

**The Willing Defeat of Christ**  
**Sermon of the Metropolitan of Morphou, Neofytos**

*at the solemn Vespers of the feast of St. Nikitas, which was held at the holy chapel of St. Nikitas in the Latsia neighborhood of Nicosia. (14.9.2017)*

**Ἡ ἐκούσια ἦττα τοῦ Χριστοῦ**  
**Κήρυγμα Μητροπολίτου Μόρφου κ. Νεοφύτου**

*Κήρυγμα Μητροπολίτου Μόρφου κ. Νεοφύτου στὸν πανηγυρικὸ Ἑσπερινὸ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικήτα, ποὺ τελέσθηκε στὸ ἱερὸ παρεκκλήσιο Ἁγίου Νικήτα τοῦ Συνοικισμοῦ Λατσιῶν Λευκωσίας. Κατὰ τὴν ἡμέρα αὐτὴ πανηγυρίζει στὴν προσφυγιὰ ἢ κατεχόμενῃ ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους κοινότητα Νικήτας, τῆς μητροπολιτικῆς περιφέρειας Μόρφου. (14.9.2017)*

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



*Beautifully decorated kollyva for the feast of St. Nikitas  
(Latsia, September 14, 2017)*

*Cypriot refugees from the village of Nikitas fled their homes during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The village of Nikitas remains under Turkish occupation to this day.*

*Transcription of the RumOrthodox video of the Sermon  
of the Metropolitan of Morphou on the feast of St. Nikitas*

*Doxastikon of the Aposticha for the Sept. 15 service for Great Martyr Nikitas*

*Thou didst show thyself to be the namesake of victory, O most honored Martyr Nicetas;  
proclaiming Christ our God amid thy struggle,  
thou didst confess Him before kings and tormentors.  
Wherefore, cease thou never in thy prayers to Him who alone is the Lover of mankind,  
on behalf of the world, for Christ-loving kings,  
and for all who faithfully keep thy memory, that he deliver them from all wrath.*

**M**Y Fathers and brothers, this year, in our condition as refugees and amid the great agony in the whole planet with its many outbreaks and sources of pestilence, earthquakes, disasters, cyclones, and with the many problems in the Cypriot society, we come to this refugee chapel of the Great-Martyr Nikitas.

The inspiration of Mr. George Kaisis, his colleagues and the refugee people of St. Nikitas of Morphou built [the chapel] here in the welcoming grounds of Latsia.

Glory to the Holy God that we have this chapel in [our] condition as refugees to remind us of our home, our place of origin, our destination, because Cyprus will not remain enslaved. It will be liberated, [although] not through the processes of [international] talks, but through other processes of a great reordering which already has started in Syria and increases in all the places of our Near East. Inside the “secret winds” Cyprus has its own share. It seems that its share, this time, will be positive.

As a man of God told me, “From 1974 [the year of Turkish invasion of Cyprus] until today, [you] Cypriots have almost finished your canon [penance].”

We, the refugees, come under many restrictions to celebrate St. Nikitas, St. Nikitas who is “the namesake of victory” as it says in the Doxastikon of Aposticha. The name St. Nikitas [«Νικήτας» in Greek] is identical to the Greek word «Νίκη» for victory.

[St. Nikitas] who lived in the ancient country of Dacia, where Hungary is nowadays located, was an idolater, Goth in origin. The [ancient] Greeks named these people “barbarians.” And yet this barbarian taught us letters.

We love him, we feel him as our own, we feel him as a Cypriot, although he is not one. Who “naturalized” him as a Cypriot? The love of Cypriots, including both the older and the current generations. When you love someone, you don’t sit down to check whether they are ours or a stranger, white or black, tall or short, rich or poor. You love them for free! Because our God loves us freely.

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Whoever loves his neighbor freely is made worthy of the great gift by the Triune God to be loved as well. Whoever demands love, won't find love. Whoever offers love sacrificially, he will find much love both on earth and in heaven.

