



# Christian Light

April 2020 — Vol. 32

## Fr. Philip's April Message

### **Pascha, Coronavirus, and the Meaning of Human Life**

**“Bad things happen to good people.”**

**“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,  
that he was born blind?”**

**“Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his  
parents sinned, but that *the works of God*  
*should be revealed in him.*’” (John 9:1 - 3)**

As Orthodox Pascha approaches this month, due to the Coronavirus pandemic we do not yet even know if we will be able to celebrate this central feast of our Church physically together in our parish church. This crisis has upset our whole schedule and, even worse, people all over the world are getting sick and even dying. The first question that often arises is, “where is God in all this?”

A common answer is that our understanding of historical events is always limited because we are limited. There's always a bigger picture that only God can see. Yet, these words cannot be comforting when someone suffers a terrible tragedy. A better way to look at this is the way the whole narrative of scripture looks at it. Throughout scripture, but especially in

the all-encompassing event of the passion and crucifixion of Christ that we are about to celebrate, God is seen taking tragic events we cause due to our sin (after all it was the people who crucified Christ) and turning them around for our good. He uses bad things that happen and transforms them into opportunities for growth, life and salvation. Every cross leads to resurrection and God's power is “made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Thus this crisis we are going through can potentially have many positive side effects. For instance, we can now appreciate so many things we usually take for granted; we can reflect on what really matters in life, and we can allow our best selves to show forth. We see this happening all over the world with health care professionals literally laying their lives down for others as they fight at the front lines of this pandemic. Many nurses, doctors, and even priests visiting the sick, have contracted the illness and given the ultimate sacrifice for their fellow man.

We learn from scripture that this is the real meaning of Pascha and this is what it means to be truly human! This might be surprising to you, but Scripture tells us that we are not automatically human – being human has specific parameters! Coronavirus can be a reminder of what they are.

In Genesis everything God created was described as “very good” except for one thing. The human being is left as an open project that we need to complete. Scripture says “Let us make the *human being* in our image, according to our

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**SUNDAY SERVICES**

Orthros at 8 A.M. and Divine Liturgy at 9:30 A.M.

**ALL CHURCH SERVICES CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

**OFFICE HOURS**

Monday-Friday 8:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.

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likeness," (Genesis 1:26), but this is not followed by the characteristic phrase "and it was good" (note that the English translation "Let us make 'man' in our image" is wrong because the word "ἄνθρωπος" - *human being*, is used). Everything else God created is presented to us as a "done deal" and "good," but only the human being is able to freely complete what God started by answering with his own "so be it – let it be," to make it "good," but this is a lifetime process of "becoming human."

Christ's Passion and the Pascha we are about to celebrate complete the picture of what this "human project" is all about. In the same way that God created the human being (ἄνθρωπος) as an open project, the gospel of John shows us how this project is actually fulfilled. As Christ was about to be crucified Pilate declared: (John 19:5) "Behold the *human being*" (ἄνθρωπος) (again, the translation into English "Behold the *man*" is incorrect because the word used in the original Greek is "*human being*" [ἄνθρωπος], not "man" [άνήρ]). Pilate spoke a profound truth here without knowing it and this is why it is recorded in scripture. Why was he called specifically "*human being*" (ἄνθρωπος) as also Adam was in Genesis 1 while being created, rather than simply "man?" (άνήρ). It is because He was about to be crucified for us: Christ teaches that to be truly *human* we need to lay our life for others as He did – this is crucified, self-sacrificial love. In fact Christ showed us what it is to be God specifically by the way he died as a human being and he showed us what it is to be human by the way he died as God! This means that we can all have the opportunity to become truly human because we all die! The death referred to here is not only our biological death: we die figuratively every day when we sacrifice our ego for our neighbor. So we actually have ample opportunity right now to gradually become . . . human! In practical terms this does not mean being thrown to the lions in a Roman arena, it can mean something as simple as getting along with our family members now that we are confined in our homes! It means sacrificing our private plans for the common good.

A hymn that we sing on Holy Saturday morning in our churches clearly declares that the fulfillment of God's project for the human being, the completion of his work that allows him to "rest" - His "Sabbath" - is not something that happened a long time ago in Genesis when God "rested on the 7th

day” (Genesis 2:2) – that was only a symbol, a prophesy and a sketch of the real thing that was to come – rather, the first true Sabbath was the first Holy Saturday when God Himself=Christ, truly “rested” in the grave. The hymn says: “The great Moses mystically foreshadowed this day, saying: ‘*And God blessed the seventh day.*’ For *this* is the blessed Sabbath: it is the day of rest, in which the Only-Begotten Son of God rested from all His works . . . .” (Doxastikon of Holy Saturday vespers). He could rest because the human project was completed. This is why Christ exclaimed on the Cross “it is perfected!” (John 19:30 - this is usually translated “It is finished,” but the original Greek “τετέλεσται” means “it is fulfilled,” “it is perfected”). What is perfected? The human project that began in Genesis. What we were really made for, real human life, was manifested to us for the first time on the Cross and on Holy Friday. We finally have the example of real human life to follow! Have we achieved this goal? Christ is the true “ἄνθρωπος,” yet St. Paul says that we have not yet reached the full “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13). We are still works in progress.

Since this is the only paradigm for human life, how we react to all events and crises, including our present Coronavirus pandemic, has profound consequences for our humanity. In the same way that God created Adam - who represents all of humanity - out of the dust (Genesis 2:7 - again, this is a symbol, prophesy and sketch referring to us), at the General Resurrection we will be created again from the *literal* dust of our own graves, and now is the time to prepare how “human” that final manifestation of ourselves will be.

In light of this ultimate human destiny we all share, the Coronavirus Pandemic has given us great examples and opportunities. We have seen how healthcare workers have given us an example of what we were really made for - of what it means to be truly human. We can do the same thing in our own little way depending on the role and calling life has given us. Now, during the Coronavirus crisis, this could mean simply sacrificing our personal plans for a while and staying home to ensure the safety of others. Whatever unique way we manage to “lay our lives for others” is how we live out what it is to be truly human.

Thus, the Coronavirus crisis, Pascha and true human life are very connected. Keeping this in mind might make this year’s Pascha a very special one. Whether we will be compelled to celebrate Pascha at home or we will be granted the blessing to physically gather in our church we still will proclaim loudly that “Christ is risen!” - and this year we might even know what this really means existentially!

Have a blessed Pascha!

