

the

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“Do the work of an evangelist” - 2 Tim 4:5



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The Glory of the Logos' Incarnation

By the V. Rev. Fr. Timothy Cremeens, PhD

In the last issue of the Orthodox Evangelist (Fall, 2016), I wrote about the wonderful power of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we must embrace it in order to be transformed, in this issue I want to address the absolute

cornerstone, foundation and bedrock of the Orthodox Christian Faith; the Incarnation, the taking on of flesh, by the second member of the holy and blessed Godhead, the Word, or Logos, of God the Father. There are many important themes in the holy Scriptures regarding the one true God, as I wrote in the last issue on the Cross, but also the Lord's suffering, His miracles, His love for His fallen people, His mercy, redemption, sanctification, His victory over death, hell and the grave, His second and glorious coming, etc. However, all of these themes hinge upon the most important event in all of human history; past, present or future, and that is the Incarnation, the taking on flesh by the pre-eternal Son of God, Jesus!

The holy Apostle and Evangelist John opens his unique Gospel with these words, *“In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God and Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made....in Him was life (zoë), and the life (zoë) was the light (phos) of men...and the Word became flesh*

and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1-4, 14) John clearly shows us by these passages that the Logos, the Word was from the beginning, or more accurately the Logos was beyond time, He was before time even existed. He was with the Father and He, the Logos, Himself is God. He together with the Father created everything that exists. Then, that Creator God, the one who made the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon, the billions of stars and every planet, every tree and creature on earth, above the earth and in the seas, the Logos, became FLESH. This is THE cornerstone; this is center of the mystery of our Faith. For without the Incarnation, the en-fleshment of the eternally existing Logos, all the life, teachings, actions, miracles, suffering death and resurrection of that en-fleshed Logos would have meant nothing! There would be NO salvation from sin, NO transformation, NO healing, NO joy, NO hope for tomorrow.

We celebrate the beginning of this miracle on March 25. The Annunciation of the Good News (evangelion) that the Logos would

become flesh came from the mouth of the Archangel Gabriel as he announced to the all-pure Virgin Mary, living in Nazareth and perhaps as young as 14 or 16 years of age. The Archangel startled the young girl with his words, *“...behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest...”* Then Mary replied and said, *“How can this be since I do not know a man?”* To which the Archangel responds, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”* Mary's final words to the Archangel were, *“Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”* (Luke 1:31-32, 34-35, 38) At that very moment eternity stepped into time! The God who spoke the world into existence, He who was above and beyond time and space came and dwelt as a newly formed human life within the womb of the Virgin Mary. As the hymn writer St. Romanos the Melodist penned, *“He whom the heavens could not contain becomes contained within the womb of the Virgin?”* What a miracle, what a glorious moment! At that moment all of creation was changed for the Creator Himself now becomes fully a part of His creation. God comes and dwells among us, truly and irrevocably, Emmanuel. However, since He took on our flesh and joined Himself to our humanity He condescended and had to go through the human stages of gestation just like any other human child. If ultra-sounds existed back then we could have seen

Him develop within the womb of the Virgin.

Finally, "...when the fullness of time had come...." (Galatians 4:4), when the Logos made flesh had matured within the Virgin's womb, after Joseph had been comforted in a dream to take Mary, even though she was pregnant, not by human will, but by the decree and actions of the Holy Spirit, and the neighbors' and family's tongues were certainly wagging with gossip and judgement, the Roman Emperor issued his decree that everyone in Judea should be registered in their family's town of origin in order that they might have a record of the families so they could be taxed by the Roman government occupying Israel. Joseph and Mary, being of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, traveled to Bethlehem, the City of David, to register. As they approached the town Mary's time to deliver her baby hastened. The Apostle and Evangelist Luke informs us that in the town of Bethlehem there was no room in any of the town's inns for Joseph and Mary to seek shelter, probably because the town was crowded with others coming to register. Instead, Joseph and Mary found lodging in what the early Church Father St. Justin Martyr tells us was a cave that also served as a stable. Here, certainly among animals who inhabited the stable-cave, the pre-existent Logos, the Word of God who was in the beginning with God and was God, the one who created the cave in which He came into the world, the animals who surrounded

the manger, His very mother Mary and His guardian Joseph came forth from a virginal womb and humanity "beheld His glory"! The prophet Micah had seen this in the Spirit centuries before when he declared, "*But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you will he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose going forth has been from of old, from everlasting.*" (Micah 5:2) The heavenly bodies announced His coming through the Star that was seen and interpreted by the Magi as heralding the coming of a new King, an angel proclaimed His birth to a



group of shepherds and then was joined by a great multitude of heavenly hosts praising God at His coming! What a MAGNIFICENT miracle! The God of the universe, of the Cosmos becomes a baby FOR US! The glory of it all cannot be explained! Words fail in communicating this awesome mystery! The tongue stammers trying to proclaim its wonder! St. Athanasios the Great sums up the reason so simply, yet so profoundly, "God became man, that Man might become God." (On the Incarnation).

