



Christ Is Risen!

by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D.

Easter comes each year to remind us that Jesus is alive and not dead. The Risen Lord comforts us with the assurance that, because He lives, we too will live eternally. “Because I live, ye shall live also” (Jn. 14:19).

But there is nothing futuristic about the Resurrection life. We have a foretaste of it already, because we have entered into the “newness of life” by faith and by our baptism. The Holy Spirit baptism gives us the “earnest of our inheritance”, and in the here and now we have a taste of the Resurrection power and joy that will be ours in all fullness beyond the grave.

The life of the Church is Pentecostal because it is first Paschal. It was the Resurrection that made Pentecost possible. Pentecost is the natural sequel to the Resurrection. This is why the first act of Jesus after His Resurrection was to blow upon His disciples in the upper room and to say: “Receive ye the Holy Spirit”.

Easter and Man’s Renewal in the Spirit

Orthodoxy is one continuous experience of the resurrection. **To be a practicing member of the Church is to participate in the life of the Risen Christ.** Once the believer emerges from the trine immersion of the baptismal font, he enters the realm of the Paschal glory. The Bible speaks of it as the “newness of life” that comes with faith in Jesus Christ and with dying and rising with Him in baptism.

By becoming a “new creature” each believer becomes a member of His body, the Church. He is new, because his birth and life are new. The old man is destroyed with its lusts and passions. Born of the Spirit, he now walks in the Spirit. No longer the child of the flesh, he is the child of the Light.

To live the life of the resurrection is to have the soul flooded with the fullness of the Logos and the Spirit. “Receive ye the Holy Spirit”, said Jesus to His disciples after the resurrection. Breathing upon them. The victory of life over death that came with the Cross released the Holy Spirit. The initial inbreathing that once created man now is renewed to recreate man “in the image and likeness of God.”

While Adam’s disobedience estranged man from God’s Spirit, the obedience of the New Adam restored man to the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil teaches that the pre-existent Logos Who originally infused the Spirit into the first man now infuses it anew (Against Eunomius V). Similarly St. Cyril of Alexandria says that: *“The Holy Spirit which left us is restored to us by Christ Who breathed upon His Holy Apostles, saying, Receive ye the Holy Spirit.”* It is a “renewal of that ancient gift and of the inbreathing which was given to us” (Adversus Anthropomorphitas II).

In His baptism Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by the Spirit that indwelt in its fullness. Being sinless, He received in His human nature the Spirit to the measure that Adam would have were he not to have sinned. He represents man in his normal growth into the “image and likeness of God” without the need of the expiatory shedding of blood.

Christ died upon the Cross and offered Himself up to the Father that we might be forgiven of our sins and

washed in His Blood. This is the fundamental teaching of the Orthodox Church.

By vanquishing death by His own death Christ made every man a participant of the Spirit. He reinfused the Spirit “*that by becoming remade again in the original image we would appear conformed to Him Who has created us by participation in the Spirit*” (Liber Thesaurorum XXXIV). This means the fruits of the Spirit, as enumerated in the Bible, are now available to those born again in water and the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness.

The Easter experience of the indwelling Spirit is made continuous by means of the Eucharist. Each time we participate in the offering of the Divine Liturgy we rediscover the “newness of life”, that is, the inner perception of the resurrection. When we sing “We have seen the true Light!” at the close of the Liturgy, we are expressing this rediscovery of that deeper hidden life in Christ. “We have found the true Faith!” does not state a first-time discovery, but a renewed discovery. “We have received the Heavenly Spirit!” expresses the soul’s receiving anew what it had initially received at baptism.

At the altar we commemorate and re-experience the Sacrifice of Christ in the breaking of the Bread which is in truth His Body and the drinking of the Cup which is His Blood. The vicarious death of Jesus is not simply an event of the past. In the Orthodox Church that most crucial happening is made a present reality in the act of Eucharistic worship.

The Crucified and Risen Christ is made tangible and immediate.

To eat of the Body of Christ and drink of His Precious Blood is to replenish our fullness of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of grace in the western Churches unfortunately displaced the sacramental teaching of Spirit-indwelling which has always remained

in the Orthodox Church.

The priest at the consecration prays “That to those who partake thereof, they may be.... Unto the fellowship of Thy Holy Spirit”. When he pours the warm water into the Chalice, he says: “The fullness of the Cup of Faith and of the Holy Spirit”. In the post-communion prayers Christ is invoked to “Show me as Thy habitation of the only Spirit and no longer as a habitation for sin”.

