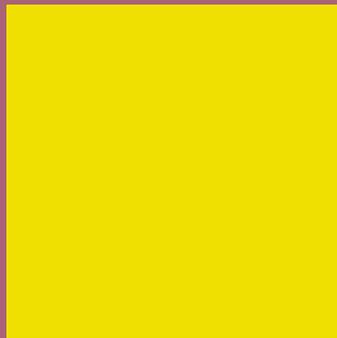


3



ENCOUNTER WITH THE
ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL AND
ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

MODULE THREE

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE VIDEO



Figure 3.1
Video Clip

Our story takes place on a remote Greek island. George and Stratos in their classroom learn from their teacher the biblical story of the creation of the world. In the discussion that follows, they focus on the fact that the world was created to be good by God from the beginning and that man is responsible for all the problems that occur in the environment today. The next day, the children face a serious environmental problem as they walk on the beach. They look for the cause and question themselves how to act in order to eliminate the problem. What will be their decision and how do the words of the Ecumenical Patriarch support it?

3.2 VIDEO SCREENING

3.2.1 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Based on the video you watched, try to answer the following questions.

1. *In the video we watched the theme of the creation of the world was connected:*
 - a. With the charitable work of the Church
 - b. With religious worship
 - c. With the protection of the environment
 - d. I do not know / No answer

2. *The pollution observed by the students during the excursion comes from:*
 - a. The waste of the nearby olive mill
 - b. The sewage from an oil tanker that sank on a nearby beach
 - c. Wind turbines
 - d. I do not know / No answer

3. *In the video, the youngsters support the view that in order to stop the pollution of the environment it is necessary:*
 - a. To shut down the factory
 - b. To press the factory to comply with the laws and rules of environmental protection
 - c. To dispose the waste in another area
 - d. I do not know / No answer

4. *What does the Ecumenical Patriarch in the video characterize as a sin?*
- a. The pollution of the environment
 - b. The biodiversity of creation
 - c. Child labor
 - d. I do not know / No answer
5. *What do you consider to be the attitude of the Christian Church regarding the protection of the environment?*
- a. It does not care
 - b. It does not include it in its priorities
 - c. It is interested
 - d. I do not know / I did not understand

3.2.2 TOPICS FOR RESEARCH

Exercise 1

Based on the screened video, imagine the decision made by Yiorgos and his classmates made regarding the problem of the pollution created by the olive mill.

Exercise 2

Have you heard or witnessed similar cases of environmental pollution? Mention some of them.

3.3 ISSUES WHICH WE WILL EXAMINE

The problem of environmental pollution is very big nowadays and seriously threatens the life of the whole world. But how did we get to this point? What did we not notice along the way? Can we prevent greater catastrophes, even now? What is our responsibility for the environment?

Let us look at the answers we can get to the above questions, first from the Bible, and then from the interpretive approach of the Orthodox Christian tradition.

THE BOOK OF GENESIS (GEN: 1:27-31 & 2:8,15 NRSV)

3.3.1 GEN. 1:27-31

²⁷So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹ God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

3.3.2 GEN. 2:8,15

⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. [...] ¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.



Figure 3.2
Aquarelle by Vaso Cogou

3.4 WHAT I NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER TO STUDY THE ABOVE BIBLICAL PASSAGE

In the image: The phrase that “humankind was created in the image of God” does not refer to external features, but to the **spiritual qualities of mankind**, such as reason, will, conscience, freedom, etc., as well as dominion over nature. This is what makes him stand out from the rest of the creation.

He created man and woman: From the first moment of his creation, **the human being is understood as a social being**, as something that exists only in communion, in a relationship.

Fill the earth and subdue it: The authority of mankind over nature is granted by God, implying accountability to God for the proper administration of nature. Only the creator, God, is an absolute sovereign over creation and consequently **mankind can become sovereign only by becoming a co-creator**.

