

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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The Power of Her Name

“There are Three that bear record in Heaven”

The One God is Triune

“O Father, Word, and Spirit, the Trinity in Unity, blot out the multitude of my transgressions.”



“My hope is the Father, my refuge the Son, my shelter the Holy Spirit. O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee!”

“The Father is Light, the Word is Light, and the Holy Spirit is Light, Who was sent to the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues; and through Him all creation is illumined and guided to worship the Holy Trinity.”

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”
(St. Matthew 28:19).

a. The Father is **God**, the Son is **God**, and the Holy Spirit is **God**;
the Father is **all God**, the Son is **all God**,
and the Holy Spirit is **all God**;
yet there are not three Gods, but **ONE God**.

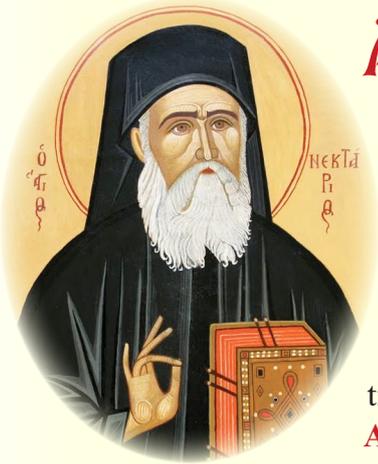
b. God is a **Unity**, that is, **One** in His single and undivided
Essence; God is also a **Trinity**, the Holy Trinity,
with respect to the Persons or Hypostases.

c. The Father is **unbegotten**,
the Son is **begotten** directly of the Father,
and the Holy Spirit **proceeds** directly
and solely from the Father.

■ The Saint continues to serve the People of God

St. Nectarios
Celebrated the Services
Throughout All of Great Week
in Ukraine*

Pascha 2007



A pious dentist from Athens went to Aegina one week-end in the summer of 2008 to venerate the Relics of St. Nectarios, a wonderworking Saint of the twentieth-century.

At the Saint's monastery, she encountered a group of Ukrainian Orthodox Christians that had come to Greece especially to venerate and thank the Saint.

They were all so moved—even overwhelmed, one might say—that they drew the attention of the other pilgrims.

When they had finished venerating the Relics, they recounted the following astonishing event with the help of an interpreter.

* * *

“This year, we asked our local Bishop to send us a Priest to celebrate the services for us during Great Week.

“The Bishop sadly replied:

“Unfortunately, my children, we have no Priests available. As you know, we have a great shortage of clergy.”

“Crestfallen, we returned home, resolved all the same to go to Church on those holy days, even without a Priest.

“On Great Monday, however, to our great joy, a venerable elderly Priest arrived, who served for us throughout all of Great Week, in a profoundly compunction-evoking atmosphere.

“It was an exceptional experience. We were all grateful to our Bishop, who had, we thought,

managed to find a Priest for us, and such a venerable one at that. On the morning of Great Saturday, the Priest even baptized a small child for us.

“Come Bright Week, we met up with our Bishop and wanted to thank him for the Priest he had sent us.

“Taken aback, he replied that he had not sent us a Priest, since he had not had any available, as he had already told us. We were all bewildered. When we told the Bishop that the Priest had performed a Baptism on Great Saturday, an idea occurred to him and he said:

“Go check your parish’s Baptismal records to see how this unknown Priest signed his name.”

“We followed his advice, and what did we find? The signature read:

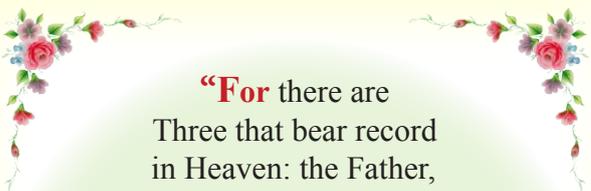
† *Nectarios of Pentapolis(!)*

“You can imagine our awe and emotion. Our gratitude to Christ, Who sent us His Saint, and to St. Nectarios himself, prompted us humble pilgrims to come to your country!”

(*) *Expressions of a Spiritual World* [in Greek] (Evpalion: Hiera Mone Panagias Varnakova, 2009), pp. 193-194.



