



73<sup>rd</sup> Year

January 5, 2025

Pamphlet #1 (3736)

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## **THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (2 Timothy 4:5-8)**

### **A crown of righteousness from the Righteous Judge**

*TIMOTHY, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

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## **THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Today's Scriptural reading, my brethren, contains Pauline advice for managing the evangelical work. It concludes with the Apostle to the Nations acknowledging that he is nearing the completion of his missionary ministry, and that his martyrical end is near. Therefore, he eagerly awaits the crown of righteousness from the righteous judge, Jesus. This is the just reward awaiting those who have shown their love for Christ, not just with words, but in specific ways that Paul describes as undeniable proofs of love for God.

### **The ascesis of spiritual life**

The first is the ascesis of the good fight, which is a fundamental pillar of Orthodox spiritual life. This involves keeping Christ's commandments, experiencing the Sacred Mysteries, waging war against the passions, and making constant efforts to form and

establish Christ within us. The one who does asceticism in spiritual life is the truly spiritual person, as noted by the blessed Fr. Aimilianos of Simonopetra: "A spiritual person, a true Christian, is one who has vowed to God, through his baptism and afterwards, when he has grown up, with all his heart, to always stay close to Him and with Him. A spiritual person is the athlete who emerged from life, who stands out from the crowds of people, and runs with all the speed of his soul, to conquer the heavens... and the kingdom of heaven. He is not just a good person. The spiritual person knows that he needs strong wings, and these wings are the wings of the Holy Spirit.

## **Love for God**

The next way to express love for God is to complete the journey. It is not enough to only be a member of the Church. One must reach the end, faithful in his love for Christ, struggling to please God and not people. Unfortunately, there are many cases of Christians who, although they start their spiritual life well, go astray along the way and get lost. Their faith is not grounded in church experience, and they are led to and fro by the temptation to rationalize everything. People who drift between the spirit of God and the world do not complete the journey of love, and they risk losing the crown of righteousness, which is given to those who reach the end, continually fighting against the world and themselves.

## **Keeping the faith**

The third way to express love for God is to keep the faith. The temptation to adjust our faith to our personal limits and circumstances is tremendous in our age. The danger of its distortion by various heretical doctrines and novel ideologies is real and leads to destructive religious syncretism<sup>1</sup>. Those who truly believe in God and make their faith a way of life have the certainty that "God is their only and great constant. They do not believe in anything else. Without Him, they have no interpretation for the world. Without His existence, every reason for their own existence is abolished. Without faith in God, they drown, sink, collapse, and are lost. Faith in Him

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<sup>1</sup> English translator's note: Syncretism is the blending of different beliefs or practices.

intoxicates them, resurrects them, gives them life, a sense of eternity, a vision of otherness" (Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogaia).

My brethren, the crown of God's righteousness is intended for all of us. It depends on us whether we will conquer it. If we demonstrate our love for God, with ascesis and the completion of the good spiritual fight, and with keeping the Orthodox faith intact, then we can rightly repeat the words of the Apostle: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness!"

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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**From the publications of the Apostolic Ministry:**

*Η ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΡΗΜΟΥ  
(THE POLITY OF THE DESERT)*

*1st Edition, in Greek, Size 14x24 cm, 104 pages*  
by Agathangelos, Metropolitan of Phanariou, General Director of the  
Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece

The Apostolic Ministry published this spiritual book, which explores the concepts of solitude, silence, and prayer as concepts of spirituality.

**From the publications of the Apostolic Ministry:**

*ΔΙΠΤΥΧΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ,  
ΗΜΕΡΟΔΕΙΚΤΗΣ ΤΟΙΧΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΕΤΗΡΙΔΑ 2025*

*(DIPTYCHS OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE,  
WALL CALENDAR AND ALMANAC 2025)*

The **Diptychs of the Church** contain the specific liturgical guidelines for the 2025 calendar, dedicated to the anniversary of the 1,700 years since the convening of the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

The **Wall Calendar** includes the daily calendar of feasts and timely theological messages. The frame is adorned with a four-color intricate portable icon of the First Ecumenical Council from the Holy Monastery of Iveron on Mount Athos.

The **Almanac** – a pocket calendar – includes a summary and alphabetical calendar of feasts, a weekly planner, notebook, and useful information. It is dedicated to the celebration of 1,700 years since the convening of the First Ecumenical Council (325-2025).

**WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY WISH FOR 2025 TO BE FILLED WITH JOY AND PEACE, AN ABUNDANCE OF HOPE, INEXHAUSTIBLE STRENGTH OF RESISTANCE AND CREATIVITY *IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT*, AND WORDS AND DEEDS OF LOVE FOR OUR FELLOW MAN AND CREATION.**

January 5, 2025: Sunday Before Theophany

Martyrs Theopemptus and Theonas (+305); Righteous Syncretike (+350).

3rd Tone – Eothonon: 6 – Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8 – Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

NEXT SUNDAY: January 12, Sunday After Theophany  
Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13 – Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

**From the publications of the Apostolic Ministry:**

*Η Α΄ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΗ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΣ: ΝΙΚΑΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΒΙΘΥΝΙΑΣ - 325 μ.Χ.  
(THE FIRST ECUMENICAL COUNCIL: NICAEA OF BITHYNIA - 325 A.D.)*

*1st Edition, in Greek, Size 14x24 cm, 160 pages  
by Chrysostomos Savvatou, Metropolitan of Messenia*

In the context of the celebrations of 1,700 years since the convening of the First Ecumenical Council (325-2025), this text presents the historical and doctrinal work and the contribution of this particular Council, both at the theological level and its significance for matters of the life of the Church. It expresses in this way the unity of the Church in faith.

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