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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)

O GLORIOUS MARINA, ONCE BETROTHED
TO THE LOGOS, YOU RELINQUISHED

CHAMPION, AND YOU ARE NOW THE WORLD'S
WELLSPRING OF HEALING GRACE.



ALL WORLDLY CONCERNS AND BRILLIANTLY
GAVE STRUGGLE AS A VIRGINAL BEAUTY.

YOU SOUNDLY TROUNCED THE INVISIBLE
ENEMY WHO APPEARED TO YOU, O

"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)



8th Sunday of Matthew: Feeding the Five Thousand

When the holy Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist was beheaded, his disciples “took the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.” Although Christ, as God, already knew of His Forerunner’s tragic end, He received the news as any man would have, not being willing yet to reveal His identity fully. And, because Jesus’ signs and wonders had led Herod to believe that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead, the Lord elected to go away rather than to expose Himself to danger before the appointed time for His suffering and death.

He went by boat to a desert place, apparently wanting to get away from the crowds. But “when the people had heard (of His departure), they followed Him on foot out of the cities.” In other words, they went around the lake to reach the other side before Him. Now the Lord, who is full of mercy, saw the faith of the people who followed Him without provisions. He “was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick” (Matthew 14:12-14).

The multitude included John’s disciples. Now that their master was dead, they attached themselves closely to Jesus, no doubt remembering John’s own declaration that Jesus was mightier than he (Matthew 3:11) and that Jesus was to increase while he was to decrease (John 3:30). John’s work of preparing the way was finished, and now the One whom he had proclaimed had come.

The “desert place” to which Jesus retreated becomes the scene of an extraordinary miracle that is only a further demonstration of the Lord’s compassion but also one that teaches a number of doctrinal and spiritual lessons. (The miracle is recorded by all four Evangelists, and St Matthew’s account [14:15-21] forms the Gospel reading for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost; see, in the other Gospels, Luke 9:12-17; Mark 6:35-44; and John 6:1-14.)

We have noted that it was compassion that moved the Lord to heal the sick from among the multitude that followed Him. Now, although fully aware that the people, in their zeal to hear Him, have neglected to bring food, He does not simply decide to feed them. He waits for his disciples to take the initiative. They come to Him and ask to be sent off to find food in the nearby villages. His response must have come as a surprise: “They need not depart; give them to eat.” They had approached the One whom they called Master but One whom they still knew only as a man, albeit One who was a prophet and teacher. They could hardly have yet imagined a miraculous feeding. They met the Lord’s response with an objection: they

have but five loaves and two fish (v. 17).

It is evident that the Lord wants to see in His disciples some concern for the people’s good, in some way learning from Him and imitating Him and His own compassion for mankind. They do not disappoint Him. As on other occasions when the Lord has done miraculous works, He is moved by the intercessory action of others. Christ Himself will feed the multitude, but, very significantly, he will use the disciples to carry out His will. Clearly, Christ’s plan for His work includes human instruments who act, not as mediators, but as ministers of His design.

The faith of the disciples and of the people was great but not yet perfected. They did not yet fully understand who He was. Had they been convinced at this time that He was God, the Son of God, by whom and through whom all things were created (Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:3), who, in His providence, feeds the whole world, they would have known that He had the power to feed the crowd.

The Fathers of the Church find significance in every detail of what follows: “Neither the number, the order, nor what is left over after the people had eaten is insignificant” (St Ambrose, *Treatise on the Gospel according to St Luke*, Book 6, no. 79).

Someone—“a lad,” according to St John—had brought five loaves and two fish. His willingness to share so little says a great deal about the atmosphere of faith and love that the Lord’s presence brought. It also teaches us to share even when there is no abundance. Sometimes we are willing to share only when we have too much for ourselves.

Some ancient commentators (the Blessed Theophylact, for example, in his *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St Matthew*, 14:17-19) see the Lord’s command to sit and the people’s obedience as a lesson in the significance of food. One eats to live; that is, he takes what is necessary to sustain life. The follower of Christ should not make eating an elaborate affair or give great attention to presumably suitable settings. Food should be simple. Thus the Lord multiplied only the simple provisions that were already at hand: barley bread (common among the poor) and fish. Further, no matter how simple and scarce the fare, before touching any food, the Christian always remembers to give thanks to Him who gives all food (St John Chrysostom, *On the Gospel According to St Matthew*, Homily 49, no. 2). This the Lord indicates by looking up to heaven (v. 19).

He “blessed and broke the bread” as was the custom among the Jews. Then “He gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples to the multitude.” The bread multiplied in their hands, and again we see

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8th Sunday of Matthew: Feeding the Five Thousand

(from page 2)

the Lord's plan at work: to make use of his chosen servants to minister to the rest.

The Fathers were sensitive to the numbers brought to our attention in Scripture. This number consciousness was familiar to the Jews, and no doubt the early Christians understood such symbolism as well. For some of the Fathers, the five loaves represent the five senses, which need healing because of the sinfulness in which the senses play a part. Others say the number five represents the first five books of the Holy Bible, and the two fish represent the New Testament, consisting of the Gospels and Epistles. In any event, we must respect the fact that numbers such as these were fixed in the minds of the early Christians and the Fathers, and we often see the influence of this consciousness in the life of the Church. We have always used five loaves in the *Artoklasia*, which is, of course, the means by which every generation of Christians has been miraculously fed, spiritually nourished. The fish became a secret sign, the drawing of which was a means for Christians to identify themselves to one another in the early days of the Church. It happens that the initial and final letters of the Greek words for *fish* and for *Jesus* are the same.

