened to face beatings in defense of the True Faith, and was clubbed to death by police as she and many faithful attempted to shield the priest after the Liturgy*

bed and immediately did her Cross, saying with determination, "I am going to find Nicholas!" When she met him, she said to him, "I accept, because I also want to come into the light, and not remain with those in darkness!" See what wonders the Lord reveals! In those days, God showed many signs and miraculous events, which we know from the elders. He revealed to us that whosoever remained in the Old Calendar walked in the light of God, irrespective of the possible mistakes or passions with which they may have struggled, as humans. Nevertheless, they kept their Confession. Now, we will not say that the others, who conformed themselves to the papal calendar innovation, instantly passed into the dark depths of hell, but that they walked in a spiritually dim place, and it was getting darker... And this was 1940... Since then, the horizon has been continuously darkening. As for Konstantina, she developed such a zeal for the Faith that she not only embraced all the terms that Nicholas suggested, but she surpassed them. She was the first to urge Nicholas on to the fulfillment of their spiritual obligations, their daily prayers and prostrations. And indeed, they lived a married life in modesty and Christian piety.

Now, Nicholas and Konstantina desired to have a child, but—in a trial permitted by God—after more than ten years of marriage, they were still not able to become parents. This was Konstantina's sorrow, over which she prayed incessantly. What else could she have done? Direct her attention to doctors for procedures such as in vitro fertilization?! But these are not blessed things. We would be forcing nature. If God wills, He gives. If He does not will, for reasons that He knows, then He does not give. We will not seek to transgress nature and force God. So, one time when she was fervently praying to Saint Anna, the mother of the Theotokos, who is the protectress of childless couples, Konstantina fell asleep and it appeared to her that she was in the chapel of Saint Minas, which stands outside of the Convent of Panagia in Thrakomakedones. A nun named Anna then appeared and said to her, "Konstantina, your prayer has been heard. You will have a child, which shall be a girl. You will name her 'Evaggelia.'" Konstantina rejoiced at this news, but objected to the name, "I await the child joyously and I am thankful, but I do not want to name her Evaggelia; I do not care for that name. I want to name her Ekaterini, which is the name of my mother-in-law." Then Saint Anna replied thus, revealing her identity, "As we said, you will have a baby girl and she will be named Evaggelia, because she must take the name of my Daughter... 'Evangelizou gi haran megali/ Good tidings to earth of great joy...' [the name "Evaggelia" translates as "Good Tidings" and honors the Annunciation of the Theotokos]. After that, however, Saint Anna added something strange, "You will not enjoy her for long..." then disappeared. Konstantina woke up with great joy on the one hand, because her supplication had been heard, but sorrow on the other hand, that she would not "enjoy her for long."

After some time, in the year 1951, Konstantina realized that she was indeed pregnant. Unfortunately, that year, 1951, was when we



Local newspapers reported on the violent police attacks on the old-calendar churches, one headline calling the new-calendar persecutor "The Bloody Archbishop of Athens"

## *Dormition of the Theotokos in Clearwater, Florida*

The 2022 Metropolis Youth and Family Conference was held for the first time in over a decade at the Dormition of the Theotokos parish in Clearwater, Florida. The theme of this year's conference was "Orthodox Building Blocks: The Restoration of an Orthodox Way of Life". The conference was attended by over 250 faithful from all across the Metropolis of America, not including the local parish community, with visitors and vendors coming from as far away places like Etna, California and even Guatemala. In attendance were also a number of clergy that participated in the conference activities giving lectures, talks and panel discussions as well as concelebrating in the various services during the conference, particularly in the central Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on the Lord's Day. Much was discussed in the various sessions of the conference, which edified the faithful of all ages, from toddler to adult. We hope to share the many blessings we experienced and collected during the conference in this article.

The conference's central theme was "The Restoration of an Orthodox Way of Life." The conference of faithful acknowledged that our modern life is one that is bisected and fragmented in many different ways. The political, social and economic orders of our life here in America have been increasingly and are now ungodly and therefore anti-Christian. The disorder can be found everywhere: in our country's overtly secularized political institutions, which have no moral bearing beyond legalism, our public schools that indoctrinate our children in folly, and in the frenetic daily marketing of "goods" and "services" that spoil our hearts and incline them to the vic-

es. As the Body of Christ, we are often exposed to the passions of the world in multiple media, including on television and on the internet. These last two no longer limit themselves to public spaces in the home, such as a TV or computer in the living room, but are also now ubiquitously located in the privacy of our pockets and therefore have easy access to our eyes and minds and the eyes and minds of our children if we are not careful.

According to the Apostle of the Nations, we are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. In Him, you too are built up into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

In order to build up the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, to live a holy life, we must actively work toward the restoration of an Orthodox way of life in each of our lives and our children's lives, pushing back against the onslaught of ungodliness hurled at us and our youth and families each day. And so the conference presented some of the vital tools and blocks needed to build up a holy life in our daily life. Orthodox Building Blocks therefore became the title of the conference with each session presenting a block needed to build the walls of the dwelling place of God.

A final note on the theme of the conference, and the inspiration of restoring an Orthodox way of life, was the teaching of Archbishop Andrei Rymarenko of Novo-Diveyevo of blessed memory and contemporary of our Metropolis's patron St. John Maximovich Archbishop of San Francisco the Wonderworker, and founder Metropolitan Petros of Astoria. Archbishop Andrei taught the need to bear a "conscious struggle" to hold what is God's in honor each day. It is necessary to be attentive to all aspects of our life so that we may commit ourselves and all our life unto Christ our God.

Unofficially, the Youth and Family Conference began with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the Synaxis of All the Saints of America on Friday, October 7, 2022. The Saints of America were the first visitors to arrive who we firmly believe stayed with us throughout the conference, including St. John Maximovich and St. Philaret of New York. Over 250 faithful arrived over the next day from across the Metropolis. Far away lands like California and Canada were represented alongside New York, North Carolina, Maryland, Illi-

nois, Michigan, South Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Combined with the local faithful from across Florida, it was estimated over 300 participated in this year's conference. Thank God that it was successful.

There were also five vendors that arrived, including one out-of-state and two local artisans that sold baked goods, the proceeds of which were donated to the conference, handmade clothing apparel and accessories as well as hand-painted authentic Byzantine icons. In addition to the artisans, the St. Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary (SPOTS) was represented by a booth as well as the Seminary's representatives to share with the faithful the mission of the Seminary.

Finally, in a first for the Youth and Family Conference, San Ignacio coffee from the Metropolis' hermitage San Ignacio in Guatemala was served and sold to raise funds for the evangelization of Latin America. San Ignacio

coffee is grown on the Hermitage grounds in Guatemala. May St. Ignatius intercede before the Lord to help the clergy and monastics serving the Orthodox Christians of Latin America!

