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Theosis

So what is your New Year resolution? To improve your physical conditioning? To improve your morality? To improve your spirituality? To improve in many other positive areas? This article, however, is for those who thirst and hunger for the ultimate purpose of this life and the eternal life.

Theosis is the reality that in time, space and matter, Jesus Christ became man (incarnation) so that man can become god. How is this possible? *Theosis* becomes possible by God's grace and adoption and in tandem with man synergistically living a life of holiness in God. This God-man union is unlike pantheism, that fuses all together as one, but that the worshipper retains personal integrity. The worshipper's ultimate purpose in life is to achieve *Theosis*, a/k/a Deification, a/k/a Divination, a/k/a Glorification.

Jesus

Jesus Christ said, "You are gods." Jn. 10:34. He said, "be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Math. 5:48. Did Jesus Christ make these statements to be understood literally or as figures of speech?

Biblical Writers

St. John wrote, "But as many as received him, to them He gave the right to become children of God." Jn. 1:12.

St. Paul wrote that, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." Rom. 8:14. In the same chapter, he wrote, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...that we may be glorified together." Rom. 8:16-17. Further, St. Paul states, "we are being transformed into the same image (the Lord) from glory to glory." 2 Cor. 3: 18.

St. Peter wrote that the worshipper becomes a "partaker of divine nature." 2 Pet. 1:4. Such an awesome and incredible statement that we humans, with all our fallibilities, are capable of partaking in the "divine nature."

In short, the Holy Spirit transforms the worshipper to glory, degree by degree, to make him/her "complete in every good work." Heb. 13:21.

Patristic Writings

Many Patristic Fathers have written about *Theosis*.

Justin Martyr, (c. 100-165) wrote that in the beginning, Adam and Eve "were made like God, free from suffering and death," and that they are thus "deemed worthy of becoming gods and of having power to become sons of the Highest."

Irenaeus, (c. 130-202) wrote that God "became what we are in order to make us what He is Himself." Irenaeus also wrote, "If the Word became a man, it was so that men may become gods."

Clement of Alexandria, (c. 150-215) wrote: "Yea, I say, the Word of God became a man so that you might learn from a man how to become a god."

Hippolytus, (c. 170-235) wrote: "And you shall be a companion of the Deity, and a co-heir with Christ, no longer enslaved by lusts or passions, and never again wasted by disease. For you have become god: for whatever sufferings you underwent while being a man, these He gave to you, because you were of mortal mould, but whatever it is consistent with God to impart, these God has promised to bestow upon you, because you have been deified, and begotten unto immortality."

Athanasius, (c. 296-373) wrote of his belief in a literal deification: "The Word was made flesh in order that we might be made gods... Just as the Lord, putting on the body, became a man, so also we men are both deified through his flesh, and henceforth inherit everlasting life." Athanasius also wrote: "For the Son of God became man so that we might become god."

Gregory of Nazianzus, (c. 329-390) implores humankind to "become gods for (God's) sake, since (God) became man for our sake."

Basil of Caesarea, (c. 330-379) wrote that: "becoming a god is the highest goal

IMAGES OF 2015



Government and municipal officials including Transport Minister Christos Spirtzis and Thessaloniki Mayor Yiannis Boutaris took a tour of a metro excavation site on the corner of Egnatia and Venizelou streets in the northern port city, on Tuesday. Spirtzis vowed to restart the project, aiming at completion in 2020. He also said that antiquities unearthed by the digging would be protected and showcased. Work on the Thessaloniki metro came to a halt – following lengthy delays – a year ago after a falling-out between the state and the construction consortium.



The winning photograph "UNICEF Photo of the Year 2015" by Georgi Licovski from the European Pressphoto Agency (EPA) shows children crying as migrants waiting on the Greek side of the border break through a cordon of special police forces to cross into Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), near the southern city of Gevgelija, on August 21. Seventy-five photographers from 30 countries submitted a total of 909 pictures to the international competition. [EPA]

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- 1.To applaud the achievements of our ethnic group
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8. To promote the ideals Greece has given to humanity.

