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"BE HOLY FOR I AM HOLY"

(Leviticus 11:44)

Written by A Mighty Arrow
St Mary Church, Atlanta, GA

Astronauts, policemen, firemen, clergy dress the way they do so others know who and what they are. Imagine if we were stranded with a flat tire in the middle of nowhere and a man dressed in jeans and a T-shirt approached us stating he was a policeman, would our first instinct be reluctance in believing him?

Substance over image is always more important, however one must get over the image before they can ever look at us or into us for the substance of who we are. Most people will not get past the image; this is why con men dress like businessmen and give the image of clergy... they know how important the image is allowing us to be drawn in. Even Satan knows that image is important for he disguises himself and the traps he sets before us for St. Paul warned us "and no wonder for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14). And thus this is how all human beings are...we are drawn to form image over substance. Image has a great impact on everything we do.

As Orthodox Christians living in this contemporary world, our duty is to live fully in the image of God. Our image was, is, and should always be in the image of God for God Himself desired this from the beginning for He "created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). Since God created man in His own image and likeness, He put in man the qualities and attributes of Himself. After the fall of Adam, man lost the privilege to live the image of God, but God still had a desire to restore us to His likeness and He sent His Only Begotten Son to save us. Our image should now be the image of the Living Son of God who is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). Since we attempt to live in the ever perfect image of God, this should be portrayed not only in our behaviors, but also in our physical appearances. If we are truly Christians, we should not only behave so, but also appear so as others may see us and glorify

our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:16)

Body Piercing:

Our God the Pantocrator commanded in the Holy Book of Leviticus that we should "not make any cuttings in (our) flesh for the dead, nor make any tattoo marks" (Leviticus 19:28). This type of marking of the body was heeded as a pagan, ungodly practice coming from the heathens; it is classified as scarification. Considering this, we should be careful not to cause harm to our bodies, but bring honor to our bodies.

In the Old Testament, the Jews were extremely frightened to approach the mountain on which God used to appear. They also were not allowed to enter the Holy of Holies in the temple because it was the dwelling place of the Living God. How much more can we consider our body as the

Holy of Holies and as a mountain upon which God can be seen above it? We should be cautious not to disturb the Spirit of God dwelling in us or we would become rejected by Him.

Let us examine how pure our bodies are in the New Testament. Our bodies are members in Christ as St. Paul instructs us "know you not that your bodies are members of Christ?" (I Corinthians

6:15). By no means would Our Lord accept the members of His Body to be defiled. We should also honor our bodies by the fact that God was incarnate in the likeness of our bodies as St. John states "and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) "for as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14). Therefore, we should compare our deeds with His deeds, follow His footsteps keeping our bodies pure and holy as Our Lord's was.

If we are still convinced that piercing our belly button and/



Is Image Everything?... How important is image?... Is image a picture of what and who we really are?... Does image signal who we are?.....



or nose is satisfactory on making a statement, let us reflect how Our Lord Jesus Christ was pierced.

We find a strong association of body piercing with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord was pierced. He was pierced numerous times. The Holy Gospel of St. Matthew states that Our Lord was scourged and delivered over to be crucified (Matthew 27:26). The scourging of the Lord were whippings in which the tissue was exposed with blood. Healing leaves huge scars, but Our Lord did not heal. His precious wounds were left open and were forced up against the huge rugged splintered cross. ***This is the type of body piercing Our Lord endured.*** Huge nails pierced His hands and feet driven into His body with hammers. ***This is body piercing to the Lord Jesus Christ.*** And then they forcibly placed a crown of thrones on His head making sure the Lord's head was very pierced. ***This is what body piercing meant to Our Lord.*** And they continued to beat His head with a reed spitting at Him. One soldier out of his frustration pierced His side with a spear (John 19:33). ***This is body piercing to the Lord Jesus Christ.*** Scourged, beat on the head after forcing a crown of thrones on His head, crucified, nails in His hands and feet and pierced with a spear in His side. . . . ***this is body piercing to the Lord Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, Our Image.***

If for no other reason, out of respect for the pain and agony that Our Lord suffered after His arrest, no Christian should pierce any part of their body. If we truly love the Lord, then how can we make a mockery of the horror that He endured in order to save the world?

Tattoos:

God addressed the issue of tattoos in the Holy of Book of



Icon of the Lord Jesus' appearance to St Thomas after His Resurrection

Leviticus demanding that we do "not make any cuttings in (our) flesh for the dead nor make any tattoo marks" (Leviticus 19:28). This is a clear implication that tattoos are against God's commandments for tattoos (and body piercing) were considered unchristian, pagan practices. The people expressed their sorrow at funerals by cutting their bodies for the dead. God considered such practices as rebellion against Him and set apart for Himself His own people. As Christians, we should NOT associate our bodies with pagan activities and dishonor our Lord.

The Lord requests that we honor and cherish our bodies for our bodies are confirmed by the Holy Sacraments. Each Christian is baptized with water cleansing us from Adam's sin. We are then anointed with the Holy Myron in order to receive the Holy Spirit and then we partake of the Holy Mysteries becoming one with

God. When we receive these Sacraments, we further honor the body. Thus, tattooing (or body piercing) our bodies not only dishonors our bodies, but also our Holy Baptism. We disrespect the Holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of our disobedience, it is a direct insult to God Himself because He is the founder of these sacraments and to the Holy Spirit because He works through Him.

Our bodies should be looked upon as the Temple of God in which the Holy Spirit abides and in which Our Lord resides comfortably as St. Paul says "know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have of God and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's" (I Corinthians 6:19-20). We would never vandalize the church we attend with graffiti, so why would we put graffiti on the temple where the Holy Spirit lives? We can not claim ownership of our bodies as they belong to God



and He will claim them from us on Judgement Day. We should take full responsibility of our bodies and not defile them with tattoos or body piercing, but “by the mercies of God (we must) present (our) bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is (our) reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

Marks are used by God to identify His people. When He commanded that the rebellious people be killed, He commanded the cherub “not to come near anyone on whom is the mark” (Ezekiel 9:6). The Anti-Christ in the last days will also use a mark to identify his people; this will be an abomination to God (Revelation 14:9-11). God uses a mark to identify and glorify and separate His people while Satan uses a mark to defile and vilify the body. In our days, what are tattoos representative of? Do they identify us as the people of God, or are we identified as practicing pagan worship?

It is true that many Copts have a tattoo of the cross and this trend evolved from the persecution of the Copts. During the persecution, Christians were not allowed to wear crosses nor declare themselves as Christians. As the persecution increased, Copts began to tattoo the cross on their wrists as a sign that they will never denounce Christianity until they are skinned—representative of clinging on to God. As His Grace Bishop Youssef said “nowadays it is much more important to tattoo the cross on our hearts rather than our skin.”

Adornment:

A positive approach springing from a heart full of love for God desires to know how to best glorify God in all aspects of lifestyle, including outward appearance. In order to be faithful to God and His commandments, we must learn how to profess our faith and love for Our Lord Jesus Christ in our daily living

i.e. appropriate adorning.

Dress and appearance are an important index of Christian character. Clothes and appearance are the most powerful nonverbal communicators of our moral values. *We are what we wear.* Our outward appearance is a visible and silent testimony of our Christian values. Unsaved people know by instinct that Christians should be different in their behaviors and appearance. It is a type of evangelism for if others see how Christ-like we look, they surely will glorify God for “(we) are the light of the world... (shining) our light before men, that they may see (our) good works and glorify (our) Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).



**Icon of the Martyrdom of Christians.
12th Century**

We are instructed to “adorn (ourselves) with eminence and dignity; and clothe (ourselves) with honor and majesty” (Job 40:10) meaning how much dignity do we have when we expose to others our stomachs (i.e. tank tops, and bikinis), our shoulders (i.e. sleeveless dresses/shirts), our legs (i.e. short skirts/shorts), etc. When Adam and Eve sinned, they knew that they were naked and were ashamed and embarrassed even though they were the only two in the Garden of Eden. They quickly sewed fig leaves together and made for themselves coverings. God did not approve of the fig leaves for He desired that they

be *totally* covered making for them tunics of animal skins (Genesis 3). We must dress in a well-ordered, decent manner without causing shame or embarrassment to God, ourselves, or others. We should dress neatly and becomingly by not being overdressed or dressing in a lax, untidy manner. We should act as though the eye of heaven is upon us and we are living under the approval of God.

Clothes define our identity and help us develop a new identity. Adorning ourselves with luxurious clothes reveals inner pride



and vanity. Lavish clothing contributes to rebellion against God by fostering self-glorification. St. Paul instructs us to “adorn (ourselves) in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with...gold or pearls,...or costly clothing” (I Timothy 2:9). We represent the church, who is the bride of Christ, and should be attired modestly in purity and fine linen without outward appearance (Revelation 19:7-8). Our identity should be compared to Our Lord Jesus which is the quiet spirit “which is very precious in the sight of God” (I Peter 3:4). We should reflect on the inward appearance the natural beauty of simplicity and of elevated purity for “to the pure all things are pure” (Titus 1:15).

Clothes do not make us Christians, but we reveal our identity through our clothes and appearance. We should always reflect His glory by dressing modestly, decently, and soberly. Our outward appearance is a constant silent witness of God’s image for “whatever (we) do, whether in word or deed, do all in the

name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17).

If this article has not convinced us that our bodies are truly the Temple of the Holy Spirit, perhaps we should meditate on what our life truly means to us. Life is too precious to spend adorning and worshipping our bodies. Personal judgment is required for each of us when determining what matters in our life. What are the necessities in life? What are the priorities in life? Should we not accomplish every task glorifying God? Should we waste our energy in arguing with others that piercing our bodies and tattooing a sunset is the correct way of life, or should we use this energy to adorn our bodies spiritually with God’s Word and Love. Are we allowing God to reshape us in His image and fill us with His Love? God is asking each one of us not to distort His image. He is pleading with us to keep our bodies pure and undefiled for He requests that each of us “Be Holy for (He is) Holy” (Leviticus 11:44).

Holy Bible Word Search: The Risen Lord Jesus Christ

M G C N E E L I L A G B P C P
 D E Z I T P A B N E V A E H E
 U I G G O D J M A G S P E X T
 O N S V D M E L A S U R E J E
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 C A S T O G E T H E R I I E R
 A I T K I N G D O M D R O L T
 H T A B B A S H O S A E S I Y

All the words listed below are in the puzzle — left, right, up, down or diagonally. When you find one of these words in the puzzle, circle it.

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| ACELDAMA | GALILEE | OLIVET |
| ALIVE | GOD | PASSION |
| APOSTLES | HEAVEN | PETER |
| ASSEMBLED | INFALLIBLE | POWER |
| BAPTIZED | INIQUITY | PRAYER |
| BLOOD | ISRAEL | RECEIVE |
| BRETHREN | JERUSALEM | REWARD |
| CLOUD | JESUS | SABBATH |
| DAVID | KINGDOM | SEASONS |
| DISCIPLES | LORD | SPEAKING |
| FATHER | MARY | TOGETHER |
| FORTY | MINISTRY | WAIT |