Concerning the feeding of more than five thousand people, the Blessed Theophylact has this to say: "Jesus withdrew to a desert place, to the nations who were desolate without God, and He healed the sick in soul and then He fed them. For if He had not forgiven our sins and healed our sicknesses by baptism He could not have nourished us by giving us the immaculate Mysteries, for no one partakes of Holy Communion who has not first been baptised." For this holy Father, the healing of "their sick" and the miraculous feeding are figures of the two primary holy mysteries (*Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St Matthew, ch. 14:14-21*). St Ambrose of Milan likewise sees in this miracle a figure of the Eucharist: "Here there is also a mystery in the fact that the people eat and are satisfied and that the Apostles serve them. For this being filled indicates that hunger has forever disappeared, since there will be no more hunger once the food of Christ is received. And the service of the Apostles makes us foresee their distributing (in communion) the Body and Blood of the Lord" (*Treatise on the Gospel According to St Luke, Book 6, no. 84*). The service of the holy Apostles in relation to this miracle is not only a figure of their continued service as ministers of the holy mysteries but also of the service of their successors, as one other important detail in the story will show.

The fragments that remained were gathered up by the Apostles; there was so much that they were able to fill twelve baskets, corresponding to the number of the Apostles. They were thus commissioned to continue to feed the hungry, but only later would they understand the full extent of this commission. Several Fathers (such as St

John Chrysostom, *On the Gospel According to St Matthew, Homily 49, no. 3*) note that it was the fragments of what had been given to the multitude and not new, untouched breads. In this way, they were being prepared to continue the same miracle in the days that followed, and to understand the significance of the miracle when they would be commissioned to distribute the bread of heaven and the chalice of salvation.

In the Holy Gospel according to St John (ch. 6), the feeding of the five thousand and the Lord's walking on the sea are followed by His discourse on Himself as the Bread of Life.

The people who have eaten and been filled are ready to believe in Him, but not according to His will. He knows that they are concerned only about their material welfare. In fact, He knows that "they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king" (John 6:15). Their motive for seeking Him He clearly understands, and He tells them that it is not because they have seen and understood the sign, but because they have been fed (John 6:26). And then, to

make it clear that the miraculous feeding signified something greater than a response to their physical needs, He says: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give unto you" (John 6:27). When they were requesting a sign so that they might believe in Him, they recalled the miracle of the feeding of their forefathers in the desert with manna from heaven (Exodus 16). Yet that miracle was not enough to cause the forefathers to follow the law of God and to obey His commandments. Jesus declares Himself to be the True Bread from heaven given to them by the Father, and thus the manna in the desert and the bread of this miracle are both signs of that True Bread. But those who have received the miraculous feeding in the "desert place" are in danger of the same misunderstanding as their forefathers. To have everlasting life, they must believe on Him; to hunger no more, they must receive and partake of the True Bread. (See St Augustine, *Tractate 25 on the Gospel According to St John, no 10*).

In response to the Jew's question, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (v. 52), Jesus utters His "hard saying" (v. 60): "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except you who eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (vv. 53-58). It was because of this that "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (v. 66). The Fathers (such as St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures 22, nos. 1-4*) consistently understand His sayings here as referring not only to complete faith and trust in Him but also to the holy Eucharist, at whose institution He said: "Take, eat, this is my body" and drink ye all of this, this is my blood."

(Source: *The Miracles of Christ* by Archbishop Dmitri (Royster), St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1999)



THE GENERAL STRUGGLE

Carefully joined to sobriety must be patience, "for nothing is equal to long-suffering. Such a man is never insulted....The long-suffering man is high, so high that he is not wounded by the darts of the enemy" (St John Chrysostom, *Homily 22 on Hebrews*).

And then, "if possible let us constantly remember death, for from this is born the exclusion of all cares and vanities, the guarding of the mind and constant prayer, non-attachment to the body and hatred of sin. Frankly, almost every...virtue arises from it [i.e., remembrance of death]. Therefore...let this remembrance be as continuous as our breathing" (*Hesychius of Jerusalem, Texts on Sobriety and Prayer*).

Finally, let us learn the practice of continence, which is nothing else than "a complete avoidance of everything that tends to harmful pleasure" or passion. "In other words, we may use whatever we can to relieve our basic needs with the least disturbance" (*St Basil the Great, The Long Rules*). For this reason our Saviour gave us the law of fasting—from food, sin, and pleasure

"The Saviour began the work of our salvation with fasting. In the same way all those who follow in the footsteps of the Saviour build on this foundation the beginning of their endeavour, since fasting is a weapon established by God. Who will escape blame if he neglects this? If the Lawgiver Himself fasts, how can any of those, who have to obey the law, be exempt from fasting?"

"This is why the human race knew no victory before fasting, and the devil was never defeated by our nature as it is: but this weapon has indeed deprived the devil of strength from the outset. Our Lord was the Leader and the first example of this victory, in order to place the first crown of victory on the head of our nature. As soon as the devil sees someone possessed of this weapon [fasting], fear immediately falls on our adversary and tormentor, who remembers his defeat by the Saviour in the wilderness; his strength is at once destroyed, and the sight of the weapon, given us by our Supreme Leader, burns him up.

"A man armed with the weapon of fasting is always afire with zeal. He who remains therein, keeps his mind steadfast, and ready to meet and repel all violent passions" (*St Isaac of Syria, Directions on Spiritual Training*).

It is rightly said that struggle against the passions is the most difficult warfare any man can know. It is so filled with trials, downfalls and temptations to despondency, that is likened to the bearing of a cross. St Isaac of Syria writes:

"This cross-bearing is of two kinds: one consists of enduring the bodily privations which are inevitable in struggling with passions....The

other consists in...meditating on God, abiding in prayer, and so forth, and is called contemplation.

"The first [bodily cross-bearing purifies the passionate part of the soul, while the second [contemplation] brings light to it..." (*St Isaac of Syria, Directions of Spiritual Training*).

The great temptation for beginners is to entirely skip bodily struggle after the first unsuccessful attempts to subdue the passions. But, having still some liking for spiritual things, they give all of their attention instead to lofty and divine matters. This is why the Holy Fathers issue this stern warning:

"Every man who, before perfecting his training in the first activity [bodily struggle], passes to the second [contemplation], being attracted to its delights, not to speak of his own laziness, is overtaken by God's wrath for not having first mortified his members which are upon the earth (Col. 3:5).