The 2022 Youth and Family Conference included a number of visiting clergy that spoke on various topics affording conference goers various blocks with which to build themselves and their families up. Speakers included His Eminence Metropolitan Demetrius of America, who gave both the keynote as well as the close-note address to the conference, Archimandrite Fr. Akakios, abbot of the Monastery of St. Gregory Palamas and a professor from SPOTS who spoke on the value of order, Fr. John Somers of the St. John

of Damascus Education Initiative and Fr. Leonidas Pittos who made virtual presentations to the conference on education and the services in the lives of Orthodox Christians respectively, Fr. George Liadis who taught youth on the Jesus Prayer, Fr. Theodore Giannakopoulos who spoke on the early youth and child martyrs of the Church, Fr. Victor Dobroff on sanctification, Deacon Nicholas Laggis on how to live a holy life, Mr. Paul Azkoul introduced the youth to iconography and Mr. Mateusz Ferens spoke on the family as the domestic church and issues dealing with addiction, as well as panelists Fr. George Psaromatis and Fr. Nicholas Chernjavsky who along with Fr. George Liadis and the Metropolitan talked about various aspects of parish life. Additional speakers included Mrs. Helen Bezas, Presvytera Sofia Liadis who made crafts with the children, Ms. Maria Pittos who workshoped with the youth and Presvytera Constantina Pittos who read *The Suitcase* by Jane Meyer. By God's mercy and grace, the speakers made over 20 edifying presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and crafts to the faithful on Saturday and Sunday that spanned all ages from toddler to adult.

The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy that was celebrated on Sunday, October 9, 2022, the feast day of the Beloved Disciple of our Lord, St. John the Theologian. It was fitting that over 300 faithful from across the Metropolis were together on this day at the Dormition of the Theotokos parish, commemorating the Holy Apostle who made known to the world "the holy mystery of love... that love of God is concealed in love of one's neighbor and is not found apart therefrom." His Eminence Metropolitan Demetrius of America presided along with eight priests and two deacons. The analogion included many chanters from across the Metropolis in a united chorus that glorified God throughout the weekend with all the Saints.

After the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, the clergy and the faithful went to Spartan Manor in New Port Richey, Florida for trapeza. At the trapeza, His Eminence gave the close-note address to the conference and announced that the next Youth and Family Conference will be in Chicago, Illinois.

Many thanks to our Lord for all the wonderful things He has done for us and for guiding the organizing committee by the intercessions of His most holy Mother, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary our patron and speedy protection here in Tampa, Florida.



# Ο Γέροντας Θεολόγος: Μια Εκπληκτική Ιστορία Συνεχίζεται από την σελ. 4

συμβαίνει σήμερα - μιλάμε για το 1940. Εντούτοις, της κοπέλας της φάνηκαν λίγο δύσκολα όλα αυτά. «Παλαιό; Εκκλησιασμούς; Τι έχει σκοπό να με κάνει αυτός; Καλό γρια», σκέφτηκε η Κωνσταντίνα. «Θα το σκεφτώ», του απάντησε. Επειδή όμως ήταν καλοπροαίρετη κι αυτή, ο Θεός της φανέρωσε σημείο. Τι σημείο; Λέει σήμερα στο Ευαγγέλιο πως ο Χριστός πήγε και έφερε το φως «τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν χώρα καὶ σκιά θανάτου...». Να λοιπόν, τι της έδειξε ο Θεός για να την στερεώσει: Στον ύπνο της εκείνη τη βραδιά, ενώ σκεφτόταν τι απάντηση θα έδινε, είδε ότι ήταν η οικογένειά της, η ευρύτερη συγγενείας της και αυτή, σε έναν χώρο σκοτεινό όπου αμυδρά έβλεπε ο ένας τον άλλον, θολά και μετά βίας. Λίγο πιο πάνω, όμως, σαν να μην είχε οροφή το σπίτι εκείνο, σε ένα υψηλότερο επίπεδο, είδε τον Νικόλαο με τη δική του οικογένεια κι άλλους γνωστούς, να είναι μέσα σε ένα άπλετο φως, να έχουν χαρά και ευλογία. Τότε, άκουσε μια φωνή να της λέει: «Αν θέλεις να βρεθείς κι εσύ, εκεί όπου βρίσκεται ο Νικόλαος, να αποδεχθείς όλα όσα σου προτείνει. Αν τα αποδεχθείς, θα βρεθείς εκεί, μαζί του. Αλλιώς, θα μείνεις εδώ που είσαι. Διάλεξε».

Ήταν τόσο ζωντανό το όνειρο, που η Κωνσταντίνα ξύπνησε, πετάχτηκε, έκανε αμέσως τον Σταυρό της και είπε αποφασισμένη: «Πάω να βρω τον Νικόλαο!». Τον συνάντησε λοιπόν και του είπε: «Δέχομαι, διότι θέλω να έρθω κι εγώ στο φως, κι όχι να παραμείνω με αυτούς μέσα στο σκοτάδι!». Δείτε τι θαύματα φανερώνει ο Κύριος! Τον καιρό εκείνο ο Θεός φανέρωνε πολλά θαυμαστά περιστατικά τα οποία γνωρίζουμε σήμερα από τους γέροντες. Μας φανέρωσε ότι όσοι παρέμειναν στο Πάτριό ζούσαν μέσα στο φως Του Θεού, ασχέτως με το αν είχαν κι αυτοί τα λάθη τους και τα πάθη τους. Κράτησαν ωστόσο, ομολογία. Οι άλλοι, δεν μπορούμε να πούμε πως πέρασαν στο ζοφερό σκότος της κολάσεως, ζούσαν όμως στα θαμπά, κι όλο και σκοτεινιάζε... Και φανταστείτε ότι αυτό συνέβαινε το 1940... Έκτοτε, ολόένα και σκοτεινιάζει περισσότερο ο ορίζοντας. Όσο για την Κωνσταντίνα, έγινε τόσο ζηλώτρια, που όχι μόνο εφαρμόζε όσα της υποδείκνυε ο Νικόλαος, αλλά και περισσότερο. Αυτή πρώτη παρότρυνε τον Νικόλαο να κάνουν τα πνευματικά τους καθήκοντα, τις καθημερινές τους προσευχές και μετάνοιες. Και πραγματικά, ζούσαν μια έγγαμη ζωή, σεμνοπρεπή και Χριστιανική.

