

## Genesis 1 from the Orthodox Study Bible

at <https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/books/original/18430/18430-The-Orthodox-Study-Bible.pdf>

In the beginning God made heaven and earth. 2The earth was invisible and unfinished; and darkness was over the deep. The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water. 3Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4God saw the light; it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day; the darkness He called Night; and there was evening and morning, one day. 6Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and let it divide the water from the water"; and it was so. 7Thus God made the firmament, and God divided the water under the firmament from the water above the firmament. 8So God called the firmament Heaven, and God saw that it was good; and there was evening and morning, the second day. 9Then God said, "Let the water under heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. The water under heaven was gathered into its places, and the dry land appeared. 10So God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas; and God saw that it was good. 11Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the herb of grass, bearing seed according to its kind and likeness. Let the fruit tree bear fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind on earth." It was so. 12Thus the earth brought forth the herb of grass, bearing seed according to its kind and likeness. The fruit tree bore fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind on earth. God saw that it was good. 13So evening and morning were the third day. 14Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven for illumination to divide day from night. 15Let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years. Let them be for illumination in the firmament of heaven to give light on the earth." It was so. 16Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. 17God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light on the earth, 18and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. 19So evening and morning were the fourth day. 20Then God said, "Let the waters bring forth creatures having life, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of heaven's firmament." It was so. 21Thus God made great sea creatures and every living thing that moves with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. God saw that it was good. 22God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on earth." 23So evening and morning were the fifth day. 24Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: the quadrupeds, the creeping things, and the wild animals of the earth according to their kind." It was so. 25So God made the wild animals of the earth according to their kind, the cattle according to their kind, and all the creeping things on earth according to their kind. God saw that it was good. 26Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of heaven, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that moves on the earth." 27So God made man; in the image of God He made him; male and female He made them. 28Then God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of heaven, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing herb that sows seed on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. 30I also give every green plant as food for all the wild animals of the earth, for all the birds of heaven, and for everything that creeps on the earth in which is the breath of life." It was so. 31Then God saw everything He had made, and indeed, it was very good. So evening and morning were the sixth day.

### **III Kingdoms, Chapter 19 from the Orthodox Study Bible**

at <https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/books/original/18430/18430-The-Orthodox-Study-Bible.pdf>

Now Ahab told Jezebel his wife everything Elijah did, and how he put to death the prophets with the sword. 2Then Jezebel sent to Elijah, saying, "If you are Elijah and I this Jezebel, may God do so to me and more also if at this hour tomorrow, I do not make your life like the life of one of them." 3Elijah was fearful, and he arose and ran for his life. He came to Beersheba of Judah, where he left his servant.<sup>ω</sup> 4But Elijah himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat under a juniper tree. He prayed concerning his life, that he might die, and said, "I pray it be enough, O Lord. Now take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." 5Then he lay down and slept under a tree. Unexpectedly, someone touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6Then Elijah looked, and there by his head was a cake made of wheat and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. 7Again the angel of the Lord came back a second time, touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is a great many days for you." 8So he arose, ate and drank; and he went with the strength of that food forty days and forty nights, as far as Mount Horeb. 9There he went into a cave and rested. Behold, the word of the Lord came to him and said to him, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" 10And Elijah said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord Almighty since the children of Israel have forsaken You. They tore down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life." 11Then He replied, "Go out tomorrow and stand on the mountain before the Lord; and behold, the Lord will pass by, and before the Lord, a great and powerful wind will be rending the mountains and shattering the rocks; but the Lord will not be in the wind. After the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord will not be in the earthquake. 12After the earthquake, there will be a fire, but the Lord will not be in the fire. After the fire, there will be a sound of a gentle breeze, and the Lord will be there." 13So when Elijah heard this, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a Voice came to him and said, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" 14He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord Almighty, since the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life." 15Then the Lord said to him, "Go and return on your way to the desert of Damascus. When you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. 16You shall also anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel, and shall anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah as prophet in your place. 17Whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. 20 18And you will leave seven thousand in Israel; all those whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and whose mouth has not kissed him." 19Elijah departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. 20So Elisha left the oxen, and ran after Elijah and said, "I will kiss my father, then I will follow after you." Elijah said to him, "Return, for I have done this for you." 21Elisha returned from following him, and took a pair of oxen, and slaughtered them. He boiled their flesh with the proper equipment, and gave it to the people to eat. He then arose and followed Elijah, and ministered to him.

