



# EDIFICATION AND CONSOLATION

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

Simple Catechism Drawn From the Experience of the Orthodox Church

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## Grateful glorification of God works miracles

### “When God So Wishes...”\* “Glory to God! Thank You, Lord!”

**T**here was once a poor woman who, whatever happened to her, would always look up into the heavens and say “Glory to God!”

She was very grateful for everything.

Nearby there lived a rich man. Every time he walked by the woman’s house, he would hear her saying: “Glory to God! Thank You, Lord!”

At first, he paid no attention, but at some point it started to annoy him. “How can such a poor woman constantly be thanking God?” he wondered.

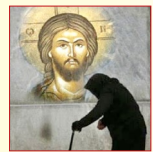
One day, then, after passing by her house and hearing her say “Glory to God” again, he was so irritated that he told his servant: “Go to the grocery store and buy two shopping baskets full of food. Take them to the woman, and when she asks who they are from, say it was the devil that brought them.”

Obedying orders, the servant went the next day to the grocery store, filled two shopping baskets to overflowing, and took them to the woman.

Upon arriving at her house, he knocked at the door. “Oh, glory to God! Thank You, Lord!” she said, as soon as she came out and caught sight of the two shopping carts.

“Do you not want to learn who sent the food?” the servant impatiently asked the woman.

“No, my dear, it doesn’t matter. When God so wishes, even the devil himself serves Him.” And taking the two baskets, she happily went inside.



(\*) [www.inagiounikolaouneou.gr/apps/gr/spag/3-14\\_95517273.html](http://www.inagiounikolaouneou.gr/apps/gr/spag/3-14_95517273.html), by G. D. Kuvela.

■ “My Angel reminded me of it...”

## The Miraculous Salvation of a Sinner\*

How much saving power a good word—a word of God—has!

**A** venerable old woman who came on a pilgrimage in May of 2009 to pray to the Mother of God told us the following miraculous account of the healing and salvation of a soul. She had heard it from her father, who knew the person involved in the following story, since they were from the same village in the region of Kalavryta.

The villager in question was a man with many sins on his conscience. He often quarrelled, and was avaricious and a blasphemer. He was also a “soil stealer.”

When asked what that meant, the woman explained that in her village “soil stealer” was what they called someone who *stole soil*, that is, his neighbor’s land, by moving the fences!

\* \* \*

**O**ne day a storm broke out in the village, and lightning hit the “soil stealer” as he was sitting on a chair in his house. He was killed on the spot. He was not burned, but was left curled up to such an extent that they could not straighten him out to put him in a coffin and bury him.

At a loss, the entire day went by without their daring to do anything. Finally, the more courageous among them decided to forcefully straighten him out to bury him.

But as they were doing so, the “soil stealer” came back to life before the eyes of the astonished villagers!

The entire village was greatly disturbed, but once the inhabitants recovered from their fright, they sat down next to him. With tears in his eyes, yet calmly and humbly, he first asked forgiveness for his former behavior, in the presence of the Priest, and recounted the following:

“My fellow villagers, the mercy of God restored me to life in order to repent and correct my way of living, which, as you all know, was not at all good.

“When I was killed by lightning, a radiant young man in white, with a kind, sweet face and holding a book in his hands, took me and brought me to all the places where I had lived, and I beheld my sinful life. A dark creature

with the face of a dog approached me and seemed pleased that I was so weighed down by sins.

“My Guardian Angel anxiously paged through the book of my life hoping to find some good deed of mine. I the wretch was also in agony. Suddenly, he stopped on a page and joyfully said:

“It is true that he has many sins, but he has saved two people: one from committing murder and the other from death!”

“Then the Lord commanded for me to return to life in order to repent and be saved. That is what my Guardian Angel told me.”

“And how was it that you saved two people?” the enthralled villagers asked him.

Then, with a modest voice, the resurrected man replied:

“My brothers, I did not even remember this event, but my Angel reminded me of it. I will tell you.

“One winter evening, I went as usual to the village *kafenio*, where some were drinking and others were talking. I noticed a young man who was sitting by himself and seemed to be a stranger, and so I asked the owner to treat him to an ouzo ‘on me.’

“After a little while, I went to sit next to him and we started up a very interesting conversation. Moved by my interest, he started to brighten up. Every now and then, however, he looked at his watch and sighed. I looked at him with sympathy and encouraged him to tell me what was bothering him.

