



Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina  
Fili, Attika

**“Thanksgiving 2006”**

In honor of our Most Reverend Father,  
Metropolitan Cyprian

**P R O G R A M**

**Part I →**

**Byzantine Choir**

1. – “We Shall Joyfully Meet.” Second Tone. A hymn of welcome.
2. – Entrance of our Most Reverend Father, Metropolitan Cyprian.
3. – “*Eis polla eti, Despota.*”
4. – *Apolytikion* of Sts. Cyprian and Justina. Third Tone.
5. – Verses from the slow Doxology. First Tone. By Petros the Peloponnesian, Chanter of the Great Church of Christ.
6. – “O Joyous Light.” Plagal of the First Tone.  
Evening hymn of thanksgiving, by Constantine Protopsaltis.
7. – **Eight Festive Encomia.** *Prosomoia* in the Third Tone.  
Original acrostic: “To Cyprian.”  
Selection from the *kratema* in the same tone.

**Part II →**

**Address – “Message of Gratitude” – Gift**

1. – **Festal Address:**  
“The Central Rôle of the Elder in the Sanctification of His Disciple.”
2. – “**Message of Gratitude**” on behalf of his lay spiritual children
3. – Offering of a gift to our Most Reverend Father Cyprian

**Part III →**

**Chorus and Instrumental Ensemble**  
**“Orthodox Heritage”**

1. – “**Doxology to God.**” Plagal of the First Tone. Verses and melody by Georgios Violakes, Protopsaltis of the Great Church of Christ
2. – “**Poor Plane-Tree.**” Historic folk song from Moria. First Tone.  
In the tempo of the *Kalamatiano* 7/8

3. – Instrumental melodies from Macedonia.
4. – “[The Mountain Song.](#)” Pastoral song of Kalamata. Plagal of the Second Tone.

#### **Part IV →**

##### **Narration – Film**

1. – “[The Novice Patapios, the Oil of the Abbot, and the Morning Star of the Panagia.](#)”  
Narrated by Professor Onouphrios Sochos.
2. – “[Travelogue to Orthodox Kenya.](#)”  
A film produced by our monastery.

#### **Part V →**

##### **Concluding Proceedings**

1. – Expression of gratitude.
2. – Closing remarks by our Most Reverend Father.
4. – *Polychronion*. Second Tone.
5. – Distribution of treats and small mementoes as a blessing

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**The End,  
and to God be glory and thanksgiving.**





# “Thanksgiving 2006”

## Part I

1. – “We shall joyfully meet.”

*We shall joyfully meet, hailing the shepherd of Christ and minister of the Lord with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Him do we greet, calling out: Through the intercessions of Thy Saints, O Lord, have mercy on us and save us.*

2. – Entrance of our Most Reverend Father.
3. – “*Eis polla eti, Despota.*”
4. – *Apolytikion.*
5. – *Verses from the Doxology.*

### • Master of Ceremonies:

Holy Hierarchs, venerable Fathers and Mothers, beloved Brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is with particular joy and gratitude that we welcome you once again to our “Thanksgiving” celebration.

These celebrations were inaugurated in 1976 by our Brotherhood in honor of the Nameday of our spiritual Father and Abbot, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, President of the Holy Synod in Resistance.

We thank you most warmly, because by your presence here this evening, you honor not only our Much-Revered Elder, Guide, Father, and Metropolitan, but also the Brotherhood of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, which this year is completing, by the Grace of God, its forty-fifth year of existence. May we be counted worthy in five years, in 2011, to celebrate our golden anniversary.

We earnestly call upon the fervent protection of the *Theotokos* and of our Saints, but also on your prayers, for the success of our program, which our choir opened with the hymn of welcome: “We shall joyfully meet” in the Second Tone and the *Apolytikion* of Sts. Cyprian and Justina.

We followed with verses from the slow Doxology in the First Tone by Petros the Peloponnesian, Chanter of the Great Church of Christ (Constantinople).

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

This Thanksgiving celebration—our yearly Nameday tribute—is a feast of love and unity, but also of light.

We all—clergy, monastics, and laypeople—gather together to give an embrace of love in Christ and to renew the bond of peace, in the Light of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It would, then, now be mostly timely for our choir to chant the well-known hymn from Vespers: “O Joyous Light.”

In the Plagal of the First Tone, by Constantine the Protopsaltis.

6. – “*O Joyous Light.*”

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

We follow with eight Festal Encomia in the Third Tone.

These new Prosoimoia constitute one more poem and one more humble offering on behalf of our Brotherhood to our Most Reverend Father and Metropolitan, especially for this evening’s “Thanksgiving” celebration.

They are of a thankful and prayerful character, but also uplifting, since their well-known, compunctious melodies gently incite us to Divine ascents.

Festal Encomia, then, in the Third Tone, with a selection from the *kratema* in the same tone.

7. – *Festal Encomia.*





# Thanksgiving 2006

*Prosomeia in the Third Tone*

Original acrostic: "To Cyprian"

**E**ncircling our Shepherd, let us offer up hymns of  
thanksgiving to the Lord!  
**L**ift up your hands, O blessed Shepherd, and seal  
your children with the Cross!  
**L**et us all pray with a pure heart for  
our Chief Shepherd!  
**B**oth strength and health do Thou grant,  
O Savior, to our Shepherd!  
**V**ouchsafe, O our Christ, for our Shepherd to see  
Thee at the time of his departure!  
**E**njoy, O Father, of the work of your hands,  
and rejoice in the Lord!  
**G**lory.  
**B**y The dew of Thy waters, O my God, do Thou  
sprinkle the heart of our Father!  
**B**oth now.  
**O**ur Mother and Virgin, fill the heart  
of our Father with joy!



