

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

Happy New Year! Welcome to the 34th edition of St Nestor.

Among the feasts which we celebrate between January and March are those of St Basil the Great (1 Jan), the Holy Theophany of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (6 Jan), St Gregory of Nyssa (10 Jan: see article on page 6 of this edition), St Anthony the Great (17 Jan), Sts Athanasius and Cyril (18 Jan) (we have included an excerpt of one of the writings of St Athanasius on page 5), the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple (2 Feb) and St Haralambos the Holy Martyr (10 Feb) to name but a few.

Great and Holy Lent begins on 27 February. This is the beginning of a 40 day period within the church which is a time of preparation for the glorious Resurrection of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.; the great feast of Pascha.

During Lent we fast, not only from certain foods, but also from sin. We should always combine our fasting with prayer and almsgiving. This edition of St Nestor has an article about Fasting in the Orthodox Church by Dr Philip Kariatlis.

It is during Lent that our Churches around Victoria make a collection of non-perishable foods for those families who are struggling. Contact your local priest for further details.

Also we would like to remind you 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.

Wishing you all a great and prayerful Lent

With love in Christ.

Kontakion of St Gregory of Nyssa (10th January)

Rejoicing with the Angels and taking delight in the Divine Light, Gregory of Nyssa, the vigilant mind, the God inspired hierarch of the Church, and wisdom's revered hymnographer, intercede unceasingly for us all.



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)

Orthodoxy and Ecumenism

Many times, while attending ecumenical functions, I have been amused, and at times a little frustrated, to see a registration table for Roman Catholics and another for Protestants. I would stand between them and shrug my shoulders wondering where I should go. Orthodoxy is neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant; it has much in common with both, but it also stands apart from both. Orthodoxy also sees itself in a fragile position within the Ecumenical Movement. It is neither completely at home within ecumenism, nor is closed to other Christian groups wishing to dialogue with it. To understand this, one needs to understand something of the nature of Orthodoxy.

In this attempt to outline the Orthodox approach to ecumenism, I need to convey a glimpse of the theological issues behind this idea. This is not merely a question of action, "Should we or shouldn't we?" It is a more important question of theology, "Can we or can't we, and if we can what form does our ecumenism take?" This short paper will attempt to give some insight into the dilemma of Orthodoxy and ecumenism. However, it is not a summary of Orthodox Dogma or Tradition, it is only trying to read the pulse of Orthodoxy as it considers the ecumenical movement.

Many churches are facing modern crises that are calling them to question their often long held beliefs and dogmas. Issues such as the ordination of women to the sacred Priesthood of Christ and Modernism have been on the 'agenda' of Churches for some time. Other issues such as 'New Age' philosophies and the increasing dilemma of bio-ethics have seen various Christian groups take stances completely opposed to those of other Christian traditions. There are even some controversial subjects that have seen division within Churches. The Orthodox also are facing new dilemmas, but these are about how the Church relates to a modern and rapidly changing world, and to other Christians who, to the Orthodox at least, seem to be constantly changing their face and their nature. It may seem extraordinary to some, but one of the most controversial issues that has gripped Orthodoxy in recent years has been ECUMENISM!

Much of the heat of the ecumenical argument within Orthodoxy comes from a difference of opinion as to the nature of ecumenism. This confusion, I think, also exists within other Christian groups.

In his book "Our Orthodox Christian Faith", Athanasios Frangopoulos lists ecumenism along with nasties like Arianism and other heretical teachings. He states:

"Ecumenism is a new heresy that has appeared in our days ...we Orthodox must stand far apart. Indeed, we ought to fight against it by enlightening those Orthodox who are ignorant of ecumenism and what it entails".

In stark contrast are the views expressed in the writings of the now famous convert to Orthodox Christianity, Timothy (or later Kallistos) Ware. This 'western' Ortho-

dox theologian is now a Metropolitan Bishop in England. Bishop Kallistos cites the opinions of many theologians who see ecumenism not just as a positive action of the Orthodox Church, but as a necessary response to other Christian groups that do not share the same environment, the same attitude, the same *phronema* (spiritual identity and intention) as Orthodoxy.

The next question is an obvious one, how can theologians belonging to the same tradition express opposing views on ecumenism? I quote from Athanasios Frangopoulos again:

"Ecumenism maintains that the truth and Grace of Christ is not to be found in any one single Church, but partially in all the Churches... Now if we put all these Churches together and create an Ecumenical Church we also unite all the pieces of the faith and the truth, and come up with the whole truth of Christ... (However), that which is divided cannot be joined, and the Ecumenists shall never achieve the 'union of the Churches' because there are not many Churches but one... the Orthodox Catholic Church".

Many non-Orthodox Christians involved in the ecumenical movement would hold to the above belief that Frangopoulos so completely rejects. Bishop Kallistos and most of the Orthodox Churches (the family of Orthodoxy) would agree with Frangopoulos on the unique and fundamental integrity of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church. They would, however, DISAGREE with the above definition of ecumenism. There is not a difference of doctrine here, but, as I have already said, a difference in the understanding of the nature of ecumenism.

Most of the Orthodox see ecumenism as an expression of love, a working out of the desire to be one in Christ, even as the Son and the Father are one. We cannot hope to understand each other if we do not share of ourselves and try to explain what it is that makes us what we are. However, for this hope to become reality, Christians of differing backgrounds will need to agree on the fundamentals of the Faith. If we attempt to by-pass this, to compromise ourselves, then unity is false and the fears of Frangopoulos are justified. Ecumenism involves discussion and education; these must precede any attempt at reconciliation of the Churches. It is this that most Orthodox believe is ecumenism.

The Orthodox assert that only they have retained the fullness of the Truth, handed down by Christ to the Apostles, and handed on by them to the Church, down to the present day. The Orthodox claim is made without any false pride. It is not arrogance, but adherence to the Holy Tradition - unchanged. Many of you would no doubt wish to argue this point, but it is the Orthodox position. For us Orthodox to be faithful to this claim, a sharing of this truth with those outside Orthodoxy is not an option; to act otherwise is to be false to ourselves, and to what we believe. We speak with other Christians out of love, but also because we believe that we have the

truth that only Orthodoxy, out of all the Christian Churches, has retained. There can be no coming together of divergent dogmas, no 'partial' union; when we can be of the same Tradition (with a capital T), then and only then can our ecumenism lead us to unity.