### **Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 7**

1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see

clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. 6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces. 7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! 12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. 13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' 24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." 28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

#### **Gospel of St. John, Chapter 14**

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 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. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know." 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. 7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." 8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. 12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. 13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. 15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give

you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. 19 “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. 20 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me. 25 “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28 You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I. 29 “And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. 31 But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

### **I Corinthians, Chapter 12**

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: 2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. 4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be

less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

### **Philemon**

1 Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, 2 to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, 6 that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. 7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. 8 Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, 9 yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ— 10 I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, 11 who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. 12 I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. 14 But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. 15 For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, 16 no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. 17 If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. 18 But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. 19 I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. 20 Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. 21 Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. 23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, 24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

### **Greatmartyr Euphemia the All-praised Commemorated on September 16**

(from <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2018/09/16/102626-greatmartyr-euphemia-the-all-praised>)

The Holy Great Martyr Euphemia the All-Praised was the daughter of Christians, the senator Philophronos and Theodosia. She suffered for Christ in the year 304 in the city of Chalcedon, on the banks of the Bosphorus opposite Constantinople.

The Chalcedon governor Priscus circulated an order to all the inhabitants of Chalcedon and its surroundings to appear at a pagan festival to worship and offer sacrifice to an idol of Ares, threatening grave torments for anyone who failed to appear. During this impious festival, 49 Christians were hidden in one house, where they secretly attended services to the True God.

The young maiden Euphemia was also among those praying there. Soon the hiding place of the Christians was discovered, and they were brought before Priscus to answer for themselves. For nineteen days the martyrs were subjected to various tortures and torments, but none of them wavered in their faith nor consented to offer sacrifice to the idol. The governor, beside himself with rage and not knowing any other way of forcing the Christians to abandon their faith, sent them for trial to the emperor Diocletian. He kept the youngest, the virgin Euphemia, hoping that she would not remain strong if she were all alone.

Saint Euphemia, separated from her brethren in faith, fervently prayed the Lord Jesus Christ, that He strengthen her in her impending ordeal. Priscus at first urged the saint to recant, promising her earthly blessings, but then he gave the order to torture her.

The martyr was tied to a wheel with sharp knives, which cut her body. The saint prayed aloud, and as it happened, the wheel stopped by itself and would not move even with all the efforts of the executioners. An angel of the Lord, came down from Heaven, removed Euphemia from the wheel and healed her of her wounds. The saint gave thanks unto the Lord with gladness.

Not perceiving the miracle that had occurred, the torturer ordered the soldiers Victor and Sosthenes to take the saint to a red-hot oven. But the soldiers, seeing two fearsome angels in the midst of the flames, refused to carry out the order of the governor and became believers in the God Whom Euphemia worshipped. Boldly proclaiming that they too were Christians, Victor and Sosthenes bravely went to suffering. They were sent to be eaten by wild beasts. During their execution, they cried out for mercy to God, asking that the Lord would receive them into the Heavenly Kingdom. A heavenly Voice answered their cries, and they entered into eternal life. The beasts, however, did not even touch their bodies.

Saint Euphemia, cast into the fire by other soldiers, remained unharmed. With the help of God she emerged unharmed after many other tortures and torments. Ascribing this to sorcery, the governor gave orders to dig out a new pit, and filling it with knives, he had it covered over with earth and grass, so that the martyr would not notice the preparation for her execution.

Here also Saint Euphemia remained safe, easily passing over the pit. Finally, they sentenced her to be devoured by wild beasts at the circus. Before execution the saint began to implore that the Lord deem her worthy to die a violent death. But none of the beasts, set loose at her in the arena, attacked her. Finally, one of the she-bears gave her a small wound on the leg, from which came blood, and immediately the holy Great Martyr Euphemia died. During this time there was an earthquake, and both the guards and the spectators ran in terror, so that the parents of the saint were able to take up her body and reverently bury it not far from Chalcedon.

A majestic church was afterwards built over the grave of the Great Martyr Euphemia. At this temple the sessions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council took place in the year 451. At that time, the holy Great Martyr Euphemia confirmed the Orthodox confession in a miraculous manner, and exposed the Monophysite heresy. Details of this miracle are related under July 11.

