

# SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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## JULY 25, 2010

### THE FALLING ASLEEP OF ST. ANNA

*Saint Anna* was the daughter of the priest Matthan and his wife Mary. She was of the tribe of Levi and the lineage of Aaron. According to Tradition, she died peacefully in Jerusalem at age 79, before the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos.

During the reign of St Justinian the Emperor (527-565), a church was built in her honor at Deutera. Emperor Justinian II (685-695; 705-711) restored her church, since St Anna had appeared to his pregnant wife. It was at this time that her body and maphorion (veil) were transferred to Constantinople.

*Saint Eupraxia* was daughter of the Constantinople dignitary Antigonos, a kinsman of the holy Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395).

Antigonos and his wife Eupraxia were pious and bestowed generous alms on the destitute. A daughter was born to them, whom they also named Eupraxia. Antigonos soon died, and the mother withdrew from the imperial court. She went with her daughter to Egypt, on the pretext of inspecting her properties. Near the Thebaid there was a women's monastery with a strict monastic rule. The life of the inhabitants attracted the pious widow. She wanted to bestow aid on this monastery, but the abbess Theophila refused and said that the nuns had fully devoted themselves to God and that they did not wish the acquisition of any earthly riches. The abbess consented to accept only candles, incense and oil.

The younger Eupraxia was seven years old at this time. She liked the monastic way of life and she decided to remain at the monastery. Her pious mother did not stand in the way of her daughter's wish. Taking leave of her daughter at the monastery, Eupraxia asked her daughter to be humble, never to dwell upon her noble descent, and to serve God and her sisters.

In a short while the mother died. Having learned of her death, the emperor St Theodosius sent St Eupraxia the Younger a letter in which he reminded her that her parents had betrothed her to the son of a certain senator, intending that she marry him when she reached age fifteen. The Emperor desired that she honor the commitment made by her parents. In reply, St Eupraxia wrote to the emperor that she had already become a bride of Christ, and she requested of the emperor to dispose of her properties, distributing the proceeds for the use of the Church and the needy.

*Continued on page 8...*

# AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING

## APOLYTIKION. MODE 8.

**Y**ou descended from on high, O compassion-ate One, and condescended to be buried for three days, so that from the passions You might set us free. Our life and resurrection, O Lord, glory be to You.

## APOLYTIKION OF ST. ANNA. MODE 4.

**Y**ou carried within your womb her who was pregnant with Life, \* the Mother of God, O godly-minded Anna, and thus \* rejoicing you were today \* translated unto heaven, where they live who rejoice now. \* And you entreat forgiveness of offences for the faithful \* who honor you with longing, O ever-blessed one.

## APOLYTIKION FOR THE CHURCH. MODE 5.

**T**he holy Apostle, the All-hymned Luke, \* who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ \* as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles, \* and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ. \* Let us praise with sacred hymns as a physician, \* who heals the infirmities of man, \* and the ailments of nature, \* who cleanses spiritual wounds, and prays unceasingly for our souls.

## KONTAKION. MODE 2.

**T**oday we observe the memory of Christ's forebears, and also we pray that we might receive their aid, so that all of us may be freed from tribulations, as we cry aloud, 'Be with us, O Lord our God, who glorified them as You were pleased to do.'

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ ΠΛ. Δ.

**Ἐ**ξ ὕψους κατήλθες ὁ εὐσπλαγχνος, Ἐταφὴν κατεδέξω τριήμερον, ἵνα ἡμᾶς ἐλευθερώσης τῶν παθῶν. Ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ Ἀνάστασις ἡμῶν, Κύριε δόξα σοι.

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ.

**Ζ**ωὴν τὴν κύησασαν, ἐκνοφόρησας, ἀγνήν Θεομήτορα, θεόφρον Ἄννα, διὸ πρὸς λήξιν οὐράνιον, ἔνθα εὐφραينوμένων, κατοικία ἐν δόξῃ, χαίρουσα νῦν μετέστης, τοῖς τιμῶσί σε πόθῳ, πταισμάτων αἰτουμένη, ἰλασμὸν ἀεμακάριστε.

## ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΝΑΟΥ. ΠΛ. Α΄.

**Λ**ουκάν τον πανύμνητον καὶ ἅγιον Ἀπόστολον, τὸν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας γνωστὸν συνθέτην τῶν Πράξεων τῶν Ἀποστόλων, τὸν τε σεμνὸν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου Χριστοῦ ὑπομνηματιστήν, ἀξίως τιμήσωμεν ὕμνοις ὁσίοις, ὡς νοσημάτων ἀνθρωπίνων καὶ φυσικῶν ἀσθενειῶν θεραπευτήν, τὸν καθαίροντα πληγὰς τοῦ πνεύματος, καὶ ἀδιαλείπτως πρεσβεύοντα ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.

## KONTAKION. ΗΧΟΣ Β΄.

**Π**ρογόνων Χριστοῦ, τὴν μνήμην ἑορτάζομεν, τὴν τούτων πιστῶς, αἰτούμενοι βοήθειαν, τοῦ ῥυθθῆναι ἅπαντας, ἀπὸ πάσης θλίψεως, τοὺς κραυγάζοντας, ὁ Θεὸς γενοῦ μεθ' ἡμῶν, ὁ τούτους δοξάσας ὡς ἠδὲ δόκησας.

# THE READINGS OF THE DAY

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## EPISTLE READING

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO  
THE GALATIANS 4:22-27

**B**RETHREN, Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in travail; for the children of the desolate one are many more than the children of her that is married.”

## GOSPEL READING

MATTHEW 14:22-34

**A**t that time, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying “Take heart, it is I; have no fear.” And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “O man of little faith, why did you doubt?” And when they entered the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.

“*If I am faced with two paths and I am in doubt, then even if all human wisdom, experience, and tradition point to one of these, but I feel that Christ would have followed the other — then all my doubts should immediately disappear and I should choose to follow Christ in spite of all the experience, tradition and wisdom that are opposed to it.*”

—MOTHER MARIA SKOBTSOVA (1891-1945)”

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES: Saturday, July 31, Great Vespers, 6pm

### DONATIONS REQUESTED

A donation box has been placed in the Narthex for our Long-range planning study - gifts of any amount are greatly appreciated towards the completion of this project.

### FASTING PERIOD BEGINS ON AUGUST 1

On August 1st we will inaugurate the fast in preparation for the celebration of our Lord's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and the Falling Asleep of the Most Holy Theotokos. During this period of fasting, we will celebrate the Paraklesis to the Most Holy Theotokos on August 2, 4, 9, 11, 13. If you would like to submit names of Orthodox Christians to be commemorated during the Paraklesis, please complete the enclosed Commemoration Form.

### REMEMBER THE CHURCH THIS SUMMER

If you are planning to travel during the summer months, do not forget the needs of the Church. Our financial obligations continue, even when you are traveling. Prior to leaving town, please remember to send your stewardship offerings to the Church.

### FESTIVAL MEETING

We will have a Greek Festival meeting on Sunday, August 1, following Divine Services. This will be our first organizational meeting for the upcoming festival which will be held on Sept. 18 - 19. Everyone's help is greatly appreciated.

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Volunteers are needed for our Sunday School program. If you are interested in helping, please speak with Fr. Michael.

“Someone who bears in himself all the stain of Adam's sin and is called to salvation through the blood of Christ has before him just one goal: the salvation of his soul. By itself this goal determines everything for him. It determines his hostility toward anything that stands in the way of salvation. It defines all the means used to attain it. A human being here on earth is placed, as it were, at the start of an endless path toward God. Everything is either a hindrance or a help along that path. In essence there are two polar entities: the eternal Creator of the world, the Redeemer of my soul, and this miserable soul of mine which must strive toward him. What are the means for progress along this path? The first step is the ascetic mortification of one's flesh. It is prayer and fasting.”

