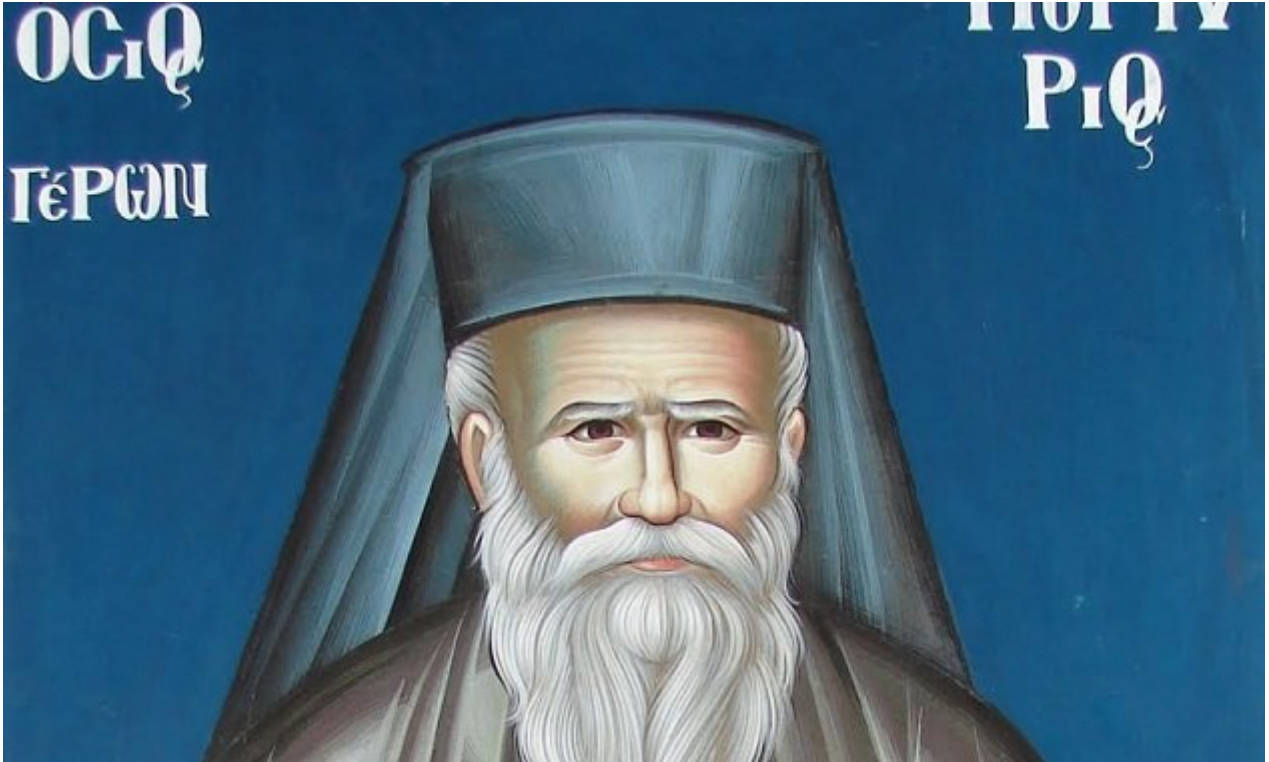


2 Δεκεμβρίου 2021

Saint Porphyrios Kavsoakalyvitis (Part II) (George Arvanitis)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



[Previous post: <http://bit.ly/1dGhQRx>]

His most essential characteristics

In our opinion, the most essential characteristics of Elder Porphyrios's personality were as follows: first of all, the fact that his membership of the Church was of a substantial and not a nominal kind; secondly, his boundless love for Christ and through Him his fellow men, which was accompanied by a saintly humility; thirdly, his experience of mystical joy in Christ; and fourthly, his sense of immortality in Christ.



a) Membership of the Church

Elder Porphyrios used to say, like all the saints, that Christ should be in the Church. This means that the faithful should be united with Christ and all of His people, and particularly with His archpriest, who is Christ's representative. Yet this, being a member of the Church, should not be merely a formal act. This, moreover, must be what Elder Porphyrios means in his last testament, in which he prays that we may enter the earthly uncreated Church of God, even though we would superficially reply that we are already in the Church as a result of our baptism.

