

# Stop Saying “Glory to God for All Things!”



A testimony offered by Hieromonk Synesios.

“A few years ago, I was the parish priest of St. Vasileios church (Piraeus) and was called to hear the confession of a young man, Xenophon, 42 years old.

When I arrived, his days were numbered. Cancer with rapid metastases had affected his brain too. He was all alone at the ward, the bed next to him was empty, so we were all alone.

This is what he told me about how he came to Faith, since he was a “hardened atheist” in his own words:

‘I arrived here about 35 days ago, in this ward of two beds. Next to me was another patient, about 80 years old. He was suffering from cancer too, in his bones, and although he was experiencing excruciating pain, he was constantly praising the Lord “Glory to God! Glory to God for all things!” He also recited more prayers which I

heard for the first time in my life since I was an atheist who had never set my foot to church. Often, all those prayers comforted him and he slept for a couple of hours. Then, after 2-3 hours, he woke up again from the excruciating pain, and he would start over “My Christ, I thank you! Glory be to Thy Name! Glory to God! Glory to God for all things!” I was moaning with my pain, and this patient at the next bed to mine was glorifying God. I was blaspheming Christ and the Theotokos, and he was thanking God, thanking him for the cancer which he had given to him, and for all the excruciating pain he was suffering.

I was so rebellious and indignant at this! Not only for the excruciating pain I was suffering, but also for his never-ending Doxology. He was also partaking daily of Holy Communion, while I was throwing up in disgust.

– ‘Will you please shut up! Shut up and stop saying all the time ‘Glory to God’! Can’t you see that this God, Whom you are thanking and glorifying, this same God is torturing us with such cruelty? What kind of God this is? No, He does not exist!’

And the patient on the next bed would meekly answer me: ‘He does exist, my child, and He is also a most loving Father, because with all this illness and pain, He cleanses me from my many sins. If you had worked on some rough task, and your clothes and your body stank, would you not need a rough brush to clean all this dirt? Likewise, God is using this disease as a balm, as a beneficial cleansing for my soul, in order to prepare it for the Kingdom of Heaven’.

His replies got even more on my nerves and I was blaspheming gods and demons. All my reactions were sadly most negative, and all I did was to keep on screaming: ‘There is no God. ... I do not believe in anything. ... Neither in this God nor in His Kingdom ...’

I remember his last words: ‘Wait and you shall see with your own eyes how the soul of a Christian who believes is separated from his body. I am a sinner, but His Mercy will save me. Wait, and you will behold and will believe!’

And that day came. The nurses wanted to place a screen, as is their duty, but I protested against and stopped them. I told them ‘No, don’t do this, because I want to watch how this old man will die!!!’

So I watched him and he was glorifying God all the time. He also said a few ‘Hail, Unwedded Bride’ for the Theotokos, which as I later found out, they are called ‘Salutations’. He would also chant “Theotokos Virgin Mary ...”, “From my many sins ..” and “It is truly right to bless you, Theotokos ...”, and he would also make the sign of the Cross a number of times.

Then ... he raised both of his hands and said “Welcome, my Angel! Thank you for coming with such a bright synodeia to take my soul. Thank you! Thank you!” He raised his hands a little bit more, he made the sign of the Cross, he crossed his arms on his chest and fell asleep in the Lord. Suddenly, the ward was filled with Light, like ten and more bright suns had risen all together, such was splendour of the light with which this ward was lit!” And not only was this ward lit, but a heavenly fragrance spread around, inside the ward, even outside the corridor, so powerful that those patients in the neighbouring wards who were not asleep and could get out of their beds, they came out and started walking up and down the corridor, trying to discern where this special fragrance was exuded from.

Thus, my Father, I, the hardened atheist did believe and called for you to hear my Confession.’

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Xenophon was firm and merciless with his old self, but the Mercy of our Lord was great, really great! He offered a clear confession, received Holy Communion a couple of times, and departed in deep repentance, in peace, a holy death, himself glorifying God!”

By Protopresbyter Stephanos Anagnostopoulos

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