

St. Meletios the Confessor on the Tollhouses

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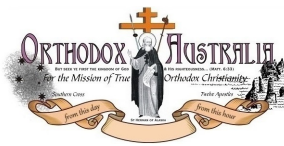
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Newly discovered excerpts unavailable at the time of publishing The Departure of the Soul:

St. Meletios the Confessor of Mount Galesion (+1286) - (commemorated on January 19th)

Called by God at a young age, St. Meletios abandoned his homeland and his beloved family and set out as a pilgrim for the Holy Land. Becoming a monk on Mount Sinai, he spent weeks without food and nights without sleep, continuing in fasting, vigils, and ceaseless prayer to the astonishment of all his fellow monks. Having wandered through the desert, like a diligent bee gathering the nectar of the virtues from the holy ascetics he met, St. Meletios settled on Mount Galesion at the Monastery of St. Lazarus, becoming perfect in obedience and the ascetical life.

Christ the Lord appeared to him in glory, commanding him to go to Constantinople to defend the Orthodox Faith, which was in danger from compromises with the Latins that Emperor Michael VIII had made for political reasons. Presenting himself at the imperial court, St. Meletios boldly reproached the emperor for betraying the Faith. Thrown into prison, he was then exiled to the island of Skyros where he authored a long poem, excerpted here, in which he desired to set forth all the essentials of the Orthodox Faith in a single Gathering. Sent to the pope in Rome for trial, St. Meletios continued to boldly confess the Orthodox Faith, confronting the Latin scholastic theologians and rebuking their errors. Imprisoned for seven more years, he was then sent back to Skyros and shut up in a dark dungeon. The peoples' proclamation of the saint as a confessor of the Orthodox Faith stirred the Emperor to summon him back to the imperial court. Steadfast as



ever in proclaiming Orthodoxy, the saint was condemned to torture. He was hung on a dry tree which burst into leaf upon receiving him. His tongue which had so bravely spoken the truth was cut out, but miraculously he was able to continue proclaiming the true Faith. Finally released from imprisonment on the death of Michael VIII, St. Meletios played an important role in re-establishing Orthodoxy. When he departed from this world to God, his face shone like the sun. His body remained incorrupt, becoming a wellspring of countless miracles.

The texts excerpted below provide a significant early witness to the saints of the Orthodox Church embracing not only the teaching of the toll-houses but also the Life of St. Basil the New, the most complete and vivid description of the toll-houses:

“The soul that yearns for God and does good things, gladly departs to Him when it is called. It soars above the evil demons and with peace proceeds to the assembly of the angels, having certainly passed through safely. The things that are said about the toll-houses are from experience which the divine Theodora has stated wonderfully. You certainly know these things, how fearsome, how terrible, how frightful, how full of shock the time of death is.... The venerable Basil says that they examine that [dissolute] life as well....”

T. Simopoulos, ed., ????????? ? ????????? (Meletios Galesiotes) (Athens, 1978), no. 180, “On the Remembrance of Death,” p. 492, lines 49–57, 71. (In Greek.)

“The Savior at the time of the Passion said that the ruler of this world will find nothing in Me (John 14:30). But in someone else he will find many or few things. However many passions someone says he has, he has the same number of demons. Each one is marked by the corresponding toll-house. According to the words of the venerable and divine Theodora, each demon incites us towards sin.”

Ibid., no. 181, “On the Separation of the Soul and the Resurrection of the Body,” p. 493, line 15–20. (In Greek.)

Source:

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