

Odoiporikon

Orthodox Mission in the East

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE PATRIARCHAL FOUNDATION
OF ORTHODOX MISSION IN THE FAR EAST
Issue #83 April - June 2023



*From the Annual Memorial Service of the
Late Metropolitan of Pisidia,
formerly of Korea, Soterios, in Antalya*

HOLY EASTER

The late Fr. Alexander Smemann notes that *Christianity did not bring new things but makes everything new*. This is because its core is the only eternal *Person* under the sun, the Risen Christ. He alone, through his crucified love *to the end* (Jn 13:1), truly conquered death through His death, which poisons human existence throughout time, having as its sting *the sin*, and especially arrogance and self-sufficiency (1 Cor. 15:55-56). The presence of the Risen Christ in everyday human life, primarily through the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Baptism, transmits to man, who from birth tragically experiences the here and now, hope, light of life, the reason for existence or rather *coexistence*.

Both of the two most important Christian holidays, such as Christmas and the Resurrection, have their roots in earlier centuries. Especially Jewish holidays, such as Passover, have a *triple foundation: Firstly, they are both connected through Creation so much to nature (which constitutes a Bible) as well as to the human quest for God. Subsequently, they are celebrations of the remembrance, reflection and revival of the sanctifying acts of the personal God who sympathizes with his creation and intervenes liberatingly-redemptively in History. Finally, remembrance develops more and more into the hope of the coming perfect sanctifying intervention, which has not yet happened* (Ratzinger).

The word Passover (pasàch) is usually etymologically associated with *passing*, and *crossing*, but it also has the meaning of *protection* (Is 31:5). It is an ancient pastoral feast. Every spring the nomadic shepherds slaughtered-sacrificed a year-old lamb to protect their flock from demonic misfortune and to decipher the

unknown future from its shoulder blade. The pastoral feast of Easter was combined with the agricultural spring celebration of the unleavened bread. The Canaanite farmers, at the same time as they harvested barley, they ate unleavened bread to prevent any negative effects on the harvest.

Later on, Passover was associated with the leading event of the liberation of the enslaved Jews from Egypt, the Superpower of tyranny and insult, the crossing of *the Red Sea* and their adventurous march to the Earth where honey and milk flowed, but not by the coastal highway but through the harsh and dry desert. There human existence realizes that man does not live by bread and the spectacle of virtual reality and the expendable beings, but by the God of liberation from all dependence and love, the only Lord of history and nature.

In particular, Easter at first was not associated with the crossing of the «Sea of Reeds» but with the passage of the exterminating angel from the houses and the death of the firstborn on that «great» night before the Exodus. The Israelites had to slaughter and standing up to consume as a family a year-old male lamb without blemish with whose blood they sealed the doors of their houses so that their children would be saved. This Passover feast was and is celebrated gloriously by the Israelites on 14 Nisan (March-April) remembering, in addition to their freedom, the creation of the world and eagerly awaiting for a new Moses to liberate them from the foreign oppressors. Isaiah: (24-27), Ezekiel: (37) and Daniel: (12), at a time when the political and religious authority, that was based in Zion, was vilified, and the terror of guilt, pain and death – hades was «crushing» the world, they proclaimed the renewal of this

world of decay and groaning with a new Pass-over, a new crossing.

The amazing thing is that *also for the nations, those near and far (and this includes the Far East)* there has been a great prophet of the resurrection: It is nature itself that constitutes *a Bible*. Spring, the season of vegetation, of flowering, of nature's revival after a winter of desolation, preaches its own gospel. The seed, which must be buried deep into the earth, so that it will not be left alone but will sprout and grow into a tall fruitful and vigorous tree (Jn 12: 23-25). The sun that disappears into the depths of the horizon to rise again brighter the next day. The moon, which after three days of absolute silence appears whole in the starlit sky. The glow of the fire that comes from the friction of two dry stones. The mother earth that becomes desolate and sprouts, but also the woman who gives birth with pain accompanied by rejoicing after nine months from one sperm to a whole human being, who thinks and loves, they spoke and taught all nations who stood terrified before the sweeping and indiscriminate greed of death, that the Resurrection is possible. *Man becomes worm dirt and dust*. Yet, he will rise again more beautiful, newer and brighter.

What the prophets foretold and nature proclaimed has happened in History. First John the Baptist saw in the face of Jesus Christ the Lamb, who, even though immaculate, i.e., without the blemish and the stain of sin, by His voluntary and painful slaughter on the Cross, removes (lifts upon Himself and at the same time eliminates) the sins and guilt of mankind as a whole.

