

Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina
Phyle, Attica

Thanksgiving 2008

In honor of our Most Reverend Father,
Metropolitan Cyprian

PROGRAM

Part I →

Byzantine Choir

1. – Entrance of His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod.
2. – “*Eis polla ete, Despota.*”
3. – *Apolytikion* of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, in the Third Tone.
4. – Verses from the Great Doxology, in the First Tone. By Iakovos *Protopsaltes*.
5. – Verses from the Polyeleos “*O ye servants, praise the Lord...*” in the First Tone, by Balasios the Priest.
6. – “Praise the Lord, all ye His Angels,” in the Third Tone, by Iakovos *Protopsaltes*.
7. – Festal Encomia in the First Tone, “*O Brothers and Fathers...*”

Part II →

Address – “Message of Gratitude” – Gift

1. – **Festal Address:** *Eldress Kypriane, Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Angels: An Earthly Angel (b. 1908).*
2. – “**Message of Gratitude**” On behalf of the Sisterhood of the Convent of the Holy Angels
3. – Offering of a gift to our Most Reverend Metropolitan Cyprian :
A portrait of **Eldress Kypriane**.

Part III →

Chorus and Instrumental Ensemble “Hellenorthódoxe Kleronomia”

1. - “*I wish to ascend to the heights.*” Dance melody from Mytilene.
2. - “*My red rose bush.*” Song from Aitolia-Acarmania.
3. - “*A small, little boat,*” “*In your deep-blue waters.*” Folk melodies.
4. - Instrumental melody from Lesbos.
5. - “*The nightingale.*” Song from Amorgos, in the Cyclades.

Part IV →

Narration

1. - “**The Cross of Obedience**” (from the Life of Mother Kypriane).
Narrated by Mr. Onouphrios Sochos.
2. - “**Eldress Kypriane, Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Angels: An Earthly Angel.**” A short film produced by the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina.

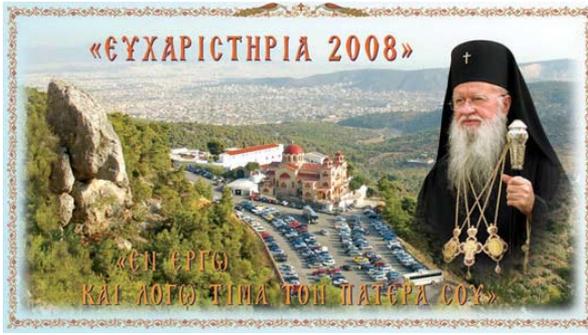
Part V →

Conclusion

1. – Closing remarks
2. – *Polychronion*, in the Second Tone.
3. – Distribution of treats and small mementoes
4. – “*Through the prayers of our holy Fathers...*”



Glory to God
for all things!



“Thanksgiving 2008”

Part I

1. – Entrance of our His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi
2. – “*Eis polla ete, Despota.*”
3. – *Apolytikion of Sts. Cyprian and Justina*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

Holy Hierarchs, Reverend 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 Phyle, First Hierarch 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.

Our Christ-loving Elder and Metropolitan is absent for the first time in thirty-two years at this joyful tribute, on account of his ill health. His blessing is nevertheless with us, and his spiritual presence comforts and strengthens us.

We earnestly call upon the fervent protection of the *Theotokos* and of our Saints, and also on your prayers, for the success of our program, which our choir opened with the *Apolytikion* of Sts. Cyprian and Justina.

We will follow with verses from the Great Doxology, in the First Tone (largetto), by Iakovos *Protopsaltes*.

4. – *Verses from the Doxology.*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

This “Thanksgiving” celebration—our yearly Nameday tribute—is a feast which helps us to become more profoundly aware that all of us brothers and sisters in Christ make up one family, constituting the House of the Lord, in which we send up doxologies and thanksgiving to our God and Father, Who loves mankind.

The *Polyeleos* in the first tone, by Balasios the Priest, underscores this great truth.

5. – *Polyeleos.*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

The doxological and grateful nature of our celebration is also underscored by the hymn, “Praise Him, all ye His Angels,” in the Third Tone, by Iakovos the Protopsaltes.

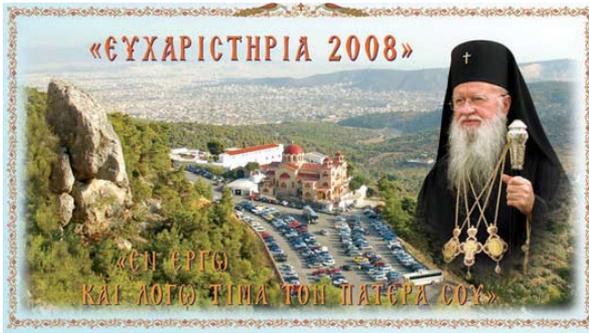
6. – *Praise Him, all ye His Angels.*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

Let us follow with the familiar Festal *Prosomoia*, “O Brothers and Fathers,” in the First Tone, a composition and humble offering on behalf of our Brotherhood to our Most Reverend Father and Metropolitan

7. – *Festal Prosomoia.*





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 address that which is to follow.

