

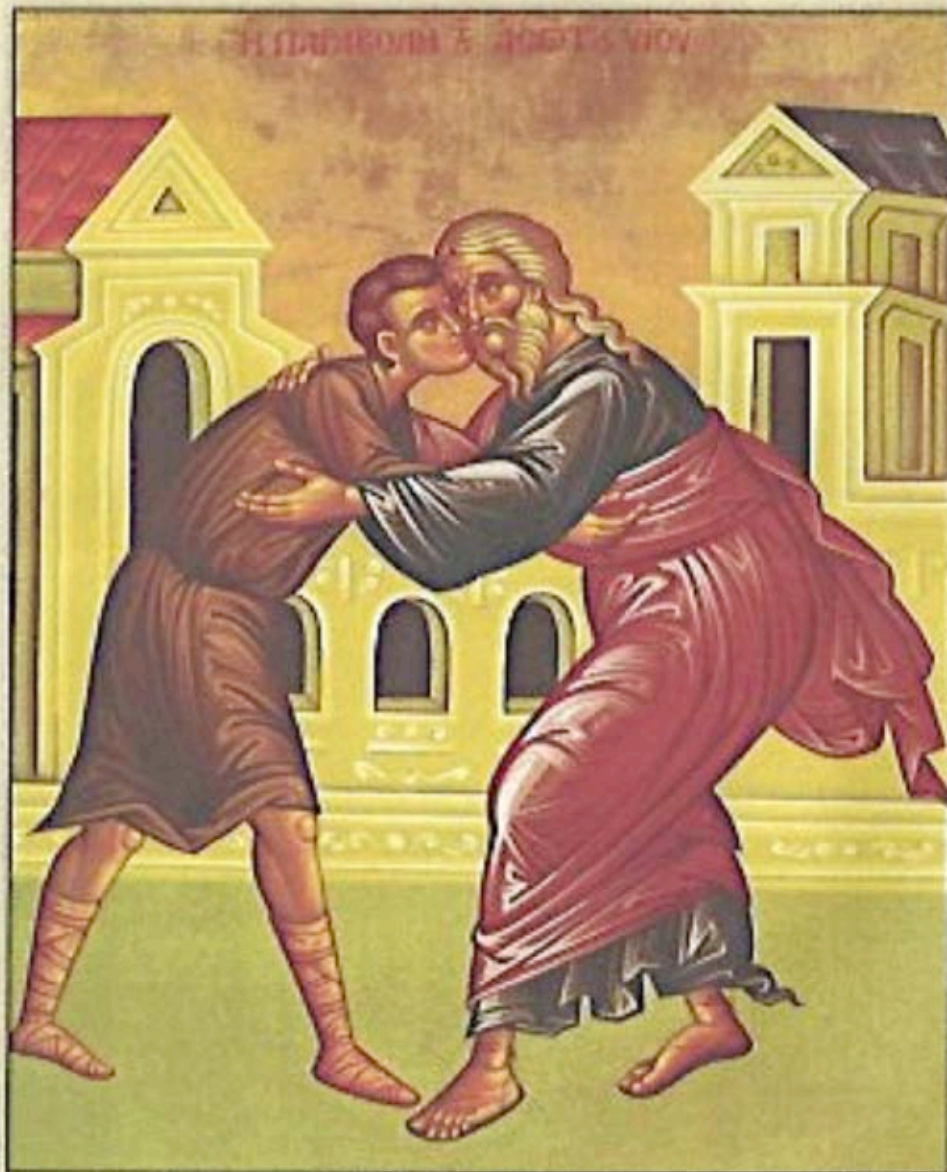


DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN
DISTRICT

JUBILEE 85TH ANNIVERSARY
THREE HIERARCHS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN January 24th, 2016
V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON



Icon of the Prodigal Son

St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy 1:15-17

Prokeimenon. Mode Plagal 2.

Psalm 27.9,1

O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

Verse: To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.

Timothy, my son, the saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. To the King of Ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory to the ages of ages. Amen.

Πρὸς Τιμόθεον α' 1:15-17

Προκείμενον. Ἦχος πλ β'.

ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 27.9,1

Σῶσον, Κύριε τὸν λαὸν σου καὶ εὐλόγησον τὴν κληρονομίαν σου.

Στίχ. Πρὸς σέ, Κύριε, κεκράζομαι ὁ Θεός μου.

Τέκνον Τιμόθεε, πιστὸς ὁ λόγος καὶ πάσης ἀποδοχῆς ἄξιος, ὅτι Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι, ὧν πρῶτός εἰμι ἐγώ· ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἠλεήθην, ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ πρῶτῳ ἐνδείξῃται Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τὴν πᾶσαν μακροθυμίαν, πρὸς ὑποτύπωσιν τῶν μελλόντων πιστεῦειν ἐπ' αὐτῷ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Τῷ δὲ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων, ἀφθάρτῳ, ἀοράτῳ, μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, τιμὴ καὶ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.

