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Saint Nestor

CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE

"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." John 11:25)

BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM

... LITURGICAL CALL TAKES THE WOMEN



COMES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT:

AND BLESSED IS THE SERVANT,

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8: 12)



Turning in the Right Direction: Cheesefare Sunday

“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:14-21)

I remember something that happened to me when I was first playing basketball. I was in fifth or sixth grade and had joined a team, and it was a very exciting time for me—the first time I was going to play organised ball.

I didn't start out on the first string; I was second or third string. I can remember sitting on the bench waiting to get in and being so excited about being able to play in a basketball game. Finally the coach said it was my time to enter the game. I was ready to play, it was the moment I had waited for.

The ball was out of bounds, I remember, and I was guarding my man, and I could tell that the other player was going to pass it to my man. So when the pass came I jumped in front, grabbed the ball, began to dribble, and headed right for the hoop. It was amazing, because all the players on the other team sort of moved out of my way. Everybody started screaming in the whole place, and I was sure that I was a star, that I was the greatest. They weren't even guarding me because they knew there was no point.

Everybody was screaming, and as I got closer to the basket, I began to distinguish the words that were being screamed, “No, no, you're going the wrong way! It's the wrong hoop! We're going the other way!” As the ball exited my hand to go into the basket, I saw the faces of all my team-mates cast down, and the other team was so excited because I had scored for them.

What happened to me in that basketball game often happens to us in the spiritual life. It is easy for us to be confused, to be deceived, to be so sure of ourselves that we interpret everything as meaning that we are

doing it right, when in reality we are doing it wrong.

That is why this is one of my favourite days of the year, because tomorrow (Clean Monday) we begin the Great Fast. The fast is the greatest time of the year. It's a time of great rejoicing, because for the next forty days we get to distinguish the words that are being screamed. During the next forty days we are given insights into how we are living, and in what direction we are proceeding.

We all find that we have been shooting at the wrong baskets. Many of us think that we are doing things right, and we must be shown that we are doing things very wrong. Great Lent is given to us so that we might see ourselves, so that we might take stock of what is truly going on inside of us, so that we might repent, so that we might stop before we score for the other team. Satan hates this time of the year.

Orthodox Christians tend to love Lent. Wherever I go they all say the same thing to me: “I can't wait for Lent to be here.” We rejoice in being shown where we are wrong. We don't live our lives hoping that someone will tell us that we are doing something right. As hard and as painful as it is, we hope that people will show us where we're doing wrong. The saints' greatest fear was that someone would say something positive about them. They were so happy when people said negative things.

A priest friend of mine has many good people in his parish who are very supportive. He also has a few people who think that he is the worst priest in the world. I talked to him once just after this latter group had shared with him all the things that he had done wrong, and how they were going to find a new spiritual father, because certainly anybody was better than he was. He said, “Thank God some people in my parish have got it right.” I said, “Yes, isn't it wonderful when people support you?” He said, “No, Father, they're the ones who have it wrong. Thank God there are at least some in my parish who understand that I'm good for nothing.”

He is truly Orthodox. Those of us who struggle with our pride would sit all day and say, “This person thinks I'm good, this person thinks I'm good, those people don't know what they're talking about.” This Orthodox priest said, “Thank God for those who have said bad things about me, because they're the ones who have it right, and I need to repent.”

Great Lent is given to us so that we might repent, so that we might see our sins, so that we might find out what is wrong with us. When I go to the doctor, I don't say, “Doctor, tell me everything that is good about me. Tell me everything that's working.” And the doctor doesn't say, “This is really working well, and this is really working well. Half of your body is just doing wonderfully!”

(Continued on page 3)

Turning in the right direction: Cheesefare Sunday

(from page 2)

When I go to the doctor I say, "Doctor, these are the symptoms—what's wrong with me?" My doctor says, "This is wrong, and this is wrong, and this is wrong." I don't get angry at him and say, "How dare you say those things about me! I know people who think I'm doing great!" I say, "Thank you," and then, "How can we fix it?" The doctor says, "I'm not quite sure. But you can try this for a while and we'll see if it works."

Why don't we do the same thing in spiritual life? I have a good friend who, before he goes to confession, goes around to each member of his family and says, "I need to go to confession—can you write my list for me? Tell me everything I need to confess, because I know I don't see it myself." He comes to confession with the list that's written by others, and then he adds all the other sins that he can see.

He wants to repent. He wants to be shown where he's failing so that he can ask forgiveness, so that he can change. That's why Great Lent has been given to us.

The Synaxarion points out that the time of Great Lent is approximately ten percent of the year—a tithe. The Synaxarion says that we should be fasting and praying and repenting every day of the year, because we're such terrible sinners. But we're weak and we're not ready for that kind of spiritual labour.

Now the Church and God come to you and ask for a tithe of your time: forty days to think about nothing but your soul and what you are doing wrong. Forty days to deny yourself pleasure, to say no to what you want, and yes to what is good for you. Forty days to humble yourself, to abase yourself. Forty days to centre your thoughts and attention on your spiritual life and how you need to change.

Everyone who's been through Great Lent knows how easy it is to fail at Lent. On Cheesefare Sunday everyone says, "I'm going to have a good Lent, it's going to be different this year." And we get to the end of Lent and say, "What's happened? How did I blow it?"

Let me fill you in on a few ways that Satan is going to try to ruin your Lent. We read it in today's Gospel. First of all, he's going to try to get you to pay more attention to the sins and failings of others than to your own. He's going to incite your curiosity. Satan is the most curious of all beings. He's going to want you to be more interested in the lives of others than in your own.

He's going to attempt to get you angry and bitter with resentment over the wrongs that have been done to you. So Jesus in our Gospel says,

"Forgive." At Vespers on this Sunday in our rite of forgiveness we will ask each other for forgiveness and we will say, "It's over, it's all forgiven."

Satan will attempt to get you to worry about what other people are thinking and saying about you. He may get you thinking that you're a great person, so you have to tell everybody around you what you're doing. Many of us are very good at broadcasting to everyone the spiritual struggles that we're having. We're good at reminding people that we're fasting: "Oh, I can't do that tonight because I have to spend four hours in prayer." Satan can distract us into worrying about presenting ourselves positively.

But Satan can also distract us by getting us to worry about negative things people say. How many people have stopped their fast because "I don't want someone to know that I'm fasting." They say it in a very pious way—"I don't want to broadcast that I'm fasting, I don't want to be proud" - but really what they're saying is, "I don't want anyone to look down on me because I'm fasting. I don't want people to know that I take my spiritual life seriously, because they won't understand, so I'm not going to fast today." See how subtle sin can be? We're not concerned about our humility, we're concerned about what other people think.

