

Odoiporikon

Orthodox Mission in the East

**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE PATRIARCHAL FOUNDATION
OF ORTHODOX MISSION IN THE FAR EAST**

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The Mysteries of Christmas

Christmas is a celebration filled with mysteries 'wonderful and paradoxical'. Mysteries that can lead the small human brain and logic from boredom to surprise. God's eternal Word, the invisible, the unseen, the light from light, the source of life and immortality, the identical Image of God, wearing flesh for the flesh, and a noetic soul for my own dark and wounded soul. Yet, the great God becomes a humble man, descending into the mud of the earth in order to lift up man who had been subjected to the vicious cycle of pleasure and suffering: «He who exists is made, he who is uncreated is built, he who the universe cannot contain is contained... and he who is rich is made poor. For he made poor my selfish flesh, so that I may richer through his divinity»!

The Almighty God could have saved man by His power. Yet, He did not do so because His actions are characterized, first by righteousness and then by power. Man abandoned His Creator. A just consequence of this choice of autonomy from the Source of Life was death, both spiritual and physical. And just as man was freely deceived by the devil, so it was only just that man alone should defeat the devil. This man had to be a **NEW** man without the hereditary disease of disobedience and rebellion. It should not apply to him what David so graphically expresses, «Behold, I was conceived in iniquity, and in sins my mother gave birth to me! Man, therefore, had to be a **God-man**. This manner of salvation, combining justice and love, was therefore the most adapted to human weakness and the most worthy of God!

Christ is mysteriously born. He is not born according to the laws of nature but from the **Virgin Mary**, from a woman who did not come into carnal union with a man, from a woman purified by unceasing prayer and conversation with God in the Holy of Holies! **Where God wills the laws of nature are upset**. Why then is Jesus Christ born of a virgin? St. John Chrysostomos answers: «Just as a craftsman, when he finds a fine material makes his pottery more beautiful, so was with Christ who could only be incarnated in the immaculate body of the pure Virgin. Besides,

the new man, the God-man, could only come from a pure birth. Just as in the first creation, it was not possible for man to exist before God took clay in his hands, so was with the diseased human body which could not become new unless it became the cloth of its creator. In the first creation, Adam» gave birth» to Eve without the participation of a woman, so to speak. In the second creation, the woman, Mary, without the participation of a man, gave birth to Jesus Christ, so that equality between the sexes could be restored. Just as God did not leave Adam incomplete when He removed his side to create his wife, so it was when He created His living temple, He did not abolish Mary's Virginity. Finally, if Jesus had come from an ordinary marriage, they would not have believed that He was God. The unusual manner of His birth helps us to accept His divinity completely.»

Another mystery, however, is also the following: The Word of God for nine months being in the Virgin's womb took on the human form and for thirty-three years, he walked on this Planet interacting with us humans. Yet, He did not cease to be with His Father in Heaven:

“Wholly present on earth, yet never absent from heaven was he, the infinite Word. For Divine condescension, not a mere change of location had occurred in his birth.”(The Acathist Hymn)

The mysteries of Christmas require an approach not of inquiry and rejection but of silence and tears, of thanksgiving and praise: *We could easily be content to remain in silence, as this would be free from fear!* There are many who smile ironically upon hearing such strange facts. St. Gregory the Theologian answers them: «It would not have been such a great birth, if you could understand it, you who do not even know your own birth, or rather have understood such a small part of it that you are ashamed even to say it”! You must first strive to explain your own conception, formation, your birth, the connection between soul and body, mind and soul, speech and intellect... **And if you do not know your own birth, how can you know God's birth?** If you do not believe that the Son has been born just because you cannot understand

it, it is time to reject many beings which you do not understand, and above all God himself.» St. John Chrysostomos himself trembles before the inconceivable reality of God's birth and confesses: «Please forgive me that I feel powerless to continue the discourse. I am afraid to proceed to the investigation of the most important event, I do not possess the knowledge, I do not know. Where shall I turn the speech? What shall I say? What should I talk about? I see the mother, I face the child... Natural law is defeated, the order of the world is defeated when God's 'will' is heard! The Only Begotten Son who exists before the centuries began, the One who is not subject to human senses, the Unconditioned, the incorporeal, took the form of my body, which is subject to decay. Why? Because men have more confidence in their eyes than in their ears. That is why God endured to appear in a body before our eyes in order to clear the doubts we had in hearing His words.»

