

# THE PILGRIM

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# THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN MELBOURNE

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*By Timothy Tan*

**M**y name is Timothy and I would like to share a bit of my experience with the Orthodox Church here in Australia. I am currently studying architecture at the University of Melbourne, having recently been released from national service. (It is a requirement for all able bodied Singaporean males to serve in the armed forces for at least 2 years.) I attend St Nicolas Antiochian



*St. Nicolas Antiochian  
Orthodox Church, Melbourne*

Orthodox Church, Melbourne, where the majority of the parishioners are of Arab stock. Now you may ask, what in the world is a Singaporean doing in an Orthodox church? Aren't you supposed to be Greek or Russian to be Orthodox? Aren't all Arabs Muslims?

I guess we have to go back two thousand years to find the answers. Two thousand years ago, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, came in the flesh, suffered a humiliating death, was gloriously resurrected from the dead and ascended into Heaven to sit at the Right Hand of God. Before He left, He promised His disciples the Holy Spirit who will clothe them with power to preach the good news. That day came at Pentecost and on that day the Church was established. The Church that grew from this small band of followers from the Middle East is none other than the Orthodox Church. It is the Church that was given the command by the Lord to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (*Matt 28:19*) It was this desire of mine to be part of

this unbroken continuity that led me to be baptized into the Orthodox faith in 2001. Naturally, when I came to Australia, I immediately joined St. Nicolas, knowing that it is important to have this continuous spiritual support.

St. Nicolas is a pretty large parish, about 400 families, which is quite large for a typical Orthodox parish. The parish priest, Fr Dimitry, is a very dedicated priest, who follows our Lord's example in laying down his life for the sheep. (*John 10:11*) He is constantly on the run, visiting sick parishioners, baptizing, marrying, burying the dead etc. Above all this, he finds the time to celebrate an extra liturgy on Wednesdays every week to benefit the youth, the converts and inquirers. I have also been blessed by the Lord to meet other priests who are just as dedicated to their flock as Fr Dimitry.

The parishioners come from a rich culture that has its roots in Biblical times. Having met them, I have come to realize the rich diversity within the Middle East. For example, there are many dialects within the Arabic language. A person from Egypt may not be able to understand someone else who comes from Palestine. I feel very privileged by the fact that I have met people whose ancestors hail from Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem and other towns mentioned in the Bible. Despite such diversity, the parishioners are united under one faith. It is very joyful to see how prayerful some of them are at the services. A few even go forward to volunteer to sing in the choir, some of the hymns that they know by heart! When they sing, it comes from the heart and there is no attempt at trying to compete to be the best singer.

Services at St. Nicolas are conducted in both English and Arabic to help people of all ages understand the services. Fr Dimitry alternates between the two languages so that people can follow and will not be lost in the services. Contrary to what many people think, Arabic is a very beautiful poetic language. The language goes very well with Byzantine chant, the music of the Orthodox from the Mediterranean basin. The Antiochians (name

given to the jurisdiction that serves the Arab Orthodox with the Bishop of Antioch as its head) follow the Greek way of holding the services. Mattins, the morning service, is done in the morning followed by the Divine Liturgy, the main service. As a result, on a typical Sunday service, there would be people worshipping in the church for as long as two and a half hours, far longer than any typical Western church service.

Being an Orthodox Christian is not at all dull in Australia, the Antiochian youth constantly organize a wide variety of social events. It is through these events that I have met people from other Antiochian churches. Some of these events include an annual youth retreat, an annual ball, sport days, barbecues, boat cruises etc. It surprises me that it is often the youth who take the initiative to plan and organize the events, with no adult supervision. Attending such events has certainly enriched my experience in Australia.

However, I have not restricted myself to the Antiochians. During my time in Melbourne, I have met Orthodox Christians from other jurisdictions. Russians, Greeks and native Australians have become like a second family to me. Their warmth and hospitality have overwhelmed me at times. Once, I was invited by the matushka (Russian word for priest's wife, directly translated as Little Mama) of Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church (under the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate) to sing in a choir at a seminar on Russian Orthodox liturgical music! Interestingly, this church was established as a missionary church to evangelize Melbourne. (Whoever said Orthodox never evangelize!) Within a few years of the church's founding, the parish priest, Fr Igor, has received a number of people from diverse backgrounds into the Orthodox faith. At the same time, Fr Igor is trying hard to perfect his English as the services are all done in English.

