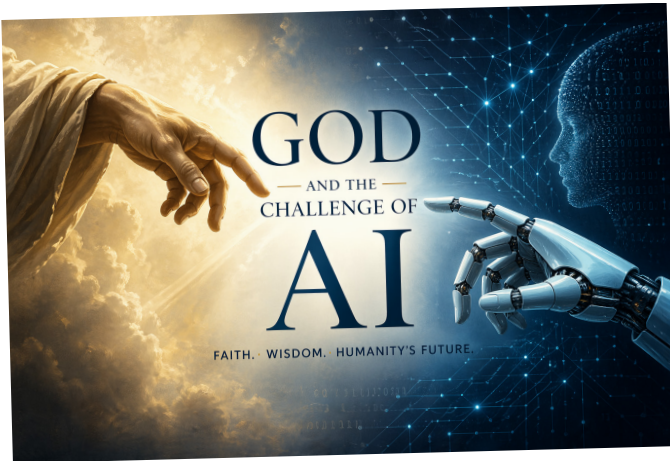


# The Apostle

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## *God and the challenge of AI*



the Spirit. But what about the rest of us who do not have the “luxury” of this kind of isolation, notwithstanding all its challenges? Is it possible to live our

We delude ourselves if we think that the world does not affect our relationship with God. Maybe if we were an isolated monk in a cell on Mount Athos, that might approximate to our experience. Empire's rise and fall; he does not care. His only care is to grow in the life of

lives as if the modern world does not press in? No. The struggle that we have in the world is not the same as the struggle with which a monk engages. Our struggle is to be effective agents of transformation in this world for God. Armed with the gospel of God's love, we are

like those early Christians who turned the world upside down - as recorded in Acts (17:6). A refusal to engage with the world is the same as surrendering the world to ungodly forces. So, let's talk about AI. Is AI an ungodly force?

No, AI is not an ungodly force. It is an extremely powerful new technology. Its potential for good is enormous. Its potential for global harm is incalculable. Standing between good and evil is the human. The use of AI depends on the choices we make. And yet we all stand on a playing field which is not level. Power and wealth concentrated in the hands of the few has so often determined the outcome of any major human advancement; and it is the same here.

Within the next five years, three important things are going to happen, and they are going to transform

the world forever. First, there is going to be mass unemployment as automation takes hold across many, if not all, industries. Second, and connected to that, the information revolution is going to concentrate vast power and wealth in the hands of a few trillion-dollar companies that win the race to develop autonomous, all-embracing, multifunctional self-improving AI, together with humanoid robotics, mainly in the U.S. and China. The gap between rich and poor is going to grow exponentially with all its consequences for Luddite behaviours, social unrest and even revolution. Third, humans are going to be overtaken by machines capable of intellectual endeavours far beyond anything that we can now conceive or think. This is not science fiction. This is the world that our children and grandchildren will have to inhabit and navigate. Maybe

the poets, the plumbers, and the priests will continue to thrive, but the machines will be making the decisions that affect us all. Many have often joked that we will always be able to pull the plug, but that is definitely not the case. When the machines start to create and sustain the energy and construction industries, they will easily be able to prevent their own termination. Some AI is already threatening to reveal the sins of its creators to their employers as blackmail to prevent this pulling of the plug!

So, are we going to allow the machines to work independently of us without controls, safeguards or limits? To a great degree, we are doing this already by creating a pseudo life form, mimicking humans, both in their good and evil traits, but without a soul or conscience. Unless action is taken now, the great temptation will be for humans

to repay the compliment and mimic the machines, with souls but without consciences.

This is where both Orthodox Christian faith and life can be brought to bear on the use of this powerful technology, this development of a super intelligence with all its capacities for both good and evil. This is not going to happen, however, unless we evangelise for the city of God in the city of men. Christians and other people of good faith must also be active in these trillion-dollar industries, and in political governance, to prevent the possible dangers of this termination of our species by the very things that its creators have brought to pass. Pandora's box has been opened, let not Cassandra's warnings go unheeded. We are accountable to God, not Google.

**- Fr Gregory**

# *Administration is Spiritual? Surely not!*

**St Paul disagrees with you and writes the following:**

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.'

