

Defending the Faith

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July 2018

Death Is So Unreal

Recently, words have failed me. It is difficult to express the magnitude of the loss of a loved one. A year ago, I lost my wonderful father, and a few weeks ago, I also lost my dear mother. Death is so unreal. My mind cannot comprehend it, yet my heart senses the great loss. Each time I hear the phone ring, my memory tells me it must be mom. Each time I visit my mom's and dad's home, I feel their presence. There is an overwhelming flood of memories. I see her in her favorite chair on her tablet watching YouTube videos of Greek music. I can hear dad singing his favorite song to my mom. When I visit their home, I don't want to leave. When I come home from work, I have an urge to call mom and see how she is doing. When I went grocery shopping a couple of days ago, I recognized items that she liked and that I would have bought for her. My heart has a piece missing. I miss all the things I enjoyed doing for them, and even though I had a lifetime with them, I wish I could have had a greater appreciation of the time we had together.

When life becomes difficult to comprehend, I always look to God. I ask God to help me understand the unexplainable. Experience teaches us more than what we can grasp with our minds. Experience teaches our hearts. The Holy Spirit guides us in times of suffering. So far, through this experience, I have learned three important lessons. First, I have learned that God grieves deeply at the loss of any of His children who have rejected Him and refused to accept the love He offers us. He grieves over our separation and rejoices when we accept the Holy Spirit into our hearts because through the Holy Spirit, we are no longer separated. Christ made this possible through His sacrifice on the cross. The Holy Spirit reunites us to our heavenly Father. The loss of a loved one helps us to understand God's grief at our separation and His joy at our reunion. It is the same kind of grief we experience at the loss of a loved one and the same kind of joy we will experience when we are reunited with them in paradise.

I know that God created us to love. He created us to give of ourselves. When our love is



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Death Is So Unreal (cont'd)



received and returned to us, we experience ultimate joy. We are complete. The second lesson I learned is that the loss of our loved ones is experienced more deeply at those moments when we wish we could show our love to them by talking to them, caring for them, buying them their favorite ice cream or sharing the enjoyment of their favorite song. It is the memory of those moments when we were able to act on our love for them that we miss the most. We long to, once again, give ourselves to them, but our separation makes that impossible. This is why we feel loss, why we feel that a piece of our heart is missing. We do not miss them simply because they loved us. We miss them because we loved them.

The third lesson I learned is that death feels unreal because it is not real. It is not permanent. It is a separation, but not a permanent separation. That is why we are in denial. In truth, there are two realities, the physical and the spiritual. This physical existence is temporal. It had a beginning, and it will have an end. Death is simply the end of our physical existence, but our eternal existence is spiritual. Our soul or spirit was created to continue after our physical death in our resurrected bodies in the presence of

God. Even in death, the Holy Spirit spiritually unites us to our loved ones, at least those who are with God. My mom and dad loved God and lived to love others. Therefore, I am confident that they are with the Lord. When my time comes, I will no longer be separated from them. We will be reunited in an infinitely joyous celebration. However, while I remain in this life, I feel their presence and their love through the Holy Spirit. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which gives us hope. It is the hope of our future life, eternal life with God and with our loved ones, where there is no pain, no loss, where there is only love freely given and freely received.

In this life, I will continue to miss my father and mother. I will grieve our separation. But, I can relieve some of the pain by keeping their memories alive in the way I live my life, by honoring their legacy. I hope I can honor them by loving as selflessly as they did.

Helen Kamenos
Readers' Favorite Author



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July 15 – Sunday of the Holy Fathers



On July 15, Greek Orthodox Christians celebrate the Holy Fathers of the Church who participated in the Seven Ecumenical Councils from 318 through 787 A.D. These bishops and church leaders were responsible for establishing church dogma, theological truths which cannot be compromised. The councils met because doctrinal issues were being challenged and threatened the established beliefs of the Church. According to Orthodox tradition as expressed by Mastrantonis (2016):

“The Church, as a whole, is infallible, but it is not God-inspired to the extent that it has understood the entire depth of the truths and formulated and proclaimed them to the world. The Church, by nature and duty, from time to time - to settle controversies - formulates, defines, and pronounces some of these Revealed truths. In such instances, the Fathers of the Church have assembled in synods to discuss the disputed points and to

decree and interpret the correct meaning of those truths. In doing so, the synods of the Fathers, as a whole and as individuals, have believed that their decisions are infallible. Their decisions, however, are not considered permanent until they are accepted by the ‘Conscience of the Church,’ the whole body of the faithful, clergy and laity, who must give their consent.” It was not until the whole Church consented to those beliefs that Church dogma was established and the Nicene Creed was accepted as doctrine. The Nicene Creed enumerates the theological truths accepted by the Church, which cannot be compromised. It is recited during each liturgy, prior to receiving Communion, the Holy Eucharist.

Mastrantonis, Rev. George. (1990-1996). *The twelve apostles*. Retrieved on September 7, 2015 from: <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7065>

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The Nicene Creed

(cont'd)

I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages.

Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father through Whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried.

And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

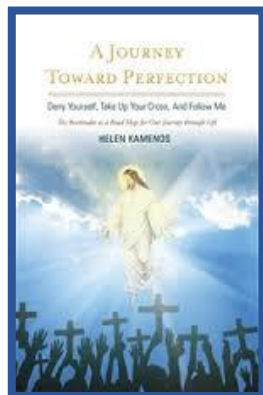
And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Amen.



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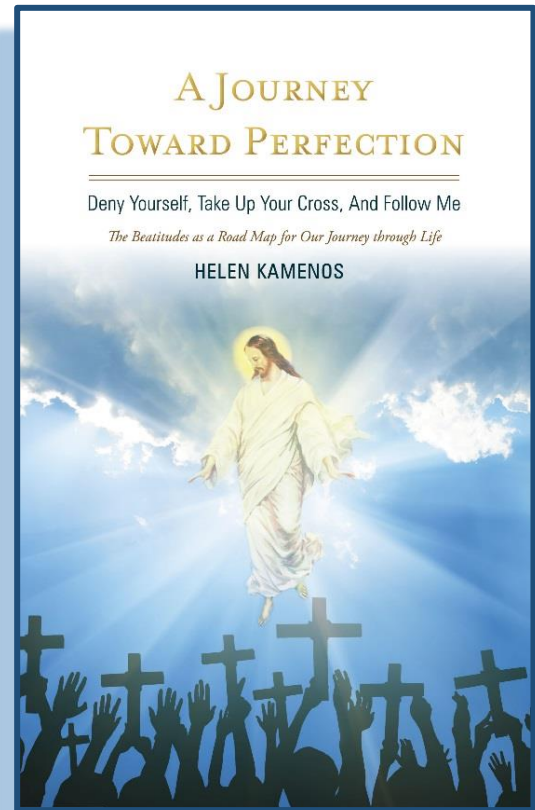
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A Journey Toward Perfection

The Beatitudes from Matthew 5:

- ³ Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
- ⁵ Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
- ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness,
For they shall be filled.
- ⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.
- ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.
- ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.
- ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for
righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute
you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.
- ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the
prophets who were before you.



A *Journey Toward Perfection* reveals a path toward developing an intimate experiential relationship with God. It is an in-depth study of the attributes of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. These are the attributes God bestowed upon us when He created us in His image. God created us to love. These are the traits necessary to love others as God loves us. These characteristics are central to our Christian spiritual growth. Discover how these attributes can sustain you through the many trials and tribulations of your life. Comprehend how love truly conquers all. Experience God's true presence in your life.

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