

Saint Nestor

CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE

I am the Resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, though they may die, they shall live. (John 11:25)

Message from the CYC

Welcome to the July-September edition of St Nestor.

In this edition of St Nestor we have included part four of the article on the sacramental life of the Church, which looks at Holy Confession, Priesthood and Holy Unction.

Over the next three months we have many feast days to celebrate. Among these include the Holy Anargyri: Cosmas and Damian (1 July), St Mary Magdalene (22 July), St Anna, the mother of the Theotokos (25 July), St Paraskevi (26 July), St Panteleimon (27 July), St Euphemia (16 September) and St Eustathios and his family (20 September).

On the 1 August we begin the Fast leading up to the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary (15 August). During the fast we also celebrate the Transfiguration of our Lord (6 August).

The Church of St Haralambos in Templestowe is now holding a Divine Liturgy each month. The time and dates of all of the English Services held in Melbourne and Geelong are listed on page 12.

Remember to tune in to "The Voice of Orthodoxy", a radio program in English which is held every Wednesday evening from 7:30pm-8:00pm on Radio 3XY.

With love in Christ.

Central Youth Committee



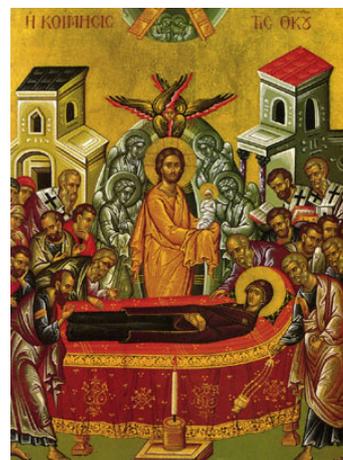
Dormition of the Holy Theotokos

(15th August)

Apolytikion

In giving birth, you preserved your virginity;
in your dormition, you did not forsake the world,
O Theotokos.

You were translated to life, since you are
the Mother of Life;
and by your intercessions you do redeem
our souls from death.



Kontakion

Neither the grave nor death could contain the Theotokos,
the unshakable hope, ever vigilant in intercession and
protection.

As Mother of life, He who dwelt in the ever-virginal
womb transposed her to life.

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

The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church: Part 4

This, the fourth part of "The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church", delves into the sacraments of Holy Confession, the Priesthood and Holy Unction. (Continued from the last edition of St Nestor).

THE MYSTERY OF HOLY CONFESSION

The mysteries of initiation introduce us to the lifelong process of grasping, accepting and choosing to follow the values of the Christian life. Christians, born anew in Baptism, are expected to govern their lives by the power of God. They are to undertake the noblest deeds and "holding fast to both faith and virtue... formed by both into the blessed likeness of Christ" (St. Nicholas Cabasilas). The Church, however, has never considered Baptism to be an automatic guarantor of continuous salvation. It is only the beginning of the life in Christ. Its full effects are derived when the baptized are disposed to persevere and preserve the treasure to the end. The process of healing and restoring our damaged, wounded and fallen nature is on-going.

God is recognized to be continuously loving, merciful and long-suffering towards his creation. He accepts all repentant sinners tenderly and rejoices greatly in their conversion. There are no limits set to the exercise of his loving-kindness and forgiveness. All sins are forgivable, save one: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Here we are confronted not with the powerlessness of God, but with an unrepentant and callous heart.

Through the mystery of repentance God embraces a repentant lapsed Christian with his love, in order to forgive him and reconcile him to the Church. But, for this to occur, the sinful Christian must first have a sense of his unfaithfulness to God, contrition of heart, and determination to amend. This must be followed by the confession of his sins before the authorized clergy of the Church. Both the interior repentance and the verbal acknowledgment of concrete sins are indispensable conditions for true forgiveness and reconciliation. Confession is the opening of one's conscience before God and the witness of the Church.

"Did you commit sin? Enter the Church and repent for your sin; for here is the physician, not the judge; here one is not investigated, one receives remission of sins"

(St. John Chrysostom).

Who Administers Holy Confession?

A bishop or designated confessor-priest administers the mystery of Repentance. Confessions are usually heard in the Church or in some other convenient and suitable place. The penitent and the confessor see each other face to face. The confessor identifies with the sinner and bears with him the consequences of his sin as he prays for him. Just as a perceptive physician seeks to heal wounds, he heals sins: he offers counsel, and may pre-

scribe remedies that look to the preservation of the spiritual health of the penitent. Such "penances" are not punitive in nature, but remedial. They do not constitute an essential part of the mystery. Penances may include such things as spiritual reading, fasting, increased prayer, prostrations, charitable works, and exclusion from Holy Communion for a specified time.

The confessor pronounces judgement upon the sin and not over the sinner. As a caring spiritual father he prays for the sinner and manifests to him the mercy and love of God. When the penitent has completed his confession, the confessor beckons him to kneel and, placing his hands upon his head, reads the prayer of absolution, by which the forgiveness of God is pronounced and bestowed. For it is God who is the forgiver and the healer of the penitent, not the human confessor.

Penitence is essentially a healing ministry, since sin is viewed primarily as a disease that needs to be healed, rather than a crime that needs to be punished. And since everyone is susceptible to the wiles of the devil, a regular examination of the conscience deepens self-awareness and quickens the sensitivity of the heart. For this reason many persons as a matter of course have a father confessor who shares their concerns in the on-going process of spiritual development and growth.

PRIESTHOOD

Jesus Christ is the one, true priest of the Church. Through his perfect self-offering, Christ continues to unite fallen humanity to God and is the unique High Priest and Mediator of the new covenant. Both the royal priesthood of all believers and the ministerial priesthood have their sources in Christ the High Priest.

The priestly ministry of Christ is perpetuated in the Church by the ministerial priesthood, existing in the three essential ministries of bishop, presbyter and deacon. These are set apart by the grace of ordination to serve the Church; to preach, teach and shepherd the people of God; to celebrate the sacred mysteries; to preserve correct doctrine; and to keep the body united in the love of Christ. The ministerial priesthood belongs to the very essence and structure of the Church, having been established by the Lord Himself. The gifts and functions once given to the Apostles are transmitted to the ordained ministers through the mystery of the priesthood in the rites of ordination.