## Part II

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We warmly thank our Byzantine Choir, for preparing us so that, by the Grace of prayer, we might be able to approach that which is to follow.

This year, the main theme of our tribute deals with the subject so familiar to monastics; that is, blessed obedience, but by way of a new, considerably *advanced*, perspective.

Our Speaker is called upon this evening to explain to us: Why is the role of the Elder central to the sanctification of his disciple? And how is this centrality understood within Patristic tradition?

I invite Fr. Cyprian to come to the podium, in order to expand on this crucial and interesting theme.

1. – *Speaker. Panegyric.*





“Thanksgiving 2006”

## The Central Rôle of the Elder in the Sanctification of His Disciple

Towards the Light of the Eschatological Kingdom  
by way of *Praxis* and *Theoria*

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan  
and Much-Revered Spiritual Father,  
Holy Hierarchs, Reverend Fathers and Mothers,  
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

*a. A venturesome approach*

**I** SINCERELY trust in your prayers, that I might enter into a very difficult sphere of the life of monastics and approach spiritual experiences that are truly most lofty.

To be sure, I confess in advance that this approach literally constitutes a *venture* on my part; however, the nature of this evening’s theme incites and moves me to proceed, in self-reproach, while begging your indulgence and invoking the aid as much of the Most Blessed *Theotokos* as that of our Patron Saints Cyprian and Justina.

In the past, we were afforded the opportunity to speak extensively from this podium on “*The Necessity of Spiritual Fatherhood*”;<sup>1</sup> that is, on the great importance of the spiritual Father, the Elder, in our birth and regeneration in Christ.

What, therefore, would we now have to add to this fundamental subject? And just why would this constitute a *venture*?

Our reply is that, grounded on the foundations of the previous accounts—that is, on *praxis*—, we will now proceed to the edifice—that is, to *theoria*; in other words, to how the necessity of the Elder has been experienced, in a way that is always moving, as the *central figure* in the sanctification and deification of the monastic in obedience.

How, then, could this entry into the *Holy of Holies* of the monastic experience not be characterized as a *venture*? How could it not be *venturesome* to describe these most lofty experiences, especially when addressed to lay people, no matter how well-disposed they might be? And what would ultimately be the spiritual message directed at them?

Here, then, is the complex challenge that I am to confront this evening. I have chosen brevity and simplicity as the best means of approaching this difficult sphere, without theoretic flights or analyses.

### *b. The vision of St. Symeon*

**F**irst of all, I must elucidate what we mean when we maintain that the rôle of the Elder is central to the sanctification of his disciple.

Let us turn to the wonderful Life of St. Symeon the New Theologian.

St. Symeon, that lover of the Divine Light and poet of Divine eros, lived in Constantinople—where he reposed on 12 March 1037—, distinguishing himself as a monk and a neptic Father, and serves as an eternal model of a disciple devoted to his Elder.

His spiritual guide and teacher was the renowned monk Symeon the Studite, who was called “the Pious.”

In his youth, and while still a layman, St. Symeon had given himself over to his Elder and trustfully followed his guidance for the healing of his soul, the illumination of his heart, and the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.

A short time had passed when, during his evening prayers, which would be drawn out until midnight, he would offer to the Lord and the *Theotokos* heartfelt prayers, prostrations, tears, and sighs.

One night, as he was praying,

*“he suddenly saw a Light from Heaven shining above him—a pure and opulent Light that illumined and made everything clear as if it were day.... And while he was in that Light, he saw a sort of luminous cloud in the height of the heavens, formless and shapeless and full of the ineffable glory of God. To the right of this cloud he saw—what a fearsome vision!—his spiritual Father, Symeon the Pious standing”* and *“looking attentively at that Divine Light and intently beseeching it....”*<sup>2,2a</sup>

I call upon your special attention!

A rare deifying experience is here presented to us, an astonishing *revelation*: the disciple, in a time of prayer, *“was entirely immersed in the immaterial Light and it appears that he himself also became Light.”*<sup>3</sup> following that, *“he saw another Light, much more brilliant than the one that surrounded him,”*<sup>4</sup> and *“his Elder standing at the right hand of the glory of God”!*<sup>5</sup>

St. Symeon is united with God and becomes a god by Grace, together, however, with his spiritual guide, who at that moment is praying for him!

At the core of *praxis* are obedience and the Elder; at the core of *theoria* are the vision of the Light and of the Elder!

A most lofty experience, on which we will make no further comments, as I trust that the following accounts will themselves answer any questions that might have arisen.

### *c. The vision of the Nun Taisia*

**I**would now ask that we turn to the wondrous Life of Staretz Nektary, one of the last Startsi of Optina, who reposed on 29 April 1928.

During the first critical period of the atheistic domination in Holy Russia, the Nun Taisia from Moscow met Staretz Nektary. The holy Elder taught her the *prayer of Jesus* and guided her in *noetic activity*.