Ο Νικόλαος και η Κωνσταντίνα ήθελαν να αποκτήσουν και ένα παιδί, αλλά -δοκιμασία Θεού- πέρασαν πάνω από δέκα χρόνια γάμου, και δεν τα κατάφεραν. Αυτός ήταν ο καημός της Κωνσταντίνας, γεγονός για το οποίο ακατάπαυστα προσευχόταν. Τι άλλο θα μπορούσε να κάνει; Να απευθυνόταν στους γιατρούς για εξωσωματική γονιμοποίηση! Μα δεν είναι ευλογημένα αυτά τα πράγματα. Βιάζεις τη φύση. Αν θέλει ο Θεός, δίνει· αν δεν θέλει -για τους λόγους που Εκείνος γνωρίζει- δεν δίνει. Δεν θα υπερβούμε εμείς τους νόμους της φύσεως και τον Θεό. Λοιπόν, μια φορά που έκανε θερμή προσευχή στην Αγία Άννα, την μητέρα της Παναγίας, που είναι προστάτις των ατέκνων, την πήρε ο ύπνος και της φάνηκε πως βρισκόταν στο παρεκκλήσι του Αγίου Μηνά που είναι έξω από την Μονή της Παναγίας στους Θρακομακεδόνες. Της εμφανίστηκε τότε μία Μοναχή με το όνομα Άννα η οποία της είπε: «Κωνσταντίνα, εισακούστηκε η προσευχή σου. Θα κάνεις ένα παιδί, που θα είναι κοριτσάκι. Θα το ονομάσεις Ευαγγελία». Χάρηκε η Κωνσταντίνα, μα έφερε αντίρρηση στο θέμα του ονόματος. «Το παιδάκι το περιμένω και ευχαριστώ, αλλά εγώ δεν θέλω να το βγάλω Ευαγγελία, δεν μου αρέσει αυτό το όνομα. Θέλω να το ονομάσω Αικατερίνη, το όνομα της πεθεράς μου». Η Αγία Άννα όμως της απάντησε: «Είπαμε, θα κάνεις κοριτσάκι και θα πάρει το όνομα Ευαγγελία, γιατί πρέπει να πάρει το όνομα της Κόρης μου... εὐαγγελίζου, γῆ, χαρὰν μεγάλην...». Κατόπιν όμως, της είπε και κάτι παράξενο: «..δεν θα το χαρείς για πολύ», κι έγινε άφαντη. Ξύπνησε η Κων-

σταντίνα αισθανόμενη μεγάλη αγαλλίαση από την μία, γιατί εισακούστηκε η προσευχή της, αλλά και λύπη από την άλλη που «δεν θα το χαρεί για πολύ».

Πράγματι, μετά από λίγο καιρό, το έτος 1951, η Κωνσταντίνα κατάλαβε πως ήταν έγκυος. Δυστυχώς, η χρονιά αυτή, το '51, ήταν που βιώσαμε τον μεγάλο διωγμό του Πατρίου. Από το χειμώνα ήδη, τον Ιανουάριο που οι δικοί μας άνθρωποι γιόρταζαν τα Θεοφάνια του '51, αμέσως μετά άρχισε ένας σφοδρός διωγμός, απίστευτος! Ίσως μερικοί από εσάς να τον θυμόσαστε, ως νέοι τότε. Φοβερός διωγμός. Κλείνανε τις εκκλησίες, κλείδωναν τα πάντα, συλλαμβάνανε τους Ιερείς, τους ξύριζαν, τους χτυπούσαν, τι συνέβη... δεν λέγεται! Όμως, έτσι έπρεπε να γίνει, να περάσουμε δια πυρός και σιδήρου. Στην εποχή του διωγμού, πραγματοποιούνταν συλλαλητήρια στην πλατεία Μητροπόλεως, στην Αρχιεπισκοπή από τους δικούς μας ανθρώπους, τους λαϊκούς, οι οποίοι τα οργάνωναν προκειμένου να διαμαρτυρηθούν ειρηνικά, για να σταματήσει ο φρικτός διωγμός και να επιτραπεί ελευθερία πνευματική. Όλοι οι αιρετικοί έχουν ελευθερία, μόνο εμείς να μην έχουμε! Το ξυλοκόπημα που υπέστησαν όσοι διαμαρτύρονταν τότε εκεί, δεν περιγράφεται. Το τραγικότερο δε όλων, ήταν ότι δεν σεβόντουσαν τίποτα... ούτε τον Νικόλαο με την έγκυο γυναίκα του. Ακόμη και κατά την εγκυμοσύνη, η Κωνσταντίνα ήταν τόσο θερμή, που δεν το έβαζε κάτω. Ήταν στην πρώτη γραμμή του συλλαλητηρίου. Εδώ σε θέλω... Τους επιτέθηκε ένας αστυνομικός με ρόπαλο και χτύπησε τον Νικόλαο που σωριάστηκε αιμόφυρτος. Επιτέθηκε τότε και στην έγκυο Κωνσταντίνα, χωρίς να σεβαστεί την κατάσταση της, και την κλώτσησε τόσο δυνατά που την άφησε στον τόπο. Όλοι πίστεψαν ότι πάει, το διέλυσε το βρέφος. Το χτύπημα επιτάχυνε τη γέννηση του παιδιού, και ώσπου να μεταφέρουν την τραυματισμένη Κωνσταντίνα στο νοσοκομείο, το βρέφος είχε ήδη γεννηθεί. Ήθελε ο Θεός και έζησε το κοριτσάκι. Μα η κλωτσιά που είχε δεχτεί η έγκυος γυναίκα από τη βάρβαρη επίθεση ήταν τόσο δυνατή, που το βρέφος γεννήθηκε με κακώσεις στο κεφάλι. Οι γονείς της ωστόσο, δεν θρηνούσαν γι' αυτό, απεναντίας καυχόντουσαν που το παιδί τους, η μικρή Ευαγγελία, έφερε «στίγματα ομολογίας» από βρέφος! Μάλιστα, ο π. Παρθένιος, ο τότε Γέροντας της προαναφερθείσας Ιεράς Μονής της Παναγίας των Θρακομακεδόνων, όταν την έβλεπε, μικρό παιδάκι, της έλεγε: «Καλώς στην ομολογήτριά!»

Όταν μεγάλωσε η μικρή Ευαγγελία έγινε Μοναχή παίρνοντας κατά την κουρά το όνομα «Ξένη». Πρόκειται για τη σημερινή Γερόντισσα Ξένη, την Ηγουμένη της Ιεράς Μονής της Παναγίας των Θρακομακεδόνων, όπου είναι και τα λείψανα του Αγίου Χρυσοστόμου του Νέου Ομολογητού, όπως αναφέρουμε παραπάνω. Πριν γίνει Ηγουμένη, η Μητέρα Ξένη φρόντιζε τον τυφλό πλέον γέροντα, τον π. Θεολόγο, ο οποίος ήταν ο κατά σάρκα πατέρας της, ο κατά κόσμον Νικόλαος.