To this day Easter is experienced in the Church, (as it once was by the baptized), by those who are not merely *born* but *become Christians* as the personal and communal exodus from the slavery of all kinds of «Pharaohs» and the resignation from the constant preoccupation with



clay and straw, the caring for the flesh and the « indicators» of well-being. It marks the tearing down of «idols», leaving the «couch» and marching with the «mourners» the «hungry and thirsty for righteousness» through the Dead Sea and the desert of this life and this world to the Kingdom. This new world of God (the Kingdom) does not constitute a utopia, but through participation in the risen Body of Christ, which involves daily sacrifice for the sake of *the other*, His image, it rises as a resurrection light through the «tombs» of despair, disillusionment with human ideologies and the crisis of consumer values. *For through the Cross came Joy to the whole world! Christ has risen my Joy!* (According to the greeting of St. Seraphim of Sarov).

Soterios Despotis
Professor at the University of Athens

Mission: The Real Purpose of the Entire Church

Just a few days after the Sunday of Pentecost, which marks the birthday of our Church, our thoughts run to the first days of the Church of Christ on planet Earth.

Simple, unlettered people, without education or diplomas, with their only references being the “graduation ceremony” of the Holy Spirit, in regard to who Christ is really and what exactly was his task here on earth, the spread out over the entire known civilized world so that they could communicate the great truth that God became man and that he waits for man to become god by grace.

This is what made them “university” graduates, not only did they comprehend the truth, but they had the experiential knowledge of the Life. It was this experience that they wanted to share with everyone, creating the conditions for its successful propagation, in other words, creating the Church! They laid the foundations so that this great faith can remain in the hearts of man to the end of the ages.

They created the Church which has as its goal the sanctification of every person to every corner of the earth, and to every age and generation, offering to each person the real experience of the Holy Spirit.

The responsibility, then, of the Evangelization of the world and of all people for all time, is the responsibility of the entire Church through the work of Orthodox Mission.

The charisms of God’s grace are shared out with the individual members of Christ’s body; however, the Church contains all those graces through the totality of its people.

All Christians are entitled to the joy of that is felt in heaven when one person comes to know God, when one person acquires a life of Sanctity, Holiness.

The joy of Holiness is the product of the offering of each and every member of the body of Christ, his or her offering of time, talents, resources, caring concern and prayer. Far beyond the capacity of oneself alone!



Sunday of Pentecost at the church of the Holy Trinity in Saweni, Fiji 2023- Fr. Michael, Fr. Bartholomaios, Fr. Andronikos, and Fr. George

The greatest enemy of the Evangelization of the nations, is the resistance of the “chosen”, those who, in other words, nearsightedly think that their personal perfection is enough for them, those who don’t understand that we aren’t “enough” until we have included our neighbour, and each neighbour, that very “neighbour” whom Christ has determined is the key to our entrance into Paradise!

This concept, the real meaning of the “other”, of our neighbour, is the key to the life in Christ.

If we miss this, we may have beautiful churches, beautiful ecclesiastical arts, wonderful organization, able administration, a well-tended and attractive grounds, everything just right, but Christ isn’t alive in us. Not without the understanding of the other, the neighbour, and paradise remains hermetically sealed.

Our age has divinized man, but most especially made of god of our own self.

The Church without Evangelism is a church without purpose. And Church without purpose is a lie, a falsehood, it’s a mere human institution, without the Holy Spirit and without God.

The Church shows us how to fix this. It invites us to transcend our self, to find the “other”. When we love our neighbour as our own self, we receive God.

† Metropolitan of New Zealand Myron



Thoughts and proposals for the further spread of the Orthodox witness in the Pacific Islands

As the primary aim of the Orthodox Church's mission is to share the Gospel with the world, the Pacific islands, and their 1.1 million people, are no exception. The Orthodox Christian mission in the Pacific continues to bring a promise of change, to be life-giving and life-transforming, prompting the conversion of communities into a Christ-like image.

Some of the difficulties beyond COVID-19 for this region relate to the social, cultural, and economic factors. These reasons should only encourage the Holy Metropolis of New Zealand (Ecumenical Patriarchate) to continue. Specifically, the reasons are:

Socially:

- The welfare of the Pacific is characterized by poverty,
- Lack of adequate health and community care facilities,
- Low educational opportunities.