Satan will try to make us irritable. Most of us get irritable when we fast. Satan will try to distract us. Forty days is a long time for us to be focused on anything. Be very careful.

There are great rewards promised to those who fast. There are great blessings given to those who take this time seriously. On the Feast of Pascha, St John Chrysostom will say, "Come one, come all, you who came at the first and you who came at the eleventh hour, because the meal is all ready." Thank God that, in His grace, even when we fall He is there to receive us. But from a human standpoint, if we come at the first and endure, there is so much more that we will receive than if we come at the eleventh hour.

So let us enter the fast with joy and thanksgiving. Thank God that right now He is screaming at you, "No, no! You're going the wrong way! That's the wrong basket!" Thank God that He and all the saints are there to remind us that the hoop is at the other end of the court, and we need to change direction and go that way.

(Source: *Journey to the Kingdom- Reflections on the Sunday Gospels* by Fr John Mack, Conciliar Press, 2001)



Warfare with the Passions: ANGER

THE HOLY FATHERS teach that man is subject to a certain disease of the tongue. It sometimes manifests itself in anger, at other times as argumentativeness, and often as unbridled talkativeness. But each is a symptom of the same disease: lack of self-control.

“Anger is the quickest passion of all. It is aroused and inflamed against a man who has done, or seems to have done, one an injury. It hardens the soul ever more and more” (*Abba Evagrius, On Eight Thoughts*).

“Anger nurses a grievance. The soul, itching for vengeance, constantly tempts us to repay those who have offended us” (*St Basil the Great, Homily 10*).

“Thus, imagine if you will that your wrath is a kind of a wild beast: as much care as others take around lions, so must you take for yourself....If a man nourishes worms in his entrails he will not even be able to do so much as breathe, his inward parts all wasting away. How then can we produce anything noble if we have the great serpent of anger eating us up inside?” (*St John Chrysostom, Homily 4 on St Matthew*).

“Indeed, once anger successfully banishes reason, it gains dominion over the soul. It makes a man completely bestial. In fact, it does not even allow him to be a man at all, because he no longer has the help of his reason. Those enslaved by this passion of anger are like venomous animals; they become like rabid dogs; they dart about like scorpions; they bite like snakes...

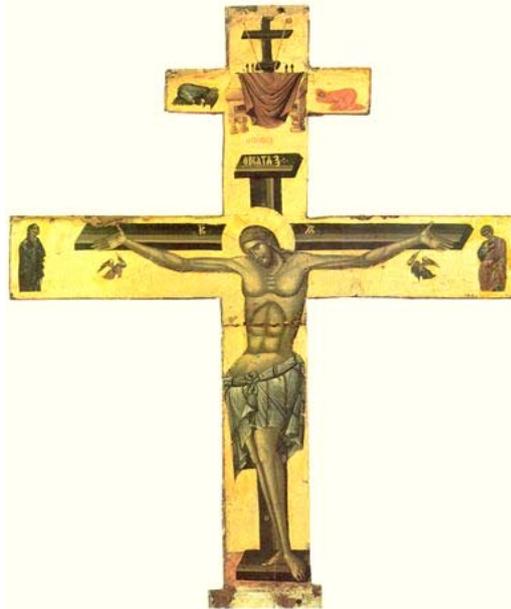
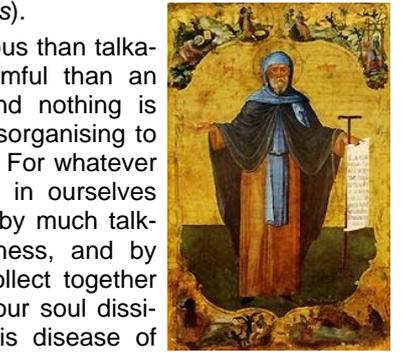
“And because of anger, tongues become unbridled and speech unguarded. Physical violence...is born of anger....Anger is a kind of momentary madness, for its victims...do not rest until they have either inflicted some hurt or are themselves injured” (*St Basil the Great, Homily 10*).

“An argumentative man is like someone who consciously gives himself up to his enemies....[If] a man is deeply wounded in his heart by provocation and abuse...[and therefore] argues with bitterness or speaks with arrogance, he will give the serpent added strength to pour poison into his heart and mercilessly devour his entrails. In this way, daily gaining strength, the serpent will finally devour the poor soul’s power to do so.

Thereupon the man will live for sin and become totally dead to truth” (*St Symeon the New Theologian, Practical and Theological Precepts*).

“Nothing is more ruinous than talkativeness and more harmful than an uncontrolled tongue; and nothing is more destructive and disorganising to the treasure of the soul. For whatever we succeed in building in ourselves every day is destroyed by much talking,” by argumentativeness, and by anger. For “what we collect together with such great labour our soul dissipates again through this disease of the tongue...Who can express all the harm that arises from an uncontrolled tongue?” (*Philotheos of Sinai*).

But “anger is tamed and becomes transformed into gentleness only by courage and mercy” (*St Gregory of Sinai*). And how do we achieve gentleness? “By continually counting our sins, and by mourning and weeping over them. We mourn because wherever there is mourning it is impossible for there to be anger. The mind, when scourged by sorrow, does not have the leisure to be roused” (*St John Chrysostom, Homily 10*).



When wrestling with this passion, it is important not to “judge yourself as meriting any great rewards or think that any man is inferior to you. If you rid yourself of these two faults, anger will never be aroused in you, even when you suffer indignities...

“You must quiet your heart when it howls with rage. Compel your passions to honour the arrival of your reason, just as an ill-behaved boy respects the presence of a holy elder....We should keep [anger] curbed, just as we would a horse, by keeping it bridled to our reason, which then will lead it wherever

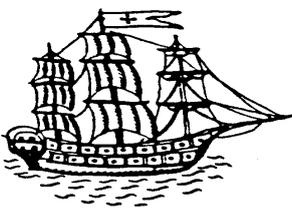
it wishes (*Ibid*).

But, “anger is often useful” (*St John Chrysostom, Homily 22 on Hebrews*) because it is “by nature designed for waging war with demons and for struggling with every kind of sin....It is the demons, who entice us towards worldly lusts, that make us use anger to fight with men” (*Abba Evagrius, Directions on Spiritual Training*).

“Anger is the sinew of the soul when it is allied with the reason against sin....Unless your anger has been aroused against the Evil One, it is impossible for you to hate him as fiercely as he deserves. For our hatred of sin should be as intense as our love for virtue. Anger is very helpful in bringing this about so long as it closely follows the guidance of the reason, being quiet, docile, and readily obedient to the call of reason....Such, then, is the advantage of anger if one knows how to control it” (*St Basil the Great, Homily 10*).