Let's look at what another Orthodox writer says of ecumenism. Stanley Harakas has written in "Something is stirring in world Orthodoxy":

"The chief issue for the Orthodox regarding participation in the ecumenical movement has been the doctrine of the Church. Some Orthodox feel strongly that participation... implies a betrayal of the faith... The fears of the anti-ecumenists have not been realised... However, neither have the rosy expectations of the Orthodox ecumenists been fulfilled".

Orthodoxy is an enigma to many other Churches, but they themselves are often embarrassed and troubled by the actions and opinions of others in the ecumenical movement. Orthodoxy has been involved in the ecumenical movement from the beginning. If ecumenism involves dialogue with an honest wish to work towards unity - a physical communion with all who are Christian - then the Orthodox rejoice. However, if Ecumenism is about compromise, about rejecting the basic dogmas of the Tradition of the Church of God, then the Orthodox will pull back because they will not give up on this treasure -this "pearl of great price"- which is Orthodoxy. The Orthodox have not reached agreement with other Christians on the fundamental and important doctrines of the Christian Faith, but they go on in their wish for unity, and continue (for the moment at least) in the ecumenical movement.

The words expressed in this paper may seem harsh and unbending. Many may find the Orthodox position an insurmountable obstacle to the unity of the Churches. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Church persists in ecumenical discussion because it seeks the visible unity of all Christians in truth and in love. However, for the Orthodox to ignore their fundamental beliefs in a bid to create some tenuous, 'common denominator' Christianity, unity will not be achieved at all; such a thing is destructive. It is a creation of DISUNITY of the Church from her Tradition.

Despite what might seem a gloomy and negative prognosis, there is still hope and encouragement on many fronts for Orthodoxy. I am here presenting this paper this evening. This surely indicates the hope of at least one Orthodox priest for positive discussion with other Christians. If the Orthodox saw no constructive purpose for the ecumenical movement, this exercise would be pointless and merely an attempt at dissension and ecumenical terrorism.

Orthodoxy is in dialogue with many other Churches, eg: The Uniting Church in Australia, the Anglican Churches, The Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Churches. Much social statement and action have seen various Orthodox Churches joining Roman Catholics and Protestants with a united front. Ecumenism has allowed the Orthodox to come to an understanding of the traditions of many other Churches, and it has also

opened up Orthodoxy to the curious eyes of the rest of Christendom.

Although much of Orthodoxy's agreed action with others has been on a 'non-doctrinal level', discussion, common action and an acceptance of the integrity of other Christians must precede any unity on more fundamental levels. Orthodox Christians are usually not permitted to share in the Eucharistic Supper with other Christians, nor are Orthodox and other clergy permitted to co-officiate at services. However, because we can and do attend each other's services, the desire for understanding and unity is there. Will this desire ever lead to unity? I cannot say, but my hope is that this will take place.

Sadly, much has occurred in recent times that has seen the Orthodox question their position in the ecumenical movement. The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe has seen serious division and even a suspension of official dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The ordination of women to what many Churches believe is the sacred Priesthood of Christ, is seen by the Orthodox as a grave obstacle to unity.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Canberra in 1991 had the Orthodox delegates meeting in the midst of this ecumenical gathering to consider whether they should continue in the ecumenical movement at all. Many Orthodox now see the WCC in a new sinister role. They view it as a catalyst for a total liberalising of the Christian Faith, a movement to coalesce the churches into a 'Super Church', without set dogma and tradition. Some more extreme Orthodox writers even refer to the WCC as heralding the Anti-Christ. These may not be universal opinions within Orthodoxy, but they do show something of the tension and hesitation that Orthodoxy feels concerning itself and ecumenism.

I began this short paper with some questions. Should Orthodoxy be involved in reaching out to other Churches and Christians of a different 'phronema'? My answer is yes. If we are to be true to the words of Christ, "that they all may be one", then I can answer only yes. However, if the question is: "Will the Orthodox continue in the ecumenical movement?", then my answer is not nearly so definite, it all depends on what the ecumenical movement becomes and how other Christians continue to see the nature of ecumenism. Orthodoxy continues in ecumenical dialogue in many countries and on an international level. Indeed about half the member Churches of the Australian Council of Churches are Orthodox [NOTE: In 1994, the A.C.C. was renamed and is now called the "National Council of Churches in Australia" - N.C.C.A.]. What form our ecumenical involvement takes in the future, is the subject of much consideration and prayer.

Fr Timothy Evangelides

Based on a paper presented at the Tasmanian Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission on 20 July 1993

Fasting in the Orthodox Church

Introductory Remarks

The Orthodox Church has now entered a new Liturgical period of time, which is known as the Triodion and Great Lent. The season of Great Lent is an opportunity for all faithful to prepare for the great feast of the Resurrection of Christ. Just like any great event requires a time of preparation, so too the season of Great Lent is that time of the year where all Christians seek to renew and restore their communion with God. In this sense, Great Lent is that period of time, offered by the Church to remind her faithful to seek to do and be all that they should do and be throughout the entire year. In this way it is a time of renewed devotion to prayer, fasting, repentance and giving to those in need – that is, freely deciding to follow Christ and His commandment of loving God and neighbour.

Far from being a time of morbidity, gloominess or dreariness, as many might suppose, it is a time of joyful expectation. Indeed, it is a time of eager expectation for the bestowal, by God, of His greatest gift to the world – that is, the gift of eternal life by the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. The hymns of Great Lent begin with this air of festivity: "Let us begin the Lenten time with delight... let us fast from the passions as we fast from food, taking pleasure in the good words of the Spirit, that we may be granted to see the holy passion of Christ our God and His holy Pascha spiritually rejoicing".

It is precisely within this context, that fasting is to be properly understood and experienced – that is, as a means of renewing our relationship with God assured of the joy of His loving kindness and mercy. Accordingly, fasting has to be observed with a sense of resurrectional joy knowing that the victory of life has already been granted through Christ's resurrection from the dead. Before looking specifically at the historical evolution of the Lenten fast as a means for preparing to encounter the risen Lord, we will briefly examine the place of fasting in the life of the Church in general. Only then will we be in a position to approach the true meaning of fasting.