In August 1918, Taisia stayed as a guest in Optina, where she was counted worthy of a moving *revelation*:

She herself recounts:

*“Once, when I had begun praying with a contrite heart, I became so absorbed in the Jesus Prayer that I forgot even my own existence. Suddenly, I felt that my soul was in the hands of the Elder and that we were standing together before the Lord. Yes, I the unworthy one experienced such a thing! I saw a wondrous Light and felt that I was tightly bound with the Elder and that he was supplicating the Lord for me. I dared not look at the Light, but, humbly and with fear, I sensed my own worthlessness, and entreated: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. . . .’”<sup>6</sup>*

Here, we have another astonishing *revelation*, which, while related to the *revelation* of St. Symeon the New Theologian, yet contains an additional wondrous element: the disciple and the Elder are certainly within the Uncreated Light and before the Lord, but “*her soul was in the hands of the Elder*,” and she “*was tightly bound with the Elder*”!

The reminder of the teaching of the Holy Fathers is abundantly clear: the disciple goes from *praxis* to *theoria* by means of the Elder and together with the Elder.

This constitutes a *spiritual law*, and indeed an inviolable one, as we will ascertain from the following and final account.

### *d. The vision of a monk*

**A** contemporary and renowned Elder of the Holy Mountain recounts the following very compunction-evoking event that occurred in the 1970’s.

One of his spiritual children had contradicted him in some matter and had most certainly grieved him.

The next day, the disciple asked forgiveness from his Elder with pro-

found repentance and told him what had occurred the night before:

*“After I had grieved you, I went to bed but could not sleep. I do not know how it happened, but I saw myself as if on Golgotha, and I saw Christ on the Cross, crucified, in exactly natural size, very much alive, and with blood flowing from his wounds. As soon as I saw Christ on the Cross, I began to make prostrations, beseeching Him to forgive me all of my sins, and I said some things with repentance and love. And thus, . . . as I was making prostrations and looking at Him, I saw that He was motioning for me to look to His right. I looked to His right and saw you [Elder] standing there. Then, Christ said to me: ‘If he, your spiritual Father, who is My minister and My mouth, does not forgive you, I do not forgive you! You will receive forgiveness through him.’ I again made prostrations and wept. And He said to me again that ‘only through him will you be forgiven.’”<sup>7</sup>*

In this *revelation*, I believe that the *central rôle* of the Elder in the sanctification of his disciple is easily confirmed.

Our Lord Himself does not bypass the Elder, whom, indeed, He characterizes as His “minister” and “mouth”!

The repentant disciple is not reconciled with God by bypassing the Elder. He is not united with God and does not see His mercy without the Elder.

By means of the Elder and united with the Elder, the passage from *praxis* to *theoria* will be brought to a successful end.

### *e. Two messages*

**I** do not wish to weary you further. I feel that these three *revelations* have an obvious relationship and excellently comment on the theme of this evening’s tribute.

In conclusion, the question arises: How is it possible to summarize the *messages* of these *revelations* in a simple and comprehensible way?

First of all, it has to be stated that the *messages* are many.

Blessed be the Name of our Lord, Who reveals such *mysteries* to us, that we might be illumined, brought to contrition, and strengthened in our struggle for our *purification, illumination, and deification*.

The messages, then, are many; I will, however, succinctly emphasize only two.

a) Our effort to keep the Divine commandments—which effort is contained within the boundaries of *Orthodox asceticism*—does not constitute an end in itself.

Our multi-sided struggles for the practice of humility, love, and purity

constitute *praxis*.

By means of *praxis*, the three faculties of the soul are assuredly healed and our heart is purified, but our desired objective is *illumination* and *deification*; that is, *theoria*, with *prayer of the heart* at its core.

When we lack knowledge of this fundamental truth and forget our objective, then we reduce *praxis* to an end in itself; we make it an absolute. And, little by little, we fall into ritualism; that is, into a dehydrated *spirituality*, a *spirituality* that is body without soul, without essence or *eschatological dimension*.

b) The core of *praxis* is obedience. When obedience is practiced in a God-pleasing manner, all of the holy virtues revolve around this center in wondrous harmony, as in a solar system.

So long as this harmony is preserved, *praxis* ever increasingly intersects with *theoria*, until the two cores of *praxis* and *theoria*—obedience and *prayer of the heart*—coincide.

In this deifying course and in the deifying experience of the coincidence of these two cores, the person of the Elder, as we have seen, has a *central rôle*.

This *rôle* has been ordained by our Lord; this *rôle* is respected—may it be permitted me—by our Lord; this *rôle* is not bypassed by our Lord, when He is to pour out His mercy upon the disciple.

\* \* \*

**I CLOSE** by addressing heartfelt thanks to our Elder, our Most Reverend Metropolitan, because his holy prayers and guidance have initiated us into these most lofty mysteries of *praxis* and *theoria*.

I humbly and reverently pray that our Most Holy Mother and Saints Cyprian and Justina will keep him for many more years vigorous, in good humor, and active, such that—like another Moses—he will patiently lead us to the Promised Land: that he will lead us by means of *praxis* to *theoria*, to the Light of the Eschatological Kingdom. Amen.

I thank you!

+Fr. Cyprian

9/22 October 2006

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The end,  
and to the Giver of all good things  
be glory and thanksgiving.  
Amen.

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## Notes

1. **Fathers of the Monastery of St. Cyprian**, *Discourses on Obedience*, Vol. VII, “The Necessity of Spiritual Fatherhood” (Fili, Attika: 1999).

2. **Archimandrite Symeon P. Koutsas (ed.)**, Nikitas Stethatos, *The Life and Conduct of our Father Among the Saints, Symeon the New Theologian* (Athens: “Akritas,” 1996), p. 60.