Functions and Duties.

The Bishops are the successors to the Apostles, the chief shepherds and administrators of the Church and the guardians and teachers of the true faith. They are the celebrants and ministers of the mystery of the priesthood. While the right to choose the ministers of the

Church belongs to all the clergy and the people, the bishop alone has the authority to ordain and appoint ministers and to consecrate churches. As a sign of the collegiality of the episcopacy, three bishops (or at least two with the consent of a third) ordain a bishop. In all other ordinations, one bishop suffices. Since the sixth century bishops have been selected from the celibate clergy. *Presbyters* (priests) and deacons, however, are permitted to marry but only before ordination. Hence, married men may be ordained, but priests and deacons may not marry. A widower can be elected and ordained a bishop.

Presbyters (priests) share in the functions of the episcopacy. They shepherd and administer local parishes, they teach and celebrate the holy mysteries for the edification of the people of God, and take counsel with the bishop concerning the affairs of the diocese. Most parish priests are married, but it is not unusual for celibate clergy and monastics to serve local churches.

Deacons assist the bishops and *presbyters* in the execution of their pastoral liturgical and teaching duties. In earlier times, women were also ordained as deaconesses. The order, however, fell into disuse by the twelfth century.

Minor Orders.

Besides the three "major" orders, the priesthood includes several "minor" orders: subdeacons, readers, chanters, and acolytes. The ordination of such minor orders is conducted outside the sanctuary and at any communal worship service, but never within Divine Liturgy. The enthronement of a bishop or the bestowal of honours and the appointment to an office are also conducted outside the framework of the Divine Liturgy.

Ordination Rites.

The ordination of the major orders is held during the course of the Divine Liturgy. Bishops are ordained before the scripture readings and *Anaphora*. This is to indicate that a bishop is the primary expounder of the faith and celebrant of the mysteries. A *presbyter* is ordained immediately after the Great Entrance and before the *Anaphora*, because he too is a celebrant of the mysteries. A deacon is ordained after the consecration of the Gifts and before Holy Communion, because he assists at the liturgical services and administers Holy Communion.

The consent of the whole Church is a necessary requirement for ordination. At every ordination rite both the candidate and the assembled clergy and laity, and the celebrating bishop are asked to give their assent with the *antiphon* (*Keleuson*). After the ordination, the new cleric is clothed with the vestments of his order and installed in his new position amidst the acclamation "he is worthy" (*axios*) by the assembled faithful.

The primary signs of all ordination rites are the prayers and the laying on of hands upon the heads of the candidate by the bishop. There is a distinction between the rites of ordination for the major and minor orders. The

term *cheirotomia* (to stretch out the hand) designates the rites of ordination for the major orders, while the term *cheirothesia* (to place hands) is used to designate an ordination to the minor orders.

The Character of the Priesthood.

Those called and ordained to serve the Church are referred to as "clergy" (*kleros*), because they are chosen and set apart. The character of ordination is indelible. Therefore, ordination is never repeated, even in the case of clergy who have apostatized or have been defrocked, and are received again into the Church.

The male character of the ordained priesthood is a basic tenet of Orthodoxy. The priesthood belongs to Christ and those ordained to perpetuate his priesthood are his icons. The bishop (or priest) is not simply a delegate or a vicar of an absent Christ, but the one through whom Christ renders himself present to his Church.

The clergy do not possess an intrinsic personal holiness because of their ordination. Rather, they strive to acquire it, like all Christians, but with a greater urgency through ascetic effort. The clergy ought to embody the love of Christ and manifest to the community the essentials of the Christian life. Conversely, the clergy need to discover in their flock the presence of Christ. In this mutual witness each assists the other to become a living member of the body of Christ.

HOLY UNCTION

"Is there any sick man among you? Let him send for the elders of the Church and let them pray over him. The prayer offered in faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him from his bed, and he will be forgiven any sins he has committed" (James 5:14-15).

So St. James describes the anointing of the sick, providing the apostolic foundations for the sacrament of unction, or more properly, "the oil of prayer" (*euchelaion*). In keeping with the biblical injunction, the Orthodox order for the celebration of this sacrament calls for a group of presbyters to be present at it but this requirement is only of secondary importance. Nor is it required that the person receiving the sacrament be mortally ill as some have supposed. Bodily healing as well as the forgiveness of sins are the primary purposes of this sacrament and only in cases of immanent death can it be considered a preparation for it.

Orthodox theology has always stressed the unity of body and soul and this means that there can be no sharp dichotomy between physical and spiritual; the readings and prayers used in the rite of unction certainly do not assume that physical healing is assured framework of repentance. The anointing symbolizes ultimate pardon in the face of sickness and even death, physical results of the spiritual disease of sinfulness. Unction itself has frequently been associated with penance as a single action and in some instances it has even superseded penance. The popular public celebrations of unction on Holy Wednesday in many Orthodox churches might be inter-

The Sacramental Life of the Orthodox Church: Part 4

(Continued from page 3)

preted as a substitute for actual confessions of sins by individuals in preparation for the Paschal Eucharist. Needless to say, anointing is meaningless without true contrition.

The Dogmatic Background

It has been noted that we are born into a situation, in which pain and sorrow are ever-present realities. Sickness, suffering and death are the terrible proofs that humanity groans under the heavy burden of ancestral sin (Rom. 5:12-14; 8:18-25). In the words of Panagiotis Chrestou, "we bear by birth that nature, which Adam and Eve corrupted." As if the burdens of our fallen, moribund nature were not enough, some choose to exacerbate the dreadfulness of our condition by abusing the soul and body with every manner of excess.

Sickness and the body's eventual death are inescapable indignities which we suffer because of the fall. They are not forms of divine retribution, but the result of our deep alienation from God and our rejection of Him. God allows death, not as a punishment, but to terminate graceless life, so that it may be restored to its fullness in the resurrection.

"Since, through man, sin came into the world, and through sin death, it pleased God to give us His Son, in order to condemn sin in His flesh, so that those who died in Adam may be brought to life in Him" (Liturgy of St. Basil).

Christ "took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (Matt 8:17; Is 53:4). He overcame the world, by loosening the bonds of death and opening, for all flesh, a path to the resurrection from the dead. By participating in his deified human nature, humanity has access to imperishable life.