This year, we have chosen as the theme of our customary festal address the sanctified personality of the ever-memorable Eldress Kypriane.

On this, the centennial of her birth, we have deemed it most edifying to speak about this earthly Angel of the Convent of the Holy Angels.

I invite His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi to come to the podium to present to us the life of the Divinely-illuminated servant of God, Nun Kypriane.

1. – Speaker. Panegyric.



“Thanksgiving 2008”

Eldress Kypriane, Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Angels: An Earthly Angel (b. 1908)

*Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs,
Venerable Fathers and Mothers,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

In **embarking** upon writing about the ever-memorable Eldress, Mother Kypriane, I feel as though I am entering into a Mystical Garden—into the Garden of the Beloved.

Our Beloved One, Christ our Savior, loves us with a love characterized by St. Nicholas Cabasilas as “God’s mad love for man.”

God, though omnipotent, has one “weakness”: this is His compassion for His image, for His creation.

As the Holy Fathers and our humble experience assure us, “God can do all things, save coercing man to love Him.”

His omnipotence, however, is so revealed in His “weakness”: His love leads Him to the Life-Giving Cross, to self-abnegation, to disrepute, to Hades, to the Mystery of crucified love, and to the victorious “weakness” of Pascha.

The most majestic interaction between God and man consists in loving and being loved.

“Divine love,” says St. Makarios of Egypt, “made God to descend upon earth and impelled Him to leave the heights of His silence.”

This descent by God reveals to us the Mystery of love: “and it shall come to pass that as a bridegroom will rejoice over a bride, so will the Lord rejoice over thee” (Isaiah 62:5). The joy of marriage as an image of the joy arising from the union between God and His people, His Church, and His Bride, the soul.

The close bond between God and man underscores the nuptial form of their communion.

The Song of Songs is a hymn to the Mystical Wedding of Christ the Bridegroom with His bride, the soul, which, burning with Divine love, impetuously casts itself into the luminous abyss of God’s love.

This nuptial communion, this feast of our meeting with Him, the Beloved

One, becomes the center of our existence. And such is our calling: a daring flight of the human heart, that it might approach the Divine Heart and unite with it, amidst the ineffable illumination of the Holy Trinity.

The friends of the Bridegroom, smitten with love for Him, are gathered around the heart of the God-Man. Behold, the Garden of the Beloved!

* * *

I have had the exceptional honor and blessing of working for a number of years on the life of Mother Kypriane of the Convent of the Holy Angels, this Angel on earth.

Ultimately, I am forced to ask myself: Was she a human being or an Angel?

In the Garden of the Beloved, however, *all* of the friends of the Bridegroom are gathered: both earthly Angels and ethereal beings.

Around 1971, I had the special joy of meeting Penelope Alexopoulos (as she was known in the world), the future Mother Kypriane.

She was then sixty-three years old, though she looked much younger. Her bright face shone with a childlike innocence. There was something angelic about her sweet and noble smile. Her modest and pure mien was a reflection of a virginal and peaceful heart. Her words, humble and sage, bore witness to an extraordinary maturity.

At that time, she was living in a small apartment in Athens. Yet her heart was not at rest. She was firmly and unswervingly oriented towards a life dedicated to God.

From 1908, at the time of her birth in Aigion, in the Peloponnese, until 1967, when she retired from her work, a flame warmed her pure heart: her fervent desire to become a nun!

Penelope, so valiant in her humility, was distinguished throughout her life by her self-sacrificing contributions to others.

She incessantly exerted herself in love for her neighbor, though always within a holy atmosphere formed by the Mysteries, by prayer, by humility, and by chastity.

Lengthy experience had taught her that one's neighbor comes first, before his own self. Our lofty calling is to live in God together with our brethren and for the sake of our brethren.

This loving communion with God and His image leads us to sanctification and deification.

Thereby, we are granted the fullness of our personhood in Christ.

No one approaches God by himself or for himself alone. For the Christian, true life means a **communion of love**. *I love, therefore I am!*

* * *

Being orphaned at a very early age decidedly severed her strongest bonds

with the world and its ephemeral happiness, turning her towards things on high.

Two days after her birth, her mother died. Four years later, her father passed away.

She always looked upon the loss of these individuals, so dear to her, without complaints and with boundless trust in God's Providence:

"You never know," she would later say, "I loved my parents so much.... Perhaps this love might have become an obstacle in my spiritual life...."

Following the death of her parents, the young Penelope lived with her grandmother, who raised her orphaned granddaughter with unlimited affection and love.

This grandmother kindled the fear of God in the small child's pure heart, becoming her teacher and guide in piety, chastity, and study of the Divine word.