14th Sunday of Luke

The Gospel according to Luke 18:35-43

At that time, as Jesus drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

14th Sunday of Luke

Κατὰ Λουκᾶν 18:35-43

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεριχῶ τυφλὸς τις ἐκάθητο παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν προσαιτῶν· ἀκούσας δὲ ὄχλου διαπορευομένου ἐπυνθάνετο τί εἶη ταῦτα. ἀπήγγειλαν δὲ αὐτῷ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος παρέρχεται. καὶ ἐβόησε λέγων· Ἰησοῦ υἱὲ Δαυῖδ, ἐλέησόν με· καὶ οἱ προάγοντες ἐπετίμων αὐτῷ ἵνα σιωπήσῃ· αὐτὸς δὲ πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἔκραζεν· υἱὲ Δαυῖδ, ἐλέησόν με. σταθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὸν ἀχθῆναι πρὸς αὐτόν. ἐγγίσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτὸν λέγων· τί σοι θέλεις ποιήσω; ὁ δὲ εἶπε· Κύριε, ἵνα ἀναβλέψω. καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἀνάβλεψον· ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέ σε. καὶ παραχρῆμα ἀνέβλεψε, καὶ ἠκολούθει αὐτῷ δοξάζων τὸν Θεόν· καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἰδὼν ἔδωκεν αἶνον τῷ Θεῷ.

DEVOTIONS THIS WEEK: PLEASE REFER TO TRIDUUM SCHEDULE BELOW

AGAPE COFFEE FELLOWSHIP : I s being hosted today by Louis Vellios in memory of his wife + **SPYRIDOULA** and mother + **BARBARA VELLIOS. ETERNAL BE THEIR MEMORY!**

Join us for coffee and sweets in Whitehall. Open to All! The Greek School P.T.A. Will Serve.

50TH GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY: Our Pastor Father Eugene will open his golden anniversary jubilee of his ORDINATION to Holy Orders on THREE HIERARCHS DAY. January 30th, at the Divine Liturgy. 50 years ago -1966 Father was ordained at this very altar by the Primate of the Church in the Western Hemisphere, HIS EMINENCE + ARCHBISHOP IAKOVOS. Despite the BLIZZARD of ‘66 (a snowstorm that commenced on Saturday night) His Eminence and hundreds of faithful were at the ‘ordination ceremonies’. Classmates from Saint John’s University, and Holy Cross Seminary as well as IOTA SIGMA FRATERNITY alumni joined the festivities. Priests from all over Brooklyn came to join the local event. His Eminence, Metropolitan Polyzoidis of blessed memory and renowned respect also made it through the ‘blizzard’ accompanied by Metropolitan Titus of Rethymnon (CRETE) who was from the beginning a ‘MENTOR’ TO FR. EUGENE. the ladies of the Philoptochos hosted a reception for hundreds in attendance for the first native son of the parish to be ordained. That same day was the inauguration of the HOLY ORDER where Archbishop Iakovos inscribed his name as member #1. Father Eugene’s initial steps into the priesthood inspired others who had served with him as an altar boy at Three Hierarchs, namely Fr. Bill Bassakyros, Fr. Dean Martin, and Fr. Nick Krommydas.

TODAY: Children from our Greek School will present a short program celebrating ‘GREEK LETTERS’, the heritage of our language, culture and history. Congratulations to Mrs. Zoe Anastasakos and Mrs Maria Halkias for their efforts.

UP COMING SPECIAL EVENTS:

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Monday | February 01st, | AGIASMOS (Holy water blessing) | 11:00 A.M. |
| Tuesday, | February 02nd, | YPAPANTI (Presentation Liturgy) | 9:30 A.M. |
| Thursday, | February 04th, | Emmanus Lecture (Holy Cross Church) | 7:00 P.M. |
| | | Guest Preacher F. John Amarantidis | |

CALENDARS 2016: The ecclesiastical and inspirational calendar of our THREE HIERARCHS PARISH is available to all upon request in the CHURCH OFFICE. Registered stewards of the parish are receiving their calendar in the mail with other greetings. The calendar is offered FREE upon request as a courtesy of the church. WHY NOT REGISTER NOW WITH YOUR PARISH TO ENJOY ALL THE PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP?

PHILOPTOCHOS LADIES ANNUAL MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY :luncheon was hosted at RUSSO’S on the BAY. A sumptuous luncheon, music, dancing, prizes galore celebrated the event. Congratulations ladies! It was a major SUCCESS. Special thanks to the Chairlady MRS EFFIE GALIATSATIS. A deserved BRAVA!