St. Gregory the Theologian, referring to the way Christmas is celebrated, uses a language in his famous speech that many would describe as fanatical and extreme: «Let us not beautify the propylaea; let us not satisfy our eyes, let us not delight our hearing, let us not make our sense of smell feminine, let us not corrupt our taste with many and fine foods, let us not load ourselves with gold ornaments, let us not use paintings that falsify natural beauty and destroy the image.» St. Simeon the Theologian adds: «Happy is he who has seen the light of the world, i.e. Christ being formed in him, for **he will become the mother of Christ**, having Christ in him as an infant, just as he (Chrst) himself has promised: *my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and practice it...* God becomes man in order that man may become God. Therefore, rise from the earth, from earthly things, in order to offer all your love to the Him who is now coming down to earth for you. If you have nothing else to offer Him as a gift like the wise men and the shepherds, put away your sins and offer them to Him. Cleanse with the bath of the Church the cave of Bethlehem, which is within you. **The Word of God, once born in the flesh, is always born wishing to behold, according to the Spirit of God, those who are willing, and becomes an infant in them forming the virtues.**»



The birth of Jesus Christ did not only happen two thousand years ago. Christ is born today! «Christ is born, praise Him!» «**Today** (not yesterday) **he is born of the Virgin**!» When we refer to Christmas, we talk more about a family atmosphere, about strolling downtown, about childhood memories. Yet, those who wish to feel something more spiritual, something deeper, should start noetically here and now for the distant city of Judea, the poor Bethlehem. They should walk a long way guided by the shining star of love and humility to find the manger... Unless Christ is born in secret in our inner Bethlehem and we personally commune his incarnation in the dark cave of our hearts, never will the stable of the soul become heaven!.. In order to find God, it is necessary to seek Him. In order to seek him we must know him. However, in order to know him we must love him!

Sotiris Despotis
Professor at the University of Athens

Lecture on Orthodox Theology at Seoul National University

On Wednesday, September 27, 2023, the professor of systematic theology at the Theological School of Saint Vladimir, USA, Dr. Peter Bouteneff, at the initiative of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, gave a three-hour lecture at Seoul National University on the topic: “Doctrine, Ethos, Art of the Orthodox Church”.

The last hour of the lecture was devoted to questions and answers. From the questions of professors and students, it became clear that the subject of the lecture aroused great interest in them.

It is worth noting that the aforementioned lecture was the first lecture organized at Seoul National University on the subject of the Orthodox Church and given by a distinguished professor of theology of the Orthodox Church.



Autumn picnic of the Parish of St. Dionysios of Aegina in Ulsan



On Sunday, October 15, 2023, following the Divine Liturgy, all the members of the Parish of St. Dionysios of Aegina in Ulsan went to Ulsan Grand Park for an autumn picnic.

We thank God for the very good weather and beautiful nature surrounding the park and express our deep gratitude to those who worked hard to organize the picnic.

The Annual Fall International Food Festival 2023

On Sunday, October 15, 2023, the annual Autumn International Food Festival was held in the courtyard of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Seoul, with the participation of many visitors from various parts of Seoul.

Days before the event, young members of the Youth organization “Syndesmos”, members of the group of young couples “Akylas and Priscilla”, together with many Slavic speakers, as well as English and Greek speakers volunteered to prepare the food and sweets from Korea, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Greece, America, and Lebanon.



On the day of the Festival, the sunny autumn weather and, above all, the heartfelt contribution of the volunteers created a happy atmosphere, which could be seen in the smiling faces of the young and old.

What needs to be particularly emphasized is the spirit of cooperation between Slavic speakers. Despite the ongoing terrible war in Ukraine and the divisions it has caused between the people of the two warring sides, the spirit of cooperation and love in Christ prevailed in the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea. Those who participated in the festival saw and experienced the miracle of the Church that always unites and never divides.

