

## **The Time of Choice**

### **Sermon of the Metropolitan of Morphou, Neofytos**

*at the Divine Liturgy of the feast of Saint Catherine the Great Martyr, which was held in the eponymous celebratory church of the community of Byzakia in the metropolitan region of Morphou. (November 25, 2021).*

**Ἦρθε ἡ ἐποχὴ τῆς ἐπιλογῆς...**

### **Κήρυγμα Μητροπολίτου Μόρφου κ. Νεοφύτου**

*στὴ θεία Λειτουργία τῆς ἐορτῆς τῆς ἁγίας Αἰκατερίνης τῆς μεγαλομάρτυρος, ποὺ τελέσθηκε στὸν ὁμώνυμο πανηγυρίζοντα ναὸ τῆς κοινότητος Βυζακιάς τῆς μητροπολιτικῆς περιφέρειας Μόρφου (11.25.2021)*

*an English transcription of the video from ΟΜΙΛΙΕΣ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΟΥ ΜΟΡΦΟΥ*

### **Apolytikion of Saint Catherine**

Let us praise the most auspicious bride of Christ,  
the divine Catherine, protectress of Sinai, our aid and our help.  
For, she brilliantly silenced the eloquence of the impious by the sword of the spirit,  
and now, crowned as a martyr, she asks great mercy for all.

**M**ANY AND BLESSED YEARS to you too. I wish we all have blessed holidays. Saint Catherine is the tallest of all [women] Saints in Heaven, as St. Paisios, who saw her, told us. When she silenced the 200 and more philosophers of Alexandria with her faith and her great knowledge, we all thought she was old, but Saint Paisios, who knows better [than us] the citizens of heaven, tells us that Saint Catherine was only 19 years old when she was martyred. Her life and martyrdom are very relevant [in our days]. Even among the Protestants—who do not love the Saints and do not believe in the intercession of the Saints—the patroness [protector] of scientists is Saint Catherine.

Today, in our age, we have a huge scientific problem as a result of the known pandemic. There are hundreds of interpretations and approaches [on the pandemic]. The one we live is the one imposed by authority. It does not go to say that it is the best, the most original and the most truthful. It is the approach the strong ones have decided.

*Transcription of the RumOrthodox video of the Sermon  
of the Metropolitan of Morphou, The Time of Choice Has Come*

However, at the time of Saint Catherine it was proven that the strong ones are weak in front of a girl of 19 years old who knew the philosophy of the strong ones of that age, the legal science, the rhetoric and other sciences. Yet, the Saint did not beat [them] with her rhetoric and scientific speech. She beat the philosophers with her faith and her bravery.

I won't say more today. The big sermons in Byzakia will come later, not now. You will pass the years to come with what you've heard. Understand them well. I say one thing. Tough times are ahead for everyone. And tough times call for good "management," call for enlightenment, call for bravery. Saint Catherine had these [qualities]. Even though she was a woman of 19, she had bravery.

Today, we are on the lookout for brave men [«ανδρείους άνδρες»], who have the courage—not just to say their opinion without the fear of the authority of this century—but without fear of death.

This is our big problem, my dear ones, especially among Christians. Although, death was defeated by Christ and because of this victory, we have the greatest feast, which is called Pascha [Orthodox Easter] and we say, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death," we keep finding ourselves in fear of death. And we think that life ends with death, is it not so?

And we forget that Christ is the victor of death, the victor of sin, the victor of the devil. Maybe—although I am sure that it is this way, I should not have said "maybe"—this is the fault of us, archpriests and priests who all these years, have been taking advantage of you. We did not tell you clearly:

You, brothers and sisters, who come to church, who are considered faithful, death is defeated. The [only] question is who we want, the victor, Christ, or the defeated.

By defeated, I mean the devil, death, sin. Although we come to the home of the victor [the Orthodox church] with the smallest cause, Christians become scared. Is this how Saint Catherine behaved? Did she say, as soon as the persecution started, "I am a rich princess, I should not lose my sciences, I should not lose my art of rhetoric, my art of painting, my beauty, at 19 years of age, tall, beautiful, a most sought-after bride."

My dear ones, she had bravery. Her bravery stemmed from her faith to the victor of death and so she was not afraid of death, because she knew that, as soon as she dies, she will go to eternal life.

Here is the whole point. Do we believe that when we die, we will go to the eternal life which is much superior, much more beautiful and much more joyful and with much more sciences and knowledge and information than this [present] life? Do

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we believe this? If we do, there is no need of saying it and pretend to be smart. Our stance against death, against diseases, against sin, against the devil manifests it [that is, manifests our belief, or not].

The other day, some fathers were performing exorcisms on a young man, here in St. Cyprianos. Do you know what the demon said through the mouth of the possessed man: “I made the priests do exactly as I wanted, I scared them with a disease [coronavirus].”

And still, we receive the Body and Blood of Christ “to remission of sins and eternal life.” This “schizophrenia” of the faith, at least among Christians, should be put to an end. The ones who do not believe or prefer their coffee, let them do otherwise. It is their right. They [the non-believers] are still more genuine, more honest [than us] in acting this way.

I am talking about us who come to the house of the victor of the death. Who do we want in the end? The Christ of Saint Catherine or fear or death?

Every feast is a challenge. Pascha [Orthodox Easter] is a glory for the one who loves the victor and [who] actually manifests it and is not afraid of diseases, nor death, nor poverty, nor wars, nor earthquakes, nor disasters. All these are not punishments; they are pedagogical [educational] means. [For] what we fail to understand in a nice way, God has other means to send His messages...Yet, we have something [that] we should not destroy. We have a free “nous” – to choose who we want, the victor or the defeated.

Saint Catherine showed us what she wanted and we have given glory to her for centuries and she will be glorified in centuries to come. All the rest [of the people] are forgotten, whatever position, whatever richness, whatever honor they held inside society. Only the ones who love and choose freely “with trust” as you heard in today’s Apostle [Reading] by the left chantor. “With trust...” This is what faith means, to trust Christ and tell Him,

Take me [from this life] whenever You wish. Do you wish to take me at 100 years old from this earthly life? Do so, even if I am sick and lame. Do you wish to take me tomorrow for your eternal life? Do so! I only want to be with You, my Christ! I want to be with the victor!

He won once and for all time and for everyone. It is us who should choose. Pay attention to what I am telling you.

The time of choice has come! We choose and whoever we choose will choose us. “By the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.”