## Μήνυμα Ἀπριλίου π. Φιλίππου

### Πάσχα, Κορωνοϊός και τὸ Νόημα τῆς Ἀνθρώπινης Ζωῆς

**“Κακὰ πράγματα συμβαίνουν σὲ καλοὺς ἀνθρώπους.”**

**Ῥαββί, τίς ἤμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆ;  
Ἄπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς, οὔτε οὗτος ἤμαρτεν οὔτε οὔτε οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἀλλ’ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.» (Ἰωάνν. 9:1-3).**

Τὸ Πάσχα πλησιάζει αὐτὸν τὸν μῆνα, ὅμως λόγῳ τῆς πανδημίας τοῦ Κορωνοϊοῦ, δὲν ξέρουμε ἀκόμη ἂν θὰ μπορέσουμε νὰ γιορτάσουμε αὐτὴν τὴν κεντρικὴ γιορτὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μαζὶ σωματικὰ ἐντὸς τοῦ ναοῦ. Ἡ κρίση αὐτὴ ἔχει διαταράξει τὸ πρόγραμμά μας καί, τὸ χειρότερο, ἄνθρωποι παγκοσμίως ἀρρωσταίνουν καὶ πεθαίνουν. Ἡ πρώτη ἐρώτηση ποὺ συνήθως ἀναδύεται σὲ τέτοιες περιπτώσεις εἶναι «*ποῦ εἶναι ὁ Θεὸς σὲ ὅλα αὐτά;*».

Μία συνηθισμένη απάντηση είναι ότι η κατανόηση των ιστορικών γεγονότων είναι πάντοτε περιορισμένη, ἐφ'ὅσον εἴμαστε περιορισμένοι καὶ ἐμεῖς. Πάντοτε ὑπάρχει ἡ μεγαλύτερη εἰκόνα ποὺ βλέπει μόνο ὁ Θεός. Ὡστόσο, τέτοια λόγια δὲν παρηγοροῦν ὅταν κάποιος περνᾷ μία φρικτὴ τραγωδία στὴν ζωὴ του. Ἴσως ἕνας καλύτερος τρόπος νὰ κατανοήσουμε τὰ παράξενα καὶ παράδοξα ποὺ γίνονται στὴν ἱστορία εἶναι ὁ τρόπος τῆς ὅλης διηγήσεως τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς. Στὴ Γραφὴ γενικά, ἀλλὰ ἰδίως στὸ καίριο γεγονός τοῦ Πάθους καὶ τῆς Σταυρώσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποὺ θὰ γιορτάσουμε σὲ λίγο, ὁ Θεὸς παίρνει τραγικὰ συμβάντα ποὺ προέρχονται ἀπὸ τὴ δική μας ἁμαρτία (σὲ τελικὴ ἀνάλυση ἐμεῖς οἱ ἄνθρωποι σταυρώσαμε τὸ Χριστό) καὶ τὰ μεταστρέφει γιὰ τὸ καλὸ μας. Δηλαδή, χρησιμοποιοῖ κακὰ πράγματα ποὺ γίνονται (ποὺ δὲν δημιούργησε ὁ ἴδιος) καὶ τὰ μεταμορφώνει σὲ εὐκαιρίες γιὰ ὠρίμανση, ζωὴ, καὶ σωτηρία. Ὁ Σταυρὸς πάντα ὁδηγεῖ στὴν Ἀνάσταση καὶ ἡ δύναμη τοῦ Θεοῦ «ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται» (Β' Κορ. 12:9). Ὅποτε ἡ κρίση τὴν ὁποία διανύουμε τώρα δυνατὰ μπορεῖ νὰ κρύβει πολλὰ θετικὰ μελλοντικὰ ἐπιπτώσεις. Παραδείγματος χάριν, τώρα μποροῦμε νὰ ἐκτιμήσουμε πολλὰ ἀπλὰ πράγματα ποὺ συνήθως παίρνομε ὡς δεδομένα, μποροῦμε νὰ συλλογιστοῦμε τι ἔχει σημασία στὴ ζωὴ, καὶ ὁ καλύτερος ἐαυτὸς μας μπορεῖ νὰ φανερωθεῖ. Αὐτὸ βλέπουμε παγκοσμίως καθὼς, ὅσοι ἀσχολοῦνται μὲ τὴν ἰατρικὴ περίθαλψη, κυριολεκτικὰ θυσιάζουν τὴ ζωὴ τους γιὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, ἐνῶ μάχονται στὴ πρώτη γραμμὴ τῆς παρούσας πανδημίας. Πολλοὶ ἰατροί, νοσοκόμες, καὶ ἀκόμη ἱερεῖς ποὺ ἐπισκέπτονται τοὺς ἀρρώστους, ἔχουν ἀρρωστήσει μὲ τὸν Κορωνοϊό καὶ ἔχουν πεθάνει, κάνοντας τὴν ἔσχατη θυσία γιὰ τὸν πλησίον.

Ἀπὸ τὴν Ἁγία Γραφὴ Μαθαίνουμε ὅτι αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ ἀληθινὸ νόημα τοῦ Πάσχα καὶ ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶναι ὁ μόνος τρόπος νὰ γίνουμε πραγματικοὶ «ἄνθρωποι». Τὸ νὰ εἶναι κανεῖς «ἄνθρωπος» δὲν εἶναι ἕνα αὐτόματο δεδομένο, ἔχει συγκεκριμένες παραμέτρους. Ὁ Κορωνοϊὸς μπορεῖ νὰ μᾶς ὑπενθυμίσει ποιὲς εἶναι αὐτὲς οἱ παράμετροι.

Στὴ Γένεση ὅλα ὅσα δημιούργησε ὁ Θεὸς περιγράφονται ὡς «λίαν καλά», ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ ἕνα πρᾶγμα. Ἡ δημιουργία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφήνεται ἀνοικτὴ ὡς μία διαδικασία ποὺ πρέπει ἐμεῖς νὰ τελειώσουμε. Ἡ γραφὴ λέει «ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ'εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ'ὀμοίωσιν» (Γέν. 1:26),

ἀλλὰ δὲν ἀκολουθεῖ ἡ χαρακτηριστικὴ φράση «ὅτι καλόν». Ὅτιδήποτε ἄλλο δημιούργησε ὁ Θεὸς κατανοεῖται ὡς τετελεσμένο γεγονός καὶ «καλόν», ἐνῶ μόνο ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τὴν ἱκανότητα ἐλεύθερα νὰ τελειώσει αὐτὸ ποὺ ξεκίνησε ὁ Θεὸς μὲ τὸ δικό του «γεννηθῆτω», τὸ δικό του «Ἀμήν» γιὰ νὰ γίνει «καλός»· εἶναι μία συνεχῆς ἐφ'ὅρου ζωῆς διαδικασία γιὰ νὰ γίνει κανεῖς «ἄνθρωπος».