—MOTHER MARIA SKOBTSOVA  
(1891-1945)

**DOGMA AND DOGMATICS:**  
**ON COGNIZANCE AND FAITH:**  
**PART 2, SEC. B : ON FAITH, CONTINUED...**

*By Metropolitan John of Pergamus*

**W**hat do we see in this verse, in this definition of faith? Well, exactly those elements that I have tried to describe and shall analyze again. The first element is that faith is knowledge. It is an existential identification. Notice how the author uses the word substance - 'Hypostasis': "...faith is the substance..." . The Hypostasis is an existential expression. We can translate it, with exactly that which I named existential identification; that something actually does exist; that it is precisely this, and not something else. It was because of this interpretation of Hypostasis, that the term was officially included in the 4th century Dogmatics. Therefore, when we say that faith is hypostatical, we mean that with faith we can acquire recognition, or identification, of a being. And naturally, "...of things" – or, similarly, of points in the same direction, ontologically.

But the second element is that this knowledge, this identification, this hypostasis, is eschatological. It is the "substance of things hoped for...", of things that are to come, things that we do not have before us at this moment. Therefore, it is with faith that one turns towards the future, towards the End of Time, and one acknowledges as substantial (notice the term substance) those things that from a physical aspect are without substance. Hence the second part of the expression, which clarifies the first part : "...the grasping of things not visible.." , things, which we cannot see – and here, the term "visible" has a certain Platonic background. The Epistle to Hebrews cannot be interpreted in any other way. When he says "things not visible", he

is placing his finger on the Greeks' focal point of knowledge, which was vision. Vision, therefore, generally means knowledge. The things that can be observed are those that convince us of their existence. Things "not seen" are those that are not subject to scrutiny by the senses in general. Hence, it is not a matter of vision alone, but any kind of scrutiny by the senses. Now, where is the importance here?

The importance lies in that which I mentioned in an earlier lesson; that, while we cannot claim faith in those things that we can see, i.e., things that can be subjected to scrutiny by our senses (and this is where we must broaden the scope and not limit ourselves to the senses, but must also include logic, i.e., whatever convinces us logically, whatever convinces us through our senses, whatever convinces us objectively), on the contrary, we can claim faith when something convinces us, but not objectively, on account of our being obliged to recognize its existence. Thus, the notion of freedom once again presents itself, in faith. We do not believe because we must believe; or because we are obliged to believe. Whatever I said about knowledge previously, the same things apply, to faith.

My presence here is perceived by your senses, by your vision; it is important for you, from the aspect of knowledge. You cannot say that you do not recognize me, or do not identify me ontologically, because it is imposed on you by your senses; it is a compulsory knowledge for you. This is due to the fact that knowledge can be grasped; my substance/hypostasis is grasped by your senses, or by the sens-

es of your mind - by your reasoning. Whichever the case, whether by reasoning or by the senses, that which is important, is that you cannot avoid acknowledging the hypostasis of a being, therefore, based on the definition in Hebrews, this cannot be called "Faith".

Faith, therefore, is not something that the nature of things imposes on us as compulsory knowledge, nor is it something that is imposed on us by experience or by history; instead, it is that which comes to us as a hypostasis from the hereafter; it does not come from within history, or experience, or from the "not visible". Which means that faith is not derived from things governed by nature and the senses.

In other words, faith calls upon us to take a leap beyond compulsory knowledge. We cannot combine these two things. And this compulsory knowledge is a very sensitive thing, because it can also have a psychological inference in which case, faith can be interpreted as trust between two persons. A child trusts its mother. Would we call this faith? This is not what the term implies here, because this trust springs from a natural and empirical cause. The child has become convinced that its mother naturally loves it. From as early as gestation, the maternal filter has convinced it that its mother cares for it, and it is thus convinced empirically when it sees the dawn of life, where again the mother is there to take care of it. This is why a child cannot be fooled as to who loves it and who doesn't. It has tremendous intuition that comes from a grasping of "things not visible", but very well "perceived".

