

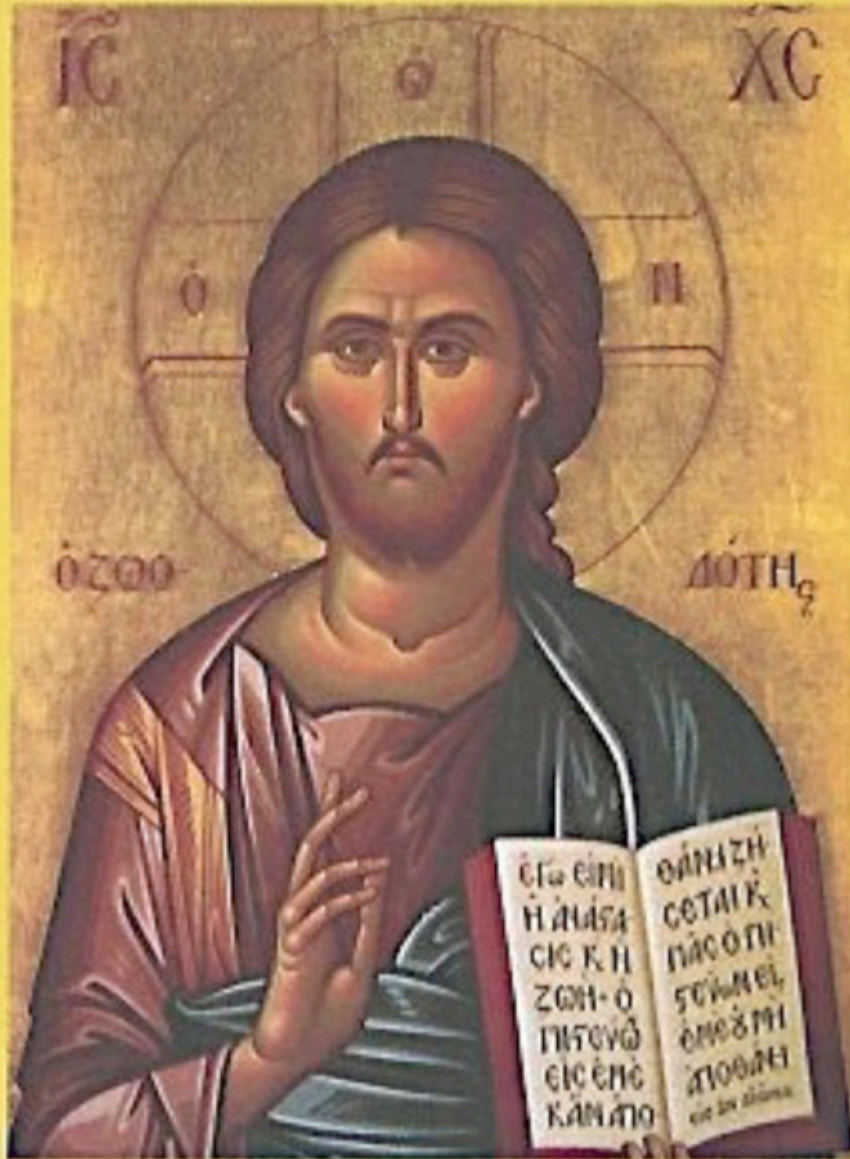


DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN
DISTRICT

THREE HIERARCHS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN February 26th, 2017
V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas

FORGIVENESS SUNDAY



Icon of Christ the Teacher

St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4

Prokeimenon. Mode Plagal 4.

Psalm 75.11,1

Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.

Verse: God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

Πρὸς Ῥωμαίους 13:11-14, 14:1-4

Προκείμενον. Ἦχος πλ δ.

ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 75.11,1

Εὐξασθε καὶ ἀπόδοτε Κυρίῳ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν.

Στίχ. Γνωστὸς ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ὁ Θεός, ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ μέγα τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.

