

Orthodox  
in  
Encounter  
STUDENT'S BOOK



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# **FACE2FACE**

# **ORTHODOX IN ENCOUNTER**

STUDENT'S BOOK



EDUC8

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Development of the Document:

Volos Academy for Theological Studies

- Christos Fradellos, MTh
- Apostolos Barlos, MTh
- Maria Anna Tsintsifa, Master in Intercultural Education
- Vaso Gogou, BA in Theology and History
- Nikolaos Tsirevelos, PhD

Beyond the Horizon ISSG

- Timucin Ibu, Developer and Graphic Designer

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Contact: Beyond the Horizon ISSG vzw (Project Coordinator), [info@behorizon.org](mailto:info@behorizon.org)

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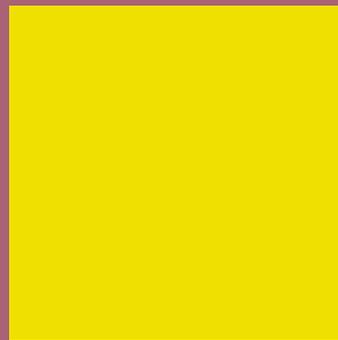
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# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

Dear Students,

Wherever we live, whether in cities or villages, town or country, violent incidents, both verbal and physical, are common. Violence often directed at people of different ethnicities and religions, who live together in the same place.

If you think about it, your own class may be made up of students of different faiths. What does the Orthodox Church teach us about violence against those who differ from us in terms of religion or origin? Can we coexist peacefully and creatively, despite our differences?

The material in this book attempts to provide a foundation for the peaceful coexistence of people of different religions and cultures, based on the teachings and the tradition of the Orthodox Church. But in order to do this, we must ask ourselves how bigotry and violence between people who profess different faiths can be tackled, and we will explore this together in the classroom.

Figure 1  
Video



This book, therefore, is intended to act as a stimulus for you to explore and find answers to such questions for yourselves. You will not be required to learn anything by heart but, rather, with the guidance of your religious education teacher, you will explore texts from the Bible, the patristic Fathers, contemporary theologians as well as works of art, ecclesiastical or non-religious. The main purpose is to interact with this material and therefore with theology, in order to come to your own conclusions.

To achieve our goals, the book is divided into four thematic sections. In the first section you will explore the teachings of the Orthodox Church regarding difference, and specifically the religious “other”, who belongs to a different religion. In the next section, you will consider some texts of the Orthodox Church in which God seems to act in a violent manner, and learn the historical reasons and interpretations for this. Next, you will deal with a particular form of violence, that which is exercised against the natural environment, and engage with the teachings of Orthodox Christians pertaining to this. In the last section, you will explore issues related to war and peace and research the Orthodox perspective on these issues.

The ultimate goal is to discuss these issues with your classmates, including those who believe in a different religion or who don't believe at all; and, at the end of each section, to reflect, to exchange views and to come up with new findings or even with joint investigative and creative activities.

To begin with, however, we are left with the need to answer the primary question. Can we all live together peacefully, even though we believe and understand God in a different way, or if we don't even accept His existence?

Together we will set out on this short journey within the world of the Orthodox Church, towards a meeting with the “other” and their difference; in other words, a meeting with our neighbor or our classmate and their world.

Enjoy the trip!

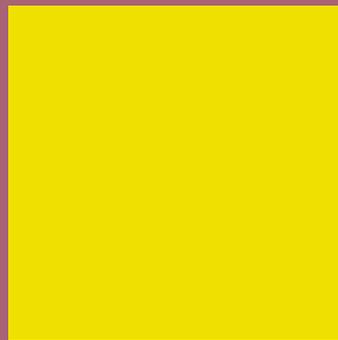
The authors

**“ WHAT IS NEEDED FOR RELIGION, IS TO GUIDE PEOPLE TO THE DEPTH OF THIS TRUTH, TO A CHANGE OF MIND AND LIFE AND TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. THIS IS INDEED THE CORE OF OUR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. ”**

————— Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch

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ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER:  
DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

## MODULE ONE

# DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE VIDEO



Figure 1.1  
Video Clip

The story takes place on a remote Greek island, where Yiorgos, a school student, lives with his family. On the island there is a large refugee camp, and the locals react to it in various ways, at least suspiciously. Yiorgos, however, has established friendly relations with many of the youngsters that live in the camp. Suddenly, Yiorgos' grandfather has a heart attack and urgently needs blood. Who will respond to the family's needs and become a blood donor? Will it be their relatives and their local friends or maybe the foreigners, whom Yiorgos' family confronts as a threat?

## 1.2 VIDEO SCREENING

### 1.2.1 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONNAIRE

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

1. *What kind of relationship does Yiorgos' father want his son to have with the refugees?*
  - a. A friendly relationship
  - b. No relationship at all
  - c. He does not care if his son has any relations with the refugees
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
2. *Who mobilized to donate blood for Yiorgos' grandfather?*
  - a. His compatriots and fellow believers
  - b. Lena, Sotiris, Yiorgos' father and two friends of theirs who had diabetes
  - c. Refugees of a different nationality and a different religion
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
3. *In the parable mentioned by the grandfather, who is it who comes to the aid of the wounded man?*
  - a. The Samaritan who was considered his enemy
  - b. The Priest who was his compatriot
  - c. The Levite who was his compatriot
  - d. I do not know / No answer

4. *The words of Gregory of Nazianzus that “all people have a divine seal and that all of us, in the love of Christ, become as one” are mentioned in the video. What do they mean?*
  - a. We are all one in the love of Christ, regardless of ethnic origin, religious belief or social class.
  - b. We are all one in the love of Christ, as long as we share the same religion
  - c. We are all one in the love of Christ, as long as we have a common ethnic origin and religion
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
5. *At the end of the story we watched, whose perceptions were changed in relation to foreigners?*
  - a. The father’s
  - b. The grandfather’s
  - c. None of them
  - d. I do not know / No answer

### **1.2.2 TOPICS FOR RESEARCH**

The video we watched presents the topic: “Encounter with the other”. The main issues and questions we will need to address are:

- a. Whom do we consider to be our neighbor and whom do we consider to be “the other”?
- b. Why do we often regard “the other” fearfully and feel threatened by him/her?
- c. What answers does the New Testament give us to the above questions?
- d. What practices and attitudes can we draw from the Orthodox tradition and apply in our daily life?

## 1.3 US AND THEM

### 1.3.1 QUESTIONS

1. In relation to the story you watched, consider the characters and write down which of them you consider “yours”, i.e. close to you?

2. In addition to the people close to us, there are also other people around us, who are different from us and whom we often fear and treat with hostility. Can you give some examples?

### 1.3.1 OBSERVING AROUND US



Most people usually call “neighbors” their blood relatives, compatriots and fellow believers, local people and friends, with whom we share the same feelings, the same ideas, the same views and in general our daily life. As they have a common language with us, a common religion, a common homeland, we feel they are similar to us, we communicate with them easily and that is why we do not think of them as a threat and we are not afraid of them. On the contrary, we regard as “other” every person who is different from us, who is possibly a foreigner, who does not speak our language, who does not have the same religion, the same homeland and the same culture as us. “Others” differ from us in their ideas and opinions and so communicating with them is difficult and requires a lot of effort. Often, we feel they are a threat to us and we regard them with suspicion and fear. Thus we maintain a distance and are unable to achieve unity and harmonious coexistence with them.

## 1.4 THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament, Christ gives us the criteria and shows us the way to coexist harmoniously with all human beings, regardless of any differences, with love for every human being, even towards the enemy, overcoming fears and insecurities. Let's read Jesus words, written down by St Luke.

### 1.4.1. THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN (LK. 10:25-37)

<sup>25</sup> Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.[a] "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" <sup>27</sup> He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." <sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead." <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii,[b] gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" <sup>37</sup> He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."



Figure 1.2  
The Good Samaritan by  
Aimé Morot (1880)  
Source: Marc Baronnet  
via Wikimedia Commons:  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7901316>

**1.4.2 WHAT I NEED  
TO KNOW IN ORDER  
TO UNDERSTAND THE  
PARABLE OF THE GOOD  
SAMARITAN**

**Parables:** Jesus usually taught in parables. About one third of His teaching is parables. These are short stories He Himself created, whose subject matter comes from the daily life of the Israelites, revealing, in a vivid way, the truths of the Kingdom of God. Jesus taught in parables because this was the usual way of teaching among all his compatriot rabbis, and because it was **an illustrative way of teaching that everyone could understand**. The parables invite the listener to recognize his own self somewhere in the plot of the story, to wake up, to reflect and to take a personal stance. Jesus' parables were justifiably described as an "illustrated gospel".

**Neighbor:** In the times of Christ, the Israelites considered parents, brothers, relatives, friends, neighbors, fellow believers and compatriots as "neighbors", people close to them. On the other hand,, the enemies of their homeland, especially the Romans, foreigners, the followers of different religions and particularly the Samaritans were considered as "other".

**Priests:** These were the descendants of Aaron, who was the brother of Moses. Priests **served in the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem** during the daily ceremonies. Their main duty was the offering of sacrifices and prayers to liberate the faithful from their sins and from evil forces. In the times of Jesus the priests are estimated to have been about a few thousand. In Jerusalem alone there were over 1000 priests and 250 Levites.

**Levites:** These were the descendants of Levi and **assistants of the priests**. Their duties were to guard and to keep the Temple of Solomon tidy and clean. Both the priests and the Levites knew the divine commandments very well and would have been obliged to take care of the wounded Jew, who was in any case, their compatriot.

**Samaritans:** Members of an ethno-religious group composed of Israelites who had intermarried with Babylonians, Syrians etc. **Their religion had the same roots as Judaism**, but with serious deviations from the Jewish tradition. Because of this, the Israelites considered them schismatic and not compatriots. Their religious center was the temple on Mount Gerizim, which was located above the city of Shechem. In the time of Christ, **the gap between them and the Israelites was vast; the two groups hated each other deeply** and for this reason the Israelites avoided any communication with them.

**Denarius:** (plural Denarii): A silver coin of the Roman Empire, circulating in the time of Christ. On one side it had the image of the emperor Tiberius and on the other the image of his mother Livia. The two dinars that the Samaritan gave to the innkeeper were equal to two daily wages of an unskilled labourer.

**1.4.3 MAP OF  
PALESTINE IN THE TIME  
OF CHRIST**



Figure 1.3  
Iudea Province in the  
First Century,  
Source: Andrew c via  
Wikimedia Commons.  
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can be found at [https://  
commons.wikimedia.org/  
wiki/File:First\\_century\\_  
ludaea\\_province.gif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_century_ludaea_province.gif)

### 1.4.4 EXERCISE

The following works of art depict various scenes from the parable of the Good Samaritan. Observe the works carefully and place them in the correct order according to the narrative of the parable. Can you identify the characters from the parable in these works?

Figure 1.4

Source: Wikimedia  
Commons: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f1/Rembrandt\\_Harmensz.\\_van\\_Rijn\\_033.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f1/Rembrandt_Harmensz._van_Rijn_033.jpg)



Rembrandt, *The Good Samaritan*



Figure 1.5

Source: Wikimedia  
Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paula\\_Modersohn-Becker\\_005.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paula_Modersohn-Becker_005.jpg)



Paula Modersohn-Becker, *The merciful Samaritan*



Figure 1.6

Source: Wikimedia  
Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent\\_Willem\\_van\\_Gogh\\_022-2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_Willem_van_Gogh_022-2.jpg)



Vincent Van Gogh, *The Good Samaritan*



**1.4.5 DELVING DEEPER INTO THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN:**

To obtain a deeper understanding of the Parable we will investigate what love means to the Samaritan, we will identify similarities between characters in the video and those in the Parable and finally we will focus on the central point of the Parable in order to address its basic question.

**Exercise 1**

In the biblical text the verbs that express the attitude of the Samaritan towards the wounded Jew are:

came – saw – was moved – approached – bandaged – poured – put on – brought – took care – gave – come back – repay

Use as many of these verbs as you can to describe what love means to the Samaritan.

**Exercise 2**

Place the persons of the parable and the persons of the story of the video in the corresponding squares according to their position or behavior.

	Person in need	Who is considered "neighbor"	Who is considered "other" (stranger or enemy)
Parable of Good Samaritan			
Story in the Video			

### Exercise 3

After telling the parable, in reply to the original question of the lawyer, “who is my neighbor?”, Jesus replies with another question “which of these, do you think, behaved as a neighbor?” What does Jesus want us to understand, with this question, about our attitude toward the other?



