

# OUR SUPER-ESSENTIAL BREAD

by

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In the Lord's prayer, we pray that our Father would give us this day our "daily" bread. What is this petition meant to teach us? What did our Lord really mean?

God created man as a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds. In one sense, we live above the world of things. Man understands the world, but the world does not understand man. We stand higher than the world, on a plane of personhood, a plane in which we speak to God face to face. In another sense, however, we are part of the world and inseparably connected to it. God created us such that we need to breathe air unceasingly, drink water, and eat food several times a day – not once a week or once a month. Food incorporates both the physical and spiritual dimensions of man, because it is not only a necessity, but, unlike breathing, includes an element of choice and control. So, praying for "daily" bread is a way not only to acknowledge God as the Source of all of our sustenance, the Provider for our bodily necessities, but to include God in the most fundamental human choice: eating, the act that connects us to the world in our human way.

Scholars have noted the parallels between our Lord Jesus Christ as a new Moses and this petition of the Lord's prayer as a reiteration of the manna given to the Israelites in the desert (Ex. 16:11; Nm. 11:1; Dt. 8:1). Just as God gave the manna once a day to feed His people so as to teach them to rely entirely on Him ("you shall gather a day's portion every day ... and you shall know that I am the LORD your God"), so does our prayer of this simple petition. It is not a petition for "success," or wealth, power, or even health – it is more fundamental than all those things: a simple acknowledgement of our total dependence on God.

This may be true and good, but is this all that our Lord Jesus Christ meant to say? The answer is emphatically, "No." In fact, in Greek our Lord did not say "daily" ("kath' ueron") at all. Using the word "daily" could even be called a mistranslation.

Rather, our Lord used a specific Greek word, "epiousios," to describe the bread in this petition. The word "epiousios" is an absolutely unique word. It was never used in the Greek language before our Lord Jesus Christ used it in the Lord's prayer, and it has never been used since. It is found in absolutely zero other texts, manuscripts or inscriptions. This fact was noticed as early as the third century by the great Alexandrian theologian, Origen, and has been confirmed by modern scholarship with its access to computers, etc. Neither can this word be reverse-engi-

neered to an Aramaic equivalent. There is no Aramaic equivalent. The exact derivation and meaning of this word remains for contemporary scholarship "the great unresolved puzzle of New Testament lexicography."

The word is formed from a prefix ("epi" – "above") and a form of the participle of the verb "to be." So it could be rendered "above being" or "above essence" or "most-, or super-essential." But if our Lord meant simply "essential," He, again, would have used a different word.

The fact of the matter is that our Lord did not come to earth to give us ordinary bread. In the miracle of the five loaves, the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels, and the chief "sign" in the Gospel of John (which proved He was the new Moses, the Messiah), our Lord specifically tells the people to "labor not for the food which perishes" (Jn 6:27). Moreover, our Lord specifically disassociates this bread from the manna in the wilderness:

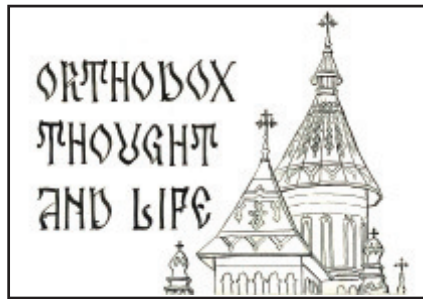
"This is that bread which came down from heaven: *not* as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live for ever" (Jn 6:31-58). The bread which our Lord Jesus Christ came to give is nothing other than Himself. So important is this fact, that our Lord repeats it emphatically four times (Jn 6:35, 41, 48, 51). "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Therefore, even though it can be said that we do in fact pray for "daily" bread in the Lord's prayer, we are also praying for much more: we are praying to be part of the Body of Christ. Without this necessary Eucharistic reference, any other interpretation of our Lord's words is incomplete, at best.

It is for this reason that our Lord Jesus Christ used an absolutely unique word in the history of the human language, to describe an absolutely unique bread in the history of humanity, a bread which can be given by no one except Himself. And this Bread is Himself, His Divine Body. The great gift of God to those who believe in Him is not a book, or a teaching, or ethics, or anything else that might be associated with Christianity or the Church, though it includes those things too. Quite simply: God sent us His Son, who left His Body, and sent His Spirit.

As Christians, we pray to God at all times, in every moment and circumstance (I Thess 5:17). What a great gift and consolation that God is always nearby, standing right next to us, speaking to us in a still,

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## St. Nicholas Camp *Cont. from page 6*

camp offering; the offering of prayers by all the community members; the instructional preparation of the gifts outside the altar at Holy Liturgy; the sacrament of Confession (the first time for some younger children), and Holy Liturgy. The second class for the Sophomore/Seniors (ages 12-15/16-17) was a group discussion about 'Christian concepts', with topics like bullying; our measuring sticks (how we judge success); and how we see ourselves and others, supplemented with a DVD for teens called Crossroads, a 10 day program, offered free at Holy Cross Seminary at Brookline, Mass. In an additional choir class, all the campers learned some of the music from the prayer book, taught by three choir sisters with angelic voices.

Rounding out the program were some calisthenics in the morning where the campers learned to march, RCMP style; a bit of stormy weather that came and went; a run up the hill, dodging poison ivy, to the white cross for a great view of the lake; watching the septic tank being slurped; hundreds of photographs which are now up on Windows Live Spaces; barbecues; campfires, tambourines, and songs; and a newly leaderless choir which struggled through the Liturgy as best we could on that last day ... for which there are no rewards in heaven unless there is one for children's bravery!

But made it through, we did. We got through the liturgy that morning. We got through the lack of sleep. We got through the week, and we got through the 48<sup>th</sup> ROEA Canadian summer camp silently guided by our patron saint, Nicholas. What else can we say? Our day is truly done. Gone is the sun one more year, from the lake, from the hills, from the sky. All is well, so safely rest. God is nigh. We close with "Christ is in our midst," to which we all can answer, "He is. And, always, shall be."

Note: St. Ephraim the Syrian says we need to be careful about what we spend an hour of our lives doing, because we are exchanging an hour of our lives to do it. The men and women who spent hours and hours of their lives at this camp are newcomers: Violeta Iosub (Alberta), Andy and Simona Strothotte (BC), Alice Vasile (BC), Doina Strimbu (BC), Cornelia Stefan (BC), Ray Farah (Michigan), Fr. John Maerean (SK), Shelley Dumba (SK), and veterans: Fr. Dan and Alice Nenson (SK), Fr. Dn. Ken Gaber (MB), Dave Steski (AB), Claude Dupas (MB), Angela Rowan (BC), Tamara MacLellan (MB), Mary Thorne (SK), and Dianne Farah (Michigan). And, we thank them, because they could have chosen to do something else, but chose to do this instead. Anonymous Orthodox also contributed to the continuation of this camp this year. Suffice it to say, they gave time, money and energy to quickly help put together this program. They didn't have to. But they did, out of love, and in doing so became conduits of the Holy Spirit.

I have done many articles for Solia over the years,

beginning in 1964. I have to say, this is one I am very glad to do. I hope St. Nicholas Camp will continue to grow in programming and facilities so that another generation of Canadians will value and pass along their Orthodox heritage in the spirit of those who passed it on to us. I hope it becomes your vision, your torch, because now it is your time. Take hold.

**Dianne Scott Farah, M.Div. '73**

## St. Demetrius *Cont. from page 3*

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9. At the Matins: Luke 11:12-20. At the Divine Liturgy: II Timothy 2:1-10; John 15:17-16:2.

### Hymns of the Feast

**Troparion** (Third Tone) - The world has found in you a great champion in time of peril, as you emerged the victor in routing the barbarians. For as you brought to naught the boasts of Lyaaios, imparting courage to Nestor in the stadium, in like manner, holy one, great Martyr Demetrios, invoke Christ God for us, that He may grant us His great mercy.

**Kontakion** (Second Tone) - God, who gave you invincible power and with care kept your city invulnerable, royally clothed the Church in purple with the streams of your blood, for you are her strength, O Demetrios.

*Apolytikion and Kontakion courtesy of Holy Cross Press, Brookline, MA as posted on the web site of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (<http://www.goarch.org>).*

## Our Super-Essential Bread

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small voice in the depth of our hearts. Let us reflect, however, that according to *the* Christian prayer, the Lord's Prayer, it is not enough to simply pray to God thus, at home, although this is essential. It is also necessary to properly prepare ourselves (through confession, fasting and prayer) to receive the Super-essential Bread. For this our Lord taught us to pray every day.

## Vatra Camps *Cont. from page 5*

assistance of other staff members, led the campers in talks that touched on the importance of the Church and the Vatra in their lives. A major theme was building a relationship with God and deepening the bonds of friendship within the Episcopate family.

By the time the Vatra Summer Camps had come to a close, our students/children had grown closer to God, the Church and one another as tears of joy were flowing. There was a buzz among the students as they were thinking about the next time they would be getting together and planning on attending next year's Vatra Camps.

**V. Rev. Fr. Dimitrie Vincent**