Our God is One and Triune

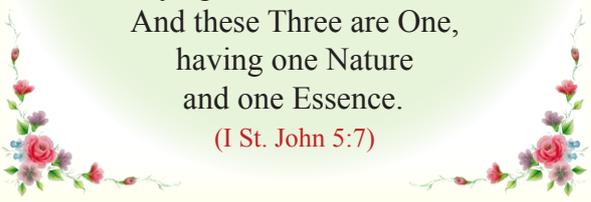


“For there are Three that bear record in Heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these Three are One.”

* * *

There are Three that bear witness in Heaven that Jesus is the Son of God; that is, the Father, the Word, and Holy Spirit bear witness thereof. And these Three are One, having one Nature and one Essence.

(I St. John 5:7)



■ Counsels on prayer by St. Hieronymos of Aegina

The Power of the Creed*
Confession of Faith As Prayer

Elder, please tell me, at difficult times, when my thoughts are in a state of confusion or I am very sad, what prayer should I say to help me endure it without harm?”

● “Say the Creed, my daughter. But say it slowly so that you can feel it. Let every word reach the depths of your heart; do not say it mechanically and without attention.

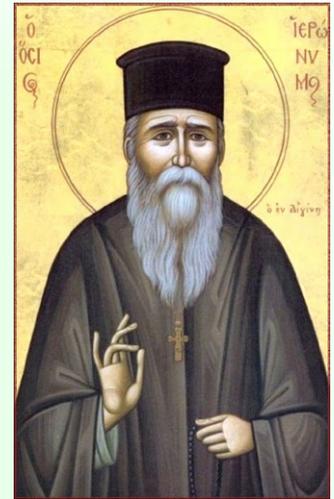
I say it many times a day—at least five or six times. On the streets, wherever I go, I say the **Creed**.”

● “When a bad thought assails me, I say

the Creed and it leaves me.”

● “Say the Creed once in the morning, once at noon, and once in the evening; do not wait until you are at a Church service, such as the Compline, to say it.”

● “Do not let a day go by without saying the Creed, either during the services or at another time.”



(*) Elder Hieronymos of Aegina, 1883-1966, [in Greek] Sotiria D. Nousi (Ekdoseis: Eptalofos E.II.E.) pp. 227, 296, 242.

■ The Apparition of God to St. Paisios the Great

The Blessing of Hospitality*
The Living God of Love

One day, three men in rags arrived at the hut of St. Paisios the Great. They looked pitiable and unfortunate.

“Come in,” he said to them. “Let us share the few rusks and soaked beans that I have. Come, let me wash your feet with cool water to relieve them.”

The Saint and great Father of the Church straightaway brought water and began washing the feet of his visitors, while speaking words of spiritual edification to them.

Suddenly, to his astonishment, the third man, whose feet he had been washing, leaned forward, embraced him tenderly, and kissed him!



Bewildered, the Saint lifted his head, and what met his eyes? He beheld our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in all of His Glory and Divine splendor. The Saint was overcome. In rapture, he was left speechless...

And the Lord said to him:

“Peace be unto thee, My elect servant Paisios.”

Then He vanished!

Everything became inundated with light, peace, and a Divine fragrance. When the Saint was able to comprehend what had taken place, his heart caught on fire. Now understanding Whose feet he had washed, he took the clay basin and drank the water to receive Grace and sanctification.

This water delivered him of thirst forevermore, and thenceforth, as we read in his Life, for many years to come, he was nourished by Holy Communion alone.

(*) Knowledge and Experience of the Orthodox Faith [in Greek], Protopresbyter Stephanos K. Anagnostopoulos, (Piraeus: 2005) p. 129; Metropolitan Meletios of Nikopolis “St. Paisios the Great” (Prebeza: 1993), p. 55.



Admonitions of the *Theotokos**

“Born of a Woman”; “also with Him were many women who ministered unto Him”

(Galatians 4:4; cf. St. Luke 8:2-3)

*Reverend fellow Presbyters and Ministers;
Beloved and pious children of our Church:*

On this, the great and universal Feast of the Dormition of our *Panagia*; when the Gates of Heaven open to receive the Celestial Gate and the living Heaven of the Godhead; at this time, when we are called to praise the Song of the Bodiless Powers and the immaculate dwelling place of the Holy Trinity;

Today, I am saying, we are once again given the opportunity to explore in greater depth the soteriological work of our Lord and the place of woman in the unfolding of this work.