## 1.5 SO FAR WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD...

**... that I am not a “neighbor” by default, but I become a “neighbor” to the other through love and solidarity; by accepting responsibility for the other.**

In order to confront the concept of the “foreigner”, we must begin by acknowledging that the Gospel is a scandal. I remind you that, at one point, where Christ gave the definition of “neighbor” [...] **He indicated as the “neighbor” the most distant person (a person of a different race and a different religion) [...]** Which means that, for the definition of the “neighbor” and the “stranger”, the Gospel does not share the criteria of the old world, i.e. common blood [origin], common language and common religion [...] These features, of course, are the building blocks of a nation or a race. But they are not the criteria of the Church. And in fact, if we pay attention to the text of the Gospel, we will see (and I repeat) that **Christ does not say who “is” the neighbor and the enemy, but who “becomes” the neighbor and the enemy.** Both “become”, not according to their origin, but through their actions: through **solidarity** or the denial of love, accordingly.

(Th. N. Papathanassiou, *The Rupture with Zero. Shots of political theology*, Athens: Armos, 2015, pp. 152 -153)

**... that love knows no limits**

Jesus’ question radically reverses the question posed by the lawyer, “who is my neighbor?” While the latter referred to the object of love (i.e. who should be considered as a neighbor), Jesus speaks of the subject of love (i.e. who behaved as a neighbor). The lawyer posed the problem of his epoch, regarding the extent of the concept of the neighbor and therefore of the limits of love, while Jesus, in telling the parable, showed that **there are no limits to the concept of the neighbor, nor any restrictions to the commandment to love.** If every human being feels as a subject of love, then he cannot set limits to this love; his love extends to all, because the limits of the neighbor are boundless. Whoever loves only his friends, his fellow believers, his own in general, behaves as a human. But whoever is not confined by such barriers, behaves divinely, following the model of the God of love as revealed in the person of Jesus, who tells the parable.

(Ioannis D. Karavidopoulos. *Biblical Studies*, Thessaloniki: Pournaras, 1995, p. 335)

## 1.6 THE ENCOUNTER WITH THE “OTHER” IN THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The same guidelines given to us by Christ, governing our attitude to our neighbor and to “the other”, and shaping a new way of life, are found in texts of the Orthodox Christian tradition.

In the following texts the criteria of the Orthodox Christian tradition governing our relationship with each other are made clear. These are:

**a) Human nature and human needs are common to us all, and that is why there is no place for discrimination.**

**b) Love for God presupposes love for every human being**

### Exercise 1

Discover in the following texts the phrases that correspond to the above criteria and underline them.

### Texts

If someone who is struggling to meet their needs knocks on your door, do not weigh things in an uneven way. In other words, do not say “He is a friend, he is of the same race, he has benefited me in the past, while the other is a stranger, a foreigner, a person I don’t know.” If you judge unequally, you too will receive no mercy [...] Human nature is common; both neighbor and stranger are human; needs are common to both, and so is poverty. Offer to your brother as well as to the stranger; do not turn your back on your brother, and make the stranger into your brother too. God wants you to support the needy, and not to discriminate between people; he does not want you to give to the person of your kin and neglect the stranger; all people are of the same kin, all of them are brothers, all of them are children of one father.

(Basil the Great\*, Fourth oration on Charity)

If we detect any trace of hatred in our hearts against any man whatsoever for committing any fault, we are utterly estranged from love for God, since love for God absolutely precludes us from hating any man. He who loves Me, says the Lord, will keep My commandments (cf. John 14: 13, 23); and “this is My commandment, that you love one another” (John 13: 12). Thus he who does not love his neighbor fails to keep the commandment, and so cannot love the Lord. Blessed is he who can love all men equally. He who loves God will certainly love his neighbor as well.

(Maximus the Confessor\*, Four hundred texts on love 15 – 17, 23)

## Exercise 2

According to the words of Gregory of Nazianzus which we heard in the video, “all people have a divine seal and in the love of Christ we all become one. Also, all discrimination belongs to the old world, the one we Christians leave behind.”

Answer individually or work in small groups:

What would you change in your life in order to leave behind what St. Gregory calls the “old world”?

## Exercise 3

Imagine that the grandfather in the video story, while recovering in hospital, dictates a message for the social media to his grandson, in which he thanks the people who saved his life. What do you think he would write in his message?

## 1.7 FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

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

1. *What kind of relationship does Yiorgos' father want his son to have with the refugees?*
  - a. Friendly relationship
  - b. No relationship at all
  - c. He does not care if his son has relations with the refugees
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
2. *Who mobilized to donate blood to Yiorgos' grandfather?*
  - a. His compatriots and fellow believers
  - b. Lena, Sotiris, Yiorgos' father and two friends of theirs who had diabetes
  - c. Refugees of a different nationality and different religion
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
3. *In the parable mentioned by the grandfather, who is it who comes to the aid of the wounded man?*
  - a. The Samaritan who was considered his enemy
  - b. The Priest who was his compatriot
  - c. The Levite who was his compatriot
  - d. I do not know / No answer

4. *The words of Gregory of Nazianzus that "all people have a divine seal and that all of us, in the love of Christ, become as one" are mentioned in the video. What do they mean?*
- a. We are all one in the love of Christ, regardless of ethnic origin, religious belief or social class.
  - b. We are all one in the love of Christ, as long as we share the same religion
  - c. We are all one in the love of Christ, as long as we have a common ethnic origin and religion
  - d. I do not know / No answer
5. *The words of Gregory of Nazianzus that "all people have a divine seal and that all of us, in the love of Christ, become as one" are mentioned in the video. What do they mean?*
- a. The father's
  - b. The grandfather's
  - c. None of them
  - d. *I do not know / No answer*

## 1.8 ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: MATERIAL FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION



Figure 1.7  
Rossano Gospels Good Samaritan cut  
Source: Wikimedia Commons: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RossanoGospelsFolio007vGoodSamaritan.jpg>

### My grandmother Rousa

We were hungry and wanted to eat right away. Immediately, without delay. We had stood up and were celebrating by shouting and laughing, when suddenly my grandmother came back in. We froze. She was holding two frightened children by the hand. Smiling and full of kindness, she gestured to us to sit down. The children were crying and couldn't say a word. "Sit all together", she said. "Tonight we have two more friends: Ahmet and Fatme. We will all eat together and tell stories. Ahmet and Fatme live in Gurculadika. Today they came to Kozani\* and have not eaten all day." Isaac and Clio, Greek refugees from Asia Minor\*, descendants of the Ionians\*. Fatme and Ahmet from Portorazi, children of the antichrists. And the rest of us, locals from Kozani\*. At the same table. We were totally stupefied, eyes wide open. The refugees were trembling, the Turks were trembling, and we were trembling too. We sat down, not so much because our grandmother told us to, but mainly because our knees were shaking. And, despite our hunger, it was impossible to start eating. She had managed to make us sit at the same table. The uprooted from their ancient homelands, the enemies from the nation who had oppressed us for four hundred years, and us, yesterday's slaves and today's masters.

(M. Papakonstantinou, *My grandmother Rousa*, Athens: Estia, 1997, pp.38-39)

**The following excerpt is from an interview of the Ecumenical Patriarch\* Bartholomew, commenting on the Papal Encyclical “Fratelli tutti”.**

Question: On what basis can we all consider ourselves brothers and why is it important to discover ourselves as such for the good of humanity?

Answer: The Christians of the very early Church called each other “brothers.” This spiritual and Christian brotherhood is deeper than the physical kinship. However, for Christians, brothers are not just the members of the Church, but all people. The Word of God took on human nature which unites everything by itself. As all human beings are created by God, everything is incorporated into the plan of salvation. The love of the believer has no limits and barriers. In fact, it embraces the creation as a whole, it is “the flame of the heart for all creation” (Isaac the Syrian). Love for brothers is always incomparable. It is not an abstract feeling of sympathy for humanity, which usually ignores the neighbor. The dimension of personal communion and brotherhood distinguishes Christian love and brotherhood from abstract humanism.

(The Ecumenical Patriarch\* Bartholomew, “Abandon indifference and cynicism”, interview commenting the Papal Encyclical Fratelli tutti, 23.10.2020)

## 1.9 GLOSSARY

Clarification of theological terminology, and also information on the historic personalities and places found in the book.

**Asia Minor:** The peninsula of Anatolia in present-day Turkey. It was a crossroads of cultures and a meeting point of migratory tribes moving from east to west and vice versa. Hellenism flourished there from about 1200 BCE until the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922 and the expulsion of Greek Christians.

**Basil the Great:** One of the great Fathers of the Christian Church and one of the Three Hierarchs. He was born in 330 in Caesarea, Cappadocia in Asia Minor. He studied rhetoric, philosophy, astronomy, geometry, medicine, and physics in Athens. He lived as an ascetic in the desert of Pontus for five years until he was proclaimed Bishop of Caesarea. As a bishop he founded a number of institutions for the care of the poor and the sick. Throughout his short life he fought for the unity of the Christian Church. His works are divided into dogmatic, anti-heretic, ascetic, practical, orations and letters. He died on January 1, 379 at the age of 49 and was buried with great honors. His memory is celebrated on January 1 by the Orthodox Church and on January 2 by Catholics.

**Blood brother:** One who becomes a brotherly friend through the process of fraternization. In this way individuals or groups of persons who are unrelated by blood are ritually united in fraternal ties, and promise mutual love and protection. This custom was fairly widespread in the Eastern Mediterranean.

**Diabetes:** A chronic disease characterized by a constant high blood sugar level.

**Ecumenical Patriarch:** In the Orthodox Church, the Patriarch of Constantinople is called Ecumenical Patriarch. The title Ecumenical (“Universalis”) was formerly attributed also to the Pope of Rome, but quickly became the exclusive title of the Archbishop and Patriarch of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman State (Byzantine Empire). The Ecumenical Patriarch is the first among equals (“primus inter pares”) of all the Bishops of the Orthodox Church and presides over the Synod of Bishops.

**Gregory of Nazianzus:** Otherwise known as Gregory the Theologian. He is considered to be an important personage of the Church and one of the Three Hierarchs. He was born in 329 in Arianzus, near Nazianzus in Cappadocia. He was ordained a Bishop and proclaimed Ecumenical Patriarch. His rich literary work is divided into orations, letters and poems. He died on January 25, 390, at the age of 61. His memory is celebrated in East and West on January 25.

**Inn:** A type of hostel in olden times; a shop that offered, for a fee, accommodation and food for travellers and their animals.

**Ionians:** The Ionians were one of the four ancient Greek tribes and were settled mainly in Attica, the Aegean islands and Asia Minor, in the region called Ionia.

According to mythology, the Ionians and the rest of the Greek tribes were descendants of Deucalion and Pyrrha whose son, Hellen was considered the progenitor of the Greek (Hellenic) tribes. From the name Ionia, the Turks named the Greeks “Yunan” and Greece “Yunanistan” since the Ionians were the first tribe they met when they came to the area.

**Jericho:** A city in Judea, 27 km to the North East of Jerusalem. The road from Jericho to Jerusalem passed through desert in many places with several precipices and steep cliffs. Robbers frequently found refuge in such places and used them as their strongholds. Pilgrims travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem in order to celebrate Pesach, often made a final stop in Jericho.

**Kozani:** A city in Western Macedonia in Northern Greece which flourished in the 18th century. Kozani still has many mansions dating from that time, which form a tourist attraction.

**Maximus the Confessor:** Was born in Constantinople in 580 and received a remarkable philosophical and theological education. He was a high-ranking government executive and later became a monk. As a monk, he was a central figure in the opposition to the heresies of his time. He was exiled and tortured for his views by a group of heretics but nevertheless he confessed (remained faithful to) Orthodoxy. He died in 662. The Church commemorates him on January 21.

**Olive oil:** This well-known product of olive pressing was a staple food of the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, due to its beneficial ingredients, it facilitates the faster healing of wounds, keeping them soft and moist and preventing pain. Hippocrates, Greek physician of the 4th century BCE, in his work "On ulcers" recommends "gauze folded in two and moistened with wine, with clean wool soaked in olive oil on top" for the treatment of wounds.

**Wine:** A product in daily use in the time of Christ by the peoples of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. In addition to its consumption for enjoyment, it was also used for sterilization and purification, due to its alcohol content.