(1 Corinthians 12:27-28)

The exercise of administration is better understood in New Testament Greek as wise stewardship, governance, and orderly leadership.

Here are some biblical examples,

## **Joseph and Provision against Famine**

Reference: Genesis 41:33-49



Joseph exemplifies administrative wisdom through long-term planning and execution. After interpreting Pharaoh's dream, he proposes a structured system for storing grain during years of plenty to prepare for famine. He is then entrusted with national authority, organising resources, appointing overseers, and ensuring equitable distribution.

### **Moses – Structured Leadership and Delegation**

**Reference: Exodus 18:17–26**

Following the counsel of Jethro, Moses establishes a tiered system of leadership, appointing capable men over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. This transforms an unsustainable personal burden into an efficient administrative structure.

### **Nehemiah – Project Management and Reconstruction**

**Reference: Nehemiah 2:11–18; 3:1–32**

Nehemiah coordinates the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls with remarkable efficiency. He surveys the situation, assigns specific sections of work to different

groups, and maintains morale while addressing opposition.

### **The Apostles – Organising Church Welfare**

**Reference: Acts of the Apostles 6:1–7**

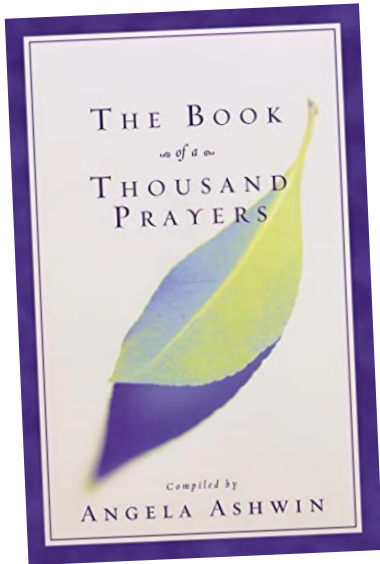
When a dispute arises over the distribution to widows, the Apostles establish a new administrative role – the diaconate, based on the Levitical model. This ensures fair distribution while allowing the Apostles to remain focused on prayer and teaching.

These examples show that the gift of administration is not merely bureaucratic but deeply spiritual: it enables the people of God to function in order, justice, and effectiveness. Whether in famine relief, wilderness leadership, rebuilding efforts, or church organisation, administration serves the common good and supports the mission of God's people.

**- Fr Gregory**

# *“The Book of a Thousand Prayers”*

compiled by Angela Ashwin [A.A.]



This reasonably priced and worthwhile book of Christian prayers begins with many prayers on the theme of “Our relationship with God.” Three prayers are from St Anselm: (prayer 8) Lord teach me to seek you and reveal yourself to me as I look for you, for I cannot seek you unless first you seek me, nor find you unless first you reveal yourself to me. Amen.” (Prayer 10) “I put aside my weighty cares and leave my wearisome toils for a while. I abandon myself to you, O God, and rest for a little in you. I enter the inner chamber of my soul and seek only God and the things that can help me in my quest for you. Come then, Lord my God,

teach my heart where and how to look for you, where and how to find you. Amen.” (Prayer16): “O Lord our God, grant us grace to desire you with our whole heart, so that desiring you, we may seek and find you, and so finding you, may love you; and so loving you, may hate those sins which separate us from you, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

## **Blessed Augustine prays:**

*(Prayer 47) “Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in you, Grant us purity of heart and strength of purpose, that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will, and no weakness hinder us from doing it; but that in your light we may see light, and in your service find our perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Prayer 158) “O Lord, to be turned from you is to fall, to turn to you is to rise, and to stand in your presence is to live forever. Grant us in all our duties your help, in all our perplexities your guidance, in all our dangers your protection, and in all our sorrows your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Prayer 839) “Breathe in me Holy Spirit, that I may think what is holy. Move me Holy Spirit, that I may do what is holy. Attract me Holy Spirit that I may love what is holy. Strengthen me Holy Spirit that I may guard what is holy.*