Historical Evolution of Fasting in General

As early as the second century, in early Christian texts such as the Didache and The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles one finds references to Wednesdays and Fridays as days of fast. In the eighth chapter of the Didache, the faithful are advised as follows:

"Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but fast on Wednesdays and Fridays."

Until recently the opinion has been that these fasts were established in opposition to the Hebrew fast days which

were Monday and Thursday. Modern scholarship, however - after the discovery of the Qumran documents – has claimed that the fast held on these days by the early Christians originated from the ancient sacred calendar which the Essenes observed and which, in all probability was accepted by the early Judeo-Christian communities in Palestine. Later on, the Christians would add a new meaning to these days - as commemorations of the days of Christ's betrayal and death. These days came to be known as days of fasting or station days. This implies that originally fasting indicated the people of God standing ready and awaiting for the *Parousia* of the Lord. Hence, fasting had an eschatological meaning to it and the emphasis was not on the ascetical value of fasting. That is to say, the early Christians fasted precisely because they were looking forward, into the future, at the second coming of the Lord. It becomes clear that the pre-Constantine and pre-monastic tradition understood fasting primarily as a one day fast which involved the complete abstinence from food and not the abstinence from certain foods as is understood today.

Development of the Lenten Fast

Fasting, in preparation for Pascha was universal in the Early Church, both in the East and in the West, as evidenced by various second and third century references to the practice. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History makes reference to St Irenaeus who had written on the debate regarding the date for Pascha and on the nature of the period of abstinence preceding it:

"For the controversy is not only concerning the day, but also concerning the very manner of the fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more; some moreover, count their day as consisting of forty hours day and night. And this variety in its observance has not originated in our time; but long before in that of our ancestors."

Not only does this reference establish that fasting before Pascha was already a custom in the lifetime of St Irenaeus but that it was of even earlier, if not of Apostolic origin. By the fourth century, this pre-Paschal fast had undergone a transformation, both in its form and length. It had evolved into a forty day fast and became centred, as a result of its long duration, more in the restriction of certain kinds of foods rather than total abstinence from food. The first explicit reference to a forty day fast is in the Council of Nicaea (325) in Canon 5. By the end of the fourth century Bishop Kallistos (Ware) concluded that: "the observance of a forty day fast seems to have been the standard practice in most

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The Death of Christ: Saint Athanasius

ALL these things the Saviour thought fit to do, so that, recognising His bodily acts as works of God, men who were blind to His presence in creation might regain knowledge of the Father. For, as I said before, who that saw His authority over evil spirits and their response to it could doubt that He was, indeed, the Son, the Wisdom and the Power of God? Even the very creation broke silence at His behest and, marvellous to relate, confessed with one voice before the cross, that monument of victory, that He Who suffered thereon in the body was not man only, but Son of God and Saviour of all. The sun veiled his face, the earth quaked, the mountains were rent asunder, all men were stricken with awe. These things showed that Christ on the cross was God, and that all creation was His slave and was bearing witness by its fear to the presence of its Master. Thus, then, God the Word revealed Himself to men through His works. We must next consider the end of His earthly life and the nature of His bodily death. This is, indeed, the very centre of our faith, and everywhere you hear men speak of it; by it, too, no less than by His other acts, Christ is revealed as God and Son of God.

We have dealt as far as circumstances and our own understanding permit with the reason for His bodily manifestation. We have seen that to change the corruptible to incorruption was proper to none other than the Saviour Himself, Who in the beginning made all things out of nothing; that only the Image of the Father could recreate the likeness of the Image in men, that none save our Lord Jesus Christ could give to mortals immortality, and that only the Word Who orders all things and is alone the Father's true and sole-begotten Son could teach men about Him and abolish the worship of idols. But beyond all this, there was a debt owing which must needs be paid; for, as I said before, all men were due to die. Here, then, is the second reason why the Word dwelt among us, namely that having proved His Godhead by His works, He might offer the sacrifice on behalf of all, surrendering His own temple to death in place of all, to settle man's account with death and free him from the primal transgression. In the same act also He showed Himself mightier than death, displaying His own body incorruptible as the first-fruits of the resurrection.

You must not be surprised if we repeat ourselves in dealing with this subject. We are speaking of the good pleasure of God and of the things which He in His loving wisdom thought fit to do, and it is better to put the same thing in several ways than to run the risk of leaving something out. The body of the Word, then, being a real human body, in spite of its having been uniquely formed from a virgin, was of itself mortal and, like other bodies, liable to death. But the indwelling of the Word loosed it from this natural liability, so that corruption

could not touch it. Thus it happened that two opposite marvels took place at once: the death of all was consummated in the Lord's body; yet, because the Word was in it, death and corruption were in the same act utterly abolished. Death there had to be, and death for all, so that the due of all might be paid. Wherefore, the Word, as I said, being Himself incapable of death, assumed a mortal body, that He might offer it as His in place of all, and suffering for the sake of all through union with it, "might bring to nought Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver them who all their lifetime were enslaved by the fear of death." (Heb. 2:14)

Have no fear, then. Now that the common Saviour of all has died on our behalf, we who believe in Christ no longer die, as men died aforetime, in fulfilment of the threat of the law. That condemnation has come to an end; and now that, by the grace of the resurrection, corruption has been banished and done away, we are loosed from our mortal bodies in God's good time for each, so that we may obtain thereby a better resurrection. Like seeds cast into the earth, we do not perish in our dissolution, but like them shall rise again, death having been brought to nought by the grace of the Saviour. That is why blessed Paul, through whom we all have surety of the resurrection, says: "This corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality; but when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory, O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?'" (1Cor. 15:53)

"Well then," some people may say, "if the essential thing was that He should surrender His body to death in place of all, why did He not do so as Man privately, without going to the length of public crucifixion? Surely it would have been more suitable for Him to have laid aside His body with honour than to endure so shameful a death." But look at this argument closely, and see how merely human it is, whereas what the Saviour did was truly divine and worthy of His Godhead for several reasons. The first is this. The death of men under ordinary circumstances is the result of their natural weakness. They are essentially impermanent, so after a time they fall ill and when worn out they die. But the Lord is not like that. He is not weak, He is the Power of God and Word of God and Very Life Itself. If He had died quietly in His bed like other men it would have looked as if He did so in accordance with His nature, and as though He was indeed no more than other men. But because He was Himself Word and Life and Power His body was made strong, and be-