Το πώς μεγάλωσε η Ευαγγελία μέσα στους διωγμούς, και το τι πέρασε η οικογένειά της είναι μια ολόκληρη ιστορία. Πώς έγινε η βάπτισή της Ευαγγελίτσας; Αφού δεν είχαμε Ναούς, τους είχαν σφραγίσει. Πού γινόντουσαν τότε οι βαπτίσεις, ξέρετε; Μετά τα μεσάνυχτα, στα σκοτεινά, σε υπόγειο σπιτιών. Πήγαιναν οι Ιερείς εκεί μεταμφιεσμένοι -διότι δεν μπορούσαν να κυκλοφορήσουν τότε με ράσα και γενειάδα- και έτσι γίνονταν οι βαπτίσεις, με το φόβο μην κλάψουν τα παιδιά και μας αντιληφθούν οι τότε αρχές. Το πώς βαπτίστηκε η Ευαγγελία το '52, σε ένα υπόγειο στον Πειραιά, είναι επίσης μια ολόκληρη ιστορία. Το τι πέρασαν όταν ήταν βρέφος το παιδί, πού να σας τα λέω... Πού έφταναν οι άνθρωποι στα χρόνια του διωγμού, για να γιορτάσουν Χριστούγεννα, Θεοφάνια, Πάσχα- απίστευτες ιστορίες! Ας προχωρήσουμε όμως, για να μην καθυστερούμε -αν και αυτά είναι πράγματα φοβερά, τα οποία σφείλουμε να τα γνωρίζουμε, και να τα εκτιμήσουμε όπως πρέπει. Δεν τα εξιστορώ για κανέναν άλλον λόγο, παρά για να εκτιμήσουμε αυτό που κουβαλάμε! Ποιοι πέρασαν και τι πέρασαν! Εμείς, τα βρήκαμε όλα έτοιμα, και λέμε σήμερα:

Συνεχίζεται στη σελ. 17



*Mother Xenia, the Abbess of Holy Dormition Convent, the daughter in-the-flesh of Fr. Theologos*

*Η Γερόντισσα Ξένη, η Ηγουμένη της Μονής Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου, η κατά-σάρκα κόρη του π. Θεολόγου*

# St. Nicholas of Myra: The Saint of Compassion *Cont'd from front cover*

In him, as perhaps in no other saint, are incorporated to an incomparable degree the wondrous virtues of love and compassion. This has moved the pious Russian people to say as a proverb: "Bring your tribulation to Nicholas the Merciful, and he will tell them to the All-Merciful Saviour."

Yet it must be remembered that this love which illumined the heart of St. Nicholas for our Lord and his neighbor, this love, when confronted by stubborn evil and conscious enmity against the Truth was transfigured into burning and indignant zeal.

Certainly, many of you know of an event within the life of St. Nicholas which has been preserved in the Tradition of our Holy Church and which is even now depicted on many icons of the Wonderworker of Myra. As he sat at the sessions of the First Ecumenical Council, he listened to the blasphemies of the heresiarch Arius against which this Council had been summoned. Arius defended his doctrines stubbornly, and with bitterness directly assailed the divine dignity of the Son of God. It was just this that St. Nicholas could not abide, for the Saviour of mankind was dearer to him than his own life. . . . and St. Nicholas slapped the blasphemer in his face! Much was the confusion of the Fathers of the Council, for there is a Canon which calls for the deposition of a clergyman who would strike anyone, whether a Christian or an non-believer, and the Fathers took all the Canons seriously. But on the other hand, St. Nicholas was held in high esteem by the Fathers of the Council, for his virtues shone with a heavenly brilliance for all men to see. So it was that he was placed in seclusion until the end of the Council when his case would be discussed also. But even this penalty was set aside by divine intervention; for, one of the Fathers there was granted a revelation: he saw our Lord giving the divine Nicholas the Book of the New Testament, and the All-holy Mother of God giving him his omophorion—the vestment symbolic of the episcopacy. The Father lost no time in relating this vision to the other Fathers who speedily reinstated St. Nicholas with honours to his rightful place among them. In such a clear way did our Lord reveal that St. Nicholas's act was not a petty outburst of human anger or malice, but that it was rather just wrath against the blasphemies of a heretic. Such a man was St. Nicholas!

Oh, how lacking we are in such zeal to defend Truth when it is trampled and insulted.

Just recently I was told of a matter which occurred of late, such as we would never have imagined just a few years ago; but it just shows



*In righteousness and love for Christ, St. Nicholas strikes the blasphemer Arius at the First Ecumenical Council*

us how deeply we have sunk. This gentleman, who is from Paris, told us of an "Ecumenical" meeting held there. You of course know what "Ecumenism" is: It is that heresy of all heresies! It seeks to completely destroy the fact that the Orthodox Church is the unique guardian of the Truth, and in Her place to create some new sort of strange organization encompassing all sorts of beliefs. And so, alas, to this ecumenical meeting there went an Orthodox priest from the Paris Theological Institute . . . a heretical institution itself. In attendance also there were a latin priest, a pastor and a rabbi. There was some sort of common prayer, and then there began lectures.

And then . . . (please forgive me for even saying such things from this sacred ambo, but I want you to know how far things have gone) the rabbi asserted that our Lord Jesus Christ was the illegitimate son of a woman of frivolous behavior! His actual words were coarser and even worse, but I can not quote from this sacred tribune the words that this insane detractor used against Her Who is more honorable than the Cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim. Yet even this is not the worst thing, for the Jews have long

been in opposition to God, and their detractions against our Saviour and His Blameless Mother are nothing new; no, the worst thing is that when he said this, ALL kept silent! The "orthodox" priest who heard this blasphemy was later asked how could he have kept quiet. And he answered: "I didn't want to offend the Jew." One may not offend a Jew, you see, but to offend the All-pure Mother of God; this is permitted! "How deeply we have fallen! How lacking are we in zeal! This priest should have raised himself up to full stature to stop the mouth of the blasphemer as did St. Nicholas.

St. John Chrysostom preached: "If you are afraid to confront a heretic, tell me and I shall go to stop his mouth." But we, alas, have become shamefully indifferent to both good and evil" as the poet has written. And from this indifference and this self-care does "Ecumenism" reap the fruits of apostasy which are becoming more and more clear. We fail to heed the lesson taught us by St. Nicholas of how we must defend the glory of our Lord God when sacred things are blasphemed and His Name is trodden upon.

Let us remember that Christian love embraces all men; it manifests mercy to every one and warmly prays that all be saved. But when this love witnesses a willful campaign against Truth, then it burns with a consuming zeal which will not permit such assaults. The example of our holy father St. Nicholas is a shining example of such love, the love which must burn in every Christian heart for our Lord God. Amen.

## The Miracle of St. Nicholas Recounted by St. Philaret

The Feasts of Saint Nicholas are so splendid that they even remind us of the 12 Great Feasts. Why is that so? Because he lived a life of virtue incarnate: an accessible, comprehensible virtue, close to every man and every heart, even the heart that rejects every other holy thing. That virtue is love; love and compassion.

The Russians like to call Saint Nicholas "Nikola the Merciful" because his miracles are as numerous as the stars of heaven. I would like to remind you of one touching miracle that shows his mercy. This did not happen once upon a time, long ago; it happened in our time, in the city of Harbin [China], where I lived for over 40 years. At the train station in Harbin there was a large icon of Saint Nicholas the Wonder-

worker, and it was especially venerated by all the travelers. Hundreds of candles were always burning in front of it. People departing by train and the people who came to see them off would light candles, and prayers were constantly going up to the great hierarch for his protection during trips. There was always a crowd in the station because the rail traffic was very heavy.

