



Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece Holy Synod in Resistance

Third Synodal Exhortation to the Christian Flock of our Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

Phyle, Attica
October 3, 2012 (Old Style)
† *St. Dionysios the Areopagite*

“And the multitude of them that believed
were of one heart and of one soul.”
(Acts 4:32)

The Economic and Social Crisis and the Social Ethos of Christians

*Light-Wrought children of the Church;
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

WE embrace you with a holy kiss of love, peace, and unity in Christ and greet you yet again with the Apostolic liturgical salutation: “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!”

Glory to God for all things! The Lord has vouchsafed us, the least among your spiritual Fathers in Christ, the Bishops of the Holy Synod in Resistance against the innovation of ecumenism, to gather together this year at the Thirty-Ninth Convocation of our Synod of Bishops (October 3, 2012 [Old Style]) and to deal with various issues that our Ecclesiastical Community faces.

We express our thanksgiving and gratitude first and foremost to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, our one Triune God, for this truly great gift, and also to all of you for your prayers, which have

helped us to deliberate and reach decisions together, in accordance with the Will of God, for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ, the Church.

On the occasion of this gift of the love of our Savior, we wish to address to you once again some words of hope, consolation, and edification, especially in view of the continuing economic and social crisis in our homeland and in the world.

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The third year of this severe crisis is drawing near to an end, and the hands of those newly made poor and homeless, which they are extending to our Shepherds, parishes, and monasteries, are constantly on the increase, along with agony regarding the morrow, survival, and the basic necessities of life.

This reality, which causes us great distress, reminds us of the compunctious exhortation of St. John Chrysostomos:

[Just as the Lord and the Disciples went out to the Mount of Olives after the Mystical Supper,] let us also go forth to the hands of the poor, since this place is for us the Mount of Olives; and the multitude of the poor are olive trees, which have been planted in the House of God, dripping with the oil that will profit us there [at our meeting with Christ the Bridegroom] (“Homily LXXXII on St. Matthew,” §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LVIII, col. 744).

In our previous Exhortations, we made mention of our responsibility, at a collective and at a parochial level, for this crisis, since as Christians we are not functioning as a community in such a way as to manifest the Mystery of the love of God for the world.

This is, therefore, an opportunity, and especially now, not for passive self-criticism, but for active self-knowledge; it is time for us radically to change our behavior, with our focus always on the parish and with ever-expanding horizons, so that our concern for others, for our brothers and sisters, might have not a static, but a dynamic character.

We ought to work unceasingly on cultivating a collective social conscience—not an abstract and indeterminate one but one that is concrete and palpable—if we wish to exercise our God-given freedom

in a responsible manner and to be good stewards of God's gifts, as well as reliable and sober citizens.

This means, in practical terms, that we should always give preference and priority to what is to the good and to the advantage of all at every level, with an attitude of self-sacrifice, with Evangelical self-denial, and with Christocentric volunteerism.

Christians should never forget that the first and true volunteer was our Savior Christ, Who proclaimed: "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give My life a ransom for many" (cf. St. Matthew 10:28).

By His voluntary self-emptying, poverty and sacrifice for the salvation of the world, our Lord proved to be an eternal and incomparable model of volunteerism. And He urges Christians to emulate Him, that is, to offer their gifts of Grace to dry tears, to heal wounds, to serve suffering mankind: the poor, the homeless, the sick, the widow, the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned....

Our voluntary offering to those suffering undeservedly renders us gods by Grace. "Become a god to the unfortunate by imitating the mercy of God," St. Gregory the Theologian teaches us ("Homily XIV, 'On Love for the Poor,'" §26, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxv, col. 892c).

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In the Acts of the Apostles we have a very striking image of a Christian society with a collective conscience:

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.... Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need (Acts 4:32, 34-35).

A blessed fruit of love, the New Commandment, is the union of Christians in one heart and soul, and a result of such union is holding "all things in common," for our common use and for the relief of the needy. As we see in the Acts, those who had were not possessive; they

did not reckon anything to be their own, but were only trustees of the good things of God—and not directly, moreover, but through the Holy Apostles, their spiritual Fathers.

“[A]nd great Grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33). The Grace of our Lord was poured upon all of the faithful unstintingly, so that they were strong and free in mutual love, unanimity, and non-acquisitiveness. For them, the words “they had all things in common” were a matter of experience.

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Beloved Children in the Lord:

We address a fervent paternal appeal and exhortation to your love. Let pastors work vigilantly for the cultivation of this social ethos of Christians, this collective social conscience; and let Christians constantly immerse themselves in their social responsibility, making common whatever they have been given by God and distributing to others “according as they have need.”

Negligence, indifference, and accursed self-love, which lead to “a loss of social awareness,” making the Christian “alien to the love of the Lord.” “[T]his it is whereby we are able to become equal with God, to have mercy and compassion; when we do not have this, we are deprived of everything.” “[H]e who shares with the poor will place himself in the portion of Him Who became poor for our sake.” (See St. Irenæus of Lyon, “Epistle to Victor,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. VII(B), col. 1232B; St. John Chrysostomos, “Commentary on the Epistle of St. James,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXIV, col. 1401B; St. Gregory of Nyssa, “First Oration on the Beatitudes,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XLIV, col. 1208C).

We conclude our humble exhortations with a reminder of the Apostolic injunction concerning the social obligations of the faithful: “Let brotherly love continue; be not forgetful to show hospitality to strangers.... Remember them that are in bonds...and them which suffer adversity.... [T]o do good and to impart good forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:1–3, 16).

Do not forget to do good and to be generous, for thereby other people, and first and foremost your brothers and sisters, share with you in your goods.

Through this vision of a collective social conscience, far removed from complacency, compromise, conservatism of a selfish kind, passivity, stinginess, and introversion, we will demonstrate our authenticity, offer witness to the Resurrection, and instill hope in the world for the temporary present and the eternal future.

May the blessing of the *Theotokos* and all the Saints, by the power of the life-giving Cross, preserve us in deifying communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

For the Holy Synod in Resistance

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