How, then, can one avoid the temptation to be discouraged at the outset of his struggle with the passions? By following carefully these instructions:

First, "He who struggles with passions must strive to not allow the memory of them to come to passion, just as he who has already conquered passions drives away even the first hint of passion...[For] just as no cloud is formed without the breath of the wind, no passion can be born without a movement of the thoughts" (*St Mark the Ascetic, Two Centuries on Spiritual Law*).

Second, "When trials make you despondent and you wary of them, say to yourself: 'Again you long for an impure and shameful life!' And if the body says to you: 'It is a great sin to kill oneself,' answer it: 'I am killing myself because I cannot lead an unclean life. I will die here lest I see the real death of my soul—death in the eyes of God'" (*St Isaac of Syria, Directions on Spiritual Training*).

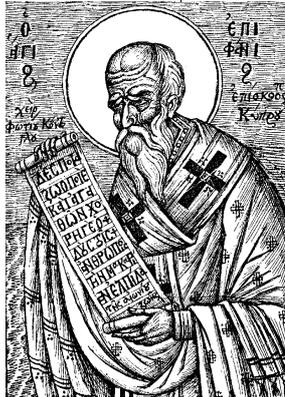
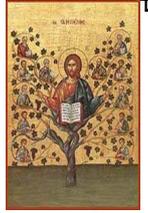
Third, we must always remember that "we are not condemned for the multitude of our evils, but because we do not want to repent and learn." And so, "those who have sinned must not despair." (*St Mark the Ascetic, Directions from Discourses*).

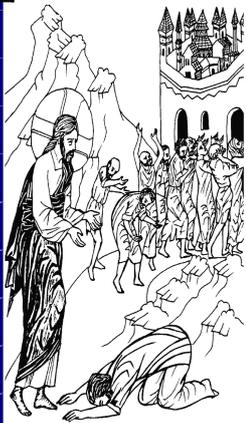
Fourth, one must have an orderly and thoughtful approach to this warfare, not trusting in oneself, but diligently seeking to learn about it from those who are wise with experience, just as a child meekly learns to write the alphabet by listening to and imitating his teacher in the classroom.

"For children first learn to recognise the letters [of the alphabet]. Then they practice distinguishing those letters which are not properly formed from those which are. Finally, they proceed in an orderly way to use the letters in reading.

"Just so let us also do. Let us divide virtue and learn first not to swear...nor to speak evil. Then, proceeding to the next row [of letters], let us learn not to envy, not to lust, not to be gluttonous, not to be drunken, nor fierce, nor slothful, so that from these we may pass on again to the things of the Spirit and practice continence, neglect of the belly, temperance, righteousness; and so that we might be above glory, and gentle and compunctionate in mind, let us join these with one another, and so write them upon our soul. (To be continued)

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





Creative Prayer

True God

The God we encounter must be as true as we who seek him. But is not God always true? Is he not always himself, unchanging? Of course.

But it is not only God as he is in himself who is involved in our prayers. It is also the image we have of him, for our attitude depends not only on what he is in himself but also on what we believe him to be.

If we have a false image of God, our attitude towards him and our prayer will alter accordingly. It is important that throughout our life, from day to day, we learn to know God as he is.

Reading Scripture (1)

When we read the Scriptures honestly we can admit that certain passages mean little to us. We are ready to agree with God because we have no reason to disagree with him. We can approve of this or that commandment or divine action because it does not touch us personally, we do not yet see the demands it makes on us personally.

Other passages frankly repel us. If we had the courage we would say 'no' to the Lord. We should note these passages carefully. They are a measure of the distance between God and us and also they are a measure of the distance between ourselves as we are now and our potential definite selves.

For the gospel is not a succession of external commandments, it is a whole gallery of internal portraits. And every time we say 'no' to the gospel we are refusing to be a person in the full sense of the word.

Reading Scripture (2)

There are passages of the gospel which make our hearts burn, which give light to our intelligence and shake up our will. They give life and strength to our whole physical and moral being. These passages reveal the points where God and his image in us already coincide, the stage we have already reached, perhaps only momentarily, fleetingly, in



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becoming what we are called to be.

We should note these passages even more carefully than the passages mentioned above. They are the points at which God's image is already present in us fallen men. And from these beginnings we can strive to continue our transformation into the person we feel we want and ought to be. We must be faithful to these revelations. In this at least we must always be faithful.



If we do this these passages increase in number, the demands of the gospel become fuller and more precise, slowly the fogs disperse and we see the image of the person we should be. Then we can begin standing before God in truth.

Disciplined Meditation

On many occasions we can do a lot of thinking; there are plenty of situations in our daily life in which we have nothing to do except wait, and if we are disciplined - and this is part of our spiritual training - we will be able to concentrate quickly and fix our attention at once on the subject of our thoughts, of our meditation. We must learn to do it by compelling our thoughts to attach themselves to one focus and to drop everything else.

In the beginning, extraneous thoughts will intrude, but if we push them away constantly, time after time, in the end they will leave us in peace. It is only when by training, by exercise, by habit, we have become able to concentrate profoundly and quickly, that we can continue through life in a state of collectedness, in spite of what we are doing.

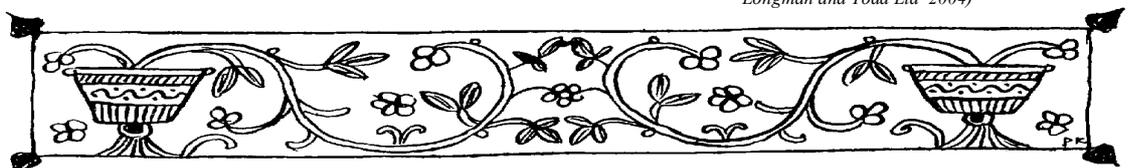
Method of Meditation

Often we consider one or two points and jump to the next, which is wrong since we have just seen that it takes a long time to become recollected, what the Fathers call an attentive person, someone capable of paying attention to an idea so long and so well that nothing is lost.