2a. “The events here recounted by Nikitas (Stethatos) (§§3 and 5) are related by St. Symeon himself in Catechesis XXII, ll. 22-128. He ascribes them to a certain youth named Georgios. It is nevertheless easily understood that St. Symeon was concealing himself under this name out of humility.” (**Archimandrite Symeon P. Koutsas**, p. 55, note 6.)

3. **St. Symeon the New Theologian**, *Catecheses*, XXII, ll. 97-99 and 102-103.

▪ See *The Complete Works of the Holy Fathers: St. Symeon the New Theologian*, V. III, (Athens: Ekdoseis “Ofelimou Vivliou,” 1977). pp. 20-33 (rendered into Modern Greek), p. 230-239 (text).

4. *Ibid.*

5. **Archimandrite Symeon P. Koutsas**, *idem*, pp. 60-61

6. **Holy Monastery of St. Symeon the New Theologian**, *St. Nektary: The Last Great Staretz of Optina* (Kalamos, Attika: 2003), pp. 159-160.

7. **Elder Ephraim of Philotheou**, *The Art of Salvation*, Homily 7 (10 December 1977), “Patience and the spiritual struggle,” Vol. I (Mount Athos: Monastery of Philotheou, 2005), pp. 114-115.



- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We warmly thank Fr. Cyprian, because by his most spiritual address, he has initiated us into the truly great mystery of our journey *towards the Light of the Eschatological Kingdom by means of praxis and theoria*.

May we—not only monastics in obedience, but also pious laypeople who have taken their salvation seriously—never forget that we proceed from *praxis* to *theoria* by means of our spiritual Father and together with him. Through our Elder and in unity with our Elder, our passage from *praxis* to *theoria* will be brought to a successful end.

\* \* \*

But our program continues.

Our lay brethren in Christ, who belong to our extended family of the Brotherhood of St. Cyprian, would also like, as always, to participate in this evening's joy in their own way.

A “Message of Gratitude” to our Most Reverend Father on their behalf is certainly welcome and assuredly within the framework of our “Thanks-giving” celebrations.

I invite our beloved Mr. Georgios Tepetzikiotis, a veteran member of the lay community of our monastery, to come to the podium.

2. – *Message of Gratitude.*





## “Thanksgiving 2006”

### A Message of Gratitude on behalf of the lay spiritual children (9 October 2006)

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan,  
and Much-Revered spiritual Father:*

**I**ask for your prayers, that I might bring to a satisfactory conclusion the task entrusted to me this evening by my lay brethren in Christ, your spiritual children, whom I sincerely thank for the honor and trust they have shown me.

■ This year, our monastery completes its forty-fifth year of existence. For nearly half a century, this Divinely-founded *Source of the Spirit* has never ceased watering us with the life-bearing waters of the teachings and ethos of the Fathers.

■ And this wonder occurs: The more this source—the source of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina—gives us from the Water of Life, so much the more is it enriched by spiritual gifts, and so much the more do people turn to it to quench their thirst and become reinvigorated.

■ It is truly a great miracle of the Right Hand of the Most High, of which we are all witnesses, and our humble prayer is that Lord not permit, on account of our sins, that this holy Source run dry, but that he preserve it flourishing and ever-flowing until the Last Day.

\* \* \*

Our Most Reverend Metropolitan:

**W**hat especially struck me in the truly spiritual address by our beloved brother in Christ, Fr. Cyprian, was the fact that the Lord himself considers the Elder, the spiritual Father, to be His “mouth.”

■ And it occurred to me that, just as every spring has a pump—a mouth—, so, also, does the *Source* of our monastery have its “mouth”; that is, Your Eminence, from which the word of Grace continually flows.

■ This word is so profuse that it has become, with the Lord's help, a rapid river, which flows through and waters, by now, the whole length and breadth of the earth; and the Holy Faith of the Orthodox is glorified.

■ May the Name of Christ our Savior be blessed, because He has taken care that this Source be made known; because He has provided that this *Source* have such an ever-flowing "mouth"; and because He has made sure to secure His *Source* with the Brotherhood's many pillars.

\* \* \*

**P**ermit us, our Most Reverend spiritual Father, at this time,

- all to embrace you mentally;
- to ask your forgiveness, because by our carelessness we do not make good use of the clear water that streams from your "mouth," and the field of our hearts does not yield commensurate fruit;
- and to wish you unfaltering health and many years.

■ Finally, may we be counted worthy, in five years, in 2011, to celebrate all together—with, as always, Your Eminence as our leader—the first fifty years of the blessed *Source* of our monastery.

■ May our *Panagia* and our Saints grant that we honor this golden jubilee in a God-pleasing manner, through your holy prayers. Amen!

*"Eis polla eti, Despota!"*



• **Master of Ceremonies:**

We thank, with especial emotion, our beloved brother in Christ, Mr. Georgios Tepetzikiotis for his “Message,” so full of compunctious simplicity, gratitude, and hope.

\* \* \*

The time has come to offer to our Most Reverend Metropolitan our traditional gift.

As always, it is the fruit of many months of labor by our Icon Studio and the result of a joint effort by our Brotherhood.