# 1.10 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

Characters

Yiorgos

Maria: Yiorgos' Mother

Apostolos: Yiorgos' Father

Grandpa: grandfather of Yiorgos and father of Apostolos

Doctor

Refugee kids

## SCENE 1

On a well-known island near the Greek border, the family we have already met is experiencing the hardships caused by the presence of hundreds of refugees in the local community, who have arrived there and live in makeshift camps. The son of the family, thirteen-year-old Yiorgos, is sitting at a table and doing his homework. His father is watching the TV news in the living room. His mother is preparing the food. The door between the two rooms is open. We see Yiorgos in the foreground while in the background his father is watching the TV.

*FATHER: (almost shouting) Hey, look what's going on here! Over and over, boats with refugees and immigrants landing on our island. Where will it all end? Can't they go anywhere else? Soon we won't hear the Greek language in our streets.*

*MOTHER: Calm down, Apostolos, Yiorgos is reading.*

*FATHER: What are you saying, Maria? Can't you see we have a very serious problem with all these foreigners? They are different from us, we have nothing in common. As for Yiorgos, I know that he has made friends with kids from the refugee camp. Time to put an end to this, lad, do you hear me?*

*YIORGOS: (Listening, but maintaining a guilty silence. He whispers faintly) Yes, dad.*

The phone rings and interrupts the talk. The mother picks up the handset, and it becomes obvious that she is frightened by what is being said to her. Yiorgos listens anxiously to what his parents are talking about.

*MOTHER: Apostolos, come here. Something happened to your father. He is in the hospital.*

*FATHER: (talking to the phone) Yes, I understand. We'll be right there... we'll do whatever we can.*

*MOTHER: (With obvious anxiety) What happened?*

*FATHER: My father had a heart attack. He needs surgery immediately and they need us to give blood for the operation. Let's go to the hospital.*

*MOTHER: Yiorgos, we are leaving for the hospital. Stay here. Ah, God help us...*

## SCENE 2

Yiorgos is at home alone. His phone rings. On the screen of the mobile, his friends from the refugee camp, two boys and a girl, appear, looking happy..

*KIDS: Hey, where are you Yiorgos? What happened? Aren't you coming today?*

*YIORGOS: (obviously sad) Sorry guys, I can't come. My grandfather had a heart attack and needs to have an operation. It must be serious, because I heard that the doctors asked us to find blood for the surgery. I'm very scared, guys. (He bursts into tears)*

## SCENE 3

Some hours later, Father and Mother head to the hospital's blood donation department. They are talking to each other.

*MOTHER: What do you mean "you told everybody and only two people came"?*

*FATHER: I called everyone and said that we need blood, but only Sotiris and Lena finally came.*

MOTHER: *And the rest?*

FATHER: *The others couldn't.*

MOTHER: *So, two units of blood from them and two from us, four. And how many do we need?*

FATHER: *At least eight. Maybe ten.*

MOTHER: *Dear God, what shall we do?*

They reach the blood donation department and they see a long queue of refugees waiting.

FATHER: *Look at that, it's terrible. They come here in their thousands and they fill our hospitals too.*

*Entering the department*

FATHER: *We came to give blood for my father.*

DOCTOR: *Don't worry, Mr Apostolos. There are already fifty units of blood available for your father.*

FATHER: *Are you kidding us, doctor? Where did fifty donors come from?*

DOCTOR: *I don't know where they came from, but there they are, waiting patiently to give blood for your father.*

The doctor points to the waiting refugees and Apostolos is left speechless, his eyes wide open in surprise.

#### **SCENE 4**

Some days later. In the hospital room, Yiorgos' grandfather is recovering after the operation. Standing next to him is Yiorgos' father, Yiorgos' Mother and his grandson, Yiorgos. The two men talk to each other.

FATHER: *Thank God, father, everything went well.*

GRANDFATHER: *Yes, son. I already feel better. What I do not understand, however, is how all those strangers came to donate blood for me.*

FATHER: *It is really strange, but I will find out. Anyway, I think they should have asked us if we wanted to receive blood from those people.*

GRANDFATHER: *If it weren't for those people, we may not be here talking right now. I don't know why, but since yesterday, when I learned about the blood, the Parable of the Good Samaritan has stuck in my mind. Do you remember? A Jew is robbed and beaten, and while he is laying there bleeding, a Jewish priest passes by, but he pays no attention. Then a Jewish Levite passes, and also ignores him. At last, a Samaritan comes along, a man from a community the Jews used to hate, and he takes pity on the victim. He cleans his wounds and takes him to an inn for better care. You see? A man considered to be an enemy helps him, while his fellow patriots and believers pass him by. It makes me wonder, who is the friend and who the enemy? Who is "the neighbor", as the Gospel says?*

FATHER: *It seems to me that you were afraid that you would die and you turned to religion. But I wonder, is the blood they gave you safe? Those people are full of diseases.*

GRANDFATHER: *We are afraid of our shadow these days, Apostolos! These people have been here for over a year now. They are our fellow humans and have become our fellow citizens. And they certainly showed it in my case, don't you think?*

FATHER: *I don't recognize you, father. Didn't we say that all these people are a threat and that they should go back where they came from?*

GRANDFATHER: *Let's give it a rest. We have been wrong for so many years. Now we have got to know them in our common homeland: humanity and love.*

Yiorgos' father and mother leave. Yiorgos stays on the ward to keep his grandfather company.

Fade in. Grandpa is reading a book in the hospital bed (maybe the Bible) and Yiorgos is sitting next to him.

YIORGOS: *Grandpa, can I ask you something?*

GRANDFATHER: Yes, of course; go ahead.

YIORGOS: What does "blood brothers" mean?

GRANDFATHER: "Blood brothers" are those who have united their blood.

YIORGOS: Their blood? Yuk!

GRANDFATHER: Yes, and so, even though they are not born of the same parents, they treat each other as if they were real brothers.

YIORGOS: And how do they unite their blood?

GRANDFATHER: They slit the skin of their hands with a knife and join their wounds. This is how their blood is mixed and this is something that unites them forever. Nice idea, huh?

(short silence)

YIORGOS: Does that mean, grandpa, that now that you have the blood of the refugees in you, that you are blood brother with them?

YIORGOS: Does that mean, grandpa, that now that you have the blood of the refugees in you, that you are blood brother with them?

GRANDFATHER: (with a surprised smile) Hmm, I hadn't thought of that, but hmm... well...I suppose you could say so... actually, why not? (One more moment of silence, Grandpa and Yiorgos look at each other) You know something, my lad? Some time ago, I flipped through your school book on religion and I read something by St. Gregory the Theologian. He said that all people have a divine seal and that all of us, in the love of Christ, become as one. He also said that all discrimination belongs to the old world, the one Christians have left behind. When I read it, I did not like it at all. I closed the book, and I was a bit angry. I could not imagine how deeply I was bound with this old world ...

YIORGOS: You know what I'm thinking, grandpa? After what happened, it's a good thing that I asked you and not dad, what it means to be "blood brothers". I'm afraid dad would call me names.

GRANDFATHER: (laughing) I think you're right. Your dad needs some more time to be able to answer such questions soberly. Let's give him time, shall we?, What do you say?

YIORGOS: (laughing playfully) Yes... of course... Let's wait for him to grow up first ...

The scene closes with grandfather and grandson laughing like kids.

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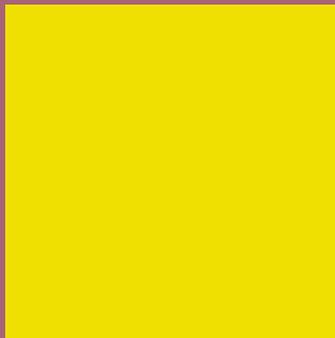
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2

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ENCOUNTER WITH  
SACRED TEXTS: TEXTS  
OF VIOLENCE

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## MODULE TWO

# ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS: TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION



Figure 2.1  
Video Clip

Two boys, while fishing at a seaside of a remote Greek island, are talking about the refugees\* that flood their island. Are the refugees\* dangerous, being of a different faith and of a different nation? Is it God's will for them to get drowned, just like the Egyptians pursuing Israel in the Exodus\* narration? Suddenly the boys see a boat with refugees\* hitting the cliffs of the shore and starting sinking. What will the boys do? Will they help them or not, and what will come out?

## 2.2 VIDEO SCREENING

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

1. Why were the youngsters initially reluctant to help the refugees?
  - a. Because they did not want to waste time as they had planned to meet their friends.
  - b. Because they believed that refugees are dangerous to their homeland.
  - c. Because it was getting dark and they had to return to their homes.
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
2. In the biblical narration of the Exodus, which people are involved?
  - a. Greeks and Syrians
  - b. Egyptians and Greeks
  - c. Egyptians and Jews
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
3. In the biblical narration, which sea did the pursued people cross, in order to be saved:
  - a. The Aegean Sea
  - b. The Red Sea
  - c. The Mediterranean Sea
  - d. I do not know / No answer

4. Why, in the biblical narrative, God is depicted to act violently and vengefully?
- a. In this way the faithful wanted to declare their trust in the one and only God, who is also the Savior of humankind.
  - b. Because God is violent and punishes those who do not follow His will.
  - c. Because God is just and His justice is sometimes rendered only by force.
  - d. I do not know / No answer
5. For Christians, God is the One who:
- a. Loves all men/women regardless of national origin, religious faith and social class.
  - b. Loves only those who believe in Him.
  - c. Like any father, He punishes those who want to harm His children, i.e. the faithful, even to the extent of using violence.
  - d. I do not know / No answer



Figure 2.2  
Ivan Aivazovsky: Passage of the Jews through the Red Sea, 1891  
Source: Wikimedia Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aivazovsky\\_Passage\\_of\\_the\\_Jews\\_through\\_the\\_Red\\_Sea.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aivazovsky_Passage_of_the_Jews_through_the_Red_Sea.jpg)

## 2.3 WHAT I NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER TO STUDY THE BIBLE STORY

Check the following information, along with the map (see 3.3) and the summary table (3.2) with the protagonists, events and dates.

### 2.3.1 HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

 The story of the crossing of the Red Sea\* can be found in the **book of Exodus\*** in the Old Testament\*. This book includes the events that took place around the 13th century BCE and reveal God's intervention in history with the aim of liberating the Israelites from the Egyptians and leading them to the land of Canaan\*. The Israelites lived in Egypt from 1600 to 1200 BCE, for approximately 400 years. When Ramses II\* became Pharaoh (1290–1224 BCE), he took strict measures against them, fearing they would ally with other peoples of the desert and revolt against him. One such measure was the killing of Jewish male children to limit their number. **Moses\*** was born at that time, and was miraculously saved from death. **He was chosen by God to liberate the Israelites and lead them to the land of Canaan\*.**

 On their way to the land of Canaan\*, the Israelites did not follow the shorter, coastal route. Instead, in order to avoid the Egyptian guards, they headed south to the Red Sea\*. Pharaoh at that time was Merneptah\* (1224–1204 BCE), the successor of Ramses II\*. With his army, Merneptah\* pursued the Israelites as far as the sea, but he could not prevent them from fleeing, because God opened a passage for them through the sea. Marching through the sea, they were able to proceed to the desert and were saved. In commemoration of this important event, Israelites celebrate **“Pesach\*” (=passage) even today, as the crossing of the Red Sea\* marked their passage from slavery in Egypt to freedom.**

 During this period, God makes a Covenant, i.e. a **Testament\*** with His people and at the same time protects them, supports them, cares for them, strengthens and guides them. On the other hand, the people relate to him, trust him and recognize him as unique and omnipotent.