With the taking of Chalcedon by the Persians in the year 617, the relics of the holy Great Martyr Euphemia were transferred to Constantinople (in about the year 620). During the Iconoclast heresy, the reliquary with the relics of Saint Euphemia appears to have been

thrown into the sea. Pious sailors recovered them. They were afterwards taken to the Island of Lemnos, and in the year 796 they were returned to Constantinople.

**Miracle of the Greatmartyr Euphemia the All-praised  
Commemorated on July 11**

(from <https://oca.org/saints/lives/2018/07/11/102002-greatmartyr-euphemia-the-all-praised>)

The Miracle of Saint Euphemia the All-Praised: The holy Great Martyr Euphemia (September 16) suffered martyrdom in the city of Chalcedon in the year 304, during the time of the persecution against Christians by the emperor Diocletian (284-305). One and a half centuries later, at a time when the Christian Church had become victorious within the Roman Empire, God deigned that Euphemia the All-Praised should again be a witness and confessor of the purity of the Orthodox teaching.

In the year 451 in the city of Chalcedon, in the very church where the glorified relics of the holy Great Martyr Euphemia rested, the sessions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (July 16) took place. The Council was convened for determining the precise dogmatic formulae of the Orthodox Church concerning the nature of the God-Man Jesus Christ. This was necessary because of the widespread heresy of the Monophysites [“mono-physis” meaning “one nature”], who opposed the Orthodox teaching of the two natures in Jesus Christ, the Divine and the Human natures (in one Divine Person). The Monophysites falsely affirmed that in Christ was only one nature, the Divine [i.e. that Jesus is God but not man, by nature], causing discord and unrest within the Church. At the Council were present 630 representatives from all the local Christian Churches. On the Orthodox side Anatolius, Patriarch of Constantinople (July 3), Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem (July 2), and representatives of Saint Leo, Pope of Rome (February 18) participated in the conciliar deliberations. The Monophysites were present in large numbers, headed by Dioscorus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, and the Constantinople archimandrite Eutychius.

After prolonged discussions the two sides could not come to a decisive agreement.

The holy Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople proposed that the Council submit the decision of the Church dispute to the Holy Spirit, through His undoubted bearer Saint Euphemia the All-Praised, whose wonderworking relics had been discovered during the Council’s discussions. The Orthodox hierarchs and their opponents wrote down their confessions of faith on separate scrolls and sealed them with their seals. They opened the tomb of the holy Great Martyr Euphemia and placed both scrolls upon her bosom. Then, in the presence of the emperor Marcian (450-457), the participants of the Council sealed the tomb, putting on it the imperial seal and setting a guard to watch over it for three days. During these days both sides imposed upon themselves strict fast and made intense prayer. After three days the patriarch and the emperor in the presence of the Council opened the tomb with its relics: the scroll with the Orthodox confession was held by Saint Euphemia in her right hand, and the scroll of the heretics lay at her feet. Saint Euphemia, as though alive, raised her hand and gave the scroll to the patriarch. After this miracle many of the hesitant accepted the Orthodox confession, while those remaining obstinate in the heresy were consigned to the Council’s condemnation and excommunication.

After an invasion by the Persians during the seventh century, the relics of Saint Euphemia were transferred from Chalcedon to Constantinople, into a newly built church dedicated to her. Many years later, during the period of the Iconoclast heresy, the reliquary with the relics of the saint was cast into the sea by order of the Iconoclast emperor Leo the Isaurian (716-741). The reliquary was rescued from the sea by the ship-owning brothers Sergius and

Sergonos, who gave it over to the local bishop. The holy bishop ordered that the relics be preserved in secret, beneath a crypt, since the Iconoclast heresy was continuing to rage. A small church was built over the relics, and over the reliquary was put a board with an inscription stating whose relics rested within. When the Iconoclast heresy was finally condemned at the holy Seventh Ecumenical Council (in the year 787), during the time of Saint Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople (784-806) and the emperor Constantine VI (780-797) and his mother Saint Irene (797-802), the relics of the holy Great Martyr Euphemia were once again solemnly transferred to Constantinople.