St. Nikitas had one great love. He loved the conqueror of death, Jesus Christ, He who conquered for us, our sin, our temptations, our death. He who gifted us eternal life. When our body dies, our soul does not die since she is immortal. As a matter of fact, if we struggle a bit in this life and show repentance, forgiveness and love and follow the commandments of Christ inside our Church, then God gives us justice, catharsis [cleansing], enlightenment and to some, [even] sainthood.

To St. Nikitas, He gave sainthood. He gave the greatest gift. The premier one [of all gifts]. This premier gift of sainthood, St. Nikitas received through two processes, two praxes [actions]. First, when the tough time arrived, his compatriots were separated into two groups. St. Nikitas followed the non-heretical group, that is the Orthodox one. This was the first cause for Christ to love Him a lot. That is the confession [of faith]. He did not go where his earthly interest was, but where the eternal interest of his eternal, immortal soul [lies]. When Christ saw that, He gave him a second chance. As a result of a fight between these two groups, the Saint was martyred. When they told him to become an idolater like he used to be, he told them, "No. Now that I have met Christ, I won't betray Him." Not only did he not betray Him, but he was made worthy of a martyrdom.

At the end, in order to prevent the Christians from being able to venerate the Saint, they burned his relics. Yet, the Grace of Christ preserved it and a friend of his named Marianos from Cilicia. As we've said, Cilicia is opposite to Kyrenia, opposite the gulf of Morphou. [His friend Marianos] transferred the relics from remote "Hungary" to the Asia Minor area of Cilicia. A piece of his relics reached the blessed places of Morphou.

We have testimonies that since the 13th century that there was a church of St. Nikitas in the village of St. Nikitas, as those who search history tell us. Thus, your village was not Nikitas, but St. Nikitas. When, God willing, we are liberated [from the Turkish occupation], we will ask to fix this historical mistake.

Just like there is St. Marina of Xyliatou, you too have the privileged position to be named after a Saint, a great Saint no less, who honors us with his relic. And thanks to the hegumen of the monastery of Kykou (or Kykkou), every year with his permission, we are allowed to borrow his relic which is preserved there [at the monastery]. With the blessing of his beatitude, we are found here among you, refugees and not, so that we are able to celebrate the one who loved the victor of death, as I said.

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Still, our Church, this morning, had another feast you know and love, The Exaltation of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross. If we think why we love the Holy Cross that much... As soon as we hear the words Holy Cross, we sign ourselves with the sign of the Holy Cross, because on this Wood, as they say in ancient Greek, the Honorable, the Holy, the tri-composite Wood of pine, cypress and cedar, the God-man Jesus Christ raised His palms. He condescended to be sacrificed for us, for our sins, for our death, in order to give us eternal life. And he does give us [eternal life] now. He who condescended to die for us, was resurrected for us, ascended for us, sits on the right of the Father and “He shall come again to judge the living and the dead,” [from The Creed] in the Second Coming.

Our body will be resurrected as well, meaning nothing will stay inside the graves. The soul will be in heaven, and this body, which will be inside a grave, will be resurrected and reunited with our immortal soul.

What a God we have! Who loves us so much. Who offers His life in order for us to have life, eternal life, which never ends, that we do not die again. This God, in each Divine Liturgy, this Body that He borrowed from our Panagia [Virgin Mary], He returns back to us. And offers it to us. Our deacon comes out [of the altar], our priest comes out and he says [from the Divine Liturgy of St. John the Chrysostom], “Take, eat.” “Drink ye all of it.”

This is why the Divine Liturgy takes place. Not to look at the holy icons. Not to hear our good chanters. But to receive this Body and this Blood that beat our death, that beat our sin, that gives us eternal life. The life of the crucified and resurrected Jesus. This Body, this Blood was loved by the martyrs, the Saints, all the righteous people and St. Nikitas.

If we do not receive Holy Communion because we have not repented, we have not confessed, we do not have a spiritual order, then we are right to not receive the Holy Communion, until we go to a spiritual father to direct us. If, however, we can receive Holy Communion, especially if we have learned [how] to forgive, to show mercy and to love, then our first concern, above our husband, children and our wealth and our poverty and our life as a refugee, should be, “When am I going to receive the Holy Communion, my Christ.”