Τὰ Πάθη τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τὸ Πάσχα ποὺ θὰ γιορτάσουμε σὲ λίγο συμπληρώνουν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ σκοποῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὅπως ὁ Θεὸς δημιούργησε τὸν ἄνθρωπο ὡς μία ἀνοικτὴ δυνατότητα, τὸ Κατὰ Ἰωάννην Εὐαγγέλιο μᾶς δείχνει πῶς αὐτὴ ἡ διαδικασία φθάνει στὸ τέλος τῆς. Πρὶν σταυρωθεῖ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ Πιλάτος δήλωσε «Ἴδου ὁ ἄνθρωπος!» (Ἰωάνν. 19:5). Ὁ Πιλάτος ἄθελά του ξεστόμισε μία βαθειὰ ἀλήθεια καὶ γ'αὐτὸν τὸ λόγο τὰ λόγια αὐτὰ καταγράφηκαν στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο. Ὅμως γιὰ τὸν Χριστὸς ἐδῶ περιγράφεται ὡς «ἄνθρωπος» ὅπως ὁ Ἀδὰμ στὴ Γένεση ὅταν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν δημιούργησε, καὶ ὄχι ὡς «ἀνήρ» (ἄνδρας); Εἶναι διότι ἐπρόκειτο νὰ σταυρωθεῖ σὲ λίγο γιὰ μᾶς -ὁ Χριστὸς ἐδῶ δείχνει ὅτι ὁ πανανθρώπινος τρόπος γιὰ νὰ γίνουμε ὄντως ἄνθρωποι εἶναι νὰ θυσιάσουμε τὴ ζωὴ μας γιὰ τὸν ἄλλον ὅπως ἔκανε ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ ἴδιος. Αὐτὸ σημαίνει γνήσια, σταυρωμένη ἀγάπη. Ὁ Χριστὸς μᾶς ἔδειξε τι σημαίνει νὰ εἶναι Θεὸς μὲ τὸν τρόπο ποὺ πέθανε ὡς ἄνθρωπος (στὸν Σταυρό). Παρομοίως μὲ τὸν τρόπο αὐτὸ μᾶς ἔδειξε ὁ Χριστὸς καὶ τι σημαίνει νὰ εἶναι κανεῖς γνήσιος ἄνθρωπος. Αὐτὸ σημαίνει ὅτι ὅλοι ἔχουμε εὐκαιρία νὰ γίνουμε ἀληθινοὶ ἄνθρωποι ἀφοῦ ὅλοι πεθαίνουμε! Ὁ θάνατος στὸν ὁποῖο ἀναφερόμαστε ἐδῶ δὲν εἶναι μόνο ὁ βιολογικὸς θάνατος -μεταφορικὰ πεθαίνουμε κάθε ἡμέρα ὅταν θυσιάζουμε τὸ ἐγὼ μας γιὰ τὸν πλησίον. Ἔτσι ἔχουμε ἄπειρες εὐκαιρίες ἐδῶ καὶ τώρα νὰ γίνουμε ἄνθρωποι! Πρακτικὰ αὐτὸ δὲν σημαίνει νὰ μᾶς πετάξει ἕνας εἰδωλολάτρης τύραννος στὰ λεωντάρια σὲ μία Ρωμαϊκὴ ἀρένα, σημαίνει κάτι τόσο ἀπλὸ ὅπως τὸ νὰ ζοῦμε ἐν ἀρμονίᾳ μὲ τὰ μέλη τῆς οἰκογένειάς μας τώρα ποὺ εἴμαστε κλεισμένοι στὸ σπίτι μας λόγω Κορωνοϊοῦ! Σημαίνει τὴ θυσία τῶν ἰδιωτικῶν μας σχεδίων καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν γιὰ τὸ καλὸ τῶν ἄλλων συνανθρώπων.

Ἕνας ὕμνος ποὺ ψέλνουμε τὸ Μεγάλον Σάββατο στὶς ἐκκλησίες μας σαφῶς δηλώνει ὅτι ἡ συμπλήρωση τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο, τὸ τέλος τῆς δουλειᾶς του ποὺ τοῦ ἐπέτρεψε νὰ ἀναπαυθεῖ (νὰ «καταπαύσει»), τὸ

ἀληθινὸ «Σάββατό» του, δὲν εἶναι κάτι ποὺ ἔγινε πολὺ παλιὰ στὴ Γένεση, ὅταν ὁ Θεὸς «κατέπαυσε τῆ ἡμέρα τῆ ἑβδόμῃ» (Γεν. 2:2) – αὐτὸ ἦταν ἀπλῶς σύμβολο, τύπος, σκίαγραφία γιὰ τὸ ἀληθινὸ Σάββατο ποὺ θὰ ἐρχόταν – τὸ ἀληθινὸ Σάββατο ἦταν τὸ πρῶτο Μεγάλο Σάββατο ὅταν ὁ Θεός=Χριστὸς «κατέπαυσε» στὸν τάφο. Ὁ ὕμνος λέει: «Τὴν σήμερον μυστικῶς ὁ μέγας Μωϋσῆς προδιετυποῦτο λέγων, 'καὶ εὐλόγησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἑβδόμην, **τοῦτο** γάρ ἐστι τὸ εὐλογημένο **Σάββατον**. Αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ τῆς ἀναπαύσεως ἡμέρα, ἐν ἣ κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὁ Μονογενὴς Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ'» (Δοξαστικὸν τοῦ ἑσπερινοῦ τοῦ Μεγάλου Σαββάτου). Ἀναπαύθηκε διότι τὸ ἔργο του τελείωσε. Γι'αὐτὸ στὸν Σταυρὸ ὁ Χριστὸς διακήρυξε τὸ «τετέλεσται» (Ἰωάνν. 19:30). Τί τελείωσε; Τί τελειοποιήθηκε; Τὸ ἔργο δημιουργίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ποὺ ξεκίνησε στὴ Γένεση. Αὐτὸ γιὰ τὸ ὁποῖο δημιουργηθήκαμε, ὁ σκοπὸς τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ζωῆς ἐμφανίστηκε γιὰ πρώτη φορὰ στὸν Σταυρὸ τὴν Μεγάλῃ Παρασκευῇ. Ἐπὶ τέλους ἔχουμε ἓνα ἀληθινὸ ἀνθρώπινο παράδειγμα νὰ ἀκολουθήσουμε! Ἔχουμε φθάσει ἐκεῖ; Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι ὁ ἀληθινὸς ἀνθρωπος, ὡστόσο ὁ Ἀπόστολος Παῦλος λέει ὅτι δὲν ἔχουμε φθάσει ἀκόμη «εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ» Ἐφεσ. 4: 13). Εἴμαστε στὴν πορεία νὰ *γίνουμε* ἀνθρωποι.

Ἐφ'ὅσον αὐτὸ εἶναι τὸ μόνο γνήσιο παράδειγμα γιὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη ζωή, τὸ πῶς ἀντιδρούμε στὰ γεγονότα τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τὶς κρίσεις, ὅπως ἡ παροῦσα πανδημία τοῦ Κορωνοϊοῦ, ἔχει βαθεῖες ἐπιπτώσεις γιὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητά μας. Ὅπως ὁ Θεὸς δημιούργησε τὸν Ἀδὰμ - ὁ ὁποῖος ἀντιπροσωπεύει ὅλην τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα – «χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς» (Γέν. 2:7 – πάλι αὐτὸ εἶναι ἓνα σύμβολο, μία προφητεία ποὺ ἀναφέρεται σὲ μᾶς), στὴν Δευτέρα Παρουσία ὅταν θὰ γίνῃ ἡ Κοινὴ Ἀνάσταση, θὰ μᾶς ξαναδημιουργήσει ὁ Θεὸς κυριολεκτικὰ ἀπὸ τὸ χῶμα (χοῦν) τοῦ τάφου μας, καὶ τώρα εἶναι ἡ εὐκαιρία νὰ προετοιμαστοῦμε γιὰ τὸ πόσο «ἀνθρώπινη» αὕτη ἡ ἐσχατολογικὴ ἐμφάνιση τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ μας θὰ εἶναι.

