

Defending the Faith



Newsletter by Helen Kamenos © All rights reserved

September 2017

Being Confronted

In the last couple of weeks, I was confronted by two people about my Christian faith. One was an atheist who challenged me in a lively debate and ended her lengthy response to my arguments with “I don’t hope you become an atheist. I know the comfort of believing in God...All this said, I’m a person of science and logic. While I find it HIGHLY unlikely I’m wrong, I would welcome that reality with open arms.” She was once a Christian, but lost her faith. I pray that she experiences God and finds her faith once again.

The second person was a Christian fundamentalist who told me to renounce “the idolatry of icon worship and works for salvation.” He had many more angry words to add to this sentiment, but I won’t burden you with the rest of his rantings. This person obviously has no idea what Orthodox Christianity is all about. I was taken aback by his response, yet I am fully aware that there are many in the Protestant denominations who know nothing about Orthodoxy, yet feel they know everything they need to know. This kind of response traces back to the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and those who led the Protestant Reformation. The result was a complete rejection of all that appeared to be Roman Catholic and “organized” religion. These wounds have not healed.

Just for the record, Orthodox Christianity traces its roots back 2,000 years to the original church set up by the Apostles and St. Paul. Icons were commonly used in the early church to tell the story of Christ through pictures to a population of believers who were, for the most part, illiterate. The four Gospels and the Epistles were read to the congregations during church services, as they still are to this day. Icons are not worshipped by Orthodox believers. They are venerated, just as we show respect to a picture of a loved one who has passed on to the next life. Orthodox Christians recognize a heavenly church, the Church Triumphant, which consists of those who have been rewarded with Christ’s crowns of victory, having attained salvation. These would include all the saints, those the church has recognized as saints, as well as all those who are with Christ, who may not have been formerly recognized. The earthly church, known as the Church Militant, includes those still alive and still fighting the good fight. Just as we ask our friends and family members to intercede on our behalf and pray for us, at times, we ask the Saints, who are with Christ to intercede on our behalf. Orthodox Christians do not worship the Saints. As St. Paul said, *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by*

Defending the Faith

Newsletter by Helen Kamenos © All rights reserved

September 2017

Being Confronted

Cont'd

one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Christ’s Church is one body of believers with many members.

A greater issue for Christian believers, which my fundamentalist friend brought up, is the issue of works for salvation. This is definitely not a tenet of Orthodox Christianity or any other mainstream Christian church. We are all agree that we are saved by the grace of God, who has mercy on us and forgives us our sins. However, does this mean I can continue to sin and simply ask God for forgiveness each time? Is there nothing about our lives that should change, once we proclaim ourselves a Christian? What makes us a genuine faithful follower of Christ? According to Jeremiah 17:12, *“I the LORD test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.”* The “fruit of their doings” are our actions, how we live our lives, with an emphasis on the heart and mind. The old adage, “our actions speak louder than words” applies here. James put it this way, *“Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith”* (James 2:18). I can say I love my neighbor all I want, but if I don’t act on my words, they are meaningless. What does this mean for me as a Christian?

As a true follower of Christ, we look for opportunities to bless others. If God sends a homeless person into a moment of our lives, we feed him or give him money. This is love. Does it matter whether he will spend it on alcohol or drugs? No! God gives us the opportunity to bless him, and it is up to him how he will accept that blessing. It is my heart that God is testing. Are we sensitive to the needs of our family and friends? If a family member needs our time, we will stop whatever we are doing and give him our full attention. This is love. If a friend needs a shoulder to cry on, we listen with an empathic heart. We offer advice, if appropriate, but it is more important that we listen. This is love. If an old woman is walking out of the store with a cane and too many bags for her to carry, we will take the time to help her to her car, even though we are in a hurry to be somewhere. This is love. We see a stranger who is visibly distraught. We ask him, if there is anything we can do to help. He says “no.” How can we be a blessing to someone who refuses our help? We pray for him or her. This is love. God hears our prayers.

Why did Christ set up a church, a community of believers? For God, we are a community, especially if we are believers. We no longer serve ourselves and our needs. We look for opportunities to serve others. These opportunities come up every day. Many times, our opportunities arise when we face challenges or hardship. Each challenge is an opportunity for us to glorify God through our actions, our love and our faith. It is only through the fruits of our actions in love that our faith grows, as well as the faith of others. When we offer love to someone unexpectedly, they are blessed, but we are also blessed by the love of the Holy Spirit in us. We feel God’s love toward us.

Why should we go to church? Now, that is a touchy subject for some. However, God blessed us with talents we are to share with one another. Love in our hearts is not genuine love, until we act upon it. We go to church to bless one another. We go to church to encourage one another and strengthen one another. Christianity is about relationships! Relationship with God through Holy Communion, as well as communal prayer and worship are crucial. Holy Communion is just that – communion or intimacy with God. We also go to church to develop relationships with one another,

Defending the Faith

Newsletter by Helen Kamenos © All rights reserved

September 2017

Being Confronted

Cont'd

loving and blessing one another in unity. Through the Holy Spirit, we are united with one another as Christ, the head of our church, is one with God. God has knit us together with a part of Himself that actually lives inside each and every true believer. If it has been a while since you have gone to church, or maybe you have never gone to church, go this Sunday. God will be happy to see you there and will bless you! Look for that blessing!