As of this year, the Melbourne Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies was set up in the University of Melbourne to offer

courses in Orthodox theology. It is the first pan-Orthodox project in Melbourne. It is hoped that through this institute, more Orthodox Christians will be able to deepen their understanding of the faith and that the Orthodox witness in Melbourne will be strengthened. Already, about 25 people from many Orthodox jurisdictions have enrolled in this course, excluding interested westerners.

After worshipping and experiencing Orthodox Churches in two countries, I have come to realize that we are not different, although there is always an incredible mix of people in every Orthodox church that I have been to. The prophet and king David said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (*Psalms 133:1*) I had never fully understood this till I became an Orthodox Christian and gone to experience the Church in another culture and location.

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## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO REPENTANCE?

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*By Frederica Mathewes-Green*

*"We've come to think our faith is about comfort. It's not."*

Forget what the Billboard charts say-to judge from church ads in the Yellow Pages, America's favorite song is "I'm Mr. Lonely." Churches are quick to spot that need and promise eagerly that they will be friendly, or be family, or just care. Apparently this is the church's principal product. When people need tires, they look up a tire store; when they start having those bad-sad-mad feelings, they shop for a church.

Here, for once, denominational and political divisions vanish. Churches across the spectrum compete to display their capacity for caring, though each has its own way of making the pitch. The Tabernacle, a "spirit-filled, multi-cultured church," pleads, "Come let us love you," while the Bible Way Temple is more formal, if not downright odd: "A church where no stranger need feel strangely." (The only response that comes to mind is "Thank thee.") One church sign in South Carolina announced, "Where Jesus is Lord and everybody is special," which made it sound like second prize. And one Methodist congregation tries to get it all in: "A Christ-centered church where you can make new friends and form lasting relationships with people who care about you."

But when Jesus preached, he did not spend a lot of time on "caring." The first time we see him, in the first Gospel, the first instruction he gives is "Repent" (*Mark 1:15*). From then on, it's his most consistent message. Yes, he spoke words of comfort like "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden" (*Matt. 11:28*). But much more frequently he challenged his hearers, urging them to turn to God in humility and admit their sins. Even when told of a tragedy that caused many deaths, he repeated this difficult theme: "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (*Luke 13:1-5*).

We love one of these sayings of Jesus. We repeat it often, paste it onto felt banners, and print it on refrigerator magnets. We mostly ignore those on repentance. This says more about us than it does about Jesus.

One thing it says is that we live in a time when it's hard to talk about Christian faith at all, much less awkward topics like repentance. (No era finds repentance easy, but many have found it easier to talk about.) Paradoxically, we live in a very easy time. We are the wealthiest, healthiest, most comfortable generation in history. With less to struggle for, we become increasingly oriented toward pleasure. This all-too-natural inclination is what

most unites us. America is a place of wild diversity, but we all meet at the shopping mall.

### **Whining Spiritual Babies**

We're confirmed in this quest for comfort by a ceaseless stream of advertising messages. These tell us who we are: special, precious people with no faults, who deserve to feel better than we do. Ads tell us, "Your wife (boss, teenager, classmate) doesn't understand you, but we do. Here, buy this, and you'll feel better." Advertising invites us to be big babies—an invitation that fallen human nature has always found hard to resist.

Try telling a person who's been disciplined by advertising that he's a sinner. A hundred years ago, a preacher would have seen heads nod in recognition at that familiar concept. But today's consumer is likely to be shocked-and baffled. How could he be a sinner? All he knows is that he's unhappy because he does not have his fair share of stuff, and he isn't appreciated enough by those around him. Original sin? He will readily agree that everyone else keeps letting him down. That he's estranged from the one, holy God and needs to be reconciled? He's likely to respond, "So who's this God who thinks he's better than us?" Bring up Judgment Day, and you'll get to see someone genuinely appalled; the very idea just sounds so \*judgmental\*.