This place and the relationship between Christ and woman are strangely betrayed in our days even by those women who assuredly believe in Christ and take part in the life of the Church, but not always in a profound or substantial way; that is, not “sitting” with devotion and heartfelt love “at the feet of Jesus.”

What is needed, then, is a reminder to both men and women, that men, on the one hand, not lose their respect for women or a sense of the **sanctity** with which our Lord crowned women; and that women, on the other hand, cultivate gratitude to our Savior and preserve the heavenly treasure of that very **sanctity**, that they might, as other Mothers of the Lord, bear Christ within them and be magnified together with the *Panagia*.

* * *

The incredible abyss of contempt in which woman was held before the coming of Christ can be grasped only by the incredible height of glory to which our Lord subsequently

raised her. **The** unfathomable denigration of woman could be known only to Him, Who unfathomably hallowed her.

Precisely for this reason, His work begins “of a woman”: He enters time and history “of a woman,” he appropriates and deifies mankind “of a woman,” and renews creation “of a woman.”

Christ constantly displayed such all-pure love and a compassionate and tender attitude towards women in divers ways throughout His earthly life.

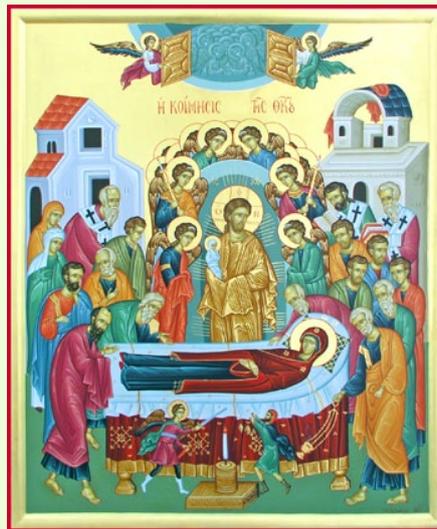
Women, for their part, reciprocated with devotion and gratitude, demonstrating self-sacrifice, at a time when men were either secret disciples that would come “by night” or else were hiding themselves in fear.

As He travelled and preached, “many women” also accompanied Him, “which ministered unto him of their substance.” **With** self-sacrifice,

and at their own expense, they ministered to Christ and the choir of the Apostles, that the latter might concentrate on their work without distraction. **Indeed**, since some of the women were wealthy, they contributed to the Disciples’ purse, so that there would be a sufficient amount to give as alms to their impoverished countrymen.

Our Lord did not turn away from even the women who were the outcasts of society or those of ill repute, but rather, by His Divine compassion, led them to the light of repentance and of Divine glory.

The Apostle Peter’s mother-in-law, Mary Magdalene, the widow with her deceased only son, the Canaanite woman, the woman



who was bowed over with a spirit of infirmity, the daughter of Jairus, the woman with an issue of blood, the adulteress, the sinful woman at His feet, Martha and Mary, the Samaritan woman, the many women who were present at His Passion, the Myrrh-bearing women, with the *Theotokos* at their head, “and many others,” constitute the unerring witnesses of the place of women in the work of our Lord and their relationship to His Theandric Person.

These many women and countless others, who jostled through the throng of simple people surrounding Christ, seeking from Him a blessing, healing, a gesture of consolation, a look of acceptance, a gentle stroking of their children’s heads, remission of sins, a word of encouragement, tenderness, a miracle, compassion... all together and each individually constantly repeated that wonderful phrase: “Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!”



This question, in our tragic age, expresses an anguished hope.

A good “sign of the times,” a tone of spring-like hope, a breeze of consolation, would be an increase in the number of women who, moved by profound love and fervent gratitude to Christ, the All-Luminous Bridegroom of our souls, would call out with a great voice: “Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!”

May Orthodox Christian women understand their duty and responsibility.

The salvation of the world depends on them and this “voice” of theirs.

Why are they delaying?

They owe it to us!

The *Theotokos* is calling us to remembrance...

ing us to remembrance...

† Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Phyle

* * *

One wonders why, in our own days, we do not see, to the extent that we should, this throng surrounding our Lord?