Last but not least, all of us were impressed by the industriousness of the young people of



“Syndesmos”, who took all the burden of setting up and taking down the tents, tables, and seats, as well as offering refreshments for the festival visitors, washing the dishes, collecting the garbage and cleaning the space after the end of the event.

We are deeply grateful to all those who in every way helped in organizing the festival and we wish them may God grant them good health, long life, and many blessings in their lives.



The feast of the 24 patron Saints of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea



On Monday, October 2, 2023, the Service of Great Vespers with Artoklasia was held at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong, on the occasion of the Synaxis of the 24 patron Saints of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, on which the holy Relics are enshrined.

On the following day, October 3, the Service of Matins (Orthros) and the Sacrament of the

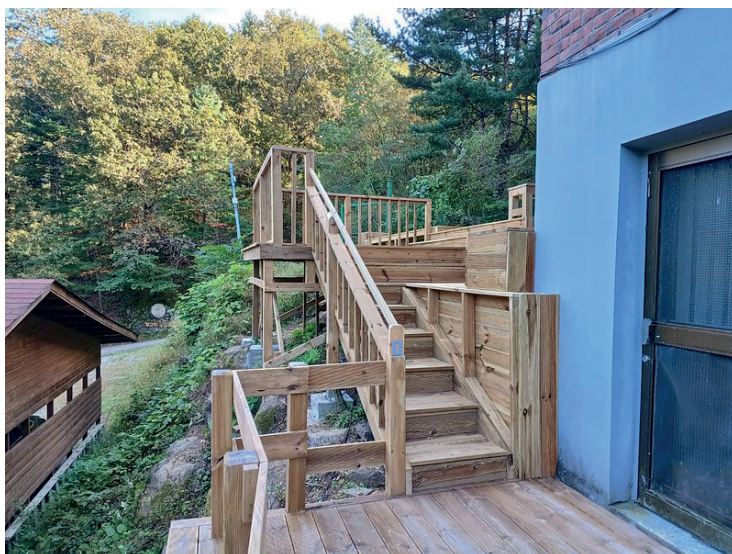
Divine Liturgy was celebrated with the participation of the following priests: Fr. Antonios Woo Jong-hyun, Fr. Jeremiah Cho Kyeong-jin, Fr. Hilarion Jeong Jong-hyuk, Fr. Roman Kavchak, Fr. Antonios Lim Jong-hun, and Fr. Johan Park In-gon.

Also, at the end of the Divine Liturgy, the forty-day memorial service of the late Daniel Moon Jun-Sik, who had a special love for the Orthodox Church of Korea, was held, and then followed by a memorial service at the grave of the late Metropolitan Soterios, founder of the Holy Monastery.

About 80 believers from various Parishes of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea participated in the celebration, to whom the Holy Monastery offered a meal of love. We want to express our sincere thanks to those who decorated the interior and exterior of the monastery and offered flowers in preparation for the celebration.

Carpentry work at the Holy Monastery of Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong

Carpentry work on the exterior of the Holy Monastery of Transfiguration of the Savior in Gapyeong was carried out on September 8-9, 22-23 and September 30 to October 2 by the following members of the “Aquila and Priscilla” Union of the Seoul Cathedral: Gregory Park No -yang, Michael Park In-hyeon, Thomas Ha Jeong-hoon, Andreas Kim Deok-seong and Peter Seo Jin-yong. We express to all of them our deep gratitude for their great effort and their excellent work, in assisting the nuns and pilgrims of the Holy Monastery.



Intercommunion with the non-Orthodox Koreans

On Saturday, November 4, 2023, the “Orthodox Day” event was held with the participation of about 80 students and their professor Wonmo Suh from the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary.

This event, which has been held every Spring and Fall for many years, was discontinued in the spring of 2020 due to Covid 19.

The program included attending the Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral, followed by a lecture in the missionary center Hall with a question and answer session on the Orthodox Church.

Since the lifting of the prohibitive measures, which were in place due to the pandemic, there has been an increase in visits by students or other Koreans wishing to learn about Orthodox teaching and tradition.

The Dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral, Fr. Anthony Lim, devotes many hours to this very important ministry of introducing non-Orthodox Koreans to the richness of the Orthodox Church.