One day the people who happened to be there (they related this themselves, this is their own story; it was early spring, when the ice breaks up on the Sungari, on which Harbin is located) they saw a Chinese man rush in, soaked from head to toe. *Cont'd on page 19*



# Elder Theologos: An Extraordinary Life *Cont'd from p. 12*

lived through the great persecution of the Old Calendarists. It started early in the year, in January, right after our people celebrated Theophany of '51, a fierce, unbelievable persecution broke out! Perhaps some of you remember it, as young folks then. A terrible persecution. They locked up our churches, everywhere, arrested the priests, shaved them by force, beat them... What went on is indescribable! But it had to be so... That we might pass through fire and iron.

During this time of persecution, our laypeople would organize rallies in Metropolis Square, at the Archdiocese, in order to peacefully protest to end the horrific persecutions and to allow spiritual freedom. Even the heretics had their freedom—should we be the only ones without freedom? The beatings endured by those who protested there at that time cannot be described. The most tragic reality was that the authorities respected nothing...not even Nicholas with his pregnant wife. Even during her long-awaited pregnancy, Konstantina's love for the Church was so strong, that she would not give up. She was in the front lines of the rally. Extraordinary. A policeman attacked them with his club and he struck Nicholas who collapsed, bleeding. Then he attacked Konstantina, who was advanced in her pregnancy, without respecting her condition, and kicked her with such force that she was left unconscious. Everyone who witnessed this believed that the unborn infant surely must have been destroyed. The beating sent Konstantina into labor and accelerated the birth of the child. By the time they transported the injured Konstantina to the hospital, the baby had been born. God so ordained, and the infant girl survived. However, the kick that the pregnant mom had received during the barbaric attack was so powerful, that the baby was born with visible injuries on her head. Her parents, however, did not lament over these marks—to the contrary, they boasted that their child, baby Evaggelia, bore the "marks of Confession" even from infancy! In fact, Fr. Parthenios, the Elder who ministered to the aforementioned Holy Convent of Panagia Thrakomakedonon at that time, would say to her, whenever she visited as a small child, "Welcome, to the little Confessor!"

When little Evaggelia grew up, she became a nun, taking the name "Xeni" in tonsure. This is, of course, the current Abbess Mother Xeni, the present-day Hegumeness of the Convent of the Theotokos of Thrakomakedonon, where the relics of Saint Chrisostomos, the New Confessor are located, as we mentioned earlier. Before she became Abbess, Mother Xeni took care of the blind elder Theologos, who was her father in the flesh, who had been Nicholas in the world.

The circumstances under which little Evaggelia grew up, during the

persecutions, and what her family went through, is another whole story. How did they accomplish her baptism? We did not have access to our churches—they had sealed them off. Do you know where baptisms took place, then? After midnight, in the dark, in basements. The priests would go there, disguised—because they could not go out with beards or rassa. And they would celebrate baptisms with the fear that the baby would cry, and that they would be discovered by the authorities. Evaggelia's baptism alone, which took place in 1952 in a basement in Peiraias, is another whole story in and of itself! What the family endured when the child was a baby, I cannot begin to tell. Where people would find themselves, during the years of persecution, to celebrate the Nativity, Theophany, or Pascha—unbelievable stories. But let us move on, so that we might not delay—even though this is our extraordinary history and our background, which is our duty to know and appreciate accordingly. I do not narrate these events today for any other reason except that we appreciate what we are carrying! Who suffered and what did they suffer to deliver the Pearl of great price to us! We found everything ready, and we say, "Nice. Aren't we doing nicely here, in our Church?" Truly. But in order for you to be here today, and for me to be here today, some had to spill their blood. No one would be here today, in the Church, if the sacrifices of others had not preceded. Our predecessors stood up and confessed, and they suffered; we must respect this, so that we are also prepared to struggle and be proven worthy of the Treasure that they bequeathed to us with their blood.

In another incident, during the persecution of 1953, they were attacked by the police as they brought out the Epitaphios in Peiraias for a procession on Holy Friday. It was forbidden for us to carry the Epitaphios in a procession; we were not supposed to exist. Nicholas, as a brave and courageous man, physically intervened and scuffled with the policemen in defense of the Body of Christ on the Epitaphios. The police attempted to grab the Body from the Epitaphios, but Nicholas also rushed to take It. The flowers on the Epitaphios were destroyed in the violent disturbance, but Nicholas held on to the Body, tugging It away from the policemen. Then another young man came to assist Nicholas, and together, they were able to pull the Body away from the hands of the police! The two young men began to run so they could save It, but right behind them, the two enraged policemen chased after them. They ran for some time, when one of the policemen slipped in the mud, and thus they escaped from his clutches. Further down, the two young men made a sudden turn down a dark alley, and the second policeman became confused at the dead end, and they escaped from him, too. As soon as the two young men realized that they

*Cont'd on page 18*

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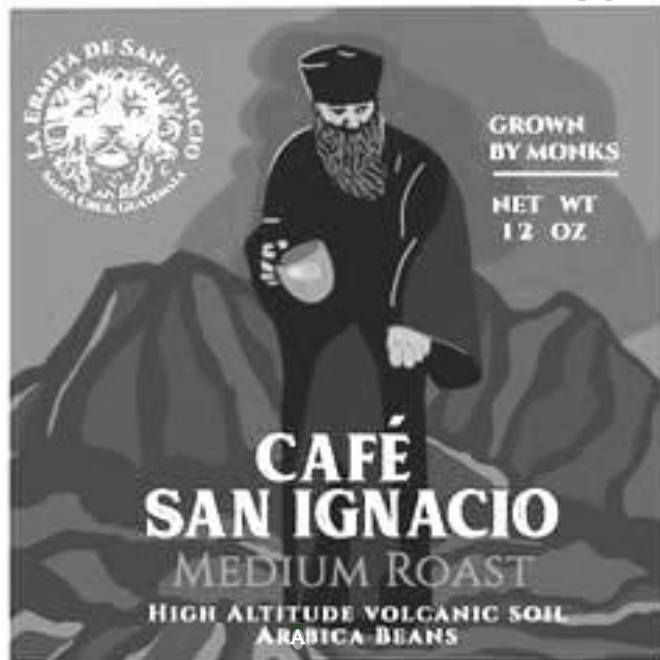
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# Μια Εκπληκτική Ιστορία

Συνεχίζεται από την σελ. 14

«Ωραία, μια χαρά δεν είμαστε;». Οντως. Για να είσαι εσύ όμως, εδώ σήμερα, και για να είμαι κι εγώ, κάποιοι μαρτύρησαν. Κανείς δεν θα ήταν σήμερα εδώ, αν δεν είχαν προηγηθεί οι θυσίες κάποιων. Κάποιοι μαρτύρησαν κι αυτό πρέπει να το σεβαστούμε, και να αγωνιστούμε κι εμείς, ώστε να αναδειχθούμε άξιοι του θησαυρού της Αληθείας που αυτοί μας κληροδότησαν με το αίμα τους.