Κάτω ἀπὸ τὸ φῶς τοῦ τελικοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου προορισμοῦ ποὺ μοιραζόμαστε ὅλοι (ὁ θάνατος καὶ ἡ Δευτέρα Παρουσία), ἡ πανδημία τοῦ Κορωνοϊοῦ μᾶς ἔχει δώσει καίρια παραδείγματα καὶ εὐκαιρίες. Ἔχουμε παρατηρήσει πῶς οἱ ἀνθρωποὶ ποὺ δουλεύουν στὸν τομέα τῆς ἰατροφαρμακευτικῆς περίθαλψης μᾶς ἔχουν δώσει τὸ παράδειγμα γιὰ τὸ

τι σημαίνει νὰ εἶναι κανεὶς ἀνθρωπος. Καὶ ἐμεῖς μπορούμε νὰ κάνουμε τὸ ἴδιο πρᾶγμα μὲ τὸ δικό μας μικρὸ τρόπο ἀνάλογα μὲ τὸν ρόλο καὶ τὴν κλίση ποὺ μᾶς ἔχει δώσει ἡ ζωὴ. Τώρα στὴν κρίση τοῦ Κορωνοϊοῦ, αὐτὸ μπορεῖ νὰ σημαίνει ἀπλῶς νὰ θυσιάσουμε τὰ προσωπικά μας σχέδια καὶ νὰ μείνουμε σπῆτι γιὰ νὰ ἐξασφαλίσουμε τὴν ἀσφάλεια τῶν ἄλλων. Μὲ ὅποιον τρόπο καὶ ἂν καταφέρνουμε νὰ θυσιάσουμε τὴ ζωὴ μας γιὰ τὸν ἄλλον, αὕτη εἶναι ἡ μέθοδος νὰ γίνουμε σταδιακὰ ἀνθρωποὶ.

Ἐπομένως, ὁ Κορωνοϊός, τὸ Πάσχα καὶ ἡ γνήσια ἀνθρώπινη κατάσταση συνδέονται. Ἔχοντας αὐτὸ κατὰ νοῦν τὸ φεινὸ Πάσχα μπορεῖ νὰ ἀποδειχθεῖ μοναδικὴ εὐκαιρία. Ἀνεξάρτητα ἀπὸ τὸ ἂν ἡ κατάσταση θὰ μᾶς ἀναγκάσει νὰ μείνουμε σπῆτι ἢ ὄχι, πάλι θὰ διακηρύξουμε τὸ «Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!» Ἴσως ἐφέτος θὰ καταλάβουμε τί σημαίνει αὐτὸ ὑπαρξιακά!

Καλὸ Πάσχα!



# Holy Week Meditation and Study Guide

The services of Holy Week transform us into eyewitnesses and direct participants in the awesome events of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In readings taken from both Old and New Testaments, in hymns, processions, and liturgical commemoration, we see the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies and the mighty acts by which God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, grants us forgiveness for our sins and rescues us from the pain of eternal death.

**PALM SUNDAY EVENING** (Matthew 21:18-43) — This evening's service calls to mind the beginning of Jesus' suffering. The gospel describes the plotting of the priests and elders to trap Jesus into convicting Himself as a religious heretic. Through parables, Jesus tells us of His coming betrayal, trial, conviction, and execution by crucifixion. The hymns of this service commemorate two things; the first, the prophetic figure of Joseph who, while virtuous, nonetheless suffered unjustly at the hands of his brothers before being greatly rewarded, and the second, the parable of the fig tree which, in failing to bear fruit, became a symbol of fallen creation and of our own lives in which we also have failed to bear spiritual fruit.

**HOLY MONDAY EVENING** (Matthew 22:15-46; 23:1-39) — This evening's theme is the need for watchfulness and preparation lest we be called unprepared before the awesome judgment seat of Christ to render an account of ourselves. The gospel reading contrasts the efforts of the Pharisees to trick and discredit Jesus with the forceful resistance which Christ mounts against their evil. The hymns remind us of the parable of the Ten Virgins in which the faithful Christian is exhorted to vigilance.

**HOLY TUESDAY EVENING** (John 12:17-50) — The need for true repentance is the concern of Tuesday evening's service. This transformation from the life of sin to a life of faith and obedience is exemplified for us in the person of the sinful woman who received the gift for forgiveness when she anointed Jesus with myrr and washed His feet. The highlight of the service is the hymn written in honor of this woman by St. Kassiani. The Gospel meditation foretells of the coming suffering of Christ and recalls His inner struggles and agony.

**HOLY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING** (**Epistle Readings:** James 5:10-16, Romans 15:1-7, I Corinthians 12:27-31-13:1-8, II Corinthians 1:8-11, Galatians 5:22-6:2, I Thessalonians 5:14-23) (**Gospel Readings:** Luke 10:25-37, Luke 19:1-10, Matthew 10:1 & 10:5-8, Matthew 8:14-23, Matthew 25:1-13, Matthew 15:21-28, and Matthew 9:9-13) — The primary theme of Holy Wednesday is our human need for the healing and forgiveness that comes into our lives when we establish a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We are reminded that the way to this relationship is to be found, above all else, through the life of prayer. In the Sacrament of Holy unction the faithful are anointed and thus healed both physically and spiritually. They are also reconciled to God and one another so that they might receive the gift of the Holy Eucharist instituted by Christ at the Last Supper.

**HOLY THURSDAY MORNING** (Matthew 26:2-20, John 13:3-17, Matthew 26:21-39, Luke 22:43-45, and Matthew 26:40-27:2) — On Holy Thursday morning, we ascend Mt. Zion with Christ and the Twelve and enter into the upper room. Once there we witness the awesome moment when, at the Last Supper, Christ abolishes the ritual practice of the Old Covenant and establishes the ritual of the New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah, through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The faithful receive Holy Communion at the Holiest of Liturgies.