Obviously, this kind of trust cannot comprise the definition of faith; it is just plain trust, which is the way many people often perceive faith.

I would say it is something much more dramatic. The dramatic thing about faith is that you are actually executing a giant leap, or a turn. What happens

then? Your basis, your hypostasis, no longer reside in those things that nature offers you as secure and governable things. Hence, your faith is not supported on the prior experience of these already confirmed things; it comes from that turnabout, towards things that cannot be grasped by the senses.

Faith, therefore, involves a non-support of our security, of our substance, by anything that can be grasped logically by our senses or our experience, because that would comprise a form of compulsion. From a positive viewpoint, it means placing our security in whatever cannot be grasped by our senses and cannot be confirmed by our experience. And when I say experience, I am referring to historical experience, as well as psychological experience, which may be pursuant to faith, but is not a presupposition and a basis for faith.

This lifestyle was the one pursued by the first Christians, in a way that is difficult for us to comprehend today.

All these definitions of faith, which we also see in Hebrews and are taken for granted during the baptismal experience, had the following prerequisites:

Upon being baptized, and subsequently embracing faith, the first Christians were asked to thoroughly change the basis of their hypostasis. The source of their identity could no longer be found in the things that other people resorted to. This meant chiefly two things, two kinds of relations, which placed them under crisis. And that is why faith was called "crisis": because they went through this important crisis, this significant turnabout, this turn from the West to the East.

One kind was biological relations. And this is a basic kind, because it is the first thing that gives us a sense of security. I mentioned the child earlier on. Its security was founded in its physical relations with its parents, with its family. If, therefore, it is

removed from inside these relations, and you then ask it to identify itself, to relate itself, or be identified by us, in other words, to be recognized independently of these relations, then you are asking it to be uprooted, to make a change in its hypostasis.

The second kind, which was also determinative for one's sense of security, for one's identity, is that of social relations; specifically, the kind that existed between the first Christians, as it still does today, i.e., the political element, or civilian. In other words, imagine a person travelling without a passport; a person who is not acknowledged by any public authorities. He would be the most non-existent person; essentially the most ignored and unrecognized. He cannot even identify himself; neither can he have a sense of security. Because security stems from the fact that I belong to a certain community, to a certain country, which can vouch not only for my integrity, but for my very existence – that I indeed exist. Quite often, one wonders why birth certificates are required. There can be no more obvious thing, than the fact we were born; nevertheless, someone has to certify that we were born, otherwise, without this social factor's certification of our birth, it would seem that we were never born. Therefore, if we are not recognized by the state, that we belong to it, we have no social basis for security. Just as if we had no family, no parents, we would have no biological basis.

These two bases are the ones that define our identity, and these are also the governable bases, of things "visible".

Here is the premise, on which the definition of faith relies, and the first Christians' experience was of this kind. They were asked to do two things, with their faith and their baptism. Firstly, they had to forsake even their family. To the extent where we read in the Gospel that "if you do not forsake your kindred, you cannot follow me", as Christ

said. Luke also stresses this point, with these harsh words: "if you do not hate your kindred, you cannot follow me"; in other words, a complete uprooting. You cannot attain faith unless you uproot yourself from the security provided by your biological hypostasis.

The second thing – which again applied to the first Christians but does not apply to us – is that they had no civilian recognition. It was necessary for Constantine the Great to come along, and bestow legal recognition to Christians. They were – in a way – outcasts, and they lived as outcasts. And that is why Paul says in his Epistle to Hebrews that "we have no permanent city here, but we yearn for the one that is to come". This is a paraphrasing of the definition of faith. "City" here implies the constitution. "Our constitution exists in the heavens". "We have no city" in this context means that we do not have any civilian hypostasis, we have no identification, we have no passport as Christians.