The young girl was happy and contented near her grandmother. The life of silence and virginity pleased her greatly.

Penelope had such pleasant experiences in her companionship with her affectionate grandmother that, when she later became a nun, she would reminisce about those years with great gratitude:

"My child, I was an orphan from a young age, but God did not leave me. I was together with my virtuous grandmother, who protected me and raised me in purity and with much piety. She taught me the Gospel, the New Testament, which is the mouth of God. No more beautiful book has ever existed or will ever exist.... My child, wherever I saw the word 'Grace,' I would underline it. I loved chastity—virginity—from my youth. O virginity! There is no greater gift than virginity and being pure. How God loves virginity and takes delight and joy in it! St. George the Trophy-Bearer was also a virgin; he was chaste. I love him dearly! When my grandmother died, I cried—cried continually. But, yet again, God did not abandon me. I would say: 'When, O Lord? When, my God, will my desire be fulfilled? When will I become a nun?'"

Around 1922, when she was about fifteen years old, Penelope's relationship with the Church started to become more profound and conscious.

Her love for Christ was by now steadfast and resolute. Very quickly, her feelings became completely clear and unambiguous. The exclusiveness of Divine love dominated her well-disposed heart, and she lived in spiritual vigilance at an exceptionally lofty level.

"I felt," she would say when she had become a nun, "that I was holding in my hands a large vessel filled to the brim with feelings, and I was fearful, lest I stumble. Fortunately, Christ appeared before me, and I emptied the entire vessel upon Him!"

A continuously increasing love for Christ ignited within her. Divine love was now a steady guide for the virtuous little girl.

Penelope's sensitive heart and the wealth of her feelings lent her existence an ethereal character. She was aflame with prayer and doxology to God, indifferent to the things of this world; she belonged to another world. And the blessed one remained so throughout her life.

As a nun, she would acknowledge that, in her childhood years, she felt such love and unity with our Lord that "not even a leaf of paper could interpose this connection!"

The foundations of her spiritual edifice were very strong. Henceforth, she would assimilate a genuine ecclesiastical mindset. Throughout her long life, she would pray together with the whole Church, "with all of the Saints."

* * *

In the beginning of the 1920s, Penelope's pure heart yearned more and more consciously for a life of consecrated virginity.

The sermons of the ever-memorable Professor Panagiotes Trembelas also contributed to the "flaring up" in her of this lofty aspiration. He had come to Aigion to stir the hearts of the devout faithful there, as well, with his eloquent homilies.

The inspired words of this charismatic speaker made a profound and indelible impression on the malleable soul of the young Penelope.

"Delicate maidens, who vanquished tyrants by the power of our Crucified Savior..." The Immaculate *Theotokos* "possessed the treasure of purity... and knew to preserve and defend it..."

Stirring words such as these roused Penelope's heart and inflamed Divine love in her to an even greater degree, henceforth serving as her watchword and guide.

When she was between sixteen and seventeen years old, Penelope joined herself spiritually with the virtuous sisters Amalia and Martha Farazoules. She loved them very much. They guided and supported her during these critical years, profoundly influencing her by their life of dedication to God.

With time, the "signs" grew in number for Penelope. Everything indicated that she was one of the "elect," preordained to become a vessel of the glory of God and a treasury of Grace.

With much Grace, she was crowned by two great gifts: purity and humility. These precious gems of true and eternal beauty and reflections of Divine pulchritude. Gifts from Him, the Beloved One, the only Pure One, the only Humble One.

Being taught by God Himself, as she was, from those years on she would engage in the sacred work of *vigilance* and *prayer*, so as to protect her chastity.

She lived in silence, with study and meditation. She had not yet learned the Jesus Prayer, but diligently endeavored to preserve her purity of character, especially with prayers of her own composition.

It sufficed the Grace-filled girl, when provoked by the Evil One, to invoke the precious “treasure” of her chastity, and the danger would immediately vanish:

“My chastity! My chastity! My chastity!”

She would “scourge” the enemy by a mental invocation of her *treasure*...

As well, Penelope lived the Divine gift of humility with such awareness,, wisdom, and maturity that it was astonishing to behold.

Already during her adolescent years, she had profound self-knowledge—this secure and blessed path of humility and knowledge of God.

Yet Penelope yearned to become an ascetic. And a life of asceticism also requires the virtue of courage, which she cultivated with especial perseverance.

The combination of the two great charisms of courage and humility in a girl of delicate constitution aroused astonishment and admiration in others.

She was peaceful and humble, while at the same time distinguished by her courage and patience. With a genteel valiance of soul, she ever struck at the root of all passions: self-love.

From her early years until the end of her life, she was known for her lofty self-denial, her austerity as regards her own person, her sacrificial contributions to others, and her patience in all things.

Love of God had formed her from her youth by means of various trials and tribulations. Nevertheless, she never complained or succumbed to self-love or a petty preoccupation with herself. Quite the contrary.