In this domain, the Mission's presence brings

hope to the people and promises to uplift their wellbeing through the message of salvation. Whilst there is already the Orphanage, a simple 'soup kitchen' setup for the public is missing. Dispatching food to the public would raise the profile of the Mission to the community and governments.

Culturally:

- A need for diversity in religious practices.
- Limited exposure to religious practices.

Orthodoxy offers an opportunity to engage in a new way to worship, including learning and experiencing new traditions, liturgical experience, and music. At the same time, they are excited and magnetized, I would say, by Orthodox iconography.

Economically:

- Financial underdevelopment
- Limited opportunities for financial empowerment

The Orthodox Mission could present an opportunity to diversify the economy through the establishment of businesses (eg. growers' market, supermarket, café, BnBs, etc) which would also provide employment for the community. Enterprise could contribute to a stable income for the Mission which would assist in strategic planning, and sustainability. Financially, there also needs to be an active attempt to locate government support locally, and globally in the form of food banks, and social welfare services.

The Orthodox Mission in the Pacific is doing much good work and its successful initiatives (listed below) are in line with the criteria of what an Orthodox mission should be:

- The Orphanage
- Ordination of local indigenous Clergy
- The building of Churches

Given the lack of initial funding it is a miracle how all of these have come to be. The culmination of these initiatives has produced the training of young men and women abroad at the Patmiada School and in Monasteries. It is hoped that these young people can assume leadership roles within the Mission.

The Holy Metropolis of New Zealand has sought some support from other Orthodox Archdioceses and Metropolises with regards to making it easier for youth to pursue further studies (Theology, Ministry, and other areas of interest) abroad. Perhaps a next step for these young people would be to consolidate relationships with these Churches, and other organizations like the Niarchos Foundations who might be able to give scholarship opportunities for the youth of the Orthodox mission in the Pacific to pursue graduate study programs abroad.



Visit of Fr. Michael Psaromatis at the local primary school in Saweni, Fiji

With all this in mind I believe it is important to revisit some core missionary models for the sustainability of the Orthodox mission in the Pacific. I must stress though that these ideas cannot be honoured without stable financial assistance and resources. Missionary models to consider are:

- Saints Cyril and Methodios and the way they used the vernacular, which involved translating biblical texts and liturgical texts into the local languages so that the Gospel is more accessible. This method ensured that the people's understanding was not limited by their knowledge of a foreign language.
- Saint Nicholas of Japan used the method of contextualization, and this involved studying the language and culture of the people that he was serving. He was able to learn the foreign language, dress like them, and participate in their cultural festivities. This made him relatable and empathetic in his teachings.
- Saint Herman of Alaska's method of simply living among the people, which involved sharing life with the people he was serving. By living among the people, missionaries get to understand the problems that exist firsthand and help address those problems. It is nearly impossible to help someone without knowing their struggles.
- St John Maximovitch taught by example, which centered on spreading the gospel through personal witness. The missionaries must exude the kind of character that they want people to emulate.
- Archbishop Anastasios of Albania partnered with other churches and made it possible for the Orthodox mission in Albania to continue to exist. Collaboration is paramount, and it is not just essential between different church groups, it also involves working hand in hand with various community groups too.

These methods are applicable to a degree in the Pacific islands, and the mission can use them to reach-out to Pacific Islander people effectively.

These models will need to contend with one main challenge and that is communication, or specifically translation. The Orthodox mission in the Pacific has recognized that the translation of the Bible and Liturgical Texts in native languages is not straightforward because of the nature of the linguistic variations and nuances of the Pacific languages and dialects. One only need to take the Fijian language as an example and realize that it is a complex polysynthetic language with a unique grammar structure which makes it challenging to translate idiomatic expressions and complex syntactical structures from other languages. The lack of a standardized writing system and ample orthographical variations in Fijian can also present challenges for consistent translations. These challenges have meant that native language has only been used scarcely, and only in Catechism or reciting the Lord's Prayer, and occasionally during sermons. When used in Catechism it is a type of paraphrasing because theological terms or phrases many native words are used to attempt to represent a concept. Even though English is an official language of the countries, the literacy levels of the communities are low. With all this in mind I am still of the view that more funding, and effort should be placed in producing native language resources.

A final but noteworthy bureaucratic issue that the Mission faces concerns land ownership. Even when land is bought, and built on lawfully, there are many situations where this land can be taken away because a native landowner seeks to claim that land as being theirs. In many cases the native land holders will demand a lease payment and claim loss of potential land value.