THREE HIERARCHS PATRONAL FEAST TRIDUUM:

| | | |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| Friday | January 29th Hierarchical Great Vesper | 7:00P.M. |
| | Presided by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios | |
| | Hellenic Heritage Award Presentation | |
| | Philoptochos Society Reception (OPEN TO ALL) | 9:00 P.M. |
| Saturday | January 30th Divine Panegyric Liturgy | 9:00 A.M. |
| | Artoklasies (Blessing of the Loaves) | 11:00 A.M. |
| | Daughters of Penelope Chapter Reception (OPEN TO ALL) | 12:00 P.M. |
| Sunday | January 31st Post Festal Divine Liturgy | 10:30 A.M. |
| | Sacred Procession of the Holy Icon of the Patrons | 12:00 P.M. |
| | Fellowship Reception in Whitehall OPEN TO ALL! | 12:30 P.M. |
| | On this occasion we welcome the members of the SAINT MARINA DEPLATANOS SOCIETY | |

HOLY WATER DISTRIBUTION: Is still available upon request of the clergy. This sacred water may be consumed, or used for blessing homes, businesses, cars and other objects. One should keep a bottle of HOLY WATER in their ‘home shrine’ and in their car ‘ glove compartment ‘ at all times.

CONGRATULATIONS to the **EAGLE SCOUTS** that were awarded their highest rank on Friday evening January 15th. AXIOI! We celebrate the advancement of STEVE CALAKOS, CHRISTOPHER PETERS, MICHAEL MINA, and ANDREW YENNA. “... indeed many boys will reach the height of a man, but only a handful soar to the height of an EAGLE.” CONGRATULATIONS TO SCOUTMASTER DEAN VEROUTIS.

RADIO MINISTRY: Each Saturday at 1:15PM Fr. Eugene hosts and produces the radio broadcast **MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE NOW IN ITS 16TH YEAR OF BROADCASTING LIVE ON WNYE 91.5 COSMOS FM, with listener** telephone participation. Subjects of interest regarding Greek Orthodox theology, faith and practice, as well as secular topics confronting the nation and the world are discussed. Tune in and join the dialogue by calling 718-204-8900. Check our live audio at LIVESTREAMINGPLAYER. The website address. W.W.W.gaepis.org (Click live audio)

TODAY: + **GEORGE ANASTASIADES** + **BARBARA VELLIOS** + **SPYRIDOULA VELLIOS**
MEMORIALS NEXT WEEK: DECEASED MEMBERS OF + DIPLATANOS SOCIETY OF SAINT MARINA



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew receives Honorary Doctorate by the Sophia University Institute

His Holiness Pope Francis sent a message on Monday, October 27, 2015 on the occasion of the conferral of an honorary doctorate to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. The Honorary Doctorate in the Culture of Unity was granted to the Ecumenical Patriarch by the Sophia University Institute "for

his service to the unity of the human family."

In his message, the Pope said, "I am pleased with this award which, besides being a rightful recognition of his commitment to the promotion of the culture of unity, contributes favourably to the common journey of our churches towards full and visible unity, to which

we tend with dedication and perseverance."

It is the first doctorate in the Culture of Unity awarded honoris causa by the Institute. The Sophia University Institute (IUS) is an academic center for education and research in which life and intellectual inquiry, different cultures and diverse disciplines, meet up in a context

permeated by a strong relational dimension. Sophia Institute is an expression of the Focolare Movement (Work of Mary), developed through the inspiration of its founder, Chiara Lubich, and an international advisory group of scholars from different disciplines.

Below, please find the full text of Pope Francis' message:



SOPHIA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

Honorary Doctorate in the Culture of Unity to Bartholomew I Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch

His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Betori
 Archbishop of Florence
 Grand Chancellor of the Sophia University Institute
 Via San Vito, 28, Loppiano
 50064 Figline Valdarno

On the occasion of the Conferral of the Honorary Doctorate in the Culture of Unity to His Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, by the Sophia University Institute, I wish to assure you of my spiritual closeness and send my warmest greetings to all those present.

I send special greetings to my beloved brother Bartholomew, with whom I renew sentiments of profound and heartfelt appreciation. I am pleased with this award which, besides being a rightful recognition of his commitment to the promotion of the culture of unity, contributes favourably to the common journey of our churches towards full and visible unity, to which we tend with dedication and perseverance.

I wish that the Sophia University institute, following the charism of the Focolare Movement and remaining open to the action of the Spirit, may continue to be a place of encounter and dialogue between different cultures and religions.

With the assurance of my prayers and, asking you to pray for me, I impart my blessing to all those present.