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good: With this phrase the Bible makes clear on the one hand the value of God’s creative work and on the other hand **the fact that God, being good himself, can only do good**. Therefore, the God of love is not responsible for the ugly and bad things in the world.

God planted a garden in Eden, in the east: This image contains all the elements that allow the reader to imagine the beauty of the place that God prepared for mankind to dwell. The word **“Eden” means pleasure**. In the translation of the Septuagint the term “Eden” is given not as a place name, but as a noun: “Paradise”. The word “paradise” is of Persian origin and means a large garden with many trees and various plants. The garden is placed in the east because the west was considered, according to the perceptions of the time, as the place where death dominates, while on the contrary the east was a symbol of life. Of course, the image of the Garden of Eden is not to be found in any particular place on Earth. It is a boundless space covering the whole earth, it is **the kingdom of man throughout creation**. The biblical author draws the image of the Garden of Eden from various traditions and myths that existed at that time among the peoples of Mesopotamia. He uses an image familiar to his readers to proclaim an important truth: that man’s happiness depends on his relationship with God and his harmonious relationship with the environment.

God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it: God plants the garden, He himself places man in it and He invites man to work to make the world his exclusive area through his own work.. Man did not have the whole world as his own immediately, nor did he dominate all of creation, nor was his relationship with God a complete and perfect communion. **Man is therefore called to a dynamic course,** in order to look like God and **become co-creator with him.**

3.4.1 EXERCISE Fill the blanks by choosing the appropriate word in parentheses based on what you read in the biblical text and the above information.

God, after creating the world, finally saw all of His creations and rejoiced because they were (very good / really many). Man was created in the image of God, which means that, among all creation, only man has spiritual gifts. According to the Bible, God created man and woman, to show us that man is a(social / reproductive) being. Man was also instructed by God to rule over the whole earth. This does not mean that man is dominating over creation, but that he is accountable to God for the proper (consumption / administration) of the creation. The Bible also says that God planted a garden in the east of Eden and God put man in this beautiful garden to live, giving him the command to(cultivate / dominate) it and to (control / take care of) it. Of course, this garden was not in a specific place, but it includes the whole (Earth / Mesopotamia).

From the book of Psalms (Ps. 65:9-11)

⁹ You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.
¹⁰ You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.



Figure 3.3
Aquarelle by Vaso Gogou

Exercise

In the verses of the Psalm that you just read, highlight words or phrases that show the relationship of God with creation.

From the works of Alexander Schmemmann

All that exists is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God. It is divine love made food, made life for man. [...] God blessed the world, blessed man, blessed the seventh day (that is, time), and this means that He filled all that exists with His love and goodness, made all this "very good." So the only natural (and not "supernatural") reaction of man, to whom God gave this blessed and sanctified world, is to bless God in return, to thank Him, to see the world as God sees it and—in this act of gratitude and adoration—to know, name and possess the world.

(Alexander Schmemmann, For the life of the world, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York, 1998, pp. 14-15)

Exercise

Which truths about man's relationship with creation does the above text reveal to us?

3.4.3 MAN AS THE RULER OF CREATION

In the book of Genesis we read that God, after creating humans as man and woman, blessed them and said to them, "fill the earth and subdue it." With the help of the following text, try to find what it means to make man sovereign over the whole creation.

For in Genesis account, our dominion over the creation is a consequence precisely of the fact that we are created in the divine image. Our exercise of dominion, then, so far from being selfish and oppressive, is to reflect the attributes of God, our archetype. We are to display towards creations nothing less than the gentle and tender-hearted compassion that is characteristic of God himself. [...] Let us treat nature as a "thou", not an "it". [...] It is our human vocation to be priest of the creation. The essence of priesthood [...] is to offer, to give thanks and to bless. The priest [...] is the one who takes the world into his or her hands and then offers it back to God, thereby bringing down God's blessing upon that which he or she offers. Through this act of priestly offering, creation is brought into communion with God himself. Such is the essence of priesthood; such is our God-given vocation as human beings; and it is a vocation that only human beings can perform. By acting in this manner as priests of creation, we, human beings, transform the world into a "eucharistic" offering

(Kallistos Ware, The beginning of the day: the Orthodox approach to creation, Akritas, Athens 2007, pp. 23-25)

Exercise

Based on what you have discovered in the above text, can you formulate in a sentence what does it mean for you that man becomes sovereign in creation?