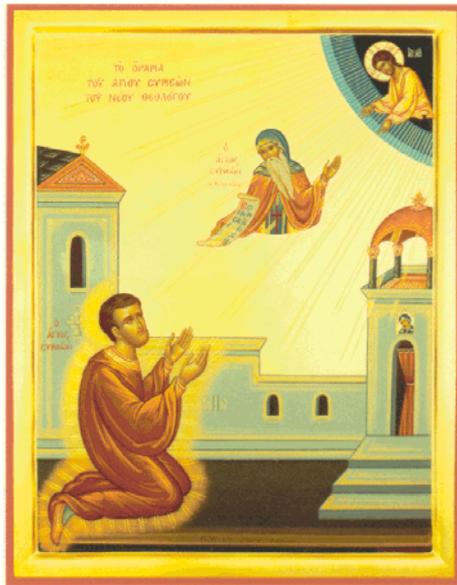
It is, as always, directly linked to the theme of this year’s celebration, “The Central Rôle of the Elder in the Sanctification of his Disciple.”

We invite Fr. Klemes to present the gift.

3. – *Presentation and offering of gift.*

*The Vision of St. Symeon the New Theologian*

“Attend to your conscience.”



## Part III

### • Master of Ceremonies:

We have already arrived, with God's help, at the third part of our program.

The chorus and instrumental ensemble, "Orthodox Heritage," will, as it does every year, perform folk songs and instrumental pieces for us.

Since all things must begin with glorification of God, our first song urges one to the *Doxology to God*.

Verses and melody by Georgios Violakes, Protopsaltis of the Great Church of Christ.

In the Plagal of the First Tone.

#### 1. – *"Doxology to God"*

All ye peoples of the earth glorify,  
Sing ye with psaltery, (2)  
To the Creator of Light,  
Glory in the highest to Him Who hath shown forth the light. (2)

Glorify the Lord,  
The saving Spirit, (2)  
The beginningless God,  
Glory in the highest to Him Who hath shown forth the light. (2)

He is our joy  
And illumination and healing, (2)  
Who hath mercy on all,  
Glory in the highest to Him Who hath shown forth the light. (2)

### • Master of Ceremonies:

*"Poor Plane-Tree"*

An historic song from Morias. First tone.

#### 2. – *"Poor Plane -Tree."*

Poor plane tree,  
With your grand branches,  
How many times have you given me shade.

How many times, in your shade,  
Have the troops of men-at-arms  
Sung of freedom.

They sang of freedom,

Until the stars came out,  
And they aimed at you.

But endure proudly  
And stand fearlessly,  
You poor plane-tree

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

We continue with instrumental pieces from Macedonia.

3. – *Instrumental pieces from Macedonia.*

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

We would like to take the opportunity to thank most warmly our chorus and instrumental ensemble “Orthodox Heritage,” which was established by, and operates under the auspices of, the Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Fili.

Its presence at our various gatherings constitutes a spiritual witness and, at the same time, contributes to the revival and continuation of our fragrant cultural tradition.

We will close the musical section of our program with:

“The Mountain Song.”  
Pastoral Song of Kalamata.  
Plagal of the Second Tone.

4. – *“The Mountain Song.”*

In the mountains sheepfolds and in the dens,  
I lead a wonderful life.  
As if my mind takes something from the mountain,  
And prayer leads it high up to the stars. (2)

Would that I always had a barrack here  
A poor hut made of branches,  
To drink from the heart of the rock  
Of the crystalline and immortal waters. (2)

I wake up with the anointed dawn;  
The myrrh from the pine tree is abundant,  
And I see the proud sun  
Rising from the golden sea (2)

Would that I had...

## Part IV

### • Master of Ceremonies:

The fourth section of our celebration opens once again with... the Novice Patapios.

You will recall that, at last year's "Thanksgiving" celebration, we were moved by the spiritual adventures of the Novice Patapios with *the apple of St. Euphrosynos and the oranges of the Panagia*.

This monastic chronicle, which is both parabolical and allusive, was to be and will be continued, and indeed most instructively so.

What is the connection between the Novice Patapios, the oil of the Abbot, and the Morning Star of the *Panagia*?

I invite our beloved and worthy Professor, Mr. Onouphrios Sochos, once again to bring to life the continuation of this so very interesting monastic adventure.

1. – "*The Novice Patapios, the Oil of the Abbot, and the Morning Star of the Panagia.*"



[NOTE: See *Annals>Greece>2005*: “Detailed program and the full texts of ‘Thanksgiving 2005’ for Part I: “The Novice Patapios, the Apple of St. Euphrosynos, and the Oranges of the Panagia.”]



## “Thanksgiving 2006”

### The Novice Patapios, the Oil of the Abbot, and the Morning Star of the Panagia

**T**he Confessor of the Monastery of the Panagia of the Fields, Fr. Kyriakos, a wise Elder with a luminous face, was standing motionless. He was a veritable *pillar of salt*!

That April morning, he had woken up early. After the All-Night Vigil, he did not feel like sleeping, but simply dozed for a short while.

And how could he sleep? It was the second week of Pascha. Resurrectional *Troparia*, full of light and life.... The surrounding nature was also dancing, resurrected. “And Thou renewest the face of the earth...” All living things and all inanimate things alike... A mystical joy was everywhere overflowing.

And when one partakes of the Holy Mysteries during this Feast, he senses that the luminous Angels have become his brothers.

He went outside to take a short stroll through the gardens. To gently sing “Christ is Risen.” To speak with the flowers of the field. To offer up a morning doxology to God together with them. Their aroma was a fragrant incense.

Spiritually uplifted, he left the green path and ascended towards the monastery mill. It was a place of quietude, ever drawing the solitude-loving brothers for spiritual ascents.