**HOLY THURSDAY EVENING** — In this service, we commemorate the undeserved suffering of Jesus Christ, endured for our sake, so that we might be reconciled anew to God our Father. The gospel readings witness for us the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, his trial, and conviction, and finally his torture, crucifixion, and death at the hands of a sinful humanity. This evening's service also includes the procession representing Christ carrying His own cross along the Via Dolorosa and ends when we see before us the King of Glory crucified. The gospels are as follows:

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. John 13:31-18:1  | 7. Matthew 27:33-54  |
| 2. John 18:1-29     | 8. Luke 23:32-49     |
| 3. Matthew 26:57-75 | 9. John 19:25-37     |
| 4. John 18:28-19:16 | 10. Mark 15:43-47    |
| 5. Matthew 27:3-32  | 11. John 19:38-42    |
| 6. Mark 15:16-32    | 12. Matthew 27:62-66 |

**HOLY FRIDAY AFTERNOON** (I Corinthians 1:18-2:2, Matthew 27:1-38, Luke 23:39-43, Matthew 27:39-54, John 19:31-37, and Matthew 27:55-61) — In this service, we are once again reverent witness to the underserved suffering of Christ, to his terrible passion, and death. What is remembered in a special way, through liturgical commemoration and procession, is the faithfulness and love of Joseph of Arimathea who tenderly removed Christ's Body from the cross, wrapped it in clean linen, and carried it to his own unused tomb for burial.

**HOLY FRIDAY EVENING** (Ezekiel 37:1-14, I Corinthians 5:6-8, Galatians 3:13-14, Matthew 27:62-66) — On Good Friday evening, the theme is Christ's descent into Hades during which the gospel of repentance and reconciliation with God is shared with those who died before Christ's saving dispensation in the flesh. The service begins with lamentations sung as we stand before the tomb of Christ commemorating His unjust punishment and the shedding of His innocent blood. But the service ends on a note of joy and hope with the reading of the Prophet Ezekiel in which he describes his vision of our resurrection yet to come; in the midst of despair, we are told there is hope, for not even death can separate us conquered, and faithfulness rewarded.

**HOLY SATURDAY MORNING** (Romans 6:3-11, Matthew 28:1-20) — On Holy Saturday morning we celebrate the theme of faithfulness receiving its reward. The crucifixion is over, Christ is buried, the 12 Apostles and other disciples are scattered and defeated. And yet, three myrrh-bearing women come in faithfulness to perform the last act of love — to anoint Jesus according to the Jewish burial custom. Their unwavering devotion is rewarded — they are the first to share in Christ's triumph over evil and death. They are the first witnesses to the Resurrection. This joy is commemorated through the scattering of bay leaves and rose petals by the priest.

**HOLY SATURDAY EVENING — EASTER SUNDAY MORNING** (Mark 16:1-8) — The Canon of the previous night are repeated and the church is plunged into darkness to symbolize the despair and defeat experienced before the dawn of Christ's victory over the Enemy of our salvation. Precisely at midnight, a single light emerges from the altar representing the victory of Christ over death, the defeat of the Prince of Darkness by Jesus, the Light of the World. As the light is passed from person to person, it pushes back the darkness of the church and defeats it completely. The Resurrection is proclaimed in song and triumphant procession and, after the Liturgy, its light is carried into our homes so that they too might be filled with its light and warmth and triumph.

**EASTER SUNDAY MORNING** (John 20:19-25) — Christ's Resurrection and victory is affirmed in this morning's theme. The gospel is read in several languages to illustrate the universality of the Good News of the Resurrection and its proclamation to the very ends of the earth. Love, forgiveness, reconciliation, triumph, and joy — these are the gifts which we receive because Christ lived and died and triumphed for our sake.

**GLORY BE TO HIM FOR ALL THINGS AND MAY YOUR EASTER BE BLESSED**



# **GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA**

On the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha, Orthodox Christians celebrate the life-giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This feast of feasts is the most significant day in the life of the Church. It is a celebration of the defeat of death, as neither death itself nor the power of the grave could hold our Savior captive. In this victory that came through the Cross, Christ broke the bondage of sin, and through faith offers us restoration, transformation, and eternal life.



## **COMMEMORATION OF THE GREAT AND HOLY FEAST OF PASCHA**

Holy Week comes to an end at sunset of Great and Holy Saturday, as the Church prepares to celebrate her most ancient and preeminent festival, Pascha, the feast of feasts. The time of preparation will give way to a time of fulfillment. The glorious and resplendent light emanating from the empty Tomb will dispel the darkness. Christ, risen from the dead, cracks the fortress of death and takes "captivity captive" (Psalm 67:19). All the limitations of our createdness are torn asunder. Death is swallowed up in victory and life is liberated. "For as by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). Pascha is the dawn of the new and unending day. The Resurrection constitutes the most radical and decisive deliverance of humankind.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth and absolute fact of the Christian faith. It is the central experience and essential kerygma of the Church. It confirms the authenticity of Christ's remarkable earthly life and vindicates the truth of His teaching. It seals all His redemptive work: His life, the model of a holy life; His compelling and unique teaching; His extraordinary works; and His awesome, life-creating death. Christ's Resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation. Together with His Ascension it brings to perfection God's union with us for all eternity. The Resurrection made possible the miracle of the Church, which in every age and generation proclaims and affirms "God's plan for the universe, the ultimate divinization of man and the created order." The profound experience of and the unshakable belief in the risen Lord enabled the Apostles to evangelize the world and empowered the Church to overcome paganism. The Resurrection discloses the indestructible power and inscrutable wisdom of God. It disposes of the illusory myths and belief systems by which people, bereft of divine knowledge, strain to affirm the meaning and purpose of their existence. Christ, risen and glorified, releases humanity from the delusions of idolatry. In Him grave-bound humanity discovers and is filled with incomparable hope. The Resurrection bestows illumination, energizes souls, brings forgiveness, transfigures lives, creates saints, and gives joy.

The Resurrection has not yet abolished the reality of death. It has revealed its powerlessness (Hebrews 2:14-15). We continue to die as a result of the Fall. Our bodies decay and fall away. "God allows death to exist but turns it against corruption and its cause, sin, and sets a boundary both to corruption and sin." Physical death does not destroy our life of communion with God. Rather, we move from death to life - from this fallen world to God's reign.

## **ICON OF THE COMMEMORATION OF GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA**

One of the most symbolic of the Festal Icons of the Orthodox Church is that of the Holy Resurrection. In the center of this radiant event is Christ pulling Adam and Eve up from their tombs. The gates of the Realm of Death are broken and thrown down. Death, personified in human form is defeated, and bound hand and foot at the bottom of the scene. We recall the joyous words of St. Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55)

In the background stands the host of the departed, so numerous they can not be depicted. Among them in the front of the multitude are some of the righteous dead, though now invigorated by the Resurrection. King David and his son Solomon are seen on the left wearing crowns. Near the center is Saint John the Baptist. On the other side is Abel, the son of Adam and the first man to ever be murdered (by his own people) despite his innocence (just like Christ). He wears a shepherd's robe and has a cane, and this points to Christ, the good Shepherd. Many Icons of this subject depict large crowds with a few other recognizable prophets.



