

"Encyclical Regarding Holy Communion", 2002: Met. Pavlos



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SAINT PHOTIOS ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Encyclical December 5/18 2002

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ENCYCLICAL

To the Holy Clergy and Pious People
Of the Holy Metropolis of the Genuine Greek Orthodox
Old Calendar Church of America

Beloved Fathers and Brethren:

“May the blessings of God always be with you.”

1. The beloved Disciple of our Lord, the Evangelist St. John, writes in his First General Epistle: “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard the antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” (I John 2:18-19).

In other words, St. John the Theologian warns us saying: My children, now is a critical time: today’s season is full of dangers. As you have heard from the evangelical preaching, the antichrist will come. At this time, many heretics have manifested themselves; they are forerunners of the antichrist. From this we learn that our times are critical.

Heretics have separated themselves from us Christians and have left the Church. In any case, they never were a part of us. They were never TRUE members of the Church. For if indeed they were of us and TRUE members of the Church, they would have remained with us. However, they left the Church so that it might be shown to be that all of them were not of us. They were not TRUE Christians. (P. Trembelas,

The New Testament with Short Interpretation, page 995).

2. The Word of God, the Gospels which contain the above-mentioned words of the Evangelist St. John, teaches us of the dangers faced by true Christians should they leave the Church of Christ. Such are heretics and various schisms.

The greatest enemy of man is the devil who by his malice caused our banishment from Paradise. Through His Divine Incarnation, His Crucifixion and his Resurrection, Christ has reestablished our friendship with God by founding his Church, which is the Ark of our salvation.

The Holy Fathers emphasize the meaning of the Church in a special way saying, "outside of the Church, there is no salvation" (St. Cyprian). In order to deny us this salvation, the devil has sown the various heresies and schisms throughout the world. Heretics and schismatics are tools of the devil, through whom he seeks to remove us from the Church of Christ, thereby denying us our salvation.

3. Such heretics and schismatics manifested themselves, even from the earliest years of Christianity. Such were Arius, Nestorios, the Monophysites, the Iconoclasts, the Franks, and others.

Each time a new heresy or schism manifested itself, the Church cut off from her body those who adhered to them. The Church would not impart to them her Holy Mysteries, especially Holy Communion, until they repented and returned to her bosom; that is, until they returned to the Orthodox Faith and Confession.

Every heresy is harmful to the Church. One such heresy that harmed the Church and our people was that of the Franks. That heresy, which from A.D. 1054 has been condemned by the Orthodox Church, has never ceased to war against the Faith of us, the genuine Orthodox Christians, and to seek to pull away members of our Church.

The Franks have ever used the most cunning, deceptive, and dishonorable means to entangle the Orthodox in error and false belief, seeking to make them Franks. One of the means used by the Franks was the papal calendar that they sought to impose upon the Orthodox Church in the 16th century. However, the Orthodox Patriarchs, with three Local Synods, held in 1582, 1587 and 1592, condemned the New Calendar. The Patriarchs preached that those Orthodox who would follow it, would be cut off from the body of the Church and cease to be Orthodox.

Unfortunately, in Greece in 1924, Archbishop Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos) along with his bishops, desired to accommodate the Orthodox faithful to the errors of the Franks. The people of God, the genuine Orthodox, resisted, and thereby did a large portion of them remain faithful members of the Church of Christ, that Church of Christ being "the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic" Orthodox Church, She to Whom,

by the grace of God, we genuine Orthodox Christians belong.

4. This Truth, that we belong to the “One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church,” has a special meaning for us, for this Church is the Ark of our salvation, which is the very reason that we exist.

Nothing other than the Orthodox Church else is able to save man. She is the Gate to Paradise.

The Holy Fathers teach us that only the Holy Mysteries which are celebrated in the bosom of the Orthodox Church have Grace and save all those who are Orthodox.

In other words, for anyone to receive the Grace of salvation, two things are required:

First, the Orthodox Christians must seek this Grace, which exists only in the Holy Mysteries, and especially the Divine Eucharist, which exist only in the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”, which is the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians, and

Second, he who wishes to receive the Grace of salvation must be a genuine member of the Orthodox Church. He must not be a heretic or a schismatic. For this reason, the genuine Orthodox Christians are not permitted to enter the churches of heretics or schismatics to receive communion, for such is a very serious sin. The person, who does so, cuts himself off from the Orthodox Church. For this same reason, the Fathers of the Church forbid to heretics or schismatics communion of the blameless Mysteries in our Churches, since by so doing, instead of salvation, they receive “a consuming fire,” (Hebrews 12:29) that is, a fire, which burns up all those who dare to partake of it.

5. Our times are the times of the antichrist, as the Evangelist St. John tells us. The antichrist labors so that iniquity, sin, apostasy, error, and false teaching may spread throughout the world.

Ecumenism, which today has captivated many people, is the result of all this. It is the work of the antichrist and of his followers. This Ecumenism would swallow up the very last lambs of Christ, that is us, the genuine Orthodox Christians, if it could. This is why Ecumenism is a pan-heresy.

In the face of this great danger, as your Bishop and Shepherd of the Orthodox Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of America, who am charged by God to protect His flock from the heretics and schismatics who have placed themselves outside the Church, I call upon the faithful children of our Church not to enter the

churches of schismatics and heretics to take communion. You should communicate only in churches that belong to our Church, which here in America are only the churches of the Holy Metropolis (GOC) of America. You should have the permission of your spiritual father, who himself should be a clergyman of our Holy Metropolis, and should have confessed and fasted correctly prior to Communion. Those who do not have an Orthodox faith and confession, that is heretics, ecumenists, false old calendarists, etc., will not be permitted to be imparted the Holy Mysteries in our churches, even as the Holy Synod of our Church has directed.

6. Neither the Holy Synod of our Church, nor I as your bishop, are chasing from our Church anyone who is seeking his salvation. However, this salvation must be achieved as Christ wills, not as just anyone wills. For this reason, all who wish to receive Communion in our Churches must formally enter into the bosom of the Orthodox Church as genuine Christians. With the permission of their confessor, and along with appropriate preparation, they will always be welcomed to receive the Mystery of Mysteries which is Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is granted to the faithful after the preparatory exclamation of the priest: "Let us attend, the Holy things for the Holy," that is, the Holy Things, which are the Body and Blood of Christ, may be received only by the Holy people, who are never heretics and schismatics.

7. The Clergy of the Holy Metropolis of America are sternly commanded to apply the provisions of this Encyclical with all strictness.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

PAVLOS

Metropolitan of North and South America