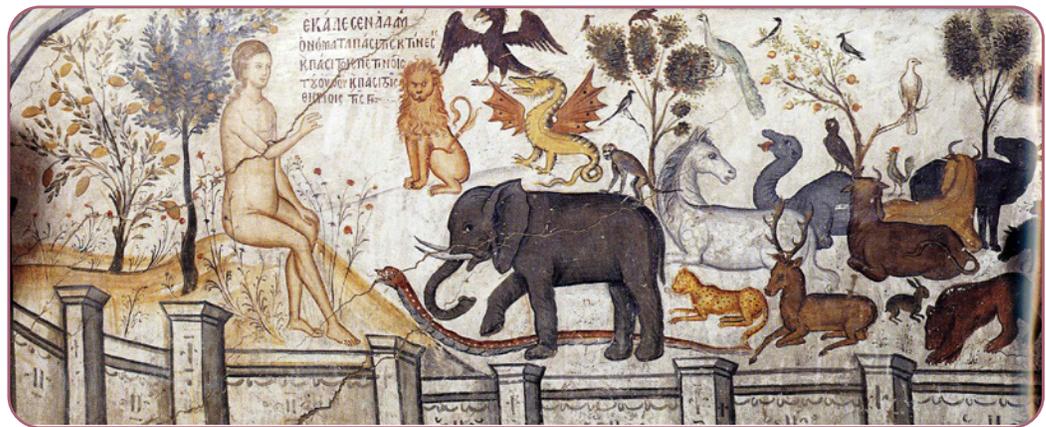


Figure 3.4
Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fayl:Adam_naming_animals_-_Moni_Ayou_Nikolaou_\(Meteora\).jpg](https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fayl:Adam_naming_animals_-_Moni_Ayou_Nikolaou_(Meteora).jpg)

(Theophanes of Crete, "Adam gave names to all the animals, to the birds of the sky and to the wild beasts". (Gen. 9: 19-20), fresco, 16th century, St.Nikolaos Anapafsas, Meteora, Greece)

Comment on the image

Man is a creator in the image of God the Creator. He gives name to things and in this way he gives them meaning, he creates things by renewing the Creation of God and in this way he reveals the divine glory in ever new forms

(Kallistos Ware, *Ecological Crisis and Hope*, Akritas, Athens 2008, p.93)

3.5 SO FAR WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD...

... that the world was created with love and care by God, and man was asked to take care of it. **Man** is sovereign on the creation, but this does not mean that he becomes its dominator, thus destroying it. It means that he functions as a priest who **receives the whole world as a gift and a blessing from God** and his responsibility is **to act creatively inside it and to offer it back to its Donor** with perfect respect to each one of his creations.

3.6 TEXTS FROM THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The questions that still remain are:

- What are the causes of the ecological crisis we experience today?
- Is there a way out of the crisis and what is it?
- What is our duty regarding the environment?

We can draw answers from the Orthodox Christian tradition

In fact, the present crisis is not outside of us, a crisis in our natural environment, but a crisis within us, in the way we humans think and feel. The real problem is not in the ecosystem, but in the human heart. It is so true what has been said, that we suffer from ecological heart failure. This means that the real problem is not technological or economic, but deeply spiritual. If the atmosphere is increasingly polluted, if lakes and rivers are poisoned, if forests die and the green meadows of the earth become deserted, it is because we humans are alienated from God and from our true selves... The most urgent need is not for more complex scientific skills, but for a collective repentance movement, with the literal meaning of the Greek term, which is "change of law". We need to change the way we think about God, the world, and ourselves.

