

The Mystery of Time (Mark 1, 1-8) (Archimandrite Nikanor Karayannis)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



‘The beginning of the Gospel of Christ’... The word ‘beginning’ in today’s Gospel reading is enough in itself to evoke the start of the new year, the threshold of which we reached a few days ago with the feast of Christmas.

The Christian notion of time

In the old days, people were in awe of the dark enigma of time. They tried to explain it through philosophy and science. But as life passes and time rolls by, we’re horrified when we realize the vanity of yesterday, the evanescence of today and the uncertainty of tomorrow. This is because yesterday’s lost, today’s being erased- since every moment escapes and becomes the past- and the future’s unknown. This concept of time, which is beyond the understanding of the human brain, caused Saint Basil the Great to wonder whether time ‘is perhaps the mirror of eternity’.



Although the fleeting nature of time poisons our life with anxiety, the sanguine light of the Christian revelation brings us calm. It says that God manifested Himself in time and, in the Person of Christ, trod the solid ground of history. It answers our questions and anxieties. Christian teaching notes that time is God's work and gift and has important educational value. Time begins with the creation and proceeds with us and the whole universe towards a specific goal at the end of the ages, that is their completion in eternity, what we might say is the transformation of all things into a different quality and dimension of time, life and existence. All things are born and die in the present world and time. This time is so transitory and the world is constantly changing and, in the end, impermanent.

This is why it's natural for there to be a desire within us for a state that's permanent, stable and imperishable. This is nothing other than the Kingdom of God, for which we were created. Our every moment is unique and unrepeatable, with no turning back. This is what makes the time of our life a time of struggle, vigilance and repentance. Repentance in relation to time means, among other things, that we're called upon to live this earthly, temporary present without becoming attached to and absorbed by it, because the here and now really is 'an evening going towards its own decline'.

Our journey in time

The time of our life is a carriage on the train of the natural time of history and 'of the whole world', which is headed towards eternity. God it is Who determines the length of the journey, and, when it's completed, He recalls us, to be in the state we've managed to achieve. Some people see the earthly course of their life as a train journey. When we're born, we board the train. We meet people, our parents, who we believe will accompany us throughout the journey, but, unfortunately, the reality of the situation is different. They disembark at some stage and leave us alone, with our memories of them but without their physical presence.

Other people come on board, however, who will prove to be of great importance to us. These are people we love, our spouse, children and friends. Some people see this journey as an excursion. These are people who have a Christian outlook on life and an awareness of their own impermanence. Others find only sorrows on the journey, people who are 'oppressed and mistreated' by life. Others on the train are willing to help those in need. These are people of service and sacrifice. Lots of people get on and off without us realizing. They're the countless numbers we encounter on a daily basis, to whom we pay no heed.

Our earthly life is a journey full of hopes and disappointments, greetings and farewells, but certainly without any going back. The mystery of the journey is that we don't know when we and our fellow travellers will finally disembark. The parting is painful, but not without hope, because we have the pledge that we'll meet again at the station of eternity. Let us be glad and use the time of our journey well, leaving God and other people with kind recollections and the hope of reunion. Amen.