Protagonists	Event	Dates
Ramses II	Egyptian Pharaoh who took strict measures against the Israelites, fearing they could ally with peoples of the desert and revolt against the Egyptians.	<b>1290–1224 BCE</b>
Moses	Leader of the Israelites who led them to liberation from the Egyptians.	<b>1393–1273 BCE</b>
Merneptah	Egyptian Pharaoh. Son and successor of Ramses II. Pursued the Israelites with his army as far as the sea, but was unable to prevent their escape	<b>1224–1204 BCE</b>

## 2.3 MAP



Figure 2.3  
Map with the march  
of the Israelites fleeing  
Egypt  
by Vaso Gogou

## 2.4 THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

### 2.4.1 THE OLD TESTAMENT TEXT (EXODUS\* 14: 1-31 ABBR., NRSV)

Then the Lord said to Moses: <sup>2</sup> Tell the Israelites to turn back and camp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea [...] <sup>3</sup> Pharaoh will say of the Israelites, "They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the wilderness has closed in on them." <sup>4</sup> I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, so that I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. And they did so. [...] <sup>10</sup> As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. [...] <sup>13</sup> But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup> The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still." <sup>15</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "[...] Tell the Israelites to go forward. <sup>16</sup> But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. <sup>17</sup> Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. <sup>18</sup> And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh" [...] <sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. <sup>22</sup> The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. <sup>23</sup> The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. [...] <sup>24</sup> At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. <sup>25</sup> He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." <sup>26</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." <sup>27</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. <sup>28</sup> The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. <sup>30</sup> Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. <sup>31</sup> Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Figure 2.4  
 Moses and the Hebrews  
 crossing the Red Sea,  
 pursued by Pharaoh  
 Dura-Europos synagogue,  
 Syria, 303 BCE  
 Source: Wikimedia  
 Commons: [https://  
 commons.wikimedia.org/  
 wiki/File:Dura\\_Europos\\_  
 fresco\\_Jews\\_cross\\_Red\\_  
 Sea.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dura_Europos_fresco_Jews_cross_Red_Sea.jpg)



## 2.4.2 EXERCISES

In the following exercises, you can process the biblical text by identifying words and phrases that show God to act violently and then to investigate why the biblical writer presents God to be violent and vindictive.

### Comprehension

#### Exercise 1

Which of the following adjectives would you use to describe the God you encounter in the text?

Omnipotent		Biased		Vengeful	
Angry		Violent		Forgiving	
Evil		Benign		Harsh	
Protector		Helper		Punishing	
Intervening		Miraculous		Compassionate	
Righteous		Saviour		Liberating	

#### Exercise 2

Find and underline in the Bible text the phrases that show God's wrath towards the Egyptians.

### Exercise 3

In the same text, mention sentences which show the reasons for God's violent actions.

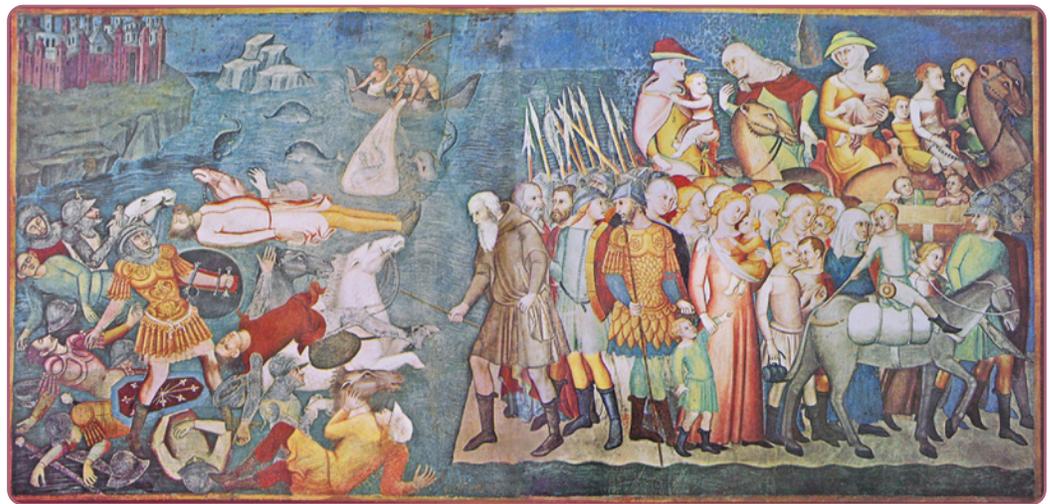


Figure 2.5  
Bartolo di Fredi, *The Crossing of the Red Sea*,  
Collegiate Church of San Gemignano, Italy, 1356  
Source: Wikimedia  
Commons: [https://  
he.wikisource.org/wiki/  
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the\\_Red\\_Sea.JPG](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/פירוש:SG_OT_304_Crossing_the_Red_Sea.JPG).

## Seeking for the deep interpretation

The biblical narration we read, describes a God who uses violence against humans. Let's read the following text and try to understand why the author of the Bible presents God like this. Maybe we need to consider something else?

### God as an avenger

All the events of the Old Testament\* were **transmitted orally for centuries before they began being recorded**. These Oral Traditions\* contained many expressions of emotion and tension, which were often exaggerated, and today we need to distinguish these from historical information. It's not our aim to discover what actually happened then, but to try to understand the significance it had for the life of those people who recorded the events centuries later, with the intention of proclaiming their faith in the one and only God. The one who, when needed, was always present and saved them from harm, evil and death. They were deeply convinced that they could not succeed on their own during those dramatically difficult times. This does not mean (as understood by those who interpret the Old Testament\* literally) that God killed children or enemies [...] Rather, it expresses their deep faith that, in this struggle, their lives and rights were protected by God. With such a view, history becomes **"sacred history."** That is, **when man recognizes Divine Providence in cases where life is preserved, protected, and escapes the danger of extinction.** And this God-savior of their lives is the one people trust.

(Ol. Grizopoulou & P. Kazlari, *Old Testament, The prehistory of Christianity, Class A Religious Education (Teacher's book)*, Athens: O.E.D.V., undated, p.58)

Based on the fact that the recording of historical events by biblical writers takes place many centuries after the events themselves, try to answer the following questions:

To which extent are these events accurately described? Do they include exaggerations because they serve other purposes? What are the purposes of this record?

## 2.5 SO FAR...

... we have learned ... understood ... clarified

In the Old Testament\*, the narration of the crossing of the Red Sea\* (Exodus\* 14:1-31) contains scenes of violence. It is violence exercised by God against the Egyptians, whom he eradicates, thus saving the people of Israel from their persecutors. **Approached literally**, this narration describes a God who is biased in favor of one particular nation and uses violence to bring another one to destruction.

The core of the historical events of Exodus\* took place around the 13th century BCE; however, the relevant texts of the Old Testament\* were recorded much later, in the 6th to 5th century BCE. The motivation for writing down narrations which had been passed down orally over centuries was not the study of history (in the contemporary sense of an accurate, objective understanding of events); but rather, it reflected concerns for the significance these narratives could have for people at the time of their recording. People of that era had already developed civilization, had settled in cities and their living conditions were essentially different from those of the period of the events narrated. **Therefore, the references of the Scriptures are not intended to provide exact historical information, as we understand it today, but rather to elaborate eternal theological truths, that will remain valid as long as there are people on Earth.**

Biblical authors attempted to graphically illustrate, absolutely and leaving no room for doubt, the omnipotence of the one and only God, in contrast to the weakness or even the non-existence of the pagan deities of that time. **Thus, their goal was to emphasize that their God is a unique, omnipotent protector and liberator.** Every time they lived through difficult and dramatic situations, he was present and saved them from every evil. Their profound conviction was that they could not cope with the hardships of life on their own, but God, through his saving interventions, protected their every righteous struggle.

Approaching the narration of the crossing of the Red Sea\*, as well as all the narrations of the Old Testament\*, from this perspective, we are able to understand the significance they have for us today and **distinguish** between the **“sacred history”** found in these texts and the **objective history** describing actual events.

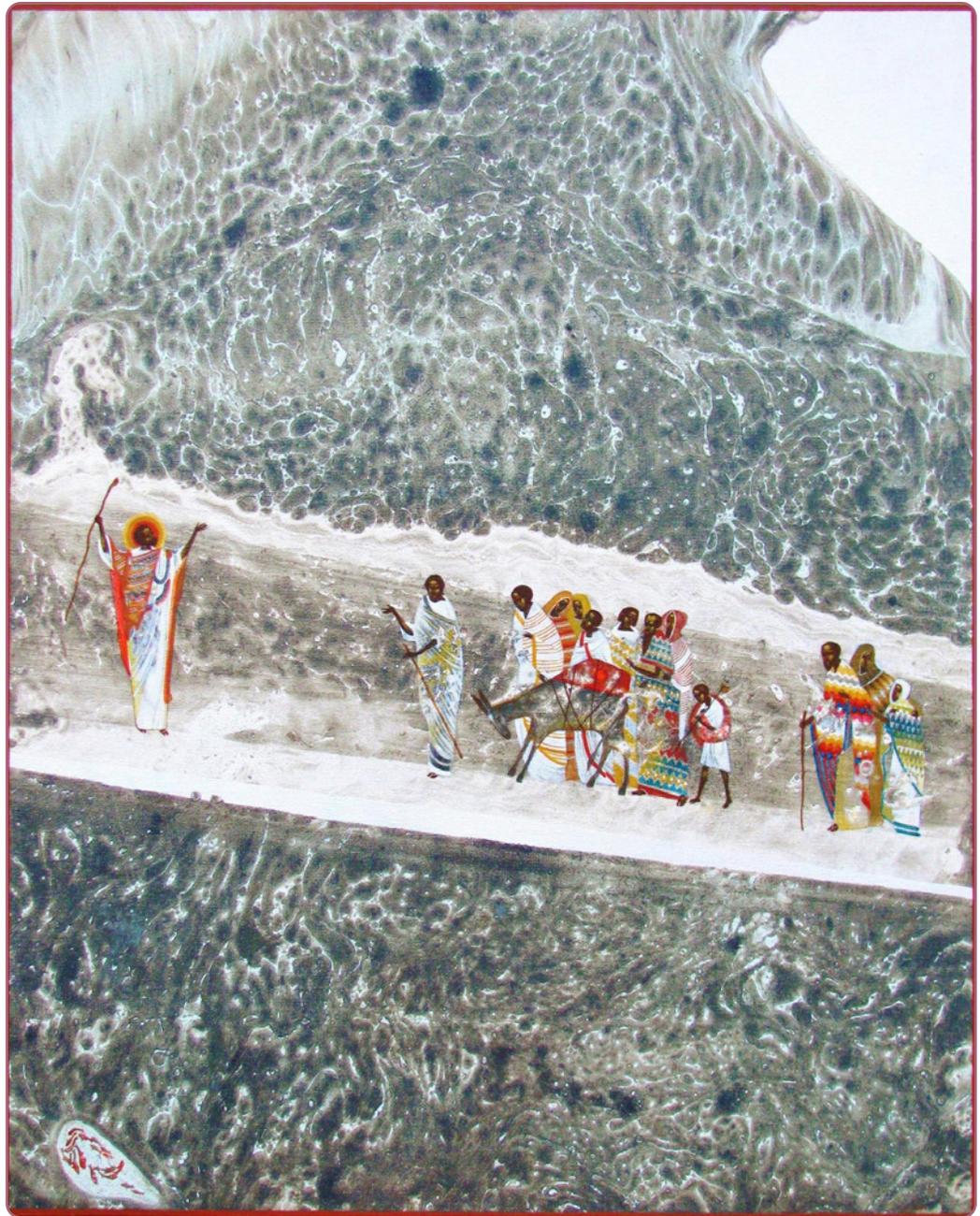


Figure 2.6  
Ivanka Demchuk,  
*Crossing the Red Sea*  
[https://www.etsy.com/  
listing/563765092/  
crossing-the-red-  
sea-original-print-  
on?ref=landingpage\\_  
similar\\_listing\\_top-  
2&pro=1&frs=1](https://www.etsy.com/listing/563765092/crossing-the-red-sea-original-print-on?ref=landingpage_similar_listing_top-2&pro=1&frs=1)

## 2.6 THE IMAGE OF TRUE GOD

### 2.6.1 EXERCISE 1 Who would I want to be my God?

Write down words that come to your mind spontaneously and try to give a description of this God.

### 2.6.2 EXERCISE 2 In the video, in the scene where Yiorgos chats with his mother about the rescue of the refugees\*, he asks “Mom, do you think God can do evil?” to which she answers, “Since we call him Father, I cannot imagine him harming his children.”

What can the phrase “God is Father” mean to a Christian?