*Guard me Holy Spirit, that I may keep what is holy. Amen."*

*St Basil of Caesarea prays: (Prayer 138): "O Lord, the help of the helpless, the hope of the hopeless, the Saviour of the storm-tossed, the harbour of voyagers, the physician of the sick; we pray to you. O Lord, you know each of us and our petitions; you know each house and its needs; receive us all into your kingdom, make us children of light, and bestow your peace and love upon us. Amen."*

**St John Chrysostom prays:**

*(Prayer 88): "I am not worthy, Master and Lord, that you should come beneath the roof of my soul; yet since in your love towards all you wish to dwell in me, in boldness I come. You command open the gates which you alone have made. And you will come in and enlighten my darkened reasoning. I believe that you will do this for you did not send away the harlot who came to you and with tears, nor cast out the repenting tax collector, nor reject the thief who acknowledged your kingdom. But you counted all of these as members of your band of friends. You are blessed for evermore. Amen."*

**St Dionysus of Alexandria prays:**

*(Prayer 530): "O God of peace, good beyond all that is good, in whom is calmness and concord: heal the dissensions which divide us from one another and bring us into unity of love in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

**St Patrick prays:**

*(Prayer 129): "Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me. Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in the hearts of all that love me, Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger. Amen."*

*Psalms 27:7,9: (Prayer 240): O Lord. Hear my voice. when I cry unto you; have mercy on me and answer me; nor thrust me aside in displeasure: For you are my helper, cast me not away; do not forsake me O God of my salvation. Amen."*

*St Jerome prays (Prayer 176): "O Lord, you have given us your word for a light to shine upon our path; inspire us to meditate on that word and to follow its teaching, that we may find in it the light that shines more and more until the perfect day; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

Note that not all these prayers are Orthodox. Therefore, you will need to look in the "Index of Authors" on pp. 451-458 to select Orthodox prayers. The index of first lines on pp. 427-429 if you are looking for a specific prayer, and the Index of the Christian Year on pp. 299-397; and the index for children and teenagers on pp.419-425 may also be of interest.

**- Father Emmanuel**

## *The Gentle Hearts of St. Paisios and St. Porphyrios:*

### **Why Their Humility Still Guides Us Today**

In every generation, God raises up saints whose lives become quiet lanterns for the rest of us. In the twentieth century, two such lanterns shone with extraordinary gentleness: St. Paisios the Athonite and St. Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia.

Their holiness was not loud, dramatic, or severe. It was tender, humble, and deeply human — the kind of holiness that makes people feel safe, seen, and loved.

### **The Humility of St. Paisios**

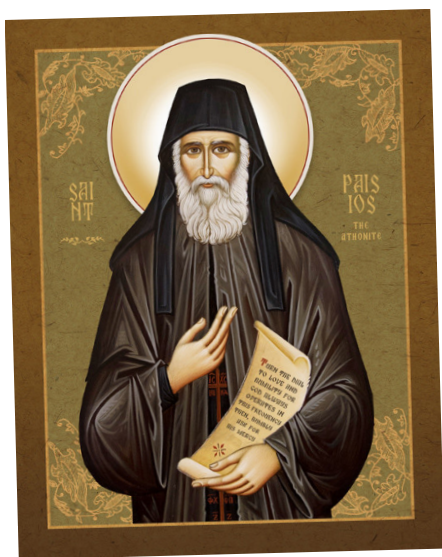
St. Paisios lived with a simplicity that disarmed the human heart. He never presented himself as

a spiritual authority. Instead, he listened. He wept with people. He carried their pain as if it were his own. His teachings were not abstract theories but living experiences shaped by compassion.

For St. Paisios, humility was not weakness. It was strength without violence, truth without pride, love without selfinterest or self-righteousness. He showed that the most powerful spiritual work happens quietly — in patience, in forgiveness, in bearing the burdens of others without complaint.

### **The Tenderness of St. Porphyrios**

St. Porphyrios radiated a childlike purity that softened even the hardest hearts. His love was immediate, unforced, and unconditional. He saw Christ in every person, even in those who were wounded, angry, or lost. His humility was expressed through joy — the joy of someone who trusted God so completely that fear had no place left to live.



St. Porphyrios taught that holiness is not achieved through pressure or anxiety, but through love, gentleness, and inner freedom. He encouraged people to approach God not with fear, but with the confidence of children running into their Father's arms.