But we cannot pretend that all Orthodox receive the Holy Spirit unto salvation. Too many of them, clergy, as well as laity, receive the Spirit in the Paschal life of the Church unto damnation, actually being guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ. The proximity brings about the greater judgement, because there are too many really not born again of the Spirit. They have remained simply “flesh” just as they came out of their mother’s womb. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh”, teaches Christ, “And that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit”. But “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”.

One must be blind not to see the “works of the flesh” in the Church. And these are not necessarily and exclusively sexual sins. They are “hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, and envy. “These are ever more disruptive of the Church when found among bishops and priests, although “fornication and adultery” lead to such divisiveness. They receive frequently at the altar of Holy Communion, but the “fruit of the Spirit” is rarely to be found: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance”

The Cross and the Easter Message

The Orthodox Church proclaims to the world the “logos of the Cross”. As St. Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians (1:18), the “logos of the Cross” is more than the word or preaching of the Cross. The original Greek word “logos” also indicates

the rationale, as it were, of Christ’s crucifixion. Since “logos” means reasonableness or rationality, it contrasts with the word “folly”: “*For the logos of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*”.

That which is foolish is never rational or logical. But God proves through the Cross that what appears to men to be foolishness is actually wisdom in all its fullness. “*For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men*” (1:25).

The wisdom of the Crucifixion is apprehended only in living the mystery of faith. Awareness of the truly logical and rational comes by experiencing the deeper dimension of life; that of spiritual vision.

The voice of God is still telling us: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart”. In today’s space-age man prides himself on his extra-terrestrial explorations. Space science and man’s technological know-how has become the ultimate in wisdom for him. He searches and adores creation, while he ignores the Creator. Like the Greeks of old, he rejects the “logos of the Cross” as folly, and as the Jews of old, he repudiates it as weakness.

Man today needs both wisdom and strength, as he never has before. The lack of both forebodes his catastrophe in a nuclear age. The Orthodox Church must make her redeeming message louder in an age of impending disaster. Her priests and bishops must be cautious against pushing the “logos of the Cross” to the background to the preference of humanistic sermons. No Orthodox message from the pulpit can possibly be complete without making the death and resurrection of the Savior central and meaningful to our people who seek the wisdom and strength so badly needed in our present day and age of unrest and uncertainty. The Clergy must always be mindful of what is of primary importance in the

ministry of preaching:

“For I delivered unto you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3).

The Easter Experience

The Easter experience is one of reconciliation and unity. “Let us embrace one another”, we sing throughout the Paschal season. After St. Paul enumerates the “works of the flesh”, he teaches: “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” and “*They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*” (Gal. 22). Yet, hypocrisy and double-dealing and envy still take their toll in the Church in terms of peace and unity.

But now is the time for mercy and God’s longsuffering. “I have come not to judge, but to save the world”, Christ told us. His love redeems, but it also condemns in the last analysis. His infinite condescension is present in the Paschal experience of the Church. But how long will God put up with our continuous blasphemy of His Holy Spirit? Easter is the time for ineffable joy, but it is the precious gift of only those who live in faith and repentance. To those who mock Easter with their sins of disobedience it is but the pledge of the unending pain of Hell.

How sad the world would be without the Cross of Calvary and the empty Tomb! Because the stone was rolled away we have real joy on Easter day. As we celebrate this holy Paschal Season and praise our Risen Lord, I pray that your heart be filled with all gladness that Easter time can bring. Remember that there are many of our fellow Orthodox who still do not “know Christ and the power of His Resurrection”, even though they will faithfully go to church on Easter, hold their Paschal candle and say: “Christ is Risen”.

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Liturgy for the Evangelized

by the Rev. Maxym Lysack

In recent years, the Orthodox Church in North America has begun to open its doors to those who are not of Orthodox background. Among those who have lately entered the Orthodox Church are a large number of Protestants. A significant number of those are originally from Evangelical Protestant Churches.

To be sure, the Orthodox Tradition has much to offer these pilgrims: a deep spirituality, a powerful experience of the Holy Mysteries, a heavenly experience of worship, and so on. We know about the things we have to offer them. Let us consider the things that these newcomers to the Orthodox Church have to offer us.

The very possibility of the Orthodox Church being in need frightens many priests and lay people. It damages our pride when we think of our Church, which has a direct historical connection with the apostles, suffering some sort of deficiency. It is hard for us to realize that we have forgotten some of the apostolic injunctions, practices, teachings and structures.

While all these things remain as resources in our history, they have no impact on the Church until the moment they are rediscovered and re-applied. Many of those entering our Church could exercise an important function in the renewal of apostolic power in the Orthodox Church.