The Constitution of the Holy Unction

The Mystery of Holy Unction is established upon the words and actions of our Lord Jesus Christ. It embodies, extends and continues his healing ministry. It is the sign of his transforming presence in a bruised and hurt-



ing world, and the emblem of His promise to deliver us from sin and corruption. It is the manifestation of the Kingdom and the sign of what God has in store for the world when it reaches its state of ultimate completion. While the reign of God has not yet come in power, the mighty deeds of Christ disclose and proclaim the mystery of humankind's renewal: "the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matt 11:5-6). The Mystery of Holy Unction places the sick into this eschatological reality, where suffering, corruption and death are overcome, even in the present time.

The healing ministry of the Church is patterned after the healing ministry of Christ; it addresses humanity's need for deliverance. A succinct description of the form and meaning of this ministry, from apostolic times to the present age, is found in the Epistle of James:

"Is any among you sick? Let him call the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and prayers of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15).

Holy Unction is a sacrament of faith. It seeks to raise up hope and impart courage and peace to the sick person by alleviating anxieties, frustrations and feelings of alienation that often afflict the sufferer. It communicates spiritual power so that the trials of sickness are borne with fortitude and the temptations that lead to despair are resisted and overcome.

Holy Unction does not serve as a substitute for medical treatment, nor is the priest a replacement for the physician. Medical science is, itself, a gift of God, and a sign of His providential benevolence, wisdom and love. (Sirach 1:1, 38:1-15). In time of illness we are guided by the words of Scripture:

"When you are sick do not be negligent, but pray to the Lord, and He will heal you. Give up your faults and direct your hands aright, and cleanse your heart from all sins ...And give the physician his place, for the Lord created him ... There is a time when success lies in the hands of physicians, for they too will pray to the Lord that he should grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life" (Sirach 38: 9-10, 12-14).

The gift of healing is, first of all, a restoration of interior justice and holiness; an entrance into the peace of God. While "healing is certainly a much desired effect... it is not an indispensable condition for the existence of the sacrament," notes Elie Melia. Holy Unction allows the sick person to share in Christ's victory over sin and death by "conforming him or her in some degree to the body of the risen Lord and by disposing the whole person - body, soul and spirit - for eternal life." The essential purpose of Holy Unction is to raise up the sick into the realm of

(Continued on page 5)

God's Kingdom.

The Lord has commanded us to share one another's burdens, to visit the sick, and to care for the hungry and the poor. The sacrament of Holy Unction is the strong reminder to the Church community that care for the afflicted, those suffering from illness, injustice, exploitation, oppression, hunger, poverty and abuse, is a communal concern and duty. The Church has a special responsibility to minister to the ills of humanity.

Holy Unction as a Sacrament

The Church's sacrament of healing has several names. It is known as *Euchelaion* or Prayer Oil; Holy Oil; *Eptapapadon* (from a custom requiring seven priests to celebrate it); and Holy Unction (from Latin, meaning anointing).

The outward sign or element of the sacrament is (olive) oil. It is an appropriate symbol for the sacrament, since its use as a therapeutic agent is known from antiquity.

As is the case in all the sacraments, Holy Unction is celebrated by a canonically ordained bishop or presbyter.

The service developed over a long period of time. It contains the following basic elements: a modified Orthros; a prayer for the consecration of the oil; a set of seven Readings and priestly prayers; and a prayer for the anointing of the sick person.

The sacrament is used for the sick and may be celebrated at any time, in the Church, home or hospital. In earlier times the sacrament was celebrated in the context of the Divine Liturgy.

The Church celebrates the sacrament, with special solemnity, on Holy Wednesday for the whole community. The Church confers the sacrament upon all the faithful, whether they are physically ill or not, because we do not draw a sharp distinction between bodily and spiritual illness.

It may be that the use of Holy Unction in the middle of Holy Week is a vestige of the ancient practice of the reconciliation of penitents before Pascha. In any case, the solemn celebration serves to remind the faithful of Christ's power to forgive and liberate the conscience from the blight of personal and collective sin and to emphasize the glorious expectation of Pascha; the resurrection, redemption and sanctification of all life.

Rev. Alciviadis C. Calivas

Source: <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7106>

In the next edition of St Nestor, Fr Calivas examines the sacrament of Marriage.



PRAYING TO THE VIRGIN MARY?

WHY DO WE PRAY FOR THE DEAD?

QUESTION: What are your beliefs about the Virgin Mary - most particularly do you pray to her? Why do you pray for the departed? The Bible clearly says it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. Recall the rich man after death!

ANSWER: Your first question was, "What are your beliefs about the Virgin Mary-most particularly do you pray to her?"

We believe that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God. Through her He Who was God before the ages took on our human nature without relinquishing His divine nature or confusing or "meshing" it with the human nature in any way. The Mother of God is often referred to as the "New Eve," for she said "yes" to God whereas the first Eve said "no." We believe that the Mother of God was sinless of her own free will, that she remains ever-virgin, and that she is the "living tabernacle" of God inasmuch as her womb, as one hymn states, becomes "more spacious than the heavens" by carrying within it the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ.

Properly speaking, Orthodox Christians do not "pray to" the Mother of God instead of God; we seek her intercession before her Son, asking her to pray on our behalf; another Orthodox hymn states that "the prayers of a mother availeth much before her Son."

With regard to certain teachings about the Mother of God held by other bodies, such as the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, such are foreign to Orthodox Christianity. Non-Orthodox should never assume that the Orthodox doctrine concerning the Mother of God is identical with that of Roman Catholicism, nor should they condemn Orthodox teaching based on what they know of Roman Catholic doctrine on the Virgin Mary.

Your second question was, "Why do you pray for the departed? The Bible clearly says it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment. Recall the rich man after death!" Unfortunately, you begin this by asking a question which you then seem to answer and then offer chastisement. Perhaps you are assuming that the Orthodox doctrine concerning the 'Last Things' are identical with those of other bodies, specifically Roman Catholicism, which is not the case either.