She considered tribulations to be caresses of Divine love. They were invaluable ornaments on the bridal veil of her soul, such that she might enter into the *Wedding of the Lamb* with appropriate nuptial garments.

It was amazing to see how she would be overcome, in such instances, with deep emotion; for, as she would say, the Lord *had condescended to concern Himself with her!*

* * *

The thrice-Graced Penelope was reared within this climate of profound spirituality until she was thirty-seven.

The Divine Love of God for mankind had sufficiently prepared her for her next great step. Thus far, she had conscientiously and consistently exercised herself in chastity and humility. The time had now come, however, for the charism of exalting love to manifest itself in abundance.

Christ, her mystical Bridegroom, would set a third precious gem on her spiritual crown.

Over the next two decades, the virtuous orphan from Aigion would reach lofty heights, advancing spiritually through the labors of her service of love.

In 1945, in order to study nursing at the Greek Red Cross, she had to go to Athens.

With tears in her eyes, Penelope devoutly kissed the walls of her parents’

house for the last time, feeling as if she were taking their blessing for a great and momentous “exodus.”

She prayed to God to protect her, invoked the aid of the *Panagia* of Trypete [a miraculous Icon in her home town], and venerated the Icons in the parish Church of the Holy Archangels. She said farewell to her beloved “*Hesy-chasterion*” [her small house] and set off for the capital.

After her three years of study, in May of 1948 she began her regular duties as a registered nurse at the Greek Red Cross Hospital, from which she retired, as vice-superintendent, in 1967.

When a soul thirsts for Christ, then He will “inebriate” her with His love. This Divine “inebriation” leads us to a liberation from our own selves. We no longer live, but Christ lives in us. And thenceforth, together with Christ, we live for others. We live outside ourselves, sacrificially, on the Cross.

Penelope, so endowed with Grace and veritably inebriated with love for her Bridegroom, made exceedingly good use of her service at the hospital.

She gave herself over with self-sacrifice and enthusiasm to works of love for her neighbor. For her, the patient was an image of Christ our Savior. Her every sacrifice for her suffering brother constituted an offering to her Lord. Thus, this offering would have to be the best, loftiest, and fullest she could offer.

Never for a moment did she forget that her poignant “exodus” from her beloved Aigion was at the same time an exodus from her own self, thanks to her obedience on the Cross for the love of God and His image.

The blessed bride of Christ shone ever more brightly amidst the light of love. As exalting love led her nearer to her Bridegroom, her spiritual beauty increased.

An Angelic innocence filled her being and was fulsomely outspread upon her countenance. She looked much younger, as she approached her sixties....

Deifying love, this third precious gem on her spiritual crown, had rendered her pure heart a wellspring of the mysteries of the *New Age*.

* * *

Around 1970, the successive stages of her “exodus” had come to an end. Penelope, sealed by Christ, had as her guide on her arduous journey the Luminous Cloud—the aid of the *Theotokos*.

She was now ready to enter into the “Promised Land”—to come to dwell in a holy place, a wondrous land. Like a shady and fruit-laden tree, she would at last be transplanted “on the streams of waters” of the monastic life.

Near to her, numerous souls would find true nourishment and consoling refreshment, while she herself would reach the heights of spiritual maturity.

Our Lord, Who loves mankind, would have need of His pure servant for thirty more years.

In 1971, she met our Much-Revered Father [Metropolitan Cyprian] and placed herself under his spiritual direction.

In 1973, as Nun Kypriane, she settled into the newly-built *Hesychasterion*, dedicated to the Holy Angels, in Aphidnai, Attica.

Until her repose in ascetic saintliness, on February 15, 2000, the Divinely-Graced Mother Kypriane travelled on a radiant course. But a whole book is needed to speak about this period of her life. Perhaps at another opportunity, we will recount Mother's life as a nun and Abbess in detail, since our time is now limited.

In any event, she *learned at the feet* of our Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian, also sealed by Christ, and was his most faithful and genuine spiritual daughter, truly proving to be the earthly Angel of the Convent of the Holy Angels.

May the shelter of her prayers, so powerful before God, protect all of us, and grant our ailing Elder peace, strength, and consolation.

I thank you!
Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi
Holy Apostle Thomas
October 6, 2008 (Old Style)



- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We warmly thank His Grace, Bishop Cyprian for helping us to become acquainted with the truly Angelic personality of Mother Kypriane.

At this point, we would like to inform you that the tomb of the holy Eldress, located at her Convent, has become a place of consolation and hope for the faithful.

* * *

Our program now continues.

The Sisterhood of the Convent of the Holy Angels, genuine spiritual children of our Much-Revered Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian, would like to address a “Message of Gratitude” to our Most Reverend Father, within the context of this evening’s tribute.

I invite Mother Seraphima to come to the podium.