(To be continued)

(Source: *The Teaching of the Holy Fathers on the Passions, Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society 2004*)



Words of Life



death. The saints too. Paradise always costs this price. Prayer for the world is the fruit of extremely deep and acute suffering.

We must follow Christ going to the Golgotha. This ascension is none other than the struggle waged by Christ in His love for the whole world. When contests are fought only on the level of the world and the passions, people exhaust themselves and age very quickly. But when, on the other hand, sufferings come from striving against the passions in the Spirit of Christ, people are born anew.

Nothing is more painful than to have the love of Christ in this world. It is a struggle of cosmic dimensions.

How can we go towards God? When one stretches out towards this unique goal, everything else becomes a source of suffering, of pain. But we bear this cross in silence.

Such is the paradox of Christian life: it is in choosing the suffering of Christ for the world that we have the feeling of being nearer to Him and to eternal life.

When we decide to follow Christ, every day of our life becomes a day of suffering, of weeping, of pain.

Sometimes this question arises in us: 'Lord, why have You created us thus, that we must go through so much suffering?' We do not manage to understand that this negative experience is the way of salvation.

Earthly existence is for man an endless suffering. Why do we bear all this? Because the Creator has come and has dwelt among us. And we now know Him personally.

We are created 'in the image and likeness of God'. When we measure the reality of our everyday life against this divine revelation, we fall into despair. Why is it so difficult to act as a Christian in the here and now? Because it is a matter of eternal life. For us who are

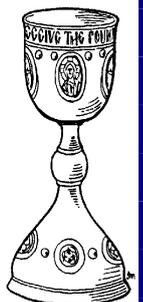
created from nothing, what relation is there between our pettiness, our poverty, and this so high, infinite, goal?

The struggle for salvation can at times be very simple and 'primitive', and at times very complicated, beyond all human strength.

Of course, it is better not to sin. But repentance, if it is like a flame, can restore every loss.

We must preserve the spirit of repentance all our life, right to the end. Repentance is the basis of all ascetic and spiritual life. The feeling, or intuition, of sin can become so acute in us that it really engenders a repentance from the depths of our being.

(Source: *Words of Life*, by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakarov) Savropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist Essex, 1998)



We repent personally, but our passions are also those which dominate the whole world. Thus, what we live is not separated from cosmic life. Little by little, quite naturally, we begin to live our state as a reflection of the state of all humanity. We begin to live our life as through God's eyes, in a universal way. Through our repentance, we do not only live our own individual drama; we live in ourselves the tragedy of all humanity, the drama of its history since the beginning of time.

In Christ, our consciousness expands, our life becomes unlimited. In the commandment 'Love your neighbour as yourself', we must understand the words 'as yourself' in this way: every man, the 'whole Adam', is my being.

The kingdom of Christ, writes St Silouan, is to bear in our heart the whole universe and God the Creator Himself.

When you pray, pray for each and every one. And add: 'By their prayers, by his/her prayer, have mercy also upon me'. In this way, gradually, your consciousness will broaden.

Love your enemies'. Yes, it is difficult. Yes, it is painful. But the moral beauty of Christ attracts us to such a degree that we are ready to bear all trials, as long as we are being raised up into His Spirit. There is no other choice.

Christ has given His divine life to those who are created in His image, but the only response He received was hatred. Today, after two thousand years of Christianity, what do we see? The contemporary world is losing Christ, losing eternal life, more and more. The deep darkness of sinful passions, hatred, domination, wars of all kinds, are what make up our earthly existence. In this situation, Christ has given this commandment to those who decide to follow Him: 'Love your enemies'. Why is the world afraid of such a God? Can one find a better principle than this: bless those who curse you, love your enemies?

One cannot love without suffering. The greatest pain is that of loving to the utmost. Christ loved so much that He gave Himself up to a terrible





Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult: Part 10

From Black Magic to Christ

In the end, the Satanist and black magic priestess, Doreen Irvine, returned to the bosom of Christ after a dramatic experience. She tells us how this happened in her book, *"From Witchcraft to Christ."*

Signs and Wonders

On her initiation into magic, her god and father, the devil, gave her superhuman powers. She was able, for example, to make tables, chairs and so on, disappear and then bring them back. She hovered in the air in her room. Just by thinking about it, she would kill birds. There were other such strange things, as well.

Promotion Examinations

The time came when a queen of black magic was to be chosen. There were seven candidates, among whom was Doreen. All of them had to pass through a fire six feet high. Whoever got through with the least damage would become queen.

The moment for the test came. About a thousand witches had already gathered, waiting to see their new queen.

Doreen's turn came. She implored her father, the devil, to help her, and he appeared before her in person! Doreen took his hand and together they went through the fire. Both of them went directly into the heat of the flames.

The miracle happened. Doreen passed through the fire unharmed. Her long hair wasn't even singed! Not a single hair had burned.

The thousand or so witches who had gathered all began to celebrate at the sight of their new queen. And at the same time they fell down before her and prostrated themselves.

The Coronation

The time came for her to be crowned. They placed a crown of pure gold on her head, they threw the royal robe trimmed with gold around her shoulders, they gave her a scepter and raised her to the throne.

Then the celebrations began. Men and women, totally naked, danced satanic dances, consumed drinks laced with narcotics and engaged in unmentionable orgies.

Now her father and god, the devil, became even closer to her. At every danger, he himself intervened and saved her. Doreen says that the proverb, "The devil takes care of his own," is well said. She saw it and lived it herself.

With her new office, her gifts increased. She was, for example, able to speak foreign languages and do other amazing things.

Light in the Darkness

God wants "all people to be saved," particularly those who are in the insatiable maw of the devil. "I do not want

the death of a sinner, but that he may turn and repent and live." So God never ceased to be concerned about Doreen's salvation. He sowed the seeds of repentance in her soul. And they bore fruit. Now that Doreen had risen to the highest office of black magic, a small flickering light was sparked in her soul. She began to think of her old age (and after!). She was worried; she was far from certain about the state she was in.

It occurred to her to go to a meeting of Christians and to hear something about Christ. But she had given her oath never to attend such meetings. She was in a dilemma. What should she do, go or not go? She made her decision. She reneged on her devil-centered oath and in May, 1964, found herself at a Christian meeting. She heard a sermon about Christ and this set her thinking.

A month later, she returned to the meeting. Again she heard people talking about Christ. Now she was troubled to an even greater extent. And she made a bold decision: "No more magic ever gain. Ever!"