## **ORTHODOX CELEBRATION OF PASCHA**

Before midnight on Saturday evening, the Odes of Lamentation of the previous day are repeated. The Orthros of the Resurrection begins in complete darkness. The priest takes light from the vigil light and gives it to the faithful who are holding candles. The priest sings: "Come ye and receive light from the unwaning light, and glorify Christ who arose from the dead", and all the people join him in singing this hymn again and again. From this moment, every Christian holds the Easter candle as a symbol of his vivid, deep faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as Savior. In many churches the priest leads the people outside the church, where he reads the Gospel which refers to the Angels statement: "He is Risen; He is not here" (Mark 16:1-8).

Then comes the breathless moment as the people wait for the priest to start the hymn of Resurrection, which they join him in singing repeatedly: "Christ has Risen from the dead, by death trampling upon Death, and has bestowed life upon those in the tombs". From this moment the entire service takes on a joyous Easter atmosphere. The hymns of the Odes and Praises of Resurrection which follow are of superb meaning and expression. The people confess, "It is the Day of Resurrection, let us be glorious, let us embrace one another and speak to those that hate us; let us forgive all things and so let us cry, Christ has arisen from the dead". By this hymn they admit that love of one's fellowman is the solid foundation of the faith in the Resurrection of Christ.

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is then officiated. At the end of the Liturgy, a part of the marvelous festival sermon of Saint Chrysostom is read, which calls upon the people to "Take part in this fair and radiant festival. Let no one be fearful of death, for the death of the Savior has set us free . . . O Death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is Thy victory? Christ is Risen and Thou art overthrown. To Him be glory and power from all ages to all ages."

## **THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE DIVINE LITURGY ARE: Acts 1:1-8 and John 1:1-17**

On Easter Sunday afternoon the faithful gather once more for prayer with lighted candles. All sing the hymn, "Christ is Risen from the Dead". The people greet one another joyously, saying: "Christ is Risen", the Easter salutation which is answered, "Truly He is Risen". They sing, "the dark shadows of the Law has passed away by the coming of grace", and standing in exaltation they exclaim, "Who is so great a God as our God?"

The Gospel according to John (20:19-25) is read in various languages, proclaiming the Good News of Resurrection all over the universe without discrimination. The fruit of faith in the Resurrection of the Lord is love in His Name; therefore, this day is called "Sunday of Agape" (love feast), a day dedicated to Christian principles, especially to forgiveness and charity. At this time, Christians seek to end misunderstanding and arguments among those whom they may be at odds. Apostle Paul firmly interprets the Resurrection of Christ, saying: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). The Church also states in its Creed, "The Third day He rose again."

## **HYMNS OF PASCHA**

### ***Apolytikion (Plagal of the First Tone)***

Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs He has granted life.

### ***First Ode of the Canon of Pascha (First Tone)***

It is the day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O ye peoples: Pascha, the Lord's Pascha; for Christ God hath brought us from death to life, and from earth unto Heaven as we sing the triumphal hymn.

### ***Doxastikon of the Praises (Plagal of the First Tone)***

It is the day of Resurrection; let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us say, O brethren, even to those that hate us: Let us forgive all things on the Resurrection; and thus let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead, by death He has trampled down death, and on those in the tombs He has bestowed life.

# April 2020

**ALL CHURCH SERVICES CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE DUE TO THE CORONA VIRUS**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 AKATHIST HYMN	4
5 SUNDAY OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT	6	7	8	9	10	11 SATURDAY OF LAZARUS
12 PALM SUNDAY	13 HOLY MONDAY	14 HOLY TUESDAY	15 HOLY WEDNESDAY	16 HOLY THURSDAY	17 GOOD FRIDAY	18 HOLY SATURDAY
19 GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA	20	21	22	23 ST. GEORGE	24	25
26 THOMAS SUNDAY	27	28	29	30		

## **“How Are We Saved?”**

*(An excerpt from the little book “How Are We Saved” by Bishop Kallistos Ware)  
Bishop Kallistos Ware says that he usually responds in the continuous present tense: “I trust that by God’s mercy and grace, I am being saved.” As Orthodox Christians we were not created to stay as we are. We were created to become.*



*Our challenge as Orthodox faithful is to hear the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as if we were hearing it for the first time, allowing Him to transform our lives — to be renewed in His Resurrection. Being saved is not an event but a process. It is the same process that led all those whom we commemorate today to attain Sainthood. The moon has no light of its own, yet it is able to light up the night by reflecting the light of the sun. And so it is with us – we have no light of our own, yet we may be radiant by reflecting the light of Christ – by the way we live our lives. A saint is a sinner who keeps trying. A saint is one who makes it easier for others to believe in God. Consider the possibility that you may be the only Orthodox Christian that someone ever meets. Are you radiant with Christ? Do you reflect His light? If we believe that in Orthodoxy we have the fullness of the Truth, then we have the great responsibility to let our light shine before all people. It is our duty and obligation not to hide our light under the bushel. Let us take the light of Christ that we received at our baptism and the light we receive at His Resurrection, and let it be born in our hearts —*

***Let us be Radiant!***

## **GOYA News April 2020**

**In the month of February, our GOYA had their monthly meeting along with a fundraiser. We decided to switch things up and host a pulled pork/pulled chicken fundraiser rather than our Super Bowl Bake Sale. Our hard work paid off and the fundraiser was a success. We once again thank our community for the support.**

**Respectfully submitted,  
Ellie Dafulas, Recording Secretary**



## ***Philoptochos***

**Due to the Covid19 virus, many of our Philoptochos plans have been postponed. When the time is right, then we will resume our meetings and plans for our Bingo and breakfast, etc.**

**We hope to do our part in assisting any member of the community who requires assistance. Please contact Fr. Philip if help is needed, and he will work with Philoptochos to see that the needs are met.**

**We wish everyone a safe and healthy Lenten season, and we look forward to returning to our Church and fellow parishioners.**

**Ann Mudge  
Philoptochos Recording Secretary**



# Greek School – The Three Hierarchs/Greek Letters Program

On Sunday, February 2nd, the Greek School celebrated the Greek Letters/Three Hierarchs Day presenting a very short program. The students recited poems and read an essay about the contribution of The Three Hierarchs and the meaning of the Greek Letters celebration and what it means for the newer generation to continue passing down to future generations their Orthodox faith and our Greek language and traditions. They did a wonderful job and congratulations to all of them!!!





