

Odoiporikon

Orthodox Mission in the East

*Quarterly newsletter of the Patriarchal Foundation of the Far East Mission -
Issue 76 July - September 2021*



Baptisms in the Fiji Islands

Message from the Ecumenical Patriarch on the day of prayer for the Protection of the Natural Environment (1 September 2021)

† B A R T H O L O M E W

By God's Mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church

Grace, Peace and Mercy from the Maker of All Creation

Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

Esteemed brethren and beloved children
in the Lord,

The Feast of the Indiction, the solemn day of prayers for the natural environment, finds once again humanity confronted with intense weather conditions due to mounting climate change, with devastating floods and fires across the globe, as well as with the Coronavirus pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences.

The fact that the restrictive measures in transportation and the limits imposed on industrial production have resulted in a reduction of pollutants and emissions, offered an additional valuable lesson on global interconnection and on the interdependence of all dimensions of life. Moreover, it has been also revealed anew that the Ecumenical Patriarchate's ecological initiatives, which comprise an extension of the Church's theology and liturgical tradition, correspond with scientific findings and with experts' recommendations calling for multifaceted mobilization in order to protect the integrity of the natural environment.

We thus pray for the swift overcoming of the consequences of the health crisis and for the illumination from above of



governments throughout the world, so that they do not return to or persist upon economism, to those principles of organization of the economic life, of production and consumption, of exhaustive exploitation of natural resources, principles that prevailed prior to the pandemic. Further, it is our genuine desire that the dissemination of pseudoscientific opinions concerning the purported dangers of the Covid-19 vaccines, the slander aimed toward specialists of the medical field, and the unfounded degradation of the seriousness of the disease, be termi-

nated. Unfortunately, similar opinions are propagated in regard to climate change as well, its cause and its disastrous effects. The reality is entirely different, and must be faced with responsibility, collaboration, joint actions, and common vision.

Inactivity is inconceivable when in full knowledge of the shared great contemporary challenges of humanity. Indifference toward our suffering brethren and toward the destruction of the “very good” creation, is an offence against God and a violation of His commandments. Wherein exist respect toward creation and tangible love toward man, the “beloved of God,” therein God is present.

After the Holy and Great Council (Crete, 2016), the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in accordance to its spirit and decisions, appointed an official commission, comprised of theologians, to draft a document on the social implications of our faith and on the social mission and witness of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world. This text, which was approved for publication by the Holy and Sacred Synod and is entitled *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, states the following: “The Church encourages the faithful to be grateful for—and to accept—the findings of the sciences, even those that might occasionally oblige them to revise their understandings of the history and frame of cosmic reality. The desire for scientific knowledge flows from the same wellspring as faith’s longing to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of God” (§ 71).

The Holy Great Church of Christ emphatically highlights the indivisibility of the natural environment’s protection and the philanthropic care for one’s neighbor. Both an eco-friendly stance and the rec-

ognition of the sacredness of the human person are a “liturgy after the Liturgy,” vital dimensions of the Eucharistic actualization of the Church. The life of the Church is a manifest respect for creation, as well as the place and the way of experiencing the culture of personhood and of solidarity.

Most honorable brothers and cherished children,

Throughout this difficult period, it is an essential pastoral duty of the Church to undertake initiatives for the containment of the pandemic. And it is also a categorical ethical mandate to support global access to the immunization against the coronavirus, especially in poorer nations, in accordance with the words of our Lord, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). We ought to love one another “as Christ has loved us” (Eph. 5:2) and to show ourselves as “priests” of creation, safeguarding and cultivating it with care and affection, and, offering in thanksgiving this exceedingly precious gift of God’s Grace unto the Creator of all.

In closing, we wholeheartedly wish unto all a blessed, healthful and fruitful new ecclesiastical year, and we call upon you, through the intercessions of the Theotokos Pammakaristos, the grace and mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory and the dominion unto the everlasting ages. Amen!

September 1, 2021

†Bartholomew of Constantinople
Fervent supplicant of all before God

THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN TODAY'S WORLD

My dear brethren, rejoice in the Lord,

The Church of Christ in the Pacific Islands sends you its love and gratitude.