Outbreak of War

When the misanthropic devil saw that Doreen had made the courageous decision to return to his Enemy, Christ, he gnashed his teeth. One night, while she was in bed, he appeared to her in person. His arms were covered in long, black hairs and his voice was repulsive. He was hideous spectacle. He grabbed Doreen by the throat, half throttled her and howled, "No! No! You won't go to Christ! You're mine!"

Doreen was frightened but not overwhelmed. She remained firm in her resolution. It wasn't long before she went again to a Christian meeting. Lucifer followed her.

At this meeting, Doreen did a number of things against her will. She ripped up the Scriptures, attacked the servers, howled, fell to the ground and slithered like a snake.

She went back to the meeting another time, and then again, each time performing the same, uncontrolled acts, under the influence of Satan. The third time she went, the devil shouted at her "The best thing for you to do know is to commit suicide! To die! To die! To die!"

The cruel voice pierced her. She ran through the streets as if she were being pursued. She reached a bridge over a river, mounted the railings and was all set to jump into the water and drown. At the very last moment, a passer-by stopped her. **(To be continued)**

(Source: *Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult* by Archim. Vassilios Bakoyiannis, Orthodox Book Centre, Athens 2003)



The Importance and Value of Memorial Services: Part 6

WHAT IS NEEDED FOR A MEMORIAL SERVICE

The items that are needed to perform a memorial service are: the offertory bread (*prosporon*), wine, incense, oil, and candles—all the things that are always offered by the faithful for the celebration of the Holy Liturgy.

All these things are required because the very concept of a memorial service is closely tied to the Holy Liturgy. Its concern is not only with people but primarily with Christ. It is from Christ that we will seek help, and the help we seek can only be provided by the Holy Liturgy. Other prayers should naturally be offered, but they are not memorial services, for they consist of a simple *trisagion* or thrice-holy prayer (Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us) offered for the repose of the soul of our loved one who has passed away.

This is why we give the offertory bread and wine in church, along with a list of the names of those for whom the gifts are offered.

Simeon of Thessaloniki insists on the importance of memorial services, emphasizing the great benefit that the celebration of the Holy Liturgy has for the souls of the departed.

“On the third day” he writes, referring to the third day following a person’s death, the so-called *trita* takes place, in which kernels of wheat and various other fruits of the earth are offered to God. What do these offerings signify? They show that human beings are also seeds, like the fruits of the earth. When they are cast down on the ground they want, with the power of God, to rise up again like grain, and after they manage to sprout up, then, full-grown and alive, they want to be offered to Christ. For just as what is now a seed will be buried in the earth and after that will germinate and come to fruition and bear forth its ample fruit, so too a human being that is now delivered to the earth on account of death wants to rise up again. Paul also says this, using seeds as an example to explain the resurrection.”

Here Simeon of Thessaloniki is referring specifically to the *kollyva* (boiled wheat) that is offered at memorial services and to the ingredients that are used to make it, as well as to their symbolic meaning.

We find this tradition of offering *kollyva* at memorial services as early as the 4th century.

Before the custom of offering people *kollyva*, bread and wine were served at holy memorial services, along with olives or cheese or rice. When people took what was being offered they would pray, saying “blessed (*makaria*) be his memory.” For this reason, such foods also came to be known as *makariai*. The bread and coffee that guests are offered today at memorial services by the relatives of the deceased are vestiges of these earlier practices.



Saint Nestor

ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES TO MEMORIAL SERVICES?

Some people offer gifts in the memory of the person who has passed away, as a substitute for or alternative to memorial services. However, memorial services are completely different from charitable deeds. Neither charitable deeds nor anything else can replace the Holy Liturgy, where “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” is offered. This is why we offer the *prosporon* and the communion wine in church, which are then transformed into the body and blood of Christ. From the *prosporon* come the portions for those who have died, and these are placed on the Holy Paten, beside the



portions for the saints and the righteous of the Church. Here the entire Church is found, both the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. “It is a great honour”, St John Chrysostom states, “for the name of our relative to be mentioned in that place,

where Christ and the entire Church are found. Take note. At that moment the fearful mystery is announced: namely God gave Himself for the salvation of all the world....”

The help that is offered by commemorating someone’s name in the Holy Liturgy is therefore the greatest and most important assistance that can be given to those who have departed from this life.

The prayers of a single righteous person can accomplish more than all the charitable gifts that are given to the poor. How much more, then, can be accomplished through the Holy Liturgy! **(To be continued)**

(Source: *The Memorial Services & their benefits* by Hieromonk Benedict, New Skete, Mt Athos, 2002)



Prayer For the Departed

O God of spirits and all flesh, who have trampled down death, made the devil powerless, and given life to your world, give rest to your servant (name) who has fallen asleep, in a place of light, in a place of green pasture, in a place of refreshment, from where pain, sorrow and sighing have fled. As a good and loving God, forgive every sin committed by him/her in word, deed or thought; for there is no one who lives and does not sin; you alone are without sin, your righteousness endures forever, and your law is truth. For you are the resurrection, the life and the repose of your servant (name) who has fallen asleep, Christ our God, and to you we offer glory, with your eternal Father and your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

(Source: *Book of Prayers—A Selection for Orthodox Christians*, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia Sydney 1993)



4th Sunday of Lent: Feast Day of St John of the Ladder - Climacus

ON CONTROLLING THE TONGUE

“For the man who recognizes his sins has taken control of his tongue, while the chatterer has yet to discover himself as he should.” - St John Climacus

The fourth Sunday of Lent is dedicated to one of the holiest men of the Christian Church: **St John Climacus, also known as St John of the Ladder.** He lived during the 6th century. Like many of the early saints, little is known of St John Climacus. He is widely recognised for his classic work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Much of what we do know comes from his own writing.

In Kallistos Ware's introduction to *The Ladder*, we find that John Climacus was probably born shortly before 579 and died around 649. He was sixteen years old when he came to the monastic community at Sinai. John was tonsured as a monk when he was nineteen or twenty.

At an early age he was recognised as a great spiritual guide. In fact, the stream of visitors he received caused many to criticize him, calling him a gossip and a “chatterbox.” When hearing this John remained totally silent for one year, until his former critics urged him to speak once more.

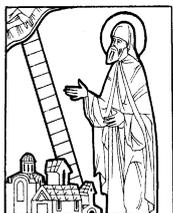
Shortly after this incident, John lived forty years in solitude, at a place called Tholas. Against his will he was elected as abbot of the great monastery of Mount Sinai. During this period of his life, he was asked by the superior of a monastery at Raithu to compose a book of instruction for the monks. The end result was *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. Having completed this great work, he later resigned as abbot, longing for solitude again. He appointed his brother, George, as a replacement. John died shortly after leaving his position.