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Upcoming Feast Days

St Gregory of Nyssa

(10th January)

Saint Gregory was born at Caesarea in Cappadocia about the year 331. He was the fourth son of St Basil the Elder and of Saint Emmelia, and the younger brother of Saint Macrina (19 July) and Saint Basil the Great (1 Jan.). Brought up in the atmosphere of virtue and piety created by all these Saints, instead of setting out like Basil for the great centres of Greek learning in order to follow the lectures of renowned masters, he received his secular education from his father, who was a master of rhetoric. This did not prevent his acquiring a deep and comprehensive knowledge of philosophy, literature and the sciences and becoming one of the greatest architects of the Christianisation of ancient culture. Baptized in his youth and ordained reader, he was intended for an ecclesiastical career when, suddenly changing direction, he plunged into secular life, became a professor of rhetoric and married the young and devout Theosebeia. The remonstrances of his sister Macrina—who had persuaded her mother and brothers to embrace the monastic life—and those of Saint Gregory the Theologian, prevailed with him in the end, and he spent some time with the latter and Saint Basil at Annesi, their retreat on the banks of the Iris. There he was able to experience the joys of the anchoritic life: silence, freedom from earthly cares, deeper meditation on the mysteries of holy Scripture and of the holy dogmas, and the spirit's flight towards God in prayer. Basil, who through publication of his Rules had begun to organize the monastic life of Cappadocia, soon enjoined him to compose a complementary treatise on Virginité and Christian Perfection. Who could have written more wonderfully in praise of virginité, or with greater fervour, than one who lamented having allowed himself to be caught in the nets of common life, and of thus being separated as by a chasm from the glory of that way of living, which brings man to the likeness of the angels and makes him thereby a partaker of divine incorruptibility?

On becoming Archbishop of Caesarea in 370, Saint Basil gathered around him reliable friends in order to resist Valens' persecution of the defenders of the doctrine of the Council of Nicaea, and he saw to the election of the reluctant Gregory to the bishopric of the inconspicuous town of Nyssa. With little aptitude for administration or ecclesiastical niceties, too humble and sincere to contend with the bad and the devious, he soon fell victim to the machinations of the Arians. Accusing him of being irregularly ordained and of having embezzled church funds, they assembled a council in his absence and applied to the Prefect Demosthenes, an open enemy of the Orthodox, for his deposition and exile (376). Silent and

unresisting like a lamb before his shearers (Is. 53:7), the holy Bishop allowed himself to be thus deprived. It was only after two years, on the death of Valens, that he was able to recover his see and to return in triumph to Nyssa (378). But he was not left long in the enjoyment of peace, for early in 379 Saint Basil died. Saint Gregory had always tended to look on him as his father in God rather than his brother according to the flesh, and now he, the philosopher, meek and reserved by temperament, became the heir and successor of the great hierarch and champion of Orthodoxy.

His engagement in the dogmatic struggle was vigorous, and his deep theological insight and powerful eloquence soon impressed his authority upon everyone. He took part in the Council of Antioch, which met to put an end to the schism which had afflicted that Church for more than half a century, and he succeeded in vindicating the cause of Saint Meletius (12 Feb.); he undertook a mission to reorganize the Church of Pontus and Armenia, and he had his brother Peter elected as Bishop of Sebaste; he also composed a series of polemical works against the extreme Arian Eunomius, in which he defends the incomprehensibility of the divine nature; and against Apollinarius, in which he shows that Christ has really and truly assumed the whole man, soul and body. Above all, in 381, he took part in the great and holy second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, during which he overthrew the reasonings of the Arian and Pneumatomachian heretics and achieved the triumph of the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity, for which Basil had fought so hard all his life. Saluted by the Fathers of the Council as the 'pillar of Orthodoxy' and regarded as the worthy successor of Saint Athanasius and Saint Basil, Gregory subsequently took part in every council and assembly of the Church. He was sent on a mission to settle the troubles that disturbed the Churches of Palestine and Arabia. On his return to Constantinople, the Emperor Theodosius took him as his spiritual counsellor and asked him to deliver the funeral orations of his wife Pulcheria and of his daughter Flacilla (385).

With the peace of the Church assured, Saint Gregory was able, from about 386, to devote himself at last entirely to the spiritual life, and to the direction of the monasteries founded by Saint Basil. His wife, Saint Theosebeia, had died—she had long ago become his sister and spiritual companion—and the Emperor and court had removed to Milan. In the same way as he had carried forward his brother's dogmatic and ecclesiastical work and had completed certain of Basil's exegetical and theological writings, Gregory now brought to fulfilment the monastic enterprise of which Saint Basil was the founder, organizer and legislator, by composing mystical treatises of a depth and beauty which increased with his years: *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, the *Life of Moses*,

The Christian Institute. They constitute a bold and imposing statement of Orthodox spiritual teaching: mystical theology above all, put into practice in the monastic life, and which Gregory expresses in the terms and categories that had been tested in the heat of dogmatic controversies.

According to Saint Gregory, man has been created at the image of God, as a reflection of His perfections and especially of His sovereign freedom. Since he has fallen into corruption and been clothed with the 'coats of skin' of mortality and of the passions through the misuse of this freedom, his restoration to his original state, entry into renewed communion with God and recovery of the dignity of priest and king of the creation, has been possible only through the Incarnation of Christ. Joined by Baptism to the Body of Christ and causing the presence of the Lord to grow ever more and more within him—in his soul by the holy virtues and in his body by the sacraments—man is capable of neverending progress in a union without confusion with the infinite God, drawing with him the human race and the entire universe which he transforms into the Church.

Thus in the eternity of the age without end, he who runs towards Thee is always becoming greater and higher, always adding to himself by the multiplication of graces... but as that which is sought is in itself boundless, the end and fulfilment of that which is found becomes, for those who ascend, the starting point of the discovery of more exalted blessings. And he who ascends never ceases to go from beginning to beginning by beginnings which have no end. (Seventh Homily on the Song of Songs (PG 44, 941)).