Pope Francis



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew visits Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury



At the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew paid a formal visit to Lambeth Palace from November 2-4, 2015. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is based in Istanbul, Turkey, is Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome, and occupies the First Throne of the Orthodox Christian Church worldwide. The occasion was in response to Archbishop Justin's visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate last year.

The two leaders presided over ecumenical services filled with symbolic significance, participated in formal functions organized by the Nikæan Club and the Greek Community, and shared private conversations. A service was held at Lambeth Chapel, where the Archbishop of Canterbury welcomed His All-Holiness and congratulated him on the twenty-fourth anniversary of his enthronement.

The two leaders prayed for those affected by conflict, persecution, climate change and



“Fellowship in Christ between our churches is so vital in our world”

Archbishop Justin Welby

the refugee crisis. In light of this, they agreed to undertake the joint organization of an international conference in Istanbul next year on overcoming modern slavery and human trafficking.

A choral evensong took place in Westminster Abbey, where the two leaders visited the Shrine of St. Edward the Confessor and blessed the congregation. During the service, the co-

chairmen of the International Commission for the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue presented the Archbishop and the Ecumenical Patriarch with a copy of the latest Agreed Statement, entitled *In The Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*. The text celebrates what Anglicans and Orthodox affirm together about the human person, created in ‘the Image and Likeness

of God’ and will form the theological foundation for forthcoming discussions on the practical consequences of these theological presuppositions for addressing the key themes, including the protection of the environment, medical interventions, and questions around family life and ethics.

The programme also included two formal addresses by the Ecumenical Patriarch on the ethical concerns imposed by the ecological plight of the planet and on the current state of relations between the Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion.

The visit concluded with the recognition that the Common Statement of the two leaders at their first meeting at the Phanar in January 2014 continued to provide the necessary basis and vision for witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ today and with an invitation extended by His All-Holiness for a joint pilgrimage with the Archbishop of Canterbury to Nicaea and Cappadocia in 2016. ■



ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ

ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΝ ΚΗΡΥΓΜΑ



«Ἐγενόμην ἐν Πνεύματι ἐν τῇ Κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ὀπίσω μου μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος» (Ἀπ. 1,10)

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|--|---|---|
| Περίοδος Δ' - Ἔτος ΛΓ' Φλώρινα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 1925 | Κυριακὴ ΛΑ' [ΙΔ' Λουκ.] (Α' Τιμ. 1,15-17) 24 Ἰανουαρίου 2016 | Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος Ν. Καντιώτης |
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Ἡ μακροθυμία τοῦ Θεοῦ

«Διὰ τοῦτο ἠλεήθην, ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ ἐνδείξῃται
τῆσους Χριστὸς τὴν πᾶσαν μακροθυμίαν» (Α' Τιμ. 1,16)

Δὲν θὰ ἔπρεπε, ἀγαπητοί μου, στὸν τόπο μας νὰ ὑπάρχη οὔτε ἓνας ἄπιστος καὶ ἄθεος. Γιατί τὰ χώματά μας εἶνε ἀγιασμένα· καὶ οἱ πέτρες ἀκόμα θὰ φωνάζουν, ὅτι ἡ θρησκεία μας εἶνε ζωντανή, κάνει θαύματα. Δυστυχῶς ὁμως τὰ τελευταῖα χρόνια **ὑπάρχουν ἄπιστοι καὶ ἄθεοι**. Γι' αὐτούς ὁ Δαυὶδ λέει: «*Εἶπεν ἄφρων ἐν καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ· Οὐκ ἔστι Θεός*» (Ψαλμ. 131, 22). Δηλαδή· μόνο ἄνθρωπος πού οἱ διανοητικές του δυνάμεις ἔχουν διασαλευθῆ, μόνο αὐτὸς μπορεῖ νὰ πῆ ὅτι δὲν ὑπάρχει Θεός.

Συναντᾶτε ἓναν ἄπιστο καὶ ἄθεο; Κάντε του μία ἐρώτησι, καὶ φτάνει· Ἀσφαλῶς, φίλε μου, θὰ κάθεσαι σὲ κάποιο σπίτι. Ἐὰν λοιπὸν μοῦ πῆς ὅτι τὸ σπίτι αὐτὸ φύτρωσε ἔτσι μόνο του, χωρὶς μηχανικὸ καὶ χτίστη, τότε κ' ἐγὼ θὰ δεχθῶ ὅτι τὸ μεγάλο σπίτι πού λέγεται σύμπαν ἔγινε μόνο του. «*Πᾶς οἶκος κατασκευάζεται ὑπὸ τινος, ὁ δὲ τὰ πάντα κατασκευάσας Θεός*» (Ἔβρ. 14). Ἡ λογικὴ ἐπιβάλλει νὰ παραδεχθοῦμε, ὅτι **ὑπάρχει Θεὸς δημιουργὸς τοῦ παντός**.