Σε ένα άλλο περιστατικό, στο διωγμό του '53, τους επιτέθηκε η αστυνομία όταν έβγαλαν προς περιφορά έναν Επιτάφιο στον Πειραιά. Απαγορευόταν να περιφέρουμε εμείς Επιτάφιο, εμείς δεν έπρεπε να υπάρχουμε... Ο Νικόλαος, θαρραλέος και τολμηρότερος καθώς ήταν, πιάστηκε με τους αστυνομικούς στα χέρια, προσπιζόμενος Το Σώμα Του Χριστού. Οι αστυνομικοί ήθελαν να αρπάξουν Το Σώμα από τον Επιτάφιο, αλλά παράλληλα όρμησε και ο Νικόλαος να Το πάρει. Αφού μάδησε ο Επιτάφιος από την αναστάτωση, τράβηξε ο Νικόλαος Το Σώμα από τους αστυνομικούς. Ήρθε τότε, και ένας άλλος πιστός νεαρός να τον ενισχύσει, και κατάφεραν τελικά, να πάρουν Το Σώμα από τα χέρια των αστυνομικών! Ετρεχαν τα δύο παλληκάρια για να Το γλυτώσουν, όμως στο κατόπι τους, τούς κυνήγησαν δύο αστυνομικοί, μανιασμένοι. Ενώ έτρεχαν για αρκετή ώρα, έπεσε ο ένας αστυνομικός χάμω στις λάσπες, κι έτσι τον ξέφυγαν. Πιο κάτω, οι δυο νέοι έστριψαν αιφνιδιαστικά σε κάποιο σκοτεινό στενό, μπερδεύτηκε και ο δεύτερος αστυνομικός σε ένα αδιέξοδο, κι έτσι τον έχασαν κι αυτόν.

Μόλις αντιλήφθηκαν τα δυο παιδιά πως είχαν ξεφύγει από τους αστυνομικούς, ήταν τόσο μεγάλος ο ενθουσιασμός τους, που σταματώντας τελικά σε κάποια οικοδομή, απίθωσαν το Σώμα σε ένα καθαρό σημείο και άρχισαν να χοροπηδούν από την χαρά τους, που γλύτωσαν τον Χριστό από τους αστυνομικούς. Ξαφνικά όμως, εκεί που πανηγύριζαν, συναιδητοποίησε ο Νικόλαος πως ο άλλος νέος άρχισε να αλλάζει μορφή, να γίνεται πύρινος, αστραφτερός, και σιγά-σιγά να ανεβαίνει προς τον ουρανό. Ο Νικόλαος τον κοίταζε σασισμένος, χωρίς να πιστεύει στα μάτια του. Ήταν Άγγελος Κυρίου, ο οποίος καθώς ανέβαινε, τον κοιτούσε χαμογελαστός. Τόσο φοβερά σημεία φάνέρωνε ο Χριστός. Φανταστείτε, τι ευλογία! Τα έζησαν οι παλιοί αυτά. Δεν πρόκειται για παραμύθια. Ο Νικόλαος ήταν άνθρωπος σοβαρός και αξιοπρεπής, δεν έλεγε ψέματα, ούτε ήταν ονειροπαρμένος. Ήταν πνευματικός άνθρωπος από παιδί, άφοβος, θαρραλέος, με ζήλο. Γι' αυτό ο Θεός παρουσίαζε σε αυτούς τους ανθρώπους τέτοια θαύματα, για να τους στερεώσει σε χρόνια φρικτού διωγμού. Θέλει ο Θεός ζήλο, όχι φανατισμό, να ξεφωνίζουμε και να κάνουμε έκτροπα, αλλά ζήλο ψυχής, θέρμη, και σταθερότητα.

Όταν λοιπόν το κοριτσάκι, η Ευαγγελία έγινε δύο περίπου ετών, η μητέρα της, η Κωνσταντίνα, αρρώστησε βαριά, οδεύοντας προς το θάνατο. Παρακάλεσε τότε θερμά η Κωνσταντίνα, την Αγία Ειρήνη τη Χρυσοβαλάντου, μια άλλη εξαιρετικά θαυματουργή Αγία, η οποία, αφού της εμφανίστηκε της έδωσε μια μικρή παράταση χρόνου διότι το παιδί ήταν ακόμη πολύ μικρό. Είπε η Αγία στην Κωνσταντίνα, πως αφού μεγαλώσει λίγο το παιδί, τότε ο Θεός θα την πάρει κοντά Του. Η Αγία Ειρήνη δεν διευκρίνισε πόσα χρόνια θα της δώσει ο Θεός, αλλά τελικά έζησε άλλα ξέξι περίπου ακόμη χρόνια από τότε που αρρώστησε. Όταν η Ευαγγελία έγινε περίπου εφτά-οχτώ ετών, κατά το 1960, η Κωνσταντίνα κοιμήθηκε. Το δε τέλος της, ήταν τόσο οσιακό και ειρηνικό! Ακόμα κι αγγέλους της επέτρεψε ο Θεός να δει πριν κοιμηθεί, που είχαν έρθει να την πάρουν. «Γέμισε ο τόπος παλληκάρια, λευκοντυμένους νεαρούς! Κεράστε τους!», έλεγε η ασθενούσα στους γύρω της, οι οποίοι φυσικά δεν τους έβλεπαν.

Μετά από περίπου μια δεκαετία μετά την κοίμηση της γυναίκας του, ο Νικόλαος, κι αφού μεγάλωσε την Ευαγγελία, πλησίαζε ο καιρός κατά τον οποίο θα γινόταν Μοναχός, εκπληρώνοντας έτσι το τάμα του, αλλά και την επιθυμία που έτρεφε από παιδί. Πριν την Μοναχική κουρά του, όμως, ο Νικόλαος πήγε προσκυνητής στους Αγίους Τόπους. Και τι σημεία του φα-

νέρωσε ο Θεός εκεί! Μπήκε στον Πανάγιο Τάφο να προσκυνήσει, και εκεί του φάνηκε ότι δεν υπήρχε στέγη, και ξαφνικά λούστηκε στο Φως Του Θεού. Δεν ήξερε πού βρισκόταν και για πόση ώρα. Και όταν αποτράβηξε ο Θεός το Φως, τότε είδε πάλι τη στέγη του Παναγίου Τάφου και όλα τα πράγματα όπως όντως ήταν. Ρώτησε τότε ο Νικόλαος τους γύρω του, στον

Πανάγιο Τάφο, αν είχαν δει ή αντιληφθεί κάτι, αλλά κανείς δεν είχε δει, ούτε καταλάβει τίποτα. Ήταν προφανώς το θαύμα μόνο γι' αυτόν.