The spiritual writers of the past and of the present day will all tell us: take a text, ponder on it hour after hour, day after day, until you have exhausted all your possibilities, intellectual and emotional, and thanks to attentive reading and re-reading of this text, you have come to a new attitude.

Quite often meditation consists in nothing but examining the text, turning over these words of God addressed to us so as to become completely familiar with them, so imbued with them that gradually we and these words become completely one. In this process, even if we think we have not found any particular intellectual richness, we have changed.

(Source: Creative Prayer: Daily Readings With Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, Hugh Wybrev-Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd 2004)





Confronting the Devil, Magic & the Occult: Part 12

Weapons Against Magic The Cross, Relics and the Gospel

The Cross:

In Thrace, Greece, Christians and Muslims live together in harmony.

There was once a good, well-intentioned shepherd who was a Muslim, and, on comparing the religion of Mohammed with Christianity, came to the conclusion that Christianity was much better than Islam. His interest in Christ increased all the time. He began to talk, to study, to ask about Christianity. Then he decided to renounce Islam and become a Christian. His father learned about it and did his best to change the young man's mind. He was unable to do so, though, because his son was convinced. In the end, the father had recourse to an occultist. "I want you to stop my son from thinking about Christ," he told him. The sorcerer, certain of his success, set to work.

The first time he failed, so he tried again. He failed again. Third attempt, third failure. Then he realized what was wrong. He called the father and told him directly, "If you want the magic to work, tell your son to get rid of those bits of wood he wears round his neck!"

What was it? The young Muslim had seen that Christians wear a cross round their necks, and so he did the same. He took two bits of wood, made them into the form of a cross and wore them around his neck. And thanks to the cross, which the devil fears, the magic didn't work. Remember, when the demons heard Arthur the missionary talking about Golgotha, where the Lord was crucified, they became furious and told him to stop.

Relics:

The emperor Julian the Apostate went to a famous sorcerer at the oracle of Apollo, at Daphne, Antioch. But right next to the oracle was a cemetery where there were the relics of the holy martyr Babylas. The sorcerer couldn't speak. He told the emperor, "If you want me to tell you your fortune, you'll have to break the reliquary of St Babylas. That's what is keeping my mouth shut."

Prayer and Fasting:

We've seen how fasting and prayer put the Devil to flight. We'll do no more here than note the following:

The race of demons, says the Lord, is defeated by prayer and fasting. Fasting has to do with the body, prayer with the soul. So the whole person engages in the struggle against the devil.

Let's dwell a little on prayer. I would remind you of the famous sorcerer who went to Kolwezi, in Zaire, in 1984, and set about curing people. Father Meletios, the missionary from the Holy Monastery of Gregoriou on the Holy Mountain, who was an eye-witness to the events, tells us of the sequel. In October 1994, the sorcerer re-

turned to the same town, preceded by a wide-spread publicity campaign. Banners were stretched over the main streets and loud speakers announced his arrival: "The saviour is returning." They'd also set up a platform on one of the main roads, where the sorcerer would stand. Lots of people hastened to make their way there, to present themselves before him in order to regain their health. The "saviour" arrived. There was pandemonium.

His timetable was such that he would remain in the town for a week.

- On Day 1 he went up onto the platform to heal the sick who were waiting anxiously. He made his prayer. There was no result. Three hours passed and still there was no result.
- On Day 2, he made his prayer again. But again he had nothing to show for it. Meanwhile, the loudspeakers on the streets were still blaring his arrival.
- On Day 3, he still had nothing to show for his efforts. People began to feel uneasy.
- On Day 4, there was still nothing. Now people began to get angry.

All hope wasn't lost. There were still three days left. He did everything he could, but still without any result at all. And then, on the last day, covered in confusion, he was forced to admit to the disappointed crowd that this was the first time that anything like this had happened to him, and that it had happened here, in Kolwezi. Well, what had happened?

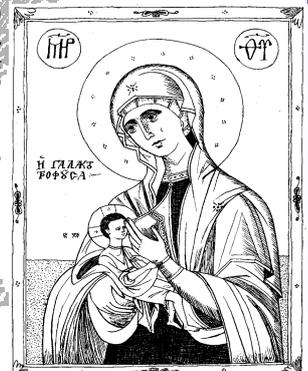
Father Meletios hadn't been idle. He'd used the visit of the sorcerer to shame the devil, to benefit the Orthodox Christians and to glorify God. Every time the shaman mounted the platform, Father Meletios and all the Orthodox Christians gathered in the church of St George, sang the Supplicatory Canon (*Paraklisis*) to the Mother of God, and read the exorcism prayers of St Basil the Great.

When the famous shaman publicly confessed that this was the first time that anything like this had happened to him, what he didn't know was that, for the first time, he'd been opposed by the weapons of the Orthodox Church.

(To be continued)

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

*"Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of God, have
mercy on me,
the sinner"*



The Importance and Value of Memorial Services: Part 8



ARE MEMORIAL SERVICES BENEFICIAL?

Whom They Benefit

...When the services are celebrated with faith and reverence.

...When the deceased are receptive of God's mercy.

...When the completion of the prayers of these services do not go against divine justice and kindness.

They Do Not Benefit

...When a person rejects divine grace and becomes satanical and unrepentant.

As for that person who has passed away while totally unrepentant, there does not exist any great amount of benefit from the prayers. However, the Holy Church Fathers do admit, that even those persons may find some type of rest.

For persons who have committed suicide (who were not considered psychologically ill), we are not permitted to perform commemorative services for them.

We are also not permitted to perform these services for heretics since they are considered excluded from the Church.

Those who have lived here in a Christian manner and who were unable to attain perfection, derive a great amount of benefit from the commemorative services. How much, we do not know. "Have no doubt. You will definitely be granted some benefit", stresses St John Chrysostom.