They can remind us of certain things that we have forgotten. They have an experience of certain elements of the apostolic tradition that are historically Orthodox, but absent in practice in contemporary Orthodox ecclesial life. In the scope of this

teaching, I will restrict myself to the rediscovery of the apostolic notion of evangelism.

Many orthodox theologians of our day hold to the following two propositions: first, that salvation is an objective fact by virtue of the creation and continuing life of the Church; second, that because the Church, showing forth in itself the fact of salvation, is most itself a celebration of the Eucharist, little or nothing is required of the Church in terms of evangelism outside of the context of liturgical life. In other words, they feel the Liturgy is everything.

I would never argue that the Liturgy has no connection with evangelism. The connection is, in fact, vital. The question at hand rather concerns the order of events in the evangelism process. While many Orthodox on the contemporary scene conceive of the Liturgy as the first stage, if not the crux, of evangelism, the New Testament and the early apostolic tradition indicate the opposite.

In fact, the Liturgy represents the final stage of evangelism, appropriate to those who have repented and have been initiated into the Church. In short, the Liturgy is for the evangelized, not for evangelism. This is why the Liturgy was celebrated in two parts: the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. The latter was for the converted and initiated only.

Who else could appreciate the mystery and the intimacy of the Eucharist? The liturgy of the Word (or of the catechumens) included the catechumens and penitents as well as the initiated. To use the Liturgy as an

evangelistic tool in the context of the early Church would have represented a complete violation or even denial of its ethos.

Acts 2 provides us with a glimpse into the life of the primitive Church at Jerusalem. Many are quick to hurry to verse 42, where we find that early believers gave themselves to fellowship, apostolic teaching, the breaking of bread and the prayers. The latter two activities definitely suggest a context of worship in which, for that matter, the former two activities could sometimes have been conducted.

How quickly we forget the verses of chapter 2 preceding verse 42! Prior to the four elements of apostolic life we see in verse 42, we witness a powerful scene of mass evangelism during and following the Sermon of the apostle Peter. Evangelism, whether *en masse* or one to one, must always precede apostolic life. This pattern does not simply reflect the day of Pentecost, but indeed apostolic practice in the entire book of Acts.

When evangelism does not precede the Liturgy, the worshipping community that results is ill-equipped to comprehend, much less participate in, that which is happening around it. Many priests have tried a variety of ways to encourage a deep understanding of and active participation in the Liturgy, with little success. This is due in part to the failure to implement the Lord's commandment to evangelize and to follow the order set down for us. Were this order to be restored, the effects on our Church would be visible and immediate.

Developing Events Around the World

by Joseph Abbate / President

Several years back I wrote an article entitled: "Things to Come", in which I explained that we can get an idea of what would shortly come onto the world stage and to prepare in advance. As a Christian pastor once wrote: "*Events cast their shadows before them*". How very true! Fr. Eusebius was never shy in warning people of what we may witness in the future through the eyes of Bible prophecy. **It was never meant to scare people, but rather to warn them in advance out of love.** Allow me to summarize some of what I wrote in my article.

If people have been caught off guard, it is mainly from a lack of spiritual awareness. This is mainly due to the fact that many of our pastors didn't want to rock the boat in Church, or political leaders who wanted to look impressive on the world stage with worthless treaties which often gave opponents of freedom more power, just like Chamberlin had in 1938.

Today the numerous hot-spots in the world involve international economic strife, insane dictators which now have nuclear weapons, or are trying to get their hands on

some, terrorism which has spread from the Middle East unto the ends of the globe, not to mention pandemics such as Ebola. The current global situation is far more dangerous than 1938 ever was.

In the very same newsletter, Fr. Stephanou had written the main article which dwelled on some of the matters pertaining to the then Russian and Ukrainian Church and political situation. Here are some excerpts: "*The authentic root of Russian Orthodoxy, Kiev, was erased because of the lust for the rule in the coalition of*

the political and ecclesiastical powers that be. We see the tragic fruits of such demonic corruption in today's Russian-Ukrainian crisis.

Raising Kiev into a self-governing Patriarchate equal to that of Moscow would be the most God-pleasing resolution. It would come under the oversight of the Mother Church of Constantinople, but, on the other hand, would face the threatening distrust of the Moscow Church and remain locked helplessly in her current dilemma, generated by her perpetual lust for power.

If Moscow continues to dream of becoming the Third Rome, she would be welcoming the apocalyptic legacy of Elder and New Rome with all of its tragic prospects. The "man of iniquity" would delight to know of a coming expanded Roman Empire reborn. Gog and Magog have a common target of ruthless aggression – Israel, its total control or annihilation (Ezekiel 38 and 39; Revelation 20:8).