Την επόμενη χρονιά, το '70, σε ταξίδι πηγαίνοντας στο προσκύνημα της Πάτμου, ο Νικόλαος υπέστη έμφραγμα του μυοκαρδίου. Παρακάλεσε τότε, τον Άγιο Ιωάννη τον Θεολόγο, που είναι προστάτης των καρδιακών, διότι ο Ιωάννης έπεσε στο στήθος Του Κυρίου στον Μυστικό Δείπνο, να τον αξιώσει να καταφέρει να προσκυνήσει και κατόπιν, να γίνει Μοναχός. Πράγματι, του εμφανίστηκε ο Ευαγγελιστής, και του είπε να πάει να προσκυνήσει χωρίς φόβο. «Και τι όνομα θα πάρω στην κουρά, Άγιε μου;», ρώτησε ο Νικόλαος τον Άγιο Ιωάννη. «Θα σε βγάλω» του είπε ο Ευαγγελιστής, «Θεολόγο». Χάρηκε ο Νικόλαος και σα μικρό παιδάκι άρχισε να φωνάζει: «Σ' ευχαριστώ, Άγιε μου, να μου ζήσει! Είσαι η χαρά μου!».

Το '73 έγινε τελικά η κουρά του Μοναχού πλέον, πατρός Θεολόγου. Τη βραδιά κατά την οποία πραγματοποιήθηκε η κουρά, εμφανίστηκε από τον ουρανό η γυναίκα του, η Κωνσταντίνα, σε μια γνωστή τους Μοναχή, σ' ένα μονύδριο στην Ηλιούπολη. Ήταν πολύ χαρούμενη, και έφερε στην κεφαλή στεφάνι δόξης. Έλεγε δε: «Αυτό που κάνει σήμερα ο Νικόλαος στη γη, μου δίνει απέραντη χαρά και ευτυχία!». Η Μοναχή, στην οποία εμφανίστηκε η Κωνσταντίνα, δεν γνώ-

ριζε πως κάπου αλλού εκείνο το βράδυ, γινόταν η Μοναχική κουρά του π. Θεολόγου, κι αναρωτήθηκε, τι άραγε να έκανε ο Νικόλαος και εμφανίστηκε η Κωνσταντίνα σε τόσο τιμή και δόξα... και σημείωσε την ημερομηνία. Μετά από ένα χρονικό διάστημα, όταν συναντήθηκαν οι δυο Μοναχοί, το αίνιγμα λύθηκε, και κατάλαβαν ποιο ήταν το γεγονός που είχε δώσει τόσο χαρά στην Κωνσταντίνα. Βλέπετε πως τιμάει ο Θεός αυτούς που Τον τιμούν;

Με την πάροδο του χρόνου, ο γέρον Θεολόγος έχασε και το φως του. Ωστόσο, παρέμεινε ακέραιος, απαρέγκλιτος στην προσευχή του, στη νηστεία του, και στην πνευματική του ζωή, πάντοτε ήρεμος και πράος.

Σας διηγήθηκα λοιπόν μόλις, περιληπτικά, την ιστορία του π. Θεολόγου και της οικογενείας του, ανθρώπων σύγχρονων με εμάς, που τους προλάβσαμε και που τους γνωρίσαμε καλά. Τέτοιοι άνθρωποι υπήρξαν ανάμεσα μας, και αναφερόμαστε σε αυτούς, αν μη τι άλλο, για να ενδυναμωθούμε, να παραδειγματιστούμε, και να προσπαθήσουμε λίγο περισσότερο να φανούμε αντάξιοι των κόπων και των μαρτυριών τους. Είναι Οδός ένδοξη αυτή, Οδός καθαρά, Οδός αγία, Οδός υψηλή.

Εύχομαι ο Θεός να μας αξιώσει έως τέλους να παραμείνουμε σ' αυτήν την Οδό. Κι αν δεν έχουμε να παρουσιάσουμε πολλά στον Θεό από πλεονράς έργων, ας κρατήσουμε έστω την Πίστη, και να μπορούμε να πούμε στον Θεό: «Δεν έχω τίποτα να Σου δείξω, Θεέ μου, αλλά, μέσα σ' έναν κόσμο με τόσο σύγχυση, τόσο μπερδεμά, τόσες κατηγορίες, τόσες συκοφαντίες και κακός, κράτησα την Πίστη την αγία...». Θα είναι μέγα αυτό! Και ο Θεός θα ελεήσει και θα παραβλέψει τυχόν λάθη και αδυναμίες μας. Οι μέρες που έρχονται θα είναι πιθανόν πιο δύσκολες, και γι' αυτό πρέπει να γίνει έκδηλη η δύναμη μας. Γι' αυτό τα λέμε αυτά, για να προετοιμαζόμαστε. Ο στρατιώτης ο καλός που φαίνεται; Στη μάχη. Αν τον καιρό της ειρήνης, πριν τη μάχη, δεν έχει ασκηθεί, πώς μπορεί να αποδώσει στην μάχη; Αν είσαι νωθρός, δεν θα έχεις ευλογία και δεν θα έχεις δύναμη ομολογίας από Τον Θεό. Διότι η ομολογία συνιστά χάρισμα για όσους προετοιμάζονται. Αν πάλι δεν είναι κάποιοι δεινοί και ικανοί ομολογητές, ο Θεός θα τους φυλάξει, αρκεί να έχουν καλή πρόθεση, να μην προδώσουν την Πίστη, να μην υποχωρήσουν, να μην υποκύψουν, και να μην καταισχυθούν.

Βασισμένο σε ομιλία του Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτη Λαρίσης και Πλαταμώνος, κ. Κλήμη



Παρακάλεσε τότε θερμά η Κωνσταντίνα, την Αγία Ειρήνη Χρυσοβαλάντου, μια άλλη εξαιρετικά θαυματουργή Αγία, η οποία της έδωσε μια μικρή παράταση χρόνου διότι το παιδί ήταν ακόμη πολύ μικρό.

# Elder Theologos: An Extraordinary Life *Cont'd from p. 16*

had escaped from the police, their excitement was so great that, finally stopping at some abandoned construction site, they carefully placed the Body down on a clean spot and literally began to leap for joy that they had rescued Christ's Body from the policemen. Suddenly, as they celebrated this blessed victory, Nicholas realized that the other young man began to change in his appearance, becoming radiant, and started slowly ascending to the sky. Nicholas stared at him in shock, not believing his own eyes. It was an Angel of the Lord, who, as he ascended, looked back at the puzzled Nicholas, smiling.

Such extraordinary signs Christ revealed. Imagine, what a blessing! Our elders lived these things. These are not fairy tales. Nicholas was a serious man and dignified; he did not lie, nor was he the dreamy type. He was a deeply spiritual person since childhood, fearless, courageous, with zeal. This is why God showed such people such miracles, to establish them in times of horrific persecutions. God wants zeal, not fanaticism—not screaming and extreme behaviors; but inward zeal, strong faith and stability.