On this occasion of our communication, we would not like to relate the signatory the missionary news from the Pacific Ocean. Instead, we would like the word of the Church to be heard as it is for Its Mission to the modern world with some short remarks from the signatory, and this reasons of information, reflection and action.

A short time ago (1-3 September 2021) the Synaxis of the Hierarchy of the

Ecumenical Throne took place in Constantinople, the Queen City, under the presidency of His All Holiness, our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the participation of almost all the Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate around the world.

During the proceedings of the Assembly, our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, as well as some of the speakers, referred to the conclusions of the Holy and Great Synod that took place in Crete during Pentecost 2016.

The following points are mentioned on the chapter **“The Mission of the Orthodox Church in Today’s World”**:

The conveyance of the Gospel’s message according to the last command of Christ, **“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”** (Matt 28:19) is the **diachronic mission of the Church**. This mission must be carried out not aggressively or by different forms of proselytism, but **in love, humility and respect towards the identity of each person** and the cultural particularity of each people. All the Orthodox Churches have an obligation to contribute to this missionary endeavor.

The Dignity of the Human Person

«We are convinced that, as God’s fellow workers (I Cor 3:9), we can advance



Lesson in the midst of a pandemic at orphanage of Agia Tavitha



Our brothers in Christ

to this common service together with all people of good will, who love peace that is pleasing to God, for the sake of human society on the local, national, and international levels. This ministry is a commandment of God” (Mt 5:9).

The Mission of the Orthodox Church As a Witness of Love through Service

In fulfilling her salvific mission in the world, the Orthodox Church actively cares for all people in need, including the hungry, the poor, the sick, the disabled, the elderly, the persecuted, those in captivity and prison, the homeless, the orphans, the victims of destruction and military conflict, those affected by human trafficking and mod-

ern forms of slavery. The Orthodox Church’s efforts to confront destitution and social injustice are an expression of her faith and service to the Lord, Who identifies Himself with every person and especially with those in need: Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me (Mt 25:50). This multidimensional social service enables the Church to cooperate with various social institutions.

Thank you very much from the bottom of our hearts. We wish you a blessed new Church Year with the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the protection of Our Lady the Theotokos.

† Myron Metropolitan of New Zealand

Paul's heart is the heart of the world

THE "JOURNEY" OF THE PAR EXCELLENCE GOSPEL PREACHER *

Someone claimed that in life there are many people who are vicious, several others are persecutors of Christianity and very few are Pauls. But if one watched a film with the life and work of Paul to the point that is, where Paul, blinded by ignorance and hatred, fell to the ground by the surprising light of Nazoreos, whom he passionately persecuted, would surely condemn him. If one saw that phase of Saul's life, who persecuted the Christian faith with passion and fanaticism, would surely decide that Paul was doomed to perish. However, this is why the life of man is not judged by the beginning, but by its end, and moreover it is not judged by us the pious but by Jesus Christ, who is the beginning and especially the end of our lives. This is where the differentiation made by the professor to vicious and Pauls or our own distinction to good and bad people is a superficial label: In the vicious Saul hid the fiery heart of a Paul. Christ emphasized that whoever really longs, hungers and thirsts for righteousness will be satiated, and this was also the case with the fiery Paul, who persecuted the Church not out of selfishness, malice and self-interest, as the high priests did, but out of love for God. If I was liked by people, he points out in one of his letters, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Paul's change is attributed to the terrible vision he saw at the gates of Damascus. Jesus pursues with his mercy the one who was chasing him. As he once complained: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, so now you are confronting the cruelty of the persecutor to his mercy: Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? Paul's blindness became the illumination of the world. It is not possible for one to see properly if first is not blinded, does not take away the thoughts that disturb him, and does not entrust everything to faith. For Paul was blinded not by darkness, but by the excessive light of Christ's love. In the blindness of his body, the light of faith rises in him: it was a rise of forces full of mystery, the beginning of a new life, the entrance of a higher world, the processing of the dry land of life. And here is where Saul, not any dreamer, but a man of deed, asks: "What do I do, Lord? He defended his fort like a hero. But as soon as he saw that his zeal was wrong, he becomes a slave of the victorious. No mourning for his broken life, nor desperate steps, but deeds, lesson from the beginning, regrouping!