In trying to reach this seeker, the church has been given a severely reduced pack of options. Since he is aware only of seeking comfort, it looks like that's what we have to headline in any message we send. Neither this need, nor our response, is untrue. A profound sense of unease and dislocation is indeed part of the human condition, because sin has estranged us from God. "I'm Mr. Lonely" is the theme song of everyone on Earth. The church has the only authentic solution to this problem, because we bear the Good News of reconciliation through Jesus Christ.

The problem comes when we never get around to talking about the hard part of the Good News. The problem can even be that we start forgetting it ourselves, and start believing that consolation is the main reason Jesus came. But what's wrong with us required much more than a hug; it required the Cross. It doesn't seem this way; we too, have been catechized by the world and reflexively think of ourselves as needy, wronged children. We'd rather feel as if we're victims of a cruel world than admit we are contributors to the world's cruelty, lost sinners who perversely love our lostness, clinging to our treasured sins like a drowning man to an anvil.

How bizarre such language seems today. We look around our neighborhood and our congregation and everyone seems so \*nice\*. We know what really wicked people are like-we see them in the papers every day-and we're not like that. God must find us, in comparison, quite endearing. And of course he knows the hurts we bear deep inside, and anyone who's been hurt can't be bad (I call this the "victims are sinless" fallacy). With these and a thousand other sweet murmurs we shield ourselves from our real condition and remain Christian babies all our lives: pampered, ineffective, whiney, and numb.

### **Repentance Is Joy**

Jesus didn't come just to save us from the \*penalty\* for our sins; he came to save us from our \*sins\*-now, today, if we will only respond to the challenge and let him. A nation of grownup Christians, courageous, confident, humble, and holy, would be more compelling than any smiley-face ad campaign. The Lord does not love us for our good parts and pass over the rest. He died for the bad parts and will not rest until they are put right. We must stop thinking of God as infinitely indulgent. We must begin to grapple with the scary and exhilarating truth that he is infinitely holy, and that he wants the same for us.

I propose that we recover the ideas of sin and repentance, and reinstate them at the heart of all we do. Such words make us uncomfortable, and raise images that come more from old movies than Scripture. "Repent!" is what's on the soundtrack when a sweating, shouting preacher in a string tie starts slamming his Bible around and making everybody cower. But the meaning of repentance in Scripture and the early church was very different. It was part of the good news, so any bad-news associations we find lying around are just plain wrong.

A good place to start is with the word repentance, or the Greek



*Icon of St. Mary of Egypt*

metanoia, meaning a change of mind. (The Hebrew word is shub, which means to change from the wrong to the right path.) Metanoia is a compound word; "meta" is a versatile preposition that here denotes transformation. Metamorphosis is change of shape; metanoia is a change of the "nous," or the innermost consciousness, a region that lies below both rational thought and emotion. "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind [nous]," Paul wrote, and the devotional classic "The Shepherd" (A.D. 140) says,

"Repentance is great understanding." Repentance is not blubbing and self-loathing. It is insight.

The insight is about our true condition. We begin to see our fallen inclinations the way God does, and realize how deep-rooted is the rottenness in our hearts. This awareness grows slowly, over many years, because he mercifully shows us only a little at a time. But he sees it all. His is like the eye of a surgeon, which sees through to the sickness deepest within. There is no other way for us to be healed. It's when the surgeon says, "All we can do is keep him comfortable," that you're really in trouble.

Some will object, "But I don't think I'm a fine person. I hate myself. I feel ashamed and like a failure all the time." That miserable feeling can be pride with a twist: we have an inflated idea of how wonderful we can be, and find the inevitable failures crushing. God's assessment of our abilities is more accurate to begin with, so he doesn't share our surprised dismay. Repentance, "great understanding," replaces our distorted self-image with God's perspective.

Other times the wash of self-hatred is due to feelings of hopelessness. We have all committed a millions wrongs, large and small. We can get stuck there, aware that God forgives us but unable to apply that fact, and feeling bound to continue to fail. It seems like there's no solution, so we sit in the garbage pile feeling miserable.

