



# EDIFICATION AND CONSOLATION

“But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men for edification and exhortation and consolation”  
(I Corinthians 14:3)

Simple Catechism Through the Experience of the Orthodox Church

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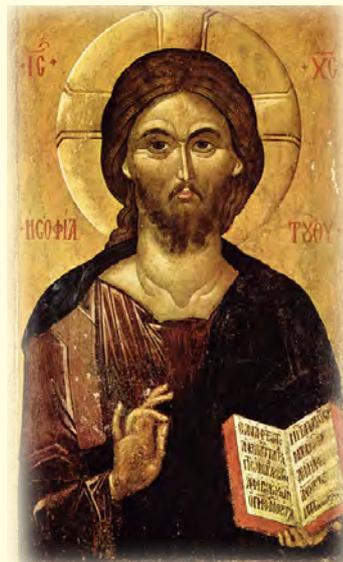
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## September 1

### The Beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year



**Bless for us the Indiction\* of the New Year,**

**○ Thou Who for mankind art both Ancient and New.**

**On this day**, our Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year with a special service, which can be found in the *Menaiion* for September.

**In this service**, special prayers are also read, such as those by the most holy Patriarchs of Constantinople, Sts. Athanasios (1289-1293) and Philotheos (1353-1355, 1364-1376).

\* \* \*

• **There** are three reasons for this Feast:

**a. The Beginning of the Year.** Following the harvesting of the crops during summer, the year is, as it were, completed. A new agricultural period begins in September, and seeds are sown anew in the earth, so that we might be provided with future crops. Thus a new year begins.

• **During** the time of the Old Testament, on the first day of the seventh Judaic month (i.e., the beginning of September), the Jews celebrated the Feast of the New Moon or the Blowing of the Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25 and Numbers 29:1-6).

**b. Thanksgiving and Supplication.** The Church sends up thanksgiving to God for His good favor towards Creation, and also prays to the Lord, beseeching Him for fair weather, seasonable rains, and fertility of the earth—in other words, that “God be merciful and bless the new year,” the New Year of His goodness.



**c. The Entry of our Lord into the synagogue.**

Today we commemorate the entry of our Lord into the synagogue in Nazareth (which synagogue exists to this day), where He was given the book of the Prophet Isaiah to read. Christ then read the passage in which the Prophet

speaks in the name of the Savior: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me [the Christ, the Messiah] because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor...to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (St. Luke 4:18).

• **Hence**, this Feast reminds us today, when nature is preparing itself to pass through a new cycle of seasons—a New Year—that Christ our Savior is the Creator of the world and of time: Christ, Who became incarnate in order to recapitulate and restore all things in Himself.

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**On this day**, all Christians throughout the world glorify the All-Holy Triune God, Who created and preserves all things in life, and sends down His abundant blessings onto all of creation in every era.

**Our Lord** Jesus Christ opens the gates of the

\* **Indiction, *Indictio***: “Definition,” “Decree,” or “Order” issued by the Roman Emperor regarding the tax to be collected for the maintenance of the armed forces. This imperial tax was paid every year before winter for the span of fifteen years. The term Indiction refers to both the entire fifteen-year cycle and for every individual year of the period.

• The beginning of the Indiction = the beginning of each year in the fifteen-year cycle = the beginning of the New Year according to the civil calendar (in the past) = the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year (now).

■ **It** should be noted that when January 1 was ultimately designated as the beginning of the civil year, the Church did not deem it necessary to transfer the

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**The Indiction.**

*Apolytikion. Tone Two.*

**O** Maker of all creation, Who hast established the times and the seasons by Thine own power: Bless the crown of this year with Thy goodness, O Lord, and keep our rulers and Thy flock in peace, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, and save us.

*Kontakion. Tone Four*  
**Thou Who wast raised up.**

**O** Maker and Master of the ages, O God of all, Who art truly transcendent in essence, bless the coming year; and of Thy boundless mercy, O Compassionate One, save all who worship Thee, the only Master, and who cry with fear, O Redeemer: Grant unto all a fruitful year.

*Megalynarion.*

O Unoriginate and Three-Sunned King, Who dost oversee the revolvings of seasons and times, bless the cycle of the new year, granting thy good gifts unto all.

\*\*\*\*\*

New Year, churchifies nature and time, and calls upon us to reexamine in greater depth the purpose of our lives, which is to become temples of the Holy Trinity, participants in the Life of God, and, consequently, eternal by Grace, in the New World and New Heaven of the Last Times.

Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi

*to Ὁσάνη Κροφίαι*

Feast in question to that day, but rather kept to the festal order handed down to us **from the fourth century**, which designates September 1 as the New Indiction. It did so, considering that it has: its own year, viz. the **ecclesiastical year**; its own New Year, viz. September 1; its own calendar, viz. the **Church Calendar**, which is indissolubly bound up with the **Church’s Festal Calendar**.

■ **Such** being the case, one is better able to understand why the adoption, in 1924, by the innovationist ecumenists of the “new,” or “revised,” or “Gregorian,” or “civil” calendar was ecclesiastically improper. It was, in any case, certainly improper, since it was introduced for the purpose of promoting ecumenism.

## The Theotokos theologizes and catechizes

### The Mystery of the Divine Eucharist\*

**I**n the land of the Alamans [a Germanic tribe of the second century] there lived a very virtuous Priest by the name of Pelagios, who had special devotion to the Most Holy *Theotokos*.

The Devil, however, envied him and sowed in him thoughts of disbelief regarding Holy Communion. "How is it possible," he would think, "for the bread to become the Body and the wine to become the Blood of Christ?"

He was overcome by great distress at these thoughts, but did not dare to seek counsel from anyone. He thus turned to the *Panagia* herself, beseeching her to instruct him in this regard.

\* \* \*

**One day**, then, as he was celebrating the Divine Liturgy, when he came to the words "Especially for our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed, and glorious Lady, *Theotokos*, and Ever-Virgin Mary...", the holy Bread disappeared from the *Diskarion*. Pelagios looked around, but could not find It.

"O, my *Panagia*!" he called out in terror. "I understand that, by reason of my lack of faith and my doubts, Christ has come to hold me in abomination and disappeared from before my eyes, so that I, the unworthy one, might



not commune. Do Thou, however, beseech Him to forgive me!"

He then saw the most glorious Queen before the Holy Table, bearing the Divine Infant in her arms, and she said to him:

"This Infant is the Creator of the universe, the Son and Word of God, perfect God and perfect Man. It is He Who died on the Cross for the salvation of the world and was resurrected. Even now, He daily takes on, in a wondrous manner, the form of bread and wine, out of His great love for mankind, and is offered to men and women for the sanctification of their souls. Touch Him, then, and examine Him without



fear, so as to see for yourself that this is a true vision, and that this is a true Body of flesh and blood, just as I gave birth to Him. This is precisely what the bread and wine become when you liturgize. Since humans are not able to eat raw flesh and drink blood, however, the Omnipotent One, in His great wisdom, is offered in the form of bread and wine, so that everyone is able to partake of Him with longing and desire. Hence, you must also commune with piety and faith; for whoever receives Him worthily becomes a participant in His Divine Glory."

\* \* \*

**With these words**, the Mother of God deposited the Infant on the Holy Table, and after humbly worshipping Him, she disappeared.



The Priest took the Divine Infant in his hands with fear and joy, reverently kissed Him, and discerned that this was indeed a living infant with true flesh. He then set Him on the Holy Table, fell to the ground, and prayed with tears:

"I believe, O my Lord, and confess that Thou art the Son of God, Who wast born of the Ever-Virgin Mary. I thank Thee for the Grace that I, the unworthy one, was vouchsafed today, and I beseech Thee to forgive me my former disbelief. And now do Thou grant me to commune of Thee not as an Infant, but as Bread."

**Having** prayed this way with faith, he stood up and saw before him the Holy Bread in its previous form. He communed with great joy, and continued for the rest of his life to celebrate the Divine Mysteries with exceeding devoutness.

\* Source: *Miracles and Revelations from the Divine Liturgy* [in Greek] 2nd ed. (Oropos, Attica: Hiera Mone Parakletou, 1997), pp. 46-48.



On the occasion of the commemoration of the Elevation of the Precious Cross (September 14)



## Pious Practices Surrounding the Holy Cross

In days of old:

**B**efore putting bread in the oven to bake, women would “seal” it with the sign of the Cross.

- Householders would carve a Cross on the front of their houses.
- Craftsmen would adorn works of art and vessels with the Cross.
- Before leaving for battle, soldiers would cross themselves.

Throughout the ages, and until our day:

**A**fter lighting incense, the faithful take “flowers from the Cross” [*stavroloulouda*: the flowers adorning the Cross on the Feast Day of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross—these are distributed to the congregation] and make the sign of the Cross over themselves with them when they are sick, and thereby regain their health.

