

# 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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## ✠ CONTENTS ✠

- **Text 1:** Encyclical for the All-Glorious Resurrection of Christ our Savior

*The Mind of the Risen Christ, Purification of the Heart, and the Vision of God*

- **Text 2:** “Her heart was a true garden of God”

*The Value of Compassion and of Almsgiving*

- **Text 3:** The Lord and Women: Womanly Love

*The Resurrection of our Lord... The Feast Day of Women*

- **Text 4:** “They forgot to instill faith in Christ in their hearts”

*The Consequences of Heartlessness Towards One's Parents*

- **Text 5:** “They attend to us night and day, protecting and assisting us in all things”

*The Holy Angels Love the Christian Race*

- **Text 6:** A Revealing Miracle That Took Place in Modern Day Australia

*Women Should Pray With Their Heads Covered*

## Encyclical for the All-Glorious Resurrection of Christ our Savior



### The Mind of the Risen Christ, Purification of the Heart, and the Vision of God

**L**et us keep feast yet again with the whole of creation, which, renewed, endows its fragrance upon all that surrounds us.

Let this Feast be unceasing and perpetual, for our Lord Jesus Christ is risen, and death and Hades have not only been vanquished and trampled, but have also ceased any longer to tyrannize and dominate man, the Image and Creation of God.

“Today spring giveth forth fragrance and the new creation danceth....” “Today all creation exulteth and rejoiceth, for Christ is risen and Hades is despoiled....” “Today, the Master hath harrowed Hades, lifting up those whom it held captive in grievous bondage from ages past....” “Let the things of Heaven make glad and let the things of the earth rejoice...”!

On this radiant and all-gladsome day, we sense that our being is permeated by the all-joyful tidings of the Holy Apostle Paul:

Brethren, “God, Who is **rich in mercy, for His great love** wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, **hath quickened us together** with Christ...and **hath raised us up together**, and **made us sit together** in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>

Since God is rich in compassion, “He stooped down to earth and retrieved His Image.”<sup>2</sup> He vivified it, resurrected it, and exalted it; He made it sit upon the Throne of the Lamb that was slain.

Glory to Thy compassion, O Lord!  
Glory to Thine Œconomy, O Thou  
Who alone lovest mankind! Glory to  
Thee, O God, O Holy Trinity, glory to  
Thee!

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The words “**A great thing is man,**” resound from the depths of the ages from the wise author of the Old Testament Book of Proverbs.<sup>3</sup>

A great thing is this creature of God which is called man. The most beautiful creature, the apogee of creation, the Image of God. It is precisely because of this greatness that it behooves man—now revived, liberated, and renewed—to recover his ancient glory, his primordial beauty amid the glory of the Holy Trinity, and to behold God.

The Resurrection of our Lord inaugurates the **era in which the vision of God becomes possible**. This **charism of beholding God** will assuredly be given to us in its fullness at the End of the Age, in the newness of creation, when “we shall see Him as He is.”<sup>4</sup> Then the servants of God “shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet our Incarnate, Crucified, and Risen Lord and God regards as fortunate—and these, indeed, are the truly fortunate ones—those men and women who have purity and chastity of soul in this life, for they shall see God: “**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**”<sup>6</sup>

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The **vision of God** requires, as we all know, a **change of outlook**: from self-interest and concern for ourselves to adopting and embracing the **Mind of the Risen Christ**; that is, the mindset of magnanimity and selflessness, the mindset of humility and obedience to the point of sacrifice.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Apostle Paul

exhorts us: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”<sup>7</sup>

God became man in order to instill **His Mind** in us. This Mind will lead us to **love and compassion** and will give us **purity of heart**. And then we will be granted the great **charism of the vision of God**.

“**Purity of heart,**” says St. Isaac the Syrian, “**is love for the weak who fall.**” And he continues: “**If you see your brother sinning, throw the garment of your love over his shoulders.**”<sup>8</sup>

A love of such radiance flows only from the **Mind of the Risen Christ**. This love is truly purifying, creative, and efficacious, since “it alters the nature of things,”<sup>9</sup> as the Divine Chrysostomos assures us, and leads us unerringly to the **vision of God** within the Light of the Resurrection and the glory of the Holy Trinity.