This Body and Blood that beat death. This is Who Nikitas loved, the victor of death, our Christ.

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But, I want to emphasize something. This victor of death, before He was resurrected, He ascended to the cross and died. Who? God [Himself] who created the universes, condescended to die for us, the disgraceful. That is the victor, before He became the victor of death, He condescended to the greatest defeat of all history.

We forget that. We only emphasize the victory, the resurrection, the Pascha [Orthodox Easter]. No, my dear ones. The God-man, Jesus, Himself, accepted to be defeated. He wanted to be defeated. When the priest finishes the services during the Holy and Great Week, he says characteristically, “May He who is coming to His voluntary Passion for our salvation, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-pure and all-immaculate holy Mother...”

What does this mean in simple words? He wanted to suffer the passion. But He wanted it with His heart, with His whole existence. This “I want to die for you” requires great love. Today, couples cannot sacrifice for one coffee and they are led to divorce. Imagine this sacrificial stance of our God towards us. And [the stance] of St. Nikitas and all the righteous people as well.

Could not St. Nikitas have said, “I am young, I am beautiful, I am an officer of the army. I can have a career. I can have a family. I can make money.” Nothing [of the sort]! When [St. Nikitas] realized what his eternal interest was, he said, “With Christ, [even if] you burn me and kill me.”

Where are those who burned him? Where are those who killed him? They are all forgotten.

His relic is here and elsewhere wherever there is a small piece of the relic. Why? Because it is a relic full of the Holy Spirit. They brought it to us two days ago from Kykos. For two days now it has been fragrant the whole time. I say to myself, “The Saint will go to his villagers and he is happy already.”

“How can you tell that a relic is happy?” St. Porphyrios asked me once. [St. Porphyrios supplied the answer]: “By being fragrant. Sometimes by streaming myrrh.”

This is why, my dear Fathers and brothers, from everything we say, let us keep this one. If we want to be victors in our personal Christian life, we have to first condescend to being defeated.

The life as a refugee is a form of prolonged defeat that we have been experiencing from 1974 to this day. But if we chose something more than the defeat of 1974 and the life as a refugee, what would that be? A Russian Saint, St. John of Kronstadt says, “Do you want to be a victor with Christ? Watch your heart every day.”

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Our heart is filled with evil desires and thoughts. The Gospel says so. From the heart ascend desires, murders, thefts, hatreds, malice, dirty carnal desires, complaints, many complaints that lead to anger, malice, envy, divorces, to pain and sorrow, ours and for other people. And many times, we turn something small into something big.

If people chose everyday repentance which is seemingly a form of defeat, meaning what? As soon as I see that inside me I have envy towards someone, right away as soon as I realize that inside my heart I have envy, antagonism, malice, right away I ask [myself], “With whom do I have this problem?” [Let’s say] with Cyprianos [random male name]. “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on Cyprianos and have mercy on me.” You see not just me but also the one I am thinking against.

In this way, the heart is cured. Before the tree matures fully, when it is still [the size of] a blade of grass, a desire and a thought, you can pull it out easily and it goes away. If we let the malice with Cyrpos, the envy with John, the aggressiveness with Spyros, the dirty thought with some woman, then what does our heart turn into? A filthy place, full of evilness, desires and thoughts and it won’t be cleansed easily. And it will take “a great doctor, a great cardiologist” to cleanse it, and this person will be a very considerate spiritual father.

Everyday repentance is an “on-call hospital” as St. Paisios used to say. Meaning, because we have a quick nous and we watch our heart, as soon as there is an evil inside it, we uproot it, right away. In this way, we do not let a molehill turn into a mountain and crush our soul.

Just like our body needs nourishment, the soul needs nourishment as well. The Cypriots forget this. We are concerned about what we will eat and what we will drink. All these for the body. Does not the soul needs its nourishment as well? The nourishment of the soul is everyday repentance, [which is] to admit my defeat before my God and my spiritual father.

