



CHRISTMAS MORNING 2018

Abalinx 25 December 2018
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As Christmas morning arrives the sun rises slowly in the West striking fear into the heart of darkness as it retreats back into the abyss like beast whence it came. The light shines on the glitter of raindrops on the ground amongst the golden leaves of Lakonian soil.

A soil which holds in its embrace the souls of thousands of ancient warriors that have perished in their attempts to keep it free. Some say that the birth of Greek civilization had its origins in the ten year war against Troy. A battle to bring back the beautiful Helen to her husband Menelaus, Master of the war cry. Both husband and wife were raised and lived in Pellana, the ancient capital of Lakonia long before the arrival of the Dorians who transformed into the Spartans. The cottage and the Hellenic ANZAC GARDENS lie on top of the graves of an ancient warrior race long gone. There are no visible traces of them as their remains were distributed amongst the elements. Those warrior bones not changed by the elements were exposed by the plough and their bones gathered and deposited in the village cemetery ossuary.

The ancient slabs that once covered their graves were collected and created into a large wheat threshing floor. A post was cantered and a horse tied to it trotting endlessly around it grinding wheat and corn alike. Today there is very little to identify that the knoll was an ancient cemetery, except for a few slabs that were recovered, cleaned, photographed and place around the family commemorative tree. Outside the cottage the pitter patter of raindrops continue their downward journey, striking the odd leaf and forcing it to the ground. These leaves had clung to their parent as long as they could until nature told them it's time to let go and start their own journey in another form.

One can hear the chirping of birds and easily fooled thinking they are in the trees. In fact it is the two canaries, Vasili and Kaliope chirping merrily in their cage within the warmth of the cottage. Soon the chooks will be let out to seek out and close with succulent worms stupid enough to put their heads above their defence pits. When will the silly worms learn not to make any sudden movement or shine in the sunshine that it will give them away. These chooks, like their ancestors, the dinosaur raptors, have keen eyes and hunt in packs when food is scarce.

Meanwhile my toaster is on the blink and I am not going to tinker with it like my mate Peter Hatherley did. I must admit he did fix it whilst he was here, but now it's time it's removed and placed amongst the trash. Christmas breakfast consisted of two eggs, spam, cheese followed by a myriad of prescription pills to keep the body going. As pre breakfast snack I had two "kourebrethies" (sweet bread) a Christmas gift from my mate Dimitris Bogris from the village of Vergadeika.

Dimitri dropped in last night and like Father Christmas left a big of goodies on the driveway gate which was locked due to the early embrace of darkness. Today, I shall pay my respects to those with the name Chris (cousins) for their name day and a quick Christmas cuppa with my mate Kostas Sgourdas who lives high up above the village near the church Prophet Ilias. Life in the village is simple, quiet and uncomplicated. People go about their business and try to make ends meet.

The village is a far cry from the Nineteen Fifties where it was bustling with people and the village had many taverns all competing with each other. Today there are about four taverns left of which they enjoy the same patrons year in or year out. Only during the summer months and holiday season are they able to make sufficient income to see them through the winter. A winter which is the time to harvest the olives, burn the excess foliage, cut and store wood and prepare for the ravages of winter.

My lovely wife is in Quebec City, Canada, the boys, siblings and families in Melbourne and here I am surrounded in the cottage of photos of all of them. In a sense I am not alone. Mum will be at home expecting a call and like all mothers worry about their kids. Parents worry about their kids until they close their eyes forever and are greeted by others waiting for them on the other side. Such is the way of life. Without death, there is no meaning for life. Death comes to us all.

I envisage a great new year where many of the ills of life as we know it will change for the better. Friends struggling will find a new meaning and defeat what troubles them. Those struggling to make ends meet will overcome their challenges and come good again. Last of all, for my pagan mates that have lost their faith, don't despair for there is a God. For those non-Christians remember that we all believe in the same God whose name is in different languages. Stay strong, be of good cheer and never give up. Merry Christmas and a happy season of festivities whatever that may mean to you.