The invaders from the land of Gog and Magog suffer a crushing defeat, as the word of God reveals to us. "Seven months shall the house of Israel be burying them, that they may cleanse the land." The Millennial Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16), sparked by the World Dictator, had consolidated total rule over the Roman Empire Reborn. The power base of the Antichrist at this time as we know was well established. Most Bible scholars agree that Russia of today is the land of Magog spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel.

The monastery of St. Panteleimon which the Russian Tsars established and richly endowed in Mount Athos served as a stronghold of Russian influence under the watchful eye of the Greek Government. We have a similar case of the projection of Russian influence under the guise of Russian Orthodoxy with the Church of St. Magdalene in the Holy Land, especially in the Garden of Gethsemane. All of this in the shadow of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

There are further illustrations how the Roman state has exploited the Orthodox Church to further its own secular ends. They are an example of the Church from Constantine's time which has been subjected to the State to serve its own Roman purposes.

"We see not our signs", the Psalmist warns us. "There is no more any prophet". Had Greece heeded to the warning of her latest prophet and luminary, Apostolos Makrakis, the tragic Asia Minor Disaster of 1922

would have been averted. At that time millions of Greeks were literally swept into the Aegean Sea, deserted to perish like drowning cattle!

Christ must be established as the Antikeimenon at the fundamental human institutions: the High Priest and Lamb of God in Religion, the Logos in the Academy, and the King in Government. I mention this three-fold truth again, as I have previously. Satan's master plan has been to replace Christ from all these institutions with his own substitutes. We are about to see Antichrist as the Abomination of Desolation seated in the Holy of Holies on the Temple Mount where Christianity and Islam will be merged into his new global religious pact. Then Jesus will appear in the eastern skies in all of His might and glory in order to establish His final rule and kingdom".



How remarkable it is to look back at Fr. Stephanou's writings. He truly had a prophetic calling. What we are currently witnessing may only be the opening salvo of an even larger event in scope. Recently, reports have been discovered of the possibility of a Russian intelligence report that China had originally planned an invasion of Taiwan last fall (Newsweek). An alliance between China and Russia, with an increasing threat of Iran's development of Nuclear weapons could very well be the invasion force described in so many books of the Bible, such as found in Joel, Ezekiel, and Revelations.

As we are watching events unfold around the world, Europe is now agreeing to unify in a way that we have never witnessed before. This is due to the increasing threats from Russia, in which it wishes to reestablish its old borders from the days of the USSR. This includes many eastern European nations. These events may eventually cause a new and strong European leader to arise on the scene to usher in a new World Order in the guise of world peace.

Recently, Vladimir Putin has talked about the great number of Russians who have fled to the nation of Israel. He still refers to them as being Russians. He has also grown much closer now with Syria, and has talked about bringing in more military forces into the country. This, following the matter that thousands of Syrian military troops are joining Russia in the invasion of Ukraine. This may very well build up to an outright invasion of Israel. If this event, being the fulfillment of the war against Israel mentioned in the book of Ezekiel is fulfilled, then that would mean that a new leader would arise to propose a peace treaty in Israel, which may also involve a new Temple being built in Jerusalem. This leader is described as presenting a seven year treaty which would be broken halfway through. He would eventually declare himself as God on that sight of the temple. It is then that he could be exposed as the Antichrist, which is described in 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2.

Just recently, I had seen a video from Athens, Greece in which an Icon of Christ has poured out what looks like blood and water. Not far from the Icon of Christ is an Icon of the Blessed Theotokos, which was weeping oil from the eyes. There have been some Icons in the past in which this has occurred, but never before have I heard of such a thing happening to two icons simultaneously in one church edifice. The church is named after St. Andrew the Apostle, which is the patron Saint of Greece. Many years ago I recall an Icon of the Theotokos weeping in an Albanian Church in the Chicago area. The priest there had given a message on how blessed we were to receive such a gift. I met with the priest afterward and asked him a very simple question: "Is it a good sign when our Mother is crying for us"? He seemed taken back by the question, as if he never thought about it before. Just a short while after that event, war broke out in Serbia and Bosnia.

An icon giving holy oil is one thing, but when they are bleeding and crying, is it not a sign of warning? Shouldn't the priests and bishops preach repentance from the pulpit? What testimony is it to the world when two countries whose people are of the Orthodox faith, Russia and Ukraine, are at war with each other? And all of this is happening during the season of Lent.

God is warning us! Repent! Let the Church, from the Patriarch to the priests, call the people to repentance before it is too late. If we do so, God promised that He would heal our land