

It is March 21, 2020 in Bethlehem Pennsylvania, four days before the most significant universal event in the history of mankind, the feast of Evangelismos, the Annunciation of the momentous revelation of the great mystery hidden before all ages: The pre-eternal desire of God to attain a human body and a human soul, to walk among men... *the delight of the Wisdom* (of God the Logos) *was to live with the sons of men* (cf. Proverbs 8:31).

Prophet Baruch further adds: *He found the whole way to knowledge and gave it to his servant Jacob and Israel whom he loved* (Baruch 3:36). (He, the Wisdom, communicated His knowledge via the prophets of Israel to prepare humanity for the Incarnation) The seed of the woman, the child of the virgin of Isaiah, the unhewn mountain of Daniel, the ladder of Jacob, the shut gate of Ezekiel, the light cloud of Isaiah are awesome prophetic prefigurements of the most precious gift of humanity to its Creator, the mystical Paradise called the most holy Theotokos.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria exclaims: "Through her (the Theotokos) the heavens rejoice, through her angels and archangels are gratified, through her demons disperse, through her the fallen creature re-enters heaven, through her all creation is freed from idolatry and comes to the deep knowledge of the truth; through her, churches are being established on all the earth, through her nations are directed to repentance, and why do I need to say all this? Through her the only Begotten Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin and the Savior of mankind."

Mother Earth, obedient to this pre- eternal mystical reality, is once again beautifully decorating herself with the most breathtaking tree and shrub blossoms, the most colorful bulbs and wild flowers, all created by God the Logos for His Mother whose profound purity, holiness, humility and obedience would offer Him the only thing that He lacked... the human flesh to work out our salvation. After the Theotokos said, *Let it be according to your word.*

He appeared on Earth and lived among men (Baruch 3:37). He came to his own and His own did not receive Him [because their works were evil]. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name (John 1:11-12). He walked on earth. He revealed the truth. He suffered, died on the Cross, resurrected and ascended according to the Scriptures.

He commissioned His disciples to evangelize the nations and to baptize His believers in the *Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*, teaching them to practice everything He had commanded them.

Here is a brief anthology of some of His eternal and salvific teachings that we His children often forget:

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them

If you have the faith of the mustard seed ...you can move mountains...

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul

Rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell

*Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions
And over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will hurt you...*

He who believes in me, the works that I do, he will do also...

Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find the faith (he entrusted to the saints) upon the earth?

Two thousand years later Christ's melancholic, prophetic, rhetorical question is finding its fulfillment not in those outside of his vineyard, but faithlessness, doubt and confusion has overtaken the vast majority of the un-shepherded members of our Orthodox Churches.

He foretold that the love of the many would grow cold due to lack of faith, lawlessness, iniquity, and sin.¹

In the absence of the love for God, and His inerrant truth, the heart is emptied of Gods grace, and the weeds of selfishness, egoism and self-idolization sprout the contemporary commonplace illnesses of; anxiety, fear of death, self-preservation, isolation, depression and suicide.

For the first time in the 2000 years of Christianity our Churches will remain closed for the Feast of the Annunciation, and perhaps Pascha, due to the threat from the pandemic of Corona virus.

The social media frenzy is attributing this pandemic to the carelessness of the Chinese, to biological warfare, to insidious dark forces, to one of the horses of the book of the Revelation, to the wrath of God, to the agents of the

¹ repentance...?

Antichrist, to the adherents of population control, and why not, to some aliens...

As Christians, however, we need to interpret these events theologically if we truly believe that not a leaf falls from a tree, and not a single one of our hairs changes color without the permission, and or the knowledge of our God.

Our temples will be empty this Lenten season because we emptied our hearts and our human temples from the presence of the Holy Spirit. We have succumbed to alien spirits that desiccate the heart and leave it desolate.

Fear of disease, fear of death, fear of attending the Great Banquet of the Lord is uncharacteristic of the Orthodox Christians of the last twenty centuries, who abided in truth and love.

The loss of our Orthodox Truth has progressively turned us into lukewarm, loveless and indifferent Christians.

The contemporary actions of most of our hierarchs are not at all unrelated to the pandemic of ecumenism and syncretism, which introduces a rational and secularist spirit in the area of God's mysteries.

Does our Divine Liturgy not begin with the proclamation, "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?" Are we are not participants and guests at the Lord's Table?