In order to answer, we will use the following text from the New Testament\*:

Speaking to his disciples, Jesus says: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those that hate you and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he causes his sun to rise on both the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” (Mt. 5:43-45)

Answer:

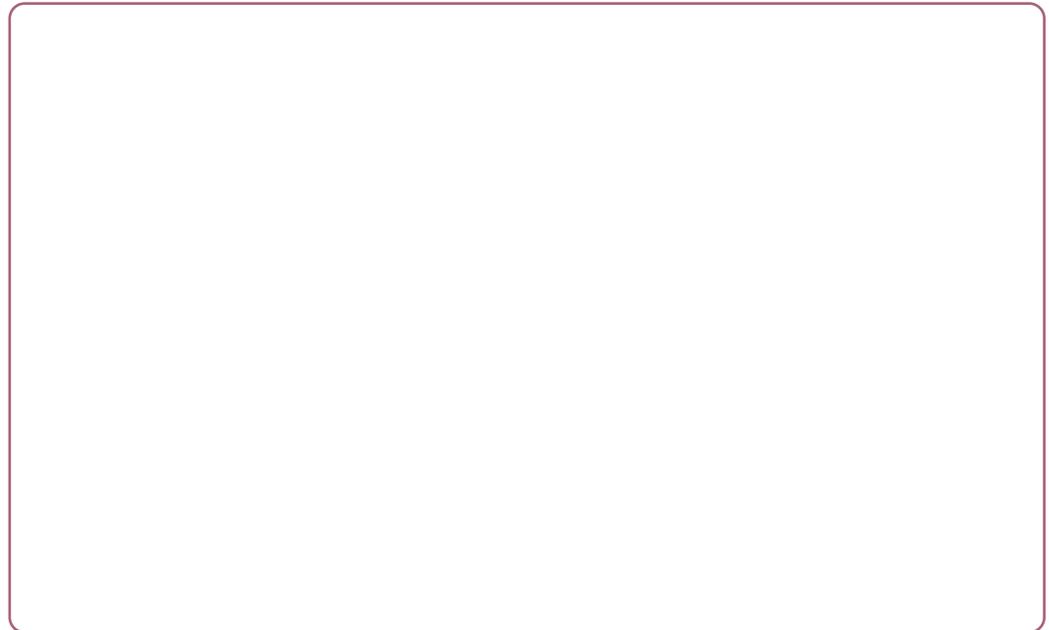
“Father” means that:

### 2.6.3 EXERCISE 3

God is Father to all men. Why, then, when we feel fear of the stranger and of the unknown, do we often need a strong God who protects only us and annihilates the one we fear?

When we are afraid, our image of God, but also of our fellow humans, is often affected by our insecurity. How can we deal with our fears towards strangers? In the following paragraph, underline the keywords that answer the above question. Explain your choice.

Let's remember what we saw in the video: Yiorgos shares his father's fear of the supposedly "dangerous" refugees\* and thus he remembers the story of the Old Testament\*. In the end, however, the youngsters' contact and acquaintance with the refugees\* eliminates the fear and creates feelings of friendship and familiarity with them.



### 2.6.3 CONCLUSION

According to the Christian tradition, God is ...

... Father, who loves all people with no exceptions and discriminations. God-Father, being Love himself, calls all of us to love all of our **fellow humans, even our enemies**, if we want to be his real children.

## 2.7 FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

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

1. Why were the youngsters initially reluctant to help the refugees?
  - a. Because they did not want to waste time as they had planned to meet their friends.
  - b. Because they believed that refugees are dangerous to their homeland.
  - c. Because it was getting dark and they had to return to their homes.
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
2. In the biblical narration of the Exodus, which people are involved?
  - a. Greeks and Syrians
  - b. Egyptians and Greeks
  - c. Egyptians and Jews
  - d. I do not know / No answer
  
3. In the biblical narration, which sea did the pursued people cross, in order to be saved:
  - a. The Aegean Sea
  - b. The Red Sea
  - c. The Mediterranean Sea
  - d. I do not know / No answer

4. Why is God shown, in the biblical narrative, to act violently and vengefully?
- a. In this way the faithful wanted to declare their trust in the one and only God, who is also the Savior of humankind.
  - b. Because God is violent and punishes those who do not follow His will.
  - c. Because God is just and His justice is sometimes rendered only by force.
  - d. I do not know / No answer
5. For Christians, God is the One who:
- a. Loves all men/women regardless of national origin, religious faith and social class.
  - b. Loves only those who believe in Him.
  - c. Like any father, He punishes those who want to harm His children, i.e. the faithful, even to the extent of using violence.
  - d. I do not know / No answer

## 2.8 ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: MATERIAL FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION



Figure 2.7  
Nikolaos Gyzis, Greeks  
fleeing the Destruction of  
Psara, 1896-8  
Source: [https://commons.  
wikimedia.org/wiki/  
File:Cysis\\_Nikolaos\\_After\\_  
the\\_destruction\\_of\\_Psara.  
jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cysis_Nikolaos_After_the_destruction_of_Psara.jpg)

## Exodus (Edith Piaf)

They left during the winter sun  
They left running through the sea  
To erase fear  
To override fear  
That life had nailed into the depths of their hearts

They left believing in the harvest  
From the old country of their song  
Their hearts singing with hope  
Their hearts bellowing with hope  
They have reclaimed the road of their memories

They have cried the tears of the sea  
They have recited so many prayers  
“Deliver us, our brothers!  
Deliver us, our brothers!”  
That their brothers will pull them towards the light

They are there in a new country  
That floats with the mast of their boat  
Their broken hearts of love  
Their hearts of love lost  
They have found the land of love

## 2.9 GLOSSARY

Clarification of theological terminology, and also information on the historic personalities and places found in the book.

### **Canaan**

In the Old Testament, refers to the land settled by the Israelites, but also by its “Canaanite” inhabitants. The name means “country of purple” (Greek name “Phoenicia”) and comes from the main export product of the region, a substance used to dye fabrics deep purple. The land of Canaan is the Promised Land; the fulfillment of God’s promises to the people of Israel by enabling them to settle in this area after leaving Egypt.

### **Easter (Christian)**

With the feast of Easter, Christians celebrate the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, who gave man the prospect of life, and freedom from death and evil in all its manifestations. They celebrate the restoration of life in its entirety and its victory over death which was brought by Jesus Christ.

### **Exodus**

The book of Exodus is the second book of the Bible and the Hebrew Bible and belongs to the historical books of the Old Testament. Exodus, together with the books of Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy is the Pentateuch (in Hebrew **Law** (Torah). In the Greek translation of the Septuagint (LXX) it was called “Exodus”, because the central issue is the exit (ie the liberation) of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The protagonist in the Exodus is Moses.

### **Merneptah (1224-1204 BCE)**

The 3rd son of Ramses II and his wife Isetnofret (and 13th son of Ramses, overall). With his army, Merneptah pursued the Israelites to the sea, but was unable to prevent them from fleeing.

### **Moses**

Charismatic personality of the Jewish nation and religion. Moses was a leader, a hero, a legislator, a prophet and a mediator between God and his people. He led the people of Israel to liberation from the Egyptians, crossing the Red Sea and through the Sinai Desert for 40 years. According to Jewish and Christian tradition, Moses received the 10 commandments from God. He receives special honour as a prophet from both Christians and Muslims.

### **Oral Traditions (Old Testament)**

Words and narratives that Jews, both men and women, repeated to each other outside their tents in the desert, and in their homes, whether hovels or palaces. At the heart of these narratives has always been the conviction that God is the great protagonist in human life. Most of these narratives were transmitted in ways that were easy to decipher: narratives, images, quotes, poems. In this way they were indelibly engraved in the memory of people and everyone was able to understand them. Centuries later, these narratives began to be recorded and gradually, a collection of texts was created that later became the Old Testament.

## **Pesach (Jewish)**

The word Pesach means “passage”. Jews celebrating Pesach remember that their ancestors crossed the Red Sea from slavery in Egypt into freedom.

## **Ramses II (1290-1224 BCE)**

Also known as Ramses the Great. He was the third pharaoh of Egypt's 19th dynasty and the most powerful of all Egyptian rulers.

## **Red Sea**

The narrow sea arm of the Indian Ocean between NE. Africa and SW. Asia, where it creates the ancient Arabian Gulf. At the time of the “Exodus” of the Israelites from Egypt, the Red Sea was also called the Sea of Reeds and was then a lake. The northern part, west of the Sinai Peninsula, is mentioned in the Old Testament book of Exodus as being crossed by the Israelites since, for a millennium, it was crossed only widthwise and never lengthwise.

## **Refugee**

Someone who is forced, by circumstances or by violence, to leave his or her home or place of permanent residence and seek refuge in a foreign country or country of ethnic origin. Often used in the plural to refer to populations of people moving in groups.

## **Testament**

The term literally means the last expression of a person's will, but in the Bible it is used to describe a Hebrew word meaning “treaty”, “alliance” or “agreement”. However, in addition to the meaning it can have for human relationships, the term is used specifically to denote the particular agreement that governs God's relationship (Gen. 9:8; Ex. 15:18; 17:1) with the people of Israel (Ex. 19-24) and aims to create the conditions for the salvation of all mankind. The responsibility for initiating the agreement lies with God, who determines its content and terms. But this does not abolish the freedom of man, who is free to accept or reject the agreement, which provides for rights and obligations for both God (faithfulness to promises, love and protection for his people) and man (faith in the One and Only God, and social justice). Thus the covenant does not define a God-master and man-slave relationship, but a father-son relationship (Ex. 4:22).

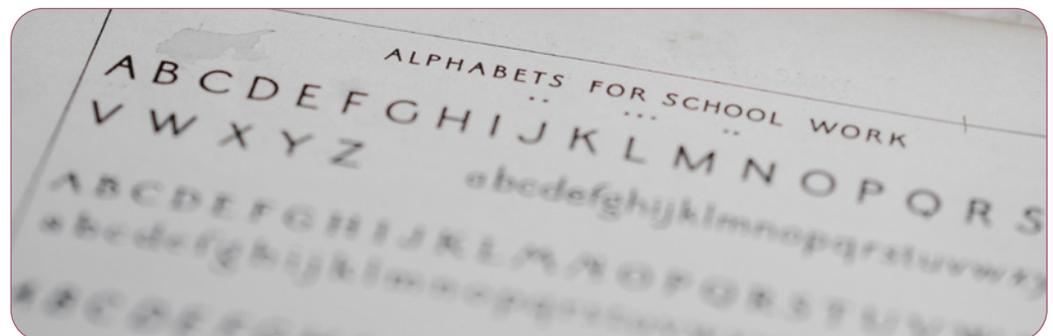


Photo: Annie Spratt | Unsplash

## 2.10 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

### **Coast at a Greek island, close to the Turkish coast. Evening**

Two youngsters, friends from school, have gone fishing on a rocky and steep coast. It's late afternoon. As they fish they talk.

STRATOS: *Have you heard? Yesterday, two more boats with refugees and migrants arrived on our island. But the sea was very rough and I heard their boat sank and most of them drowned.*

YIORGOS: *Saying the truth, I don't understand why they embark and risk drowning. And those who manage to reach our island, they live in miserable conditions. You see them everywhere.*

STRATOS: *Yeah, I know...*

YIORGOS: *My dad says that we can't afford more of them on the island. He also says that many of them come on purpose, in order to alter our faith and traditions. They are dangerous. May God put his hand.*

STRATOS: *What do you mean?*

YIORGOS: *My dad says that God stands by our side and that's why they are drowning, God doesn't let them carry out their plans for our country.*

STRATOS: *This reminds me of the story of the Red Sea Crossing we read the day before yesterday at school.*

### **In the class of Stratos and Yiorgos**

The teacher act with a bit of talent and with the help of slides showing illustrations on the story of the Red Sea Crossing. Some kids are very enthusiastic, some are a bit bored but the excitement of the teacher is contagious.

TEACHER: *And Lord said to Moses "Tell the Israelites to go forward. But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. [...] And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers." [...] and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. [...] Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea.*

*The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.*

### **Coast at a Greek island, close to the Turkish coast.**

YIORGOS: *Exactly. That's what my dad says! As of then, so and now God protects his believers and punishes those who try to cause them harm.*

STRATOS: *Do you mean that God destroys people? Does he harm people?*

YIORGOS: *Ehh ... I don't know. I never thought about it, but why not?*

STRATOS: *So, some people are his favorites and some others, "let them go hell", as we use to say?*

YIORGOS: *I'm not sure, but it could be that way. After all, everything happens as God wants to. Isn't that what they say? God can do everything. God is omnipotent.*

STRATOS: *I don't know man... But I really need to go. I don't think God will help me on my geography test tomorrow.*

### **Stratos strats walking away when Yiorgos sees a flickering flashlight in the sea and hears voices**

YIORGOS: *Hey, Stratos, look!*

STRATOS: *Where?*

YIORGOS: *To the sea, yo! There's a light there. Voices too, can't you hear?*

STRATOS: *Yes, right. I hear something. Let's go closer to see...*

*(From the side of the sea, voices are heard shouting in an incomprehensible language and in English they cry "Help")*

STRATOS: *There are people ... Refugees!*

YIORGOS: *They ask for help. Let's go... (Yiorgos moves towards from the sea)*

STRATOS: *Go where, Yiorgos? Are you crazy? Let's go home. It's perilous here.*

YIORGOS: *No, Stratos. They ask for help.*

STRATOS: *And how will we help them? You think we can?*

YIORGOS: *I don't know. We'll see.*

(The Refugee boat hits the cliffs, gets slashed and starts sinking. The waves hitting the cliffs push the boat adrift back to the sea. The passengers cry for help. Voices and screams of women and children are heard. A man from the boat throws a rope to the youngsters. The end of the rope slides into the water).