(Kallistos Ware, *Ecological Crisis and Hope*, Akritas, Athens 2008, 34-35)

It is clear that the present-day ecological crisis is due to spiritual and moral causes. Its roots are connected with greed, avarice and egoism, which lead to the thoughtless use of natural resources, the filling of the atmosphere with damaging pollutants, and to climate change. The Christian response to the problem demands repentance for the abuses, an ascetic frame of mind as an antidote to overconsumption, and at the same time a cultivation of the consciousness that man is a "steward" and not a possessor of creation.

(*Message of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church to the Orthodox people and to all people of good will*, Crete 2016)

The tendency was to consider sin to be related to the evil we do to our fellow human beings [...] As the abuse of land and air, water resources, plants and animals springs directly from greed and greed our selfishness is indeed a sin, a deadly transgression, seeking repentance and correction

(Kallistos Ware, Ecological Crisis and Hope, Akritas, Athens 2008, 35-36)

3.6.1 THEREFORE **Exercise 1**

The causes of the ecological crisis according to the Orthodox Christian point of view are:

Exercise 2

The way out of the ecological crisis according to the Orthodox Christian point of view is:

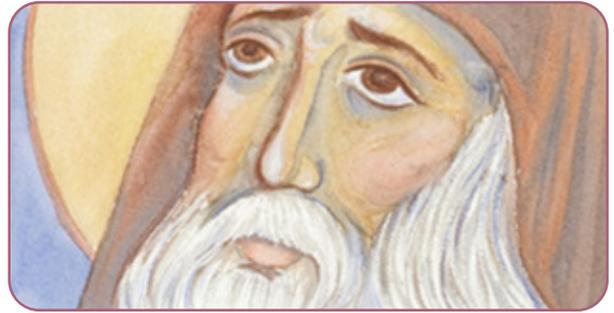


Figure 3.5
Aquarelle by Vaso Gogou

3.7 THE SAINTS OF THE CHURCH AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Saint Silouan the Athonite

loved not only people but also all of God's creation. Looking at the blue sky and the white clouds, he said: "How great is our Lord and how beautifully He made everything! His glory is evident in all things around

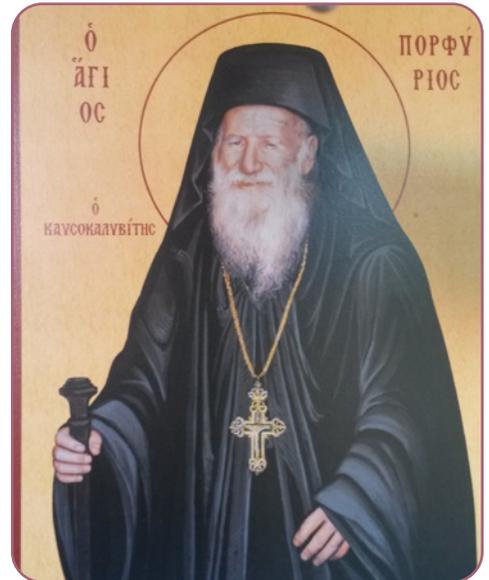


us. All we have to do is take care of all them, with love and to glorify Him joyfully for His rich gifts. The heart that has learned to love, mourns for all creation, even for a green leaf if it is cut without need."

Figure 3.6
Saint Silouan the
Antonite, aquarelle by
Vaso Gogou

Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia

narrates: "Once a woman, Mrs. Leni, came and brought me her goats and asked me: Can you pray for my goats, for they are not doing well? The woman was sad and I sympathized with her. I got up. The goats came to me by themselves. I stretched out my arms and read a prayer. They were all near me, raising their heads and looking at me. A male one weighed closer. He bent down and kissed my hand. He wanted me to caress him. I caressed him, he was pleased. They all surrounded me and looked up. They were looking me



in the face. I blessed them. I was talking, I was praying. All that concerns nature helps us a lot in our spiritual life, when it is by the grace of God. I, when I feel the harmony of nature, always cry with joy".