We believe that death is the result of sin, that death is not a part of God's original design for mankind: "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn and live" (Ezek 18:32). Death was not "created" by God, who is the Source and Author of all

(Continued on page 11)



Archbishop Stylianos on The Transfiguration of the Lord

This evening's Service, dear brothers and sisters, was not simply a supplication and a supplicatory cry. It was a doxology, an endless and innermost hymnology, from the mouths of all, even of babes, to the Lord of Glory.

We are not always in a position to see the glory of God in world history, and amidst human torment. That is why God Incarnate had to use a specific moment to remind us that He is not a mere man. He is a perfect and true man. But He is not only a man. He is also perfect God, and this glory is our last refuge, our last hope, our last strength. That is why He was transfigured before His Disciples, the Apostles. He did not take them all. He took the Chief Apostle Peter and the brothers James and John, who represented the Twelve, representing all of us. Yet for which purpose?

He took these Apostles to see - before the Passion, the humiliation and the Crucifixion - His glory, as we chant: "so that in beholding Your wonders, they may not be fearful at Your Passion". He took them for that reason. And He was transfigured in front of them. And His face shone as the sun. And His clothes became white, like light. The Apostles believed; they marvelled at His wonders. And we have also believed, but in spite of this, we know we are sinful, and sin blinds us. It clouds our horizon. It weakens the grace given to us by God through the Sacraments of the Church, and weakens our faith. If we do not admit this weakness, we will then be unable to entreat Him to help us see. And not only to see, but, above all, to marvel and so to venerate. As we chant in the hymn of the Feast:

"You showed Your Disciples Your glory according to their ability".

You showed them Your glory to the degree that they were able to see it. To which degree? Only You know. They experienced it. But they are one thing, beyond and above us, and we are another. We are the ones who are still struggling. As the hymn goes on to say: "Show to us sinners also Your eternal light". We beseech that He might show us as well, sinful though we are. This is our thirst. Not to 'see', but to be 'shown'. There is a big difference! When you see on your own, you see whatever you like. But when He shows you, you see whatever you need. It is these small details that sanctify our life.

If the Apostles needed to behold His wonders so as not to be fearful of His Passion subsequently, what then do we need? We need to see His wonders, not in His Person, which shone like the sun. Not in His life. We need to see the wonders He has worked in our own life. As He willed it. As He was pleased to allow.

Heraclitos, the greatest sage of the Ancient Greeks, the most mystical and profound philosopher, made the astounding statement: 'all things are in a state of flux'. That is to say, nothing remains the same. All things are fluid. Like a river that flows in one direction and cannot turn back. This is a pessimistic view. Moreover, it is a pungent description of the present world. All things move on. All things are on a one-way course. All things pass.

For us, however, it cannot be so. After this evening's Service, which recalls for us the true meaning of 'transfiguration', we shall no longer speak of irrevocable change. For us, all things are not

in a state of flux, but rather of transfiguration. While they continually change form, they continually reveal new aspects of God's glory. Reality is not merely a river that flows. It is a sun which continually rises - in rising over the firmament of life it increasingly enlightens our path, so that we no longer have too much darkness in the world.

Think of how many stages of life we all pass, and will pass, through. For as long as God will continue to put up with us. The first stage is from non-existence to existence. That is the first leap. And then, the leap is followed by a step, and the step leads to a further leap.



We are conceived in the womb of our mother, whereupon an endless journey of 'transfigurations' commences. The embryo grows from strength to strength, month by month. And in the ninth month normally (some are born earlier, as God allows), the child comes into the world, and it is separated from its mother's body. It is self-sufficient, and yet it is not self-sufficient. It is a separate being, and yet it cannot do without its mother, and it proceeds to grow and becomes a child, then an adolescent, then a mature man or woman, who is transfigured by becoming a father or mother, before growing old and weak, fading like a flower. Then the eyes no longer see, the ears no longer hear properly, the knees and hands no longer withstand the pressure!

And a little while later, we return to the earth from which we came. These transfigurations are not just a flow of current. They are in fact other forms of life, beneath the same sun of righteousness. May we see these stages of our life, with the related lessons, as nothing less than the wonders of God.

With this assurance, with this optimism, with this courage of faith, let us proceed to the finish line of this series of transfigurations. Always bearing in mind that the Transfiguration is the Polar Star, which we will follow like the sunflowers that always turn towards the sun, towards God, towards eternity. Like the sunflowers, then, we will keep watch, forever changing but never vanishing, being sanctified and indeed immortalized, in the grace of God.

I wish this Transfiguration upon us all, with forbearance, patience, without grumbling in times of illness or any other misfortunes of life. We call them misfortunes, but often they are lessons- contests which are in the end to our benefit.

This courage of faith, love and hope towards God Incarnate I Pray each of us may have, for many years to come.

Amen.

Source: 'St Andrews Theological College, The first two decades', St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2007



Meditations on Daily Bible Readings: 4th Sunday of Matthew

Gospel according to St Matthew 8:5-13

5. Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him,

6. saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralysed, dreadfully tormented."

7. And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

8. The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.

9. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

10. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!

11. And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

12. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

13. Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

Implications in Christ's healing: **Saint Matthew 8:5-13, especially vs. 10:** "...Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" The healings by the Lord Jesus point beyond mere Divine tenderness to the outcomes God wills to achieve in each of us as His fallen children. In His grand purpose, He wills that we become worthy servants, free from the influence of demons and unquestioningly obedient. In fact, His healing always is conducted with those ends in mind. Furthermore, He yearns for us to cooperate in achieving these goals.

The Centurion described in this passage from Saint Matthew was spiritually outstanding, as the Lord Himself testifies (vs. 10). The Gospels tell of others who were not as advanced in the life of the Kingdom of God as was this Roman officer. It is the manner in which this Centurion approached the Lord that reveals his attainment of several of the goals needed by those who would "...sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven" (vs. 11).

He knew his unworthiness before the Lord (vs. 8); he revealed great insight into the scope of Christ's capacity to heal (vss. 8,9); and he demonstrated profound insight into the exalted nature of the Lord's Person (vs. 8). He is a worthy model to follow if we would grow in Christ, become free from the power of the demons, and attain health through all our being.