Ἀδελφοί, νῦν ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἡ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπιστεῦσαμεν. Ἡ νύξ προέκοπεν, ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν· ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους, καὶ ἐνδυσώμεθα τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός. Ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ, εὐσχημόνως περιπατήσωμεν, μὴ κώμοις καὶ μέθαις, μὴ κοίταις καὶ ἀσελγείαις, μὴ ἔριδι καὶ ζήλῳ. Ἄλλ' ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε, εἰς ἐπιθυμίας. Τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε, μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν. Ὅς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει. Ὁ ἐσθίων τὸν μὴ ἐσθιοντα μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτω, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθιοντα μὴ κρινέτω· ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο. Σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; Τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει. Σταθήσεται δέ· δυνατὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς στήσαι αὐτόν.

Forgiveness Sunday

The Gospel according to Matthew 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Forgiveness Sunday

Κατὰ Ματθαῖον 6:14-21

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος· Ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, οὐδὲ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν. Ὅταν δὲ νηστεύητε, μὴ γίνεσθε ὡσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταὶ σκυθρωποὶ· ἀφανίζουσι γὰρ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν ὅπως φανῶσι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύοντες· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἀπέχουσι τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν. σὺ δὲ νηστεύων ἄλειψαί σου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου νίψαι, ὅπως μὴ φανῆς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύων, ἀλλὰ τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ, καὶ ὁ πατὴρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι ἐν τῷ φανερῷ. Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅπου σὴς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσι καὶ κλέπτουσι· θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὅπου οὔτε σὴς οὔτε βρῶσις ἀφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου κλέπται οὐ διορύσσουσιν οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν· ὅπου γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ θησαυρὸς ὑμῶν, ἐκεῖ ἔσται καὶ ἡ καρδιά ὑμῶν.

DEVOTIONS THIS WEEK:

Sunday	February 26th,	TYROFAGOU-Cheese Fare Observance St. Porphyrios of GAZA	9:30 P.M.
Monday Monday	February 27th, February 27th,	LENT BEGINS for PASCHA Strict Fast A.H.E.P.A. Lenten Dinner WHITEHALL / OPEN FREE TO ALL!	7:00 P.M.
Wednesday	March 01st,	PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY	9:30 A.M.
Wednesday	March 01st,	Agiasmos HOLY WATER Blessing	11:00 A.M.
Friday	March 03rd,	First SALUTATIONS to Blessed Virgin Mary	7:00 P.M.
Saturday	March 04th,	FINAL Psycho-Sabbaton Saint Theodoroi KOLLYVA	9:00 A.M. 11:00 A.M.
Sunday	March 05th,	ORTHODOXIAS LITURGY Procession of Icons	10:30 A.M. 12:00 NOON

AGAPE COFFEE FELLOWSHIP: is being hosted today by the Mr. & Mrs. Club. Please join us in WHITEHALL for refreshments , open to all.

PHILOPTOCHOS LADIES are reminded TODAY that there will be a GENERAL MEETING of the Membership directly after the Divine Liturgy at 12:30 P.M. in Whitehall at the coffee Fellowship.

DAUGHTERS of PENELOPE DEMETRA CHAPTER #33 is hosting a BINGO NIGHT on Monday, March 06th, in WHITEHALL at 7:00 P.M. SNACKS , PRIZES, GIFTS, BINGO ALL FOR \$10.00 (TEN DOLLARS) proceeds are to maintain the 'chapter' obligations. SEE YOU THERE! see flyer insert'.

A.H.E.P.A. will host their CONEY ISLAND CHAPTER #200 annual Kathari Defera (CLEAN MONDAY) Lenten dinner with music and folk Greek dancing starting at 7:00 P.M. MONDAY February 27. OPEN TO ALL FREE! Come and share the 'mardi gras' festivity.

SEE THE INSERT FLYER

B.S.A. TROOP GOLDEN GREEKS #531 will host their traditional Sunday of ORTHODOXY 'Pasta Luncheon' on March 05th at 12:30 P.M. in ROSEHALL. Please see the enclosed flyer. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children under 10 years of age. All proceeds will support the TROOP SUMMER CAMP EXPERIENCE.

ALTAR BOYS will be distributing psychohartia to those who did not receive one in the pews. ASK and you shall receive! It's a prayer.