2. – *Message of Gratitude.*





“Thanksgiving 2008”

Message of Gratitude on behalf of the Sisterhood of the Convent of the Holy Angels

*Your Grace, Bishop Cyprian, Acting President of the Holy Synod,
Holy Hierarchs, Reverend Fathers and Mothers,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

I have the exceptional honor, at this moment, of representing the Sisterhood of the Convent of the Holy Angels, having been invited to address a message of gratitude—an Angelic message—to our Much-Revered spiritual Father and Metropolitan.

And yet, our *Patera* (Father), so richly endowed with Grace and beloved of Christ, is not with us here, this evening, at this splendid tribute and historic moment for our Convent.

I could never have imagined that the gratitude of our Sisterhood, which pours forth so ardently from all of our hearts, would be expressed in the absence of our benefactor, the founder of our Convent, and the spiritual Father and Elder of Mother Kypriane, our spiritual Mother and Abbess.

We are comforted by the fact that his spirit and blessing are ever with us, just as they are with us now, this evening. And his joy is great; for we are honoring his most saintly spiritual daughter on the occasion of the centennial of her birth.

Our justifiable sorrow is alleviated and replaced by joy in Christ, which is instilled in us tonight by the irreplaceable persons of our Most Reverend Father and our holy Mother, who are so dear to us.

Nearly forty years ago, our *Patera* gave flesh and blood to our Mother’s sacred yearnings, with which she was aflame from her youth.

Our Abbess received the charism of being a Mother because she herself had a Father. And we were begotten as spiritual daughters by our Mother, through our Father beloved of God.

Our *Patera* was, and continues to be, a wellspring of blessings; and our Mother was, and continues to be, a serene brook at which we stoop to quench our thirst.

In February of the year 2000, Mother’s soul flew to Christ her Bridegroom, secure in her conviction that she was not leaving us orphans, but rather in the hands of our spiritual Father.

We had already been experiencing this truth in our lives for eight years.

And even now, from his sickbed, our affectionate *Patera* continues to give flesh and blood to the sacred yearnings of our souls.

We are, in other words, living a mystery.

Permit me to express our heartfelt gratitude to our Christ-loving Elder and benefactor for the innumerable gifts of his love, for his guidance and forbearance, for his unceasing prayer, and for the solicitude shown to us on his behalf by the Fathers of the Monastery.

At this point, please allow me in particular to express the grateful best wishes of our Sisterhood to His Grace, Bishop Cyprian on the occasion of his Nameday and the anniversary of his elevation to the Episcopacy.

Our Much-Revered Father, we wholeheartedly and humbly pray that our Most Holy *Theotokos* and Sovereign Lady of the Angels, together with Sts. Cyprian and Justina, richly bestow upon your soul peace, strengthening, and heavenly consolation, and that they grant us our fervent desire that you regain your health.

May your greatly esteemed paternal blessing protect us and sustain us throughout our lives, that we might follow in the footsteps of our ever-memorable, holy Mother.

Forgive me.



- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We warmly thank our beloved sister in Christ, Mother Seraphima, who moved us with her combination of love for father and mother.

May our Lord bless the Convent of the Holy Angels, that it might continue to be a nursery of sanctity, to the glory of God.

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The time has come to offer our traditional gift to our Most Reverend Metropolitan, whose Nameday it is.

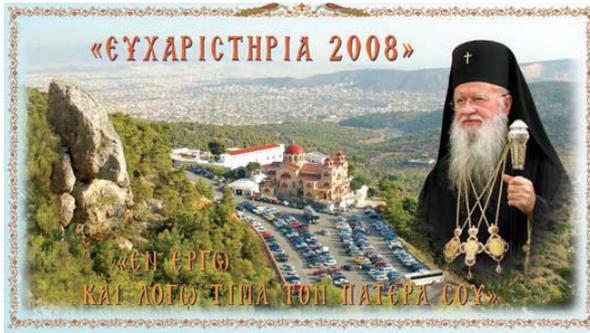
This token of our gratitude is a fruit of the Icon Studio of the Convent of the Holy Angels, with the help and guidance of our Monastery's Icon Studio.

I invite His Grace, Bishop Klemes to present the gift.

3. – *Presentation and offering of gift.*



Portrait of Mother Kypriane



Part III

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We have now come, with God's help, to the third part of our program.

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

The vision of sanctity directs us "to the heights." The wondrous Life of Mother Kypriane points us towards "the things on high."

We are also reminded of this by the dance melody from Mytilene, "I wish to ascend to the heights."

1. – *"I wish to ascend to the heights."*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

Just as the beauty of nature elevates us to heavenly beauty, in the same way does the spiritual beauty of virtue, such as that possessed by Mother Kypriane, help us in this ascent.

"My red rose bush," a song from Aetolia-Acarmania.

2. – *"My red rose bush."*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

The sea and boats remind us of the great journey to the Harbor of Life, which is Paradise.