The importance of *The Ladder* cannot be underestimated. While written especially for monastics, it is a book from which spiritual guidance can be attained by anyone desiring to grow in the Christian life. From an ascetic standpoint, the book is often severe. Yet it has earned a place in the history of monasticism that few other works have managed to do. Ware writes, “With the exception of the Bible and the service books, there is no work in Eastern Christendom that has been studied, copied and translated more often than *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* by St John Climacus. Every Lent in Orthodox monasteries it is appointed to be read aloud in church or in the refectory, so that some monks will have listened to it as much as fifty or sixty times in the course of their life.”

Ware also notes that the work has been widely read by lay people in Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia. He compares its popularity in the East to that of *The Imitation of Christ* in the West.

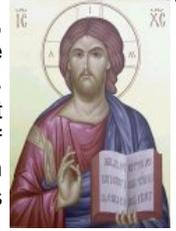
St John's ladder consists of thirty steps, each one ascending to the next level of the spiritual life. Much of *The Ladder* is filled with picturesque images clothed in a style that is at times abrupt as well as humorous. Of the thirty steps only three are directly related to the tongue. Slander, talkativeness and falsehood are the three steps that deal with this subject. What he teaches us is as pertinent today as it was nearly fifteen hundred years ago.

According to St John Climacus, the whole body needs to be in complete submission to God. For example, we must control our



Saint Nestor

eyes from lust, the stomach from gluttony, and the ears from listening to gossip. In the same way, the tongue must be restrained. The view is corroborated by Scripture. St James warns, “If any one considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is useless” (James 1:26 NIV).



St John Climacus teaches us that we must avoid the sin of talkativeness. Scripture teaches us, “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise” (Prov. 10:19 NIV). John tells us what is at the root of this sin. “Talkativeness results from a bad or relaxed lifestyle...or it comes from vain glory, a particular problem with ascetics; or it comes from gluttony, which is why many who keep a hard check on the stomach can more easily restrain the blathering tongue”. It makes sense that if, through ascetic practices such as fasting, we learn to use self-control in one area, it should become less difficult for us to restrain other passions.

Expounding on vainglory as one of the roots of this sin, he writes, “Talkativeness is the throne of vainglory on



which it loves to preen itself and show off.” In a typical passage from *The Ladder*, he warns us where talkativeness leads: “Talkativeness is a sign of ignorance, a doorway to slander, a leader of jesting, a servant of lies, the ruin of compunction, a summoner of despondency, a messenger of sleep, a dissipation of recollection, the end of vigilance, the cooling of zeal, the darkening of prayer.” In short, talkativeness endangers the soul.

It is not that we must take vows of silence or sit mute at all times. The saint teaches us that we must take control over what we say, thinking before speaking. This restraining of the tongue can only be accomplished by being sober-minded. Like many of the Fathers, John instructs us to remember our own mortality, our own death, as a way of conquering the sin of the tongue. We must remember the words of Christ: “I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render an account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37). St John writes, “The man who is seriously concerned about death reduces the amount of what he has to say, and the man who has received the gift of spiritual mourning runs from talkativeness as from a fire.”

If talkativeness can endanger the soul, it follows that silence can offer healing and renewal. St John writes, “Intelligent silence is the mother of prayer, freedom from bondage, custodian of zeal, a guard on our thoughts, a watch on our enemies, a prison of mourning, a friend of tears, a sure recollection of death, a painter of judgment,... a companion of stillness, the opponent of dogmatism, a growth of knowledge, a hand to shape contemplation, hidden progress, the secret journey upward”.

In other words, silence brings the converse of talkativeness. If talkativeness causes us to sin and draw away from God, then silence is the remedy that nurtures prayer and the sweet remembrance of the holy and divine.

Not only do we draw closer to God through silence, we also prevent ourselves from falling into sin. “The lover of silence draws close to God. He talks to him in secret and

(Continued on page 9)

On Controlling the Tongue (continued from page 8)



God enlightens him. Jesus, by His silence, shamed Pilate; and a man, by his stillness, conquers vainglory”.

Thus when we are in the presence of others, we should not always think about what we should say next. Moreover, we must weigh our words, asking ourselves if what we are wanting to say will benefit the listener. Are we wanting to speak in order to slander another, to make ourselves look better? Or are we wanting to say something that will show how intelligent or “spiritual” we are? It is important to con-

sider our motives before we speak.

Another sin which is born of the tongue is slander. John defines slander as “the offspring of hatred, a subtle and yet crass disease, a leech in hiding and escaping notice, wasting and draining away the lifeblood of love. It puts on the appearance of love and is the ambassador of an unholy and unclean heart.”

The reason this saint sees slander as subtle and as “hiding and escaping notice” is because often slander hides in a cloak of so-called virtue. How often have we repeated a story about someone under the guise of “concern” for another? If we have, St John teaches us to reconsider. “If, as you insist, you love that man, then do not be making a mockery of him, but pray for him in secret, for this is the kind of love that is acceptable to the Lord. And remember--now I say this as something to be pondered, and do not start passing judgment on the offender-- Judas was one of the company of Christ’s disciples and the robber was in the company of killers. Yet what a turnabout there was when the decisive moment arrived!” If we are repeating the sin to another, the person who committed the sin may be weeping before God.

Slander is closely related to judging, if not condemning, others. St John warns us: “To pass judgment on another is to usurp shamelessly a prerogative of God, and to condemn is to ruin one’s soul.” He also writes, “Do not make judgments, and you will travel no quicker road to the forgiveness of sins.” Because we know not the hearts of others, he teaches us that judging others is incompatible to the Christian life of repentance. He writes, “Fire and water do not mix, neither can you mix judgment of others with the desire to repent. If a man commits a sin before you at the very moment of his death, pass no judgment, because the judgment of God is hidden from men. It has happened that men have sinned greatly in the open but have done greater deeds in secret, so that those who would disparage them have been fooled, with smoke instead of sunlight in their eyes.” He further warns that “whatsoever sin of body or spirit that we ascribe to our neighbour we will surely fall into ourselves.”