And suddenly... *he froze!*

There, in the mill, was the young Novice Patapios. Kneeling, with his hands crossed on his chest, he was facing East.

His Grace-filled voice could be clearly heard:

*“Rejoice, Star, showing forth the Sun.’ May you be joyful, morning Star, who presages the sovereign of the day. Rejoice, brilliant morning star, who proceeds the Sun. May you be joyful, very joyful, out Most-Holy Mother, who comes first, like the dawn, so that the Sun, our Christ,*

*may come after. And may you put of your oil into the vigil lamp of our Elder, the Abbot. Grant that it flow abundantly and becalm us....”*

Day was dawning. In the soft light, the Novice’s face looked otherworldly, angelic, heavenly. His tears shone like diamonds. One would think that he were covered with a Divine veil, as he continued:

*“Rejoice Star, showing forth the Sun.’ May the Panagia rejoice, who goes before the Sun. And may she give from her oil to the holy Abbot, my Elder.*

Fr. Kyriakos, awe-struck, literally trembling, noiselessly turned around and went back to his cell.

\* \* \*

**E**ight months had gone by. The Fathers of the monastery remained in a state of spiritual exaltation, deeply moved as they were by the *oranges of the Panagia*.

The venerable Abbot, Fr. Isaiah, had called them, back then, to the Church. It was 31 August, Feast of the Holy Cincture of the *Theotokos*.

A strong unearthly fragrance was filling the House of God. What could be going on?

They sang the Canon of Supplication to the *Panagia* with deep compunction. At the end, the Elder briefly described to them the *overshadowing of the Mother of God*. His words were broken by his sobs.

The Brothers and Fathers had a supernatural sensation. It was as if time and place had been transformed. They began their prostrations and the pious exclamations: “*O Most Holy Lady and Mother of Christ! Who can tell of thy marvels, O Immaculate Maiden!*”

At the conclusion, the Elder carefully pulled apart the pieces of two of the three oranges. He would keep the last one; he had something in mind.

The waves of aroma literally gushed forth, penetrating into the depths of their beings. Heaven on earth. Earth in Heaven. “Thou art the Mystical Paradise, O *Theotokos*, who hath blossomed forth Christ.”

The Fathers took the Mother of God’s blessing in their hands and partook with contrition and fear. Exaltation was at its peak! Grace sealed them most profoundly... “Luminous, radiant as lightning, and transformed with an extraordinary transformation.”

Before the final “through the prayers,” Fr. Isaiah addressed fatherly

admonitions, with tears in his eyes and in an enigmatic manner:

*“Brothers and Fathers, let us attend! The Most Pure One has had mercy on us. She is sending us a message. What could it be that she wants from us? The oil of my lamp is coming to an end. The flame is flickering out. Sunset is approaching. Have your minds on the Novice Patapios. When the sun is setting behind the hills, the brilliant Evening Star grants joy and hope....”*

\* \* \*

**I**n Fr. Kyriakos’ cell, a different sort of calm prevailed. A mystical calm—something from the silence of the age to come. The vigil lamp illumined the figures of the Saints in an unearthly way.

The Infant-Bearing *Theotokos* seemed to be looking from her Icon at the Novice Patapios with a sort of joyfulness. He was kneeling before the Confessor. His prayer rope was fragrant from having blessed it with the *oranges of the Panagia*. And now he was serenely moving it through his fingers in prayer. His pure heart was full of a light that reflected on his face: a veritable Icon.

*“So, what is the matter, my little Father?”* Fr. Kyriakos meekly asked. *“For some time now you seem to me to be rather pensive. And this morning at daybreak it seems to me that I saw you at the mill. Kneeling towards the East, you were calling out something.”*

The Novice did not hurry to answer. He piously made the sign of the Cross, turned for a moment towards the Infant-Bearing Mother of God, and then bowed his head, near tears.

*“Holy Confessor, what can I, the sinner, say?”* he stammered with difficulty. *“I had asked Her Grace to give me one little apple of the venerable cook, Euphrosynos. And she gave me three oranges. But I had made a vow: I would not kiss her Icon anymore if she did not give me what I asked. And, you know, I kept my vow. I want to be an obedient ‘child of the Panagia,’ but what am I to do? Being human, I also have my passions. I need comfort and strength to continue. Why does she not listen to me?!”*

\* \* \*

**A**faint smile appeared on the Confessor’s lips. He peacefully stood up and burned some incense. Its fragrance soon blended with the sweet scents of springtime. From the open window with its aromatic flower-pots, the moon was giving off a golden shimmer. The queen of the night, dressed up in her best, was taking part in this strange rite.

Fr. Kyriakos had experience and virtue. These had taught him to see the more profound side of things: to “fish” for the most precious.

*“Well now, my boy,” he asked again affectionately. “After so many months, for such a small thing, your heart is withered up against our sweet Panagia? Is it worth it, my little Father? Just look around and see what Her Blessing grants us! Do not be ungrateful anymore!”*

*“Ah, no, Elder,” the Novice sighed, as he continued with his prayer rope. “It’s not just a small thing. But I’ve been struck by yet another sorrow. What was it again that the Abbot said? ‘The oil in my lamp is coming to an end’? Well, if it’s coming to an end, what is the Panagia doing?”*

Fr. Kyriakos was astonished, but he did not show it. He simply sat down a little more comfortably on his ascetic stool. His inner prayer intensified. He had a sort of presentiment that he would hear something very serious.