Experts help divided Cyprus figure out economics of peace

A peace accord cobbling Cyprus back together again after over four decades of ethnic division is possible in 2016 and will bring opportunity and economic growth, officials say. But sorting out the financial side of reunification will be a huge task.

The challenges of melding the economies of an internationally recognized Greek Cypriot south that enjoys European Union membership and a breakaway Turkish Cypriot north that relies on Turkey's financial support are coming into sharp relief as the rival leaders press on with tough negotiations into the new year.

That's why experts from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have been recruited to help Nicos Anastasiades, the island's Greek Cypriot president, and Turkish leader Mustafa Akinci to navigate the economic labyrinth of a hoped-for reunification deal that both men say they want to clinch in 2016.

Cyprus was split in 1974 when Turkey invaded following a coup aiming to unite the island with Greece. Only Turkey recognizes a Turkish Cypriot declaration of independence and continues to maintain around 35,000 troops in the north.

The experts this month made the first of many trips to Cyprus to sort out the mechanics of a unified economy before a peace deal is agreed. The benefits are clear: economic growth and rising wealth is needed to make a new federation work and help sell the deal to a long-divided and skeptical people.

"If the settlement talks were conducted in a purely political fashion, without regard to the ensuing economic implications of decisions made, or if these were relegated to a later stage, significant opportunities would be lost for kick-starting the economy of a post-settlement Cyprus," the United Nations spokesperson's office told The Associated Press.

The experts will focus on issues including post-settlement public finances in a federated Cyprus, keeping banks stable, taxation and switching the north's currency to the euro and applying EU law there. It's very symbolic that the IMF is involved for the first time.

But as is often with Cyprus peace talks, optimism is tempered by reality.

A key challenge to a pact's political and economic success is dealing with private property lost during the conflict. In particular, experts need to figure out the cost of compensating property owners and where that money will come from.

"Well managed, a solution should be able to pay for itself in the long perspective, due to a higher growth rate, but it will still need external support up front in order to be properly implemented," the UN spokesperson said.

Most property in the north belongs to Greek Cypriots who fled in the face of advancing Turkish troops. But Turkish Cypriots insist any peace accord should ensure that they hold on to the majority of property in their future administrative zone and remain the majority in population as well.

Sozen said Turkish Cypriots take the issue very seriously because it's tied to their sense of security and that Akinci, the Turkish Cypriot leader, is "very firm on this."

Turkish Cypriots see doling out cash for property as the primary way of dealing with the issue, as it would avoid displacing a large number of Turkish Cypriots who have since moved in.

There is no figure on how much this will cost, but the European Union and the US and other countries have offered financial support, according to the UN.

Many Greek Cypriots see the 'compensation-first' tack as curtailing their property rights and coming in direct conflict with EU principles that both sides say should be the bedrock of any agreement.

Parliamentary Speaker Yiannakis Omirou blasted Turkish Cypriot positions as "legalizing the invasion's outcome." In a tense statement, Cypriot government spokesman Nicos Christodoulides said Akinci's remarks on the issue show that "there's plenty of work yet to be done."

IMAGES OF 2015



The City of Athens served more than 700 people at its free Christmas lunch at an indoor stadium in Rouf, west of the city center. Dozens of municipal employees and volunteers helped serve the dinners – which were this year donated by a Chicago-based Greek-American family – mostly to elderly people and a small number of families with children. Meanwhile, food and Christmas sweets were distributed to about 200 poor and homeless people by municipal authorities in Piraeus. Similar initiatives were organized by the Archbishopric of Athens and other municipalities.



Even by the standards of the action-packed crisis years, 2015 was a non-stop, helter-skelter experience for most Greeks. The year's key events included three national votes, one of which was a referendum that cast doubt on Greece's euro membership, SYRIZA's rise to power, frantic negotiations with the country's lenders, the ubiquitousness of Yanis Varoufakis, the closure of Greek banks, capital controls and the arrival of more than 800,000 refugees and migrants. Here are some of the images that will remain seared into the nation's memory.



