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ORTHODOX EVANGELIST

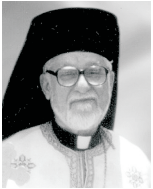


“Do the work of an evangelist” - 2 Tim 4:5

Spring 2018

www.stsymeon.org

Vol. 52, No. 1



Half a Century of Ministry

By Joseph Abbate / President

Fifty years ago the first edition of the *Logos Newsletter* went out to the Orthodox Christian community. Father Eusebius Stephanou, having witnessed first-hand that his fellow Greek community, felt the strong hand of the lord upon his life and was moved to commence a ministry specifically

to evangelize the Orthodox people, who though they had a number of very impressive Church cathedrals, they were lacking in hearing the Gospel proclaimed.

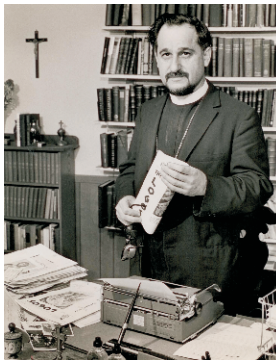
Emphasizing the ministry of the word of God and reaffirming the importance of spiritual growth, especially through the sacramental life of the Church. For twenty years, “*The Logos Ministry for Orthodox Renewal*” had its base in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

Even though he had many degrees after his name and was Sub-Dean at Holy Cross Seminary and Assistant Professor of Theology at Notre Dame, as well as being a Theologian of the Church, he felt the stirring in his soul to begin an itinerant ministry which would take him through Europe, South America, Canada, Africa, Israel and Australia. Father Eusebius even initiated a television ministry program on channel 38 in Chicago.

Yet, it was during his outreach in Greece that a number of very exciting events began to take place. While Father Eusebius was preaching, a number of people in the audience began to be miraculously healed. Yet, instead of the Church Hierarchy rejoicing,

a number of priests and monks began to heckle him from the balconies.

“Who do you think you are to heal anyone”, they shouted. Father Eusebius replied people just started to be healed while they were in their seats while I was delivering my messages.” Such a commotion took place that these events were showing up on the pages of the Greek newspapers.



The news was then brought to the Chancellor of Athens, who had then called Father Eusebius to his office. After the Chancellor had told him that he had caused an earthquake in Greece, Father Eusebius replied “Men can't cause earthquakes, only God can.” The Chancellor demanded Archbishop Iakovos to call him back to the United States. After returning to the States, the Archbishop placed Father

on a temporary suspension.

A New Beginning

Yet, being on suspension only encouraged him to do more. He authored a great number of books.

When the suspension was lifted and he began to travel again. He made a very important discovery in finding some writings of St. Symeon the New Theologian. What had struck him the most about this illustrious Church Father was his teachings of encouragement to seek after and attain the “gifts of the Spirit” which St. Symeon had stated that we can all receive if we seek after God with all our hearts and ask Him for the gifts. St. Symeon was also unique in the matter that he did not feel prideful in sharing his testimony and experiences of the Lord with others. Father Eusebius was really responsible for taking St. Symeon out of obscurity and opening the Orthodox world to his writings.

Out of Retirement

It was only a matter of time in which all the stresses of ridicule, slander and ostracism by members of the Church Hierarchy had worn him out. He then remembered a sleepy fishing village along the Florida Panhandle he would travel to in the past. He thought that it was a good time for him to retire from the ministry and catch up on some much needed rest.

Father purchased a home in Destin, Florida and was given the Church Parish in neighboring Fort Walton Beach. Even though his papers were all in order and a promising letter of recommendation from the Archbishop stating that Father Eusebius was a “prominent Theologian of the Orthodox Church”,

he was unfairly rejected by the church-board and locked out of the parish on Sunday morning without any prior notification.

Saddened by this event, he looked into having a chapel constructed in his back yard for his own private use. Since the city of Destin denied his request, he then decided to purchase an isolated parcel of land in a deeply forested part of Destin.