**Η ΕΛΛΑΔΑ ΘΑ  
ΥΠΑΡΧΕΙ, ΟΣΟ  
ΥΠΑΡΧΟΥΝ  
ΤΕΤΟΙΟΙ ΛΕΒΕΝΤΕΣ**



**Ζήτω Η Ελλάδα**  
**Ζήτω Η 25η  
Μαρτίου 1821**  
**Η ημέρα που  
σηκώσαμε  
κεφάλι στους  
Τούρκους και  
ποτέ δεν θα το  
βάλουμε κάτω**

*The 25th of March is a national holiday which remembers the start of the War of Greek Independence against the Ottoman Empire which began in 1821 and ended in 1829!!!*



Η διακοπή των σχολείων δεν σταμάτησαν τα παιδιά του Ελληνικού σχολείου της εκκλησίας μας να γιορτάσουν τον Ευαγγελισμό της Παναγίας μας και να τιμήσουν την πατρίδα μας με σημαιούλες και λογάκια γιά την ημέρα της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821  
Πολλά συγχαρητήρια από την Κυρία Βαστή και κυρία Σοφία





## A121 Chapter, Pawtucket, RI - Established 1926

### AHEPA A121 Pawtucket Chapter and Coronavirus

Dear Friends — Our AHEPA, A121 Pawtucket Chapter will adopt all best practices to keep us safe from the Coronavirus epidemic. We will adjust our methods; however, **we will not abandon our mission to Defend Hellenism**. We will keep in touch via newsletter contributions and email blasts trying to keep you up to date in matters close to our heart and our mission statement. Hellenism is made up of the very same principles that Western civilization was founded upon and the very same principles that make up the pillars of the United States. Hellenism is not a far-fetched idea - simply put it is all of our values and what makes us motivated to defend them!



### AHEPA Is Raising Funds to Support Greek Border Police

For several weeks now, Turkey has been trying to break through the Greek land and sea borders so that tens of thousands mostly young men from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, and other places can flood Greece and Europe. Their identities unknown, infiltrated by fanatic islamists, criminals, paramilitary agents of Turkey and possibly terrorists from Syria. Turkey is waging a fake news campaign against Greece, claiming that Greek security forces have shot and killed “innocent immigrants”, and that Greeks

behave like “monsters”. AHEPA is taking a leadership role in supporting Greece defending Europe’s borders and it is raising funds to support the Greek Border patrol officers. We are happy to report that District 7 (Connecticut, Rhode Island) is contributing \$1,000 dollars towards this goal!



### This is our country; we protect Europe’s Borders!

Nope, the above words were not spoken by a Greek! The above words were spoken by a member of an elite Austrian counterterrorism unit in patrol at the Greek Borders. They were approached by a patrol from Turkey’s paramilitary police “Jadarma” and they were asked: “What are you doing here? This is not even your own country!”. Needless to say, this was not the answer the Turks expected. It came from an Austrian team, knowing that as Austrians they defended Europe so many times against the Ottoman Turks and they stood for Christianity!

## MALLIOTAKIS SPEAKS AT #STANDWITHGREECE RALLY IN ASTORIA, NYC



On March 8th Nicole was proud to stand with New York’s Greek community at the **#StandWithGreece** Rally in Athens Square, Astoria NYC. Malliotakis, among others, mentioned that every nation has the right to secure its borders. That is true for both the United States and Greece. Both nations have long, proud histories of showing compassion toward immigrants and refugees. However, they must also have the ability to control the flow of immigration and know who is entering their country for security, health, and economic reasons. Malliotakis also urged the **European Union and the United States to stand with Greece and make clear to Turkey that it cannot continue to take steps to fuel this problem and sow chaos throughout the region.**

### Greek Border Crisis Update

Every day, same play. Turkish security forces use drones to identify spots at the Greek border for the so-called immigrants to break through the Greek border, then they drop massive amounts of tear gas, stones and molotov cocktails to blind the Greek and European forces at the border. Then they start forcing the crowd to go through the barbed wire and on occasion Turkish forces are firing rounds to force them to attack the Greek and European borders!



Young men and women from Greece, Austria, Estonia, Poland, Germany and other European countries are defending Europe's borders. Let us all pray for those who protect Greek and European borders against Turkey, also known as the "troublemaker" country in Eastern Mediterranean. Every day and night they make a stand, under harsh conditions. **They are not just defending Greece – they are defending the pillars of European civilization, Christian faith and freedom.** Even the Coronavirus threat does not seem to slow them down at all. We are seeing scenes at the Greek-Turkish land and sea borders that one may think they

are coming from war movies of the past! In addition, Turkey is provoking Greece and Europe with every possible way, including attempts to sink Greek Coastguard vessels! **What can we do about it? AHEPA is taking a stand and each one of us individually can do the same!**

***We Stand With Greece! We Defend Greece Against Turkey's Fake News!***

***We Must Preserve the Legacy We Inherited! We need you to join our AHEPA A121 (Pawtucket) Chapter!***

**For more information, please visit [www.ahepa.org](http://www.ahepa.org). or talk to Yiannis Apostolakis**



*Coffee with Sister Vassa*

*Fear not, for I am with you . . .*

***“Who has wrought and done these things? He has called her (αὐτήν) who called her (αὐτήν) from the beginning of generations; I God, the first and to all futurity, I am (ἐγώ εἰμι). The nations saw, and feared; the ends of the earth drew near, and came together, each one judging for his neighbor and that to assist his brother: and one will say, The artificer has become strong, and the coppersmith that smites with the hammer, and forges also:***

***sometimes he will say, It is a piece well joined: they have fastened them with nails; they will fix them, and they shall not be moved. But you, Israel, are my servant Jacob, and he whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraam, whom I have loved: whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and from the high places of it I have called you, and said to you, You are my servant; I have chosen you, and I have not abandoned you. Fear not; for I am with you: wander not; for I am your God, who have strengthened you; and I have helped you, and have established you with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Is 41: 4-10, Septuagint-translation)***

He is the One Who is. That's the most important truth about God, and the most immediately consequential one for me, on a daily basis. And yet it's quite easy, ever-so-subtly, to lose sight of the fact that God "is" throughout my day, and to slip into trying to play God myself. But let me embrace the life-giving truth that God "is" this morning, once again, and let Him into my day. He is the One Who has called "her," meaning me, and the rest of us His church, gathering all of us together in His Spirit "from the ends of the earth," even as we are physically separated throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. He helps and strengthens and establishes us, or gives us stability in our chaos, with His "right hand," our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who sits at the right hand of the Father." So we don't "wander" to and fro, like sheep without a shepherd. Thank You, Lord, for this life-giving reading today from the Prophet Isaiah, which helps me approach this Wednesday with the proper perspective: in Your presence, and as one of Yours. "Fear not; for I am with you," You're saying to us today; "Wander not, for I am your God, who have strengthened you." Today I embrace Your strength, not mine; and open my heart to Your word and Your wisdom, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen! Happy Wednesday of the 5th or 6th Week of Lent, my friends! Tune in to our daily, weekday "Morning Coffee" audio-podcasts, for some daily inspiration on your Lenten journey, and through this Coronavirus epidemic! Join our 490+ faith-inspired subscribers at: [patreon.com/sistervassa](https://patreon.com/sistervassa). Love from Vienna, and please wash your hands & take heart, Sister Vassa





*Coffee with Sister Vassa*

## *God stops our building . . .*

*“Now the whole earth had one language and few words. And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we*

*be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.’ And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.” (Gen 11: 1-8)*