However, another critical meeting of Paul had preceded, his meeting with Stephen. Stephen, the great hope of the Church, fell dead. Saint Augustine once said that Paul kept the garments

** Most part of this text consists of excerpts from the work of J.Holzner, Paul. Translation of the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Ieronymos I, Publications Damascus 1973*

of those who stoned Stephen so that he could stone with everyone's hands. That's why the prayer of the stoned man was more suited to him than anyone else. Without Stephen's prayer, the Church would not have had Paul. Truth cannot die, because God is hiding behind it. Who could have imagined, when they stoned Stephen, that within a year his murderer would come to take his place? Could it be that the savagery and viciousness we see in our time is due to the fact that in our time there are only few Stephens who are weeping and shaken by the surplus of evil in the world?

The three days that elapse, from the time of Paul's bodily blindness to his discovery and baptism by Ananias, that is, between the sacramental death and the spiritual Resurrection in baptism, are a clear allusion to the three days and nights of Jesus in the tomb. If one had told him that he would have to wait... But now he waited quietly in the anteroom of God. It's a mysterious death that takes place on a mysterious night. The growth of new life in the mother's womb is full of mystery; A true rebirth! Just like, when according to an old narration, Christ arrived in Egypt, the idols fell from their bases and became fragments, so in the soul of Saul a whole world was coming to ruins so that the new creation, the new universe, could emerge. The old have passed, everything became new. The new life cannot be won, conquered, reached by running. It's a gift! What could become a greater miracle than Paul's miracle?



The fact that the Lord after His Resurrection went to find His disciples, this is something Paul could expect. But the fact that He appeared to him, to his most vile enemy, and especially that God surrounded him with his loving gaze from his mother's womb and during all his years, this love of Christ, who first loved him and sacrificed himself for him, was something truly overwhelming. This love is the core and the polar star of his sermon. Under the fiery gaze of the Risen Christ softens everything that had been hardened, repressed feelings, emotional forces, almost subtle, are freed. Nothing valuable is lost in the hands of God. The basic colouring of his temperament, his education, nothing is destroyed.

Paul dresses in Christ as a garment of the soul, but not as the actor who has not been identified with the person he is pretending to be, but as the priest before the altar, through which Christ

speaks and acts. Christian is the new man who changed his place of residence. Union with Christ is the nerve of Paul's morality. The essential thing in Christianity is not that it is a new teaching, a new morality, a new cult. The unheard new is the new life, the new creation. True Christianity frightens people and stirs them up from their carelessness and their way of life. Christianity is not a way of thinking that does not create obligations for you, but a way of life.

This worship in Christ really gave wings to Paul to travel to all the then

known world and preach the gospel. The second milestone in his life and in the life of us Greeks and Europeans was the cry of anguish of that Greek Macedonian, who invited Paul to cross to Macedonia and help a dying 'civilized world'. Once, from Macedonia came the young 22-year-old imposing Alexander with his many troops, spears, wise men and brought the gifts of the West to the East. Now the West, spiritually bankrupt, was asking for the most beautiful gift of the East. Passing to Makedonia, help us! The short and deformed Paul travels to Europe



The Holy Temple of the Apostle Paul in the city of Incheon

almost naked, preaching the most obscene and degrading thing that existed. The Cross of Christ, a death cursed for the Jews and awful for the Greeks. The kingdom of Alexander after his death was torn to pieces. Paul's Church like the nail he himself kicked, the deeper one fights, the deeper it enters the heart of the world.

Today's Europe is very much like the Roman world, which derailed not because it did not have a strong currency or a gold deficit, but because it had a deficit of heart. The cosmopolitan man of Pax Romana, saturated from the bread and the spectacles and at the same time feeling a frosty loneliness, was looking for redemption in the esoteric eastern mysteries, exactly as today's 'progressed' Western civilization is looking for recipes of tranquillity and happiness in Yoga and Buddhism. The freedom and serenity of these ancient religions was and is, however, a subjugation to the same self-master and yet unhappy, fragmented, authoritarian and errant ego. According to Paul, on the contrary, becoming free is achieved by embracing the freedom that Christ has gained, which is within us.