*“And how, my boy, did you entertain your new sorrow?” he asked softly, and with a certain anxiety.*

The pure-hearted Novice had started to sweat a bit. He seemed, now, to have understood his error. So many things had happened to him all those months. Why should he not inform the Confessor? He could unburden himself, get some advice, know where he was treading.

*“There, in the kitchen,” he answered, moving his prayer rope through his fingers more quickly now, “I help Elder Ananias with the work. He is very good to me, you know. And what hasn’t he taught me! May he be well. So, then, I confessed my sorrows to him one day. And he explained to me in a simple way about the Panagia ‘the Docheiarissa’ and the ‘Eldress’. You know, those holy Icons in her Garden.. And the ones at Vatopedi and Pantokratoros.... And how the vats were filled... And the Panagia’s oil flowed.... He also told me about the Evening Star and the Morning Star.... And what is meant in the ‘Salutations’ by ‘Rejoice, Star shining forth the Sun....”*

\* \* \*

**T**he moon, that footstool of the *Panagia*, was almost overhead. With its regal veil, it made the mountainsides, the plains, and the tranquil sea beyond glisten like gold. The crickets had begun their vigil early. The spring breeze swept the psalmody and fragrance of the paschal nature far into the distance. Soon after, it was joined by the sweet sound of the first semandron. Open your hearts, all ye who are sorrowful and despondent....

The highly-experienced Fr. Kyriakos was in no hurry. The spiritual “fishing method” requires patience. One needs brotherly love and fatherly forbearance to bring relief to a soul in pain.

*“I wanted nothing more than that, Holy Confessor,” Patapios now continued as if enraptured. “It was as if my mind had been enlightened, and a mystical fire lighted in my heart. From that time on, I have secretly run to the mill at dawn every day. And as soon as the Morning Star appears on high from behind the fir trees, I greet our Most Holy Mother. As I was made to understand it by Fr. Ananias, she shone first as a Queen, like the Morning Star. And she gave us a message about Christ our King who was to follow, like the Sun. And I become full of joy, great joy, heavenly joy, O my God. And so I forget my sorrow and take heart again.”*

It was as if the ingenuous Novice had fallen into ecstasy. His pure face had become more luminous than the moon. It was bordering on the sun. Never mind the duskiness of the ascetic cell...

*“Yes, but what about the apple of the venerable cook, Euphrosynos?” the Elder dared to ask. “And the oil of our revered Abbot, Fr. Isaiah? What of them? Why are you upset? You are treated to such joy, and you complain?”*

*“Ach, I beseech our Mother, the Panagia, for those things, too,” Patapios immediately answered with simplicity. “But she does not show her mercy and does not listen to me. Am I not also her child in pain? Look! In the mill this morning, when I had greeted her with the Morning Star, I dozed off a bit. And that’s when Her Grace came, dressed as a Queen. She tenderly kissed my forehead, just as my mother, Despina, used to do when she would wake me up for school. And she rather gravely said to me, full of tenderness: ‘It is not yet time for the apple. Do not be upset. I have filled your Abbot’s lamp once more. It will be lit for some time, until he makes you a monk. And then you will clearly understand that I am the Morning Star that brings the Sun into your heart.’”*

\* \* \*

**A**t that very moment, the bells started to ring! They were as if bursting from joy, as in the climax of a sacred drama. The Vigil was beginning at the Monastery of the *Panagia* of the Fields.

The holy Confessor could bear it no longer. He slowly and firmly made the sign of the Cross, letting the tears flow in a veritable stream onto his pure-white beard.

He stood up, venerated the Icon of the Infant-Bearing Mother of God with deep compunction, anointed himself with oil from her vigil lamp, and asked for her mercy.

He then turned and discreetly kissed the young Novice Patapios' head, as if wishing to derive innocence, simplicity, purity, light....

With compunction, he began to chant the hymn, "In Thee all creation doth rejoice" with his emotive, elderly voice. And all night long, in the midst of the April celebration, he continued to glorify the Immaculate Mother of God. She, who had called Patapios at sixteen, saying: "Come near me to become my child!" She, who had assured him at seventeen: "You are my child, and I am near you!" She, who yesterday had tenderly kissed him, saying: "I am the Morning Star who brings the Sun into your heart!"

*+29 September-1 October 2006  
Feast of the Holy Protection*

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**The end,  
and to the Giver of all good things  
be glory and thanksgiving.  
Amen.**



- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We sincerely thank Professor Onouphrios Sochos for his charismatic delivery of this most compunctious story about the Novice Patapios, the continuation of which we are eagerly awaiting, hopefully next year.

\* \* \*

We will complete this evening's program with a film produced by our monastery.

It deals with the missionary endeavor of the Holy Synod in Resistance.

Of course, it is only one page in the great book of the mission, but, as the saying goes, "the lion is known by its claws...."

This will be a travelogue to Orthodox Kenya.

Let us, then, mentally journey along with our missionaries this evening.