While we have a responsibility to correct a fallen member of the Church, we must do so only after praying and receiving guidance. Moreover, it must be done with the proper attitude. John relates to us in his own experience: “I knew a man who sinned openly but repented in secret. I denounced him for being lecherous but he was chaste in the eyes of



God, having propitiated Him by a genuine conversion.” In other words, we are responsible for our brother and sister in Christ, yet if they sin we must approach them in love. We have no excuse when we go to another and describe the shameful deed, even when it is done in the name of “concern”. We have no capacity for judging another’s heart; nor

do we have the responsibility to inform others of someone’s sin. Once again, prayer for the fallen person is what is needed. Then, after prayer and guidance, we may approach the person with humility and attempt to guide the person back to the path of righteousness.



St John Climacus advises those who struggle with the sin of slander to blame the demons responsible for another’s sinful behaviour. “If you want to overcome the spirit of slander, blame not the person who falls but the prompting demon.” By blaming the “prompting demon” the sin is referred back to the one with whom the sin originated.

Another way of overcoming the sin of slander is to look for the good in the one who committed the particular sin. He writes: “A good grape picker chooses to eat ripe grapes and does not pluck what is unripe. A charitable and sensible mind takes careful note of the virtues it observes in another, while the fool goes looking for faults and defects. It is of such a one that it was said, ‘They have searched out iniquity and died in the search’ (Ps. 63:7).” Thus we must look for the good in others and not fault find.

Not only must we refrain from speaking slander, but we must avoid listening to it also. Whether at work or in some other public place, we often listen to gossip and slander, not wanting to offend the speaker. John warns us that we must desist this practice. “Do not allow human respect to get in your way when you hear someone slandering his neighbour. Instead, say to him: ‘Brother, stop it! I do worse things every day, so how can I criticize him?’ You accomplish two things when you say this: You heal yourself and you heal your neighbour with one bandage”.

Also, by doing so, we increase our humility by realizing our own sinfulness.

St John Climacus gives us advice that transcends the many years that have passed since his words were first written. He instructs us, in accordance with Scripture, that the tongue, like all members of the body, must be tamed. His teachings encourage us to look for the hidden motive of what we are saying about another. Are we repeating gossip we have heard so that we may feel better about ourselves? Are we speaking out of our own pride, believing that no such sin could ever be committed by us?

He warns us that talkativeness often causes us to sin; while silence draws us closer to God. He also sees how easy it is to repeat slander under the guise of “concern”. He tells us instead to look at our own faults and pray for those who sin. In this way we will not be guilty of judging others, a sin linked closely to slander.

Not only should we refrain from speaking badly about others, we must also refuse to listen to slander or accusations. John teaches us to spend more time looking for the good in others, ignoring the weaknesses and always remember that we too are capable of the same sins.

By practicing the teaching of St John Climacus, we will understand the importance and the difficulty of taming the tongue.

Pray for us, St John Climacus, that we may take seriously the words we speak and, by God’s grace, increase our mastery over the tongue.

(Source: Flames of Wisdom—Patristic Counsel For Contemporary Life by David Beck, Light and Life Publishing, Minneapolis 1994)



Saturday of St Lazarus

Whom Christ Resurrected From the Dead

We are all familiar with the amazing story of Lazarus as written in the pages of Holy Scripture. Lazarus was a good friend of our Blessed Lord, as were his sisters, Mary and Martha. Jesus visited them on many occasions, and he loved them all very much. As we all have learned from our scriptural reading, Lazarus died at a very early age and he was buried (in accordance with Jewish custom). After four days, our Blessed Lord returned to Bethany, and it was there at the tomb of Lazarus that the miracle took place. Jesus ordered the tomb opened and commanded that Lazarus come out. Lazarus obeyed and the miracle of his resurrection has been recorded for future generations. It was this same



Lazarus who, after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, became a dedicated Apostle, preaching the message of Salvation on the Island of Cyprus. It was on this famous island that Lazarus was ordained as the first Bishop of the area known as Kition. Tradition tells us that he was ordained by the Apostles themselves and that he served as Bishop for 30 years in Cyprus. Lazarus died at the age of 58 and was buried in Cyprus. According to tradition, Lazarus was buried in a casket on which was written the following: "Lazarus, Tetraimeros, Friend of Jesus Christ." The word "Tetraimeros" pertains to the fourth day, and since it was on the fourth day after his death that Jesus brought him back from the grave, Lazarus is affectionately known as the Tetraimeros friend of Jesus Christ.

Lazarus remained entombed eight centuries in the little chapel of St Lazarus in Cyprus. In the year 890 A.D., Emperor Leo of Constantinople, a most devoted and dedicated Christian, built a beautiful monastery and Church in honour of St Lazarus on the Island of Cyprus. Emperor Leo, eventually decided to bring the remains of St Lazarus to the beautiful City of Constantinople. On October 17, 891 A.D., the remains of St Lazarus were brought to Constantinople and enshrined in a magnificent Cathedral known as the Cathedral of St Lazarus. The holy relics of St Lazarus were entombed within a bronze casket. Emperor Leo also brought the holy relics of St Mary Magdalene to Constantinople at the same time. The official dedication of the new Cathedral of St Lazarus took place on May 4, 891 A.D.

(Source: *Lives of the saints & major feast days* by Rev. George Poulos, Brookline, 1989)



Saint Nestor

THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE (part 2)

PEOPLE CHOOSE THE PATH AWAY FROM GOD

The Tower of Babel

One of the great cities was called Babylon. The people of Babylon wanted to rule their neighbours. They wanted to frighten them by showing how great and powerful they were. They began to build a huge tower that was to reach up to Heaven. They called the tower Babel.

While the workers were building the Tower of Babel, a strange thing happened. As the workers took their directions from their foremen, they found that they could no longer understand what was being said. No one could understand his fellow workers! Everyone was speaking a different language! They had to stop work. The tower was never finished. This was God's way of reminding the people not to be so proud of themselves that they forgot to be thankful to God.

GOD PREPARES HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE TO RECEIVE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Descendants of Noah

Noah was the father of all the people who lived after the flood. One of his sons was named Shem. Shem became the father of a large group of people called "Semites". The Semites were very gifted people. They built most of the earliest cities and did much of the earliest writings.



There were many tribes of Semites. A tribe is a large family group composed of grandparents, their brothers and

sisters, their married children and their husbands and wives, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. The oldest and wisest man is the leader or "patriarch".

Most of the tribes of Semites were herdsmen. They lived in a dry country without much green pasturage, so they moved about in search of food for their animals. One of these tribes called themselves Hebrews. They were the ancestors of the Jews.

God Chooses the Hebrews to be His Chosen People

Only the Hebrews worshipped the One True God. For this reason God promised to make them a holy nation and give them land of their own on which to settle down and live in cities. God chose a leader among the Hebrews to lead them to the land which He had promised them. This leader was named Abram.