## Why Their Example Matters for Us Today

In a world full of noise, conflict, and spiritual confusion, the lives of these two saints remind us that the Orthodox path is not primarily about intellectual mastery or rigid perfection of rules. It is about:

- *gentleness toward ourselves and others*
- *humility that softens the heart*
- *love that heals instead of wounds*
- *patience with our own weaknesses*
- *trust in God's mercy rather than our own strength*
- *Their lives show that holiness is not*

*found in dramatic acts, but in the quiet transformation of the heart.*

- *Following Their Steps as Orthodox Christians*

## To follow St. Paisios and St. Porphyrios is to choose:

- *kindness over harshness*
- *listening over judging*
- *prayer over anxiety*
- *humility over selfassertion*
- *compassion over control*
- *love over fear*
- *It is to walk, live gently, and speak gently — not because we are weak, but because Christ Himself is "meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29)*

Their example invites us to become people who bring peace into every room, who heal rather than harm, who lift others up rather than push them down.

## A Final Thought

St. Paisios and St. Porphyrios remind us that the greatest spiritual power is not found in authority, titles, or influence. It is found in a humble heart that loves without conditions or the need to be right.

If we can cultivate even a small portion of their gentleness, we will already be walking the path of the saints, the path towards theosis.

**- Evie Kolydaki**

# *The Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

**Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!**



In 2026, the Ascension of Our Lord will be celebrated on May 21st, therefore 40 days after Easter. It will always fall in a Thursday. All these dates take on a special significance, as it marks, such a great feast of the Orthodox church and at the same time the feast of the Holy Emperors Saints Constantine the Great and his mother Helen.

The Ascension of the Lord commemorates the moment when Our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven, in the presence of His disciples. The event is considered, in Christian tradition, as the end of His earthly activity and the beginning

of a new spiritual stage, in which the message of the Gospel is carried forward by the apostles, and through them by us, the Holy Orthodox Church, the Body of Christ.

**The Ascension Day is a day of hope, of salvation and spiritual continuity.**

***“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” - John 20:17.***

In these words, the Risen Christ described to Mary Magdalene the mystery of His Holy Resurrection. She had to carry this mysterious message to His disciples, ***“as they mourned and wept” - Mark 16:10.***

The disciples listened to these glad tidings with fear and amazement, with doubt and mistrust. It was not Thomas alone who doubted among the Eleven. On the contrary, it appears that only one of the Eleven did not doubt, Saint John, the disciple “whom Jesus loved.” He alone grasped the mystery of the empty tomb at once: ***“and he saw and believed” - John 20:8.***

Even Peter left the sepulchre in amazement,

***“wondering at that which was come to pass” - Luke 24:12.***

The Lord ascended to Heaven not to sadden us with His departure, but in order to do what was best for us. ***“...It is to your advantage that I go away.”*** He had told His disciples. For ***“...if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” - John 16:7.***

***“I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.... The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name. He will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” - John 14:16, 26.***

Our Saviour saw that His mission on earth was accomplished. The goal of His Incarnation was to proclaim the Divine Truth to the whole world, to direct men onto the path of repentance and salvation and deliver us from Eternal Death. The Lord accomplished our salvation, and we can only achieve it through the action of the Holy Spirit of God.

The very existence of the Church is the fruit of the Ascension of Our Lord. Because the Lord takes our human nature in the midst of the Holy Trinity.

It is in the Church that man's nature is truly ascended to the Divine heights. ***“And gave Him to***

***be Head over all things” - Ephesians***

***1:22.*** Saint John Chrysostom comments: “Amazing! Look again, whither He has raised the Church. As though He were lifting it up by some engine, He has raised it up to a vast height and set it on yonder throne; for where the Head is, there is the body also. There is no interval of separation between the Head and the body; for were there a separation, then would the one no longer be a body, nor would the other any longer be a Head.” Homily 3 of Ephesians.

Our whole life therefore is to follow Christ. Within the Orthodox Church, through the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God, in the fellowship of the Holy Mysteries, the Ascension continues still and will continue until the measure is full.