2. – *Film: "Travelogue to Orthodox Kenya."*





## Travelogue to Orthodox Kenya 2001-2005

### a) Kenya

1. A travelogue, and indeed an Orthodox one, to Kenya conceals many surprises and, at the same time, constitutes a great challenge.
2. Approximately four times the size of Greece, Kenya is located exactly above the equator, in Eastern Africa.
3. An independent country since 1963, it embraces a multilingual and multiethnic population of 34 million people.
4. It is pleasantly surprising that 65% of Kenyans are under the age of twenty-four!
5. There are on average five children to every woman!
6. In recent years, the country has been ravaged by the spread of AIDS: around 7% of the adult population are carriers of the virus, with 150,000 people dying from it every year.
7. Three-quarters of Kenyans are Christians of various denominations and confessions.
8. Orthodoxy became known and expanded in the country in the 1940's.
9. George Gathuna came to Orthodoxy, worked in the missionary field with remarkable zeal, and was Consecrated a Bishop in 1973.
10. In 1985, he left the Patriarchate of Alexandria with many parishes and thousands of Faithful on account of anti-Orthodox ecumenism, and placed himself under the Holy Synod in Resistance.

### b) The Monastery of St. George

1. Mt. Kenya, at 5,200 meters, is the second highest mountain in Africa after Mt. Kilimanjaro.
2. At the foot of the mountain, in the Kaanja region of Embu in the West of the country, is located the Convent of St. George the Great-Martyr in a marvelous landscape.
3. The Sisterhood is made up of nine nuns, with Mother Chrystonymphe, thirty-eight years old, as its Abbess. She spent five years in Greece (until

1995) in order to be initiated into Orthodox monasticism.

4. After around ten years of existence and building development, the first and—for the time being—only African Orthodox monastery is a reality. It is literally a miracle of the right hand of the Most High!
5. The monastic tonsures of the sisters, the new stone Church, the visit of our Most Reverend Metropolitan in 2001, and the enthronement of Abbess Chrystonymphe in 2003 have established the newly-built monastery as a center of Orthodox spirituality.
6. The Sisters occupy themselves with various tasks: they sew, knit woolen articles of clothing, make prayer ropes, and cultivate tea. This cultivation is their main task.
7. The Monastery of the Holy Great-Martyr George already constitutes an oasis of prayer, liturgical life, and spiritual nourishment for the Faithful.
8. The special importance of monasticism in the life of the local Church is opening up prospects for the foundation of a men's monastery on Mt. Kenya.

### **c. Sources of Living Water**

1. The African Continent is thirsty for the truth! For the Water of Life!
2. Every Church community, every Church, and every monastery founded by the Grace of God constitutes a source of Living Water.
3. In Kenya, the Old Calendar Holy Synod In Resistance presently has ten parishes, one monastery, nine Priests, and nine nuns.
4. A small amount of leaven that promises great results.
5. The first Churches—small huts, wooden dwellings—slowly but steadily are turning into beautiful stone Churches, thanks to the zeal and sacrifices of the people of God.
6. A journey full of emotion, surprises, and challenges....
7. A travelogue to Kenya, which is already being lighted by the joyful Light of Orthodoxy.
8. From towering Mt. Kenya, the Sun of Orthodoxy is rising. And it is spreading hope in an uneasy world that is seeking peace.

## Part V

### • Master of Ceremonies:

By the Grace of our Lord and with the help of our Patron Saints, Cyprian and Justina, our program has reached its conclusion.

Our monastic Brotherhood addresses once more its warm and heartfelt thanks to all of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have honored us again this year with their presence.

Their multiethnic and multilingual presence underscores the sober and serious missionary work undertaken by the Holy Synod in Resistance under the leadership of our Most Reverend Metropolitan.

We especially thank the holy Hierarchs—both those present and those who have already returned to their homelands—who have come again this year from various countries abroad (Romania, Bulgaria, America, Australia, Italy, and Sweden) and who were individually mentioned during the Feast Day of our monastery.

*We express our most particular and sincerest thanks to His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna in California, who, despite the grave dangers posed by his many illnesses, traveled by sea and land for over a month, in order to be present in time for our monastery's Feast Day!*

*His Eminence's health does not permit him to travel by air; thus he is obligated to be subjected to a second hardship in returning to America to return to his See, once again after another month!*

We also thank all of the clergy, monks, and nuns present here this evening, who represent our parishes and monastic brotherhoods both in Greece and abroad.

We very much thank and warmly greet Fr. Antonios from Sardinia and the Very Rev. Protopresbyter James from Kenya.

We also express our heartfelt gratitude to the Sisterhood of the Convent of the Holy Angels, which—in addition to other things—has labored on the translation work for the simultaneous rendition of this evening's celebration into English and Italian, so that it could be followed by our visitors from abroad.

We must not, of course, forget also to thank the worthy political dignitaries in attendance for the support that they have given us up to the present time, and we urge them to continue it, so that they, also, may contribute in their way to the peaceful collaboration of peoples under the protection of our supranational Orthodoxy.

We especially thank the Mayor of Fili, our beloved Mr. Demetrios Bouraimis, to whom we address hearty congratulations for his recent reelection to the high public office of Mayor. He wish that his term of office,

together with those of his elect co-workers, be productive and fruitful for the good of Fili.

Finally, we once again thank all of those who have honored our “Thanksgiving” celebration with their presence on the Nameday of our Most Reverend spiritual Father and Metropolitan.

As always, at the exit, you will all receive various small gifts as a blessing, and also a memento: a copy of the Icon depicting the vision of St. Symeon the New Theologian, which was offered this evening to our spiritual Father.

The new calendars for 2007 are also available at the exit.

\* \* \*

I would ask our Most Reverend Metropolitan to come up to the podium and deliver the closing remarks of this “Thanksgiving” celebration.

2. – *Closing remarks by our Most Reverend Father.*
3. – *Polychronion.*
4. – *Distribution of treats and small gifts.*

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**To our God be  
glory, honor, and  
thanksgiving!**