STRATOS: *It's dangerous here. Let's go. Let's go to find someone to help.*

YIORGOS: *Let's try to catch the rope they threw to us.*

STRATOS: *And what to do with it? Can we pull the boat?*

YIORGOS: *We will tie the rope to the cliffs so they can pull it themselves. Come on, hustle, there is no time to waste!*

*The youngsters manage to grab the rope and to tie it to a cliff. The passengers of the boat pull the rope and the boat, now half-deflated, finally approaches the rocky shore.*

STRATOS: *A baby. He gives us a baby.*

YIORGOS (exhausted and soaked): *Now, let's go call for help.*

STRATOS: *Yes, let's go...*

### **Night at Yiorgos' home**

Yiorgos' mother dries his hair and sits on the bed near him.

MOTHER: *It was dangerous what you did today, you know?*

YIORGOS: *You mean I shouldn't have done it?*

MOTHER: *I mean... what you did was madness.*

*(Pause)*

YIORGOS: *Mom, do you think God can do evil?*

MOTHER: *How did you come to this, right now?*

YIORGOS: *Answer me.*

MOTHER: *Hmm, let me tell you... Since we call him "Father" I can't imagine him hurting his children.*

YIORGOS: *Yes, every father loves his children, but sometimes he gets angry. Do you think dad will be angry with me? You know his views on immigrants and refugees ...*

MOTHER: *I know. But also, I know that if he sees a fire burning, first he will put out the fire and then he will look for the arsonist.*

YIORGOS: *Do you mean that dad, being there in my place, he would do the same?*

MOTHER: *Yes, that's what I believe. Your dad may have his ideas, but he puts compassion above ideas.*

YIORGOS: *And what's your own opinion?*

MOTHER: *I think that since you were there, you did exactly what you had to do. I'm very proud of you.*

(She kisses him, stands up and goes out of the room, turning off the light. Yiorgos lies on his bed and he recalls what happened a few hours ago. Shortly after, he falls asleep. He is exhausted).

### **Next day at the old olive mill**

The boys look at the old olive mill while they approach.

STRATOS: *Lucky we were there, eh? Or was it God's intent; you think?*

YIORGOS: *My grandmother says that God acts in his own way and many times, we can't even imagine them.*

*Arriving at the old olive mill, some of the refugees recognize them and approach them, smiling. One of the refugees, together with a girl of their age, comes to meet them.*

REFUGEE GIRL: *You are the boys who tied the rope of our boat yesterday, aren't you?*

YIORGOS: *(somehow confused and shy) Yyyyes, eh, you know ... we ... it was by chance, I mean ...*

STRATOS: *(almost apologetically) Yes, yes, it just happened we were there.*

REFUGEE GIRL: *Thank you very much. Thanks to you we have been saved.*

YIORGOS: *No, don't say ... Everyone would do that.*

STRATOS: *It was pure luck, that is.*

REFUGEE GIRL: *Some people call it luck. I name it the Hand of God. Yesterday you became God's hand.*

*The young girl approaches and gives Yiorgos something. She smiles at him and leaves. Yiorgos looks at his hand. The girl has given him a small glass bottle. He opens it and an exquisite fra-grance comes out.*

STRATOS: *What is it?*

YIORGOS: *Perfume. (He smells it.) Jasmine!*

STRATOS: *Jasmine. Divine! Come on, "God's hand", let's go now and you can give me a help-ing hand to clean our storeroom, as my father asked me to, otherwise nothing will save me from his hands!*

The two youngsters walk away laughing and teasing each other.

## 2.11 REFERENCES

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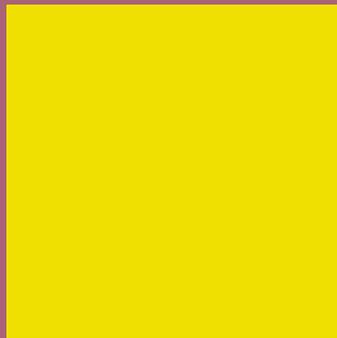
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# 3

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ENCOUNTER WITH THE  
ENVIRONMENT: SOCIAL AND  
ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

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## 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

<sup>27</sup>So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> 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." <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

#### 3.3.2 GEN. 2:8,15

<sup>8</sup>And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. [...] <sup>15</sup> 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)

<sup>9</sup>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.  
<sup>10</sup>You water its furrows abundantly,  
settling its ridges,  
softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.  
<sup>11</sup>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:

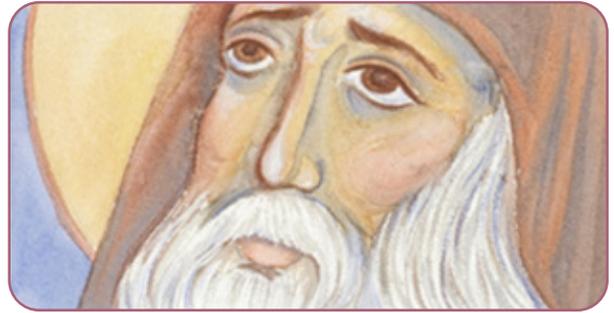


Figure 3.5  
Aquarelle by Vaso Gogou

## 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

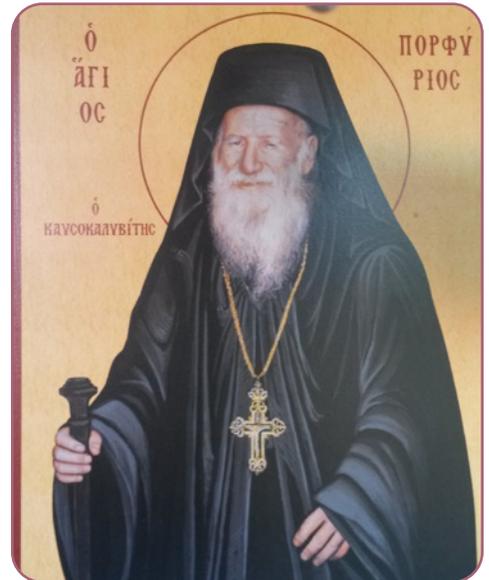


us. All we have to do is take care of all them, with love and to glorify Him joyfully for His rich gifts. The heart that has learned to love, mourns for all creation, even for a green leaf if it is cut without need."

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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Commons [Attribution-  
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://  
upload.wikimedia.org/  
wikipedia/commons/  
thumb/d/d0/Saint\\_  
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,

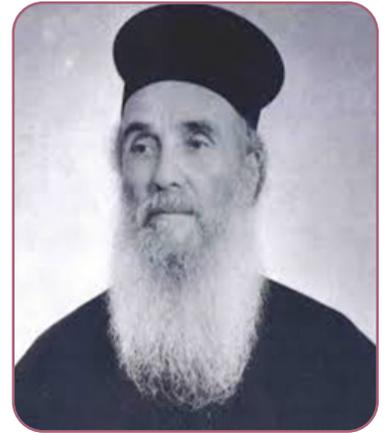


Figure 3.9  
St Amfilochios of Patmos,  
<https://www.saint.gr/4444/saint.aspx>

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 Hoghlah. 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

The list of books used by the writers in the preparation of the book at hand, plus the works of art and music used as stimuli for the students, along with the sources where they have been found.

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Christos Yannaras, "Nature and History in the Book of Apocalypse", Synaxis 56 (1995) [Χρήστος, Γιανναράς, "Φύση και Ιστορία στην Αποκάλυψη του Ιωάννη", Σύναξη 56 (1995)].

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p. 31 [Greek translation: Ιωάννης Δ. Ζηζιούλας, Μητροπολίτης Περγάμου, Η κτίση ως ευχαριστία: Θεολογική προσέγγιση στο πρόβλημα της Οικολογίας, Αθήνα: Ακρίτας, 1998].

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### **3.12.2 Works of art**

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 [https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9E%C9%99kil:Adam\\_naming\\_animals\\_-\\_Moni\\_Ayou\\_Nikolaou\\_\(Meteora\).jpg](https://az.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9E%C9%99kil:Adam_naming_animals_-_Moni_Ayou_Nikolaou_(Meteora).jpg)

St Gerasimus of Jordan

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<https://www.saint.gr/4444/saint.aspx>

Icon of Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia in the monastery of Panagia Eleousa, Achaea, Greece

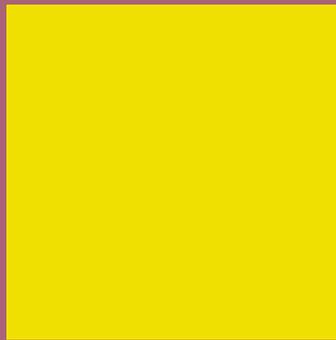
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d0/Saint\\_Porphyrios.jpg/800px-Saint\\_Porphyrios.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d0/Saint_Porphyrios.jpg/800px-Saint_Porphyrios.jpg)

Links last accessed December 15, 2020

Aquarelles created by Vaso Gogou

# 4

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WHEN ENCOUNTER  
BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST  
WAR AND JUST PEACE

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## MODULE FOUR

# JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE VIDEO

After an incident on the way to school with a guard dog which is followed by a quarrel between two classmates about their football teams, Yiorgos, a thirteen years old boy, comes to think that we frequently try to defend our beliefs in a way that is very similar to that of animals. What does Jesus suggest about our disputes and quarrels? We get the answer through the Gospel and an interactive game organized in the classroom by the religious education teacher of Yiorgos' class.



Figure 4.1  
Video Clip

## 4.2 VIDEO SCREENING

### 4.2.1 COMPREHENSION QUESTIONNAIRE

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

1. *What prompted the discussion in Yiorgos' class?*
  - a. A dispute between students and teacher.
  - b. A quarrel between two students regarding their favorite football teams.
  - c. A dispute between one group of students and another.
  - d. The racist attack of one student on another.
  - e. I do not know / I did not understand.
  
2. *In the video, the teacher read to the class a passage from the Gospel, in which Jesus said:*
  - a. You should be patient when you are slapped.
  - b. If you are slapped on the cheek, you should slap back, to be fair.
  - c. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.
  - d. When you are slapped you must report it to the authorities.
  - e. I do not know / I did not understand.
  
3. *What method did the teacher use to convey his message to the students:*
  - a. They all read a text on terrorism and discussed it.
  - b. They split into two groups and did a simulation of a quarrel.
  - c. They played the educational game "debate".
  - d. They played the interactive game "return the blow."
  - e. I do not know / I did not understand.

### 4.2.3 HAVE YOU GOT THE MESSAGE?

#### Question

In the video we see that the teacher used the game to help the students understand the words of Christ: "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (Mt. 5:39). In the following box, write a sentence explaining what you think the students learned from this?



## 4.3 THE REJECTION OF VIOLENCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Every day we witness behavior characterized by conflict and violence. Man is constantly trying to dominate and impose his ideas, or change situations using force, disregarding any concept of freedom.

In the teachings of Christ in the New Testament we find the rejection of any form of violence. Two incidents from Jesus' life reveal in practice his attitude toward violence; an attitude that contrasts with violent behavior suggested even by his own Disciples.

So, we read in the Gospel according to Luke:

### A. Shortly before the passion of Christ

<sup>51</sup>When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup>And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; <sup>53</sup>but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup>When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" <sup>55</sup>But he turned and rebuked them. <sup>56</sup>Then they went on to another village. (Lk. 9:51-56, NRSV)

### B. During the arrest of Jesus

<sup>47</sup>While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; <sup>48</sup>but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" <sup>49</sup>When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" <sup>50</sup>Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. <sup>51</sup>But Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. (Lk. 22:47-51, NRSV)



Figure 4.2  
The Betrayal of Judas,  
18th century fresco  
(under restoration) from  
the Church of St Apostles,  
Agia, Greece. Photo by  
Olya Gluschenko, 2017.