Is this not the pure offering of Malachi 1:11,² and the supper of the Lamb according to Revelation, John the Evangelist records, *there shall not by any means enter anything that defiles or causes an abomination* (Revelation 21:27). It is ludicrous, if not blasphemous, to think that the Doctor of our bodies and souls is incapable of protecting us while in His Kingdom... in our Orthodox Liturgy.

We are not unsympathetic to the severe pressure exerted on our bishops from the secular political system, and will not place the entire burden on them since we are all guilty of the various sins of our age, not to mention the lack of true and fruitful repentance. We don't expect them to have the zeal of Saint Paul, Peter and John and the rest of the Apostles.

Lack of faith is sinful but is not irreparable. Sin is never as dangerous as delusion and heresy.

In retrospect, to close our churches and succumb to the secular prophylactic measures, due to legal ramifications and liabilities, is not as sinless as some of our blessed Metropolitans and Archbishops may think.

It is the sad combination of the absence of the spirit of martyrdom, which converted the Roman Empire into the

² Maybe 1:12?? Malachi 1:11-12) For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.

[12] But you profane it when you say that the Lord's table is polluted, and the food for it may be despised.

Christian Roman Empire, and the ignorance or apathy towards Orthodox Doctrine steadily compromised by the pathogens of Ecumenistic dialogues.

Some of this same generation of bishops and Post Patristic theologians chose to contradict the theology of the Church Fathers and Saint Gregory Palamas at the Balamand Conference by claiming that the Orthodox Church does not have an exclusive on the sacraments. They were well aware that the Latin's do not believe that grace is uncreated. I believe this neo-Barlaamism predicated by the actions of some local churches is the most troublesome aspect of this spiritual tragedy. The mere suggestion that we are endangered by the kissing of the Holy Gospel or the Precious Cross or our Holy Icons in the Temple of the Most High God is hardly excusable for Christians who would like to call themselves Orthodox and spiritual descendants of the Iconophiles and Saint Gregory, the preacher of Grace. What is totally unacceptable, however, and even blasphemous is the suggestion to wash the Holy Communion spoon with alcohol after every use or to add some extra wine to the chalice... May Our Lord forgive us for this blasphemy!

I reckon that the closing of the Churches is much lesser of an evil than this blasphemy, propagated by those who no longer discern the Body and the Blood of the Lord – by those who forgot that where the grace of God intervenes the natural order is defeated and inactivated.

I believe this sifting has been long overdue. Along with our taxes (in the US), it is time for some spiritual accounting.

Some of us have been attending church and communing for decades. Do we see any spiritual deposits like love, joy, peace, meekness, and steadfast faith in the course of this ordeal or are we overtaken by fear, anxiety, anger and depression? If we find ourselves in the latter category then we have been communing without repentance, whether we confess or not.

The purpose of our life is not longevity, for we will all die sooner or later, but the acquisition of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which will make us Christ-like and immortal.

So let's be vigilantly peaceful and extremely loving to all those in need during these perilous times. Let's re-invite Christ in our hearts and all the conspirators, atheists and antichristian agents will not be able to harm us.

And please – no one will introduce the mark of the beast or the chip to any of us without our knowledge. We will not be held accountable if we don't consciously accept the mark.

I also believe it is better not to indiscriminately circulate sightings of Saints such as Porphyrios, Paisios and Nikiforos.

"Such and such saint appeared to a nun and said..." Please forgive me but this is not adequate. Ask for the name of the nun and her monastery of obedience and then communicate with her before you post. The most recent tale of Porphyrios did not reflect the mindset of the Saint who championed in the area of God's love and consolation. A Saint will point out the danger, but he will also provide the solution in a spirit of encouragement and consolation. He will not be making the

type of statements and predictions that add to the existing widespread panic.

Finally, I would like to thank our brothers and sisters in Australia for their great hospitality in February. I apologize to our brothers and sisters in Baltimore, MD, Long Island, NY and Flagstaff, Arizona for having to cancel our scheduled Lenten lectures and retreats.

The Veneration of the Holy Cross, the Annunciation of the Theotokos, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Our Lord, can still be a great personal experience if this temporary podvig/epitimio³ resurrects Christ in our heart. Then we will live the Pascha of the Lord on a daily basis in the altar of our hearts.

Let us stand well and united with Christ for the remainder of Great Lent.

Kali Anastasi!

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³ Meanings for those who do not know