Abram and his family lived in a city called Ur. It was in the same country that we have been reading about in the stories about Babylon and the Garden of Eden. Abram's father wanted to move his family to the land called Canaan, which was where Israel is today. In order to get there he had to go around the desert. It was a long journey up to the Tigris river and then westward to the Mediterranean Sea. Abram's father never got there, but when he died, God spoke to Abram and told him to take the family and continue the journey. God said, "I will make you a great nation."

As a sign that he had been chosen by God, Abram's name was changed to Abraham. (To be continued)

(Source: *The Christian Way of Life* by Presvytera Frieda Upson Brookline, Massachusetts, 1974)



March - April 2008 Issue, page 10

*From the Old
Testament - The Psalms*

Occasional Prayers

Psalm Eleven (11)

FAITH IN THE LORD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

**IN the LORD I put my trust;
How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to
your mountain"? For look!**

**The wicked bend their bow,
They make ready their arrow
on the string.**

**That they may shoot secretly at the
upright in heart.**

**If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?**

**The LORD is in His holy temple
The LORD'S throne is in heaven;**

**His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men. The**

**LORD tests the righteous,
But the wicked and the one who
loves violence**

His soul hates.

**Upon the wicked He will rain coals;
Fire and brimstone and a burning
wind**

Shall be the portion of their cup.

**But know that the LORD
has set apart for Himself him
who is godly;**

**The LORD will hear when
I call to Him.**

**Be angry, and do not sin.
Meditate within your heart on
your bed, and be still.**

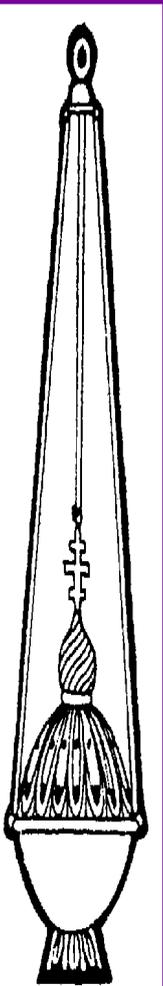
**Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
and put your trust in the LORD.**

**There are many who say,
"Who will show us any good?"
LORD, lift up the light of Your
countenance upon us.**

**You have put gladness in my heart, more
than in the season that their grain
and wine increased.**

**I will both lie down in peace, and sleep;
For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in
safety.**

(Source: The Orthodox Study Bible, Thomas Nelson
Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee 1997)



For Forgiveness

**Lord my God, I confess to you
all the ways in which I have grieved you,
both in soul and body, in word,
deed, or thought.**

**For I know my transgression,
and my sin is ever before me.**

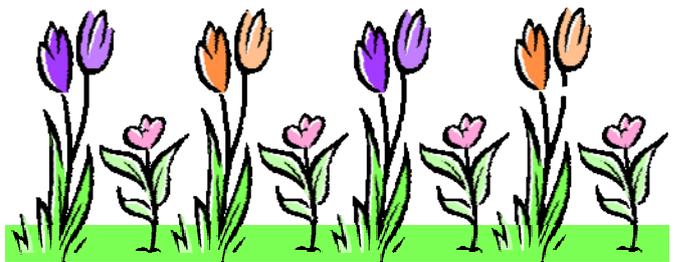
**But now, merciful Lord,
with repentance and compunction
I approach your boundless love.**

**I ask you, therefore, do not turn your face
from me, but forgive all my offences,
both voluntary and involuntary,
and wipe out all my sins.**

**Create a pure heart in me,
and renew an upright spirit within me.
Show me the way in which I am to walk,
for to you have I lifted up my soul.**

**Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.**

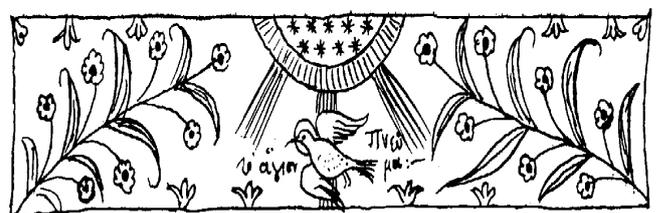
**Cleanse the defilement of my soul, Lord,
and save me in your loving kindness.**



To a Saint

**Pray to God for me, Saint (name),
well pleasing to God; For I turn to you,
my speedy helper and protector.**

(Source: Book of Prayers—A Selection for Orthodox Christians,
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia Sydney 1993)



Orthodox Christian Calendar 2008

This monthly (x2) calendar is provided for your information. It aims to give you an insight into the Orthodox Christian Church year of 2008 and hopes to prove useful and beneficial with its indications. The calendar provides you with a day-by-day outlook of the following pieces of information: **1. The Greater Feast days (†)** celebrated in the Orthodox Christian Church. **2. The main fasting and non-fasting periods** in the Church and the strictness of each of these fasts. **3. The schedule of English Divine Liturgies**, where these are held and at what time. **4. Main Vespers Services** held at each of our Melbourne, VIC Parishes (commence 7p.m.) **5. Public Holidays** and **other events** held.

Month of April

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6 † 4TH SUNDAY OF LENT (St John the Righteous)	7	8	9 † THE HOLY CANON OF ST ANDREW	10	11	12
		GREAT COMPLINE IN ENGLISH AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, STH MELBOURNE, 7.30-8.45pm			4TH SALUTATIONS TO THE THEOTOKOS (Akathist Hymn)	ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 - 10.00am
13 † 5TH SUNDAY OF LENT (St Mary of Egypt)	14	15	16	17	18	19 † SATURDAY OF LAZARUS
	CYC Monthly Talk: "The mystery of the passion and resurrection of Christ" by Rev. Fr Emmanuel Lyko-pandis, St Eustathios, South Melbourne, 7.30 pm				THE AKATHIST HYMN	
20 † PALM SUNDAY (Fish permitted)	21 † HOLY MONDAY	22 † HOLY TUESDAY	23 † HOLY WEDNESDAY (ANZAC DAY—PUBLIC HOLIDAY)	24 † HOLY THURSDAY	25 † HOLY FRIDAY	26 † HOLY SATURDAY (STRICT FASTING DAY—NO OIL PERMITTED)
27 † HOLY PASCHA (Great Lent Ends)	28 † MONDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (FAST FREE WEEK) (St George the Great Martyr)	29 † TUESDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (Sts Raphael, Nicholas & Irene — St Mark the Evangelist)	30 † WEDNESDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK			
	VESPERS: STS RAPHAEL, NICHOLAS & IRENE BENTLEIGH					