“A great thing is man,” therefore, but a **merciful man** is greatly valued: “And precious is a merciful man.”<sup>10</sup>

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**My** brothers and sisters, may the inestimable prayers of our much-revered Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian, and the intercessions of the *Theotokos*, with the Grace of the Resurrection of our Savior Christ, **strengthen us in the struggle for a change in mind, in order that we might become truly compassionate, so that our hearts might be purified and we might be vouchsafed the vision of God**, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

**Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!**

† **The Holy Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, 2013**

Your humble supplicant  
before our Risen Lord

† *Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi*

Acting President  
of the Holy Synod in Resistance

1. Ephesians 2:4-6; / 2. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *Concerning the Life in Christ*, Discourse I, §18, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CL, col. 504B. / 3. Proverbs 20:6. / 4. I St. John 3:2. / 5. Revelation 22:4. / 6. St. Matthew 5:8. / 7. Philippians 2:4-5. / 8. Cf. St. Isaac the Syrian, “Discourse LVIII,” in *Ἄπαντα τὰ εὐρεθέντα Ἀσκητικά* [The complete extant ascetical discourses] (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis Bas. Regopoulou, 1997), p. 239. / 9. St. John Chrysostomos, “Homily XXXII on I Corinthians,” §6, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXI, col. 273. / 10. Proverbs 20:6.

“Her heart was a true garden of God.”

## The Value of Compassion and of Almsgiving\*



**I**n a small village in the plains of Navpaktos, during the years of the German occupation, there lived a family renowned for its piety and hospitality.

The one who surpassed all of the others in compassion and secret almsgiving, however, was the matriarch of the family, Kyra [Mrs.] Smaragde.

During those difficult years of hunger and poverty, she never ceased secretly showing mercy to all.

The cellar of their house, which was blessed by God and always full, was at the disposal of all of their indigent relatives.

She gave them the right to come and take whatever they needed without even asking!

When she would hear that some woman had given birth and was therefore in need of nutritious food, she would do the following:

She would hide an egg, cheese, and bottle of milk under her apron and go to her house at night to feed her in secret, since at that time people were dying of hunger.

\* \* \*

**A**t other times, she used another tactic: Her kitchen had a low window that looked out onto a dirt road where the neighborhood children would often play.

So then, she would put on this window sill a covered clay pot, which contained oil or milk or something of that sort. She would then call out of the window to the child of the poor family she wanted to help.

“Hey there, Michael, come here, you little rascal! Pour this water out onto the tree so that I don’t have to go outside!”

When the child approached, she would whisper: “Take this pot and give it to your mother quickly, hush-hush!”

That is how this Christian woman would give alms.

\* \* \*

**The** years went by and Kyra-Smaragde grew old, along with the other people her age in the village. One year, three of them passed away: Kyra-Smaragde and two other women.

Sometime later, the daughter of one of these women saw her

mother in a dream.

“Mama,” she cried out with yearning. “How are you doing up there?”

And the good woman answered on behalf of all three:

“We are all well! Glory to God! We have beautiful houses! But none of us has a house like Smaragde. Now there is beauty, there are lights, there are flowers—so many flowers!”

\* \* \*

**The** next morning, when the woman told her dream to some of the people in the village, they smiled and said:

“Kyra-Smaragde deserves that heavenly palace and the many flowers! Her heart was a true garden of God. May God grant rest to her soul!”

\* \* \*

**This** was related with great affection by the wife of one of Kyra-Smaragde’s grandsons. Her memory is passed down from generation to generation.



(\* Messages from Heaven [in Greek] (Dorida: Hiera Mone Panagias Varnakovas, 2005), pp. 81-81.



**The Resurrection** of our Lord is the day when women celebrate their feast day. It is not a personal, but rather a collective feast—a feast day of their sex. When the Lord delegated women to proclaim the good tidings of His Resurrection to His Apostles, He gave honor to the female sex.

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**A. During** the Lord's earthly life, He showed His love for women, who were held in disdain, and they in turn showed Him their gratitude. Not one woman who turned to Christ left discontented.

At the beginning of His public life, He restores to health Peter's mother-in-law, who lay ill with a fever, thereby rewarding Peter's concern for her.