With baptism therefore, you lose your passport. You acquire an identity that is not acknowledged by the state as being yours. And what happens then? "We yearn for the city that is to come". Here we have the eschatological reference. Our "city", the one that has naturalized us as citizens, the one that gives us our identity, is "yet to come". It is not yet present. So, imagine being a naturalized citizen of a city that has not yet established its presence in history. This is indeed faith; this giant leap, the certainty that is acquired that we really do exist, that we really do have an identity which Someone acknowledges Whom we cannot see, and Who promises us certain things in the future and, based on these promises, to believe that you truly have an hypostasis, an identity.

Therefore, this turnabout towards things beyond our control or as yet unconfirmed historically, empirically or biologically, this is the essence

of faith. And that is why faith is interwoven with freedom; because, as explained earlier on, this faith does not stem from any certainty governed by logic or experience. Not even when, through faith, God reveals Himself to us and we become aware of this relationship, and consequently acknowledge it as an experience. Again, faith must not rely on, or stem from, these empirical experiences. Quite often, despite the absence of any such evidence – or, when God often remains silent and withdrawn and we do not see Him, even in a spiritual experience – that is when faith is true faith: when someone acknowledges that God exists and that His promises are realities, even when experience and logic tell us differently.

We could then say that faith is that giant leap towards a Being, whom we believe loves us, no matter what. Regardless of how much evidence to the opposite we may have, we believe that this Person never abandons us, that it loves us, and that we consider it an inseparable part of our existence, and that we cannot exist otherwise. Of course we could, as we are free to do so, as we are not objectively obliged to acknowledge His existence; but when we – of our own free will - make this loving relationship part of our existence, we are in fact acknowledging His existence and are hinging our security from it, and not from our experience or any other objective realities.

The first Christians actually made these giant leaps, as a result of which, faith had acquired a special content. The content was the acquisition of an identity that was now given by God, and also an eschatological community; a community that will come into being, in the future. Therefore, you are not hinging your faith, your security, in any of those things that a state normally supplies, or those things that a family gives you ...

*To Be Continued...*

St Eupraxia, when she reached the age of maturity, intensified her ascetic efforts all the more. At first she partook of food once a day, then after two days, three days, and finally, once a week. She combined her fasting with the fulfilling of all her monastic obediences. She toiled humbly in the kitchen, she washed dishes, she swept the premises and served the sisters with zeal and love. The sisters also loved the humble Eupraxia. But one of them envied her and explained away all her efforts as a desire for glory. This sister began to trouble and to reproach her, but the holy virgin did not answer her back, and instead humbly asked forgiveness.

The Enemy of the human race caused the saint much misfortune. Once, while getting water, she fell into the well, and the sisters pulled her out. Another time, St Eupraxia was chopping wood for the kitchen, and cut herself on the leg with an axe. When she carried an armload of wood up the ladder, she stepped on the hem of her garment. She fell, and a sharp splinter cut her near the eyes. All these woes St Eupraxia endured with patience, and when they asked her to rest, she would not consent.

For her efforts, the Lord granted St Eupraxia a gift of wonderworking. Through her prayers she healed a deaf and dumb crippled child, and she delivered a demon-possessed woman from infirmity. They began to bring the sick for healing to the monastery. The holy virgin humbled herself all the more, counting herself as least among the sisters. Before the death of St Eupraxia, the abbess had a vision. The holy virgin was transported into a splendid palace, and stood before the Throne of the Lord, surrounded by holy angels. The All-Pure Virgin showed St Eupraxia around the luminous chamber and said that She had made it ready for her, and that she would come into this habitation after ten days.

The abbess and the sisters wept bitterly, not wanting to lose St Eupraxia. The saint herself, in learning about the vision, wept because she was not prepared for death. She asked the abbess to pray that the Lord would grant her one year more for repentance. The abbess consoled St Eupraxia and said that the Lord would grant her His great mercy. Suddenly St Eupraxia sensed herself not well, and having sickened, she soon peacefully died at the age of thirty.