HELLENIC HERITAGE COMMITTEE announces the Annual Citation of Greek-American Brooklyn luminaries for MONDAY-MARCH 20th at 6:00 P.M. in the ROTUNDA of BOROUGH HALL.. Three members of our parish: George P. Annis, Julia Demakakos, and Connie Ioannides, will be honored with distinction. Buses will be available FREE from the church to and from Borough Hall. Reserve your bus seat NOW!

Please submit your names for commemoration as soon as possible for the appropriate intoning of the names during the services. Memorial 'forms' may be secured in the candle 'pangari' area, or at the church office upon request. PSYCHOSABBATON commemoration flyers will be distributed by the Altar Boys at the reception of the Antidoron. Secure yours for Saturday of ALL SOULS! LAST PSYCHOSABBATON on MARCH 04TH.

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY: FIRST SUNDAY of LENT is traditionally observed with the procession of icons. Our church will celebrate the occasion as prescribed. The PAN ORTHODOX VESPER of ORTHODOXY will be held on SUNDAY, MARCH 5th at 4:00 P.M. at the Saint Nicholas Antiochian (SYRIAN) Cathedral on State Street, Brooklyn. Please refer to the flyer for all details.

EARLY REGISTRATIONS for the Universal Pre-Kindergarten at Three Hierarchs will commence **Jan. 17 to Feb. 24, 2017.** Any child 4 years of age is eligible for FREE enrollment at our school operated by the New York City Department of Education. Classes are held each day from 8:00 A.M. through 3:00 P.M. with free lunch served by the City. IT'S ALL YOURS FREE FOR THE ASKING AND TAKING. DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUR CHILDREN /GRANDCHILDREN! Call now: (347) 729-0446 . TWO "OPEN-HOUSE" RECEPTION DAYS ARE WEDNESDAY FEB 8TH, 4P.M-7P.M AND MARCH 08TH 4P.M. – 7 P.M.

RADIO MINISTRY: Each Saturday at 1:15PM Fr. Eugene hosts and produces the radio broadcast **MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE NOW IN ITS 18TH 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](#))

MEMORIALS TODAY : + NADEZDAH KOTILNIKOVA + ALEXEY, + LARISA and +VIKTOR KOSLOV
+THEODOROS GAVARIS



THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE

On February 5, 2017, our Church commemorated the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. Jesus's parable in Luke 18:10-14 tells of two men who go to the temple to pray: one is a Pharisee, a member of an ancient Jewish sect known for strict observance of the law; the other is a Publican, a government tax collector. The Pharisee prays openly, thanking God that he is "not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." The Publican, in contrast, cannot even lift up his eyes. Instead, he beats his breast and cries, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" Jesus teaches that the Publican left justified and forgiven: "for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

This day marks the beginning of the three-week Triodion period leading up to Great Lent, reminding us to approach God with humility and repentance and preparing us for the journey toward Great and Holy Pascha, the greatest feast of our Church.

KONTAKION

Let us flee from the boasting of the Pharisee and learn through our own sighs of sorrow the humility of the Publican. Let us cry out to the Savior, "Have mercy on us, for through You alone are we reconciled."

Τί πλέον θέλεις;

Ἐγώ πατήρ, ἀδελφός,
συμφίος, οἰκία, τροφή,
ἔνδυμα, ρίζα, θεμέλιον,
ὄ,τι θέλεις ἐγώ· νά μὴν
ἔχῃς ἀνάγκην ἀπό τίποτε.
Ἐγώ καί θά σέ ὑπηρετήσω·
διότι ἤλθα νά διακονήσω,
ὄχι νά διακονηθῶ. Ἐγώ
εἶμαι φίλος καί μέλος καί
κεφαλή καί ἀδελφός καί
μητέρα, ὅλα ἐγώ· ἀρκεῖ νά
ἔχῃς οἰκειότητα πρὸς ἐμέ.

Ἐγώ ἔγινα πτωχός καί
περιπλανώμενος διά σέ·
ἀνέβηκα εἰς τόν Σταυρόν
καί ἐτάφην διά σέ· εἰς τόν
οὐρανόν διά σέ ἵκετεύω
τόν Πατέρα· κάτω εἰς τήν
γῆν ἐστάλην ἀπό τόν Πατέρα ὡς πρεσβευτής διά σέ.