We are indeed in the Church, although only to the extent that a foreign traveller who has just crossed the border into Greece can be regarded as being in Greece. Although this traveller is formally and essentially in Greece and can travel wherever he likes within the country and get to know all of it, it is as if he is not in the country since all he has done is take a few steps inside it and he still knows nothing about it. In the same way, a Christian who has entered the Church only once cannot be considered to have entered unless he comes further and further in to explore it until he reaches God's throne.

The Elder had seen in practice that God's Grace operates within the Church, that the faithful must be united in a single body, the Body of Christ, that nobody can be saved if they seek only their own salvation, that the believer's experience of and desire and demand for unity is a basic feature of the Church and a requirement of salvation, and that love, which impels the soul to seek unity, is essential if one is to

enter and gain salvation in the community that is the uncreated Church of God on earth.

b) Love

The driving force that enables us to share our earthly existence and joy with others, that can impart life itself, is love. Whoever thinks that other people will only take away some of their own personal comfort and joy is not thinking like God, who created mankind, even though man went on to grieve Him greatly (speaking in terms of human suffering). The only attitude that befits people created in the image and likeness of God, therefore, is love – opening one’s heart to others, both to God and to one’s fellow men.

There are many ways in which the Church tries to persuade people to follow the right path in life. Yet the royal path of the sensitive, poetic and noble soul that Elder Porphyrios showed us is the path of love, of divine eros for Jesus Christ, and selflessness, that is to say, a lack of concern about whether your love for Christ means experiencing joy or pain. It is a noble and superior path, one devoid of mean-spiritedness, calculating self-interest and fear, a gallant path worthy of God’s majesty and complete confidence in Christ’s benevolent love.

Following this path also entails adopting an enlightened approach in one’s spiritual struggle as a Christian, which is something that Elder Porphyrios often talked about and illustrated with numerous examples, a few of which are as follows:

‘When you are in an extremely dark room don’t hit out at the darkness to make it go away. That’s not how it disappears. Open the window and let in the light; in other words, submit yourself to the love of Christ and then the darkness will disappear effortlessly.’

‘When a bad or gloomy thought, fear or temptation threatens to afflict you, don’t fight it to try and get rid of it. Open your arms to Christ’s love and he will embrace you, then it will vanish by itself.’

‘When the garden of your soul is full of thistles (i.e. passions), do not try to uproot them, for as long as you concern yourself with them you will always end up being injured and infected by germs. Concentrate all your energy on the flowers of your soul, water them and then the thistles will wither themselves. And the best flower of all is your love for Christ. If you water this and it grows, all the thistles will die off.’

c) Joy

Elder Porphyrios loved everyone with Christ's love, which is unique for each individual. But the rich heart of Christ and the rich hearts of all those who resemble Him are capable of loving all men in a unique way, each individual being an image of the beloved Christ. And this love attracts Divine Grace, which falls upon the person who is loved in the form of a great and boundless joy. The person who loves feels joy because loving means giving and giving is a blessing, as the Lord Himself said ('It is more blessed to give than to receive' - Acts 20: 35).

This is how the Elder experienced the joy that nothing, not even pain or sadness, can take away from the person who has fully submitted to Christ's love. By living in Christ's love, Elder Porphyrios experienced in practice what St. John the Evangelist wrote: 'Perfect love drives out fear' (1 John 4: 18), and this is what leads him to stress with such quiet conviction in a recorded interview: 'Our friend, our brother (Christ)...! How loudly He proclaims this...! How loudly...! How profound this statement is...! It is extremely profound! It is the courage that He gives us. Christ doesn't want us to be afraid, He just doesn't want it!'

[To Be Continued]