Taking pity on Mary Magdalene, who was possessed by seven demons, He heals her.

Moved by the widow's tears, He raises her only son from the dead.

Though He had been sent to the sheep of Israel, He hearkens to the pleading of the woman of Canaan—who, not being of the Jewish race, is likened to a dog—and makes her daughter whole.

On the Sabbath day, He heals the woman who had been bowed down for eighteen years, notwithstanding the indignation of the ruler of the synagogue.

He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead and cures the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years.

The woman taken in the act of adultery, hunted like a partridge by the hawk-like Pharisees, arrives at His feet and is shielded by the words: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."



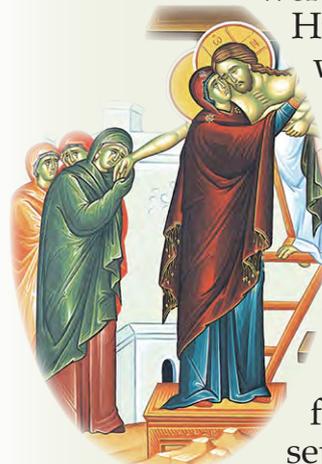
## The Resurrection of our Lord... The Lord and Women

Defending the sinful woman weeping at His feet, He refutes the condemnations of the hypocritical Pharisee.

He accepts the hospitality of Martha and Mary, more greatly rewarding Mary's attention to His words than Martha's hustle and bustle.

And the most astonishing of all: He converses with the Samaritan woman—His ethnic "enemy"—who had had five husbands, and the one whom she had at the time was not her lawful husband. To this woman, then, He reveals for the first time that He is Christ, the expected Messiah.

He does so, notwithstanding the Rabbinical injunction, whereby one must burn the Holy Scripture rather than allow a woman to hear it, and despite the astonishment of His disciples, who were amazed to see Him speaking with a woman.



It was to women that He first appeared after His Resurrection.

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**B. When** the Body of Christ had been taken down from the Cross, Joseph and Nicodemus brought It to the garden nearby and handed It over to the women to prepare It for burial.

The *Theotokos*, Maria Magdalene, Salome, and "many other women" had stood by the Cross. Having, as women, more experience than men in such things, they went about the preparations.

They took care to remove the crown of thorns placed on His head in mockery by the Roman soldiers, pulling out the thorns that remained in the skin of His head. They untangled and braided the

...the Feast Day of Women  
**Womanly Love**

Lord's hair, which had become matted with blood from the wounds caused by the crown of thorns.

The Lord's eyes and mouth were open. The women closed those eyes, which they had looked upon with such purity and tenderness when He was alive. They closed that mouth, which they had never dared kiss.



The women's many tears fell onto His face, which, in the still pallidness of death, had recovered the former sweetness of its

countenance. Their tears washed this face more perfectly than the cleanest water, even the water from Joseph's well.

After the face came the rest of the Lord's Body, which was entirely covered by the sweat of agony, the blood of the Cross, and the dust of the crossroad at Golgotha. A bloody fluid still trickled from His hands, feet, and side.

They washed and anointed Him unstintingly with myrrh, including the darkened holes on His hands and feet. After the sinful woman [in the house of the Pharisee] had anointed Jesus' feet and head with myrrh, the Lord had received nothing but beatings and spitting. Now, for a second time, He is anointed with myrrh and tears.

When the one hundred liters—thirty two kilos—of fragrances had been used up, the women wound the shroud around the Lord's Body with linen cloths and cords. They then covered His head with the napkin, after kissing His forehead.

Joseph and Nicodemus the pallbearers then took up this precious cargo wrapped in white linen—Jesus Christ—

and placed it in a tomb, rolled a large stone in front of the opening, and departed.

The women, however, remained, unable to tear themselves away from the



stone, which separated them forever from Him Whom they had loved and to Whom they were devoted.

How could they possibly leave alone, in the twofold darkness of the tomb and of death, Him Who had been so alone in His agony at Gethsemane and on the Cross?

Perhaps they prayed in low voices or recalled some of the words or gestures of their Beloved.