Source: 'The Synaxarion. The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church. Vol.3 January-February, Holy Convent of the Annunciation of Our Lady, Ormylia(Chalkidike) 2001

Forgiveness Sunday

This Sunday is the fourth of the Sundays which prepare us for Lent. It ends, and is the last day of this period of preparation. From the following day, Monday, we shall be in Lent itself. This Sunday itself is called 'Cheese-fare Sunday' because, beginning with the next day, the tradition of the Church is that we should abstain from eggs, milk, butter and cheese.

The Saturday preceding this Sunday is dedicated to the memory of those saints, men and women, who have given themselves to the ascetic life. At the threshold of

Lent, we honour them as inspirers and intercessors in this difficult way of penitence.

The epistle of St Paul to the Romans (13. 11-14. 4), read at the day liturgy, exhorts us to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, to walk honestly as in the day, fleeing drunkenness, debauchery and the lusts of the flesh. Paul links this theme of the flesh to the theme of fasting. One person believes that he may eat all things; another eats only herbs. Let not him that eats despise him who does not, and let not him who does not eat judge him who does. Who are you to judge another? Both you and he are dependent on the same Master.

The gospel for the liturgy, taken from St Matthew (6. 14-21), opens with the precept of forgiveness: 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses'. The fact that the Church has chosen this saying to introduce the gospel for the day shows that she intends to make forgiveness the dominant theme for this Sunday. It is true that the rest of the gospel for this day speaks of fasting; but the Greek particle which joins the verses about fasting to the verses about forgiveness seem to assign to the former a position of dependence on the latter. The Lord Jesus advises those who fast not to look gloomy or to be of a sad countenance like those hypocrites who want to be noticed when they fast. 'Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face.' The Father, who sees in secret, shall reward thee openly. Let thy treasure and thy heart be not on earth, but in heaven.

The chants for vespers and matins contrast the blessedness of Paradise with the wretched state of man after the fall. But Moses, through fasting, so purified his eyes that they were able to see the divine vision. In the same way, may our fasting, which will last forty days as did that of Moses, help us to repress the passions of the flesh and free us so that we may 'with light step ... set out upon the path to heaven'. Let us pay attention to the words 'with light step'. Our penitence must not be something heavy and burdensome. We must go through Lent lightly and airily, in a way which somehow makes us kin to the angels.

[Source: The Year of Grace of the Lord, SVS Press, 2001]



The Death of Christ: Saint Athanasius

(Continued from page 5)

cause the death had to be accomplished, He took the occasion of perfecting His sacrifice not from Himself, but from others. How could He fall sick, Who had healed others? Or how could that body weaken and fail by means of which others are made strong? Here, again, you may say, "Why did He not prevent death, as He did sickness?" Because it was precisely in order to be able to die that He had taken a body, and to prevent the death would have been to impede the resurrection. And as to the unsuitability of sickness for His body, as arguing weakness, you may say, "Did He then not hunger?" Yes, He hungered, because that was the property of His body, but He did not die of hunger, because He Whose body hungered was the Lord.. Similarly, though He died to ransom all, He did not see corruption. His body rose in perfect soundness, for it was the body of none other than the Life Himself.

Someone else might say, perhaps, that it would have been better for the Lord to have avoided the designs of the Jews against Him, and so to have guarded His body from death altogether. But see how unfitting this also would have been for Him. Just as it would not have been fitting for Him to give His body to death by His own hand, being Word and being Life, so also it was not consonant with Himself that He should avoid the death inflicted by others. Rather, He pursued it to the uttermost, and in pursuance of His nature neither laid aside His body of His own accord nor escaped the plotting Jews. And this action showed no limitation or weakness in the Word; for He both waited for death in order to make an end of it, and hastened to accomplish it as an offering on behalf of all. Moreover, as it was the death of all mankind that the Saviour came to accomplish, not His own, He did not lay aside His body by an individual act of dying, for to Him, as Life, this simply did not belong; but He ac-

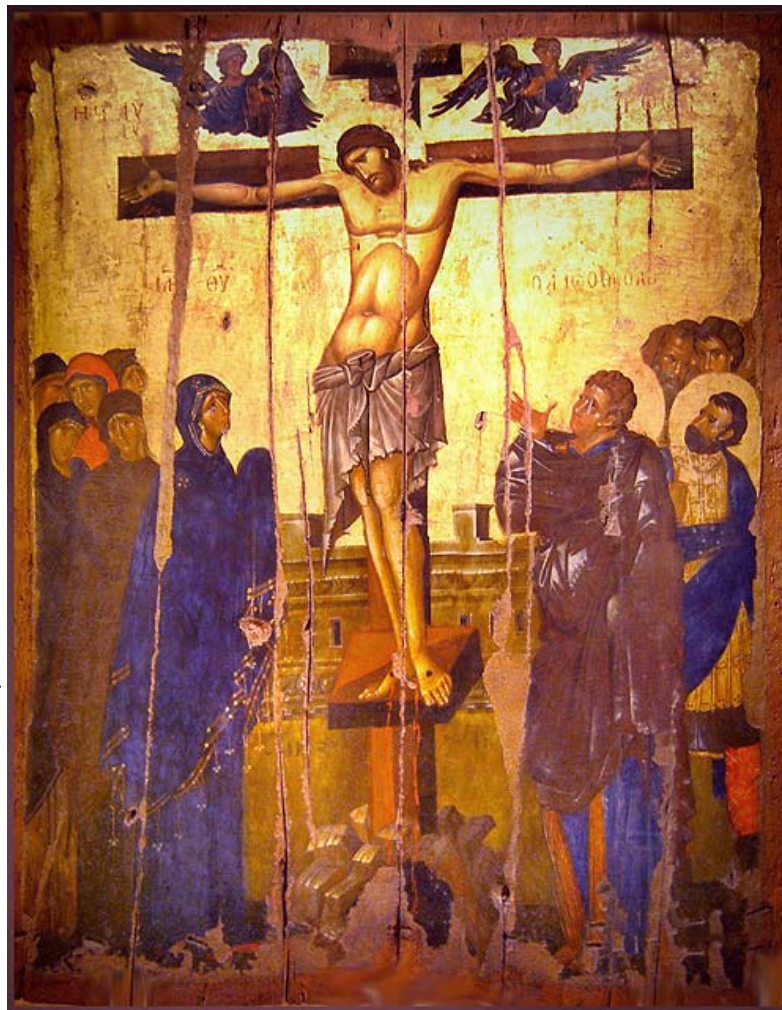
cepted death at the hands of men, thereby completely to destroy it in His own body.

