

Lumen Christi

S.T. Georgiou

While showing a video to my evening class, I noticed that one student's head, directly opposite me, was outlined with an intense glow. For a moment I was startled, but then discovered the source of the radiance. Behind the student rose a tier of windows; through them I could make out a newly installed security light shining in the distance, its steady beam pointed in our direction. Her upper body had blocked its rays, in turn giving her head a halo-like luminescence.

Though I tried to focus on the video, I kept glancing at the student framed by light. There was something intriguing, if not captivating, about her 'aura', so enhanced in the dim room. Her white-gold radiance reminded me of the brightly haloed Christ and Apostles in Tintoretto's *Last Supper*.

Yet at the same time, the obscure darkness enveloping her face drew me in as well. It was somehow familiar, despite its

austere severity. I had recently seen a similar darkness, even bordered by light, but where?

Then it came to me that a few days before, while running beneath a seaside cliff near Fort Funston, I had witnessed a magnificent sunrise. The face of the pre-dawn bluff was dark and ominous (like the student's visage), but as the sun rose, a stirring brightness began to radiate just above the dim summit (highly suggestive of the light 'emanating' from the head of the pupil).

I recalled that the sun's rays slowly spilled down the mountain's face, onto the dunes, then out across the waves. The sky became a brilliant, deep blue. A gradual and intensifying warmth spread over the beach, coursing through me as well. Morning had broken—the daylight had eclipsed the darkness.

As I continued to look at my 'haloed' student, I suddenly understood why the lamplight shimmering around her had so riveted me. I kept gazing at her 'aura' because subconsciously I was waiting for her shadowy, indistinguishable features to gradually brighten and take shape in the light, much like the seaside cliff, illuminated when touched by the dawn. Deep within the imagination of my soul, I expected her ring of radiance to wholly fulminate and extend its rays everywhere.

Later that night, while driving home, the image of the haloed student kept

coming back to me. I sensed that the inner (or spiritual) meaning of what I had seen was near, coming to fruition, like the warmth building in my heart. And then I realized that halos, while representing individual sanctity, ultimately point to the glory of the Eighth Day, the *Unending Day of Light* when all things will at last be completely illuminated and reborn, entirely transfigured in God.

Halos anticipate the hour when everything existing will become open and irradiant, rebaptized, supercharged, permeated and suffused with the glory of eternity. All illumined beings will rise, converge in a kind of 'high noon' in Christ, the Bright Lord of Creation. Together, God and humanity shall fire a New Age, a hallowed, resplendent dimension of integral consciousness and transcendent being. As St. Augustine expressed in *City of God*, 'There, in the kingdom, we shall find peace. We shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise.'

Our souls, whether we know it or not, long for that Day—we are hardwired for transfiguration. Deep within, our hearts sense that everything in this world is incomplete because there is no lasting joy save in God, in whom abundant life awaits. Our subliminal understanding of this concept explains why 'dark into light' images (such as sunrises, candles making bright the night, and irradiant halos), both fascinate and intensely move us; they stir the deepest core of our being. We are reminded of the Eden to come, and we quicken to that imminent glory.

A powerful foretaste of this divine moment, when 'all shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye' (I Cor. 15.51), may be experienced at the start of the Eastern Orthodox resurrection service.

Shortly before midnight, all the lights in the church, including candles, are extinguished, save for the vigil lamp on the altar. Everyone is in the darkness of the tomb. And yet it is not a darkness to be feared, only endured for a little while longer.

Christ has already gone down into the pit of hell and destroyed the Enemy. He stands at the Gates. God has detonated the void of death by filling it with light and life. The stone is about to roll away.

Instead of fear, there is awe, and joyful expectation. The faithful trust in 'the Spirit moving over the face of the waters' (Gen. 1.2), waters ready to part, that the sons and daughters of God might pass through the restless chasm of this age and enter the 'Promised Land'.

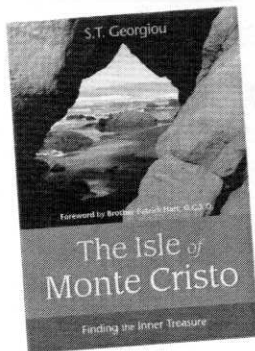
There is a flicker behind the altar. The priest has lit the Paschal candle, its wick ignited by the vigil light. The doors of the iconostasis are opened.

The pastor steps forward with the light of the resurrection raised high, chanting, '*Come, receive the light from the everlasting light, and glorify Christ who is risen from the dead!*'

Altar servers light their candles from the Paschal flame, then quickly move through the church to spread the holy fire, lighting the candles held by the congregation. As the radiance of the resurrection is disseminated, the church takes on the colour of a sunrise, of a halo extending its glory into the New World.

'*Christos Anesti!*' (Christ Is Risen!) cries the celebrant, his bright Paschal flame thrust to heaven.

'*Alithos Anesti!*' (Truly He Has Risen!) answers the congregation, their raised and radiant candles darting to and fro like a dancing sea of fire.



This article is taken from *The Isle of Monte Cristo*, the new book by Steve Georgiou, which we hope to review in the next issue of the *Journal*.

S.T. Georgiou

It is a New Genesis. Night has given way to Light. The Eighth Day dawns.

'Then I saw a new heaven, and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal... There night shall be no more. And the servants of God will

need no light of lamp or sun, for the Most High will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever' (Revelation 21, 22).

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