Helen Kamenos
Readers' Favorite Author

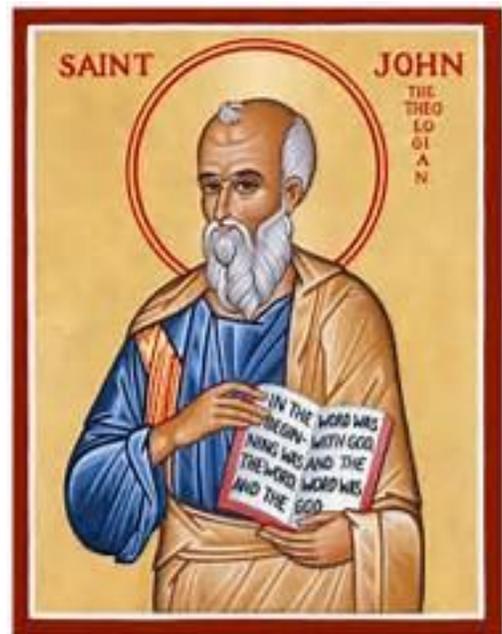
St. John the Evangelist

On September 26, we observe the falling asleep of St. John the Evangelist and Theologian. St. John is one my favorite saints. In his gospel, he often referred to himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23, John 19:26, John 20:2, John 21:7, John 21:20) because he knew the love of God personally. It was John who wrote the most quoted verses in the Gospels concerning God’s love:

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)

“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 8)

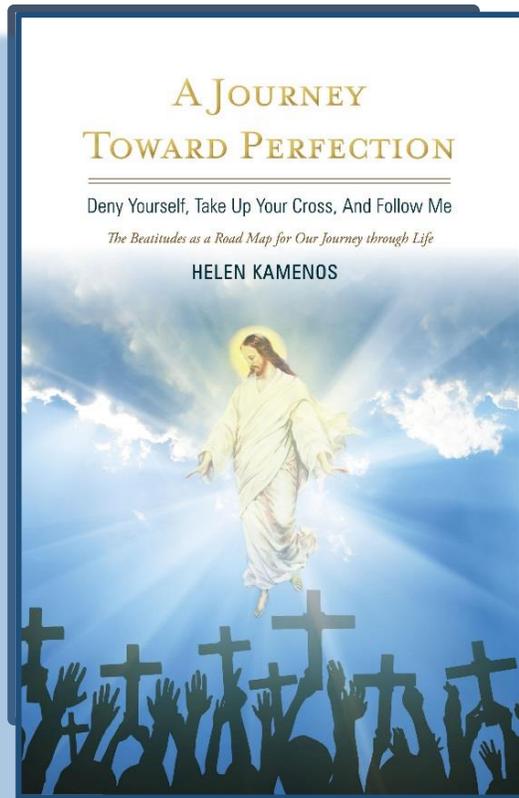
St. John was part of Christ’s inner circle of disciples along with St. Peter and John’s brother, St. James. The three witnessed the Transfiguration of Christ, when He revealed His divine glory. “His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light” (Matthew 17:2). He was the only disciple who was with Christ at the foot of the cross. Jesus entrusted him with the care of His mother, the Virgin Mary. He is known as the Theologian because “he loftily expounded in his Gospel the theology of the inexpressible and eternal birth of the Son and Word of God the Father” (<https://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints?contentid=218>). He was arrested and taken to Rome, where he was thrown into a vat of boiling water. When John came out unscathed, he was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Later he wrote his gospel and his three epistles.



Defending the Faith

Newsletter by Helen Kamenos © All rights reserved

September 2017



Take the Challenge

Unlike any other book on Christianity that you have read, *A Journey Toward Perfection* challenges you to fulfill God's purpose for your life. It dares you to be transformed and experience God's presence. Most fear change, but if you desire to become the best version of yourself, take the *Journey Toward Perfection*.

To fully comprehend God's love for us, it is necessary for us to understand Jesus, God's beloved son, who left His throne of glory to live among us, to become vulnerable like us. To fathom God's love for us, it is essential for us to walk in His footsteps by traveling life's journey as He did. As we embark on this journey, we will learn how to endure and overcome the trials and tribulations of our lives. We will learn how to cultivate a relationship with God, communicating with Him in a two-way dialogue, not only speaking to God, but also being attuned to His voice.

Christ gave us a road map to follow through the Beatitudes. By following this path toward Christ, God is revealed to us in an unprecedented way and becomes a beacon in our lives. Two thousand years ago, Christ

ignited a fire, which changed the world. Take the *Journey Toward Perfection* and be transformed. By knowing the love of God, you will undergo a metamorphosis. You will become the butterfly that God always meant for you to be.

"I truly was blown away by *A Journey Toward Perfection*...It's a very good study tool and is also enjoyable reading in its own right." (Mary C. Blowers - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"This book was written with a pure heart and soul. You can feel Helen Kamenos' love for Jesus in her words and how much she wants everyone to feel as close to Him as she does. It was exciting to read her words because she was excited to tell us what she thought...It was a wonderful experience." (Rabia Tanveer - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"An uplifting book for all those who seek the love of Christ. The book leads readers into a deeper relationship with God and reiterates the power of God's love." (Mamta Madhavan - reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

"It reinforced and gave a new perspective to lessons I learned and absorbed at my mother's knee...The book is beautifully written, logically organized, and will definitely help you on your personal journey." (Ray Simmons – reviewer for Readers' Favorite)

Defending the Faith

Newsletter by Helen Kamenos © All rights reserved

September 2017

Book Signing – October 22, 2017

**Hosted by St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church
Santa Barbara, CA**



I will be signing copies of my book, *A Journey Toward Perfection*, after the church service during coffee hour. The church service begins at 9:00 a.m. Books will be available for purchase.

JOIN US! I am looking forward to seeing you!

[For more info, follow this link-----> Book Signing](#)

St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church

1205 San Antonio Creek Rd.
Santa Barbara, California 93111

Follow my blog at: <https://plus.google.com/116159014424445968003>

To receive **Defending the Faith** each month, sign up at: www.helenkamenos.com

Forward this to your family and friends, so they can sign up, too!