A Santa Claus figure is seen at Klafthmonos Square in central Athens recently. After putting up with yet another year of political uncertainty and six months of capital controls, Greek retailers have been looking forward to the holiday season to make up for some of the damage. Greek corporate officials are anticipating more mergers and acquisitions within 2016, a trend that became evident at the start of the crisis and has grown significantly in the last couple of years to become one of the main consequences of the prolonged recession, as well as a key solution for many enterprises to avoid closure.



Members of Hellenic ost 343,the American Legion spent Tuesday afternoon of Decemeber 22ndat Hines Veterans Hospital distributing Christmas gifts to veterans patiens. Among the gifts to each patient of the extended care unit were tee shirts. Among the members of the team were Commander Peter Prosiliakos and Adjutant Michael Nichols of Hellenic Post 343.



The Drone captured this image of Amalfi on the west coast of Italy.



Alexandre Salem shot this image on his drone high above the statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



A Russian pilot died when the Su-24 jet was shot down - the other Russian airman survived.Turkey faces big losses as Russia sanctions bite.



This beautiful island image was made by the user Marama Photo Video who said: “We were waiting for sunset, drinking a Hinano, installed in warm water, rain was behind us, a rainbow appeared, this is Tahitian life.”



Alexandre Salem’s picture shows a church in Paracatu that was caught in a mudslide in Brazil caused by a mining accident. At least 17 people were killed when the dam burst in the south-eastern state of Minas Gerais, polluting rivers and destroying farmland over a vast area.



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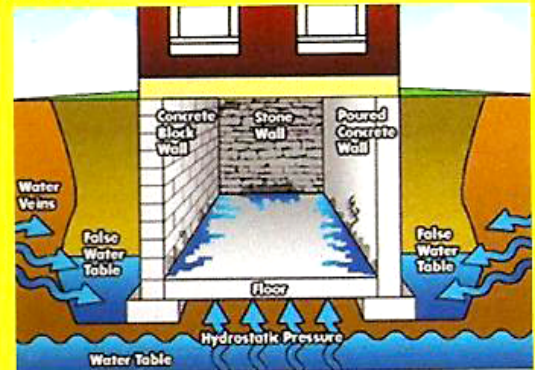
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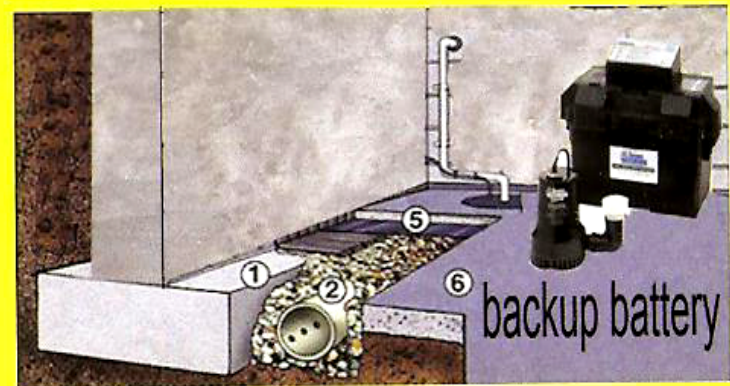
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Why IS militants destroy ancient sites



Image caption IS regards statues as idolatrous
The destruction of the grandest, most important temple in the ancient Syrian town of Palmyra has flung so-called Islamic State’s (IS) barbarous actions back into international consciousness.

Many will wonder why anyone would so actively seek to raze historical and cultural marvels that have lasted millennia.

But for the IS bulldozers, the rationale is straightforward and fulfils several readily identifiable goals.

As IS notes in the eighth issue of its own publication, the glossy Dabiq magazine, they see ancient cultural heritage as a challenge for the loyalties and legitimacy of Iraqi or Syrian people to IS itself.

Destroying such heritage is thus a part of their duty, as they see it, to reject such a “nationalist agenda” that the statues, temples, and indeed, cities represent.