Saint Matthew reports that the Centurion came 'pleading' to the Lord Jesus (vs. 5). The verb selected points beyond mere asking and discloses a plaintive quality in the man's address; yet his request is coupled with a modest withholding of any directions or expectations of the Lord. He does not tell Christ

what to do. He communicates only his pain, appealing on account of the pain of his servant who was 'dreadfully tormented' (vss. 5,6). The Lord startles him when He says, "I will come and heal him" (vs. 7).

The Centurion did not anticipate Christ's response, for being a Gentile yet devout, he knew that his home was in itself a defiled place, especially for one as holy as the great man Whom he called 'Lord' or 'Kyrie' (vss. 6,8).

The Lord's response was still more startling by its insistence on coming into his home: 'I Myself will come personally' (vs. 7). To protect the Lord Jesus from ritual defilement, the Centurion offered an alternative: "I am not worthy...only speak a word..." (vs. 8). His reply is like the Bridegroom Prayer, "I behold Thy Bridal Chamber....but I have no wedding garment to worthily enter." It discloses a man who perceives his unworthiness before the Holy God - an unusual quality in a Roman military officer.

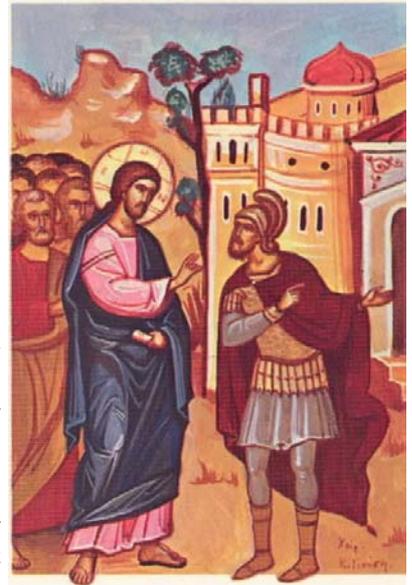
Second, the Centurion manifests a profound understanding of the power of God over all the earth. There is no need for the Lord to "...come under my roof. But only [to] speak a word..." (vs. 8). The Centurion holds no magical or limited theology one might expect from a typical pagan, idol-worshiper. He appreciates Christ as Pantocrator, Ruler of all, Ruler over all.

Third, the Centurion reveals a sublime theology of God, not simply by his humility but in his clear recognition of the exalted nature of the Lord Jesus. The eyes of his heart pierced through the humanity of the Lord to His Divinity. Whereas Mary and Martha of Bethany both failed to perceive the full extent of the Lord Jesus' Person when He came after Lazarus' burial (Jn. 11:21,32), this Centurion readily understood it with no doubting and with no hesitation. Having authority himself, he was able to perceive in his spirit the glorified eminence of the Lord that gave him unquestioning faith in the Christ's capacity to heal by a spoken word.

Let us labour for such faith that we may not be cast into darkness, but be healed!

Behold, my soul, beware, lest you fall into deep slumber and the door of the kingdom be closed against you; but be wakeful, crying, Holy! Holy! Holy! Are You, O Christ God.

(Source: *Dynamis!* www.dynamispublications.org)



Upcoming Feast Days

St Euphemia (16th September)

Saint Euphemia lived at Chalcedon in the reign of Diocletian (284-305). Her parents were rich and devout and brought her up in the love of Christ. At that time, Priscus became Proconsul of Asia. He was an enthusiastic devotee of Mars, and ordered all the inhabitants of the Province to come to Chalcedon to celebrate the feast of his god, under pain of death. Whereupon the Christians fled in small groups to isolated houses or to the deserts in order to escape the tyrant and safeguard their faith.

Saint Euphemia was among those who went into hiding, and by her virtue and wisdom shone as a bright star amid her forty-nine companions. They were soon discovered and brought before the Proconsul, who tried to persuade them to sacrifice by flattering their youth and good sense. 'Do not waste your time and your words on us,' the Saints answered him. 'We are people endowed with reason, for whom it would be the greatest disgrace to abandon the one true God, the Maker of heaven and earth, in order to worship dumb, senseless idols. We are not afraid of the torments you threaten us with. They will be easy for us to bear and will show you the power of our God.' These words enraged the Proconsul, and he had Euphemia and her companions tortured continuously for twenty days. Then, finding their faith completely unshaken, and seeing that Euphemia was the leading spirit of the group, he ordered her limbs to be crushed by iron wheels. But the Martyr called upon the help of God and was discovered to be completely unscathed. Then she was cast into a furnace with flames forty feet high, but God came to Euphemia's aid there also, and sent an angel who drew the flames away from her. Seeing this miracle, the executioners Victor and Sosthenes turned to Christ, and died as Martyrs some days later, at the teeth of the beasts. The Saint had many more torments to endure, from which God each time delivered her, showing how much stronger Grace is than any torture the malice of men can devise. In the end, she was thrown to the beasts, and gave up her soul to God through the mere bite of a bear.

When the persecution of Diocletian ended, the Christians laid Saint Euphemia's relics in a golden sarcophagus, placed within a church that was dedicated to her. On her feast day there would flow from her tomb a stream of fresh blood having a

heavenly scent. The miraculous rejection of the tome of the heretics during the Council of Chalcedon (451) also occurred at her shrine (cf. 11 July). Her relics attracted crowds of pilgrims for centuries. They were translated to Constantinople in 616 at the time of the Persian invasions, and remain intact to this day in the church of the Patriarchate at the Phanar.



St Melitina (16th September)

Saint Melitina lived at Marcianopolis in Thrace in the reign of the Emperor Antoninus, when Antiochus was Governor (c. 160). The many tortures she endured failed to persuade her to deny Christ, so she was handed over to the Governor's wife to be softened by flatteries, but instead the Saint succeeded in converting her.

When they saw Saint Melitina throw down the idols of Apollo and Hercules, as well as other miracles that God wrought by her, many pagans were brought to confess Christ. After the holy Martyr had accomplished all that God gave her to do, she was beheaded. A devout man called Acacius from Macedonia obtained her relics to take to his homeland, but he perished in a storm on the way, and the body of Saint Melitina was cast ashore on the island of Lemnos, where it was buried by pious Christians.