“And then, oh...! He confided to me that he had been paid to lie in wait for one of the villagers and to kill him on his way home! I shuddered!

“My boy,” I told him, ‘don’t do that and destroy your soul and your life. Don’t become a murderer! For God’s sake, don’t do it!’

“I heard myself talking about God and couldn’t believe my own ears! I don’t even know what else I told the lad, who eventually came to his senses and said to me:



■ The “paper” and the *Epitrachelion*

## Our Guardian Angel\*

### At the Terrible Hour of Death

**B**y the time Elder Gabriel the Confessor [in the sense of a Priest who hears confessions—*Trans.*] returned from the world to Nea Skete [on Mt. Athos], Monk Kyrillos (Koumiotes), from the Kalyva of the Life-giving Spring, had fallen gravely ill and was at the point of death, and thus had called for his spiritual Father in order to confess. This was in the year 1965.

When his confessor, Father Ephraim, tried to help the sufferer confess, the latter said that **there was a piece of paper with something written on it stuck to his left shoulder, but that he could not read what it said.**

Another confessor, Father Haralambos, then arrived, but he was also unable to help the dying Monk Kyrillos.

Then his brother in the flesh, Father Neophytos (who was also a confessor), called for Elder Gabriel the Confessor, who, filled with brotherly love, approached the sufferer. When the Elder heard about the piece of paper, as an experienced confessor he asked Monk Kyrillos to tell him exactly what **he saw. The sufferer said that on his right side he saw two Angels in white, whereas on his left side there were many demons ready to snatch his soul.** One of these demons, in fact, was using his tail to play with the prayer rope of an hesychastic monk, Elder Joseph, who was also present.

Elder Gabriel asked all of the other Fathers to leave the room, and told Monk Kyrillos a second time to reveal to him the secrets of his heart.

When he had told him everything, the Elder asked him if the paper was still attached to his shoulder, which it was. The confessor then instructed him to ask his Guardian Angel to tell him what was written on the paper. Monk Kyrillos then turned to the Angels and spoke to them in a language of which the confessor understood not a word. His Guardian Angel responded in the same language. Then Elder Gabriel placed his *Epitrachelion* (Priestly stole) over the dying monk and asked him what the Angel had told him was written on the paper. Then Monk Kyrillos told him two sins that he had forgotten to confess.

Upon hearing this, the confessor read the prayer of absolution. When he took away his *Epitrachelion*, the monk told him that the paper had attached itself to it and that all of the sins written on it had been erased. And with these words, he gave up his spirit and departed for eternal blessedness.

The confessor’s experience and discretion helped Monk Kyrillos to confess and to be cleansed of his human failings, with the Guardian Angel of his soul as his interpreter and helper.



(\*) Athonite Monk Andreas, *The Gerontikon of the Holy Mountain* [in Greek], (Ekdoseis: Athos), pp. 408-409.

↪ “What on earth was I just about to do! God sent you next to me tonight! I’ll go to the person who wanted me to commit murder and throw his filthy money in his face.’

“I was relieved. We shook hands and he disappeared into the night, without telling me his name. As for me, even though I was sincere when I gave the young man good advice, I continued my sinful habits, until I received this saving lesson from our Merciful God. I never believed that this event would bring about my own salvation! Glory to God!”

\* \* \*

**The** man lived another ten years with great repentance and virtue. He became a model Christian in the village. That is what our father told us, the dignified old woman said in closing.

**H**ow much saving power a good word has, a word of God! And how much God desires our salvation! He seeks an “excuse” to save us!



(\*) The Panagia of Varnakova, *Miracles of the Most Holy Theotokos and Her Consolation*, 2011, pp. 110-113.

■ “I can’t bear it any longer!”

## Praying When Others Offend Us\*

“In fact, you are going to change, too”

**I** **in each** family there were just one person who served God zealously, what harmony there would be in the world!

I often remember the story of Sister J. She used to come and talk to me often while I was still at the Tumane Monastery.

Once she came, together with an organized group of pilgrims, and complained, saying, “I can’t bear it any longer! People are so unkind to each other!” She went on to say that she was going to look for another job.

I advised her against it, as there were few jobs and a high level of unemployment. I told her to stop the war she was fighting with her colleagues.

“But I’m not fighting with anyone!” she said. I explained that, although she was not fighting physically, she was waging war on her colleagues in her thoughts by being dissatisfied with her position.

She argued that it was beyond anyone’s endurance.