### **Mother Alexandra**

**(from the website of the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in at Ellwood City, Pennsylvania at <http://www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org/about/foundress>)**

Our monastery was founded in 1967 by Mother Alexandra (the former Princess Ileana of Romania) whose dream it was to provide a place where American Orthodox women from all ethnic backgrounds could come to live the monastic life and benefit from a liturgical cycle in English. The desire of her heart was to provide a fountain of spiritual refreshment to the people of the country that gave her a home after her exile.

Princess Ileana, the youngest daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie, was born in Bucharest, Romania in 1909. During her childhood, she lived through the harsh realities of World War I: with her mother and sisters, she would visit the soldiers in the hospitals and on troop trains, praying with them, She also helped the Red Cross as an interpreter for one of the American colonels distributing supplies

In 1931, Ileana was married to Archduke Anton Hapsburg of Austria. She gave birth to 6 children over the course of 10 years living in Austria. During World War II, their castle in Austria was first used as housing for German troops; later she turned it into a Red Cross Hospital. In 1944, she returned to Romania, to Bran Castle, which she inherited from her mother. She established a new hospital (The Hospital of the Queen's Heart) across from the castle in memory of her mother to serve soldiers, villagers, and anyone in need of medical attention.

In 1947, she with her whole family was exiled from Romania by the Communists, being told they could leave the country with whatever they could carry or be confined in a monastery until they were executed. They lived in Switzerland for a short time before moving to Argentina. In 1950, Ileana was given a medical visa to come to the United States. In 1951, separated from Anton, she came with her 4 youngest children (the oldest 2 were already in the US for their studies) and settled in a suburb of Boston. The then senator John F. Kennedy introduced a bill in congress to give her permanent residency. To provide for her family, she accepted many speaking engagements around the United States, talking about her life and about the evils of Communism.

In 1961, with the blessing of Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, she began testing her calling to the monastic life and entered the Monastery of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God in Bussy, France. She remained in this monastery for 6 years, visiting the United States each summer to maintain her permanent residency status. While here she would teach at the Romanian Vatra about Orthodoxy and monasticism, and it was becoming clear to her that America needed an English speaking monastery for women.

In 1964, the property here in Ellwood City, PA, was purchased, and in 1967, after Sister Ileana was tonsured into the monastic life as Mother Alexandra, she returned to Ellwood City to remain and establish the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration. She lived to see



Communism fall in Romania in 1989, and was able to make a return visit to her homeland in 1990. Mother Alexandra reposed in the Lord on January 21, 1991 and is buried in the monastery cemetery. She requested the following verse to be on her gravestone: "None of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord, so then whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:7).

**"The Fourth Ecumenical Council" from Fr. Thomas Hopko, "The Orthodox Faith: An Elementary Handbook on the Orthodox Church--Volume 3: Church History—Fifth Century" at <https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/church-history/fifth-century/the-fourth-ecumenical-council>**

Together, in 451, Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria called another general council, this time on a far broader scale, to give the Church the opportunity to resolve the differences while still being completely faithful to the Nicene Creed. This illustrious council became known as the Fourth Ecumenical Council. With 630 bishops in attendance, it was the largest of all seven of the Ecumenical Councils. It was held in Chalcedon, not far from Constantinople, in Asia Minor.

This council defended the teaching of Saint Cyril on the "hypostatic union" of Christ's divine and human natures as expressed at the Council of Ephesus of 431. It also expressed the Antiochian emphasis on the genuine humanity of Jesus as expressed in the Formulary of Peace, as well as the Roman emphasis on the ongoing distinctiveness of the fully divine and fully human natures of Christ, as expressed in the language of Leo's Tome. Indeed, when Leo's Tome was read, all the bishops were reported to have cried out, "Peter has spoken through Leo!" But the Pope's statement was not the last word. It also was subjected to scrutiny by the fathers at the Council, who decided to select parts of it to be woven into the Council's final doctrinal definition.

The Chalcedonian Definition states that Jesus Christ is indeed the Logos incarnate, the very Son of God "begotten of the Father before all ages" (Nicene Creed). It reaffirms that the Virgin Mary is truly Theotokos, since the one born from her "according to the flesh" in Bethlehem is the uncreated, divine Son of God, one of the Holy Trinity. In His human birth, the Council declared, the Word of God took to Himself the whole of humanity, becoming a real man in every way, but without sin. Thus, according to the Chalcedonian Definition, Jesus of Nazareth is one person or hypostasis in two natures—human and divine—united "without change, without confusion, without division, without separation." He is fully human. He is fully divine. He is perfect God and perfect man. As God, He is "of one essence" (homoousios) with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. And as man, He is "of one essence" (homoousios) with all human beings, as the Formulary of Peace had declared.