In a wider sense, the IS brand of intolerant Islam motivates it to attack polytheism wherever it is found and to reject the worship, as they would put it, of idols that they see these sites as representing.

Elsewhere, it is also no surprise to see IS destroying Shia and Sufi sites, and even Sunni shrines.

If anything, IS ideology despises other variants of Islam even more than Christianity or Judaism. Liberally sprinkle such intolerance with a self-serving, simplistic, context-free reading of a few scriptures and a “religiously” justified policy - or commandment even - is put forth.

Shock value

But there are more political, expedient motives afoot not noted in Dabiq.

Chipping off parts of statues and otherwise selling stolen antiquities in markets around the world is a good way to earn hard cash. The UN believes that this is being done on an industrial scale, adding tens of millions of dollars to IS’ wider war economy.

Launching and especially prolonging a bloodthirsty campaign of butchery, terrorism, mass murder, torture, enslavement and ethnic cleansing is hard work.

After the initial horror, the kuffar (infidel) media and their kuffar audience eventually become inured to the repetitiveness, the sheer numbers killed, and pressing news stories elsewhere relegate the focus on IS.

Capturing and retaining attention thus becomes more difficult. This is problematic when a group needs to encourage new recruits and new sources of income.

Equally, those already recruited who are bogged down in warfare, sporadically getting picked off by drones and jets, who are (to their surprise) losing territory, or who begin to miss the comforts of home need to be reassured that the group they joined is as influential, as proactive, and as in vogue as ever.

Provocative acts

Lastly, videos of iconoclastic destruction spark outrage, mark out IS as unique, and increase the drum beat for further intervention from Western (or other) states.

Thus the logic of former al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden - his desire to entangle the US in a bloody, unwinnable land war “against Islam” - is once again employed.

Image caption Part of IS’ strategy is to outrage world opinion

This is not to say that there should be no reaction, but any considerations need to be mindful that a part of the whole IS strategy is to elicit a reaction in the first place.

To some degree, describing such desecrations as a “war crime”, as the UN has, nicely plays into IS’ hands - as do articles on the subject.

But the internet cannot be un-invented, and unless we are to surrender some of our closest held beliefs on freedom of speech, we cannot stop dissemination of such depressing stories.

We must, therefore, respond however we can.

Calm reasoning exposing the hypocrisies, the practicalities, and the banalities of IS’ policies is a step towards demystifying and debunking the likes of IS as just yet another political organisation.

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NEWS FROM GREECE

German finance minister critical of Greece over refugee policy



Germany’s Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble criticized Greece on Sunday over the way it deals with refugees, saying Athens has ignored for years the European Union’s Dublin rules that oblige migrants to file for asylum in the first European Union (EU) country they arrive in. Schäuble told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that German courts had decided some time ago that refugees were not being treated humanely in Greece and could not be sent back there, contrary to the Dublin rules.

Greece, a main gateway to Europe for migrants crossing the Aegean sea, has faced criticism from other EU governments who say it has done little to manage the flow of hundreds of thousands of people arriving on its shores.

“The Greeks should not put the blame for their problems only on others, they should also see how they can do better themselves,” said Mr Schäuble, who has repeatedly clashed with Greek officials over economic policy this year.

In contrast to his criticism of Greece, Schäuble sought to offer to compromise with eastern European states that have voiced reluctance to accept migrants under EU quotas.

“Solidarity doesn’t start by insulting each other,” he said. “Eastern European states will also have to take in refugees, but fewer than Germany.” The biggest migration crisis in Europe since World War Two also means that European countries will have to increase spending on the military, he said.

“We will have to spend a lot more funds for joint European defence initiatives,” Mr Schäuble said.

“Ultimately our aim must be a joint European army. The funds that we spend on our 28 national armies could be used far more effectively together,” he said.

“For Germany, this means that we will have to support our foreign and security policies more strongly than we would perhaps like,” he said, adding the Middle East would not become stable without stronger European engagement.

Germany has gradually adopted a more assertive role in global missions. Earlier this month, lawmakers approved a mission in Syria, including sending six Tornado reconnaissance jets, a frigate to help protect a French aircraft carrier, refuelling aircraft and 1,200 military personnel.