The wedding of two Ukrainians Oleksandr Korobko and Iuliia Zhyla in Seoul

On Sunday, November 5, 2023, the Ukrainian-born Oleksandr Korobko and Iuliia Zhyla celebrated their wedding at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Seoul. The Sacrament was presided over by Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan, accompanied by Fr. Roman Kavchak and Fr. Anthony Lim. Members of the Slavic-speaking community and the Syndesmos youth group tried to cover the lack of their parents and relatives who could not attend because of the difficult situation in war-torn Ukraine.

The newlyweds came to Korea from Tokyo Japan where they reside with the sole purpose of having their church wedding in the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea and Exarchate of Japan under the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

We wish them to be always blessed and to create a beautiful Orthodox Christian family.



The 90th Anniversary of the Holodomor (1932-1933) in Seoul

On Sunday, November 26, 2023, at 5 p.m., members of the Embassy of Ukraine in Seoul and Ukrainian citizens living in Korea, as well as Koreans, participated in the Memorial Service for the repose of the victims of the genocide of the Great Famine of Ukraine, the so-called Holodomor on the occasion of the 90th anniversary (1932-1933).

A special prayer was also recited for the victims of the ongoing war in Ukraine for the return of the abducted children to their homeland and the end of the war.

The prayer was led by Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan, assisted by Rev. Fr. Roman Kavchak and Rev. Fr. Anthony Lim.

In his brief address, the Metropolitan said the following:

Again, this year's anniversary of the commemoration of the victims of the tragedy of Holodomor unfortunately finds Ukraine in a state of war.

Therefore, this year too, let us pray both for the repose of the souls of those who died during the Holodomor and for the victims of the war in Ukraine, namely the dead, the missing, the wounded, the prisoners of war, the children, and the refugees.

His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sends you all His paternal blessings and love and He prays for the end of the war, the return of children and prisoners of war to Ukraine, and the prevalence of peace in your beautiful country.

The establishment of the Korean Christian Museum in Seoul

On the afternoon of Monday 13 November 2023, the Metropolitan of Korea and Exarch of Japan Ambrosios and Fr Anthonios Lim Jong-hun attended an event for the establishment of the Korean Christian Museum in Seoul held at the CCMM Building in Yeouido.

The Korean Christian Museum in Seoul is a project initiated by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and the Korean Orthodox Metropolis is actively involved in this project. The site of the museum is located in Eunpyeong-gu, Seoul and the completion of the construction is scheduled to take place by the end of 2024.

Metropolitan Ambrosios addressed the attendees and announced the intention of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea to donate to the museum some of its historical relics from its historic presence in Korea over the past 123 years.



Baptism of Joseph Hamalis in Seoul

On Monday, November 13, 2023, on the feast day of St. John Chrysostom, the Baptism of Joseph Hamalis, son of Andreas Hamalis and Helen Hye-Won Cho, took place at the chapel of St. Maximos the Greek of the Cathedral of St. Nicholas.

The Baptismal Divine Liturgy was presided over by Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan with co-celebrants Rev. Fr. Roman Kavchak and Rev. Fr. Anthony Lim. The infant was named Joseph in honor of Saint Joseph the Hesychast.

In his sermon, the Metropolitan referred to the rhetorical prowess of St. John Chrysostom, but also to the richness of his writings, and especially his unsurpassed hermeneutical work on the Bible.

It was a moving moment when the infant participated for the first time in the communion of the holy Body and Blood of Christ.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Metropolitan presented the newly illumined with a golden cross – an heirloom from the personal collection of the blessed Metropolitan of Pisidia Soterios, formerly of Korea, and the faithful expressed their wishes and congratulations to the Godmother Philothei Kim and the parents of the child.



The Feast of the Apostle Andrew the First-Called



By the grace of God, this year again, believers and catechumens had the extraordinary blessing to participate in the All-Night Vigil in honor of the holy and glorious Apostle Andrew the First-Called at the monastery of St. Andrew in Yangu. The Vigil was presided over by Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan with co-celebrants Fr. Roman Kavchak, Fr. Jeremy Cho, and Fr. Antonios Lim.

As every year, the feast of St. Andrew was held from Friday (1/12) to Saturday (2/12), because only then it is possible for the employees to participate.