(*) Festal Message on the occasion of the All-Venerable Dormition of the Most Holy *Theotokos*, 2015.

■ “Love bears all things”

The Meaning of Lent

“Perhaps this year he will repent...”

One day during Great Lent, the Elder caught sight of a thief breaking open the door to his cell some distance away.

The same person had stolen from him the previous year.

Smiling, the Elder hid behind a wall until the thief had finished his job.

When he told his disciple what had happened, the latter, angered, asked:

“Why, Elder, did you not call me so that we could catch him? He stole from us last year also

and remains unrepentant.”

“Who knows, my child,” the Elder serenely replied. “Perhaps this year he will repent!”

“And what if he does it again?” the disciple burst out.

“Well in that case, my child, I will have to run to open the door for him and give him the things myself, so that he does not steal again and sin a third time.”

The disciple prostrated himself, kissed the Elder’s hand, and withdrew with tears of emotion.

“When night comes, I have found a good way to fall asleep: I forgive them all, one by one.”

-Tasos Leivadites

■ “...that one lay down his life for his friends”

An Astonishing Example of “Greater Love”*

The Voluntary Martyrdom of the Holy Monk Leo the Cappadocian

During the reign of the Emperor Tiberius (578-582), we visited Oasis, where we encountered a monk that hailed from Cappadocia, who was great in the eyes of God. His name was Leo. Many people told us a multitude of wondrous stories about him.

Spending some time with this holy man and becoming well acquainted with him, we were greatly edified, and especially by his humility, quietude, non-acquisitiveness, and his love for all.

This ever-memorable Elder told us: “Believe me, my children, **I am going to be sovereign.**”

We said to him: “We assure you, Abba, that nobody from Cappadocia ever became Emperor; this thought of yours is mistaken.”

But he simply repeated: “Without a doubt, children, **I am going to be sovereign,**” and nobody could persuade him to put aside the thought.

* * *

Now then, when the Maziques arrived and pillaged the entire region, they came to Oasis and slew many monks, taking many others captive.

From the Lavra, they also took Abba John (an ordained Reader at the Great Church in Constantinople), Abba Efstathios the Roman, and Abba Theodore. All three of them were ill at the time.

When they had been captured, Abba John said to the barbarians: “Take me to the city and I will persuade the Bishop to

give you twenty-four pieces of gold.”

So one of the barbarians led him off and brought him near the city. Abba John went to the Bishop. At that time, Abba Leo was also in the city together with some of the other Fathers, which is why they had not been captured.

* * *

Abbas John arrived and began to implore the Bishop to give the money to the barbarian, but the Bishop only had eight pieces of gold. They wanted to give these to the barbarian, but he would not take them, saying: “Either give me twenty-four pieces of gold or the monk.”

Those in the fortress thus had no choice but to hand over Abba John, who wept and groaned, to the barbarians, and they took him away to their tents.

* * *

Three days later, Abba Leo took the eight pieces of gold and went out into the desert, to the place where the barbarians were camped.

He pleaded with them, saying: “Take me and these eight pieces of gold and free the others; they are sick and can not work for you and you would only have to kill them. But as for me, I am healthy and can serve you.”

The barbarians took him and the eight pieces of gold and let the others go free.

Abba Leo went with the barbarians a certain distance, but when he collapsed in exhaustion, they beheaded him. Thus did Abba Leo fulfill that which is written in the Scriptures: “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Then we understood what he meant when he would say that he was going to be sovereign. For sovereign he was, having laid down his life for his friends.

* * *



■ A Selfless Christ-Bearer in Our Days

**A Sixteen-Year Old
Carries His Friend
On His Back
For Eight Whole Years!***

A Model of Self-Sacrifice

What would you do to help out a friend?

How important would it be, not only for your friend, but even more so for you?

In Hebei, China, a teenager named Lui Shi Ching has carried his friend to school daily for the last eight years. His friend Lu Shao has a congenital disorder which makes it difficult for him to walk.

Eight years ago on a rainy day, little Lu Shao was waiting for his mother to pick him up from school.

When she did not show up, Lui Shi Ching, who was smaller than Lu Shao, decided to help his friend and carried him home.

Since then, he has carried Lu Shao to and from school daily, and even to restrooms.