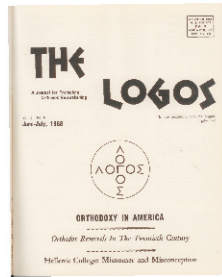
From time to time, a number of supporters would visit him for personal guidance. They would ask him, why not build a fellowship hall for coffee or meetings. It was at that time when the supports began to supply funds to build what became known as Saint Symeon's Renewal Center. Just when Father said that he wanted to slow down, things picked up again and a series of exciting renewal conferences were held there.

A matter of concern had arisen when some monks had visited Father and notified him that he would be made an Abbott if the Center be turned into a monastery. When Father politely turned down the offer is when the situation had grown worse. Then Metropolitan Philip had brought forth an ultimatum that the deed to the Center be immediately handed over. When Father refused his demand, Metropolitan Philip called him to a council and had him temporarily suspended.

Unsatisfied with suspension, the Metropolitan then brought the matter all the way up to Patriarch Bartholomew to try and have Father defrocked. After the Patriarch reviewed the situation he told Philip to "leave Father Eusebius alone!" To press the issue further, Philip went to visit the Patriarch in person, but the moment he walked off the

airplane he suffered a heart attack and died in Athens airport.

The following Metropolitan who had replaced Philp, Metropolitan Alexios, had been very kind to Father Eusebius and respected him. He even invited him to officiate with him and preach sermons at a number of Churches. Alexios had opened the doors to all of his parishes in his diocese, yet the majority of priests were not overly excited about Father Eusebius' messages and his tendency of being outspoken when it came to ministering the word of God. Father Eusebius was no longer a



young man by this time, and the years of ostracism and confrontations with some members of the Church Hierarchy had taken a toll on his health.

Father Eusebius always encouraged the lay people of the Church to be active in the Renewal movement. Many outstanding men and woman became powerful teachers and evangelists. Father even encouraged lay people in other nations to play an important role in writing and proclaiming the Gospel.

In the end, Father could not help but have a feeling of banishment, just as St. Symeon the New Theologian had to feel near the end of his life. Father Eusebius never even received the pension which was rightly due to him for all of the Church parishes he had shepherded. With over fifty years

of priesthood, one would think that a person of his credentials and qualifications would retire comfortably. But he had chosen the road less travelled. Loyal to his calling in Christ, he never compromised the Gospel!

In Season and out of Season

Even through many disappointments, Father Eusebius had never faltered in the mission work which God had called him to do. He knew that the need was there for the Orthodox people to begin to "receive the whole loaf of God's blessings" (as Father put it) in their lives. He often stressed the point that it was not only important what we do on Sundays, but equally important what parishioners do between Liturgies which also plays an important role in promoting the Gospel.

Taking Christ out of obscurity and bringing Him to the forefront in our personal lives was a crucial part of the Renewal movement. A grass root movement of the lay people of the Church were to play a large role in the future of this ministry. Today, we now have the internet, with the ability to play many of Father's messages to the world. The possibilities to proclaim the Gospel are now on an incredible scale. His tireless work has truly impacted the lives of so many people around the world, including mine. He not only spoke to crowds of thousands, but also took time minister on a one to one level with individuals. We are dedicated to continuing where Father Eusebius had left off. May we all gain strength from this wonderful example of a life which was committed to his Divine Savior. His first love, Jesus Christ! The work of Father Eusebius has impacted the lives of so many people around the world.

THE ORTHODOX EVANGELIST Spring 2018 Vol. 52 No.1

A Newsletter for the promotion of Orthodox Renewal, Published quarterly by the Orthodox Brotherhood of St Symeon the New Theologian, Inc. St. Symeon Office: 329 N. Holiday Road, Miramar Beach, Florida 32550 Phone: (850) 654-2771. Past issues available upon request.