This is not repentance; this is despair. The early church differentiated between the two, perceiving that healthy repentance is vigorous and clear-minded, while despair is debilitating, and in fact sinful. Isaiah, a fifth-century Egyptian monk, warned against the kind of sadness that "sets off numerous diabolical mechanisms until your strength is sapped. The sadness according to God, on the other hand, is joy . . . It says to the soul, 'Do not be afraid! Up! Return!' God knows that man is weak, and strengthens him."

"Sadness according to God," repentance, is joy. Initially we fear looking squarely at our sins, lest we get overwhelmed. But the reverse turns out to be true. The more we see the depth of our sin, the more we realize the height of God's love. The constant companion of repentance is gratitude. Like the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears, we are forgiven much and discover endless love. Seeing our sin becomes, paradoxically, an opportunity for joy.

Then we are free indeed: free from any need to hide, to conceal or impress, to make excuses for ourselves, to demand our fair share.

Free to love God with abandon, free to love others without bargaining and conditions. Free to love even those who hurt us because, ultimately, nothing can hurt us. Knowing our own sin, we pray for all other sinners, asking God to show them the mercy he has given so abundantly to us.

A gospel of comfort, on the other hand, is a gospel of minimal expectations. Christianity is one of the great world religions, and the greatest spiritual power in history. But we don't act like it. We act like once people are in the door and make a statement of faith, the whole thing is over. Paul envisioned something more like a transformation, Christ living in us and we in him.

A story is told about a desert monk of the early church, Abba Joseph. A young monk came to him and said, "As far as I can I say my prayers, I fast a little, try to live in peace and keep my thoughts pure. What else can I do?"

Abba Joseph stood up and spread out his hands toward heaven, and each of his fingertips was lit with flame. He said to the young monk, "If you want to, you can be totally fire." The challenge is ours as well: What, really, do we want?

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### **A Daily Repentance Workout**



As we gradually gain more insight into ourselves, we are able, with God's grace, to find ways to resist habitual sin and grow in self-control. We gain strength bit by bit, like an athlete striving for the prize, as Paul said. Gradually we reclaim more and more of ourselves and offer it to God's transforming light. Thus the

Holy Spirit works within us, sanctifying us from the inside out.

From the earliest centuries, Christians have identified certain practices that have been helpful to the "athlete in training." Here are some of them:

- Fasting. People are beset by all different temptations, but everybody eats. Restricting foods-not necessarily a total fast, but simply declining favorites for a time-can be a way of strengthening the "willpower muscle" to be ready when needed to handle a bigger temptation. An athlete doesn't lift weights just so he can lift more weights. Those healthy muscles are ready for any situation he meets. Turn down a doughnut today, and tomorrow you might be able to resist calling the driver in front of you an idiot.
- Bite your tongue. Yes, not calling someone an idiot is a frequent theme in Scripture and early Christian writings. Both place great emphasis on controlling anger, perhaps as much as on sexual continence. Jesus said the penalty for calling your brother a fool was "the hell of fire." "Your brother" includes people who can't hear you, like politicians on TV. It's not the harm to them that's at stake so much as the surging, disorienting pride in your own heart.
- Mind your thoughts. Jesus said that to commit adultery in the imagination is the equivalent of committing it in fact. Nearly all sins begin with thinking about sin. Control the thoughts and you have a good head start on behavior. You may not be able to keep thoughts from appearing, but you can decline to entertain them; birds fly overhead, but you don't have to let them nest in your hair. Paul counsels that we think about things that are true, lovely, gracious, excellent, and praiseworthy, so you might want to read some Dickens tonight instead of watching that sleazy sitcom.

- Practice humility. Humility is not the same as resisting the urge to show off (which is modesty) or denying that you have gifts and talents (which is lying). Humility is remembering that you have a beam in your eye. In every situation remember what God knows about you, and how much you have been forgiven. You might think you can fool people, but no matter how charming you appear, spiritually you have spinach in your teeth. Account yourself the "chief of sinners" and be gracious toward the failings of others. Overlook insults and be kind to those who misuse you. Be swift to admit when you're wrong. Ask others to forgive you, and forgive them without asking if you want God to forgive you.