So, the Lord “scattered them abroad,” in order to stop their building-project. It makes me think: Has the Lord separated us in some ways, from certain “building projects,” by grounding us in our homes and as we practice “social distancing”? It’s a question to which each of us would respond differently. And as time goes on, it’s a question to which we might discover new answers, not only as individuals, but as families, as churches, and on broader levels. Here’s how I see the “silver lining” of what the Lord does with the folks in the above-quoted passage: He “confuses” their old language, hence they must go elsewhere (“abroad”) and learn new languages, new ways of speaking. I think we are also being taught some new level of communication, and a deeper sense of community, during this halt to our previous “building projects.” So let me be teachable today, at the end of my second week in lockdown, and be attentive to the new languages the Lord is teaching me, as I look out my window in the beautiful city of Vienna. “Blessed are You, O Lord; teach me Your statutes.” Happy Friday of the Cross-Venerating Week of Lent, my friends! Tune in to our daily weekday “Morning Coffee” audio-podcasts, for some daily inspiration on your Lenten journey, and through this Coronavirus epidemic! Join our 490+ faith-inspired subscribers at: [patreon.com/sistervassa](https://www.patreon.com/sistervassa). Love from Vienna, and please wash your hands & take heart, *Sister Vassa*



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## **IOCC's COVID-19 Response — March 19, 2020**

### **Special Message from His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae**

*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14: 27)*

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, this is an unprecedented time. As this new, sometimes frightening disease disrupts every aspect of our lives — personal, professional, religious, academic — I pray that we may all find peace remembering the Merciful One who created us and holds us in His loving care. Let us turn to Him in prayer with renewed fervor this Great Lent. Let us seek the intercessions of His Most Holy Mother, the God-Bearer, who is our Champion and Defender. Especially in the midst of uncertainty and fear, let us remember that we serve the Almighty, and we are His own. Let us not succumb to fear but cling to our great hope, the Risen Christ, for His perfect love casts out fear. Let us seek in one another the image of the good God who made us. And let us serve Him by serving our neighbors, perhaps in new and creative ways, trusting that our God, who took on human flesh and gave Himself for us, is infinitely greater than the trial we now face. May the peace of Christ be with us all!

+Metropolitan Nicolae

Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

Liaison to IOCC from the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States

**Committed to Hope at Home and Abroad** — Thanks for your support and love over the years. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every part of daily life. As communities across the country and around the world deal with this unprecedented global health emergency, IOCC is committed to protecting the people we serve and to supporting our community of donors through a difficult time. IOCC is now assessing what our response to COVID-19 will be both in the United States and globally. We seek to find the most effective way to serve those in need, and we will share updates as we have them. Keep an eye on IOCC's [blog](#) and on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

**Measures IOCC Has Taken** — Our priority is to care for the people we serve, our supporters, and our staff; we are keeping you in our prayers. Please pray with us that we will come through this trial stronger as Christians and as Christ's Church, better able to serve Him because of this experience. At home and abroad, IOCC is committed to delivering programs to people in need, working closely with staff and partners to ensure that local regulations are followed to minimize the spread of the virus. IOCC has established a Crisis Response Team specifically dedicated to leading our international and domestic COVID-19 response, including coordinating with local churches, governments, and partners to identify humanitarian interventions. In order to follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, maintain social distancing, and do our part to limit the disruptive effects of this disease, IOCC has taken recommended actions.

### **Here is How YOU Can Help More!**

- **Become a monthly donor to IOCC**
- **Send a donation to IOCC for a cause that touches your heart!**
- **Give a donation to Ioannis Apostolakis, payable to IOCC, for any occasion you would like to make a difference!**

### ***Help Us Provide for Those in Need!***

***Remember, 92 cents of every dollar you give goes to our humanitarian work. The other 8 cents is for administration and fundraising costs. Charity Navigator gives IOCC a 4-star rating (highest possible) for financial health, accountability and transparency. Every dollar you give, helps us secure \$7 more in support from governments, foundations, and other sources.***

IOCC is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered more than \$580 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries. IOCC is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy. To learn more about IOCC, please visit our website at [iocc.org](http://iocc.org).

***Yiannis Apostolakis***

*Assumption of the Virgin Mary  
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97 Walcott Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island*



## *2020 Paschal Offering Envelope*

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Dearest Parishioners . . .

Under normal circumstances, our annual Paschal Offering Envelope would have been included in the paper mailing of this month's newsletter and envelopes would also have been available in the Narthex and in the Community Center during Lent. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this is not possible. Since all church services are cancelled until further notice, it would be greatly appreciated if you would please consider mailing a Paschal Offering to the Church Office. Please indicate on the memo line of your check "2020 Paschal Offering". Thank you so much and may God Bless our entire church community. Until we can be together again celebrating the Divine Liturgy, let's keep each other in our prayers.

Fr. Philip Zymaris

### STEWARDSHIP REMINDER

Please help the church meet its operating expenses  
by making your donation TODAY!!!

### ΥΠΕΝΘΥΜΗΣΗ ΣΥΝΔΡΟΜΗΣ

Ἄν ἔχετε ξεχάσει νὰ στείλετε τὴν ἐτήσια συνδρομὴ σας  
γιὰ τὰ ἔξοδα καὶ τὴ σωστὴ λειτουργία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας,  
παρακαλεῖστε νὰ κάνετε τὴν ἀπαραίτητη δωρεὰ σας ΣΗΜΕΡΑ!!!

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*In the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen. Lord Jesus Christ our God, accept our offerings as You have accepted the gifts of Your people throughout the ages. We offer these gifts to Your glory, for the support of the ministries of Your Holy Church, for the alleviation of suffering and hunger, and for the proclamation of Your Gospel to the whole world. Grant us Your blessing, Lord our Savior, that we may always be faithful stewards, continuing to share the gifts you have given us, by the power of Your grace, mercy and love. May Your name be glorified forever.*

*Amen*

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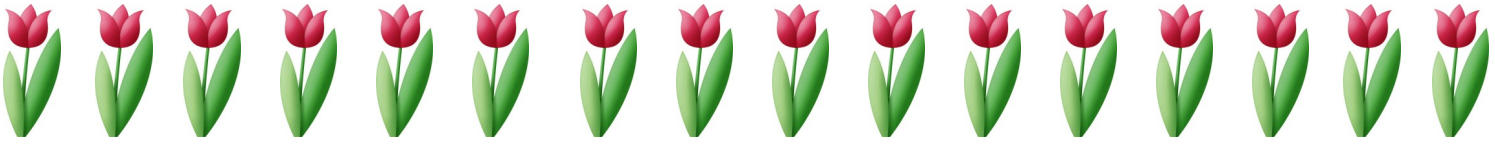
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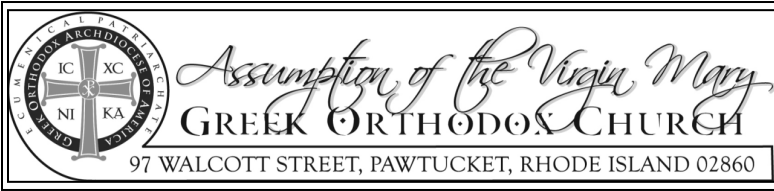
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