

■ An abundant outpouring of blessings from the *Theotokos* and the Holy Angels

The Convent of the Holy Angels Celebrates Its Feast Day with Particular Splendor

On November 8, 2007 (Old Style), the Convent of the Holy Angels (a *Metochion* of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina), under the God-pleasing direction of its Abbess, the Reverend Mother Taxiarchia, celebrated its Feast Day.

The Acting President of the Holy Synod in Resistance, His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, was the principal celebrant at the compunctious Festal *Agrypnia* (Vigil with Divine Liturgy) in honor of the Holy Patrons of our Convent. His Eminence, Bishop George of Alania and His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone concelebrated, assisted by Hieromonk Hilarion and Hierodeacon Joseph, brothers of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina.



Before Holy Communion, Bishop Cyprian delivered a panegyric, on the occasion of the Sacred *Synaxis* of the Heavenly Bodiless Powers, which dealt primarily with the *salvation of the Invisible World*, our *Allies*, and the *healing of the incensive faculty of the soul*, thereby bestowing upon the souls of all present the consoling and strengthening Grace of the Bodiless Powers, as well as the maternal overshadowing of the Mistress of the Angels.

At the conclusion of his first Liturgical and pastoral visit as proxy for our Convent's much-revered Elder and Founder, Metropolitan Cyprian, His Grace offered the Sisterhood, in an atmosphere of com-

punction and spiritual gladness, an exceptional blessing of the Mother of God, namely, his twenty-year-old spiritual daughter, Xene Pietres, who is ablaze with godly yearning for the monastic life. Finally, Bishop Cyprian served a *Trisagion*, redolent of the Resurrection, at the tomb of the ever-memorable Mother, Eldress, first Abbess, and co-founder of our Convent, Mother Kypriane (†2000).

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This was a truly historic day, during which abundant blessings of the *Theotokos* and the Holy Angels were poured out upon our blessed *cænobion*, through the prayers of our much-revered Elder and Metropolitan Cyprian.

- We would note that the Hierarchical *Divine Liturgy*, the *panegyric*, Xene Pietres' *entry* into the Convent, and the commencement, that afternoon, of a series of "*Angelic Gatherings*" (in which His Grace discusses spiritual matters on the basis of Patristic texts), all festively inaugurated the special relationship of our Convent with Bishop Cyprian, who—according to the desire, and with the blessing, of our Most Reverend Metropolitan—has now officially undertaken the spiritual responsibility for, and guidance of, the Sisterhood of the Holy Angels.

†Nun Seraphima
Convent of the Holy Angels



Third Address

Panegyric on the Occasion of the Sacred *Synaxis* of the Heavenly Bodiless Powers

The Salvation of the Invisible World, Our Allies, and the Healing of the Incensive Faculty of the Soul

Your Eminence and Your Grace, my beloved brothers in Christ and concelebrants, Bishop George of Alania and Bishop Ambrose of Methone; Brothers and Fathers; Most Reverend Mother, Abbess Taxiarchia; Sacred Company of Nuns of this Divinely-sheltered Convent of the Holy Angels; Christ-loving company of pious worshipers:



May the Light, Peace, and Consolation of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit be ever with us, through the intercessions of the Immaculate *Theotokos* and the luminous Bodiless Powers, whose sacred *Synaxis* we are celebrating.

- I convey to you the heartfelt and paternal best wishes of our much-revered Elder and Father, Metropolitan Cyprian, upon whose prayers I now rely, in order humbly to address a message of edification and consolation.

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REJOICING today, my brothers and sisters, rejoicing with a great and incomparable joy is the Heavenly Queen, who is the “much-proclaimed Marvel of Angels.”¹ Yea, she rejoices and is glad—she who is greatly renowned and an object of infinite marvel for the Angels.

Now, why does the Maiden who knew not man exult with incomparable exultation today? Does she perhaps hear the ineffable words of a new Angelic salutation?

“O All-Hymned Mother, who didst bear the Word, Holiest of all Holies,”² today “all of the hosts of Angels,”³ gathered around your gold-

enwreathed Throne, call out, with a great and unceasing voice, the words of your one and only Annunciation:

“Rejoice, O thou that art full of Grace, the Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women⁴ and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, for thou hast borne the Savior of the whole world!”

Heaven keeps feast with a great and glorious festival; for your all-glorious and preternatural birthgiving also resulted in the “salvation of the invisible world.”⁵

What, my brethren, does this “salvation” mean? How was the “invisible world” saved?

The Divinely-inspired Fathers teach that the Holy Angels,

“being formerly moved, with difficulty, towards evil, yet not unmoved towards it, received moral immutability as salvation, not by nature but by Grace, no longer fearing a change for the worse or the perdition that would result therefrom.”⁶

Yes, the Angelic Powers were truly in need of **“salvation,”** that is, of **“immutability,”** which was granted to them through the Incarnate Economy: “in Christ Himself,” says the Herald of God, St. Paul, “all things were gathered in one, both which are in Heaven and which are on earth.”⁷

All of creation, both visible and invisible, received existence and came into being for the sake of the God-Man, “for Whom are all things and by Whom are all things.”⁸ All things, says St. Gregory Palamas, “including all of the beings above the earth, the Angelic natures and orders,” were fashioned in order to serve the Theandric Economy, **“from the beginning to the end.”⁹**

Rightly, then, does the Invisible World, on the occasion of its sacred *Synaxis*, marvel at, magnify, and exalt the Most Glorious Mother of God, unceasingly chanting the hymn: **“Rejoice, O thou that art full of Grace!”**

And rightly, too, does the Bride who knew not man rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory”;¹⁰ for the more she is loved and glorified, the more does she return this love and glory.