“Of course it is,” I told her, “you can’t do it yourself. You need God’s help. No one knows whether you are praying or not while you are at work. So, when they start offending you, do not return their offences either with words or with negative thoughts. Try not to offend them even in your thoughts; pray to God that He may send them an angel of peace. Also ask that He not forget you. You will not be able to do this immediately, but if you always pray like that, you will see

how things will change over time and how the people will change as well. In fact, you are going to change, too.”

At that time I did

not know whether she was going to heed my advice.

This took place at the Tumane Monastery in 1980.

\* \* \*

**In** 1981 I was sent to the Vitovnica Monastery. I was standing underneath the quince tree when I noticed a group of pilgrims that had arrived. She was in the group and she came up to me to receive a blessing.

And this is what she said to me, “Oh, Father, I had no idea that people were so good!” I asked her whether she was referring to her colleagues at work and she said she was. “They have changed so much, Father, it’s unbelievable! No one offends me anymore, and I can see the change in myself, as well.” I asked her whether she was at peace with everyone, and she answered that there was one person with whom she could not make peace for a long time. Then, as she read the Gospels, she came to the part where the Lord commands us to love our enemies. Then she said to herself, “You are going to love this person whether you want to or not, because this is what the Lord commands us to do.” And now, you see, they are best friends!

\* \* \*

**If** there were just one such person in every company, factory or office! That would be the way toward peace. Only one person who is prayerfully connected to God is needed, and we will have peace everywhere—in the family, at work, in the government, and everywhere. It is in the presence of such a person that we are freed from gloomy and cumbersome thoughts.



(\*) *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica* (Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2014) pp. 93-94.



■ [Pages dedicated to love of the Theotokos](#)

## The Panagia Hears and Answers Us\* Light and Fragrance

**A**venerable Priest recounted to me how once, many years ago, one of his daughters, eleven years old at the time, fell gravely ill.

The Priest kept vigil, performed the Mystery of Holy Unction, and repeatedly read Supplicatory Canons to the Most Holy Theotokos, first the Small then the Great, accompanied by many prostrations.

The next day was Sunday and he had to go to his parish to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. He was, moreover, the only Priest.

He made the sign of the Cross over his little daughter and left her in the care of his good Presbytera. He went to Church, began Orthros and the *Proskomide*, and after an hour or so began the Liturgy: “Blessed is the Kingdom...”

After the Consecration of the Holy Gifts, he exclaimed: “Especially for our All-holy, Immaculate, Most Blessed, and glorious Lady, Theotokos, and Ever-Virgin Mary,” and finished, saying quietly with tears:

“My Panagia, since you became a Mother to the Son of God and were deeply pained to see Him slowly dying a martyric death on the Cross, I have complete faith that you will hear me. You are here. Yes, you are here and you hear me. You are a Mother, Theotokos, and Mother of God. And you understand my own pain. I beg you, I beseech you, work a miracle for my child.”

And then the strangest thing happened to him that he ever experienced as a Minister of

the Most High. The small Church began to be filled with a white and beautiful Light, which slowly became even brighter than the sun. At the same time, the Church filled with an ineffable fragrance.



The entire congregation could smell it, and felt dizzy and intoxicated by the divine aroma.

The faithful could not see the divine Light, but they wondered where such an incense came from, that smelled like a myriad of fragrances.

In the meantime, the Priest had fallen to his knees, speechless from astonishment, wonder, and awe at the brilliance of the Divine Light.

“My Panagia,” he whispered, “you are here! I thank you... thank you... I thank you... Yes, my little girl is well. I believe it. I thank you... I thank you...”

And he remained there on his knees, bathed in tears from his great gratitude.

He slowly was able to compose himself, feeling the heavy weight of grief lifted from his heart and being replaced by profound gratitude, thanksgiving, joy, faith, and humility.

In conclusion, he told me:

“I was not worthy of it, Father, because I was and continue to be a sinner, but our faith is living and true. God hears us, just as the Panagia hears and answers our supplications! Glory to the All-Holy Name of our Lord and of the Most Holy Theotokos...”

(\*) Protopresbyter Stephen K. Anagnostopoulos, *Steps in the Christian Journey* (Piraeus: 2011), pp. 19-21.

“It is better to pray devoutly for your neighbor...”

Saint Mark the Ascetic said:

“It is better to pray devoutly for your neighbor than to rebuke him every time he sins.”