With my full faith I believe Orthodox Mission in the Pacific to be a fascinating spiritually engaging paradise, where the challenges of life, and faith are very real. Support of the Mission will allow for this important work and for God's will to be realized for the people in the region, and for us.

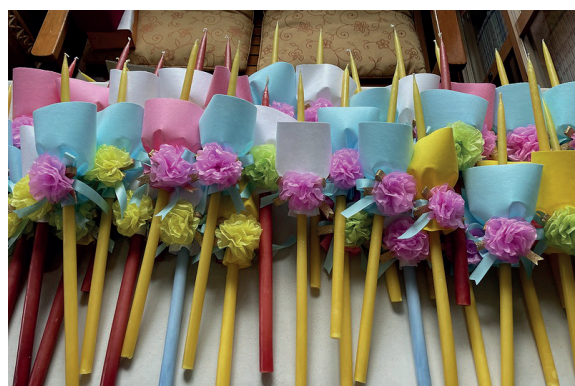
Rev. Fr. Michael Psaromatis

Holy Week and Pascha in the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea

With feelings of unceasing praise to God, and spiritual uplift, all the parishes of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea celebrated the Lord's Passion and glorious Resurrection.

After the many obstacles during the three previous years due to the pandemic, for the first time during this year's Holy Week and Easter, the participation of the faithful was very large.

May the Light, Love, and Hope that flowed from the life-giving Tomb of the Risen Lord enlighten the hearts of all the people.



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Baptismal Divine Liturgy in Seoul

On Lazarus Saturday, April 8, 2023, during the baptismal Divine Liturgy, the following Catechumen received the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Chrismation at Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Seoul: Nicholas Hush, Katerina Shin, Dionysii Kim, Nadezhda Shegai, Nikitas Shin and Bogdan Samarin.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Metropolitan welcomed the newly enlightened on behalf of the concelebrating priests Fr. Roman Kavchak and Fr. Antonios Lim, as well as all the faithful of the Cathedral Community, and wished them to live until their last breath in the arms of the Orthodox Church and to spread the Light of Christ in their environment.

A reception followed in the Hall of the Metropolis, during which, due to the different national backgrounds of the participants, the great miracle of our union with the Body of Christ was emphasized, despite the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the members of the Church.



Day of joy and gratitude in the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea

Sunday, May 14, 2023, was a special day in all the Parishes of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea. Following the Divine Liturgy, a prayer of thanksgiving was held in each Parish for the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. The long duration of the pandemic, which began in China in December 2019, and caused 6 million deaths and more than 570 million infections worldwide, the World Health Organization announced the lifting of the state of emergency on May 5, 2023.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, we recited a Prayer of thanks to the Almighty God, that was written especially for the occasion because due to His infinite mercy, we were protected from this fatal virus.

Moreover, Sunday, May 14 was also a special day of joy and gratitude to God, because a dream decades old came true. This dream had to do with the preservation of the sacred relics of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, which are in its possession (icons, sacred liturgical vessels, vestments, and books), and which date back from the 18th to the 20th century and had arrived in Korea from Russia and Greece. The collection of heirlooms also includes valuable liturgical utensils, which were a necessary and an integral part of the Hellenic Expeditionary Force of Greece (E.S.E.), which fought during the Korean Civil War (1950-1953), and they remained in Korea as a peacekeeping force after the armistice (1953-1955).

For this purpose, the conservators of works of art came from Greece: Mr. Ilias Papageorgiou, Mr. Konstantinos Tsourmas, and Mr. Panagiota Apostolou, who, with the help of many Korean and Slavonic volunteers, managed to restore a large part of the sacred relics.

After completing the restoration of the two large icons of the Virgin Mary and Saint Seraphim of Sarov, they were placed on temporary tripods in the center of the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas in Seoul on Saturday, May 13, before the Great Vespers. Thus, the faithful had the opportunity to see these holy Icons up close before their placement in their permanent shrines. After the end of the Liturgy, Metropolitan Ambrosios sprinkled the Icons with holy water while the choir of Slavonic faithful sang the Apolytikion (dismissal hymn) of the Virgin Mary and of Saint Seraphim of Sarov.

The joy and emotion were clearly evident on everyone's face, seeing the results of the restoration work of the sacred relics, as it fulfilled the duty of all of us to hand them over in good condition to the next generations of Orthodox faithful in Korea.