### Exercises

1. In the above biblical texts, find the words and actions of the Disciples which show violent behavior, and then find the response of Jesus.

2. Jesus advises us to avoid responding to violence with violence. Is this suggestion helpful for breaking the vicious circle of violence? Justify your answer.

### Exercise:

Let us remember again the words of Jesus that we heard in the video: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" These words urge us to stop the vicious circle of enforcement and retaliation. But this attitude raises the question which is often expressed: Does the rejection of violence lead us to passivity and submission to the evil that happens around us?

The following text gives us the answer to the above question:

We need to be aware that this attitude (the rejection of violence) does not mean passivity\* and fatalism\*. On the contrary, it is an active attitude; it is a choice and an action. The witness [the Christian] does not legitimize evil. He clashes with it and refuses to obey those who serve it. Christ himself, during his trial by the high priest, asked the guard who had hit him to explain the reason: "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (John 18:23). In fact, at some point before his arrest, when he saw that the temple precinct had been turned into a trading post, he made a rough whip out of ropes, pulled people and animals out, threw down the money and turned over the benches. "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" (John 2:16). It is noteworthy that even at this particular moment, Christ did not hit people.

(Ath. N. Papathanasiou – M. Koukounaras-Liagkis  
Topics of Christian Ethics, Athens: Educational Policy Institute, 2020 p.83)

Based on the text, formulate your conclusions in your own words.

## 4.4 WAR: ONE OF THE HARSHTEST FORMS OF VIOLENCE

War is one of the harshest forms of violence a human being can face. The thirst for power and strength, but also the desire for wealth, lead to the annihilation of peoples and cultures, destroying every sign of freedom and humanity. History is full of wounds that war has inflicted on the body of humanity. They confirm how unjust and tragic the violence of war is.

Find, in the following texts, what are the causes of the war.

<sup>1</sup>Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? <sup>2</sup>You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. (James 4:1-2)

Money is the gallows of souls, the hook of death, the bait of sin. How long will it be omnipotent? How long will wealth, the cause of wars, for which weapons are made and swords are sharpened, rule? (Basil the Great, Sermon to the reach, PG 31, 297B)



Figure 4.3  
Mounted Normans  
attacking the Anglo-  
Saxon infantry, 12th  
century, Author  
unknown, 12th century.  
Source Lucien Musset  
The Bayeux Tapestry  
2005 Boydell Press via  
Wikimedia Commons:  
[https://commons.  
wikimedia.org/w/index.  
php?curid=27217789](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27217789)

### 4.4.1 BUT IS THERE A JUST WAR?

But there are also wars that we treat as necessary, because they help to bring greater evils to an end. We are accustomed to calling this war "just", when it takes the form of defense because it protects freedom and life, which are precious to us. In other words, when you are trying to protect the freedom of your homeland and the lives of your loved ones by sacrificing your own life. In the history of the Orthodox Church there are cases where the Church was asked by the Byzantine emperors or by the state power to sanction the just wars they waged, by invoking the help of God. But even in this "just" war, people use violence and kill their fellow human beings in order to defend themselves.

### Question:

What is the position of the Orthodox Church concerning the "just" war?

To answer, consult the following text and, based on its positions, write a short paragraph with your answer:

Whenever it becomes necessary for a Christian to take part in a war, it should be done in a spirit of self-sacrifice. But this self-sacrifice does not concern [...] his life. It is about something infinitely more important for a Christian: the committing of sin and salvation! That is, participating in a war, with the tragic awareness that for the sake of certain relative values (e.g. the freedom of the community or the security of ones family) one accepts committing a sin and risking ones own salvation. It is a contradictory circumstance, as it is a historic duty to use violence in order to stop a torrent of violence, while being at the same time a torture, in that it is an act that not only does not please God, but will require forgiveness on His part..

(Th. N. Papathanassiou, "Anthropology, Culture, Praxis"  
in Terrorism and Culture, Athens, Armos, 2013, p.89)

### 4.4.2 CAN A WAR BE HOLY?

A war is called holy when it is declared by the Church or by a religion or, in general, in the name of God, in order to defend the faith and ideas that characterize that particular religion. For a Christian, every war is a civil war since man turns against his brother, that is, his fellow man. It is a tragic and undesirable reality. Therefore, the Orthodox Church does not accept that a war can be holy for any reason; it is impossible to declare war in the name of God and for it to have a salvific character, leading those who participate in it to their salvation.

## Exercise

The following text mentions an incident from the time of the Byzantine Empire that reveals the position of the Church that no war can have a salvific character.

In 960 A.D. the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas demanded that the Church proclaim as saints all those who died in battles against Islam, defending the Christian faith and the homeland. The Church refused, citing a sacred canon [...] It was the thirteenth canon of Basil the Great, who expressed disagreement with the "impunity" of those killing in war (even defensively!) and argued that a penance of a three year abstention from Holy Communion should be imposed [...]

(Th. N. Papathanassiou, "Anthropology, Culture, Praxis"  
in *Terrorism and Culture*, Athens, Armos, 2013, p.91)

State in one sentence the conclusion you reached after reading the text.

Figure 4.4  
Peter Stronsky: The Kind  
Angel of Peace Donetsk,  
Ukraine, 2008, photo  
by Andrew Butko via  
Wikimedia Commons.  
Licensed under the  
the Creative Commons  
[Attribution-Share Alike  
3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license. The  
photo has not  
been changed and  
can be found at [https://  
commons.wikimedia.  
org/wiki/File:2008.\\_  
Донецк\\_122.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2008._Донецк_122.jpg).



#### 4.4.3 AND SO TO CONCLUDE ...

... with what Archbishop Anastasios proclaims about what should be the role of any religion when faced with an armed conflict:

Violence brings violence and in this vicious circle it is the innocent and the weak that become the victims. The Church insists that no one has the right to use the holy oil of religion to feed the flames of armed conflict. Religion is a divine gift, to soothe hearts, to heal wounds and to bring individuals and peoples closer together, in peace."

(Anastasios (Yannoulatos, Archbishop of Tirana),  
Vigilance, Debt of the Orthodox,  
En Plo, Athens 2017, p. 122)

## 4.5 THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

### 4.5.1. PROPHET ISAIAH ON PEACE

The prophet Isaiah, in the years of the Old Testament, envisioning the coming of a new world where peace will prevail, says: “<sup>4</sup> [...] they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isa. 2: 4)

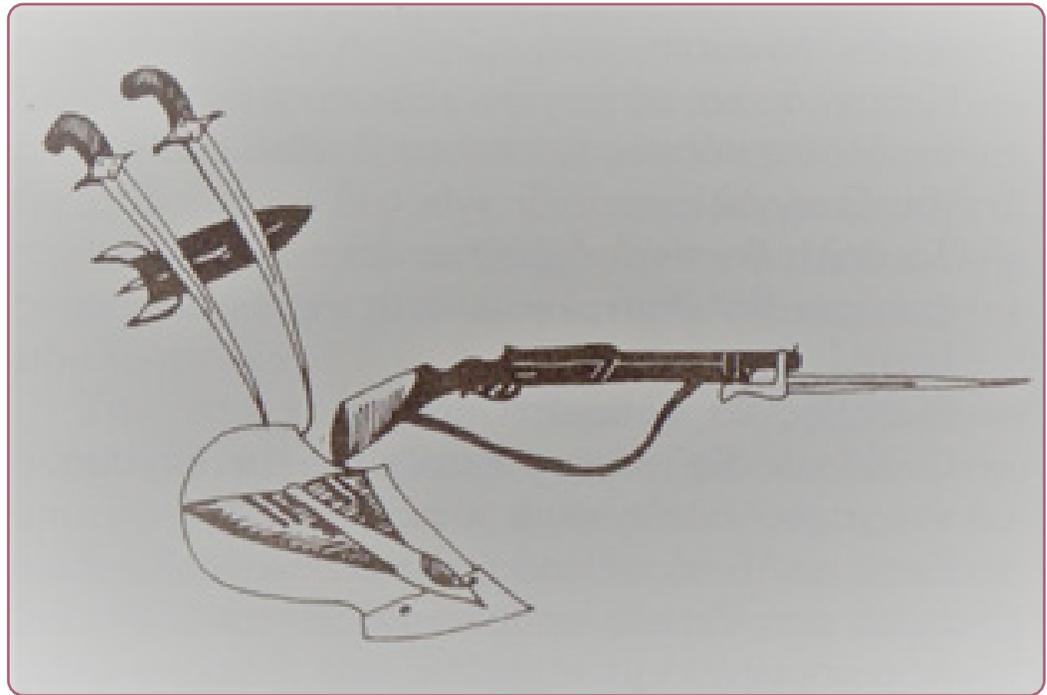


Figure 4.5  
Plow made of weapons  
Drawing by Vaso Gogou

### Exercise

Observe the drawing “plow\* made of weapons” and find the matches with the words of the prophet Isaiah.

## 4.5.2 THE ROLE OF RELIGIONS IN ACHIEVING PEACE

Figure 4.6  
Peace dove statue in Lomé, Togo, Africa, photo by Jeff Attaway. Licensed under the the Creative Commons [Attribution 2.0 Generic](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peace_dove_(3329620077).jpg) license. The photo has not been changed and can be found at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peace\\_dove\\_\(3329620077\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peace_dove_(3329620077).jpg).



### The Declaration of Assisi

On January 24th 2002, patriarchs, imams, monks and rabbis from all over the world gathered in Assisi and proclaimed, together with Pope John Paul II, that believers around the world must renounce violence, and prayed together for peace.

### Excerpts from the Declaration of Assisi

We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic Spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion. We commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism. [...] We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

(Anastasios, (Yannoulatos, Archbishop of Tirana):  
Coexistence: Peace, nature, poverty, terrorism,  
values, Armos, Athens 2016, p.35))

### Exercise

Having read the above excerpts from the Assisi declaration, imagine that you are a reporter in a newspaper and write a short tweet informing your public on the conclusions of this very important meeting.

## 4.6 ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: MATERIAL FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

### An incident with Bishop Acacius\*

In skirmishes with Persian troops in 421, in the territories of Persian Armenia, the Byzantine army captured seven thousand Persian soldiers. These prisoners suffered a famine resulting in numerous deaths. Acacius summoned the clergy of his diocese and said to them: "Our God needs no discs or chalices\*. He neither eats nor drinks, since he has no physical needs. Thanks to the gratitude of the pilgrims, the Church has many such treasures of gold and silver, so I find it appropriate to use them to save the captured soldiers from hunger". Thus, the valuable ecclesiastic vessels were given for melting. The income from these precious metals provided food for the prisoners (despite the fact that they were of a different nation and religion), and they were provided with the supplies they needed to return to their homeland. It is said that the Persian king asked to meet bishop Acacius personally, and expressed his admiration for the wisdom of the Byzantines, who managed to triumph both in war and by benevolence..

(Papathanassiou, Th. (2008), My God, a foreigner. Texts for a truth "down in the street", Athens: En plo, p. 57-58. The incident is cited from Socrates, Ecclesiastical History, 7, 21, PG 67, 781B-784A)

### An incident with St. Carpus\*

Saint Carpus, in the 1st century, narrates the following incident: Once a pagan made him very sad because he deceived a Christian and converted him to paganism. The pagans rejoiced over this conversion and sacrificed to their gods and Carpus was filled with bitterness and hatred. At night, as usual, he got up to pray to God, protesting that it is unfair for atheists and pagans to live and distort the truth of Christ. He prayed to God to send a thunderbolt and mercilessly end their lives. As soon as he had said these words, he suddenly saw a vision of Jesus with his angels high in heaven. Looking down, into a dark chasm, he saw the people he had cursed, terrified and about to fall into the void. Below them, at the bottom of the chasm, there were snakes, ready to bite them. And then he saw Jesus looking mercifully at the two men in danger and, rising from his throne, approaching them and reaching out to help them. Surprised, Carpus heard Jesus saying to him: "So hit me too, I am ready to suffer greatly again to save people.

(From the Synaxarist of St Nikodemos of Mount Athos)

## Peace and the divine Liturgy

The Divine Liturgy ends with the exhortation “let us go forth in peace”. This exhortation invites the faithful to go out to the world with the gift of peace, to live with it and to fight for it. In essence, each individual believer, but also the community as a whole, is bidden to go out and to prove that the Mystery they experienced was truly accepted. The realization and acquisition of the good of peace is the overriding request of the Divine Liturgy. It is the amazing wealth that the Liturgy contains for this good”.

(St. Ch. Tsopanidis, “The Churches in Search of a ‘Just Peace’ in an Age of Globalization”, in Kasselouri-Chatzivasileiadi, Eleni (ed.): “Peace on Earth...”: a Vision and a Demand for Societies and Churches Today. An Orthodox Contribution, Athens: Indiktos, 2010, p. 120)

## The Black Eyed Peas - “Where Is The Love?”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpYeekQkAdc&feature=youtu.be&ab\\_channel=BlackEyedPeasVEVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpYeekQkAdc&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=BlackEyedPeasVEVO)

People killin', people dyin'  
Children hurt and you hear them cryin'  
Can you practice what you preach?  
Or would you turn the other cheek?

Father, Father, Father help us  
Send some guidance from above  
Cause people got me, got me questioning

Where is the love (Love)  
Where is the love (The love)  
Where is the love (The love)  
Where is the love, the love, the love

## 4.7. GLOSSARY

**Abstention (from Holy Communion):** The Church, for pedagogical reasons, sometimes imposes abstinence from Holy Communion as a penance for certain serious transgressions or failures. Penance is an act proposed by the priest during confession, in order for the believer to comprehend the magnitude of his transgression and to move towards goodness. In the Orthodox Church, common penances include intensive prayer, study, fasting, and acts of charity. For more serious sins, the penance can be abstinence (i.e. exclusion) from Holy Communion.

**Acacius, Saint:** Became bishop of Amida, an Armenian city, at the beginning of the 5th century. In 419 the emperor Theodosius II sent him as ambassador to the king of Persia and his presence there helped to strengthen the faith of the Orthodox believers of the region. Acacius visited Persia for the second time at the invitation of the Persian king himself, who asked to meet him after his miraculous act of freeing 7000 Persian captives captured by the Byzantines. The Orthodox Church commemorates him on April 9.

**Canon:** The provisions that have been formulated from time to time by the Church for regulating and dealing with the various daily problems that arise in ecclesiastical and social life. The purpose of the rules is to guard and protect spiritual life.

**Carpus, Saint:** Lived in the times of Nero (52 AD), and is one of the seventy disciples of the Lord. He was a collaborator of St Paul and, according to his 2nd Epistle to Timothy, worked for the dissemination of the Gospel in the region of Troy. Later he became a bishop in Varna, Thrace, where he was the spiritual father and a shining example for all the people of his diocese. The Orthodox Church celebrates his memory on May 26.

**Fatalism:** A view or opinion according to which all events are irrevocably predetermined by a higher power, such as fate.

**Passivity:** Behavior that implies acceptance of a situation and does not act or seek to change it.

**Plow:** An agricultural tool drawn by a tractor or animals to plow the land

**Samaritans:** They were the inhabitants of Samaria. Samaria was attacked by other tribes who had a pagan faith and its population was completely changed due to cross-marriages. Although they maintained their faith in the one God of the Jews, they introduced into their faith several pagan customs and ceremonies. They worshipped God on Mount Gerizim and not in Solomon's Temple. In the New Testament, the word Samaritan signifies the unclean (sinful) and hated person (John 8:48).

## 4.8 TRANSCRIPTION OF THE VIDEO

Characters:

YIORGOS

APOSTOLOS: Yiorgos' father

TEACHER: A teacher of Religious Education

STUDENTS

DOG

### SCENE 1

Yiorgos and his father Apostolos are heading to school early in the morning. Apostolos will then continue to his work. Yiorgos feels drowsy and his father teases him.

*FATHER: (smiling) Hey Yiorgos, get a move on! If we go on like this it'll be time to come home before you get there!*

*YIORGOS: Leave off, Dad, I feel so sleepy... (yawns)*

*FATHER: Then you should get to bed earlier, so that you wake up easier in the morning.*

*YIORGOS: (He doesn't answer and yawns again)*

Suddenly as they are walking on the sidewalk and passing through a yard, a dog appears, barking furiously. Yiorgos and his dad are frightened by the ferocity of the barking.

*YIORGOS: That scared me!*

*FATHER: (angrily) Stupid dog! It terrified us.*

*YIORGOS: What is it about dogs that makes them bark like that sometimes? Why do they make so much noise?*

*FATHER: He is a guard. He thinks that by acting like that he is protecting the house from intruders.*

*YIORGOS: Well, we didn't try to get into his home.*

*FATHER: It doesn't matter. He has no way of knowing if we are going to try to enter, or not. He protects it anyway.*

*YIORGOS: Probably he takes his job too seriously.*

*FATHER: (in a playful mood) I don't know if he is a good guard, but he is certainly good at waking people up. He definitely woke the neighbors, but he also managed to wake you up too, ha ha!*

*YIORGOS: Pff...very funny.*

We see their backs as they continue on their way

### SCENE 2

Yiorgos arrives at school with his father. They wave goodbye to each other and Yiorgos enters the schoolyard. He suddenly hears noises from one side of the schoolyard and, along with many kids, he heads over there out of curiosity. Two students are quarreling over their football teams. Some other students are trying to restrain them. Yiorgos observes without interfering.

*STUDENT 1: You are a fool and you deserve a good beating.*

*STUDENT 2: Just you dare to come closer and you'll see what happens.*

*STUDENT 1: Do you think I'm afraid of you? We all know what a coward you are. You always hit from behind just like your team does on the field. You bribe the referees and then you win the matches.*

*STUDENT 2: Not at all, I will hit you straight in the face. As for my team, better get used to seeing our backs in the stands, because you'll never get ahead of us.*

A teacher sees the fight and intervenes. She stops them and has a short dialogue with the kids. Yiorgos is still watching the scene.

*TEACHER: Hey boys what's all the fuss about? I can't believe it! You are high school students and you fight like small children.*

*STUDENT 1: He started it, Miss.*

*STUDENT 2: Why don't you tell the truth? He insulted me first, Miss.*

They yell at each other and their voices mingle with the voices of the other students who are present at the incident.

*TEACHER: (loudly) Everyone please stop! (She speaks calmly to the first student) So tell me now, how did he insult you?*

*STUDENT 1: Eh, well...he did not exactly offend me, but he spoke against the football team I support.*

*TEACHER: (Speaking to the other Student). And how did he insult you?*

*STUDENT 2: Well, he spoke against my team too.*

*TEACHER: So, if I understood you correctly, you were fighting with each other because of your teams and not for yourselves.*

*STUDENT 2: (He shouts loudly with bared teeth and clenched fist) Yes, and if he does it again, he will pay for it...*

Everyone speaks loudly. The noise is reduced as Yiorgos looks at Student 2 and makes a logical association. As he sees him growling, threatening and showing his teeth to the other student, he brings to mind the dog that scared him with his barking a few minutes ago (he remembers that the dog was also showing his teeth). For a few seconds Yiorgos imagines that the student has been transformed into a dog. Yiorgos laughs out loud at this thought and returns to reality. The "dog-student" turns into a human being again and the surrounding voices come back.

### **SCENE 3**

The scene takes place inside the classroom. The teacher is the same one who stopped the quarrel at the schoolyard.

*TEACHER: I believe that many of you were present at the quarrel. It is certainly not uncommon for people to fight, especially if they consider that something of their own is threatened.*

*STUDENT (GIRL): Yes Miss, but what happens when both of them feel that this "something" is really valuable?*

*TEACHER: Since this is an RE lesson, shall we see what Jesus says about quarrels? Please open the Bible at Matthew, chapter 5, verse 38.*

The children look for the verse and the teacher reads.

You have heard that it was said: "An eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, "Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also."

*STUDENT 3: (Obviously perplexed) Sorry Miss, but if I understand correctly, what Christ is saying is to let the others take advantage of us. Is that right?*

*STUDENT (GIRL): Yes, that's how I see it, too. But if I act like that the whole school will make fun of me!*

The children start a rowdy but creative discussion, and the teacher walks among the desks and listens to them. As she passes Yiorgos, who is sitting at the last desk, she leaves a note on his desk and winks. Yiorgos looks puzzled and surprised. He unfolds the note and reads the following:

"We are going to play a game in the classroom. Whatever happens, please do not hit anyone back, even if others urge you to do so. There is reason for this."

The teacher walks back to the front and announces to the class:

TEACHER: OK, so we all have different opinions . Shall we play a game?

Everyone is excited.

CLASS: Yeees

TEACHER: Great. Here's what we are going to do. Each of you will give a tap on the arm, shoulder or back of the person sitting next to you. Let's do it in turns, one after the other, like a domino effect. But be careful, not too hard, alright? I'll go first.

The teacher taps the student sitting at the first desk. Then this student laughs and taps the student next to him. The other student gives a tap to the student behind him and so on. Sounds of laughter fill the room. Another student gets up and approaches Yiorgos, hitting him a little harder. Yiorgos winces with pain but does not react, as the teacher had told him not to retaliate.

STUDENT 4: (laughingly) Come on Yiorgos. Hit him!

Yiorgos doesn't react.

STUDENT (GIRL): (laughingly) Hey, what are you waiting for? Stand up and hit him.

YIORGOS: No, I don't want to.

STUDENT 3: (Obviously irritated). What do you mean? That's the game..

YIORGOS: I'm telling you no. I'm not going to hit anyone.

STUDENT (GIRL): (angrily) Miss, tell him! . Yiorgos is spoiling the game.

TEACHER: Yiorgos, don't you want to continue the game?

YIORGOS: No Miss, I don't like it.

TEACHER: Then I'm afraid we have to stop. You see, this is how the game is played: we all have to hit the one sitting next to us. If someone stops, the game stops too.

CLASSROOM: (Exclamation of disappointment. They stare at Yiorgos in a hostile way).

STUDENT 4: See what you've done?

TEACHER: But on the other hand, what Yiorgos has done by choosing not to hit anyone else is to save many of you from being hit by the others.. Yiorgos broke the chain of violence when it reached him. Is he really a spoilsport, or does the half the class owe him a favor because actually he saved them from being hit? Maybe violence and evilness is something like a pandemic. It is transmitted from one person to another.

YIORGOS: Are you saying that what Jesus suggests is the solution to our quarrels?

STUDENT (GIRL): (hesitantly) And ... What about the pandemic?

TEACHER: Quarantine has always been a solution to prevent the spread of a disease. Aren't violence and evil diseases too?

The students look at each other silently.

#### SCENE 4

Yiorgos walks with a classmate as he returns from school.

STUDENT (GIRL): Hey, Yiorgos. Do you really believe that you could do what Jesus suggested?

YIORGOS: What exactly?

STUDENT (GIRL): To not react when others harm you.

YIORGOS: I don't know. It's really difficult. It seems to me that most of the time we react with "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", as they say.

STUDENT (GIRL): Yes, that's right.

YIORGOS: But if you think about it, what Christ suggests is probably the smartest thing to do. Who would want to live in a world of blind and toothless people?

STUDENT (GIRL): You're tho right in what you're thaying. I would not like thuch a world at all. It would be a meth...

Yiorgos and his classmate laugh out loud. We watch their backs as they walk away laughing.

## 4.9 REFERENCES

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#### 4.9.2. Works of Art

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Apostolos Barlos, MTh (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece). Former Teacher of Religious Education and Educational Consultant for High-school education, Instructor of Lifelong Education, Author of textbooks for Secondary Level Religious Education. Associate for Religious Education in Volos Academy for Theological Studies.

Christos Fradellos, Mth (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens - Greece, Neapolis University of Paphos - Cyprus), Teacher of Religious Education. Author of the book *Islamic Orders in the Ottoman Crete*. Associate for Religious Education in Volos Academy for Theological Studies.



Vaso Gogou, BA in Theology and History (University of Athens, Greece). Former teacher of Religious Education, Culture and Aesthetics, Instructor of Lifelong Education, Author of textbooks for Secondary Level Religious Education. Associate for Religious Education in Volos Academy for Theological Studies.

Maria Anna Tsintsifa, Master in Intercultural Education (Free University, Berlin, Germany), Master in Special Education (Frederick University, Cyprus). Teacher of Greek Literature, Associate for Religious Education in Volos Academy for Theological Studies.



Nikolaos Tsirevelos. PhD (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece). Teacher of Religious Education, Adjunct Professor of Religious Education and Religious Studies (Department of Primary Education, University of Thessaly, Volos), Visiting Lecturer of Christian Education (Department of Theology and Culture, "Logos" University, Tirana, Albania), Associate for Religious Education in Volos Academy of Theological Studies.

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