■ St. Gregory of Nyssa: On Love of the Poor

“Their hands, stretched out imploring,  
can be seen everywhere”\*

A Very “Modern” Patristic Text

We have seen in these days a great number of the naked and homeless. For the most part they are victims of war who knock at our doors. But there is also no lack of strangers and exiles, and their hands, stretched out imploring, can be seen everywhere.

Their roof is the sky. For shelter they use porticos, alleys, and the deserted corners of the town. They hide in the cracks of walls like owls. Their clothing consists of wretched rags. Their harvest depends on human pity.

For meals they have only the alms tossed at them by those who pass by. For drink they use the springs, as do the animals. Their cup is the hollow of their hand, their store-room their pocket, or rather whatever part of it has not been torn and cannot hold whatever has been put into it. For a dining table they use their joined knees, and their lamp is the sun. Instead of the public baths, they wash in the river or pond that God provides for all. This life of theirs, wandering and brutal, was not that assigned to them by birth, but results from their tribulations and their miseries.



Assist these people, you who practice abstinence. Be generous on behalf of your unfortunate brethren. That which you withhold from your belly, give to the poor. Let a fear of God level out the differences between you and them: with self-control, carefully avoid two contrary evils: your own gorging and the hunger of your brethren. This is how the physician works: he puts some on diets and gives supplementary foods to others, so that by addition and subtractions health can be managed in each individual case. So follow this salutary advice. Let reason open the doors of the rich. Let wise counsel lead the poor to the wealthy.

Rhetoric will hardly enrich those in such straits. Let the eternal word of God give also a house and a light and table, by means of the household of the Word. Speak to them with affection and alleviate their miseries with your own substance.

(\*) St. Gregory of Nyssa, “On Love for the Poor;” translated by S. Holman in *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), appendix pp. 194-195.



Prayer of the Optina Elders

○ Lord, grant me to meet everything that this coming day may bring me with spiritual peace. Grant me to surrender myself gladly to Thy holy will.

In every hour of this day, support me in all my undertakings. Teach me to accept whatever news I may receive in the course of the day with peace of soul and the firm conviction that Thy holy will is in all things.

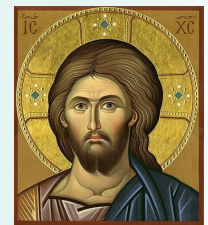
In all my words and actions, direct my thoughts, feelings and senses. In all unforeseen

events, grant me not to forget that everything is sent by Thee.

Teach me to act frankly and reasonably with everyone I meet, that none may be disturbed or embittered.

○ Lord, give me strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day and all that may happen in the course of the day. Guide my will, and teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to suffer, to forgive and to love. Amen.

(Translation by the Sisters of the Convent of the Annunciation, London, England).



The work of educators,  
as true ministers of God

## Eight-Year-Old Myrto And Her Insightful Teacher\*

**I** remember Myrto, a charming girl of eight. Afflicted by acute leukemia, she braved the most aggressive treatments given to her with unparalleled silence and patience, a sweet expression always lighting up her pale little face.

The more she patiently endured, the more her parents broke down, and together with their hopes they gradually lost the last vestiges of their faith. They were not particularly religious to begin with. But they had some good seed within them.

They sent her to a good school, where she had a teacher that adored her. Before going to sleep, Myrto always crossed herself, saying: “Cross of Christ, save us by Thy might,” as her teacher, Paraskeve, had taught her.

“Why do you make the sign of the Cross?” her mother would ask.

“So that Christ will give me strength,” she replied. “That’s what Ms. Paraskeve told us at school.”

“Wouldn’t it be better to tell Him to make you well?”

“That’s not necessary, since He gives me strength and joy!”

\* \* \*

Her parents did not insist. They did not understand much anyway.

As Myrto’s illness progressed, however, they began to blame God. But they could not blame their child, who continued to cross herself and pray.



## The Power of the Cross\*

Always on our chest

**O**ne summer night, a certain bulldozer-driver, returning home exhausted from his work, lay down to rest.

While asleep, he felt a heavy weight pressing down on him and woke up, but was unable to react.

He saw a black figure—something like a dog—that was proceeding very slowly towards his head and smothering him. He was at the point of giving up the spirit....

When, however, the black creature reached his chest, he heard a voice: “If you did not have this

Myrto died at the age of eight, asking her mother to say the “Our Father,” as she had no strength left to say it herself. Letting go of her doll, she crossed her arms over her chest and asked for the prayer.