St Eustathios and his family (20th September)

Saint Eustathios was called Placidus and his wife Tatiana before they and their sons became Christians. Placidus was a general who lived at Rome in the time of Trajan (98-117). Even though he was a pagan, he was remarkably virtuous and

(Continued on page 9)

Upcoming Feast Days

(Continued from page 8)

had an especial love for the poor. Seeing his well-disposed nature, God revealed Himself, somewhat as He had done to Saint Paul. When Placidus was hunting in the forest one day, and had a great stag at bay, he beheld between its antlers a Cross brighter than the sun, on which he could see Christ. He also heard a voice saying, 'Placidus, why are you pursuing me? I am Christ Whom you unwittingly honour by your good works. I came on earth in human form to save mankind, and appear to you today so as to catch you in the nets of my love for man. Astonished and terror-struck, Placidus fell from his horse and was without consciousness for several hours. The truth of the vision was beyond doubt when Christ appeared a second time and gave him to know that He is by nature God, the Maker of heaven and earth, Who out of love for mankind, has taken our nature upon Himself. Placidus then believed from the depths of his heart and was baptized with his wife and their sons. They all took new names; Eustathios and Theopista became the Christian names of the parents, and Agapius and Theopistus those of their sons.

Seeing in him the righteousness which is of faith, the Lord again appeared to Eustathios and told him of tribulations like Job's that the Devil would bring upon him, but that divine Grace would remain with him. Soon afterwards he lost all he possessed, and decided to take a ship to Egypt with his wife and children. The master of the vessel was a licentious rogue and seized his wife in the moment that he and his sons disembarked. Eustathios tearfully went on his way and, as he was crossing a river, a wolf and a lion made off with his sons, leaving him a ruined and lonely man, whose faith and only hope were in the mercy of the Lord. So this once brilliant member of the Roman nobility, now went from one place to another with the patience of Job, living by casual work. He settled at last as an orchard-watchman in a place called Badissos, not far from where his two sons, who had been rescued by shepherds, were growing up unbeknown to him.

Fifteen years later, the barbarians among whom Theopista was living in captivity were preparing to invade the Empire in large numbers, but the Romans were unable to find a general skillful enough to withstand them. Then the Emperor recalled the courage and many victories of Eustathios and sent in search of him. When he appeared at court, Eu-



stathios was scarcely recognizable; poverty and affliction had so altered his countenance. The Emperor restored him to his rank and possessions and gave him command of the legions which, with God's help, drove back the barbarians. During the campaign, Eustathios was reunited with his wife and children, that his patience might not be without reward in this life.

On his triumphal return to Rome Hadrian, the new Emperor, loaded him with gifts and asked him to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the idols for his victory. Eustathios replied that to Christ alone was the victory due and not to the fancied power of false gods. This reply aroused the anger of the tyrant. Once again all his goods were confiscated and Saint Eustathios, his wife and children were given to be food for the lions. As the beasts couched reverently before them, not daring to touch them, the holy Martyrs were thrown into a red-hot bronze cauldron shaped like a bull, where they gave up their souls to God without their bodies undergoing any change. This astonished the pagans and brought great joy to the faithful, who recognized by this sign that the grace of God dwelt in the bodies of the holy Martyrs and remained with them for consolation in their sufferings.

Source: 'The Synaxarion. The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church. Vol.1 September-October, Holy Convent of the Annunciation of Our Lady, Ormylia(Chalkidike) 1998

THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL AND THE CONDITION OF PRIMITIVE MAN

First God created the human body, and then after that He breathed "a living soul" into it. With His breath, He created the soul of man and gave it life. But what did God arrange for the reproduction of man? Does God directly intervene and create a soul each time someone is born? If so, at what exact moment does God intervene? At conception? During the pregnancy? Or at birth? There is no clear answer to the question either in the Bible or in Holy Tradition. The fact that God made man His co-creator helps us find some answer. As the infant's body is transplanted from the bodies of the parents', so is the soul. The creation of the infant is an act of both God and the parents. And this creation, which takes place with the cooperation of both God and parents, is for the creation of soul and body together. The soul and the body are conceived and created at the same time. From the time of its conception, the embryo is fully human. That is why abortion is murder.

The original condition of man was not the same as it is today. When God created man, He said "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Genesis, 1:26). But what does that mean, "image and likeness"? "Image" does not mean the body of man; as totally spirit: God is not related to a material body. "Image" means that which is sovereign, and independent. That is, it is the freedom and the power of man to choose and do what he wishes. Man's basic element "of supreme goodness" -- meaning his perfection -- is his freedom and his power of choice. Without this freedom and power, man would not have been created whole and perfect.

"Likeness" is the image in action. That is, it is the good use of man's free will to improve himself morally so as to come closer and closer to the Divine, to God. This movement toward holiness and perfection of the first created man and woman was not a steady and irrevocable condition. It depended on man's free will and his own authority, which was designed to have a tendency towards goodness. Man had the possibility of being perfected. With their fall, the first man and woman "blackened" the "image" and distorted the "likeness" to such a degree that they could no longer walk towards justice, holiness and perfection by themselves.

Part of the original condition of man involved Paradise, the tree of knowledge and the tree of life, and so a few words about them should be given.

The Bible tells us that when God created man, "the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East; and there He put the man whom He had formed (Genesis, 2:8)." And again, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat" (Genesis, 2:15-16).

This is not the same Paradise that we talk about today. This Paradise was an earthly garden in which were found all material and spiritual goods. It was a Paradise filled with luxuries. It was a place for material enjoyment and spiritual fulfilment. It was most delightful and beautiful.

The "tree of knowledge" was in this Paradise. It was the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God commanded man not to eat the fruit of this tree, although he was permitted to eat the fruit of all of the other trees. Why did God do this? What exactly does "the tree of knowledge" mean? What kind of tree was it? We do not know. Nor do we know why God gave this command and the punishment of death. God said "for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Genesis, 2:17).

It seems that this command was the first form of fasting, to strengthen the character of man. This fruit was the fruit of a tree, and not the sexual relationship of Adam and Eve, as some ingenuously say. God blessed the reproduction of mankind, and would not punish them for it. Nor should one think that Adam and Eve had no knowledge of good and evil before they ate from the fruit of the tree of knowledge. They had knowledge. Their knowledge was theoretical. With the tasting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, their knowledge became practical; their knowledge became empirical. The cause for the expulsion from Paradise was not the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The real cause was that they disobeyed and rejected the commandment of God.