- The faithful make the sign of the Cross over the bowl in which they will knead *prosphora*.
- When basil from the Cross [see note above] is placed next to the dough, it rises without yeast, if this is done with faith.
- Mothers make the sign of the Cross over their children:
  - before they get dressed [in the morning]
  - before they go to sleep at night (they bless their pillows)
  - before a meal
  - before they drink water (by lifting the glass in the air in the form of the Cross)
  - when they injure themselves
  - when they yawn
  - when they cry at night
  - when they are praised.
- Builders place a large wooden cross on the roof of an edifice.

- Athletes make the sign of the Cross before a game or event, and again after they win.

- We cross ourselves during unforeseen circumstances such as lightning storms, earthquakes, gunfire, etc.

- The Cross is thrown into the sea on the Feast of the Theophany, and in lakes, rivers, and reservoirs, for the sanctification of the waters.

- The Cross is placed as a “guardian” on boats, in cars, trains, and airplanes.

- Shepherds sprinkle their flocks with Holy Water every spring, giving thanks to God for protecting them from the dangers of winter and beseeching Him to bless them.

- They place wooden Crosses on the doors of their folds.

- They give sick animals Holy Water.

- Before milking, they make the sign of the Cross three times with the palms of their hands on the milk-pail, and three times again when they have finished; they then cross themselves three times in thanksgiving to God for this precious gift of His.

- Monastics cross themselves before every action, and every knot on their prayer rope is made up of nine crosses.

- The clergy “seal” their every action in the Church with the Cross.

- During droughts, the Priest takes the Cross and goes with the people to the fields, where they hold a procession with prayers of supplication, taking with them their umbrellas, since it usually begins to rain after such a procession. That is, at least, how it used to be.

- The Macedonian freedom fighters [during the struggle to liberate Macedonia from the Ottomans in 1912] had a large white Cross on their caps.

- Many people make the sign of the Cross over themselves as they leave their houses, so that it might protect them wherever they go. Upon returning home, they cross themselves again in thanksgiving.

### The Crucified One

Let us not be ashamed to confess the Crucified One. Let us boldly place, as a seal on our foreheads, the sign of the Cross with our fingers. And let us do the same in all things and in every circumstance: over the bread that we eat and the glass from which we drink; when we enter and exit; when we lie down in bed and when we get up again; when we walk and when we are still. Great is its protective power. It is the sign of the faithful and the terror of the demons.

(St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

## The great benefit gained by almsgiving



## The "Poor" Angel\*

**S**t. Gregory the Dialogist, Pope of Rome, lived in the sixth century. Before ascending the Episcopal Throne of Rome, he founded a monastery in honor of the Holy Apostle Andrew in Monticello, where he served as Abbot for many years, leading an austere and ascetic life.

\* \* \*

**One day**, a poor man knocked at the monastery's gate begging for alms. The Saint gave him six pieces of money. After a while, the man returned in search of more alms. The Saint gave him six more coins. When this was repeated a third time, the Saint had nothing left to give him, so he cheerfully offered him one of the monastery's silver plates.

Now, the monastery rules forbade such a thing, but the Saint's compassionate heart could not bear for the impudent beggar to leave with empty hands.

\* \* \*

**St. Gregory** would later continue this practice as Pope of Rome. Thus it was that he one day arranged that twelve poor people be invited to eat with him. During the meal, the Saint alone noticed that there was a thirteenth guest, who seemed different from the others. On his face there was reflected an extraordinary nobility of soul. At the end of the meal, the Saint called him to him and asked:

"Who are you, and how is it that you have come here?"

"I am an Angel of the Lord," he responded. "I am the very one who came once before, sent by God to beg alms of you, and you gave me a silver plate. The Lord had sent me to test your compassion. For that reason, then, He also had you consecrated a Bishop. Thenceforth, I received the Divine command to remain always at your side and to protect you."



\* Source: *Apparitions and Miracles of Angels* [in Greek] 2nd ed. (Oropos, Attica: Hiera Mone Parakletou, 1995), pp. 157-158.

Almsgiving gives relief to the souls of the departed

## "You Delivered Me From Hell!"\*



**A few** decades ago, in a village in Eleia [Western Greece], there lived a woman filled with the Grace of God, Kyra [Mrs.]-Katerina.

Though completely illiterate, she was a Divinely-illuminated person, with unswerving, vibrant faith of the kind possessed by the first Christians, who would go through fire and water for Christ, so as not to deny Him.