There are some further considerations which enable one to understand why the Lord's body had such an end. The supreme object of His coming was to bring about the resurrection of the body. This was to be the monument to His victory over death, the assurance to all that He had Himself conquered corruption and that their own bodies also would eventually be incorrupt; and it was in token of that and as a pledge of the future resurrection that He kept

His body incorrupt. But there again, if His body had fallen sick and the Word had left it in that condition, how unfitting it would have been! Should He Who healed the bodies of others neglect to keep His own in health? How would His miracles of healing be believed, if this were so? Surely people would either laugh at Him as unable to dispel disease or else consider Him lacking in proper human feeling because He could do so, but did not.

Then, again, suppose without any illness He had just concealed His body somewhere, and then suddenly re-appeared and said that He had risen from the dead. He would have been regarded merely as a teller of tales, and because there was no witness of His death, no-

body would believe His resurrection. Death had to precede resurrection, for there could be no resurrection without it. A secret and unwitnessed death would have left the resurrection without any proof or evidence to support it. Again, why should He die a secret death, when He proclaimed the fact of His rising openly? Why should He drive out evil spirits and heal the man blind from birth and change water into wine, all publicly, in order to convince men that He was the Word, and not also declare publicly that incorruptibility of His mortal body, so that He might Himself be believed to be the Life? And how could His disciples have had boldness in speaking of the resurrection unless they could state it as a fact that He had



(Continued from page 8)

first died? Or how could their hearers be expected to believe their assertion, unless they themselves also had witnessed His death? For if the Pharisees at the time refused to believe and forced others to deny also, though the things had happened before their very eyes, how many excuses for unbelief would they have contrived, if it had taken place secretly? Or how could the end of death and the victory over it have been declared, had not the Lord thus challenged it before the sight of all, and by the incorruption of His body proved that henceforward it was annulled and void?

There are some other possible objections that must be answered. Some might urge that, even granting the necessity of a public death for subsequent belief in the resurrection, it would surely have been better for Him to have arranged an honourable death for Himself, and so to have avoided the ignominy of the cross. But even this would have given ground for suspicion that His power over death was limited to the particular kind of death which He chose for Himself; and that again would furnish excuse for disbelieving the resurrection. Death came to his body, therefore, not from Himself but from enemy action, in order that the Saviour might utterly abolish death in whatever form they offered it to Him. A generous wrestler, virile and strong, does not himself choose his antagonists, lest it should be thought that of some of them he is afraid. Rather, he lets the spectators choose them, and that all the more if these are hostile, so that he may overthrow whomsoever they match against him and thus vindicate his superior strength. Even so was it with Christ. He, the Life of all, our Lord and Saviour, did not arrange the manner of his own death lest He should seem to be afraid of some other kind. No. He accepted and bore upon the cross a death inflicted by others, and those others His special enemies, a death which to them was supremely terrible and by no means to be faced; and He did this in order that, by destroying even this death, He might Himself be believed to be the Life, and the power of death be recognised as finally annulled. A marvellous and mighty paradox has thus occurred, for the death which they thought to inflict on Him as dishonour and disgrace has become the glorious monument to death's defeat. Therefore it is also, that He neither endured the death of John, who was beheaded, nor was He sawn asunder, like Isaiah: even in death He preserved His body whole and undivided, so that there should be no excuse hereafter for those who would divide the Church.

So much for the objections of those outside the Church. But if any honest Christian wants to know why He suffered death on the cross and not in some other way, we answer thus: in no other way was it expedient for us, indeed the Lord offered for our sakes the one death that was supremely good. He had come to bear the curse that lay on us; and how could He "become a curse" otherwise than by accepting the accursed death? And that death is the cross, for it is written 'Cursed is every one

that hangeth on a tree.' (Gal.3:13) Again, the death of the Lord is the ransom of all, and by it 'the middle wall of partition' (Eph.2:14) is broken down and the call of the Gentiles comes about. How could He have called us if He had not been crucified, for it is only on the cross that a man dies with arms outstretched? Here, again, we see the fitness of His death and of those outstretched arms: it was that He might draw His ancient people with the one and the Gentiles with the other, and join both together in Himself. Even so, He foretold the manner of His redeeming death, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Myself.' (John 12:32) Again, the air is the sphere of the devil, the enemy of our race who, having fallen from heaven, endeavours with the other evil spirits who shared in his disobedience both to keep souls from the truth and to hinder the progress of those who are trying to follow it. The apostle refers to this when he says, 'According to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.' (Eph.2:2) But the Lord came to overthrow the devil and to purify the air and to make 'a way' for us up to heaven, as the apostle says, 'through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.' (Heb. 10:20) This had to be done through death, and by what other kind of death could it be done, save by a death in the air, that is, on the cross? Here, again, you see how right and natural it was that the Lord should suffer thus; for being thus "lifted up," He cleansed the air from all the evil influences of the enemy. 'I beheld Satan as lightning falling,' (Luke 10:18) He says; and thus He reopened the road to heaven, saying again, 'Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.' (Psalm 24:7) For it was not the Word Himself Who needed an opening of the gates, He being Lord of all, nor was any of His works closed to their Maker. No, it was we who needed it, we whom He Himself upbore in His own body—that body which He first offered to death on behalf of all, and then made through it a path to heaven.

*[Source: On the Incarnation, St Athanasius,
Translation by a religious of C.S.M.V., SVS Press 1996]*



Fasting in the Orthodox Church

(Continued from page 4)

parts of Christendom...Lent as we know it ... is the result of a convergence between... two elements - between the six day pre-Nicene fast, which was directly in preparation for Easter and the forty day post-Nicene fast, which originally formed part of the training of candidates for Baptism...[but] came to evolve the whole body of the faithful, and not just those preparing for Baptism."