Saint Gerasimus of Jordan lived as a monk in the desert around the Jordan River. One day while he was on the bank of the river, the painful roar of a lion came at his ears. Driven by the weeping of the beast and without any fear, he found himself in front of a huge lion. The king of animals seemed to be in big pain.

Figure 3.7
St Porphyrios of
Kafsokalivia, Icon of
Saint Porphyrios in the
monastery of Panagia
Eleoussa, Achaea, Greece
by Peloponnisios via
Wikimedia Commons.
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Share Alike 4.0
International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license The
picture has not
been changed and
can be found at [https://
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Porphyrios.jpg/800px-
Saint_Porphyrrios.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d0/Saint_Porphyrrios.jpg/800px-Saint_Porphyrrios.jpg)

The saint took pity on the creature of God, and, as if it could talk to him, asked it where it hurts. The proud beast approached with confidence and showed the saint its front foot. A pointed cane was the cause of the problem. The saint carefully pulled the cane from the animal's paw and treated the wound with great care. Since then the lion became a faithful and inseparable companion of Saint Gerasimus. It followed him wherever he went, and served him, wanting to express his great gratitude.



Figure 3.8
St Gerasimus of Jordan
Source: Wikimedia
Commons: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=73126343>

Saint Amfilochios lived in Patmos, in the monastery of St John the Theologian. The elder often used to say: "Do you know that God gave us another commandment, which is not mentioned in the Bible? It is the commandment to love trees. "Whoever plants a tree, plants hope, plants peace, plants love and has the blessings of God." In the mystery of confession, the elder Amfilochios listened to the mistakes, the sins of the people and their sufferings, their trials, their questions. He comforted them,

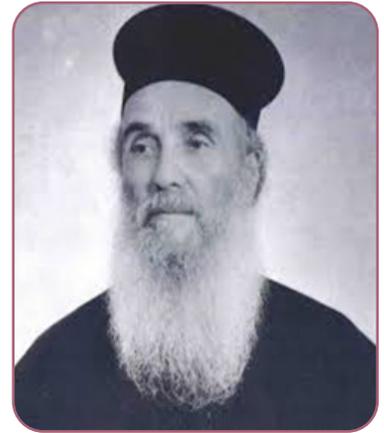


Figure 3.9
St Amfilochios of Patmos,
<https://www.saint.gr/4444/saint.aspx>

advised them, motivated them to make good and honorable decisions and to have repentance, that is, to change their way of thinking and living. And he advised them to plant and take care of a tree, to show their repentance.

(Selections from the book: Drips of God's love, the Saints and the Environment, Holy Monastery of Chrysopigi, Chania, 2015)

3.7.1 EXERCISE

Choose one of the above stories. Write down which attitude towards the environment is pointed out in this story, in one sentence.

3.8 FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

After our discussions in class, attempt to answer the following questions. Compare your final answers with your original ones.

1. *In the video we watched the theme of the creation of the world was connected:*
 - a. With the charitable work of the Church
 - b. With religious worship
 - c. With the protection of the environment
 - d. I do not know / No answer

2. *The pollutions observed by the students during the excursion comes from:*
 - a. The waste of the nearby olive mill
 - b. The sewage from an oil tanker that sank on the nearby beach
 - c. Wind turbines
 - d. I do not know / No answer

3. *In the video, the youngsters support the view that in order to stop the pollution of the environment it is necessary:*
 - a. To shut down the factory
 - b. To press the factory to comply with the laws and rules of environmental protection
 - c. To dispose the waste in another area
 - d. I do not know / No answer

4. *The Ecumenical Patriarch in the video characterizes as a sin:*
- a. The pollution of the environment
 - b. The biodiversity of creation
 - c. Child labor
 - d. I do not know / No answer
5. *What do you consider to be the attitude of the Christian Church regarding the protection of the environment?*
- a. It does not care
 - b. It does not include it in its priorities
 - c. It is interested
 - d. I do not know / I did not understand

3.9 ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: MATERIAL FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

3.9.1 ECOLOGY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

This is an example of what scholars call “environmental racism,” which is one form of environmental injustice. It provides us with a picture of the interconnection between polluting the environment and oppressing human beings; between abuse of the natural world and abuse of persons; between ecological harm and loss of human dignity. Citizens of Chicago who live in “red zones” carry a disproportionate amount of the environmental risk because they are less wealthy, less educated, and less connected to the politicians who determine where high-polluting businesses can be located. In short, the poor are trapped, and any effort to move elsewhere presents different obstacles and injustices. [...] Ecology and human dignity are inseparably connected, for good and for ill.[...] Recent studies on Environmental Inequity here in the Republic of Korea, for example, consider the “Toxic Release Inventory (TRI)” and show that distribution of environmental risks and benefits are not evenly balanced across different sociopolitical groups on the peninsula. In addition, the study suggests, as more foreigners migrate to Korea and settle in low-income urban neighborhoods, these immigrant-concentrated neighborhoods tend to be targeted as locations for new factories and waste management facilities, which further concentrates environmental harms among the most vulnerable and powerless members of society.

(Rev. Deacon Perry Hamalis, “Love God, Love thy Neighbor, Love the Trees: Environmental Justice in Orthodox Christianity”
in Ecology, Theology and Human dignity in the Orthodox Christian Tradition, International Symposium on the Environment Proceedings, Seoul: Orthodox Metropolis of Korea, 2018, p. 176-180)

3.9.2 STORY FOR THREE LITTLE DEVILS

It is a story about three little devils who finished their education in hell. Just before they were sent to earth, they appeared before the devil for his final examination. Turning to the first, the leader asked: "What will you tell them when you ascend to earth?" "I will tell them that there is no God," replied the first devil. "It does not say much," said the examiner, "they have heard it many times. The problem is that many of them know Him personally." He turned to the second devil "what will you tell them?" asked. "I will say that there is no hell," replied the second. "Ah, I find that smarter, but unfortunately it will not catch on. Many of them are already living in hell." Finally he asked the third: "And what will you tell them?". And the third replied: "I will tell them that there is no reason for any haste." "Wonderful!" exclaimed the arch-devil. "Go and start working!" This is definitely a joke with ecological implications.

(Kallistos Ware, *Ecological Crisis and Hope*,
Akritas, Athens 2008, pp.84-85)

3.10 GLOSSARY

Amfilochios of Patmos, Saint: Born in 1889 in Patmos, a Greek island where, according to Christian tradition, St John the Theologian wrote the book of Revelation. St Amphilochios became a monk in 1905 in the Monastery of St John the Theologian and in 1935 he was elected as abbot. He died in 1970. In 2018 the Ecumenical Patriarchate declared him a saint. His memory is celebrated on April 16.

Ascetic Ethic: The struggle of the Christian to overcome the failures which strengthen and develop the ego, through prayer, fasting, vigil and charity, and thus restore the relationship with God, fellow humans and the whole of creation.

Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch: The 270th “Archbishop of Constantinople - New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church”, according to his exact title. Born on the island of Imbros in 1940. He has been recognized as “The Green Patriarch” for his initiatives for the protection of the environment and his efforts to raise the awareness of Christians on ecological issues.

Biodiversity (or biological diversity): This term refers to the sum of the genes, biological species and ecosystems of an area. The large number and diversity of contemporary life forms on earth is the result of hundreds of millions of years of evolutionary history of creation. Today there is a decline in biodiversity on the planet, due to a number of causes such as environmental pollution, deforestation, desertification, water pollution and increased predation.