The first Annual Memorial of the late Metropolitan Soterios (Trambas)

The first annual Memorial Service of the late Metropolitan of Pisidia, (formerly of Korea) Soterios, was held on Saturday, June 10, 2023, at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Kapyeong.

The Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service was presided over by HE Metropolitan of New Zealand Myron, with co-celebrants the Metropolitan of Korea and Exarch of Japan Ambrosios as well as seven priests. Numerous faithful from all the Parishes of the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea participated in the event in order to express their gratitude to their late spiritual father. The family of the late Metropolitan Sotetios was represented by His niece Mrs. Eleni Trampas, who traveled from Switzerland.

Before the start of the Memorial Service the Metropolitan of Korea said the following:

My dear brothers and sisters,

Our blessed Spiritual Father, Metropolitan Soterios, whose first annual Memorial we celebrate at this Eucharistic gathering, left us as a sacred bequest, among others, the following words:

I'm not afraid of death. "For I desire to depart from this world and be with Christ, who is better than all" (Phil. 1:23). What I fear and think about daily is my plea before the Judge on the day of my judgment.

I'm not afraid of death. This shocking message is sent to all of us from Heaven where he is now.

His message was and has always been about the Resurrection. And when he lived



HE Metropolitan Kallinikos of Arta, at the annual Memorial Service in Arta said:
"Metropolitan Soterios was enlightened by the Holy Spirit and became a Light to the Nations"

among us in body, but also now that he lives among us in spirit.

I am not afraid of death, he told us, when he saw that the time of his departure from this world was approaching. In fact, he waited with longing for this hour, to be with Christ, whom he loved so much in his earthly life and worked so much for His glory, ministering with self-denial to each of his neighbors indiscriminately.

I am not afraid of death, he repeated because he believed in the Resurrection. Because he firmly believed in what it is mentioned in the Creed: "I expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come".



The annual Memorial Service of the late Metropolitan Soterios at the Holy Monastery of Transfiguration in Gapyeong

How can one not be afraid of death, one might wonder. Is such a thing possible? To reach the fearlessness of death, one must have loved Christ a lot in his life; he must have struggled a lot to imitate Christ; he must have believed strongly in Christ, as the only true God.

Therefore, for us to attain the fearlessness of death; to overcome the fear of death, which is the condition of the transitory man, we

must necessarily love, like our spiritual Father did, first of all, Christ «with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind...» and secondly, «to love our neighbor as ourselves» (Mt. 22:37-39).

*My dear brothers and sisters,
The annual Memorial Service of our spiritual Father, which we celebrate today, will have a positive sign for each of us only if we imitate His faith and love for Christ and our neighbor.*



During the Memorial Service Mrs. Eleni Trambas, niece of the late Metropolitan Soterios, addressing the participants



Trisagion at the tomb of the late Metropolitan Soterios

Let us come, please, to venerate His tomb, to draw spiritual strength, so that we live “worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27). This is how “the ends of our lives will be Christian, painless, shameless, peaceful”, and we will deserve to have “a good apology at the terrible judgment of Christ”. Amen.

After the end of the Memorial Service, everyone was directed to the tomb of the blessed Metropolitan Soterios, the funeral Trisagion Service was held, which was followed by the common meal of love in the forecourt of the Monastery. A special 20-page booklet, dedicated to him, was distributed to all the participants, starting with a letter by His All Holiness the Ecumenical

Patriarch Bartholomew, followed by his biography, the ergography, and his Will, and finally by the farewell letter of the late Metropolitan Soterios, which he sent on November 24, 1975, to his parishioners of the parish of Agia Skepi Papagou-Athens, just a few days before he left for Seoul.

Therefore, let us all be inspired by the life and sanctified example of this great missionary Hierarchy of the Church, who is now in Heaven, as HE Metropolitan Myron of New Zealand expressed as a wish, who also recited the paternal greetings and blessings of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Flock of the Korean Orthodox Church.



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Orthodox Mission in the East
Quarterly newsletter
of the Patriarchal Foundation
of the Far East Mission
83 April - June 2023

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National Bank of Greece: Account Number: 040-296124-56

IBAN: GR6001100400000004029612456

Alpha Bank of Greece: Account Number: 473-002101-099272

IBAN: GR8901404730473002101099272



*THE ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE OF THE BLESSED
METROPOLITAN SOTERIOS,
AT THE HOLY METROPOLIS OF NEW SMYRNA*