Her mother could not refuse. She said the prayer between her sobs. She left aside the logic of arguments and proofs, of narrow-mindedness and reasoning, and entered into the world of her child.

Together with the tears in her eyes, faith welled up in her heart....

\* \* \*

• **This** true story, apart from being deeply moving, makes one think. We see that God uses different ways to draw people who are indifferent or negatively disposed to the faith closer to Him. Even by the death of a small child, as harsh or unjust as that may seem to us.

**God acts from the perspective of eternity.**

• **As** for Ms. Paraskeve, Myrto’s teacher, how inspiring is her example! She planted in the soul of her young student the seed of faith in Christ. And the seed sprouted and grew into a tree of faith—a faith that had the power to sustain the little girl in moments of pain, even in the face of death.

• **Indeed, how great is the work of educators, when they are true ministers of God!**

(\*) “Syndesmos” No. 529 (May 2018), Kalamata, p. 139.

(\*) *Ascetics in the World*, Vol. I, Mt. Athos (Holy Hesy-chasterion of St. John the Forerunner, Metamorphosi Khalkidikis, 2008), p. 365.

■ The power of the Name

**The Jesus Prayer  
Humbles the Devil\***

**S**omeone once related to me what happened to her during one of her nightly prayers.

She was praying with her prayer rope and invoking the Name of Jesus Christ: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me. My Jesus, have mercy.”

She repeated this prayer for one, two, three, four hours, bent over and penetrating deep into her heart.

At one point, amidst the stillness of the night, and while in a state she could not define, the **devil himself** appeared before this prayerful soul that had fallen into ecstasy.

Falling on his knees, he said to her: “I beg you...” (Imagine, the Devil, of whom we cowardly and faithless Christians are afraid and terrified, kneeling and imploring!) “I beg you, do not say that Name. I beg you not to say it! Do not say that Name [that is, the Name of Christ] and I will give you the whole world! I will bestow upon you as much glory and power as you wish.”

And, since that person happened to be young, he added: “And many lovers will fall at your feet; just do not say that Name!”



(\*) Protopresbyter Stephanos K. Anagnostopoulos, *Experiences During the Divine Liturgy: An Interpretation of the Divine Liturgy Based on Actual Events and Experiences of Saints, Priests, Monastics and Lay People*, (Piraeus: 2003), p. 58.

■ Divine Signs

**Day of Rest on Sundays  
And the Feasts of the Saints\***

*Father Bessarion of the Dionysiou Monastery was born in 1935. He lost his father when he was eleven years old. In 1953 he went to the Dionysiou Monastery on the Holy Mountain. After a novitiate of eight months he was tonsured a rasophore monk at the age of eighteen or nineteen.*

\*\*\*

**A**t **Monoxylitis** [a Metochion of the Monastery of Dionysiou], there was an Elder who was very harsh by nature and worked hard all throughout the day, which is why nobody could endure to stay with him for very long. As for me, since I was used to working and even found it agreeable, I did not have a problem, and thus remained. One day, I saw that we were almost out of bread in the middle of the week, and since we had



workers at the time, I suggested that we bake bread. He replied that **we would bake on Sunday**. Even though I did not agree, I said “May it be blessed.” After I had prepared the yeast and other ingredients, the two of us began to kneed the dough. Then a strange thing happened:

- **Inside the dough we found blood in the shape of pasta, which we could not explain since we did not have any cuts on our hands. We threw out the pieces of blood, but in the end the bread failed.**

Then I told him that God was showing us a sign since we were baking on a Sunday.

\*\*\*

**The same** thing happened on the **Feast Day of St. John Chrysostom**. The Fathers were divided as to whether they should work or not that day. The opinion that they should work won out. In the end, however, they were not able to work because first the oil press broke down and then the tractor.

(\*) Stories From the Ascetic and Hesychastic Tradition of the Holy Mountain (Mt. Athos: 2011), p. 477.

**Mailing address:** Convent of the Holy Angels, 145 02 Agios Stefanos, P.O. Box 51891, Greece  
 ● **e-mail:** maa@imoph.org ● **Telephone number:** (+30) 22950 22582 ● **FAX:** (+30) 22950 22582  
 ● **Published in several languages:** see [www.imoph.org/Publications\\_en/OikodomiParamythia.html](http://www.imoph.org/Publications_en/OikodomiParamythia.html) ● **Distributed free of charge** ● **With the blessing and supervision** of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece.