



**ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΙΑΣ
ARCHDIOCESE OF THYATEIRA & GREAT BRITAIN**

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Encyclical of his Eminence Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira and Great Britain Gregorios to the Flock of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain.

THE FEAST OF FIFTEENTH AUGUST AND ITS AGE-LONG MESSAGES

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

The period of Fifteenth August projects the all-embracing contribution of Holy Mother of God to Humankind, reveals to us the transformation of Creation and the emancipation of man, which is achieved with the grace of God, by the example and intercession of Mary Mother of God and All the Saints, from whom we daily ask for their intercessions for the cure of the wounds of our souls and bodies. August begins with the Feast of the Procession of the Holy Cross. Our Church reminds us Christ's bloody sacrifice on the cross which has salvaged the Human race 'we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.' (1 Cor, 1:23).

Under this perspective, we also interpret the fact of the Transfiguration of Christ, which took place on Mount Tabor, before three of his chosen Disciples, Peter, Jacob and John, shortly before his Passion. The hymnist of the Church, chanting about the miracle of the Transfiguration is writing: '... pointing to us the spiritual changing of mankind through Your glorious and dread second coming to the world, you were transfigured on the Mount Tabor' (hymn of the Transfiguration). The Transfiguration of Christ introduces us into the sacrament of our own transfiguration, which can be achieved through the grace of the Holy Spirit and our participation in the life of the Church.

Man's transfiguration according to God is achieved by our Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the Great Archpriest, sanctifies and cures us with His sacrificial love to the World, for the benefit of whom 'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14).

Central in the Feast of Fifteenth August is the blessed person of Virgin Mary Mother of God, the supplications to Her, which we daily perform at our Churches, beseeching her intercessions for our health, peace and forgiveness of our sins, as well as our deliverance from sorrows and tribulations of life. These days are days of great joy and sorrow – of joyous sorrow - and the Orthodox world has rightly called them 'Summer Easter'. The reference to the needs and unceasing sorrows of the human life – which the royal poet so gracefully describes – help us to internalize the invaluable worth of prayer, through which we mystically connect with God. Mary Mother of God is our warm intercessor, the impregnable wall of our fight to remain faithful to the Gospel of salvation and the sacred expectation of the eternal gifts of the man-loving God.

What the praying and worshiping Church daily performs is the sacred conception and the mercy and help from God that are provided for the 'cloud of sorrows' that cover our turbulent and sinful life and plunge us in the darkness of despair. But the light of grace and hope wards off – casts away – the filth, the meanness, the pride from inside us, because Holy Mary is 'she who gave birth to the inaccessible light' which casts off the devil and his traps from the depths of our being.

Concluding this encyclical, I return again to the issue of prayer and the trust we place on our Lord Jesus Christ, who daily reminds us that he is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the blessed hope of every human soul that resorts to Him to find comfort and serenity from all the kinds of sorrow that are existentially associated with human life.

Joining the poet of the Great Supplication, we chant and humbly ask for the blessed intercession of Holy Mary, who is always present 'eager to listen' in order to give us courage and stamina to face the sea of life. "The storm clouds of grievous sorrows and distress shroud my unfortunate heart and soul in affliction, and with their gloom have they filled me, O Virgin. Yet, since you brought forth the Light Unapproachable, be quick to drive them far from me with the breeze of your holy entreaties, Maid".

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