

ΑΝΤΙΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΝ ΕΓΧΟΛΗΤΙΟΝ

ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΑΦΡΑΣΗΚΕΙΣ
ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ - ΔΟΣΙΜΑ - ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΕΣ

οικτιρμων και ελεμων ο Κυριος, μακροθυμος και ωλυελεος
ουκ εις τελος ορισθησει, ουδε εις τον αιωνα μνηει
ου κατα τας ανομιας ημων εωοησεν ημιν,
ουδε κατα τας αμαρτιας ημων ανταπειωκεν ημιν

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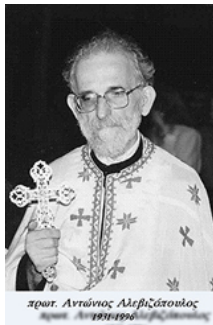
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The Holy Scriptural Orthodox Tradition of "Sarandismos"

The Holy Scriptural Orthodox Tradition of "Sarandismos"



The Holy Scriptural Orthodox Tradition of "Sarandismos"

The Apostolic Orthodox Tradition of "Sarandismos" (The Service of 40th Day Blessing of birth givers) is a special 40 Day period of a new mother's self-enclosure in her home after child-birth. This is an Ancient Liturgical Act of our Holy Orthodox Church and traces back to Mosaic Law, practiced in imitation and special honour of the Holy Mother of God, the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Even she herself, after giving birth to Christ, remained enclosed for 40 Days and only after that period was completed, she brought the Divine Infant to the Holy Temple and placed Him at the Hands of the Holy Priest St Symeon. This event was rightfully elevated to a Great Theomitoric Feast of the "Υραπανδι" = The Annunciation of Christ, which in all accuracy consists of the True Orthodox 'Mother's Day'. It portrays the perfect example of a Sacred Image of the Most Holy Mother which brings her Child to the Temple and dedicates it to God in all gratefulness that children are not really ours but God's. Thus, the Tradition of Sarandismos is an exceptional tribute to Motherhood. The ancient medical term for Sarandismos is "loheia" and a woman during medical confinement of her bed is called "lehona". In the science of medicine 'Loheia' is the 40 day period during which the female organism attempts to reinstate itself to the condition that it was prior to pregnancy.

The very first thing that we must point out is that these Orthodox Traditions are not "man-made" or "human teachings" as heretics accuse us. Holy Scripture commands us to "stand fast, and hold the **traditions** which you have been taught, whether by word or letter." (2Thess. 2, 15) These are sacred traditions initially practiced by very sacred people under divine inspiration. "Holy men of God spoke just as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1, 21) It is God the Holy Spirit that guides the Church to all Truth (John 16, 13) These

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Τα νέα μας

FASTING THERAPY AND ENERGY DIETS : THE FASTING OF THE NEW AGE:

The secret recipe of "New Age" philosophy...

What Yoga Really Is :
The philosophy of yoga can be expressed as follows:
"Ashes are fire, ashes are water, ashes..."

The Global Vision (Nightmare) Of The "New Age":
The so called New Age Of Aquarius (or "New Age") is a major problem....

The will of God:
"Now crisis, (judgment) is upon this world;" (John 12, 31) The crisis of the whole world is this. The crisis of each ...

The Holy Scriptural Orthodox Tradition of "Sarandismos":
Monk Nicodemus

The Orthodox Mind or Spirit :
All that we have mentioned define the faith of Orthodoxy and protect the Mystery of ...

Our Place in the World and the Hope of the World:
The entire world is God's creation and therefore it is by nature good; evil does not have...

The Liturgical Year :
Already by ancient Tradition, the Church honored the day on which the saints reposed as their day of...

sanctified persons found great favour by God, received holy information and confirmed that it is in fact pleasing to God.

It is therefore a very daring and anti-Christian stance to oppose these traditions, to attack believers and degrade their faith and adherence. It is far better, fairer and safer for someone to say: "Since it is recorded in the history of the First Apostolic Church, I do accept it, but I myself cannot practice this" or "I don't have the strength, the capacity, the ability or the intention to follow such thing" instead of cunningly devising evil excuses saying that it is supposedly "not Scriptural or not important for God or man-made". The truth is that Holy Scripture abundantly denotes the importance of motherhood, childbirth (and the sacred traditions surrounding it) are heavily important not only for her spiritual growth, but her very salvation: "A woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty". (1 Tim. 2, 15) Sarandismos is a gracious part and extension of these saving virtues.

During the 40 day period of Sarandismos, the mother remains enclosed in her home with special dedication and focus on her child as well as on God Who gifted her that child. No visiting by family, relatives or friends is allowed and the mother is not blessed to exit her home at all, unless there is a serious medical issue or a life-threatening need. All other contemporary forms of communication are not forbidden, such as telephone calls, emails etc, as long as they are done within the need of human support and comfort, not chit-chatting, gossiping and trivial spreading of rumours, scandals and slander.