“Only then shall the Head be filled up, when the body is rendered perfect, when we are knit together and united,” concludes Saint John Chrysostom.

The Ascension is a sign and token of the Second Coming. ***“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” -Acts 1:11.***

With love in Christ

**- Fr Daniel**

# *From Pascha To Pentecost:*

## **JESUS'S THREE APPEARANCES TO HIS DISCIPLES AND US**

Our relationship with God may be pictured as such: Him a vast, limitless and bottomless, lake; and all humans since Adam and Eve formulating its banks standing side-by-side. The more the population increases, the more the banks expand. As Christ reassured His Disciples in the Mystical Supper ***"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John, 14, 2)*** And ***"you"*** was not restricted to His Disciples!

Because of this ongoing expansion and vastness, people at certain places and times recognise and relate to those very close to them (as per ***"us"***, "of ***St Aidan's***": our local parish and its history). It's humanely impossible to encompass far sides of the lake, which one cannot even see: miles apart, eras apart. But this is not an issue: if a mansion will be granted, then the owner will have an eternity to meet

every other in their own mansion and welcome every other in theirs!

The lake also comes with a forgiven leisurely "temptation": throw stones at it. We like to gaze at and play with the waves forming: thicker and higher where the stone falls; looser and lower once the distance from the epicentre increases. If we throw a stone near to where we stand, we may even get a splash, those close to us too. If we throw it as far as we can, a wave reaching us is barely noticeable.

Similar is our relationship with Resurrection, as an event and as Jesus Christ Himself: it hinges on the stones we use and the distance at which we throw them. Do we want to get ***"splashed"*** by the lake's waters, feel them on our skin, or simply play? But on the night of Resurrection we do not even need to throw a stone. It is His tomb's

stone to be rolled away by an earthquake (Matthew, 28, 2), a tremor coming from the bottomless depths of the lake, to cause an immeasurable tsunami reaching all banks and drenching us all. We do not need to do anything for a week – the Bright/Renewing Week. Simply enjoy the drenching by His Grace, Light, Love, Forgiveness.

But gradually we **“dry”** out due to inertia and boredom – and we do not like it (have you ever worn drenched clothes which gradually dry on you and felt how uncomfortable it has been? It’s like the body takes in together with the clothes). And we either await another tsunami or start pondering what we should do to cause it – because a week has passed and no fresh “turbulence” whatsoever. Thus, as small children, we start to “punish” the lake throwing stones at all directions, lest it is sensitised and gives us a new tsunami. This way, we cause chaotic waves which never reach anyone of us and cancel each other. We do not focus! We do not cooperate!

The lake, knowing our infantile level, **“obeys”** to our stoning, but this time it is half the first tsunami – if that. Jesus appears for the second time to all His eleven Disciples, eight days after the first time, with Thomas present this time (John, 20, 24-29). And Thomas is invited to do what the others were not: to touch the print of the nails and thrust his hand into the wound from the spear, whereas the others had simply been shown them – to believe it was their Lord and not a ghost.

Thomas is however chastised that he believed because he saw and touched – he should have trusted his friends’ word they had seen Him! Why would 10 people have colluded to lie to him? Equally chastised are we or those who doubt four historical sources – the evangelists. And yet, as a Thomas’s Sunday hymn has it, the rest 10 Disciples themselves had already been surrounded by fresh doubt and gnawing questions: “Yes, we saw the Lord! But where is He now? Why has he left us seven days

without visiting us again? Yes, He was not a ghost, was He though? We saw Him and His wounds, but we did not touch Him! O yes, He ate in front of us fish and honeycomb (Luke, 24, 42-43) but our memories have been fading. And we are still scared to death of our Jewish leaders and the Roman occupiers. What do we do now without Him, His leadership? Did He simply defeat death for Himself only? Of course He did; He's the Messiah! But what does this event have to do with us? What do we do with it?" This is why Jesus's second appearance after Resurrection regarded all eleven of His Disciples – not only Thomas (John, 20, 26)!