How great this benefit is and up to where it reaches, we cannot tell. What we do know is stressed by the Holy Church Fathers who state that there is a great benefit, which proceeds from the services for those deceased who had not departed while totally unrepentant.

One recent ecclesiastical writer states: "I am aware that there existed people who were "morally dead" to whom therapies have no powerful use. I also know a lot of people who are sinners mortally wounded by their sins but they did not die, they fell, however they are able to find the weapon in their hands and in their last hours of life, see their wretchedness, and whisper some deep-rooted "Lord, remember me, when You come into Your kingdom" in their last deliriums. Who is there who can uphold with certainty that prayers for the dead have no benefit?"

At the time of the soul's exit from this present life, some sort of judgment will have been made. The average condition of all souls is that they are in a state of admission. However, the final judgment in which the soul will receive its final position in eternity has not yet been made".

And he adds: "Since God's final judgment has not yet been made, since the Kingdom of Christ reaches from the heavens to the earth and even into hell, since we have not yet heard "Come to Me", then the best attitude which the Church should hold is a position of prayer and supplications on behalf of her dead".

The Cases of the Heavily Sinful

What happens in the case of those persons who left this life totally unrepentant or who did not have the chance to make themselves ready for their departure?



The answer to this is found in God's word and is extremely clear. The Holy Fathers of the Church have the same clear answer. They stress clearly that this present life constitutes the state of the battle, whereas the future life

constitutes the final retribution.

St John Chrysostom clearly points out: "Let us not cry for those who have died, but we should do so for those who did while in a state of sin. These souls are worthy of lamentations, bewailments, and tears... As long as they were living here, we could have hoped for that person's change and improvement... No one is able to repent when he leaves this life. No athlete is capable of competing after the matches have ended, the athletes leave the field and the spectators have dispersed... As long as we are here, we can surely have hope. When we leave this life, however, we are no longer able to repent. It is not in our power to repent, and neither are we able to wash away our sins. For this reason, we should constantly be preparing ourselves for our exodus..."

In addition, however, even in these very difficult cases, the Holy Church Fathers do not leave us in a state of desperation.

St Athanasios, the Great, mentions concerning this matter, "that the souls of the sinful do receive some kind of benefit from the bloodless sacrifice. This takes place under the supervision and orders of the only one who has authority over the living and the dead. Our God". That is, he leaves this matter up to the Divine compassion.



St John Chrysostom, even though being strict in the preceding teachings, is very consoling when dealing with this topic exclusively. He stresses: "Let us help these souls as much as we are allowed to help them, so that we can render them even some small assistance and as much as we are allowed to". How and in what manner? He answers: "We ourselves should pray and we should ask others to pray for these souls. We should offer charitable acts together with supplications for those who departed while in a state of sin. All this is done so that the deceased may receive some type of a consolation. For, if Job's children were cleansed by their father's sacrifice, then why do you hesitate that the dead gain some kind of benefit from our prayers and charity done on their behalf?"

Furthermore, St Cyril of Jerusalem is even more definite and more consoling concerning this matter, than St John Chrysostom.

In a question, which was posed to him "How is a soul, which departed while full of sins from this world, benefited?" he answers thus. He imagines a king who had exiled citizens, which had revolted against him. Friends, who intervene to the king on the exiled citizen's behalf, prepare a king's crown and offer it to the king on behalf of the exiled". The Saint asks: "Is it possible that the king will not yield to the insistent supplications so that he would grant these exiled citizens reprieve from hell?"

"In a similar manner", he continues, "when we offer God prayers on behalf of the dead (even though they are sinful), we do not prepare and offer crowns but we "offer Christ Crucified for the redemption of sins, requesting and receiving forgiveness from our Benevolent God, on behalf of them and for ourselves". **(To be continued)**

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





It is the year 160 A.D., about one hundred years after Paul. We are in Rome, the capital city of the civilized world.

Rome is a fascinating city, not only because of its crowds of people, its great buildings of brick and marble, but because there is so much going on. There are horse races and chariot races. There are theatres showing plays that sometimes make fun of sacred things. There are libraries and museums and concert halls. There are people giving lectures or reading from poetry. There are parades and processions in honour of the Emperor or one of his generals. There are stores and restaurants full of people laughing, talking, shouting, and arguing. During the daytime there are no carriages to add to the noise, because wheeled vehicles are allowed only at night. Rich people travel in sedan chairs carried on the shoulders of their slaves, while their servants push aside the people who block their way.

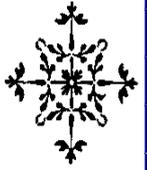
Rome about 160 A.D. was like many of our large cities today. In it were many people who had everything they could want, and others who had practically nothing. This second group were the unemployed. They had nothing to do except wait for food to be given out and for the next show to begin. The rulers always spent a great deal of money on food and shows for the people.

The entertainment that the people liked best was held in a big arena like one of our football stadiums. Thousands of people came each time there was a show. Those who were on relief got in free. Some of the shows were fights between professional soldiers called "gladiators" (from "gladius" = sword). They were armed with swords and shields, and sometimes nets. They fought in pairs until one of them got killed or badly wounded. The mobs who watched decided whether a wounded man should be killed or be released. If he had fought bravely, and they approved, they turned their thumbs up. If they wanted him dead, they turned their thumbs down.

Another popular show, which was much more expensive, required wild animals to be brought in from long distances. The fiercer the animals were, or the larger and more unusual, the better the people liked the sport. With the animals in the arena were put people from prisons - people who had been found guilty of some crime. The Romans never had much prison space, so people were not confined for long. They were put in prison to await trial, and if found guilty they were put to hard labour in the mines or else sent to the arena to be killed. The Romans believed in law and justice, but they were cruel.