Month of May

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 † THURSDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK	2 † FRIDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK (THE SOURCE OF LIFE)	3 † SATURDAY OF BRIGHT WEEK
4 † SUNDAY OF ST THOMAS	5 † ST. IRENE THE GREAT MARTYR	6	7	8 † ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN AND EVANGELIST	9 VESPERS: STS CYRIL & METHODIOS, PRESTON	10 † STS CYRIL & METHODIOS ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 - 10.00am
11 † SUNDAY OF THE MYRRBEARING WOMEN	12	13 ENGLISH LITURGY AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, STH MELBOURNE, 7.30—8.45pm	14	15	16	17
18 † SUNDAY OF THE PARALYZED MAN	19	20 VESPERS: STS CONSTANTINE & HELEN, SOUTH YARRA	21 † MID-PENTECOST STS CONSTANTINE & HELEN EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES	22	23	24
25 † SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN	26 CYC MONTHLY TALK: "The Life of Christ as Shown in Icons: An Explanation of the Dodekaorton" by Mr Petar Stefanovic, at St Eustathios, South Melbourne, 7.30 pm	27 † ST JOHN THE RUSSIAN	28	29 ENGLISH LITURGY AT TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, THOMASTOWN, 7.30—8.45pm	30	31

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Central Youth Monthly Lectures

“The Mystery of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ”

presented by

Rev. Fr Emmanuel Lykopandis

on

Monday, 14th April 2008

at the

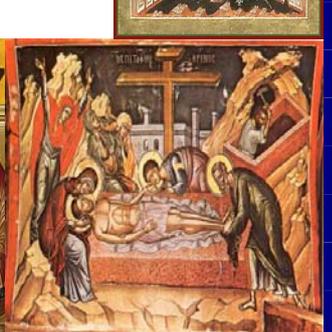
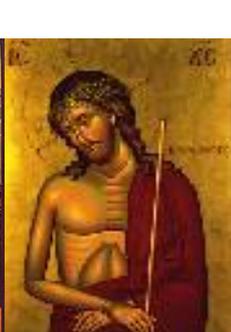
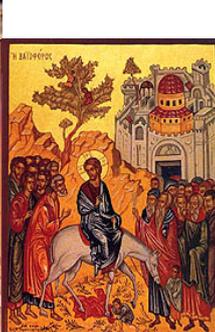
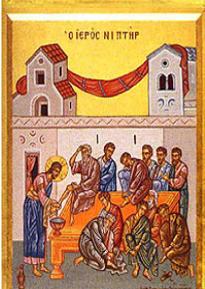
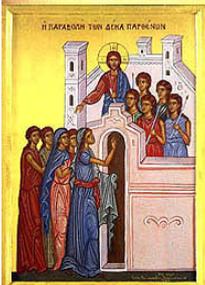
***Greek Orthodox Church of St. Eustathios
221 Dorcas Street, South Melbourne***

Commencing at 7.30pm

For further information

telephone:

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GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Central Youth Monthly Lectures

“ The Life of Christ as Shown in Icons: An Explanation of the *Dodekaorton* ”

presented by

Mr Petar Stefanovic

(Iconographer)

Monday,

26th May 2008

at the

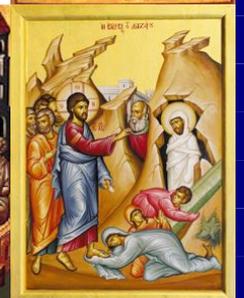
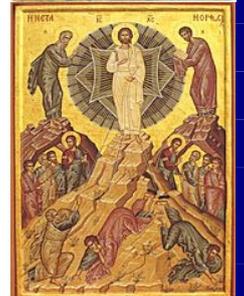
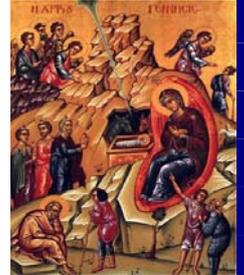
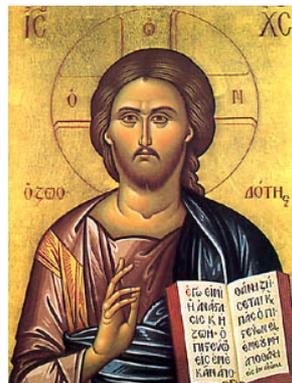
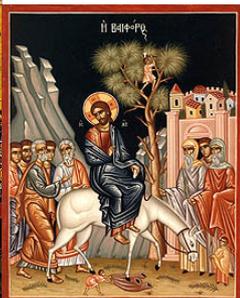
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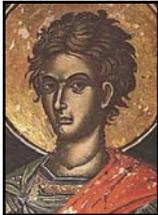


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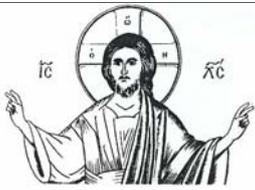


websites:
www.goyouth.org.au
www.greekorthodox.org.au



Saint Nestor

CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE



Youth Group Meetings in Victoria



Ascot Vale: St. Dimitrios
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9375 1119)

Box Hill: Holy Cross—1st Sunday of
every month straight after Church
(9890 9087)

Brunswick: St. Basil
Tuesday 7.00 p.m. (9387 7693)

Clayton: Three Hierarchs
Monday 7.30 p.m. (9544 5706)

Coburg: Presentation of our Lord
Tuesday 7.45 p.m. (9350 5559)

Dandenong: St. Panteleimon
Thursday 7.30 p.m. (9791 8369)
(www.dandenongyouth.com)

East Kellon: Panagia Soumela
Monday 7.00 p.m. (9331 2010)

East Malvern: St. Catherine
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9563 6623)

Fawkner: St. Nektarios
Monday 7.00 p.m. (9359 4404)

Forest Hill: St Andrew
Wednesday 8.00 p.m. (9802 0165)

Northcote: Axion Esti Monastery
Sunday 4.30 p.m. (9481 7826)

Oakleigh: Sts. Anargyri,
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9569 6874)
(www.sprint.net.au/~corners/)

Richmond: Holy Trinity
Thursday 7.00 p.m. (9428 1284)
parishofholyltrinityrichmond@yahoo.com

South Melbourne: St. Eustathios

Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9690 1595)

Springvale: St. Athanasios,
Saturday 6.00 p.m. (9547 8610)

Templestowe: St. Haralambos
Tuesday 8.30 p.m. (9846 4066)

Thomastown: Transfiguration of the Lord,
Thursday 7.30 p.m. (9465 9907)

Yarraville: St. Nicholas
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9687 1513)



Icon of Saint Nestor from the Monastery of Stavronikita (Mount Athos) by Theophan the Cretan