Schäuble said he also planned to top up money for development aid in order to achieve the goal of 0.7% of gross domestic product (GDP) more quickly. Germany currently spends around 0.43% of GDP on aid.

Learning our lesson

As 2015 comes to an end, it is time to look back on one of the most turbulent periods of Greece’s recent history. A lot of damage was wreaked on the beleaguered country and no one can ignore that. The closure of the banks in the summer and the imposition of capital controls, as well as a series of tragic mistakes during nego-

tiations with the country’s international lenders came at a heavy price that is not yet fully apparent.

There is nothing more dramatic than the tales of small and medium-sized businesses that were managing to hobble along until the capital controls were introduced and have since been unable to keep their heads above water.

The good thing is that Greece did not fall over the edge. It did not tumble into the abyss after the fateful referendum in July. But the reason is that its sense of self-preservation kicked in.

Greece has more important milestones to pass in 2016. When we get to them we must not forget the lessons of 2015, because there are some mistakes that should under no circumstances be allowed to be repeated.

Gov’t sends pension proposal to lenders without opposition support



The government on Monday sent the country’s creditors its proposal for a sweeping reform of the social security system, which foresees cuts to pensions, though it failed to secure the support of the opposition for the politically contentious overhaul.

The proposal was sent to creditors after Social Security Minister Giorgos Katrougalos presented it to President Prokopis Pavlopoulos, leftist SYRIZA’s political secretariat and opposition party leaders.

Despite recent insistence by government officials that no main pensions would be cut, the proposal foresees cuts to the pensions of all those retiring from 2016 onward.

According to social security experts, those cuts could reach 30 percent for those on high salaries, with an average reduction of 15 percent for average-level monthly pensions of 750 euros and above.

For those who have already retired, no cuts are foreseen though the situation would be reviewed in 2018.

The blueprint also proposes an increase of 1 percentage point in the social security contributions paid by Greek employers and a hike of 0.5 percentage point for workers.

Also in the works is a plan to merge all pension funds into one while the lump sums paid out on retirement by main pension funds are to be cut by around 10 percent.

Auxiliary pension funds will also be affected, with beneficiaries set to receive significantly smaller monthly payouts.

According to sources, representatives of Greece’s creditors who saw the pension proposal on Monday remain skeptical, particularly about the recommended increases in social security contributions.

The quadriga is expected to push for more cuts to pensions than those proposed by Athens with the aim of slashing state funding to the social security system.

According to sources, the International Monetary Fund might use objections to higher social security contributions as a pretext not to back Greece’s third bailout.

The government sought to put on a brave face.

Spokeswoman Olga Gerovasili stressed that “today’s pensions are not being reduced” and accused the opposition of “hypocrisy and irresponsibility” for failing to back the government’s pension proposal, noting that the shortfalls of New Democracy and PASOK had contributed to the country’s dysfunctional social security system.

New Democracy’s interim leader Yiannis Plakiotakis said ND rejects pension cuts but that his party would study the government’s proposals and give an official response.

Union of Centrists leader Vassilis Leventis said he would examine the proposal, noting that although he disagreed overall, high pensions should be cut.

PASOK leader Fofi Gennimata said her party is against both cuts to pensions and increases in social security contributions and proposed that pension funds be supplemented with revenues from privatizations.

Communist Party leader Dimitris Koutsoubas said his party would lobby against the pension reforms in Parliament.

Potami leader Stavros Theodorakis, who was not in Athens yesterday, said that Katrougalos’s meeting with opposition officials was “simply for the cameras.”

Financial prosecutors call depositors named on Swiss bank list

Financial prosecutors have begun summoning Greeks with deposits in Switzerland, whose names are on a list recently supplied by German authorities, to explain where they got their money from and if they have paid the necessary tax.

The first 20 notifications have been sent out, a source said, and judicial authorities plan to send another 20 to 30 per day so that around half of the depositors on the list will have been questioned by the end of February.