In this year 160, most people in Rome

still did not believe in Christ. There were philosophers who thought that there might be one Supreme God, but most people believed that the trees, water, sky, sea, and sun were each under the control of a separate god. These gods were no better in their behaviour than ordinary men and women, but they were immortal - they lived forever. They got angry, people thought, if you did not give them enough attention; and if they were angry, they might do something bad to you. Therefore you must bribe them with food and other gifts to give you what you wanted. As a result, the average Roman spent a good deal of time pouring out wine on the ground where the gods could find it (libations), or cooking food to burn on an altar (sacrifices), or burning incense as a mark of respect.



It was hard for a Roman to get through any day without doing at least one of these things. It was impossible for a man holding a public office or serving in the army. This form of religion we call "pagan."

Yet changes had been taking place in Rome. A new religion had been growing among the people. Romans were used to new religions; new ones were always being introduced. But this one was different. These people who called themselves "Christians" would have nothing at all to do with the gods that Romans knew. They would not even allow a statue of their God, Jesus Christ, to be put in the temple with the other gods. No, they insisted on keeping their religion and themselves apart.

They would not eat the food that had been prepared for the gods. They would not pour libations or burn incense in honour of the gods, some of whom had been Emperors. They said that doing this was worshipping idols. They would have nothing to do with idols. They were very difficult people, it seemed. They wouldn't go to the horse races. They wouldn't go to the theatre and laugh at dirty jokes. They wouldn't go to the gay festivals where people put wreaths on their heads and drank too much wine in honour of the god. They were people very hard to get along with.

Somewhere in Rome lived a young woman named Paraskeve. Her name means "Preparation," and refers to the day of the week we call "Friday". Only Christian parents would have called their daughter by such a name, for the Roman calendar was not divided into weeks of seven days. Paraskeve was so named because she was born on a Friday. Her parents had prayed for many years to have a child. She was the answer to their prayers.

At the time of our story, Paraskeve was 20 years old. Her parents, Agathon and Politeia, had just died. These names, like her own, were all Greek names. This probably explains why they were Christians and brought her up in the Christian faith. There were many more Christians in the Greek-speaking parts of the Empire.

When Agathon and Politeia were buried, they were buried, in Christian ground, but not near the surface. The graves were part of long

(Continued on page 9)



St Paraskeve: July 26

(continued from page 8)

underground tunnels called "Catacombs." The tunnels were parts of the city that had become buried in the course of building and rebuilding, for Rome had already existed for a thousand years. The Christians used the catacombs to hold Church Services. Here they were hidden from the view of people who might report them to the police or the Emperor.

Now that Paraskeve's parents were gone, she had a difficult decision to make. What should she do with herself? She had inherited great wealth from her father. No doubt she owned several houses in the city and villas in the country. Many wealthy Romans did. She had many servants and slaves. There were many young men who would have liked to marry such a beautiful and wealthy young woman.

Paraskeve had other ideas. She loved learning and had read widely. She had read the Scriptures many times. One incident particularly impressed her. When a young man came to meet Jesus and asked how he could have eternal life, Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in Heaven. Then come and follow me" (Matthew 19:16-26).

Paraskeve decided to do as the Gospel says. She gave away all her possessions. She founded a home for Christian widows and girls where they could be cared for and live a Christian life. For ten years she lived with them, studying and teaching about Christ. At this time it was forbidden by law to convert a Roman. Christians were not permitted to teach in public. They had to be careful not to stir up the hatred of the mobs that were always hoping for new sport in the arena.

After ten years Paraskeve found that such a quiet life did not satisfy her. She wanted to spread the Gospel of Christ among those who did not know Him, even though she knew it was forbidden. She began to travel about, teaching about Christ.

It was not long before someone made a complaint about Paraskeve. Her influence was spreading, and she was making converts. Her accusers wanted to make sure that she would not escape punishment, so they brought her to the Emperor. The Emperor was called Antonius Pius. The "pius" was added because he was very religious. As emperors went in those days, he was a good one. The men before him had been much worse. Some had even been crazy as well as cruel.

Antonius looked at Paraskeve. He saw how beautiful she was, how calm and peaceful her expression. He recognised the signs of gentle upbringing and bright intellect. He felt inwardly sorry to think that she might be tortured for her beliefs. But he had a heavy responsibility: he was the guardian of the Roman Empire. He truly believed that Rome's greatness had been achieved by her brave soldiers with the help of the old Roman gods. It would be very dangerous to displease these gods. Already there had been many disasters that could be traced to the anger of the gods against the Christians, so Romans thought.

Antonius believed that the Christians were disloyal to Rome. Why else did they refuse to serve in the army? Why else did they refuse to take part in public ceremonies that honoured the gods and the Emperors? Why

else would they refuse to swear loyalty to the Emperor? Instead of performing these duties, they invited people to persecute them, and instead of fighting back with true Roman courage, they turned the other cheek and allowed themselves to be killed.

Antonius honestly believed that Christians were weakening the moral fiber of the nation. In teaching about Christ, Paraskeve was helping to destroy the government, the laws, and the greatness of Rome. Antonius said to her,

"I swear to you by the gods, Paraskeve, that I pity your youth, I marvel at your beauty, and I admire your virtue, but I cannot allow you to bring disaster on Rome. Therefore I advise you to change your mind and sacrifice to our gods who have given you your beauty and other fine gifts. If you refuse, you know that I shall have to punish you cruelly."

Paraskeve understood perfectly what would happen to her if she did not obey. Her answer was, "Don't imagine for a moment, O Emperor, that such threats will make me deny Jesus Christ, my God. There is no torture in the world that will turn me away from Him."

As a result of this refusal, Paraskeve was sentenced to endure torture, but she did not die. Her faith gave her strength to survive. There is even a tradition that she converted Antonius by curing him of blindness. Since Antonius died in the following year, this would not have had much influence on Rome as a whole. But there is another side to our story that is even more interesting.

At the same time as our story, there was a man in Rome teaching about Christ. He was born in Palestine near Samaria where he had studied the pagan philosophers. Finally he became a Christian and made the journey to Rome. He and Paraskeve were teaching there at the same time. It is tempting to think that they knew each other. Surely, it is very likely, considering that there were so few Christians there at that time. These Christians must have known each other, especially if they were teaching in public.