With the boat of sanctity, the ever-memorable Mother Kypriane traversed the turbulent sea of life and reached the serene embrace of her Bridegroom, Christ.

Folk melodies: "A small, little boat," and "Your deep-blue waters."

3. – Folk melodies.

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

Instrumental music from Lesbos.

4. – *Instrumental music from Lesbos.*

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

We will close the musical portion of our program with a folk melody.

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

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.

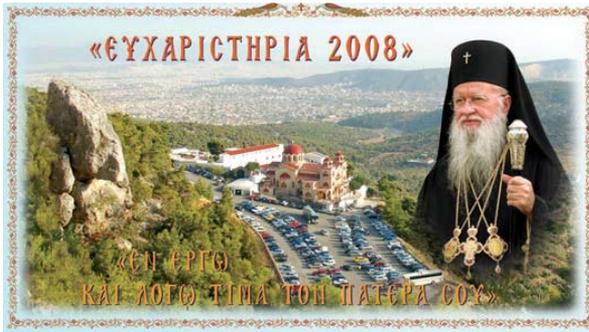
* * *

The melodic warbling of the nightingale transports us yet again to the beauty of sanctity.

The ever-memorable Mother Kypriane, whose sweetness of speech and manner were renowned, was truly a nightingale of Grace.

5. – *“The Nightingale.”*





Part IV

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

In the fourth part of our celebration, we will hear a portion of the life of the saintly Mother Kypriane. This is a small chapter from the second part of her Life, entitled “The Cross of Obedience.”

I ask our beloved and honorable Professor Onouphrios Sochos to bring this very edifying chapter to life for us.

1. – Narration by Onouphrios Sochos.



“Thanksgiving 2008”

The Cross of Obedience

THE BLESSED PENELOPE completed her studies on April 30, 1948. The next day, May 1, she began her regular duties as a registered nurse at the Greek Red Cross Hospital.

From the beginning of her studies, and especially during her internship, Divine intervention was immediately apparent in the resolution of two of her difficulties.

Her fear of diseases vanished, and her constant contact with doctors, male nurses, and, in particular, with patients, ceased unsettling her mind.

She preserved her purity of character, both then and until the end of her service: a pure, white candle before her Bridegroom, burning for His sake alone. Her flame never flickered amidst the currents of worldliness or passion.

This was truly a twofold miracle, resulting from her sincere and whole-hearted obedience.

From the very beginning, this marvellous experience led the wise Penelope to greater wisdom. During this new stage of her life, she would probe yet more profoundly into the great mystery of obedience.

She would now be given the opportunity to test herself steadfastly in sanctifying obedience, even undergoing, for its sake, moments of crucifixion.

Obedience would raise her up, love would exalt her, and humility would protect her....

* * *

GENUINE, consistent obedience is a preëminently heroic feat. It deals a mortal blow to the terrible passion of self-love, thereby slaying it.

One who has placed himself under obedience consciously chooses to ascend the Cross, to which all of the holy virtues lead the struggler. Obedience crucifies one together with our Savior, rendering him a participant in the Lord's great obedience to His Father.

The Divinely-illuminated Penelope, always following her vision, endeavored to practice a form of obedience that went beyond narrow, shallow, worldly notions. The monastic way of obedience moved her.

She submitted herself not merely outwardly and formally, but also inwardly and intrinsically. Withal, therein lies the therapeutic dynamism of obedience: in our complete denial of our own selves, our desires, our opinions, and our way of thinking.

Self-determination, self-esteem, self-reliance, self-justification, and all related passions (self-complacency, self-praise, self-admiration, a desire to be pleasing to others) are crucified and mortified, that Christ might live within us.

To be sure, she had always been a person of obedience. Now, however, she was entering the stage of spiritual adulthood. With deep understanding, she came to grasp the many dimensions of this God-given mystery.

She put rational obedience into practice.

Ruminating all things in her pure heart, she assigned them to the ineffable judgments of God. Thus, she was able to teach the the Red Cross nurses from experience: “Everything lies within the Divine plan. We must accept it all with faith in the good Will of the Lord. We do not know what is in our best interest. *‘For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?’*”

“Will we go against God?” the wise Penelope would ask, adding with simplicity: “Will we play the boss with God?”

This spiritual view of things, and of the everyday occurrences in the hospital environment, ever more greatly spawned within her the virtue of courage, which is related to obedience.

In various adversities, she was truly as firm as a rock. All of the sisters marvelled at her and acknowledged that the manner in which she dealt with every difficulty was truly *unique!*

In her endeavor to practice monastic obedience, she would anticipate the intentions and thoughts of the medical department heads and nursing directors: Whatever was permitted, but not particularly to their liking, she would avoid.

Visits to relatives, meetings with relatives in the hospital, requests for special permits, demands to be allowed to leave work at the appointed hour—all such instances provided opportunities for Penelope to practice self-denial and a more profound and intrinsic obedience: prudent obedience.