Dearest Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is why we can and should rejoice at this glorious Feast of our Lord's Nativity. The Mystery, which had first been declared to our fallen mother Eve when her Creator promised that her "seed" would

bruise the heel of the serpent (Genesis 3:15) began to be fulfilled when the Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary in Nazareth that she would give birth is revealed to us today. We take up God in our arms and we hold Him close to our breast as His mother did. We shower Him with kisses as Joseph assuredly did. We cradle His flesh and glory over the fact that it is that same flesh that covers us, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27). We are amazed at His perfectly formed fingers and toes and we look into His eyes and we see the divine Love of the Father that was and is so magnanimous that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we may not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) And we, who now stand on this side of the dispensation, see that child grown to a man, who again because of love for us takes our sin upon Himself and pours our His life-blood that we may be saved from sin, judgment, death, the grave and hell. He descends to hell in that flesh and He sets the captives free and now, in that same flesh, OUR FLESH, our human but glorified flesh, sits at the right hand of God the Father and He prays for us. And in that human flesh, which He took from the Virgin Mary, the greatest woman that humanity had to offer, He will come again to raise the living and the dead and bring us into His Kingdom! He put on US; our flesh, our nature, now if we would put on HIM we too enter into all the great blessings He has provided, we become by grace everything He is by nature (St. Athanasios, On the Incarnation). ALL of this has been accomplished, and will be fulfilled because He did not despise the Virgin's womb but joined Himself to our flesh. We are now flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone and to reflect upon it should do nothing less than make us shout, "Glory to You, O Lord, glory to You!"

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A Christmas Greeting

By Alex Kourtesis / Board of Directors

Priest, mentor, friend, spiritual father, theologian, a true man of God, a person consumed by the Holy Spirit. These are the words and phrases that I read from the numerous letters and articles that described my Uncle and spiritual father, Eusebius Stephanou. Nearly fifty years ago, my Uncle was touched by the Holy Spirit in such a way that would forever change his life. He left the comfort of a successful Church, a steady paycheck, a promise that one day He would be a hierarchy of the Orthodox Church. For a life of unknown, criticism and disarray. Father Eusebius knew that what he felt was nothing of this world. His life and purpose was no longer of this world, for he was a new creature in Christ. The old things passed away and all things have become new. His passion from that day forward was to preach the word of God and share with the world the power of the Holy Spirit and how it can be life changing.

Today, we would like to continue to share the message to all our Orthodox brethren. With the passing of Father Eusebius, this year

brought great challenges, but not unexpected challenges. We here at St. Symeon's put a plan in place 2 years ago with father's blessing, of the future of St. Symeon the New Theologian Orthodox Renewal Ministry. To continue to push the message that Father Eusebius started a half century ago.

We want to ensure you that Father Eusebius' work will continue. We have established a website and have numerous videos of Fathers' sermons on You-Tube. We have also put some of his books on Amazon or can be attained through contacting the ministry. We have put numerous editions of past newsletters and brochures on the website which can be viewed for free. There is also a Facebook page that will be continually updated with upcoming news and announcements. Along with updating Father Eusebius' works from the past, look for new faces, such as priests and laymen to post articles in our newsletters and on line. We want to ensure you that His ministry will not be forgotten, and we want to make all his works accessible for everyone. Lets not

forget that membership of our Orthodox Christian Churches have been dwindling.

The message of the living Christ is needed now more than ever. We encourage you to support your local Orthodox Churches. Support the priests, encourage them with your inspiring words of How Christ is alive and how the power of the Holy Spirit can be life-changing. Let the priests know we must put Christ first in our Church to be successful. Attend the Bible Studies at your local churches. If you don't have a Bible Study, start one! Pray that the Lord will guide you in your role to help further spread Spiritual Renewal in our Orthodox Churches.

We would love to hear from you, if you have any thoughts or experiences you would like to share. Our email address is: st-symeont@cox.net. Look us up on our website or Facebook. If you would like to view our videos on You-Tube, simply type in the name "Father Eusebius Stephanou." God bless all of you and may the Lord continue His work in your lives. Your friend in Christ, Alex Kourtesis / Secretary Treasurer.

A Miracle of Healing

By Gregory Doublas

I wanted to share with you the miracle the Lord Jesus gave to me on April 25th 2016, so that you may rejoice also and praise His Holy name. It's a big story but I will make it as brief as possible. Towards the end of 2015, an MRI test revealed I had kidney cancer and on January 12, 2016 I had my left kidney removed. Prior to the surgery, on December 23, 2015, I had a CT scan that had revealed that I also had multiple nodules in my lungs. It appeared that the cancer had spread.

But the Lord not only healed me from this metastatic cancer, a very dangerous cancer, but during the most difficult times I went through, He gave me the peace that passes all understanding. He also gave me hope and strength to overcome the attacks of sorrow, condemnation and hopelessness the enemy tried to bring upon me.