Email: st-symeon-nt@cox.net Web site: www.stsymeon.org

A Lenten Message

by John Kaniaris

The gospels tell us that Jesus had visited Bethany, staying at the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. It was a small village less than two miles east of Jerusalem that set on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Descending the mount towards the city of Jerusalem, Jesus knew that day where this path was leading him what awaited him. He had foretold clearly to his disciples that he would be rejected, suffer many terrible things, be killed and be raised on the third day, Mat.16; 21. The high priests of the Sanhedrin were plotting against him, and the betrayer, Judas, was daily in his midst. Roman troops under Emperor Caesar Augustus await to inflict cruel punishment and death with absolute authority to anyone who was a threat. These ominous events are not isolated for Jesus, when he was but an infant, Herod the Great tried to kill him.

Yet he remembers as he walks the familiar winding road of the foothills of Mount of Olives. He recalls passing by the olive groves and the garden of Gethsemane, days before, massive crowds had followed him to Bethany. They had witnessed an incomprehensible event, Lazarus a man dead four days being raised from the dead. They were ecstatic and believed that Jesus was no ordinary man, they hailed him as their King and deliverer from Roman subjugation and tyranny. Then on Sunday, his Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Prince of Peace, seated with humility upon a foal, descending from the Mount of Olives, weeping as he gazed upon the Holy City. Vast crowds gathered rejoicing, laying down their cloaks and palms before him. Waving their palm branches as a sign of victory, triumph, peace and eternal life they shouted: "*Hosanna, to the Son of David, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest!*" Matt. 21:9

Now thousands were thronging the streets of Jerusalem preparing for the

sacrifice of Passover and the Seder meal. They would carefully select their Paschal lamb, even now as the Lamb of God makes his way into the Holy City. The sacrificial Lamb without spot or blemish whose death and resurrection would redeem mankind from the power of sin and death.

Now the scriptures tell us of an event that happened as Jesus walked to Jerusalem that has great significance and is commemorated on Great and Holy Monday. The scripture reading during the Bridegroom service states;

" Now in the Morning as He returned into the city, He hungered.

And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it. And found nothing thereon, but leaves only and said unto it.



"Let no fruit grow on thee hence forward for ever." And presently the Fig tree withered away". Mat 21:19

Why is this event so important that it is read during the Bridegroom Service of Holy Week? How are we to understand why a fruitless and thereafter a withered Fig tree has any bearing on our lives presently?

We are entering once again into the most sacred and holy season for Christians around the world. Great and Holy Lent. Orthodox Christians are encouraged to lay aside their earthly cares, albeit for a short while and seek earnestly spiritual renewal. "*That we might show forth the fruit worthy of our repentance.*" (Matt 3;8). It is therefore imperative that we stop for a moment and contemplate the significance and meaning of this miracle.

Jesus walking along the way to

Jerusalem saw a fig tree that appeared to be fruitful. Normally fig trees in Israel are quite common and can have massive branches, roots, and trunks. They can bear fruit throughout the year. This tree that Jesus came upon was in full foliage, so Jesus came anticipating fruit to satisfy His hunger. But, He found nothing, only leaves. This was during the season of spring, the week of Passover, during which time figs are edible. Yet Jesus found nothing on this tree.

Jesus therefore commanded that forever no fruit grow on this tree. And the tree withered. **This is a harsh reality that speaks not only to the Jewish nation but also to Christians today.** Outwardly, things may seem beautiful and in order but appearances can be deceptive. Inwardly there is indifference, faithlessness, unbelief, spiritual decay and deadness. Jesus said of the religious leaders, "*Even so also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity*" Matthew 23; 28 The nation of Israel did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. They had no true faith in Him therefore remained barren of good fruit. The Lord had warned his chosen people many times in the Old Testament of their unbelief and idolatry. Amos 4:9 said: "*I smote thee with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me,*" declares the LORD. Brethren, this miracle was not only for the Jewish religious leaders but also has great importance for Christians today. For this speaks of the judgement of God. We acknowledge this clearly in our theology, if you remember the Sunday before Lent we had Last Judgement Sunday. Further we confess in our creed "*He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom shall have no end.*" There

will be a day of accountability before God. We are to examine ourselves and seek the Lord earnestly that we may *"be like that tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."* (Ps. 1:3). It is for this purpose that the Orthodox Church in her wisdom commemorates this miracle. That we are not judged as being unfruitful in the Lord's vineyard during our sojourn here on earth.