It is in this prototypic period of the Church's history that fasting came to be marked by a restriction in the types and quantity of food eaten. And it is this latter meaning that serves as the model for the present day Lenten period of fasting in the Orthodox Church today.

It becomes clear that the Lenten fast, which is observed today, was originally a monastic fast which crept into the life of the whole Church. That is to say that this fast was ascetical, a mortification of the flesh whose purpose it was to assist the monk in his spiritual ascent to theosis. Asceticism, of which fasting is a form, is not something optional but is a necessary tool for the successful attainment of salvation. A contemporary monk of Mount Athos, Father Tickon wrote: "whoever fasts shows that he has started to transcend earthly and temporal things and longs for the heavenly and eternal things." However, one must be careful not to make fasting an end in itself, a law or an obligation. Rather, an honest attempt must be made to empty ourselves, to become transparent and allow the grace of God to permeate within us. Fasting, in this sense is a means, which the Church offers its faithful members as an opportunity for them to transform their hunger and thirst for food into hunger and thirst for God Himself.

Biblical Basis for Fasting

The practice of fasting is clearly evident in the Scriptures and is indeed attested to by Jesus Himself, who fasted and taught His disciples to fast. "And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Mt. 6: 16-18).

Firstly, the above passage, by Jesus clearly underlines the importance of fasting. It does not say, for example "and if you fast", that is to say, it does [not] make fasting an option for Christians but a prerequisite for their spiritual life: Jesus said, "and when you fast". So important is fasting that even Jesus said that without it some forms of evil could not be conquered and overcome (cf. Mt. 17: 21).

Secondly, the passage clearly underscores that Christians are not to be ostentatious to, or Pharisaic about,

their fasting, but rather to do it in secret, not drawing attention to themselves. With such a principle given by Jesus Himself, perhaps it would be better, for example, when going to somebody's house during Great Lent, who may not know that it is a fasting period, to eat what is put in front of you thereby not drawing attention to yourself. However, a bishop once said in his sermon: "now, there is a difference between eating what is put before you and putting yourself before what is eaten." It is not wise to put other Christians down, who may not fast, because their health may not allow. It has to be stated that Jesus Christ was extremely gentle and loving to the tax collectors but was severe to the Pharisees and to the hypocrites.

Saint Paul himself fasted, and in his teaching on food insisted that men and women fast and do so in secret, without mutual inspection and judgement.

"Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things."(Phil 3:17-19). And elsewhere he wrote:

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." (1 Cor 6:12-13)

From all the above not only is fasting stressed but also the way the fast should be carried out – that is, in secret and not making it publicly known to others.

The True Meaning of Fasting

The whole purpose of fasting is to enable the Christian



(Continued from page 10)

to commune with fervour and desire with Jesus Christ. That is to say, the whole rationale behind fasting is to make human persons aware of their dependence upon God. In our fallen state, it is only by self-denial, such as the real physical hunger or tiredness involved in not eating, that we can be led to remember both our broken and created state, and therefore our total reliance on the uncreated God without whom we would not even exist. It is true that when we have eaten well and filled our stomachs with sustenance, a false sense of over-confidence and self-assurance can easily overcome us with the renewed energy gained. And so, just like a little hunger can lead us to a desire to eat, so as to be nourished, in precisely the same way can we be led to a thirst and hunger for "spiritual food" which is Jesus Christ Himself.

Divorced, however, from this desire to commune with God, fasting can lead to a heightened irritable disposition of the person fasting or it can lead to an over-emphasis of the external rules associated with the fast. This inevitably reduces the practice of fasting to a form of legalism, that is simply to rules regarding what can be eaten and what cannot be eaten. In this way we miss entirely the inward goal of the fast. And without the inner understanding of the nature of fasting, the outward form loses all its meaning. Then the words of Christ, "without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5) lose all their significance because as long as we think we are abiding by the external rules of fasting then we do not need God. Already we can see that fasting is the sacred pretext for all Christian persons to break the monologue, autonomy and their false sense of security inside their ego.

We can see that the Church, in all its wisdom has placed fasting at the disposal of its faithful members so as to give them the opportunity to gain mastery over themselves by becoming liberated in God. As one of the many tools given by the Church, fasting is also a means which can help us to liberate ourselves from a mere dependence on the things of this world in order to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom of God. It is to give power to the soul so that it will not yield to temptation and sin. It is precisely for this reason that St Seraphim underlines the importance of fasting in terms of an "indispensable means" of gaining the fruit of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

Humanity does not fast because it pleases God for His servants not to eat, for, as the Lenten hymns of the Church remind us, "the devil also never eats." Neither do the faithful fast with the belief that somehow their physical hunger and thirst can serve as a "reparation" for their sins. Such an understanding is never given in the Scriptures nor in the writings of the Fathers. Rather, people fast so that they might more effectively serve God who loves them and has saved them in Christ and the Spirit. From this, it follows that fasting without a conscious desire to live a virtuous life is to miss the

whole point of the meaning of the fast. That is to say, fasting without effort in virtue is wholly in vain. According to Abba Dorotheos:

"... in fasting one must not only obey the rule against gluttony in regard to food, but refrain from every sin so that, while fasting, the tongue may also fast, refraining from slander, lies, evil talking, degrading one's brother, anger and every sin committed by the tongue. One should also fast with the eyes, not looking at vain things...A man that fasts wisely... wins purity and comes to humility... and proves himself a skilful builder."

The spiritual fathers, as strictly ascetic as they were, are very clear in their teaching about fasting. They insisted with the Lord and the Scriptures that people are to fast in order to become free from passions and lust. But they insist as well that the most important thing is to be free from all sin, including the pride, vanity and hypocrisy, which comes through foolish and sinful fasting.

"Thus a man who strives for salvation... must not allow himself to eat to fullness... but should still eat all kinds of food so that on the one hand he might avoid boastful pride and on the other hand not show disdain for God's creation..."

Just as Adam's tasting of the forbidden fruit enslaved humanity to food so ascetical fasting has its purpose to return humanity to freedom. We end this brief reflection with the point that unless fasting is accompanied with prayer and love for neighbour then it is utterly valueless.