The mother devotes to prayer and chants joyful Orthodox Psalms with her infant in her arms and tries to follow the fasting, (on the normal fasting days Wednesdays & Fridays) only with the blessing of her spiritual father, as she must be assured that fasting does **not** affect breast-feeding in any way as there are many non-dairy foods which highly assist in breast-feeding (the mother is very highly recommended if possible to keep breast-feeding for as long as she can -even if it is for one year- and not rush to replace it with formula milk if there is no need). She also takes the chance to read various spiritual books (especially Christian Orthodox material) on how to raise children with the fear of God and how both parents can come closer to Christ & His Church. There is no such thing as Half Sarandismos, (20 days) but only the full 40 day period.

Sarandismos is entirely an issue of Faith and forms a special aspect of Spiritual Life. Although it is evidently God's will, our Mother Church does not strictly or forcefully impose this. Our Holy Orthodox Church leaves this to the good will, the level of faith and strength of determination of each individual mother. Rest assured that any woman who willingly and gladly follows this, has immense special blessings to gain for herself, her infant and her husband too. Therefore our criteria of wanting to follow such practice are critically important as there should be no trivial or just customary purposes behind this very important implementation. Also, there should be no intentions of wanting "to show off our spirituality" or promote one's self as a "good Christian" or keeper of traditions. A spirit of humbleness and a pure love for God are the only blessed, praiseworthy and exemplary motives.

The Actual Service of the "First Church Attendance" = "Protos Ecclisiasmos" in the "Efholyion" (Book of Priest's Prayers & Services) states that the Mother (always accompanied by her husband of course) attends Church for the first time "to be cleansed from every sin and every defilement of the servant of God" (Leviticus 15, 22-33) where she brings the infant to Church for the first time and dedicates it to the Holy Temple of God for the glory of God, as a sacrifice that is pleasing to God. It is important and proper that both parents specifically attend this service and not just the mother alone, as wrongly practiced today. There, the mother obtains the blessing to receive Holy Communion once again, but only her, not the child yet. The infant can only receive Holy Communion once it is Baptised and Baptism is strongly urged by our Holy Fathers to take place, no longer than 6 months, but as soon as possible immediately after the Baptism (we do not "Christen", the term "Christening" is a Western Papal erroneous term. We Orthodox exclusively use the term "Baptism" which is an Early Christian Scriptural term maintained by Christ and The Apostles, from the Greek verb "vaptizo" which means "to fully immerse someone in water")

The very first question, in all good intention, that may naturally arise, is "why and how can the woman be considered "unclean" since the menstrual flow and childbirth are a natural process by God's will"?

Although the question is logical and the mindset valid, it is deeply sad to hear this when it sometimes unfortunately comes from some 'academic' theologians, uneducated priests or Ecumenist Modern Bishops or Archbishops, especially when they make unacceptable inaccuracies by public statements that "any prayers and references to a woman being 'unclean' should be totally removed from our Church books and services" and other disturbing statements such as "our Liturgical Texts and Sacraments should be "corrected"... How profoundly deplorable...

We must clarify and underline in advance that we are not promoting any disrespect to our highly respectful Clergy and consciously avoid falling in to the cursed sin of "ierokatigoria" = speaking against priests. The above references to Bishops are only made because these statements were made in public, at

very large scale. It is imperative that we must be very discerning in what we sometimes hear and always get an opinion from an experienced Holy Elder, just as the "Yerontikon" sternly recommends us. Leaders themselves must be very cautious when making such public statements, because the scandal could be so great that it becomes extremely difficult to restore and re-gather those confused souls that are later "snatched" by heretical wolves at the first given chance. Our responsibility is immense with devastating consequences. Orthodoxy is not a system of false, fabricated traditions nor is our Faith subject to the pseudo-piety and barren ethics of any (rare) Ecclesiastical Leaders.

Now to the answer:

This "uncleanness" or "contamination" is **not of an ethical or sinful nature**. God and His Church are **not** considering the woman sinful or shameful, therefore she should feel no guilt about it at all. Saint John Chrysostom precisely exclaims: "There is nothing unclean within any natural process!" In his Hermeneutic Commentaries on Leviticus, he strongly opposes the notion of ethical uncleanness in a very apologetic way and not only underlines the preventing aspects of infections but also implies and condemns the defilement of adultery which was often committed under the pretext of men supposedly wanting to refrain from any contagiousness and cunningly resorting to sin.