If one of the women would console another, the other would burst into loud sobs. Invoking His Name, they leaned against the stone, now speaking to Him—Whose ears were henceforth closed by the napkin and death—words of love, which they had not dared address to Him during His life.

That evening, in the dark and damp dusk of the garden, they poured forth their love, which was greater than their hearts could contain.

Finally, overcome by the increasing chill and their fear of the night, they departed, their eyes lit up by tears, resolved to return two days later.

O blessed women!



**“They forgot to instill faith in Christ in their hearts”**

## The Consequences of Heartlessness Towards One's Parents \*

**A** man and wife had four children: two girls and two boys. They raised them “for better or for worse,” in great poverty; they took care of their material needs and married them off.

These unfortunate parents, however, forgot one thing in the upbringing of their children: **They forgot to instill faith in Christ in their hearts.**

He was absent from their house and from the education and breeding they gave their children; and thenceforth, to be sure, He would be absent from the four new families descended from them.

\*\*\*

**The years** went by and the parents grew old. Since they lived separately from their children, they invited their two sons (who lived closer) one day and told them that their wives would have to stop by every now and then to give them a helping hand.

The parents had not wanted to disturb them by their presence, which is why they had decided to live separately from their children in the first place.

How do you think their sons answered them? “Tell that to your daughters. Let them help you, not our wives!”

The parents did in fact tell their daughters, but their sons-in-law accepted the arrangement with a good deal of surliness.

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**Things** were rather uncomfortable for the elderly parents for a while.

Then, one day, their house caught on fire and was reduced to ashes. It was only with great difficulty that the firefighters were able to save them. Now what? At whose house would the elderly couple live? At nobody's house! None of their children wanted to take them in.

\*\*\*

**They** stayed for two or three days at a neighbor's house so as to recover somewhat, which their daughters and daughters-in-law, sons

and sons-in-law, and grandchildren took as an opportunity to vanish from the scene.

Then the old couple had to leave—since they were, after all, just guests there—and to go to their elder son.

“I will go,” said the elderly father to his wife, “while you wait in our Church courtyard, and then we will take things from there.”

It was noon, and the eldest son's family was eating when the father arrived. He pleaded with them. The son would not listen to a word of it. He had been influenced by his wife, and he called out to her:

“Go and get him out of here, before I break his ribs!”

The daughter-in-law put him out of the house, and the old man turned around to her and said:

**“May God punish you for that!”**

He cursed them, in other words. “May God punish you” may sound like a “polite” sort of curse, but a curse it is, nonetheless.

Well, there he went and said it, the blessed man! His daughter-in-law gave him a kick and a shove, and he went tumbling down the sixteen steps.

When they had lifted him up and brought him to the doctor, they discovered that he had broken his pelvis, with the result that he was paralyzed and had to stay six months in the hospital.

The mother, now alone, then went to her daughters to ask for their help. They swore at her and wanted nothing to do with her, because the poor woman had begun to suffer from urinary incontinence and could not help herself. They sent her away so that she would not *soil* their houses!

Finally, their younger son put her in the “laundry room.” (At that time, there were laundry rooms on the roofs of houses instead of washing machines.) Six months later, the paralyzed father was released from the hospital, and he was also crammed into the laundry room.

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**One** night, during a terrific thunderstorm, lightning hit this laundry room, and not only burned it down, but also killed the paralyzed father.

Not long thereafter, the unfortunate mother went through a great deal of suffering. Her daughter-in-law drove her out of the burned



laundry room. What was she to do now? She went and sought refuge under a bridge.

Eleven days later, she was found dead, and clutched in her frozen hands was a piece of paper with the words:

**It is my fault that my children turned out the way they did. If I had brought them up in Christ's embrace, then surely even their wives and husbands would have become better people.**

**I confessed to a very wise Priest that passed by here, and that is what he told me. He brought me Holy Communion here, under the bridge, and I communed. He also told me that he would come back to take me and find me a place to live, and that he would do everything he could to help me. But I know that it will be too late.**

**My children, I leave you with my blessing. May you also become grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, bearing Christ inside you. May you never meet with anything that we ourselves experienced. May God always keep you well. Your mother.**

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**A year** after her death, the daughter-in-law who had given the shove to her father-in-law fell down the same stairs and wounded her arm. It quickly became infected, and in the end had to be amputated. The other daughter-in-law developed a lump in her head, which led her two years later to a mental hospital. At the third house, within seven months, the four small children died. And in the fourth house, there was squabbling and divorce.