Ἐπὶ ὑπάρχουν λοιπὸν ἄπιστοι καὶ ἄθεοι· ὑπάρχουν ὁμως καὶ ἄλλοι, πού λένε ὅτι πιστεύουν, ἔρχονται ὁμως στιγμὲς πού **ἡ πίστι τους κλονίζεται**. Γιατί; Διότι εἶνε ἀνυπόμονοι. Θέλουν, μέσα στὸ μικρὸ διάστημα τῆς ζωῆς αὐτῆς, νὰ δοῦν νὰ λειτουργῇ ἡ θεία δικαιοσύνη, τὸ κακὸ νὰ τιμωρῆται ἀμέσως. Κι ὅταν βλέπουν, κακοὶ καὶ ἐγκληματίες νὰ εἶνε καλὰ καὶ νὰ προοδεύουν, ὅταν βλέπουν τὸ κακὸ νὰ θριαμβεύη, χάνουν τὴν πίστι τους καὶ λένε· Ποῦ εἶνε ὁ Θεός; δὲν τὰ βλέπει αὐτά; ὑπάρχει Θεός;...

Μικρὲ ἄνθρωπε, σκουλήκι τῆς γῆς, πού θέλεις μὲ τὸ μυαλουδάκι σου νὰ λύσης ὅλα τὰ προβλήματα! Ἐὰν τὸ μυρμηγκὶ δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ξέρη τί κάνει ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ νὰ τὸν σχολιάσῃ, πολὺ περισσότερο δὲν μπορεῖ ὁ ἄνθρωπος νὰ κρίνῃ τίς βουλὲς τοῦ Θεοῦ. «*Τὰ κρίματα (τοῦ Κυρίου) ὡσεὶ ἄβυσσος πολλή*» (Ψαλμ. 36).

Στὴν ἀπορία, **γιατί ὁ Θεὸς δὲν τιμωρεῖ τὸ κακὸ ἀμέσως**; ἀπαντᾶ σήμερα ὁ ἀπόστολος πού ἀκούσαμε. Δὲν τιμωρεῖ, λέει, κεραυνοβόλως τὸ κακὸ ὁ Θεός – γιατί; Διότι **περιμένει τὴ μετάνοια** ὄλων καὶ μακροθυμεῖ.

Περὶ μακροθυμίας λοιπὸν εἶνε ὁ λόγος. Καὶ ὡς **παράδειγμα μακροθυμίας** τοῦ Θεοῦ ποιὸ ἀναφέρει ὁ ἀπόστολος **Παῦλος**; Πολλὰ μποροῦσε ν' ἀναφέρῃ· τὸν τελῶνη, τὸ ληστή, τὴν πόρνη, τὸ Δαυὶδ, τὸ Μανασσῆ... Ἀφήνει τοὺς ἄλλους καὶ **ἀναφέρει τὸν ἑαυτό του**· λέει, ὅτι εἶνε ὁ πιὸ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἀπ' ὄλους κι ὅτι σ' αὐτὸν ἔδειξε ὁ Θεὸς τὸ ἁπειρὸ του ἔλεος.

Περίεργα πράγματα! ὁ κορυφαῖος ἀπόστολος Παῦλος ὀνομάζει τὸν ἑαυτό του ἁμαρτωλό; Καὶ **τί ἁμαρτία ἔπραξε** λοιπὸν; Τὸ λέει ὁ ἴδιος. Πρὶν νὰ πιστέψῃ στὸ Χριστό, ἦταν βλάστημος, ὑβριστής, διώκτης· ἀπὸ ἀγνοία βέβαια. Μισοῦσε τὸ Χριστό, κατεδίωκε τοὺς Χριστιανούς, ἔμπαινε στὰ σπίτια, τοὺς ἄρπαζε καὶ τοὺς ὠδηγοῦσε στὶς φυλακές. Ἰστοροῦν μάλιστα οἱ Πράξεις τῶν ἀποστόλων τὸ ἐξῆς ἐπεισόδιο.

Οἱ Ἑβραῖοι ἔπιασαν τὸν **διάκονο Στέφανο**, τὸν δίκασαν καὶ τὸν κατεδίκασαν εἰς θάνατον. Βγήκαν ἐξω ἀπὸ τὰ Ἱεροσόλυμα, πήραν ὄλοι πέτρες καὶ τὸν λιθοβολοῦσαν· καὶ γιὰ νὰ εὐκολύνωνται στὶς κινήσεις ἐβγάλαν τὰ ρούχα τους ὅπως οἱ ἀθληταί. Τότε λοιπὸν ποιὸς φύλαγε τὰ ρούχα τους; Ἐνας νέος, πού φώναζε κι αὐτὸς **Χτυπάτε τον!**... Ποιὸς ἦταν ὁ νέος αὐτός; Ὁ Παῦλος, πού τότε λεγόταν **Σαῦλος** (βλ. Πράξ. 7,58).