And so it was that the words of our Lord were fulfilled in Kyra-Katerina: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (St. Matthew 21:22).

\* \* \*

**In July**, if the sky were to darken with rainclouds and it rained, with the sheaves of wheat waiting to be processed on the threshing floor, the harvest would be in danger of destruction. Thus, the villagers would run to Kyra-Katerina to ask her to pray that it would not rain. She would then stand before the Icon of Christ, pray,

and the clouds would disperse!

If anyone were to fall ill, they would, once again, turn to Kyra-Katerina, that she might make the sign of the Cross over them and pray. If the sick had faith, a miracle would take place.

Never did this holy woman accept money or gifts. She did everything selflessly, with great simplicity and natural humility. Her thoughts were pure; she was not sullied by vanity or pride. For this reason, then, right up to the end of her beautiful life, she did not lose her gift from God.

\* \* \*

**At one point**, the village Priest, struck by the results of this woman's prayers, called for her and asked her privately: "Katerina, my child, what prayer do you say before the Icon of Christ?"

And she answered, in all her simplicity: "Father, as you know, I am unlettered. I say a prayer which my grandmother taught me. I



say: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!'

The Priest was astonished at hearing the first verse from the Gospel according to St. John. Having thus been assured of her guilelessness and her simple and profound faith, he said to her: "Keep praying, my child. Keep praying as you pray now."

\* \* \*

**During** the terrible German occupation of 1941, when the Greeks were condemned to starvation and people were dying of hunger, the greatness of Kyra-Katerina's soul shone forth all the more.

Her deceased husband had left her a sizeable fortune that he had inherited from his father, Kyr [Mr.]-Alexis. Among other things, the cellar of their house contained one thousand *okas* [one *oka* equals 1280 grams] of wheat and two large jugs of oil, which Kyra-Katerina began distributing to the hungry. She had a deep container, which she would fill and from which she would give generous portions.

When those receiving alms thanked her, she would reply: "Do not thank me. The wheat is from my father-in-law's property. Say 'O God,

forgive Kyr-Alexis.'"

She had distributed five hundred of the *okas* when she saw her father-in-law in a dream. Now, it had been said that this man was a miser, even though he was rich. She saw him in the form of a convict, with hair reaching the ground, in a terrible state.

Kyra-Katerina then took scissors, cut his hair, cleaned him up, and the face of the deceased lit up! He then turned to her and said with relief: "May you be blessed, my dear Katerina! By your almsgiving you delivered me from hell, my child!"

### The Panagia Great in Grace



of Varnakova

\* \* \*

**The above** was recounted with deep emotion by the blessed Kyra-Katerina's son and his wife, when they were on pilgrimage to the *Panagia* of Varnakova, during Bright Week of 2009.

• **Here** we have yet one more example that demonstrates what great relief almsgiving brings to the souls of the reposed, just as do prayers said for them in Church and by relatives.

\* Source: *Manifestations of the Spiritual World: Heavenly Messages, Miraculous Events* [in Greek] (Dorida: 2009).

Abortion, so hateful to God,  
and its tragic consequences

## The Compassion of God "Pursues" Sinners\*



**A** certain family lived in Chalkidike [Greece] some forty years ago. They were well off and had two children, aged seven and five.

\*\*\*

**When** the wife became pregnant with her third child, she was absolutely determined to terminate the pregnancy. Despite her husband's fierce objections, she insisted and went surreptitiously to have an abortion.

"God will punish us, wife," her husband then said.

"What God, old man? If there is a God, let Him show Himself now!"

One Sunday a month later, when her husband was sick, the mother took her older child on the tractor to go to their field. The tractor overturned, and the seven-year-old child was killed. You can imagine what wailing and lamentation took place then. The grief, despair, and insupportable feelings of guilt were unbearable for this mother, who held herself responsible for the death of her child.

\*\*\*

**Time passed**, and the wife became pregnant again. She once again insisted on having an abortion. This time, however, her husband was adamant in his objection. He even caught her as she was entering a clinic in Thessalonica, and threatened her with divorce if she dared proceed with the abortion. Thus, she was forced to keep the child.

Out of spite, however, and her terrible egotism, since she could not get her way, and perhaps also to pique her husband, she cursed the fetus in her womb. What did she say? "May he die before his fifth birthday!" (By this curse, she was handing him over to the Devil!)