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**Ten years** after the tragic death of the mother, not one person remained of any of these families. Person by person, the families were wiped out in a way decreed by Divine Justice, since none of them showed any inclination towards repentance or any sense of shame regarding their heartless behavior towards their elderly and infirm parents!



(\*) Protopresbyter Stephanos K. Anagnostopoulos, *Steps the Christian Journey* [in Greek] (Piraea: 2011), p. 290.

**“They attend to us night and day, protecting and assisting us in all things”**

## The Holy Angels Love the Christian Race\*



**A t one time**, when St. Niphon was in the countryside, he lifted his hands to pray.

Suddenly, the heavens opened, and he saw the Lord seated on a Throne of Glory, surrounded by the Apostles and a multitude of Angels!

He stood there gazing at them, enraptured.

He wished he could fly like a bird, burning with the desire to join them.

But they also were watching him, and said to each other with pleasure:

“Look, it is our friend Niphon! See with what yearning and love he is gazing at us! Rightly do we commemorate him at our Divine services!”

Such things did the Immaculate Angels say.

When he came to himself, filled with elation, he composed encomia and songs, overflowing with sweetness, in their honor.

Oh, how the Holy Angels love the Christian race! They assist us in every good work.

How, then, could our love and yearning remain anything but undiminished for these precious gems, shimmering pearls, creatures of Divine beauty, and immortal flowers?

They unceasingly intercede for us and beseech God, Who loves mankind, to take pity on us and deliver us from eternal fire.

They attend to us night and day: ● When we eat, they guard and protect us; ● when we sleep, they cover us with their wings; ● when we work, walk, or travel by sea, they are always at our side, protecting and assisting us in all things!

(\*) *An Ascetic Bishop: St. Niphon, Bishop of Constantiane* [in Greek] 14th ed. (Oropos: Hiera Mone Parakletou, 1994), p. 147.



A Revealing Miracle That Took Place in Modern Day Australia

Women Should Pray With Their Heads Covered\*

“...Is it comely that a woman should pray unto God uncovered?”

**A** certain Russian Old Believer converted to Orthodoxy. She fully embraced the teachings of Orthodoxy and scrupulously followed all of the Canons of the Church.

\* \* \*

**Not** long thereafter, she was in a car accident in which she was crushed against the steering wheel, thereby seriously injuring her chest.

Shortly after the accident, she developed breast cancer. Her doctors recommended that she undergo a mastectomy, which she humbly accepted as God’s Will.

The surgery was successful, but the doctors also prescribed intensive chemotherapy as a preventative measure. They informed the woman that she would lose her hair as a side effect of this treatment—something which she once again humbly accepted, placing her hope in the Lord.

The chemotherapy began, and even though it lasted a long time, her hair was not affected. The doctors were astonished and could offer no explanation.

One night, as the woman slept, she saw the Most Holy Theotokos, who told her:

“Since throughout your life you never once went into a Church with your head uncovered, not even one hair of your head will fall as a result of chemotherapy!”

• “Every woman who prayeth or propheseth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head.... Judge for yourselves: Is it comely that a woman should pray unto God uncovered?”

(1 Corinthians 11:5, 13)

• “It is modest and holy for women to pray with their heads covered, according to the order and injunction of the Apostle, since by covering their heads they give glory to their husbands and honor and reverence to the Angels that guard them....

“If, when women read sacred books, they should cover their heads so as to show by their outward appearance the inner piety of their hearts, as the Divine Chrysostomos says, then how much more so should they cover their heads when entering the Church of God to pray? For by their outward covering they reveal the inner piety of their souls.”

(St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite)

• “With these words the Apostle reveals, here, something else yet more fearful: that is, that it is God Who is insulted, and consequently dishonored, by women not covering their heads when at prayer.”



(St. Theophylact of Bulgaria)

(\*) *Hagios Kyprianos*, No. 259, March-April, 1994, p. 248.

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