This is why St. Isaac the Syrian says, “What is repentance?” “A broken and humbled heart” [Psalm 50]. A God was humbled for us and he became the “Extreme Humility” [characterization that Orthodox Christians attribute to Christ for accepting His Crucifixion].

And we cannot be defeated for a bit, for the sake of our eternal interest and tell him, “I have sinned, my Christ. I was wrong to think that way. Forgive me. Most Holy Theotokos, cover us.”

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St. Paisios used to say, “For the tough [burdens] that do not leave easily, [these may be] attributed many times to a bad heredity, to a grandfather, to a grandmother who had a great passion and did not repent. This is inherited by the children, the grandchildren, the great grandchildren. Just as the good is inherited, the bad is inherited as well.” But when we realize it, we won’t start doing psychoanalysis and assigning blame.

My blessed mother told me once, “The good are welcome, the bad not?” Said by a woman who did not go to school. I got two [university] degrees. And I closed my mouth [to her words].

We pray for our ancestors as well. In this way, not only are we cured, but also they in the other life where they are, wherever that is, either high or low. “In My Father’s house are many mansions” [John 14:2]. There are many places of glory, “for one star differs from another star in glory” [1 Corinthians 15:41]. Wherever they are, when we repent, they become happy.

The greatest memorial [service] for our departed ones is our repentance. Afterwards, there is the commemoration [of names] during the Divine Liturgy. We only kept the Trisagion services at the graves. For this, I beg you, if we want to really celebrate our Saints, St. Nikitas today, let’s do this.

Let us love regular Holy Communion [and] the everyday, diligent repentance and we will be victors just like St. Nikitas. Otherwise, what St. Paisios, the great prophet of our people, said will take place. What did he say? The Cypriots went and visited him while he was still alive. St. Paisios fell asleep in 1994. The Cypriots went and confessed to him their pain. “Elder, won’t Cyprus be liberated?”

What do you think the holy man answered? He who could “see” [in the future] the freedom of Cyprus and many other regions. He said, “If the Greek-Cypriots repent soon, then freedom will come soon. If they are late [in repenting], freedom will also be late. In any case, they will [eventually] enjoy freedom.”

Think that he said that before 1994 and now it’s 2017. Thus, we, Cypriots, are late in our repentance. God [is not late] in His gifts. The gifts of God are “unregretful.” He will provide our freedom [eventually].

There were people of God who saw even before 1974 that half of Cyprus will become enslaved for our sins and dissensions. You all know what we did back then. And they [the people of God] stated, “You will become refugees, my children.” “You will be liberated when a state is founded in Turkey whose name will be Kurdia/Kurdistan [state of the Kurds].”

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Who knew the Kurds back then? How many times have I told you not to wait [for progress] from [international] talks? From the peripheral developments wait the freedom of Cyprus and watch what the Kurds, the Turks and the Israelis do. On the 24th of this month [24th of September 2017], the Kurds will hold a referendum to create their own state in northern Iraq, and Turkey is furious.

Say a prayer inside yourself for the Kurds. They work for us. We do nothing for them. They are a people of 40 million and they have no state. We are half a million and, thanks to God, thanks to the struggle of 1955-1959, and the mastery of Makarios, we have a state, a truncated one, but we do have one. Let's have this in mind.

But if we want to help our land, we should not be hooked on the prophecies of St. Paisios and others, and count years and times [until the realization of the prophecies]. These things are not Orthodox. We say these things, and in particular I [say them], so that people will know that our prospect is freedom.

But for freedom to come and for our generation to witness it, personal repentance is needed. Otherwise, we will be a temperamental people, sometimes high, sometimes low. For this, I beg you, let the honor of Saints, be the imitation of Saints. St. Nikitas imitated the crucified Jesus and he is with the victors. Let us do this too. Everyday repentance, regular Holy Communion and trust in the providence of God the Father. Many blessed and free years!