Jesus said, *"I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."* John 15:5-6

Are we bearing the good fruit that the Lord commands of us? Or we like the green tree that has many green leaves and outwardly looks good yet is not productive? Jesus demonstrates by His divine power and authority, that He will not stand for hypocrisy and rejects those who remain unfruitful. The fruit Jesus is anxiously anticipating from His beloved servants is the fruit that comes from the Holy Spirit!

The fruit of love, the all-consuming, passionate love for the Bridegroom. The scripture declares "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thy self. Jesus asked the same of his disciple, *"Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"* Luke 10:27. Do we love him, and if so, how do we demonstrate our love to our beloved? It is not only what we say that defines us but what we do that demonstrates what dwells in our heart.

Beloved of God, do we earnestly seek to cultivate the soil of our hearts and renew this intimate relationship with Christ? Much of what God is doing in our lives depends on our willingness to receive His divine pruning and purgation from our fruitless, lukewarm and secular ways. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance is a lifelong

endeavor. Just as bearing fruit requires all the seasons of the year to be successful, we must continually seek to abide in Him all the days of our life. Only when Christ speaks to us, in our hearts through the Holy Spirit can we begin to understand him, love him and have a fruitful life. It is indeed the Holy Spirit (Parakletos) that is our helper, our spirit of truth, the giver of life, that infuses in us this understanding and love of God, He is both the giver and the gift.

So we have arrived, now is the Season of Lent, spring is upon us and we can sense a stirring in the earth. In our souls, something may be stirring deep within us. We can break up the hard soil, cultivate the ground in our hearts with fasting and earnest prayer. And after the soil is prepared, the seed of the Word of God is planted, *"the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."* (James 1:21).

Repentance is the key, which will lead us into a closer union with Christ, the true vine. We can see from the Christian martyrs and the church fathers that they possessed the fruit that glorified God,

Undeniable fervent love, abiding peace even in the face of martyrdom, deep faith that rendered a victorious life in Christ, and that winsome holiness. The Gospel of Mark 4:20 says *"And these are they which are sown on good ground, such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."*

Beloved of God, the Fig tree is a reflection of our own lives. Do we earnestly desire to follow Christ and have a personal and intimate relationship with our Divine Spouse? Where do we stand in our relationship with our Heavenly Father? Why is the parable of the Prodigal Son read during the Triodion Period? Because it is about relationship; we are reminded that we as Orthodox Christians can squander our spiritual inheritance when we travel far into the world. And far away from our

Heavenly Father. When our passions and our afflictive emotions, bitterness, anger, hatred, jealousy, pride, fear, lust, etc. cause us to become destitute and lost. Finding ourselves in a distant land feeding on husks that do not sustain us, rather than on the word of God, the bread of life. We further separate ourselves from the provider of every good and perfect gift that comes from the Father, effacing our baptismal grace and burying the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, the love of God the Father is so great! He has sent his son, the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. He has also given to us at baptism the seal of the Holy Spirit. He is our Comforter, the Spirit of Truth which empowers us to lead a victorious, productive and fruitful life.

During Holy Week starting with Palm Sunday evening through Tuesday, we have the Service of the Bridegroom. It is a deeply meaningful service, recalling parables (Ten Virgins, Talents) and events (Cursing of Fig Tree) of the final days of Jesus' life. This Paschal mystery, the Passion of Christ, draws the heart every faithful believer into an encounter with the Bridegroom (Nymphios). The Bride earnestly seeks him therefore with tears of repentance, with her whole heart and enters into this Paschal Mystery. May we, as the Bride, attain to the joyous end of our pilgrimage, the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

O Christ, number us among the wise Virgins to be ever watchful and prepared.

"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh in the midst of the night, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching; and again unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, lest thou be born down with sleep, lest thou given up to death, and lest thou be shut out from the Kingdom, wherefore rouse thy self and cry: Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou our God, through the protection of the heavenly hosts, save us." (Troparion of the service of The Bridegroom). Kali Anastasi!