O our Lady and Bride of God! How can one cease, when he begins

to contemplate and speak about your ineffable marvels?

“You alone, O Virgin, stand on the boundary between Creator and creation.... You receive the fullness of all of the Graces of God and thus distribute them to the Angels and to man, according to the measure of their purity and love for you.... Wherefore, the more they rejoice and exult in glorifying you, so much the more do they receive the resplendence granted to them from God through you.... And the more love they have for you, the more do they participate in Graces from God.”¹¹

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My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

Iwould ask that we now mentally transport ourselves to the blessed desert of Egypt, at the time that it was being watered by the God-pleasing perspiration and Grace-filled weeping of the Holy Abbas and Ammas.

Abba Moses was, at one point, severely beset by carnal warfare. Not being able to abide sitting in his cell, he went to Abba Isidore and told him of his temptation. Having heard him out, the holy Elder advised him to return to his cell. Abba Moses, however, did not consent to this, saying: “I do not have the strength, Abba.”

Abba Isidore then took Abba Moses up with him to the housetop and exhorted him: “Look to the West!” Moses turned and saw throngs of demons in an uproar and clamoring to do battle.

After that, Abba Isidore exhorted him again: “Now look to the East!” Moses indeed looked to the East and saw innumerable multitudes of glorious Holy Angels!

Abba Isidore said to him: “Behold, these are the ones that the Lord sends to help all those who struggle for their sanctification. The others, to the West, are those who battle against them. Now then, as you see, our allies are more numerous.”

Thus, Abba Moses grew calm, gave thanks to God for this revelation, took courage, and returned to his cell.¹²

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

Let all of us who have heard this encouraging and comforting revelation take heart!

We are not alone on our path to deification: we have *allies!* Let us look not only to the East, but all around us!

Our Lady, the Mistress of the Angels, leads the way as Guide and Guardian Leader. The Heavenly Powers surround us on all sides. The invincible, indestructible, and Divine power of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross shelters and strengthens us. Our elder, compassionate brothers, the Saints of all ages, inspire us and fill us with courage.

If we are fainthearted, prone to grumbling, dejected, and susceptible to the attacks of evil spirits and the uprisings of our passions, this is due to the anguish brought on by our lack of faith.

Although we confess that we believe in God, nevertheless we do not fully and completely entrust ourselves to His beneficent Providence, through our holy *Allies*.

This is an opportunity—the time has come—to understand the basic and central importance for our spiritual struggle of the all-embracing virtue of *courage*; that is, of an undaunted and valiant soul.

This great and salvific virtue of *courage* is symbolized by the lion, the king of the animal kingdom; for we also must struggle as *lions* and possess a leonine spirit. We must not be constantly on the defensive, cowardly, dismal, sulky, grumbling, melancholic, gloomy, and inconsolable. Rather, we must be on the counter-attack, courageous, valiant, bright, happy, hope-bearing, peace-bearing, and Christ-bearing witnesses of the Resurrection.

Let us never forget that the *incensive faculty* of the soul functions correctly and is healed when two primary feelings predominate within it:

a. Love—compassion, readiness to forgive, and sympathy—for all of rational and irrational creation; and

b. Courage—patience, long-suffering, and valor in the face of everything distressing or unpleasant permitted by the healing Providence of our Savior—for the sake of our *purification, illumination, and deification*.

Attention and vigilance are needed: neither should **love** degenerate

into an injurious and dangerous sentimentality, nor should **courage** lead to hardheartedness and lack of sympathy.

Let us renew, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, let us constantly revive our spiritual zeal, deriving the Grace of the Comforter from prayer, worship, and Holy Communion.

Let us recover our boldness, hope, and optimism, ever bearing in mind that our *Allies* are *here!*

Let us walk through the midst of this grieving and despondent world bearing witness to the Resurrection, witness to the Light, witness to hope, and witness to the fragrance of Christ. Valiant and compassionate, courageous and forbearing, indomitable warriors and affectionate, peaceful, and peacemaking siblings.

Through the intercessions of the Most Blessed *Theotokos* and the protection of the Heavenly Powers, unto the glory of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the Giver of all strength and consolation.

Convent of the Holy Angels,
November 8, 2007 (Old Style),
† *Synaxis* of the Heavenly Bodiless Powers

The Least Among Bishops
† Cyprian of Oreoi
Acting President of the Holy Synod in Resistance

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1. Salutations to the *Theotokos*, *Oikos Γ*.
 2. Salutations to the *Theotokos*, *Oikos Ω*.
 3. *Paraklesis* to the *Theotokos*, *Megalynarion*
 4. St. Luke 1:28.
 5. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Heortodromion* [Commentary on the Great Feasts] (Venice: 1836), p. 422, n. 1.
 6. *Ibid.*
 7. Cf. Ephesians 1:10.
 8. Hebrews 2:10.
 9. St. Nikodemos, *Heortodromion*, p. 167; St. Gregory Palamas, “Homily LX, ‘Delivered on the Holy Feast of Lights,’” §20, in *Gregoriou tou Palama Hapanta ta Erga* [The Complete Works of St. Gregory Palamas] (Thessalonica: Paterikai Ekdoseis “Gregorios ho Palamas,” 1986), Vol. XI, pp. 532-535.

10. Cf. I St. Peter 1:8.
11. St. Nikodemos, *Heortodromion*, p. 661.
12. *To Gerontikon* [The *Gerontikon*], “From Abba Moses,” §I (Athens: Ekdoseis “Aster,” 1961), pp. 71a-72a; *To Mega Gerontikon* [The Great *Gerontikon*], Vol. IV, ch. 18, §25 (Panorama, Thessalonica: Ekdoseis Gynaikείου Hierou Hesychasteriou Genesiou tes Theotokou, 1999), pp. 336-339.