- Pray constantly. Try always to recall that God is with you, dwelling in you.

(This helps a great deal in controlling thoughts.) For more than 1,500 years, some Christians have tried to do this by



forming the habit of praying, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me" all the time, a kind of background music to other thoughts. It not only helps one resist more turbulent thoughts and deeds, but also creates a kind of mental foyer in which thoughts and impulses can be examined before they're allowed inside.

- Ask God to help you repent. We really don't want to do this, and we find a million excuses to change the subject. Read stories about repentant sinners, like John Newton, the slave



*Icon of the Return of the Prodigal Son*

dealer who wrote "Amazing Grace," or the once promiscuous Mary of Egypt. Those are reasonable models for you, not an ivory-tower saint. Keep thinking of yourself as the Prodigal Son. Think over your deeds and conversations each evening and look for areas to improve. Read Psalm 51 before bed every night. Someday you may actually believe it.

*(The editorial team wishes to thank Presbytera Frederica for allowing us to re-print her article. More of her writings can be viewed at [www.frederica.com](http://www.frederica.com))*

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## FROM THE FATHERS

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### Repentance

The forgetting of wrongs is a sign of true repentance. But he who dwells on them and thinks that he is repenting is like a man who thinks he is running while he is really asleep.

*~St. John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent.*

### Lent

O Almighty Lord, who hast made all created things in wisdom, and by Thine inexpressible providence and great goodness hast brought us to these all-holy days, for the purification of body and soul, for the controlling of carnal passions, and for the hope of the Resurrection; who, during the forty days didst give into the hands of Thy servant Moses, the Tablets of the Law in characters Divinely traced by Thee; Enable us also, O Good One, to fight the

good fight; to accomplish the course of the Fast; to preserve inviolate the Faith; to crush under foot the heads of invisible serpents; to be accounted victors over sin; and uncondemned to attain unto and adore Thy Holy Resurrection. For blessed and glorified is Thine all-honorable and majestic Name: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

*~From the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: Gregory the Great*

### Pascha

"Pascha, the Pascha of the Lord!" By His Resurrection, the Lord has brought us from death to life, and that Resurrection the "Angels in Heaven cry," [for they have] seen the light of deified human nature in fore-ordained glory in the person of our Lord and Redeemer, in Whose Image and through the power of Whose Resurrection, all true believers in Him, all who have united with Him with all their souls, are transformed. Glory, O Lord, to Thy Most-glorious Resurrection! The Angels sing, rejoicing together with us and foreseeing the swelling of their ranks. O Lord, make us worthy, to hymn Thee, the Resurrected One, with pure hearts, seeing in Thy Resurrection the cessation of our corruption, the seeds of a new resplendent life and the dawn of coming eternal glory whose forerunner Thou becamest, being resurrected for our sake. The tongues of neither men nor angels are capable of expressing Thy ineffable mercy toward us, O most-gloriously Resurrected Lord!



*~St. Theophan the Recluse*

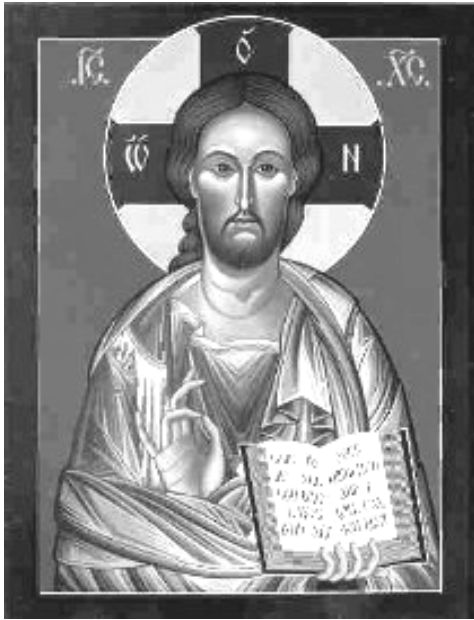
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# WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

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By Reader John (Kelvin) Lee

There are millions of people today who will tell you that they believe in Jesus Christ. But if you start asking “who is Jesus?” you might come away all confused. Some will tell you that He is God become Man, others will say He was just a good man.