When their daughter, Evaggelia, was about two years old, Konstantina became very sick, unto death. She fervently prayed to Saint Irene Chrysovalantou, another very miraculous Saint, who appeared to her and provided a small extension of time for her, because the child was so young. The Saint told Konstantina that, once the child grows a bit more, God will take Konstantina to be with Him. Saint Irene did not specify how many more years God would give her, but as it turned out, she lived about an additional six years beyond that point. When Vaggelia was about seven to eight years old, about the year 1960, Konstantina fell asleep. Her end was so blessed and peaceful! God even allowed her to see Angels before she fell asleep, who had come to take her. The ailing Konstantina suddenly exclaimed, "The house filled with bright young men, dressed in white! Give them treats!" she exhorted those around her, who, of course, could not see them.

About a decade after the repose of his wife, and having finished raising Evaggelia, Nicholas felt that the time was drawing nigh for him to fulfill his youthful promise and desire, and become a monk. Prior to his tonsure, however, Nicholas became a Pilgrim and visited the Holy Land. What signs God showed him there! He entered the Holy Sepulchere to worship, but while in there, it appeared to him that there was no roof. Suddenly, he was basking in the Light of God. He did not know where he was nor for how long. When God withdrew the Light, then he saw the roof of the Holy Sepulchere again, and everything as it had been. Nicholas then asked those around him, in the Holy Sepulchere, if they had perceived anything out of the ordinary, but no one had. It seems, the vision was just for him.

The following year, having entered the 1970s, Nicholas desired to go on a pilgrimage to the island of Patmos. During that trip, Nicholas suffered a heart attack. He asked Saint John the Theologian, who is the protector of heart disease sufferers, since Saint John reclined on the Lord's Chest at the Last Supper, to deem him worthy to complete the pilgrimage, and after that, to become a monk. And indeed, the Evangelist appeared to him and told him to go venerate without fear. "And what name shall I receive at my tonsure, my

Saint?" Nicholas asked Saint John. "I will name you," the Theologian told him, "Theologos." Nicholas rejoiced at this news and began to exclaim, like a child, "Thank you, my Saint! You are my joy!"

Finally, in 1973, the tonsure of Nicholas, now Monk Fr. Theologos, took place. That night, during the tonsure, his wife Konstantina, who had fallen asleep many years earlier, appeared to a certain nun at a skete in Ilioupolis, who had been a family acquaintance. Konstantina appeared full of joy, and wore a glorious crown on her head. She said, "What Nicholas does today on earth

brings me immense joy and happiness!" The nun who witnessed this did not know that somewhere else, that same night, the monastic tonsure of Fr. Theologos was taking place, so she wondered what Nicholas could be doing to cause Konstantina to appear in so much honor and glory. So the nun marked the date of the mysterious appearance on her calendar. After a certain amount of time, the two monastics ran into each other, and the riddle was solved, and they both understood what event had given Konstantina so much joy. Do you see how God honors



*Convent of the Dormition in Attica, where Mother Xenia, the daughter-in-law of Nicholas and Konstantina, is currently the Abbess*

those who honor Him?

With the passage of time, the elder Theologos lost his sight. However, he remained peaceful, unwavering in his prayer, his fasting, and his spiritual life; always calm and meek.

So, I have told you, briefly, about the life of Fr. Theologos and his family, people who were our contemporaries, whom we met, and whom we got to know well. People such as these have been among us, and we refer to them today, if for no other reason, so that we can be empowered by their example and try a little harder to present ourselves as worthy of their labors and their confession. This is the glorious Path, the pure Path, the sanctified Path, the lofty Path.

I pray that God deems us worthy until the end to remain on this Path. And if we do not have much to present to God in terms of good works, at least let us keep the Faith, and then we can say to Him, "I have nothing to show You, O my God, but in a world with so much turbulence, so much confusion, so many slanders, so many lies and evil, I kept the Holy Faith..." This will be huge! And God will have mercy and He will overlook mistakes and weaknesses. The days that are coming are likely to be more difficult, and for this reason, our strength must become palpable. This is why we are saying these things: to prepare. Where does the good soldier distinguish himself? In battle. If in times of peace, before the battle, the soldier has not prepared, has not exercised, how will he perform during the battle? If you are sluggish, you will not have the blessing, and you will not have the power of Confession from God. Because Confession is a gift from God to those who prepare. At the same time, if some are not strong and capable confessors, God will still cover them, as long as they have blessed intent and they do not betray the Faith, they do not retreat, do not bow down, and do not become discouraged.

*Based on a talk by His Eminence, Metropolitan Klimis of Larisa and Platamon*

# The Miracle of St. Nicholas Recounted by St. Philaret

Cont'd from p.15

He ran up to the icon, threw himself down in front of it, and stretched out his arms to it, saying something in Chinese. The people who knew Chinese said he was thanking the saint for saving him from death.



St. Philaret of New York was once arrested while he tended to his flock in Harbin, China, and violently tortured by the Japanese occupiers trying to get him to deny Christ

Here's what happened: for some reason he was in a terrible hurry to cross the river. But the river is wide, and the ice was flowing along it. He decided to take a chance. As he ran across the ice, jumping from one floe to another, he slipped, lost his balance, and fell under the ice. He was drowning, dying, when he remembered the wonderworking icon. His pagan countrymen revered it too, just as the Russian Orthodox did. As he was drowning, he cried out in despair, "Old man from the train station, help me!" He lost consciousness and went under completely; and he was about to perish . . . when, all of a sudden, he was on the riverbank, soaked but alive and unharmed! So he took off and ran—the train station was far away—and he rushed in to the icon and thanked the great hierarch for this evident and amazing miracle of his mercy and love.

The entire Far East, the entire land of China, has a great veneration for Saint Nicholas, you know. Once a Russian hunter had wandered far, far, into the taiga or steppe, and there he came upon a Chinese farmstead where he asked shelter. The friendly master and mistress of the house invited him in, and over their door he saw an icon of Saint Nicholas. He thought to himself, "What can these heathen be doing with it? What do they need it for?" And he wanted to take it. His host was offended and said, "Why do you want to take the Old Man away from us? He's so kind, he helps us so much. We won't give him up for anything!"

So not only the Orthodox Church but practically the entire human race honors this great hierarch. Whenever anyone is in trouble or has some need, he turns to Saint Nicholas. This great hierarch hears and fulfills each of the hundreds of petitions that fly to him in Heaven, as long as we ask with firm, strong faith. That's why the Russian people love Saint Nicholas so much and constantly entreat him: "O Father and Hierarch Nicholas pray to God for us!" Amen. Saint Nicholas Save us!



The train station in Harbin, China, at which this miracle took place.

The editor and volunteers at the *Spiritual Watch* ask forgiveness for the long hiatus and request your prayers for the continuation of this effort, with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America.

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