On January 19, 2016, a week after the surgery, I visited with the cancer doctor in Fort Wayne, Indiana and was told that my kidney

cancer under the microscope showed to be very aggressive. This doctor suggested I seek a second opinion and referred me to the IU Medical Center in Indianapolis where I met with a kidney cancer specialist on February 12, 2016.

During this meeting with the kidney cancer expert at the IU Medical Center, I found out for the first time how dangerous this cancer was, and at the end of the meeting, I asked the doctor about the time I had left, and he notified me of the

average life span, from the time one is diagnosed with kidney cancer to the end, is an average of about 24 months. There were no words to describe how I felt from the news I had received, and as I was driving back to Fort Wayne, the enemy filled my mind with all kinds of bad thoughts, but praise the Lord who was with me and reminded me of Psalm 112:7, which says: *“Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments. He will not be afraid of evil tidings because his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord”*, and as I through on the Word of God, peace came upon me.

After this first meeting in Indianapolis, I realized the Lord was my only hope to be saved from this cancer, and I began seeking the Lord more than I ever did through prayer and meditating in His Word. I wrote on paper Bible verses that spoke of hope, peace, healing, faith and deliverance. I mentioned them and spoke out the Word throughout the day, every day. As a result of the promises of His Word, an expectation for a miracle began to rise in me.

On February 25, 2016, I went back for a second visit at the IU Medical Center expecting a miracle. In the morning I had various tests and in the afternoon I met the doctor, but while I was waiting, a man I never met called me and asked to pray for me. I didn't know it then, but I know now, through that phone call the Lord gave me strength for what was going to happen a little later that afternoon.

The doctor came in to the room and to my utter sorrow he told me the nodules in my lungs had multiplied in comparison to the CT scan of December 2015, and in particular, the nodules that were big at that time, became larger still. Here I was expecting a miracle but instead had received devastating news. I cannot describe the despair that came upon me. By the grace of God I manage to say: *“the Lord will provide a way for me just as He did to the Israelites at the Red Sea.”* The doctor replied: “the

pill will provide a way for you.”

That afternoon, I didn't receive the miracle I expected, but deep in my heart I believed the Lord had something better for me, and I knew I needed to trust Him. But the truth is, I left the doctor's office that afternoon being in the depths of despair.

The doctor gave me information on four options available for treatment I was to consider, and told me to call him back after I made my choice. On the way back, I couldn't stop the tears from my eyes as I was driving to Fort Wayne. But I heard the Lord in my heart saying: “You are not alone. Cast it out.” He let me know that I was to cast out the spirit of sorrow and grief that had come upon me. As I did what He told me, my tears dried up and I forgot the bad news though nothing had happened. The peace from above continued for the days and weeks that followed.

The Lord gave me hope, and instead of thinking about the cancer I went about doing my business as nothing had happened. But being in prayer and in His Word throughout the days that followed. Through His Word, my faith and trust in the Lord began to increase, and the expectation for a miracle started to grow in me again.

On April 25, 2016, I went back to the IU Medical Center for the third appointment expecting a miracle again, and this time more so than before. After the usual tests in the morning, I met the doctor in the afternoon. He came in the office and he acted a little strange. I thought something was up. He gave me a meticulous examination, pressing at my lymph-nodes and asking all kinds of questions as though it was the first time had seen me. Finally, with great difficulty he said: something happened, and I cannot explain it. It has happened in rare occasions and very little is written about it. You had a “spontaneous regression” he said.

I knew instantly this was great news, and immediately it felt like I came out from under some sort of

cover which was over me, and it had broken off. It was like I came out of the grave. I cannot adequately explain it since I never had an experience like this before. The doctor continued; “the CT scan showed all of the small nodules you had in your lungs are gone and the large nodules became very small.”

I raised my hands and praised the Lord Jesus, He gave me a miracle; I praise you Lord I shouted again and again full of joy. I said to the doctor, this is a miracle, do you believe in Jesus? He didn't respond but finally he said, well Greg, those are two different things, I am a doctor and I need to find out what happened. I said, you are not going to find anything because it is a miracle!

I cannot adequately explain how it feels to be free from a death sentence, and from the burden it had brought upon me. It is a very special feeling to know I had received a miracle from the Lord. On June 23, 2016, I went back for a two month follow up visit. After the doctor examined the results of the tests, he came in to see me having another doctor with him. He told me the tests showed nearly everything was gone from my lungs.

But the miracle continued. He asked me if I would want to participate in a research study so they could study the cause of my healing. But I know with all my heart the Lord gave me a miracle. On September 22, 2016, I went back for a three month follow up visit with the doctor. The CT scan revealed that everything had cleared up from my lungs. Praise the Lord Jesus.

I know the Lord is my Healer, and He is my strength that sustained me during the most difficult times with hope and peace. I praise Him and I give Him all the glory!

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