Maybe you'll hear He was an enlightened teacher who fearlessly stood up for his beliefs. Still others may tell you He is one of many ways, or roads, to God.

Faced with all these opinions, how do we respond as Christians? We are all called to preach the Gospel and be witnesses for Christ. Many of us may feel inadequate to such a task but whenever a discussion comes up about the Lord Jesus Christ it is important that Christians, particularly

we Orthodox Christians, must know with certainty who we believe in and are able to share our Faith with clarity and in a spirit of humility.

While this short article is not meant to be a theological paper (and I am certainly not qualified to write one!), here is a brief sampling of the Biblical positions on who Jesus is as held by the Orthodox Church. It's intended as a sort of basic “survival kit” whenever we get questions or challenges to our Faith:

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God (*Acts 9:20*). He is the Second Person of the Trinity become Man (please also see “Meditations on the Holy Trinity” in Issue 1).
- He is both God and Man -- 100% God and 100% man. “Perfect God and perfect man” as the Athanasian Creed (5<sup>th</sup> Century) puts it.
- As God, Jesus is equal to the Father and has all the power and majesty of God. As Man, He is inferior to the God the Father.
- As God, Jesus is eternal and has no beginning. He is “begotten not made” (that is, not created) as we confess in the Nicene Creed. But as Man, He was born at a point in time (about 6 BC).
- The Son of God was incarnate by the work of the Holy Spirit and the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary. Jesus underwent a virgin birth and has no earthly father. He is the Son of God from His Mother's womb.
- We confess that Jesus Christ is both God and Man, yet we do not think of Him as two persons, a kind of split personality. “He is not two, but one Christ” (again from the Athanasian Creed). Neither do we believe in a “blended Being” -- His divinity and humanity getting corrupted into some sort of hybrid.
- He however has two wills – a divine and a human will working together. We do not believe Jesus was a human puppet “possessed” in some way by the Deity.
- Here is a Mystery: Jesus knows everything as God, yet as Man He had to learn the scriptures, to read, do maths, do carpentry and to cook. He grew in knowledge and stature in favour with God and men (*Luke 2:52*).

- The Gospels tell us that Jesus was tempted by the devil. The temptations He faced were real. They were not puny bullets bouncing off Superman's chest. Jesus was tempted in every way (and that means every sin you and I have been tempted to commit) yet He never sinned. This means our Lord never sinned in thought, word or deed. He never did any wrong things or failed to do the right things.
- During His earthly ministry, he healed the sick, cast out demons and raised the dead. He did not preach political revolution. He spoke of the Kingdom of God, of love and also of everyone's need of repentance. He called all of us to repent of our sins and believe the Gospel (*Mark 1:15*).
- He was betrayed, or rather gave Himself up, into the hands of the Jews and Romans. He was brutally tortured and crucified. The Son of God, who is beyond all pain and suffering tasted pain for our sakes.
- Jesus Christ died. He was really dead -- it was a real physical death.
- As Man, Jesus died. As God, He experienced death in the flesh for us. Yet the Trinity was at no time diminished to two Persons. As one of the prayers in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom goes, "Thou Lord, was with the body in the tomb, Thou was with the soul in Hades as God, Thou was with the thief in paradise, yet Thou was on the Throne of Heaven with the Father and the Holy Spirit....."
- The Lord Jesus descended into Hades, the place of the dead -- not to suffer but as a victor destroying Satan's power, defeating death and bringing into heaven all those who with faith saw His coming. For a dramatic depiction of this, look at the icon of the Holy Resurrection.
- Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The Orthodox Church proclaims a literal and historical Resurrection, nothing

less. As Man, Jesus Christ was raised to life by God, as the Son of God, He had power to take up His life again (*John 10:18*).

- He paid the price for our sins. He is our Saviour, and He has opened the doors of heaven to us. Through repentance and believing the Gospel, we have forgiveness and new life by His grace. He was put to death for our transgressions and raised for our justification (*Romans 4:25*).
- Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, taking His humanity into the Godhead. He sits at the right hand of the Father and He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. In this judgment, the righteous will enter into eternal life and those who have done evil will be cast into the hell prepared for the devil and his angels. This hell, we all fully deserve because of our sins. But God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (*John 3:16*).

