



Brief Patristic Messages



The Mystical Paradise And The Life-Bearing Tree

† *His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

IN THE month of September, the community of the Orthodox joyfully keeps festival and worships those two unshakeable towers of our Church: the *Theotokos* and the Cross.

Venerating the precious Cross of our Lord, we simultaneously magnify our Mother, the *Panagia*; for the *Theotokos* is the mystical Paradise, who “untilled, hath blossomed forth Christ, by Whom the life-bearing tree of the Cross was planted on the earth.”

Death entered the world through a woman (Eve) and a tree (the forbidden fruit); through the pure Mother of God and the thrice-blessed Tree, death has been abolished, the “curse on all mankind has been destroyed,” peace reigns in our souls, and “nature and time” “are renewed.”

The holy Orthodox Church of Christ always fervently calls upon the *Theotokos* and the Cross in its supplications:

“By Thy Cross, O Savior, put to flight our enemies and disperse their heresies as dust; raise up the horn of Thy venerable Church; bring to an end the raging of our enemies against us; and grant peace to the multitudes of the Orthodox, through the prayers of her who hath given birth to Thee.”

Hence, our most sweet Mother “is born, and the world is renewed with Her”; the Life-Bearing Cross of Christ is exalted and “sanctifies the ends of the earth.”

Our life is a cross-bearing one: we are continuously battled against by wicked thoughts; our being is convulsed by the uprisings of various passions, bodily illnesses, and life’s afflictions.

Christ’s love, however, appoints all of these things in order to purge us of our spirit of pride, that our hearts might become malleable and capable of containing the seal of Divine beauty: “Let the Light of Thy countenance be signed upon us, O Lord.”

In this martyrdom of the conscience—until we acquire Divine knowledge—, moments of dejection come upon us; we approach the brink of despondency.

But behold! the indestructible towers: the *Theotokos* and the Cross. Our recourse to them demonstrates that our life is not merely a matter of the cross, but of the cross and resurrection.

We constantly crucify ourselves and die for the sake of Christ. But, miraculously, through the intercessions of our Lady the *Theotokos* and by the power of the Life-Bearing Cross, we are resurrected and are taken up into the Heaven of Grace.

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Yea, O my soul, my soul! You, who are “adorned in Divinely wrought imperial purple and the fine linen of incorruption,” do not despair, do not become negligent. “For nothing that God does, does He do ever out of wickedness, but to a good end.” Within the humility of your crucifixions, you gain life and participate in the eternal life of your Savior, for “the prayer of the humble ‘inclines’ God” and attracts Grace.

Do not cease, O my blessed Christian, while struggling for your “Christification,” to take refuge with boundless hope in the

Mother of Christ, who is above all hymns, and in the Life-Giving Cross.

There, you will find strengthening, consolation, sanctification, and freedom. Never trust in or rely on your knowledge or virtues; all of us “are in need of guidance.” And do not forget that “all of the righteousness of man is as but a filthy rag.”

*Thirteenth Sunday of St. Matthew
5/18 September 2005*