Because this year the feast of St. Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia coincided with the feast of St. Andrew on Saturday, therefore, the two great saints were celebrated together.

The service included the Holy Vespers with Artoklasias, Litany, and Sermon by the Metropolitan on the theme: “Prayer according to the teachings of St. Porphyrios”, the Jesus Prayer, Orthros, and Divine Liturgy.

After the Vigil, everyone attended the monastic love feast.

On Saturday at 9 am the First Hour was read in the church during which the Metropolitan continued the teaching on prayer according to St. Porphyrios.



Prayer for peace in Palestine

On Monday, December 4, 2023, at 6 p.m., the National Council of Churches of Korea (NCCCK) held a “Prayer for Peace in Palestine” at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Seoul.

Many Koreans attended to support peace in the Middle East, including two Palestinians. Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan, before the prayer service began, welcomed the guests and conveyed the blessings of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and his wish that the war would end as soon as possible.

“Unfortunately,” the Metropolitan said, “on both sides, there are pro-war people who do not care about the image of God, the human being, but about their own interests. We, as Christians, who believe in Christ, the Lord of Peace, must condemn war and any form of violence from interpersonal to inter-state relations.” The Ecumenical Patriarch recently stressed, “that those Churches in which their leaders do not have the courage to say no to war, how will they sing the joy of the Nativity?”

The Metropolitan added, “that in addition to the unequivocal condemnation of war, we must at the same time ask the Lord through prayer to enlighten the powerful of the earth so that they understand that they must ‘seek peace with all’, as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews advises the Jews and all of us.”

Also during his address, the Metropolitan presented to the audience a letter from His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Eminence Patriarch Theophilos, in which he thanked the members of the NCCCK for their support “in these troubled and very difficult times of the present war” and asked them to wish “for the prevalence of justice, peace, and reconciliation in the Holy Land and the wider Middle East region”.

Finally, the Metropolitan wished “that all people in the world may celebrate Christmas in peace, especially in the place where Christ was born, walked, taught, worked miracles, was crucified and resurrected, as well as in Ukraine, where after about two years the war unfortunately continues.”





The Eve of the Feast of St. Nicholas in Seoul

On Sunday, December 3, 2023, the worship events in honor of St. Nicholas in Seoul have begun. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Exarch of Japan, assisted by Rev. Fr. Roman Kavchak and Rev. Fr. Antonios Lim, carried the Holy Relics and the icon of St. Nicholas to the center of the Seoul Cathedral, while the faithful chanted the Apolytikion of St. Nicholas in Korean and Slavonic. Afterward, a special prayer was chanted, and gifts were distributed to the children as a blessing of St. Nicholas.

At the exit of the church, the churchgoers had the opportunity to buy melomakarona, a special Christmas cookie, which had been prepared with effort and much love by Greek

ladies some days before, under the guidance of Mrs. Fotini Spanou-Mouratidis, for the financial support of the church. Also, for the same purpose, loutoumades were prepared by the same ladies and were available for sale during the Meal of Love.

After the Meal of Love, the members of the youth group “Syndesmos”, as well as other believers, worked on the cleaning of the church and the decoration of the interior and exterior spaces, so that everything would be ready for the feast of St. Nicholas, but also for the upcoming Christmas celebration.

We express sincere thanks to all those who worked. May St. Nicholas bless everyone and their loved ones.

Volunteer Work by Slavonic Faithful at the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Kapyeong

On Sunday, December 10, 2023, a group of Slavic-speaking believers, along with Rev. Fr. Roman Kavchak visited the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Gapyeong. In the morning, they participated in the Divine Liturgy and then a Trisagion Service was held at the tomb of the blessed Metropolitan Sotirios.

Afterwards, the participants had breakfast and started work inside and outside the Monastery. Specifically, they cleaned the Chapel, the interior of the building, as well as the courtyard of the Monastery. They also decorated the Christmas tree with the participation of young children.

After lunch they continued work until 5:30 p.m. and finally, late at night, they returned to Seoul.

Despite the many tasks to be completed, some pilgrims had the opportunity to devote some time to prayer inside the church.

Warm thanks go to all the Slavonic believers who worked with great zeal and effort for the embellishment of the Holy Monastery.





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