Ἦ μακροθυμία τοῦ Θεοῦ! Σύμφωνα μὲ τὴ θεωρία τῶν ἀνυπομόνων, ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ὥρα ἐκείνη θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ στείλῃ ἓνα κεραυνὸ νὰ τὸν κάψῃ. Δὲν τὸ ἔκανε. Γιατί; Περιέμενε τὴ μετάνοιά του. Καὶ ὄντως ἦρθε ἡ ὥρα πού ὁ διώκτης, **ὁ βλάστημος καὶ ὁ ὑβριστής μετανόησε**, καὶ ἔγινε τὸ μεγάλο θαῦμα· ὁ λύκος αὐ-

τὸς ἐγένετο ἀρνί· καὶ ὄχι μόνο ἀρνί τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο, ἀλλὰ καὶ τσοπάνης, ποιμένας καὶ διδάσκαλος καὶ κορυφαῖος ἀπόστολος.

Αὐτὸ λοιπὸν τὸ παρελθὸν τῆς ζωῆς του ἔχει στὸ νοῦ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος ὅταν λέη, «*Διὰ τοῦτο ἠλειήθη, ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ ἐνδείξηται Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τὴν πᾶσαν μακροθυμίαν*» (1^η Τιμ. 1,18). Σ' ἐμένα τὸν ἁμαρτωλό, πού ἔπρεπε ν' ἀνοίξη ἡ γῆ νὰ μὲ καταπιῇ, ὁ Θεὸς ἔδειξε τὸ μεγάλο του ἔλεος, γιὰ νὰ γίνω **παράδειγμα** σὲ ὄλους ὅσοι θὰ πιστεύουν.

* * *

Ὁ Θεός, ἀδελφοί μου, ἔδειξε μακροθυμίαν στὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο. Ἀλλὰ καὶ σ' ἐμᾶς σήμερα δείχνει **τὴ μακροθυμία του**. Καὶ στὸ σημεῖο αὐτὸ παρακαλῶ νὰ μὲ προσέξετε.

Ποιὸς μπορεῖ νὰ ἀρνηθῆ ὅτι **ἁμαρτάνουμε**; Ὁκεανὸς τὰ ἁμαρτήματά μας! Μόνο ὅποιος δὲν διάβασε τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο καὶ δὲν πέρασε τὴ ζωὴ του ἀπὸ τὸ κόσκινο αὐτὸ καὶ δὲν ἐξέτασε βαθειὰ τὸν ἑαυτό του, αὐτὸς νομίζει ὅτι δὲν εἶνε ἁμαρτωλός. Ὅταν βλέπης ἕναν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο νὰ πέφτη μπροστὰ στὸν Ἐσταυρωμένο καὶ νὰ λέη «*Εἶμαι ὁ πιὸ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἀπ' ὄλους*» (βλ. 1^η Τιμ. 1,15), τί νὰ ποῦμε ἐμεῖς τὰ σκουληκία;

Ἄμαρτάνουμε. Μήπως ὁ Θεὸς **ἀγνοεῖ** τὰ ἁμαρτήματά μας; Τὰ γνωρίζει ὄλα. Μήπως **ἀδιαφορεῖ**; Ὅχι βέβαια! «*βδέλυγμα*» εἶνε μπροστὰ του κάθε ἁμαρτία (βλ. Παροιμ. 15,9. Σ. Ἰσακ. 15,13. ἤκ. 1,13-14). Μήπως **ἀδυνατεῖ** νὰ τιμωρήσῃ; – γιὰτὶ ὑπάρχει κι αὐτὴ ἡ θεωρία. **Λάθος κάνετε**, ἀγαπητοί μου. Οὔτε ἀγνοεῖ, οὔτε ἀδιαφορεῖ, οὔτε ἀδυνατεῖ. Ἔχει τὴ δύναμι νὰ τιμωρήσῃ αὐτοστιγμῆ.