In spite of everything, the time came and she gave birth to a beautiful little boy, who grew ever more charming, full of grace, spirit, and wisdom, even from infancy. He infatuated everyone, and most of all his own mother.

\*\*\*

**Not long thereafter**, their second child, a little girl, fell ill with galloping leukemia. She spent her last days in the city hospital of Thessalonica.

It was during Great Lent, Friday evening. The Salutations to the Theotokos could be heard on the radio from a neighboring room. The mother was weeping, and as she sat in tears and despair, she looked up in prayer at the Icon of the *Panagia* hanging over her child's pillow, when she suddenly saw an enormous black demon over the bed, which said to her: "Cry as you might, it is of no use calling out. This one will die, and so will the other one, which you promised me. I will take him on the day he turns five, just as you promised him to me!"

Upon seeing this—and it was visible only to her, of course—the mother fainted. When they were able to bring her back to consciousness, she recounted exactly what had taken place. At dawn, her little girl died. Such was the lamentation of the mother that she suffered a nervous breakdown and had to be hospitalized for a few days. An exceptional Christian doctor helped her a great deal during these difficult moments.

\*\*\*

**The mother** recovered and returned home. One night, as she was sleeping, she saw an astonishing dream. (Though we should normally not pay attention to dreams, this one was of especial importance). She saw her two children—the older boy and the younger girl—in an exquisitely beautiful place, in Paradise. She heard them say to her:

"Do not cry, Mama! We are very well here, and for no reason whatsoever will we return to that world you live in, which is rotten" (if only the children could see the world today!) "and filthy, full of pain, sorrow, and deceit. You, as parents, of course, grieve. As for us, though, we live in a state of joy and bliss, together with the Angels and Archangels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim. But you, mama, must look after our little Mikey (the child had been baptized Michael). Be

on your guard, because you vowed him to the Evil One. You gave him away, Mama, do



you remember? You must go to Jerusalem during the days when he will turn five and ask around for an ascetic by the name of Father Prodomos. On the boy's birthday, you must remain close to him, at his side."

Thus, from that day forward the anguish, prayers of supplication, and the Divine Liturgies multiplied, that the mother might not lose her third child.

\* \* \*

**Now** we come to the summer of 1968, when little Michael would be turning five. His beleaguered parents set off for Jerusalem. They searched for Father Prodomos and found him with great difficulty, since at that time Israel, Jordan, and Egypt were in a state of war and the times were critical in the extreme. It was not easy to go from one place to another—especially around Sinai—but they were finally able to get through, by means of diplomatic channels, and with help from the local Patriarchate they found Father Prodomos.

Father Prodomos kept them near him, and on the morning of August 12 (the boy's birthday), he had arranged with fellow ascetics who were Priests that they would successively celebrate one Liturgy after another at various sketes until evening.

Father Prodomos took Deacon's *Oraria*, tied them together, and with that bound little Mi-

chael to the Holy Table. And there, at the Holy Table where the boy was bound, Father Prodomos celebrated the Divine Liturgy. He had the parents—and in particular the mother—kneel in front of the Icon of the Mother of God on the *Templon*, where they read the Salutations unceasingly from morning until night. They would finish reading and then begin again, with copious tears. And when the first Liturgy ended, the second began in the next Church, followed by the third, and so on, without interruption.

Around noon, then (to be precise, a little after noon), it seemed to them that there was a terrible earthquake; the place darkened and demons approached, howling and screaming, so as to snatch away little Michael.

Something similar is described in the Life of Father Sabbas the Confessor of the Holy Mountain, regarding a monk who was to be handed over to the demons. Precisely the same thing happened then, with the exception that the demons were now not able to do anything at all, since the child's father and Father Prodomos saw Michael, who was bound to the Holy Table, covered by the Divine *Mandyas* of the *Panagia*. And thus was he saved!

The Mother of God had answered the prayers, Divine Lit-

urgies, continuous Salutations, and the mother's tears, and the miracle happend.

\* \* \*

**After** many years, the parents reposed in piety, after having repented and changed their entire way of life. This change had been brought about by Father Prodomos and the miracle that their son had been saved. Michael is now a monk on Mt. Athos with the name Father Prodomos, in honor of the aforementioned ascetic, who has by now reposed.



\* Source: Protopresbyter Stephanos K. Anagnostopoulos, *Steps in the Christian Journey* [in Greek] (Sergoula, Dorida: Ekdosis Hierou Gynaikείου Hesychasteriou "To Genethlion tes Theotokou," 2011).



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