

## **The Sermon of the Metropolitan of Morphou Neophytos**

*following the Feast of St. Paraskevi  
an English transcription of the July 26, 2021 video*

### How Our Times Can Be Likened to The Times of St. Paraskevi

**W**E LIVE in order to know the holiness of the Triune God. Christ Himself told us this: “You shall be holy as I am holy” [Lev 19:2, 1Pet 1:16].

You see, it’s one of the most important things. In every liturgy, we have the “Holy God...” It is the precise way that the angels worship and glorify God in Heaven. It is the hymn that all the Saints cry out to Heaven: “Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.”

And so in our times, and in such interesting times – in a situation where something new is being born. Something has departed and something new is coming. The people of the New World Order – and it’s probably a new disorder (ataxia) – and taking advantage of these conditions of our times, are trying to push people away from the Theanthropic Jesus Christ.

In this, our times can be likened, although not completely, to the times of St. Paraskevi, of St. Panteleimon whom we commemorate tomorrow [July 27], with St. Christina whom we commemorated the other day [July 24]. These saints lived, some in the 2nd century, some in the 3rd century, some in the 4th, and it was the epoch of great martyrs.

In this time, in the 20th century, it also happened to be current but it was isolated to just one area of our world, and that was the former Soviet Union where a horrific persecution began against of all the true Christians, not the lukewarm and half-hearted ones. The lukewarm ones and the half-hearted ones acclimatized to the new circumstances of the times. There are always plenty of excuses.

No. The true Christians, of Russia and the neighbouring countries, in various ways and in different decades were martyred, millions of them. They were martyred in the 20th Century while we were struggling for a free Cyprus, for a unification of Cyprus with Greece. In some other parts of the world, Orthodox brothers and sisters in Christ were struggling to unite themselves with the Triune God to

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become saints. We, on the other hand, were struggling to become heroes, and these people were elevated to the next level, the level of sainthood.

Now it seems, it's our turn, in our times, the 21st Century. Using different excuses, they have even prohibited us from speaking about them. We are all called to measure our faith – our trust in God, in our faith in Him. And such events are coming, so the people who “see” say, the people who are “God-bearing,” who always exist in the Orthodox Church, that even the faith of the last child will be tested.

So, from now on, the times we live in can be likened to those of St. Paraskevi, of St. Panteleimon. From here on, our times can be likened to those of each of the ancient martyrs. What witness will we give is already evident and may God preserve us. In the next few years, all this “weak faith” (ολιγόπιστεία, oligopisteia) and all this fear that has developed over of these past few years, we shall see where it leads us. We'll see what God will allow.

If there is one prayer that we must be saying, chanting, it's what we hear in the Liturgy: “My Lord Jesus Christ, grant me the patience and the faith of the Saints.” In the Liturgy, of course, we hear it said differently: “In peace and repentance...” [Litany of Supplication]. We say, “In peace let us pray to the Lord” [Great Litany]. We pray for repentance and “[For the] peace from above...” but the “peace from above” and repentance are nothing more than the patience of the saints, or the faith of the saints shown with every opportunity.

Someone's faith can show through an illness. For someone, it could be through a divorce. For others, holding a difficult letter that doesn't reach a divorce. For others, it is inside prison. For others, it is through money. For others, through debt. To each, God gives opportunities for their faith to be revealed. And Christ Himself tells us, “Whosoever [therefore] shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” [Mat 10:32].

That is what Saint Paraskevi did. And that is what we are called to do in our days. First of all, with our children. St. Paraskevi did not only show her love for Christ and her faith becoming dedicated (γενομένη, genomeni) to Christ, in a way, a monastic of the times in which she lived.

She also was an Equal to the Apostles (ισαπόστολος, isapóstolos). She is one of the few martyrs, St. Paraskevi, we see going from town to town, from village to village, ignoring the persecutions, the restrictions and the lockdowns of her day.

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And she preached the Crucified and Resurrected Christ. And if any kings, Emperors and Eparchs of the Roman Empire (of that time) were shaken, it was from the dynamism of the saint to be persistent in proclaiming Christ in spite of all the threats. And thousands of people in that time, followed the saint and become Christian.

And in that way, we too, at least in our small villages, in our little families, in our workplaces, we must find ways in which we can show and reveal our faith without Pharisaism, without hypocrisy, to be at the very least witnesses (for our Faith).

It is something St. Paraskevi put into practice in her time. We must put it into practice in our times.

God grant you many blessed years.

Through the prayers of our Holy Father, O Lord Jesus Christ, Our God have mercy upon us and save us.