Μπορεῖ νὰ πατάξῃ ἀσέβειες, ἀθεοφοβίες, βλασφημίες, ψεῦδη, συκοφαντίες, διαβολές, πορνείες, μοιχεῖες, ψευδορκίες· ἢ ἐντολὴ του μένει «*Οὐ λήψει τὸ ὄνομα Κυρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ σου ἐπὶ ματαίῳ*» (Ἔξ. 20,7. Ἰερ. 5,11). Μπορεῖ νὰ κἀνη σεισμὸ διαρκείας καὶ νὰ μὴ μείνῃ τίποτα ὄρθιο. Μπορεῖ. Ἡ πιστεύεις, ἢ δὲν πιστεύεις. Ἄν δὲν πιστεύῃς, τότε μὴν πατᾶς καὶ στὴν ἐκκλησία· τὸ «*εἰσιπήριο*» εἰσόδου εἶνε ἡ πίστις· «*Υπὲρ τοῦ ἁγίου οἴκου τούτου καὶ τῶν μετὰ πίστεως, εὐλαβείας καὶ φόβου Θεοῦ εἰσιόντων ἐν αὐτῷ τοῦ Κυρίου δεηθῶμεν*» (βλ. Ἰερ.). Ἄν ἔχῃς πίστι, ἔλα. Καὶ ἂν πιστεύῃς ὅτι ὑπάρχει Θεός, τότε τὸ δαχτυλάκι του μόνο νὰ κουνήσῃ ὁ Χριστός, κάρβουνο γίναμε ὄλοι. **Δὲν τὸ καταλόβαμε**;

Καὶ ὅμως ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν μᾶς καίει, δὲν κάνει σεισμὸ, δὲν ἀνοίγει τὴ γῆ νὰ μᾶς καταπιῇ. Γιατί; Διότι **μᾶς περιμένει νὰ μετανοήσουμε**.

* * *

Ἀγαπητοί μου ἀδελφοί. Ὁ Κύριος στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο λέει, τί θὰ προηγηθῆ τῆς συντελείας τοῦ

κόσμου. Καὶ τὰ σημάδια τώρα δείχνουν ὅτι ἡ **συντέλεια πλησιάζει**. Ἡ εἰρήνη κρέμεται ἀπὸ μιὰ κλωστή. Τυφλός, χειρότερος ἀπὸ τὸν τυφλὸ τοῦ σημερινοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅποιος δὲν βλέπει «*τὰ σημεῖα τῶν καιρῶν*» (Ματθ. 16,3). Ποιά εἶνε «*τὰ σημεῖα τῶν καιρῶν*»; δὲν ἔχω καιρὸ νὰ τ' ἀναπτύξω· ἕνα, δύο, τρία, τέσσερα, πέντε.

Οἱ ἄνθρωποι θὰ ζοῦν ὅπως τὸν καιρὸ τοῦ **Νῶε**· οἱ τελευταῖες ἡμέρες τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος θὰ εἶνε «*ὡσπερ αἱ ἡμέραι τοῦ Νῶε*» (Ματθ. 24,37). Διαβάστε τί γινόταν τότε· παρὰ τίς εἰδοποιήσεις αὐτοὶ γλεντοῦσαν, κάγχαζαν, παντρεύονταν, ὠργίαζαν, βλαστημοῦσαν τὸ Θεό. Μέσ' στὰ συμπόσια, τὰ ἐμπόρια καὶ τὴ σαρκολατρία τους, ὁ Νῶε χτύπησε καμπάνα μεγάλη. Θὰ καταστρέψῃ ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμος! τοὺς εἶπε. Γελοῦσαν. Τοὺς περίμενε ὁ Θεός – ὡ μακροθυμία! – πόσο; 120 χρόνια, ὅσο κατασκευαζόταν ἡ κιβωτός. Καμμία σημασία δὲν ἔδιναν. Ἔως ὅτου ἀνοιξαν οἱ καταρράκτες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, τὰ νερά κάλυψαν καὶ τίς πιὸ ψηλὲς κορυφές, καὶ ἔτσι θάφτηκαν οἱ πάντες μέσα στὸν ὑγρὸ τάφο.

Κάτι τέτοιο θὰ συμβῆ καὶ τώρα. Ἀλλ' αὐτὴ τὴ φορὰ δὲν θὰ πέσῃ βροχούλα· θὰ γίνῃ **κατακλυσμὸς πυρός**. Θὰ πέσουν «*φιάλες*», λέει ἡ Ἀποκάλυψις (βλ. 9,12-15,7-16,1), πυρηνικὴ ἐνέργεια. Ἔρχεται ἡ ὥρα, «*ἔρχεται ἡ ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας*» (βλ. 5,6 καὶ 3,6).