That is why without Paul the West would be a province of the Asian spirit. The scale in Paul's time was wobbling, whether or not Christianity would be a religion of formalism, a religion of the external type, or would continue on the wings of the Spirit its flying throughout the world, whether the kingdom of God is a matter of what you eat or drink, or would it be joy in the Holy Spirit, a sacred union of the hearts, which makes

us shout 'Father'! That's why Paul fought like a lion in Jerusalem and Antioch and went alone his way, offering sacrifices of blood and heart. No one else, apart from Jesus, ever fought such a huge liberation struggle as Paul, who had been brought up with all the strictness of the Mosaic Law. If man could be saved by fulfilling certain types of liturgical Law and take his salvation as a prize from God, then Christ's death was unnecessary, and God by sacrificing his only child, made a terrible mistake! The salvation that God promised Abraham does not depend on racial origin, inheritance, and the kinship of blood. It is not privilege of a race but the property of all mankind. In Paul's heart beat the heart of the world!

Today we are sailing in a sea of news, which is essentially characterized by repetition but also by disappointment in front of the horrific face of our time. The gospel of Paul, the power, the dynamite that transformed the world was one, the Cross of Christ. We are not guilty, condemned, indebted. We are not pawns, puppets of a blind and impersonal fate. We are not the children of an unknown God, who sits blessedly in space. We are children of God the Father, who made the leap into our miserable reality and sacrificed His only child for our sake. In our difficult times we can cry out to God Abba! Father. The end of the world is not death, the absolute zero but the eternal life, happiness, peace.

Sotirios Despotis

Professor of the University of Athens

NEWS FROM ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF KOREA

A Special Spiritual Retreat Program for Young Students Retreat Camp:

In Ulsan

On the weekend of July 24 and 25, a two-day Retreat was held in the parish of St. Dionysios of Aegina in the city of Ulsan.

Due to the restrictive measures, for the protection of the children from COVID-19, the attendance of the students of Elementary, Middle School and High School, was partial. Discussions revolved around the topics: “Communication in the Digital Age” and “Practicing the Virtue of Self Control in the Proper Use of Electronic Media”.

The participation of the children in the Great Vespers on Saturday and in the Holy Services of Sunday was a great opportunity for spiritual nourishment.

We praise God for the great opportunity to once again have face-to-face communication after many months which was especially joyful for everyone.

In Jeonju

On Saturday August 14, 2021, a special Retreat Program for young students was held in our parish of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Jeonju with the main topic: “The problem of child suicide in Korea and how to cope with it.”

Emphasis was given on the right communication, the opening of the heart towards others, asking for help from God in difficult moments, also from the Most Holy Theotokos, from family members as well as trustworthy persons in their environment. The speech was highlighted with appropriate examples of how mental loneliness and iso-



lation is the main cause of stalemate, which in turn leads to self-destructive paths.

The celebration of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Jeonju

On Saturday, August 14, the Metropolitan of Korea Ambrosios accompanied by Deacon Johan Park went to the city of Jeonju in order to celebrate the feast day of the Church of the Dormition in Jeonju.

A group of believers took care of the cleaning and decoration of the temple and the preparation of the “Prosphoron” (bread offering), and the “Breaking of the bread” called the Artoclasia.

The Great Vespers with the ceremony of the “Breaking of the bread” (Artoclasia) was performed according to the church order with the participation of adults and children. The topic of the sermon that followed was “Pain in our lives and the help of the Virgin Mary”. Metropolitan Ambrosios stressed that when we are surrounded by difficulties and our heart is wounded by pain, let us not remain helpless, but to resort to Our Lady the Theotokos, Who suffered more than all the mothers of the

world, when she saw her only Son and God crucified. For this reason she knows better than anyone else what human suffering means.

The next day, August 15, the Service of Orthros (Matins) of the feast was performed followed by the Divine Liturgy, during which the Metropolitan, in his sermon, developed the theme “On the intercession of the Virgin Mary” in order to help the faithful face those non-Orthodox who reject the honor and invocation of mediation of the Most Holy Mother. He particularly emphasized that without the personal spiritual struggle of the Christian to become christ-like, the mediation of the Virgin Mary and the Saints alone does not have a magical effect.