She had knowledge of what she was seeking, and wished to remain together with Christ on the Cross. Here, she would experience a foretaste of the brilliance of the Transfiguration and the Resurrection.

* * *

IN 1950, the heroic Penelope began to hemorrhage.

For several months, she tried to hide it. Her blessed modesty restrained her in the bonds of silence.

Her condition worsened to such an extent, however, that the symptoms became apparent and gave her away: high fevers, extreme weakness....

After she was examined, it was decided that she should undergo surgery as soon as possible.

For practical reasons, the professor in charge of surgery scheduled the procedure to take place in the hospital’s maternity clinic. He ordered that Penelope

make the necessary preparations.

Yet the matter was not so simple. The doctor's decision dealt a hard blow to the pure servant of God.

Her respect for marriage was great and her love for good families and small children was sincere. The watchful eye of her soul always saw far beyond ordinary appearances. But how could she combine the guarding of her mind, imagination, heart, and feelings with everything she might face in the maternity clinic?!

She unceasingly focused her attention and vigilance on a lofty plane; she wanted her being to be outwardly and inwardly blameless and virginal before her Bridegroom. Regarding His love, she was absolute. Everything had to "be subjugated to the obedience of Christ."

And yet! She would have to remain in such unfavorable surroundings, and for quite a few days at that. And she herself would have to make all of the preparations!

Her ordeal was indeed great....

But for all that, she submitted!

She asked leave of the head nurse to enter the maternity clinic.

"But Miss Alexopoulos," the latter exclaimed in surprise, "I don't see why you should go there. Why should you not undergo surgery here, in your own surroundings?"

Penelope did not hasten to reply. Not yielding to boldness, self-justification, or her justifiable desire to avoid the maternity clinic, she humbly prayed for what was to come.

"But since that is the professor's order....," the head nurse concluded, obviously concerned.

Finally, she was scheduled to be admitted to the clinic the following week.

In her room, the bride of Christ knelt in prayer. She did not seek to descend from the Cross. Neither did she ask to be spared the *bitter cup*; nor did she beseech that the wishes and plans of her superiors be changed.

The only thing she desired was that her will would be conformed to that which was permitted by God.

"O my Lord and my God, I fervently entreat You, make me to want that which You permit them to want!"

Suddenly, she had a severe hemorrhage! In the room, in the hallway, the blood flowed profusely....

She was rushed to the hospital's nearest surgical unit and was operated on immediately.

It was cancer, and indeed at a very advanced stage. Literal decomposition had set in.... The doctors did the best they could.

When, after a few days, she had recuperated somewhat, she was given six

months' sick leave. She was then discretely assigned a three-hour work schedule. There was no hope that she would live.... She was not to be informed, so as not to be influenced psychologically.

She was forty-two years old.

The prognoses of the doctors, however, were proved false.

The Lord had put his seal on His blessed servant. She was preordained for something higher....

Through the ordeals of winter, she made steady progress. Springtime would follow. And in summer, the succulent fruit would be ripe for the nourishment and support of souls.

* * *

Until her repose in ascetic saintliness, five decades later (!), she would never forget that tragic experience.

This was no sentimental recollection. Far from it.

Her heart overflowed with feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving to her beloved Bridegroom.

He had delivered her from the ordeal of the maternity clinic in such an extraordinary manner, while she had been struggling to desire His Will alone.

Moreover, He had not permitted that she depart from this life so prematurely, without having fulfilled her ardent desire to receive the Holy and Angelic *Schema* of monastics, radiant in the beauty of her Mystical Wedding....



- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We sincerely thank Professor Onouphrios Sochos for his truly charismatic recitation of this most compunctious chapter from the Life of Mother Kypriane.

* * *

Our Monastery had the especial blessing of producing a short film this year, on the occasion of the centennial of the birth of Mother Kypriane.

Text, speech, music, and image combine to form a poem of great harmony.

The ever-memorable Eldress' entire life was indeed a poem.

2. – *Film.*





“Thanksgiving 2008”

Eldress Kypriane, Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Angels: An Earthly Angel

*In thy memory we have gathered
blossoms of the almond tree,
coming here to chant
from the depths of the heart...*

*Thy countenance
the smile of Springtime,
the lily of purity
glistening amidst its light...*

It was the fifteenth of February, 2000....

At dawn's break that day, Mother Kypriane fell asleep in the Lord. The Most Reverend Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Angels, in Aphidnai, Attica, departed into the Light unwaning.

Along with the hymns for the departed and the fragrant incense, the almond trees, their white flowers abloom, strewed alike the Blessed Path, whilst the virgin soul of this Righteous One trod her final steps to meet her Beloved.

The tranquil joy of nature reflected the mystical majesty of the Age to Come.... Already to this Age had the Divinely-Graced Mother Kypriane entirely come to belong.