Perhaps many in the world today will find this sort of teaching offensive. The world keeps telling us there are many roads to God.

But we proclaim that this is the heart of the Gospel, the Good News of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is risen from the dead. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Only in Him do we have salvation.

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me" (*John 14:6*). He also said "He who hears my words and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life" (*John 5:24*).

St Peter the Apostle proclaimed “There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (*Acts 4:12*).

Our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself says there is no other way to be saved but through Him. The Apostles preached this and the Holy Fathers of the Church have taught this unflinching down to this day.

In the Gospels, the Lord Jesus asked the Apostle Peter “who do you say that I am?” This same question challenges everyone today regardless of their church or religion. The Apostle replied “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (*Matthew 16:16*). Our answer to that question and the life we choose to live as a result of our answer will affect our eternal destinies.

The underlying issue is actually this: Jesus Christ is either God or He isn't. He was either born of the Virgin Mary or He wasn't. He either rose from the dead or He is still in a tomb somewhere.

C S Lewis, the great Christian writer, put it so elegantly:

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.” (*Mere Christianity*)

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# SINGAPORE NEWS

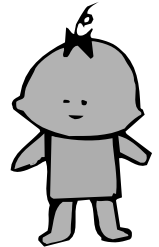
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## PARISH NEWS

### Births

15<sup>th</sup> January: **Maria** – a daughter for Carmen and Kostin.

16<sup>th</sup> March: **Maximos** – a son for Shiana & Reader Seraphim.



### Baptisms



**Nikita Philip** before Vespers for the Sunday of the Publican & the Pharisee.

**Maria & Gleb** before the Divine Liturgy on Forgiveness Sunday.

On the Great Sabbath: catechumen **Christopher Ho** will be received into the Orthodox Church.

*(Left) Fr Daniel baptizing baby girl Maria.*

### Readers Tonsured

Reader **Symeon Tan** and Reader **John (Kelvin) Lee** were tonsured by **His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas** at the Divine Liturgy on the second Sunday of Lent, St. Gregory Palamas.

**Pastoral visit of His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas to the Holy Resurrection Parish**

On Saturday 6th March, Metropolitan Nikitas arrived in Singapore. He attended and chanted Great Vespers for the Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas, and then met members of the Parish for discussion and questions & answers. The next day he served Divine Liturgy and tonsured two new Readers for the Parish. During his three full days in Singapore he paid visits to various homes in the Parish and had discussions with other parishioners, including Mr Andreas Goros, the Greek Honorary Consul. On the Monday afternoon Fr Jose, of the Syrian Orthodox Parish in Singapore, paid a courtesy call on the Metropolitan at his hotel.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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**Books for Sale**

The following books are for sale at the Parish's Book Store:

The Orthodox Study Bible **\$40**

The Orthodox New Testament Volumes I & II **\$100**

Equal Yet Different (Fr Michael Harper) **\$10**

The True Light (Fr Michael Harper) **\$10**

Are You Saved? (Barbara Pappas) **\$10**

**Parish's Library**

The parish library is now available for the borrowing of books. Parishioners can approach Symeon or Patrick after church services to register your library card.

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## Professional Viewpoints from Our Members

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### HEALTH TIP:

#### *PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT GYNAECOLOGY*

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In recent decades it has become evident that gynaecological disorders of children and adolescents warrant more attention than had been formally devoted to them. They have their own particular gynaecological problems which merit special consideration. These disorders are often more difficult to diagnose than in adults, doctors are not familiar with them and the whole emotional climate surrounding the appearance of such disorders in young person is always pronounced and must not be overlooked.

PEDIATRIC GYNAECOLOGY is concerned with the period from birth to 10 years of age and not many pathological conditions are encountered. (and will not be mentioned here)

ADOLESCENT GYNAECOLOGY pertains to puberty and adolescence. This period involves the complex transition from childhood to maturity and is associated with multiple somatic (bodily) and psychological changes influencing the health, reproductive potentiality and sexuality of future adult woman.