The Bible also speaks about the tree of life, although we do not know anything about it. From one phrase that God spoke after the fall of Adam and Eve it seems that this tree bestowed eternal life. God took care lest Adam too should "put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (Genesis, 3:22). We know nothing else about the tree of life.

Our Father and Creator, we know that our bodies and our souls are Your creations. We know that we disobeyed Your command. We ate from the forbidden fruit. We were expelled from Paradise. We blackened the image. We distorted the likeness. We are condemned. Alone, we are unable to return to You. Thank You for sending us Your Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us. To set us free. To restore us. To raise us up to Heaven. We entreat You, help us to follow Him, and at His second coming grant us to be found standing at His right hand. To be steady in holiness and perfection. To live with You forever.

by Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios

*Source: 'An Orthodox Catechism Basic Teachings of
the Orthodox Faith'*

PRAYING TO THE VIRGIN MARY?

WHY DO WE PRAY FOR THE DEAD?

(Continued from page 5)

life and Who, by revealing His Name as "I AM" to Moses reveals that He is Existence Itself: "God did not make death, and takes no pleasure in the destruction of any living thing; He created all things that they might have being" (Wis 1:13). Death is a consequence of the first sin, a consequence which touches all humanity. Jesus Christ came into the world to conquer death, to point the way to new and eternal life, to offer a refuge from corruption and all that corrupts God's "good" creation. This was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who "has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power; for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:20-26). Finally, our hope as Christians is to share in Christ's victory over death: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11:25-26).

Death, for Orthodox Christians, is always a tragedy, something which distorts the goodness and beauty of God's creation. By His own example at the tomb of His friend Lazarus we see that death is always tragic, even for the One Who conquers death. Christ came to proclaim new life, to acknowledge that death is not a transition into eternal oblivion, to announce that "through [Him] God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thess 4:14). We also believe that "if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.... If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom 6:5,8). Concerning prayers for the dead, your question, which is more of a statement, seems to be directed at those who teach that after death humans may encounter "purgatory," an intermediate state in which the "punishment" accorded to sin must be "purged" before one can enter the eternal Kingdom of God. This teaching, found among the Roman Catholics but completely alien to Orthodox Christianity [which rejects the doctrine of purgatory], implies that one should pray for the release of the souls of the departed from such punishment and may imply that the departed, of their own will, can freely repent of the sins they committed during this lifetime.

Orthodox Christians pray for the dead so that the Lord

will have mercy on their souls, that He will grant them eternal rest "in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," that He will extend His unfathomable love upon them, and that He will receive them into that state "in which there is neither sickness, nor sighing, nor sorrow, but life everlasting." Saint Paul clearly teaches that those who have gone before us are still members of the Body of Christ, the Church. And it is the duty of the members of the Church to pray for one another. Just as the living continually beseech God to have mercy on them - and may rightly offer prayers to God on behalf of their living spiritual sisters and brothers as well as request prayers on their own behalf from others - so too we have the duty to pray for all members of the Body of Christ, even those who have departed this life and still "belong to Christ." One will find that the early Christians, surrounded as they were by death as a result of official persecution on the part of the Roman Empire, took great care to honour the dead, to bury them with great care and reverence - to the point of offering the Eucharistic celebration on their graves, which is one of the earliest indications of the veneration of their relics - and to remember them especially on the anniversary of their deaths, which were seen as "birthdays" into eternal life. In asking God to have mercy on the souls of the departed, we also ask God to have mercy on us who are still in this life, and we recognize that we too shall die. All members of the Church, living as well as faithful departed cry before the throne of God, "Lord, have mercy on us."

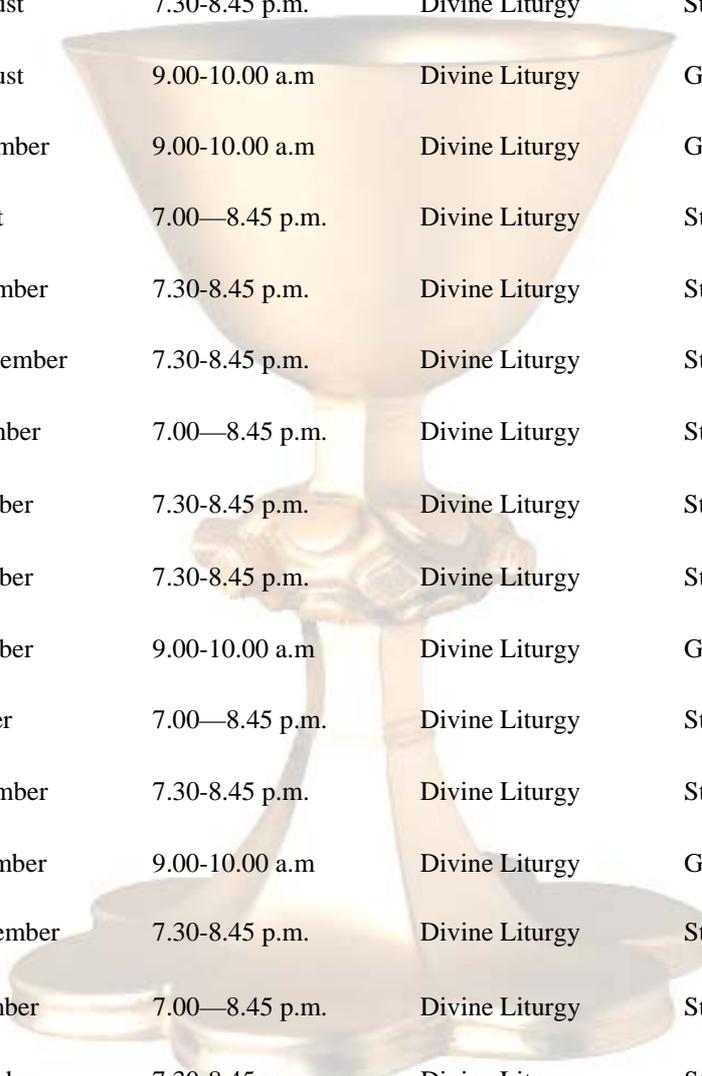
I might add here that the standard Reformed reactions to prayers for the dead are reactions to certain teachings in Roman Catholicism. The arguments against these teachings and practices should not, in blanket fashion, be used against Orthodox Christianity which rejects some of the very same teachings and practices, such as the recent re introduction of "indulgences" by Pope John Paul II. Orthodoxy is not a form of Roman Catholicism and it should not be assumed that the teachings of the Orthodox Church are one and the same as those of Roman Catholicism.