Chanting the Dismissal Hymn (Apolitikon) of the Dormition for the First Time at the New Church Under Construction in Jeonju

On August 15, 2021, following the Divine Liturgy of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Jeonju, His Eminence Metropolitan Ambrosios accompanied by the faithful visited the new church under construction and chanted all together the Dismissal Hymn (Apolitikion) of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Singing the Apolitikion for

the first time in the new church was a very moving experience for all the participants.

The Metropolitan in his short speech said, among other things: “Today we experience a miracle of Our Holy Mother. From the moment we started this project until today, it has gone through many difficult phases. It was humanly impossible for the construction to reach the level where it is today, as we are standing under its dome. I always clearly remember the tears of sadness that filled our eyes when we were forced to move from the old temple to the temporary one against our will. Today, however, the tears of sorrow turned into tears of joy and emotion seeing the miracle of the new temple before which we stand in awe”.

Then, after wishing to celebrate the feast of Our Lady in the new church next year, he urged everyone to work together to complete the construction of the church and prepare it for the Opening Ceremony. Addressing the children that were present, he said: “This temple is your church. While in it, you will be sanctified by the word of God and the sacramental life of the Church, you will grow up in it, you will get married in it, you will baptize your children in it, and you will spend your whole life in it. Therefore, make sure you love it more than you love your own home!”



Professor Georgios Patronos (1935-2021)



Professor Georgios Patronos, Peer Professor of the New Testament at the Theological School of the University of Athens, passed away on August 15 of this year. The deceased was born in Lechovo and studied at the Theological School of Athens. He continued his studies in universities abroad and in 1975 he was awarded a PhD on the following subject: **Relations of the present and future on the kingdom of God in the teaching of Orthodox theology.**

He had had worked as an assistant professor at the Theological School of Athens since 1970 and became a full professor in 2004. In 2014 he was awarded the title “Lord Master of the Great Church of Christ”. He was a devoted teacher, loved dearly by his students, but he was also a tireless worker of the Gospel. He worked as a member of the Patriarchal Foundation of the Orthodox Mission of the Far East for many years. He also did important work in Africa, where he ministered in coop-

eration with the Archbishop of Tirana and all Albania Anastasios. The writings he left behind are extremely rich. Indicatively we mention here his studies: Messianic and Eschatological Expectations of the Intertestamental Period (200 B.C-100 A.C)[1970] The Joy in New Testament [1983], The Historical Course of Jesus, from the Manger to the Empty Tomb [1991], Holy Bible and Mission [2001] and History and Eschatology [2001].

May the Risen Lord, whom he loved and ministered so much in his life, rest his soul with the Saints and may He grant consolation to his relatives.

May his memory be eternal



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Athens 16 August 2021

Resolution

The Board of Directors of the Patriarchal Foundation of the Far East Mission was summoned following the news of the death of

Georgios P. Patronos

Peer Professor of the Theological School of the University of Athens
Lord Master of the Gospel of the Great Church of Christ
Member of the Board of Directors of the Foundation

Has Decided:

- to express their condolences to his family
- to deposit a monetary donation, instead of a wreath, in his memory
- to publish the present text in the journal “Odoiporiko” of the Foundation to hand this resolution on to his family

May his memory be eternal

For the Board of Directors

The President

Prof. Sotirios Despotis

Secretary General

Vasileios Birtsas

Odoiporikon



The Holy Church of the Assumption under construction of the Virgin in the city of Jeonju.

DONATION DEPOSITS

National Bank of Greece: Account Number: 040-296124-56

IBAN: GR6001100400000004029612456

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The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

On Saturday, July 24, the catechumen Mr. KIM Tae-Won became an Orthodox Christian through the Sacrament of Baptism officiated by Fr. Antonios LIM Jong-Hun. He was given the baptismal name of Antonios.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to the newly illumined Antonios, and we pray that his whole life to be God-pleasing, as a faithful member of the Orthodox Church. Congratulations!