ADOLESCENCE can be defined as a period of mental, physical, emotional and social maturation and is considered to last ten years: from 10 to 20 years of age.

PUBERTY is only a biological phase of final physical growth, sexual maturation and ability for reproduction and for girls completes between 10 and 16 years. Boys start puberty two years later than girls and have longer maturational period.

There are **THREE MAJOR EVENTS OF HUMAN ADOLESCENCE** and they are related to unchanged mean body weight:

- pubertal growth spurt, also called critical body weight, being one of many triggering factors for the onset of puberty, starting when girls reach body weight of 30 kg and on average starting around age of 10, leading into:
- height peak velocity of growth, reached around age 12 and body weight of 39 kg, when girls can grow up to 10 cm per year and slowing down toward third major event:
- menarche, i.e. first menstruation, occurring when body weight reaches 47 kg (+5 kg) and on average at age 12-14 (for Asian girls on average body weight is less for 7 kg in mentioned happenings, for boys approximately 7 kg should be added and menarche replaced by first ejaculation).

Interesting point is that body weight gain between the onset of puberty and menarche is 17 kg which translated into calories figures 144,000 Cal. It is known that to sustain a pregnancy we need 80,000 Cal. and for full breast feeding we need 1000 Cal per day, which is so called critical storage of easily mobilizing energy for ovulation, regular cycles and ultimately pregnancy. Hence, we still do function on biological laws of primates where nature is ensuring sufficient amount of calories for survival of species.

In fact, body weight is an important parameter for normal functioning of female. Women having less 15-20% of their ideal body weight for their height, (age, ethnic group, etc) will have irregular cycles and decreased fertility. Further loss of weight will abolish periods, caused temporary infertility and decrease bone density mass.

On the other side, overweight-obesity may also lead to various menstrual disorders: missing periods, infertility, acne, hirsutism,

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome due to so called chronic anovulation (missing ripening of the egg) due to hormonal conversion in fat tissues.

Similarly, obese girls will reach critical body weight earlier and start puberty earlier (“early bloomers”),” rush” through it and start menstruating early and will be of shorter stature, because with the onset of menstruations girl will reach near 95% of her final height.

Next time, more on menstrual disorders and obesity.

*Dr. Vesna Dramusic, M.D., PhD  
Senior Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology,  
National University Hospital, Dept. Obs/Gyn*

## SERVICES FOR HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA

3 <sup>rd</sup> April ( <i>Sat</i> )	5.00pm	Vigil for Palm Sunday
4 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Sun</i> )	9.30am	Third Hour & Divine Liturgy
	12.30pm	Vespers
	7.00pm	“Bridegroom” Mattins
5 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Mon</i> )	7.00pm	“Bridegroom” Mattins
6 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Tue</i> )	7.00pm	“Bridegroom” Mattins
7 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Wed</i> )	6.30pm	Mystery of Holy Unction*
	8.00pm	Vespers & Divine Liturgy
8 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Thu</i> )	7.00pm	Mattins ~ 12 Passion Gospels
9 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Fri</i> )	10.00am	Royal Hours
	3.00pm	Vespers ~ Bringing out of the Winding Sheet
	7.00pm	Mattins – Lamentations of the Theotokos
10 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Sat</i> )	10.30am	Mystery of Baptism followed by Vespers & Divine Liturgy
	11.30pm	Midnight Office, Paschal Mattins & Divine Liturgy
11 <sup>th</sup> April ( <i>Sun</i> )	1.00pm	“Agape” Vespers & Parish Lunch

\* *Orthodox Christians who wish to partake of the Mystery of Holy Unction should prepare as they do for making their Communion, with fasting & with Confession.*

*Usual Service Schedule:*      *Saturday 5.00pm*      *Vespers*  
    *Sunday 9.30am*            *Divine Liturgy*

*For details of all other Services, please see up-to-date information on the web-site.*

## **Pascha**

### The Resurrection Of Our Lord Jesus Christ



**Christ is risen from the dead,  
 Trampling down death by death,  
 And upon those in the tombs bestowing life!**