Our Holy Orthodox Faith is a living revelation of Truth and Exposition of Sacred Tradition that is feasible and fair. According to the Old Testament (Gen. 3, 16, Leviticus 15, 22-33) which was not cancelled but completed and is still the Word of God and valid Part of Holy Scripture, and according to the All-Wise Holy Fathers, God allowed the menstrual flow as well as the birth-pains to take place after the fall of man, as a consequence of their disobedience towards their Creator, along with many other serious distortions of nature that tragically eventuated as a spiritual chastisement. After childbirth, the woman's body experiences some unpleasant changes, human nature undergoes some form of corruption, defilement and distortion, especially with all the excessive blood flow, internal and external, liquids, infections, chemicals and pharmaceuticals used etc.. Her mental and psychological state also endures some radical changes and both parents, both "Syzygi" (an ancient Greek Biblical Greek term which means "co-bearers" of the same load and "Syzygia" to carry a burden together) share the load of these life-changing occurrences as well as the load of various other good and bad experiences during and after birth. Not only the Holy Fathers, but even doctors themselves globally testify that a woman is not yet clean straight after child-birth, that is why they even suggest that the couple refrains from coming together at least for a couple of weeks in order for genital sterilisation to be completed.

The Pioneering Book called "The Holy Rudder" = "To Ieron Pedalion" (a Complete Collection of all Decisions by All Ecumenical and Local Councils) is of paramount importance and vast validity for the Orthodox Church. There, Saint Nicodemus of Holy Mountain mentions these truths, and in rhetoric form asks the same question himself: "Why does God call a woman in her monthly, 'unclean'? It seems that the blood flow itself, being a natural procedure, is not really a sin or (ethical) uncleanness". It is an educational, biological and physical uncleanness to avoid contamination and prevent any possible infection. Saint Isidoros Pilusiotis makes special interpretation of these spiritual measures and restrictions, and clearly defines them as "educational measures of catharsis and sanctification". Also in a very Early Christian Book of the 1st Century, "The Apostolic Orders" we find: "Not even the lawful marital relationships or the Wed-Bed nor the 'flowing of blood' can defile human nature and separate man from the Holy Spirit apart from evil, sin, impiety and ungodliness". Yet, no Saint, Holy Father or Ecclesiastical Write ever opposed the order of Sarandismos, but they all firmly urged the faithful to safe keep it and thus it has been preserved till today. Other Great Saints such as St Dionysios Archbishop of Alexandria-the Confessor (Canon B' 260AD), St John the Nisteftis, St Timotheos Archbishop of Alexandria, even the recent great Saints such as Saint Kosmas the Aitolean, St Nektarios, the Holy Elders St Porphyrios, St Paisios, along with all the Great Ascetic Women Saints of our times, all gave the same non-conflicting, harmonious sacred guidelines to women that sought their valuable advice and most valuable blessing.

I was very moved and taken by awe to personally witness a lady who once asked the former Holy Bishop of Florina, Augoustinos Kantiotis, if she was allowed to enter the Church whilst on her monthly, and he replied in his characteristic loving austerity: "My child, you are not even allowed to kiss my hand, not that I am anything special, we are unworthy servants but it's the Priesthood that we have, you understand? Not only you cannot light a candle, kiss an icon or receive the 'Antidoron', but strictly speaking, you are not allowed to even come to the temple. We don't say these things to degrade you women or throw you in despair, this 'uncleanness' is of a legal, educational nature, not ethical, you understand?"

The whole 40 day process of Sarandismos is an extended "askisis"= an extremely beneficial spiritual exercise of ascetic silence and rejuvenating stillness, a good form of experiencing "monastic" isolation, a very blessed chance of remoteness, a trial of patience, a test of ego and an assessment of obedience. It is not an easy thing, but not impossible. For those who truly believe, "with God's help everything is possible" (Mark 10, 27). Sarandismos is

a pure test of faith. We eagerly submit and happily obey God's will in order to oppose and "correct" the former disobedience by Eve. We accept this "penance" without evil objection or worldly suspicion, trusting in God's wisdom and with steadfast hope in His great mercy. After the 40 day period of preparation, the mother re-enters the Church and restores that distortion, approaching the Sacramental Communion of the Church of God in all blessing and readiness.

Our very own Orthodox grandmothers and ancestors (which some modern theologians are very sarcastic of) have never had any issue with observing these matters and would never take any offense to these "prohibitions". Although they were illiterate and had no theological knowledge, yet, throughout the ages, they would very humbly, remarkably and impressively express that "we really like to keep our sacred traditions, we just love to do the right thing by God! We have never thought or imagined or even intended to ever change the Gospel of Christ! That's why we see no insult to be excluded from priesthood. We are already 'priestesses' and 'Deaconesses' in act, in sacrifice, within our blessed Home-Church, the 'Kat' Oikon Ecclesia!"

I think this is a very good powerful lesson for all of us, including males, monks, priests and Bishops. Rejoice. Hairete.

Monk Nicodemus

Antihetical Manual

July 8, 2011

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Prayer Oil or Holy Unction

The Church is concerned not only for the curing of the soul but also for the curing of man's entire...



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