Eucharist: The offering of thanks by man to God, fellow human beings and the natural environment. The core of this offering is the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist is the basic sacrament in the Orthodox Church, in which the faithful, communing with the Body (bread) and Blood (wine) of Christ, are united with God and with each other.

Gerasimus of Jordan, Saint: Born in Lycaea in 5th century AD. In 451 AD he became a monk in the Jordan desert and later founded a monastery near the city of Beth Hogleh. He died in 475 AD and his memory is celebrated on March 4.

Mesopotamia: The name given by the ancient Greeks to the area bounded by the Rivers Tigris (to the east) and Euphrates (to the west). The name defines a large area, which includes the valleys of the two rivers and their tributaries, most of which lies in contemporary Iraq.

Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia, Saint: Born in 1906 in the village of Agios Ioannis in Evia. At the age of 13 he went to Mount Athos and stayed there for 6 years. In 1926 he was ordained a priest and went to the Monastery of St Nikolaos in Evia. In 1940 he was appointed as priest of the church of St Gerasimos in the Athens Polyclinic where he served until 1973. He died in 1991. In 2013 the Ecumenical Patriarchate declared him a saint. His memory is celebrated on December 2.

Psalms: One of the books of the Old Testament which is essentially a collection of 150 psalms. The name comes from the stringed instrument “psalter”, which accompanied the chanting of the psalms. The Psalms are a typical work of lyrical religious poetry.

Repentance: The ecclesiastical term “repentance” can be understood as a “change of mind”. In Greek the corresponding word is “metanoia”, which is a compound word (meta + nous) and means a change of mindset. In the Orthodox Church, repentance is understood as an act of healing from the disease of sin.

Silouan the Athonite, Saint: Born in 1866 in the village of Shovskoe near Lipetsk, Russia. In 1892 he went to Mount Athos and became a monk in the Holy Monastery of Saint Panteleimon. He died in 1938. In 1987 he was proclaimed a saint of the Orthodox Church. His memory is celebrated on September 24.

Sin: In the Christian tradition the word sin means “mistake”, “failure”. That is, the failure of a person to achieve their goal, leading, through thoughts or actions, to separation from God, from their own self, their fellow human beings and the natural environment.

Theophanes of Crete: One of the prominent painters of the Cretan School in the first half of the 16th century, whose work influenced religious post-Byzantine painting. His work, condensed over a period of twenty years (1527-1546) is found in the two main monastic centers of the Greek-speaking Orthodox Church, Meteora and Mount Athos.

3.11 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

CHARACTERS:

YIORGOS: *youngster*

STRATOS: *friend of Yiorgos*

TEACHER: *of Religious Education*

MARIA: *Yiorgos' mother*

APOSTOLOS: *Yiorgos' Father*

The ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH Bartholomew

SCENE 1

TEACHER: Well, kids, today we will talk about God and the creation of the world. If we look around us we can see that the world is really beautiful and functional. We have been given everything we need to enjoy this life, in harmony with nature, just as the Bible says. I read to you from the book of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, where God created human beings and placed them in a beautiful garden. God said to them, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (Gen. 1:29-31) Please note and remember the sentence: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good". Whatever God made was very good. There is nothing wrong with Creation, nor are there any evil creatures.

STRATOS: But Miss, isn't man often evil?

TEACHER: Well, Stratos, that's true. We humans often do wrong, but that is because we are the only creature that is free.

STRATOS: And what does that mean? Is it wrong to be free?

TEACHER: Not at all, but it is also a burden, and rather difficult, because as a free person you can choose whether or not to be not a good person

(The lesson continues. Background music)

TEACHER: Well, that's all for today. Remember that tomorrow we are going for a walk to the beach by the river. Bring some food and water with you. See you tomorrow. Take care!

SCENE 2

The next day the whole class is walking on the beach. The kids play, run, laugh, throw stones into the sea, in a happy and playful mood. Suddenly the children stop one by one as they see dead fish at the mouth of the river as well as large black patches that give off a nasty and irritating odor.