* * *

MOTHER Kypriane, this earthly Angel, was throughout her long life always unassuming, like a stranger and a sojourner. And yet she was herself a place of His revelation, where God made His appearance.... A place where sanctity yielded to poetry: an ode to the Beloved One.

* * *

SHE saw the light of life in Aigion, on November 30, 1908.

From a very young age, she would point with her hand to Heaven and say: *“My happiness lies up there!”*

This precocious feeling regarding eternal joy was surely a gift of God.

A mystical flame burned within her... Until the time that she dedicated herself to the monastic life, at sixty-five years of age, this flame had not permitted her to form any vain bond whatever with the world.

Unwaveringly, she sensed that she belonged exclusively to her only Bridegroom, Christ. She sought always the *Path of the Ascetics*.

She was crowned by two great gifts: purity and humility—these precious gems of eternal beauty. Gifts from Him, the only Pure One, the only Humble One.

She lived in spiritual vigilance on an exceptionally lofty plane.

Later, she would say: *“I felt that I was holding in my hands a large vessel filled to the brim with feelings, and I was fearful, lest I stumble. Fortunately, Christ appeared before me, and I emptied the entire vessel upon Him!”*

* * *

A THIRD precious gem was added to her spiritual crown with her service as a surgical nurse.

From 1945 on, this pure and humble servant of God, known then as Penelope Alexopoulos, was for nearly twenty years a Guardian Angel to all at the Greek Red Cross Hospital in Athens.

Until 1967, when she retired from her service as vice-superintendent of nursing, she allotted in all things and at all times the primacy of the charism of love. She was ever ready, with her luminous smile, to bring to others a heavenly message, to transform sorrow into hopefulness and anxiety into serenity.

An earthly Angel... An ethereal person... Keeping watch, she awaited her sweetest Bridegroom. The oil of her lamp never once diminished....

Yet the Bridegroom was awaiting the final and perfect dedication of His bride, as she approached her sixties....

* * *

THE *Great Expectation* of the Christ-illuminated Penelope prepared her for the desert, her lifelong dream.

In 1971, she was spiritually joined to Archimandrite Cyprian—later Metropolitan of Oropos and Phyle. For thirty years thenceforth, until her repose in ascetic saintliness, her Elder and Guide fully initiated her, as her Preceptor, into the monastic life that she so desired.

In 1973, the servant of God Penelope received her initial monastic Tonsure and was named “Nun Kypriane.” In May of the same year, she moved into the newly-built *Hesychasterion*, dedicated to the Holy Angels, in Aphidnai, Attica. In 1982, she was enthroned as Abbess, at the age of seventy-four.

The liberating power of love for God estranged her from every worldly thing, granting her the freedom possessed by the children of God and the mystical joy of the Resurrection.

In this last period of her life, *the candle was placed upon the candlestand...*

She opened the treasury of her heart and, with great humility and love, brought peace to the souls around her.

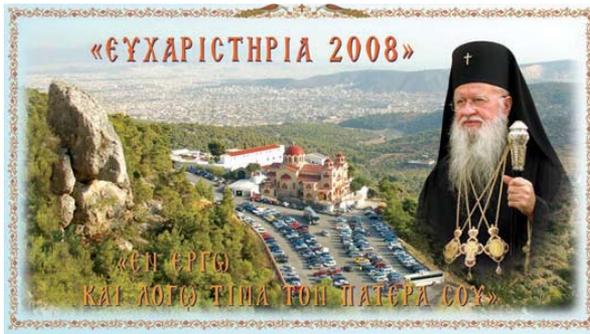
The Divine Comforter had made His dwelling in her pure being. Thus, her succulent words infused into the souls of pilgrims the refreshing dew of fervent trust in our compassionate God and His Providence.

In the eyes of Mother Kypriane, one beheld her life: the Life of the Beloved.

As one visitor to the Convent observed:

“Mother’s eyes are an open window to Heaven....”





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.

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, Ukraine, America, Italy, and Sweden) and who were individually mentioned during the Feast Day of our monastery.

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

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 Romanian, English, Italian, and Russian, so that it could be followed by our visitors from abroad.

We must also not forget, of course, to thank the worthy political dignitaries in attendance this evening for the support that they have given us up to the present time, and we urge them to continue their support, so that, in their own way, they also may contribute to the peaceful cooperation of peoples.

We especially thank [political dignitaries present at the tribute were here named].

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, for whose health we ask them to pray.

As always, at the exit, you will all receive various small gifts as a blessing,

and also a memento: a copy of the portrait of Mother Kypriane, which was offered this evening to our spiritual Father.

The new calendars for 2009 are also available at the exit.

* * *

2. – *Polychronion.*
3. – *Distribution of treats and mementoes.*
4. – *“Through the prayers of our holy Fathers...”*

⌘

The End.
And to our God be
glory, honor, and thanksgiving!