The western German state of North Rhine-Westphalia handed the Greek Finance Ministry in December more than 10,000 data sets on accounts held by Greeks in Switzerland, mostly at UBS. The total amount of deposits is estimated at close to 4 billion euros.

Sources said the list contains the names of businessmen, entertainers and priests, among others.

IMF to remain part of bailout program, Greece told

Managing Director of the European Stability Mechanism Klaus Regling (left), Greek Alternate Minister of Finance George Chouliarakis (beck right) and Greece’s Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos speak during an Eurogroup finance ministers’ meeting

at the European Council in

The government was forced to accept Thursday that the International Monetary Fund will remain part of the bailout program despite Greek officials suggesting the contrary in recent weeks.

Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos emerged from the Eurogroup meeting in Brussels in little doubt that Greece’s European lenders will not move forward with the program without the IMF.

“Tsakalotos confirmed to me that the Greek government accepts that the IMF needs to be part of the process,” said Eurogroup chief Jeroen Dijsselbloem.

“It was absolutely clear to him, it was part of the agreement this summer,” the Dutch finance minister added.

Tsakalotos confirmed the decision in an interview with Germany’s Handelsblatt newspaper. “The IMF’s participation is planned. We are sticking to this commitment,” Tsakalotos told the daily.

Speaking to Kathimerini and four other European newspapers, European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis told Kathimerini that



Brussels is working on the basis that the Fund will be involved in Greece.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras is due to meet IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde at the upcoming World Economic Forum in Davos. Athens is keen to ensure that the IMF’s representatives in the quadriga of lenders that will conduct the first program review, possibly starting next week, will not pressure the government to adopt measures that could put its political survival in doubt

Tsipras is also expected to raise the issue of debt relief. The Fund has insisted



that Greece will need a substantial restructuring of its total debt, whereas the European lenders are more focused on keeping debt servicing costs low.

The other key issues mentioned by Dijsselbloem after Thursday’s meeting of eurozone finance ministers were the need for Greece and its lenders to exchange more information on the coalition’s pension proposals and to discuss the fiscal measures for this year.

The Eurogroup chief also stressed the need for political interference in Greek banks to end. His comments came in the wake of reports that Piraeus Bank CEO Anthimos Thomopoulos came under pressure to resign.

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Theosis

(continued from p. 1)

of all.”

Gregory of Nyssa, (c. 335-395) wrote: “Since the God who was manifested infused himself into perishable humanity for this purpose, viz. that by this communion with Deity mankind might at the same time be deified, for this end it is that, by dispensation of His grace, He disseminated Himself in every believer.”

Augustine of Hippo, (c. 354-430) wrote: “For He hath given them power to become the sons of God.” and “If we have been made sons of God, we have also been made gods.”

Cyril of Alexandria, (c. 378-444) wrote: “For we too are sons and gods by grace, and we have surely been brought to this wonderful and supernatural dignity since we have the Only Begotten Word of God dwelling within us.”

Maximus the Confessor, (c. 580-662) wrote: “Nothing in theosis is the product of human nature, for nature cannot comprehend God. It is only the mercy of God that has the capacity to endow theosis unto the existing... In theosis, man (the image of God) becomes likened to God, he rejoices in all the plenitude that does not belong to him by nature, because the grace of the Spirit triumphs within him, and because God acts in him.”

St. Symeon, the New Theologian, (c. 949-1022) wrote: “For the Son of God became the son of man in order to make us human beings sons of God, raising us up by grace to what He is by nature.”

St. Gregory Palamas, (c. 1296-1357) wrote: “Theosis and union with God signifies union with God’s energies (grace) not his essence. The worshipper is deified as he/she becomes filled by the Light of Tabor of the Holy Spirit.”

The Path to Theosis

How does a worshipper achieve Theosis?

1. Humility. Humanity’s spirit is anthropocentric. However, the worshipper’s spirit must be theanthropically centered. The purpose of life for the worshipper is outside himself/herself and the center is to be in Jesus Christ. However, for humanity, the good is without God and man is the center of life.