Justin was both philosopher and writer. He wrote the first Christian philosophy to prove that the pagan philosophers had not arrived at the truth. He wrote an explanation of the Christian faith, which is called an "Apology", and addressed it to the Emperor Antonius himself. Perhaps he and Paraskeve both had a strong influence on the Emperor. We know that both of them continued their teaching during the reign of the next Emperor. Justin was accused of being an enemy of the Roman religion by some pagan philosophers. He died a martyr in 165 A.D.

Paraskeve suffered a similar fate 15 years later. She was accused and found guilty of dishonoring the pagan gods. She was put to death on July 26, 180. Throughout all her trials and sufferings for Christ, she never despaired or stopped praying. Up to the last breath she took, she was confident that Jesus would receive her into His Heavenly Kingdom where all sickness, suffering, and sorrow are done away with.

(Source: *Women of God* by Frieda Upson, Brookline MA 1978)



THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE (part 4)



FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS The Golden Calf

Moses went up on Mount Sinai to talk with God. He stayed there for forty days and forty nights. While he was gone, the people got tired of waiting and looked for something exciting to do. They collected all the gold and jewelry they had and made a golden calf. Then they danced around it and bowed down before it as if it were God.

On Mount Sinai God gave Moses two tablets of stone inscribed with the Ten Commandments. When Moses came down from the mountain carrying the tablets and saw what the people were doing, he was very angry. He threw the tablets down on the ground, and they broke. He told the people that they should remember to be thankful to God for His kindness and protection. Then he went back up on Mount Sinai and stayed for another forty days and forty nights. He asked God to forgive the people for their sin. When he came back down, he carried two new tablets of the Law and his face shone so brightly that he wore a veil to cover it.

The Ark of the Covenant

God told Moses what the people should do to show love and respect for Him. He directed them to make a large tent called a "tabernacle" which could be carried on their journeys and set up wherever they camped. This was to be their place of worship, and within it they should put a large wooden box beautifully ornamented with gold. This was to hold the tablets of the Ten Commandments and was to be called "The Ark of the Covenant" because it contained God's Written Covenant. Wherever the Israelites went, the Ark was to be carried ahead of them. With the Ark was a throne called "The Mercy Seat" where God would be present and unseen at all times.

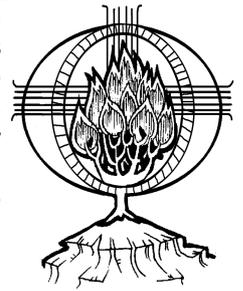
God also gave the Israelites special rules for worshipping Him and making sacrifices. He told Moses that his tribe, the tribe of Levi, should be set aside to perform the special duties of worship and sacrifice. From this tribe God's priests would be appointed.

God appoints His Prophet and His Priests



God appointed Moses to be His first Prophet. A Prophet is a person who speaks for God. Every night Moses went to the "tent of meeting" and spoke with God. Later he brought God's message to the people. God also told Moses

that his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons should have special garments and serve Him as priests. God gave instructions as to how the Israelites should make their sacrifices, how they should prepare their food, and how they should act in order to be holy in His sight. God warned the Israelites especially against having anything to do with other gods.



The Chosen People are ungrateful

The Israelites promised to do all that God asked of them, but they forgot one thing. They forgot to be grateful. The journey through the wilderness of Sinai was hard and uncomfortable. They complained. They forgot how hard life had been for them in Egypt. Worst of all, they forgot to be grateful to God for providing food for them in the wilderness.

When they began to travel in the wilderness, God sent them "manna" to eat. It fell with the dew each evening. The people gathered it, ground it or pounded it, then boiled it and made cakes of it. At first they were so glad to have something to eat! Later they began to complain:

"If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic! But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing to eat but this manna." (Num. 11: 4-6)

The Promised Land is for those who show gratitude

When God heard the people grumbling, He told them that those who grumbled would not live to see the Promised Land. The Israelites had been in the wilderness for forty years by the time they came within sight of it. Many of the people who had started out in middle life were now very old. Moses and Aaron were among these. Aaron died before the Israelites could see Canaan, but God promised Moses that he would not die until he had looked upon the Promised Land.

The people who did not trust God but became impatient sometimes went ahead on their own. These people only encountered worse difficulties and never made it. *(To be continued)*

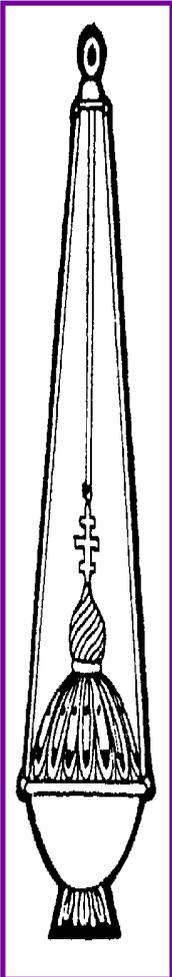
(Source: The Christian Way of Life by Presvytera Frieda Upson Brookline, Massachusetts, 1974)



From the Old Testament - The Psalms

Psalm twelve (13)

TRUST IN THE SALVATION OF THE LORD



HOW long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
 How long will You hide Your face from me?
 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?
 How long will my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God;
 Enlighten my eyes,
 Lest I sleep the *sleep* of death;
 Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him";
Lest those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

But I have trusted in Your mercy;
 My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
 I will sing to the LORD,
 Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

[This psalm is an evening prayer (v.3), used in Great Compline and in the Lenten Services.]

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





PRAYER
JUST BEFORE
GOING TO SLEEP
Into Your hands, O Lord
Jesus Christ, I commend
my spirit and body;
bless me, save me, and
grant me eternal life.
Amen.