YIORGOS: Look, dead fish!

STRATOS: Yes, and it stinks here!

TEACHER: Something bad is happening here. There is something in the river that is killing the fish.

YIORGOS: Yes. Let's go find it.

STRATOS: Somewhere around here, there is an olive mill. Let's take a look. Maybe that's where this awful smell comes from.

After a while they stop in front of a pipeline that empties into the river. It seems to be well hidden as it is hardly visible through the reeds of the river bank. A thick liquid, almost black in color, and foul smelling, pours out.

TEACHER: You were right, Stratos! (Continues sadly). I read somewhere a few days ago that one cubic meter of liquid waste from an olive mill is equal to 100 cubic meters of municipal wastewater, and the wastewater from the olive mills can "travel" up to 10 kilometers and pollute shores, underground and surface water. Can you imagine it? Let's get out of here, we've seen enough...

On the way back

YIORGOS: I guess, Miss, that God did not imagine that mankind would destroy His beautiful creation...

TEACHER: And to think, Yiorgos, that God "took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and

keep it.” (Gen 2:15)

YIORGOS (bitterly): Yes, exactly the kind of human care that we saw today!

SCENE 3

Yiorgos and his friend Stratos meet Yiorgos’ parents at the family home.

STRATOS: We are telling you the truth, Mr. Apostolos, we saw with our own eyes the pipeline pouring black wastewater into the river.

YIORGOS: Yes, Dad, why don’t you believe us?

FATHER: I believe you, but I think that you are exaggerating a bit.

YIORGOS: We are not exaggerating at all. We saw it with our own eyes. If you don’t believe us, ask our teacher, who was with us.

FATHER: No need to ask anyone. It just seems unbelievable to me that such a big olive oil plant does not meet the required environmental protection measures and causes such pollution that you claim to have seen.

MOTHER: Why not believe the kids, Apostolos? After all, they are not too young to understand.

FATHER: Okay, let’s assume that things are as you say. What are you going to do now? Will you go to accuse the factory? Will you be satisfied if it is shut down? Don’t you know that dozens of people are employed there and make a living from it?

YIORGOS: No, we don’t think it should be shut down, we wouldn’t want that! What we want is for the mill to comply with the laws and rules of environmental protection, like other factories all over the country. This is what we learn in school and discussed with our teacher, yesterday in class and today on the excursion.

FATHER: This is just a new fashion, like so many others.

MOTHER: What do you mean?

FATHER: Everyone suddenly started caring for the environment.

YIORGOS: Why dad? Don’t you yourself get angry when we go to the beach and we see cigarette butts and rubbish everywhere? Doesn’t all this

bother you?

FATHER: This is a different matter. Here we are talking about things that can’t be changed easily, because it would create more problems than it would solve. Many jobs would be lost and trade would be affected.

STRATOS: But God gave us the world to keep and watch over.

FATHER: And where is that written, Stratos?

STRATOS: The Old Testament says so. We read it at school. The Church says so.

FATHER: The Church? Is the Church concerned about environmental issues? I never heard any sermon about the environment.

The television shows a news bulletin and at that moment it refers to Patriarch Bartholomew. The journalist calls him “Green Patriarch”.

FATHER: Eh, here is the Patriarch! Have you ever heard him speaking about such issues?

MOTHER: Hush, let’s make a break, Apostolos. Why does the journalist call him “Green Patriarch”?

(The Patriarch is heard saying): “Crimes against the natural environment are a sin. The destruction of the biodiversity of God’s creation, the pollution of water, earth, air and life by man, are all sins...»

Father is left speechless and Yiorgos, his mother and Stratos burst out laughing.

Father is left speechless and yiorgos, his mother and Stratos burst out laughing.

3.12 REFERENCES

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Aquarelles created by Vaso Gogou



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