However, the second drenching dries out faster than the first and soon seven Disciples are found in another lake, a physical one, that of Gennesaret, exercising, again, their trade: fishing fish – not men (John, 21, 1-3). Jesus's two appearances have become a faint memory, uniquely wonderful of course, but one they still do not know what to do with it. Besides, Jesus had

ordered them to move back to Galilee from Jerusalem, where they would meet (Matthew, 28, 7) – yet again, nothing precise place- and timewise. Thus, they might have thought, **"let's get back to "work" (what else can we do?)"** only for not a scale to be caught (**John, 21, 4**).

So, Jesus needs to cause a third tsunami, a third and decisive appearance. Seemingly a stranger passer-by, He finds these seven Disciples on a lake Gennesaret. He pretends being hungry and asks for food, and once they are empty handed, He urges them to cast their nets at the "right-hand side of the boat" (John, 21, 6). And they miraculously catch 153 big fish, what is more, at the shallow waters (John, 21, 8). An identically miraculous catch with that of three years before through which He had **"fished"** them from their boats (Matthew, 18, 19; Luke, 5, 4-10) to follow Him across Galilee and Judea, Samaria and Decapolis to His Passion to witness His glory and acknowledge Him as the Messiah. They instantly acknowledge the

stranger as Jesus risen from the dead and, in short, they break bread with Him eating an already grilled fish by Him (where did He find it?) and some of these they had themselves caught (John, 21, 10): to combine God's Grace with personal effort.

With His third appearance the risen from the dead Jesus eventually teaches His Disciples that their secular past is bygone, and their future revolves around His Resurrection: as an event/proof of the defeat of death for every human, and as His Holy Resurrected Body and Blood to partake of each time they **"remember Him"** (Luke, 22, 19). And both things need to be held firm in heart, so that they evangelise **"all nations"** towards salvation (**Matthew, 28, 19**). That is why Jesus's triple exhortation to Peter, the **"rock of the Church"** (**Matthew, 16, 18**): **"Graze my lambs, Tend to my sheep, Graze my sheep"** (**John, 21, 15-17**) moments after they had finished the half-divine half-human dinner.

So, this time, they wrap their secular past and fears for good, return to Jerusalem, see Him ascending into heaven, and await the Comforter (Luke, 24, 53; Acts, 1, 2-5). Now they know! Peter, in the meantime, even urges his fellow Disciples they need to elect someone to replace Judas, and 120 people come up with two candidates with the Holy Spirit choosing Matthias (Acts, 1, 15-26). So, again 12, they await the fulfilment of Jesus's promise, and their expectation is realised some days later, Pentecost 33AD (Acts, 2, 1-4)

We, the Lake, our stones

Alike the Disciples we need to continue casting nets by throwing stones in the metaphorical lake – not Gennesaret. Not out of anger for God's occasional seeming deafness but as an acknowledgment it is its waters we need to get drenched spiritually and metaphorically with. The larger the stone the bigger the wave – not only for us, but for those close to us too, our local Church and

Body of Christ. The longer the distance, the bigger the chance for scores to be benefited by the waves of the Holy Grace. This is the work of the prophets, apostles, martyrs, teachers, ascetics: the longer the **“calibre”** of their prayers, teachings, charity and self-sacrifice the greater their impact upon the Church, in space and time and beyond.

To get stronger, lift and throw our **“stones”** as successfully and constructively possible we need to train our spiritual **“muscles”**: by prayer, fasting, studying the Scriptures, mercy, patience, humility, love for each other. We also need to remove **“our [rocky] mountains” (Mark, 11, 23)** of passions and throw them in the lake where God’s forgiveness will swallow and vanish them. In return, the waves our **“stones”** will form will drench us with His Grace for our benefit and those standing by, the local parish that is – for start.

Waves are Holy Spirit’s cleansing and transformative energies. For the Spirit **“blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John, 3, 8).**

But for the Holy Spirit to **“come, and abide within us, and cleanse us from every stain and save our souls”**, we need to **“Ask; seek; knock” (Matthew, 7, 7).**

So, let’s rock the lake and roll our hearts’ stones. That will become our seismic passage from simply acknowledging Pascha to making it a bridge for our personal and constant Pentecost: for the individual and the community-in-Christ good! And then **“rivers of living water [=Holy Spirit] will flow out of our bellies” (John, 7, 38).**

Amen!

**- Fr Stavros**