The union of divinity and humanity in Christ is called the hypostatic union. This expression means that in the one, unique person, or divine hypostasis, of Christ, divine nature and human nature are united in such a way that they are neither changed, nor confused, nor separated, nor divided. Christ is one Person Who is both human and divine. One and the same divine person (or hypostasis) is the Son of God and the Son of Mary.

**The Akathist Hymn**  
**Paraphrased [and edited] from Fr. George Papadeas'**  
**THE AKATHIST HYMN preceded by THE BRIEF COMPLINE**  
**published by Patmos Press, DAYTONIA BEACH, FLORIDA, 1980**  
**at<http://www.orthodoxchristian.info/pages/Akathist.htm>**

The Akathist Hymn is a profound, devotional poem or chant, which sings the praises of the Holy Mother and Ever-Virgin Mary (Theotokos). It is chanted in all Orthodox Churches throughout the world during the five Fridays in the Great Lent, and constitutes a very concrete spiritual preparation for the Holy Week and Easter Services.

Devotional Hymns to the Theotokos are as ancient as the first Christian Church. The Byzantine Empire from its very inception at Constantinople during the fourth century, closely allied itself to the Virgin Mary and always sought Her protection or intercessions. This we see from the Prayer Services to the Theotokos between the fifth and eighth centuries, and the reference to Constantinople as the 'Queen City'.

The Akathist Hymn, which in its present form was added to by many Ecclesiastical Hymnographers, existed for most part even before it was formally accepted by the Church in 626 AD. The Kontakion "To the Invincible Champion... we ascribe the victory" was added then, and came to be recognized as the Akathist Hymn, because of the following described miracle attributed to the intercession of the Theotokos.

While the Emperor of Byzantium Heracleios was on an expedition to fight the aggression of the Persians on their own grounds, there appeared outside the walls of Constantinople barbaric hordes, mostly Avars. The siege lasted a few months, and it was apparent that the outnumbered troops of the Queen City were reaching desperation. However as history records, the faith of the people worked the impossible. The Venerable Patriarch Sergius with the Clergy and the Official of Byzantium Vonos, endlessly marched along the great walls of Constantinople with an Icon of the Theotokos in hand, and bolstered the faith of the defenders of freedom. The miracle came soon after. Unexpectedly, as the chronicler narrates, a great storm with huge tidal waves destroyed most of the fleet of the enemy, and full retreat ensued.

The faithful of Constantinople spontaneously filled the Church of the Theotokos at Vlachernae on the Golden Horn, and with the Patriarch Sergius officiating, they prayed all night singing praises to the Virgin Mary without sitting. Hence the title of the Hymn "Akathistos", in Greek meaning 'not seated'.

The Akathist Hymn is a very important and indeed an integral part of our religious and ecclesiastical life. When we are present during the first Friday Service, we firmly realize that we commence to ascend the spiritual steps of the lengthy Lenten period, to finally reach the peak with our Lord's Glorious Resurrection. . . .

In any of our Service Books we can readily see that our glorious and Ever-Virgin Theotokos is the center of many of our Orthodox Services in which prayers abound for Her interceding to Her Son, and our God, for our Salvation. The Virgin Mary is the most exalted and most honoured person by God. She is the most revered and most loved by humans. She is a binding force for all Christians. She is the Unique Personality of the world, because of the unique fact of the Lord's Incarnation. She is the daughter of Grace and the Crystal Vessel of the Grace of the Holy Spirit (see Luke 1:26-56).

Faith in the Almighty God is primary and all important to the Holy Orthodox Church. Our dependence on God is always beyond question, and from this faith we should strive not to stray. Therefore, Services, like the Akathist Hymn, should be a must and attended by all. Moreover, this particular Service links us so beautifully with a great and glorious period of our Christian history; it is also a very live tradition, which has never ceased in the Orthodox Church since its official acceptance in 626 AD.

Living in these trying times, when we are besieged by many forces of evil, it is hoped that the Akathist Hymn as well as our other Services may become the bulwark to withstand, and indeed to overcome these forces.