2. Praxis of love. The worshipper must uproot the passions, the vices, repent from selfishness and apply acts of love to all, especially to the least among us. Faith without praxis is dead. Love without praxis is dead. Praxis of love is Zoe.

3. Partake in the mysteries. Are we baptized? Do we confess? Do we partake of Holy Communion? Do we pray in our heart? Is Jesus Christ just a person to us or is He in us? Are we “in Christ”? Do we know about Him or do we know Him?

Theosis does not come about immediately, but throughout our whole life we struggle, so that slowly-slowly, degree by degree, with God’s Grace, and by our humility, repentance, prayer, the Holy mysteries, we are sanctified and deified. Some of us have tasted, but earnestly hope to taste again, the Divine Light and Grace of God. How can one who has experienced a “river of fire,” “flames of fire,” “uncreated light,” describe to another person who has no such experience?

Is there a telos to Theosis? It seems that if Theosis had a telos, then, our existence would be frozen in this dimension of time, space and matter or frozen in eternity. Therefore, Theosis must proceed unending in the now and in eternity but never reaching the infinite God who is both inside and outside of time, space and matter. Let us make our New Year resolution to strive, to ask, to seek, to hunger, to thirst, to yearn for Theosis.

EU migration chief says refugee response is not working



The European Union’s top migration official says efforts to manage the refugee emergency are not working and that more countries are tightening border security to cope with the influx.

Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said Thursday that “the situation is getting worse” as thousands of people fleeing conflict or poverty continue to arrive in Europe daily. He told EU lawmakers in Brussels that “more and more member states are reintroducing border controls” in response.

In September, the EU launched a scheme to share 160,000 refugees arriving in Greece and Italy but fewer than 300 have actually found homes in other countries. Plans to directly take refugees from outside the EU, in countries like Turkey, are also moving slowly.

Avramopoulos said that “these schemes have not delivered the expected results.”

The Ancient Greek Roots of Christmas

By Maria Papathanasiou -



Christmas is the most important – and perhaps the most treasured – celebration of Christianity filled with joy and love. Countries around the world celebrate with different customs that have deep roots within history and tradition. In Greek tradition, we can find a variety of similarities in the commemoration of the birth of Christ and Dionysus between ancient and contemporary Greece.

In December, the Ancient Greeks celebrated the birth of Dionysus, calling him “Savior” and “divine infant.” According to Greek mythology, his mother, Semele, was a mortal woman and his father was Zeus, the king of all Gods. The priest of Dionysus held a pastoral staff as did the Good Shepherd. On December 30, ancient Greeks commemorated his rebirth.


The most well-known custom throughout the Christian world are the Christmas carols, songs dedicated to the occasion. Also in Ancient Greece there were specific “carols” for the rebirth of Dionysus. Specifically, Homer — during his stay on the island of Samos, along with a group of children — composed the carols. In ancient Greece, carols symbolized joy, wealth and peace, and the children sang the carols only in the homes of the rich. Children would go from house to house, holding an olive or a laurel branch adorned with wool (a symbol of health and beauty) and different kinds of fruits. The children brought the olive branch to their homes and hung it on the doors where it remained for the rest of the year.

The Christmas tree appeared for the first time in Germany at the end of the 16th century. It became globally known in the 19th century to symbolize the rejoicing of the birth of Jesus Christ. The tree was adorned first with fruits and later with clothes and other household objects. Ancient Greeks also used to decorate the ancient temples with trees, symbolizing the divine gift offering. The Christmas tree tradition made its way to Greece for the first time in 1833, when the Bavarians decorated the palace of King Otto.

Santa Claus, who travels around the world on Christmas Eve delivering gifts in a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer, is another impressive similarity. A similar tradition also existed during the celebration of Dionysus in ancient Greece who resembled light. Then, the chariot transformed into a sleigh and horses transformed into reindeer.

The New Year’s cake also holds resemblance of an ancient Greek custom. Ancient Greeks used to offer Gods the “festive bread” during the rural festivals, like the Thalsia or the Thesmophoria.

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