Lui Shi ching said in an interview: “How did I carry him when he’s so heavy? I was happy helping him out, and it’s been eight years already.”

Lui Shi Ching **does not boast** about his



good deed. In fact, his parents did not even learn about it until four years after he first helped out his friend.

As for Lu Shao, he wrote in his diary that **Lui Shi Ching’s help has lifted a dark cloud in his life and let sunshine into it.**

(*) www.ibtimes.com, 5.5.2011.

**Not only for a long-life,
but also for Eternal Life**

Volunteering*

A Genuine Expression of Love

The secret to a long life could be... volunteering.

According to a study in the journal “Health Psychology,” people who volunteer with some regularity live longer than those who do not volunteer, but only if their intentions are truly selfless.

If, on the other hand, their motives are more egocentric—for example, if they volunteer primarily to feel better about themselves—they have a mortality risk similar to non-volunteers.



(*) www.apa.org, 21.9.2011.

➤ **The** measure of love is to love your neighbor “as yourself.”

To love your neighbor “more than yourself” is “**greater love.**”

Christ was the first to show this **greater love** when He “died for our sins.”

Abba Leo also showed this **greater love** by sacrificing himself on behalf of the captives.

We come across such rare love in mothers, in those fighting for their [Faith and]

homeland, and in the Saints.

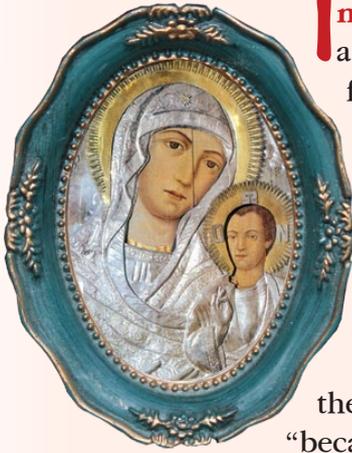
A mother sacrifices herself for the sake of her children, a soldier sacrifices himself for the sake of his country, and Saints sacrifice themselves for the sake of sinners.

(*) *The Spiritual Meadow*, John Moschos, ch. 112 (Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1992), pp. 92-94. Layout and editing ours. • Concluding comments by Bishop A. of E.

■ Help from the Mother of God

**The Power
of Her Name***

Faith, Love, and Consideration



In late May of 2006, a middle-aged man from the coastal region of Phokia [Greece], came to thank and venerate the wonder-working Icon of the Panagia.

“I came to thank the Panagia,” he said, “because she worked a great miracle for me and saved my eye from certain blinding.

* * *

“**A**t the beginning of the month, I was tilling the garden in order to plant some tomatoes. Since the plot is large, a relative of mine also gardens there. So then, as the cultivator was turning the soil, some dirt landed in my eye.

“**I** immediately stopped and went to find some water to rinse it out. At the foot of a tree near me, I saw a bottle of water, which I assumed my relative must have left behind. I leaned over and grabbed it and squirted it in my eye. It turned out not to be water, however, but **sodium hydroxide!** What I felt when it hit my eye is indescribable!

“**H**orrified, I immediately called out from the bottom of my heart: ‘O, my Panagia!’ And she hastened to my aid! The caustic liquid did not burn my eye, notwithstanding the unbearable pain I felt! **The power her name possesses quenched the liquid fire that had wrapped around my eye, the body’s most**

sensitive organ. As is well known, mere contact with sodium hydroxide burns the skin, let alone the eye.”

All those who heard the man’s story and saw that both of his eyes were healthy crossed themselves, giving thanks to God for the invincible might He has given His Most Holy Mother, the Protectress of the human race.

* * *

It is also noteworthy that the man did not tell his relatives what had happened so that the one who had left the sodium hydroxide lying under a tree—and in a water bottle at that—would not be upset.

“**I** do not want anyone to be upset because of me. I do not like troubles and quarrels!”

* * *

One can conclude from the above that the miracle took place because the man possessed not only faith but also a great deal of kindness—a gift of God, but also a matter of goodwill. He was truly worthy of the assistance of the Mother of God.



(*) *New Miracles of the Panagia of Varnakova and Stories of Eternity*, [in Greek] (Dorida: Sisterhood of the Convent of the Panagia of Varnakova, 2007). pp. 56-58.

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