Saint Nestor

The Jesus Prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner”



1) The invocation of the Name of Jesus can be put to many frames. It is for each person to find the form which is the most appropriate to his or her own prayer. But, whatever formula may be used, the heart and centre of the invocation must be the Holy Name itself, the word *Jesus*. There resides the whole strength of the invocation.

2) The Name of Jesus may either be used alone or be inserted in a more or less developed phrase. In the East the commonest form is: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner.” One might simply say, “Jesus Christ,” or “Lord Jesus.” The invocation may even be reduced to one single word, “Jesus.”



3) This last form-the Name of Jesus only-is the most ancient mould of invocation of the Name. It is the shortest, the simplest and, as we think, the easiest. Therefore, without depreciating the other formulas, we suggest that the word “Jesus” alone should be used.

4) Thus, when we speak of the invocation of the Name, we mean the devout and frequent repetition of the Name itself, or the word “Jesus” without additions. The Holy Name is the prayer.

5) The Name of Jesus may be either pronounced or silently thought. In both cases there is a real invocation of the Name, verbal in the first case, and purely mental in the second. This prayer affords an easy transition from verbal to mental prayer. Even the verbal repetition of the Name, if it is slow and thoughtful, makes us pass to mental prayer and disposes the soul to contemplation.

(Source: My Daily Orthodox Prayer Book- Classic Orthodox Prayers for Every Need, 3rd Printing Compiled and edited by Anthony M. Coniaris, Light & Life Publishing 2001)



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 August

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31 † 11TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW (Venerable Sash of the Theotokos)					1 † FAST BEGINS FOR THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	2
3 † 7TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	4 ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	5 VESPERS: TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, THOMASTOWN	6 † TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD (Fish permitted)	7 ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	8 ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	9 ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 - 10.00am
10 † 8TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	11 ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	12 ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS ***** PARAKLISIS IN ENGLISH AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, 5TH MELBOURNE, 7.30-8.30pm	13 ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	14 ALL CHURCHES: VESPERS FOR THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS	15 † THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS (FAST ENDS: Fish Permitted only)	16
17 † 9TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	18 ALL CHURCHES: PARAKLISIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	19	20 ST PHANOURIOS THE GREAT MARTYR	21	22	23 † THANKSGIVING FOR FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS
24 † 10TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW (St Kosmas of Aitolia)	25 CYC Monthly Talk: "Panagia—The Holy Theotokos" by the Very Rev. Fr Iakovos Tsigounis at St Eustathios Church, South Melbourne, 7.30 pm	26	27 † ST PHANOURIOS THE GREAT MARTYR	28 ENGLISH LITURGY: TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, THOMASTOWN, 7.30-8.45pm ***** VESPERS: ST JOHN, CARLTON	29 † BEHEADING OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST (Strict Fast)	30

Month of September

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 † BEGINNING OF THE INDICTION <i>(New Ecclesiastical Year)</i>	2	3	4	5	6 ENGLISH LITURGY AT GEELONG MONASTERY, 9.00 – 10.00am
7 † SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS VESPERS: PANAGIA KAMARIANI, RED HILL	8 † THE BIRTH OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS VESPERS: PANAGIA KAMARIANI, RED HILL	9 † SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY ANCESTORS JOACHIM & ANNA ENGLISH LITURGY AT ST. EUSTATHIOS, STH MELBOURNE, 7.30—8.45pm	10	11	12	13 VESPERS: HOLY CROSS, BOX HILL
14 † THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS <i>(FAST – WINE & OIL PERMITTED)</i>	15	16 † ST EUPHEMIA THE GREAT MARTYR	17 † ST SOPHIA & FAMILY	18	19	20 † ST EUSTATHIOS THE GREAT MARTYR & HIS FAMILY
21 † SUNDAY AFTER THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS	22	23 † CONCEPTION OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST	24 † PANAGIA MYRTIDIOTISSA	25 ENGLISH LITURGY AT TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, THOMASTOWN, 7.30—8.45pm	26 † FALLING ASLEEP OF ST JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN	27
28 † 1ST SUNDAY OF LUKE	29 CYC MONTHLY TALK: "The Acceptability of Organ Donation: An Orthodox Perspective" by the Very Rev. Fr Elias Kentrotis, at St Eustathios Church, South Melbourne, 7.30 pm	30 VESPERS: PANAGIA GORGOEPIKOOS, GEELONG				

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Central Youth Monthly Lectures

“Panagia-The Holy Theotokos”

presented by

Very Rev. Iakovos Tsigounis

on

Monday, 25th August 2008

at the

**Greek Orthodox
Church of**

St Eustathios

**221 Dorcas Street,
South Melbourne**

***Commencing
at 7.30pm***

**For further
Information
telephone:**



9690 1595 or 9696 2488

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

SECOND ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

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“The Acceptability of Organ Donation: An Orthodox Perspective”

presented by

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on

Monday, 29th September 2008

at the
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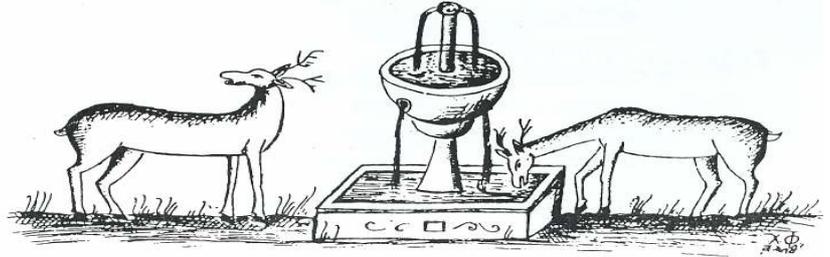
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at 7.30pm***

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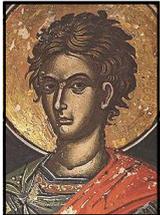
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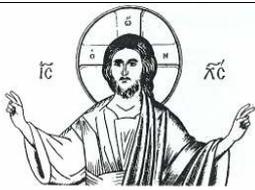
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Saint Nestor

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)

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



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