

Panagia
Sermon of the Metropolitan of Morphou, Neofytos
at the Holy Monastery of Panagia of Araka, Lagoudera.

Ένας Επίσκοπος πὸ μᾶς μαθαίνει τὴν πίστη μας
Κήρυγμα Μητροπολίτου Μόρφου κ. Νεοφύτου
Ὁ Πανιερώτατος Μητροπολίτης Μόρφου κ. Νεόφυτος στὴν Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Παναγίας
τοῦ Ἄρακα, Λαγουδερά.

an English transcription of the video from ΟΜΙΛΙΕΣ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΟΥ ΜΟΡΦΟΥ

WE LOVE the Panagia [Virgin Mary] so much. They have gone to extremes. Catholics, on the one side, worship her almost as a God. Protestants, on the other side, neither have a holy icon of hers, nor venerate her. Nor [do they] say, “Most Holy Theotokos intercede for us.” No prayer [for the Panagia] at all.

The Orthodox church, the church of truth, always preserves the balance, the harmony between heaven and earth, just as the Panagia united heaven and earth in the laboratory of her womb.

There, the human nature— that she lent to God—was united with the divine nature. The Holy Spirit dwelled inside her and the two natures were united in the hypostasis of the Word and Son of God. In this way, the God-man was born.

They are wondering, “In whatever church of the Orthodox we visit, the Panagia is the Queen of the Orthodox in the iconostasis. Wherever there are Orthodox murals, you will find the Panagia everywhere. In the most ‘official’ position, above the Holy Table, again, [you will find] the Panagia.”

We never considered giving women priesthood, that is, for a woman to become a priest. Not because we belittle women, but because we know really well that, if there is one woman who gave birth to the priesthood, it is the Panagia. For this, we accord all the honor both of archpriesthood and priesthood to this, not simply fine woman, but the most fine human that all of humanity has presented through the centuries. By honoring her, we leave the mystery of priesthood only to her. And us, men, borrow it from the Panagia through the bishops, because she gave birth to the great Archpriest, Jesus Christ.

*Transcription of the RumOrthodox video of the Sermon
of the Metropolitan of Morphou on the Panagia*

Tomorrow [at the feast of The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple], pay attention to the Apolytikion. It says that it is she who redeemed us from guilt through her parents, Joachim and Anna. The parents of the Panagia were full of guilt because her mother was barren. And at the time, almost every woman who was barren was considered cursed. She who had no blessing, who could not give birth to a male child, because they knew from the prophets: “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy” [Luke 2:23] as they were expecting the Messiah. That’s why they expected the women to give birth to male children.

Anna, this barren woman, through sorrows, through prayers, through a lot of ascesis, at her old age the small miracle happened. At the old age of Joachim and Anna, the small miracle happened. She got pregnant. Women are not able by nature to get pregnant at the age of Anna. This was the first small miracle which prepared the great miracle, the daughter of the Saints Joachim and Anna. These old people who by a miracle gave birth to the human that gave birth to the God-man, Jesus. The great miracle was that their daughter gave birth to God, the God-man, Jesus.

As you see, when we serve a small miracle, God then gives us a big one. When a small trial arrives at you, great glory follows—if you can bear [the trial]. The trial can be a disease, infertility, slander, mockery, a secret passion which is hard to bear. When we go through these [trials] with the patience and the faith of the Saints and, whenever we bow, we ask for their help, especially for the help of the Theotokos [the Panagia] and her holy parents, Joachim and Anna. Then the great miracle also arrives.

Do not assume that the great miracle is winning the stock market. The great miracle is mentioned at the end of the Apolytikion. It is the eternal life. Let nobody deprive us of our prospect, which is the eternal life. When our body dies, let our soul not die, [but instead may it] come to know the Holy Trinity, because “this is eternal life, that they may know You, the one and only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” [John 17:3] This is why, tomorrow, the Liturgy starts with, “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Every Divine Liturgy is an invitation to know the eternal life, to know its joy, to know its enjoyment. You might ask, “Is this how the eternal life is?” “This is a taste of it!” The Divine Liturgy is a taste [of the eternal life].

Humility is necessary. Patience is necessary. Faith is necessary. “The mystery” does not call for research. Repentance is necessary. A heart that repents, a heart that prays, a heart that forgives [finds it] impossible not to be happy inside the Divine Liturgy. When we are happy in the Divine Liturgy, our souls rest, even if we have a thousand problems.

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We leave every care of this life during the Divine Liturgy, especially from Cherubicon and onwards. We leave everything and we enjoy the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. For all these, the Panagia helps us. Because, what happens at the end? We will receive her Son, His Body and Blood “in remission of sins.” This is how guilt is erased. “In remission of sins.” And what else will the priest say when you receive the Holy Communion? “And unto life everlasting.”

For this, love the Divine Liturgy. Do you want to study it? Study it but in your home. Do not carry books during the Divine Liturgy. We do not comprehend the Divine Liturgy. Many times, it catches us by surprise. And we feel it. To feel and love something is superior to comprehending it.

When the children tell me at the high schools I visit, “Your Eminence, we do not understand the Divine Liturgy.” I tell them, “Do you understand your mother? Do you understand your father? Do you understand your friend? Are you sure?” And still, we expect to comprehend God, [Himself], Who was born by a woman? For this, let us always have this concern: how to win the eternal life. The Divine Liturgy is mainly the way.

The key is repentance. Repentance is another liturgy [i.e., function] that takes place in our heart. With repentance and gratitude, man starts to enjoy the eternal life from this life. And our life becomes a feast.

Hardships are coming. Sorrows are coming. Deaths of dear persons. But, “let us commend ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.” [from the Divine Liturgy]

We create inside us an elevator. Let everything ascend upwards. Let the Panagia receive them and hand them to Christ. We [offer] repentance and gratitude. And then God [preserves] for us, His sainthood.

I wish it for you. You wish it for us too.

“By the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.”

“By the prayers of our holy Bishop, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.”

“Receive, O Lord.”