



73rd Year

March 16, 2025

Pamphlet #11 (3746)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Hebrews 1:10-2:3)
Angels, the ministering spirits

In the beginning, Thou, Lord, didst found the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation? Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

In today's Epistle reading, there are testimonies from the Old Testament, according to which the Son of Man rules over both the material and spiritual creation, while being superior in all respects even to the angels, who serve the salvation of humankind. The Apostle Paul also highlights a fundamental truth that constitutes a cornerstone of Christian teaching: God laid the foundations of the earth and established the heavens. The fact that God is the creator of the material world, the environment in which we live, demonstrates its importance and sanctity. Indeed, it became the

dwelling and acting place of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Thus, it was sanctified and regenerated, as the Lord blessed the elements of nature, praised the fruits of the earth, and taught humanity a sound ecological ethic, which our Church promotes throughout time.

Creation as thanksgiving

Creation itself, recognizing the gift of God, thanks Him for its sanctification and regeneration: "Nature whispers the name of Jesus. It looks toward Jesus... All the elements of nature tend toward the God-Man. The stone and the rock will give the monument of the Savior's burial. Water will find its ultimate meaning in Baptism, which regenerates. The olive trees will provide the oil that anoints and heals the sick, through the invocation of Jesus' name. The wheat and the grapes of the vineyards will give the bread and wine, with which the Lord will perform the mystery of His Body and Blood. From the tree will come the wood of the Cross. Thus, the same momentum, the same movement drives the entire creation toward Christ. And with it, all human labor – of the reaper, the bread baker, the vine-grower and the others – that help in this ascent, in this transfiguration."

Man as the ruler

In contrast to creation's stance toward God is man's stance toward creation. It is a stance of domination, aiming at reckless exploitation, with no concern for its gradual destruction. This attitude has led to the ecological crisis, one of the greatest problems humanity faces today. "For our Orthodox Church, the primary cause of the ecological crisis lies in man. It begins with man's detachment from God and the desire for self-deification, which directly results in the misuse of the world. Humanity does not base the existence and validation of creation on the Creator but on himself. And since he cannot be delivered from decay and disintegration, he cannot free the environment from them either. The ecological crisis is primarily spiritual and moral. It arises from the crisis that was created in man. The crisis caused by self-love, egocentrism, greed, hedonism, luxury, overconsumption, wastefulness, and generally, by the passionate life."

Ecological awakening

We do not know if it is possible, in our times, to reverse the image of distortion and destruction that characterizes the natural environment. We people continue to burn, pollute, and destroy, indifferent to the consequences that will affect the Earth in both the present and the future. The frivolity, the sense of ownership that characterizes us, as well as the prevailing interests around us, create a sense of pessimism. However, at a personal level, each of us can acquire what is called ecological consciousness which, in the language of the Church, is nothing other than the mind of Christ. Then, we will begin to see the environment differently and realize that it is a very precious gift from God, which we must care for as much as we care for ourselves, our homes, to live with safety and peace within it.

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΤΕΣΣΑΡΑΚΟΣΤΗ
(*GREAT LENT*)

New Revised Edition, in Greek, Size 17x24 cm, 304 pages

The daily services and the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, with an appendix: hymns, prayers, and calendar of feasts.

March 16, 2025: 2nd Sunday of Lent (St. Gregory Palamas)

Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica; Sabinus of Egypt (†287); Julian the Martyr (3rd century); Christodoulos the Venerable of Patmos.

Pl. 1st Tone – Eothinon: 5 – Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3
– Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

NEXT SUNDAY: March 23, 3rd Sunday of Lent (Veneration of the Cross)
Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 – Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

Publications on the Ascetic and Philokalic Tradition (In Greek)

Η ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΡΗΜΟΥ (THE POLITY OF THE DESERT: Solitude, silence, prayer) by Metropolitan Agathangelos of Phanariou. This text describes a God-centered, metaphysical, ontological, and eschatological spirituality with countless soteriological, ecclesiological, anthropological, and cosmological implications. It represents a life where fullness of truth, freedom, and love are offered.

ΕΞΗΝΘΗΣΕΝ Η ΕΡΗΜΟΣ (THE DESERT FLOURISHED: Remarkable Stories of the Great Ascetics of Egypt) by Professor Emeritus P. V. Paschos. Includes stories from Abba John the Prophet, Abba Apollo, Abba Paphnutius, Abba Copres, and others.

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Η ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΤΗΤΑ (SPIRITUAL PERFECTION: focusing on the nyptic-ascetic works of nyptii fathers, especially on the catechesis of Symeon the New Theologian) by Professor Emeritus Christos Krikonis. These Philokalic texts reflect the experiential journey of the believer toward moral perfection through divine Grace.

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VOICE OF THE LORD, a weekly pamphlet of Orthodox faith and life of the "Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece". Iasiou 1, 115 21 Athens. Publisher – Director: Metropolitan of Phanariou, Agathangelos. Editorial office, tel. 210.7272.331. Processing, tel. 210.7272.388. Through the holy churches, it is distributed free of charge. From the Printing Office of the Apostolic Ministry.

The *VOICE OF THE LORD* worldwide via the Internet:

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