It should also not be assumed that, just because the Orthodox may have a similar ritual to another Christian body, it has the same meaning. One must look beyond externals, as Christ continually challenged the Pharisees, and evaluate things on the spirit which drives those externals.

Source: Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Parish of Hobart
50 Warwick Street, Hobart
Tasmania, Australia



Holy Services in English 2011



7th July	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Paraskevi Church
12th July	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
16th July	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
4th August	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Paraskevi Church
16th August	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
20th August	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
3rd September	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
24 August	7.00—8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Haralambos Church
6th September	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
22nd September	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Paraskevi Church
28 September	7.00—8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Haralambos Church
11th October	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
13th October	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Paraskevi Church
15th October	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
19 October	7.00—8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Haralambos Church
3rd November	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Paraskevi Church
5th November	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
15th November	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
23 November	7.00—8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Haralambos Church
1st December	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Paraskevi Church
10th December	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery

Geelong Monastery

Cnr Monastery Ct & Bluestone
Bridge Rd (in older Melways:
Cnr Cox & Rollins Rds) , Lovely
Banks

St Eustathios Church

221 Dorcas St,
South Melbourne

St Paraskevi Church

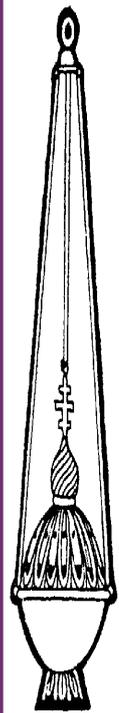
22 Marsden Crescent,
St Albans

St Haralambos Church

Cnr Porter St &
Church Rd,
Templestowe

*From the Old Testament
The Psalms*

Occasional Prayers



Psalm 150

**Praise God in His saints;
Praise Him in the firmament of His power;
Praise Him for His mighty acts;
Praise Him according to the abundance of
His greatness.
Praise Him with the sound of a
trumpet;
Praise Him with the harp and lyre;
Praise Him with timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with strings and flute;
Praise Him with resounding cymbals;
Praise Him with triumphant cymbals;
Let everything that breathes praise the
Lord.
Alleluia.**



Psalm 150 is known as one of the psalms of “Praise”, and it, along with Psalms 148 and 149, forms the conclusion to the Psalter. The psalm exhorts all creation to praise the Blessed and Holy Trinity. Humanity and creation, everywhere and in all circumstances, are called upon to make this doxology to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, our one God. These psalms are sung every morning in the Church as the Praises of Orthros.

(Sources: The Orthodox Study Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee 2008)

A MORNING PRAYER

Arising from sleep, we fall down before you,
Gracious One,
and the hymn of the Angels we cry out to you,
Mighty One:
Holy, Holy, Holy are you, O God.
Through the Theotokos have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit;

From my bed and sleep you have raised me, Lord;
enlighten my mind and my heart,
and open my lips to praise you,
Holy Trinity:
Holy, Holy, Holy are you, O God.
Through the Theotokos have mercy on us.

Both now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Suddenly the judge will come,
and the deeds of each will be laid bare;
but with fear let us cry out in the middle of the night:
Holy, Holy, Holy are you, O God.
Through the Theotokos have mercy on us.

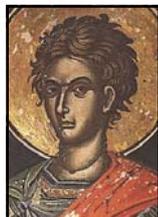
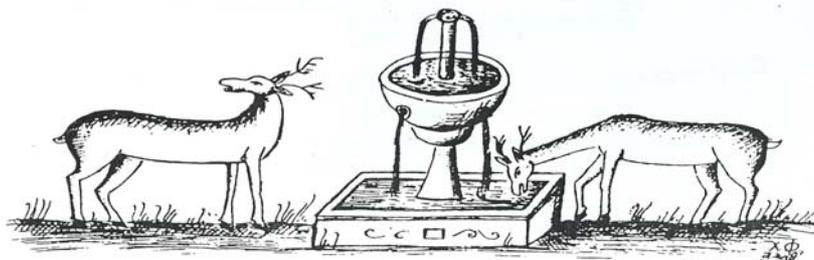
*(Source: The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints
John Chrysostom, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia,
2005)*



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Saint Nestor

CENTRAL YOUTH COMMITTEE MAGAZINE

Youth Group Meetings



Bentleigh: Sts Raphael, Nicholas & Irene
Monday 8.00 p.m. (9557 4877)

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

Brunswick: St Basil
-All teenagers and youth in their 20's
Tuesday 7.00 p.m. (9387 7693)
-Young Adults and Married couples group
Every 2nd Wednesday 7.30 p.m.
(9387 7693)

Carlton: St John the Baptist
Refer to Northcote details.

Clayton: Three Hierarchs
Monday 6.00 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 Keilor: Panagia Soumela
Monday 7.00 p.m. (9331 2010)

East Malvern: St Catherine
Temporarily postponed due to the loss of our hall.
(9563 6623)

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

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

Moonee Ponds: St Dimitrios
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9375 1119)

Northcote: Axion Estin
Wednesday 7.00 p.m. (9481 7826)

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

Richmond: Holy Trinity
Thursday 6.00 -7.00 p.m. (9428 1284)

South Melbourne: St Eustathios
Tuesday 7.30 p.m. (9690 1595)

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

St Albans: St Paraskevi,
Thursday 7.30 p.m. (0421 704 806)

Templestowe: St Haralambos
Tuesday 8.00 p.m. (9846 4066)

Thomastown: Transfiguration of the Lord,
Wednesday 7.30 p.m. (9465 9907)
-Young Adults and Married couples group
Every 2nd Sunday 4.30-6.30 p.m. (9465 9907)

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