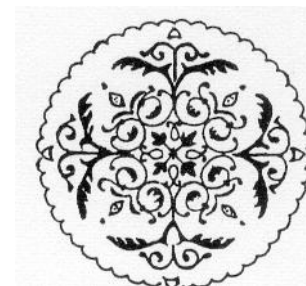
Dr. Philip Kariatlis:

Academic Secretary and Associate Lecturer St Andrew's
Greek Orthodox Theological College

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[Source: www.greekorthodox.org.au]



Holy Services in English 2012

21st January	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
11th February	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
21st February	7.30-8.30 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
10th March	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
21st April	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
24th April	7.30-8.30 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
12th May	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
15th May	7.30-8.30 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
16th June	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
26th June	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
14th July	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
24th July	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
11th August	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
21st August	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
15th September	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
25th September	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
13th October	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
30th October	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
10th November	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery
13th November	7.30-8.45 p.m.	Divine Liturgy	St Eustathios Church
8th December	9.00-10.00 a.m	Divine Liturgy	Geelong Monastery

Geelong Monastery

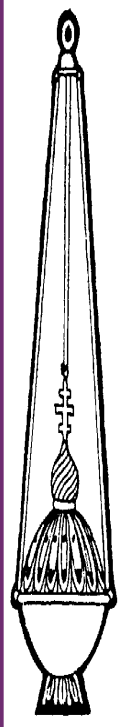
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St Eustathios Church

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South Melbourne

From the Old Testament

The Psalms



Psalm 21 (22)

1. For the End; concerning help in the morning; a psalm by David. 2. O God, my God, hear me; why have You forsaken me? The words of my transgressions are far from my salvation. 3. O my God, I will cry out by day, but You will not hear me; And by night, but not for a lack of understanding in me. 4. But You dwell among the saints, O praise of Israel. 5. Our fathers hoped in You; They hoped in You, and You delivered them. 6. They cried out to You and were saved; They hoped in You and were not ashamed. 7. But I am a worm, and not a man; A reproach of man and despised by the people. 8. All who see me mock me; they speak with their lips and shake their head, 9. saying, "He hoped in the Lord, let Him rescue him; Let Him save him since He delights in him." 10. For You are He who drew me from the womb, My

hope from my mother's breasts; 11. I was cast upon You from the womb, From my mother's womb You are my God. 12. Do not stand off from me, for affliction is near; there is no one to help. 13. Many young bulls surrounded me; Fat bulls encircled me. 14. They opened their mouths against me like a raging and roaring lion. 15. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are shattered; my heart is like wax, melting into my stomach. 16. My strength is dried up like an earthen vessel; my tongue cleaves to my throat; And You led me into the dust of death. 17. For many dogs surrounded me; an assembly of evildoers enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. 18. I numbered all my bones, and they look and stare at me. 19. They divided my garments among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. 20. But You, O Lord, do not remove Your help from me; attend to my aid. 21. Deliver my soul from the sword and my only-begotten from the hand of the dog; 22. save me from the lion's mouth, my humiliation from the horns of the unicorns. 23. I will declare Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the church I will sing to You. 24. You who fear the Lord, praise Him. All you seed of Jacob, glorify Him; fear Him, all you seed of Israel. 25. For He has not despised nor scorned the beggar's supplication, nor has He turned away His face from me; and when I cried out to Him, He heard me. 26. My praise is from You in the great church; I will pay my vows before those who fear Him. 27. The poor shall eat and be well-filled, and those who seek Him will praise the Lord; their hearts will live unto ages of ages. 28. All the ends of the world shall re-

member and turn to the Lord; and all families of the Gentiles shall worship before You, 29. for the kingdom is the Lord's; and He is the Master of the Gentiles. 30. All the prosperous of the earth ate and worshiped; all going down into the earth shall bow down before Him, and my soul lives with Him. 31. And my seed shall serve Him; the coming generation shall be told of the Lord, 32. and they will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, because the Lord made them.



Psalm 21 is a prophecy of the Lord's death and Resurrection, and of His Church. Thus, this psalm may be outlined as follows: (1) the Resurrection (v. 1); (2) the Crucifixion (vv. 2-22); (3) the Church (vv. 23-32). It is the most specifically prophetic psalm of Christ's Passion in the entire psalter.

- (1) Christ is the End, and He was resurrected early in the morning (v. 1; see also Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1).
- (2) The New Testament quotes several verses from this psalm in relation to the Crucifixion: for example v. 2, quoted in Mt 27:46 and Mk 15:34; v. 9, quoted in Mt 27:43; and v. 19, quoted in Mt 27:35.
- (3) The New Testament also quotes v. 23 in Heb 2:12, referring to the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church (Creed).

Psalm 21 is used throughout Great and Holy Friday, in Orthros, in the First Hour, and in Great Vespers. It is also used in the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

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

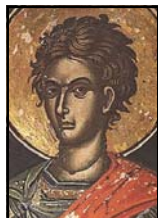
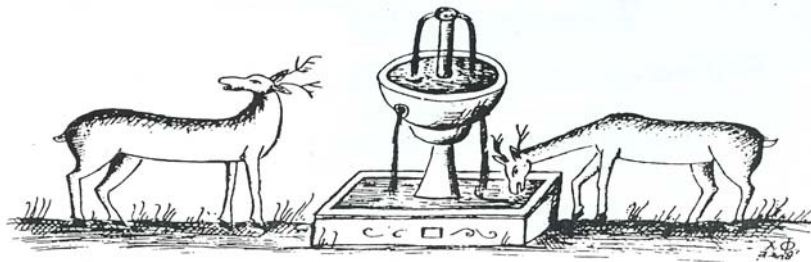
Christ in the Psalms, Patrick Henry Reardon, Conciliar Press, Ben Lomond, California, 2000)



**SAINT NESTOR IS
PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL
YOUTH COMMITTEE OF THE
GREEK ORTHODOX
ARCHDIOCESE OF
AUSTRALIA — SECOND
ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT
OF VICTORIA & TASMANIA**

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month straight after Church **(9890 9087)**

Brunswick: St Basil
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Tuesday 7.00 p.m. (9387 7693)
-Young Adults and Married couples group
*Every 2nd Wednesday 7.30 p.m.
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Clayton: Three Hierarchs
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