Μᾶς κρατᾶει ἡ μακροθυμία τοῦ Θεοῦ. Κρεμόμαστε ἀπὸ μιὰ κλωστή, ἀπὸ τὴ **φιλοanthρωπία** του. Ὅπως λένε οἱ πατέρες, ἡ μακροθυμία τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶνε ἕνα ποτήρι. Κ' ἐμεῖς τί κάνουμε· κάθε μέρα ρίχνουμε μέσα στὸ ποτήρι ἁμαρτίες· ἕνα ψέμα, μιὰ συκοφαντία, μιὰ ψευδορκία, μιὰ πορνεία, ἕνα ἄτιμο διαζύγιο, μιὰ ἀδικία... Ἔτσι γεμίζει τὸ ποτήρι. Ἄμα ξεχειλίσῃ, θὰ τελειώσῃ ἡ μακροθυμία τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ τότε – ἀλλοίμονο – φεύγουμε ἀπὸ τὴ μακροθυμία καὶ θὰ πέσουμε – ποῦ; στὴ **δικαιοσύνη** του. Διότι εἶνε «*δίκαιος ὁ Κύριος καὶ δικαιοσύνας ἠγάπησε*» (βλ. 10,8) καὶ «*δικαιοσύνην μάθετε...*» καὶ «*Πρόσθετε αὐτοῖς κακά..., τοῖς ἐνδόξοις τῆς γῆς*» (βλ. 26,3,15). Κι ὅταν πέσουμε στὴ δικαιοσύνη τοῦ Θεοῦ, τότε θὰ γίνῃ αὐτὸ ποῦ λένε οἱ προφητείες· θὰ πᾶμε στὰ μνήματα τῶν γονέων μας καὶ θὰ φωνάξουμε· «*Βγῆτε, σεῖς οἱ πεθαμένοι, νὰ μποῦμε ἐμεῖς οἱ ζωντανοί*». Θὰ πᾶμε στὰ σπήλαια καὶ στὰ βράχια καὶ θὰ ποῦμε· Ἀνοίξετε, βουνά, καὶ κρύψτε μας (βλ. Ἰερ. 5,15-18) ἀπὸ «*τὴν ὀργὴν τὴν ἐρχομένην*» (βλ. 28,1,10), τὴ **μεγάλῃ ὀργῇ** τοῦ Θεοῦ. Εἶθε ὁ Κύριος διὰ πρεσβειῶν τῆς Παναγίας Θεοτόκου καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων νὰ ἐλεήσῃ καὶ σώσῃ ἡμᾶς· ἀμήν.

(†) **ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστῖνος**

The Lord gives us once again an opportunity to express our solidarity by becoming a supporting and registered member of the parish. We can only urge you to do so because your sustaining membership keeps this parish functioning and responding to the needs of all the faithful. Don't wait until some insignificant date on the calendar. Register with the Church Office **TODAY** and garner all the benefits of being a supporter of Christ's mission on earth.

FAMILY REGISTRATION FOR HUSBAND & WIFE: \$275 PER YEAR

SINGLE MEMBERSHIP: \$225 PER YEAR

SENIOR CITIZEN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP \$150 PER YEAR

SENIOR CITIZEN HUSBAND & WIFE MEMBERSHIP: \$200 PER YEAR

WE DO NEED YOUR HELP!

Registering with your local parish is not so much a duty or obligation as it is a **PRIVILEGE**. By registering and offering your annual stewardship, you become an integral member of the living body of Christ as a faith community. By virtue of your Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation), and Holy Eucharist (Communion), you claim to be a follower of Christ, a witness for Christ, and a practitioner for Christ. May we ask you then to live up to these promises by making your 2016 commitment **TODAY!** The benefits you shall receive beyond grace include the satisfaction and knowledge that this Church and community thrives thanks to your outreach.

YOU ARE PART OF THE GREAT FRESCO OF FAITH

Imitating the Prodigal

Do not lose heart, O soul, do not grieve; pronounce not over yourself a final judgment for the multitude of your sins; do not commit yourself to fire; do not say: The Lord has cast me from his face. Such words are not pleasing to God. Can it be that he who has fallen cannot get up? Can it be that he who has turned away cannot turn back again? Do you not hear how kind the Father is to a prodigal?

Do not be ashamed to turn back and say boldly: I will arise and go to my Father. Arise and go! He will accept you and will not reproach you, but rather rejoice at your return. He awaits you; just do not be ashamed and do not hide from the face of God as did Adam.

It was for your sake that Christ was crucified; so will he cast you aside? He knows

who oppresses us. He knows that we have no other help but him alone. Christ knows that man is miserable. Do not give yourself up to despair and apathy, assuming that you have been prepared for the fire. Christ derives no consolation from thrusting us into the fire; He gains nothing if He sends us into the abyss to be tormented.

Imitate the prodigal son: leave the city that starves you. Come and beseech him and you shall behold the glory of God. Your face shall be enlightened and you will rejoice in the sweetness of paradise. Glory to the Lord and Lover of mankind who saves us!

St. Ephrem the Syrian

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