Σύ εἶσαι δι' ἐμέ τά πάντα· καί συγκληρονόμος
καί ἀδελφός καί φίλος καί μέλος τοῦ σώματός μου.

Διατί λοιπόν ἀποστρέφεται αὐτόν πού σέ ἀγαπᾷ;
Διατί κοπιᾶζεις διά τόν κόσμον;

Τί περισσότερο θέλεις ἀπό ἐμέ;

(Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου Χρυσοστομοῦ, ΕΠΕ, 12, 35)

Κάνε με, Κύριε, τέτοιον πού μέ θέλεις καί μέ
ὅποιον θέλεις, εἴτε θέλω, εἴτε δέν θέλω.

(Ἁγίου Πέτρου Λαρσκηνοῦ, Φιλοκαλία τ. Γ', 3η θεωρία)





ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ

ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΝ ΚΗΡΥΓΜΑ



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

Ἐκδίδεται ἀπὸ τὴν Κοινοβιακὴ Γυναικεία Ἱερά Μονὴ Ἁγίου Αὐγουστίνου Φλωρίνης - 531 00 ΦΛΩΡΙΝΑ - τηλ. 23650-28610 - imszfflo@yahoo.gr

Περίοδος Δ' - Ἔτος ΛΔ' Φλώρινα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 1996	Κυριακὴ τῆς Τυροφάγου 25 Φεβρουαρίου 2017	Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος Ν. Καντιώτης
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«Ἄς νηστέψουμε, ἀδελφοί»

(ἑσπερ. Τετ. τῆς Α' ἑβδομ.)

Ἡ Μεγάλῃ Τεσσαρακοστή, ἀγαπητοί μου, στὴν ὁποία μὲ τὴ βοήθεια τοῦ Θεοῦ μπαίνουμε ἀπὸ αὐριο, εἶνε περίοδος ἱερῶν ἀσκήσεων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας.

Ἡ ἀσκησι εἶνε μία τακτικὴ ποῦ ἐπὶ αἰῶνες τώρα ἐφαρμόζεται σὲ πολλοὺς τομεῖς τῆς ἀνθρώπινης ζωῆς, διότι ἔχει ἀποδειχθῆ χρησιμῃ, βοηθητικῃ καὶ σωτήριος. Ἡ ἀσκησι λέγεται καὶ *γυμνασίᾳ* ἢ *γυμναστικῃ*. Ἡ ἀσκησι ἀποβλέπει ὄχι μόνον στὴν διατήρησι μῆς καλῆς καταστάσεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ στὴ βελτίωσί τῆς ὅσο τὸ δυνατόν περισσότερο, καθὼς καὶ στὴν ἐτοιμότητα τῶν δυνάμεων τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὥστε νὰ μπορῇ νὰ τὶς χρησιμοποιήσῃ σὲ κάθε ἀνάγκη ποῦ θὰ παρουσιαστῇ.

Ἐπειδὴ ὁ ἀνθρώπος εἶνε καὶ σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴ - πνεῦμα, γι' αὐτὸ καὶ ἡ ἀσκησι διακρίνεται σὲ **σωματικὴ** καὶ σὲ **ψυχικὴ - πνευματικὴ**. Μὲ τὴν **σωματικὴ** ἀσκησι τὸ σῶμα διατηρεῖ τὴν ὑγεία καὶ τὴν εὐεξία του, οἱ μῦς καὶ τὰ μέλη δυναμώνουν, ὥστε νὰ μπορῇ νὰ ἐργάζεται ἀποδοτικῶς. Μὲ τὴν **πνευματικὴ** ἀσκησι τὸ μυαλὸ «ἀκονίζεται», ἀποκτᾷ εὐστροφία καὶ πλουτίζεται σὲ γνώσεις.

Σπουδαιότερη ὁμως καὶ πιὸ ἀναγκαία εἶνε ἡ **ψυχικὴ ἀσκησι**, μὲ τὴν ὁποία ὁ ἀνθρώπος ἀγωνίζεται νὰ καταταγῇ στὴν στρατιὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ βασιλέως Χριστοῦ, νὰ ὑπακούῃ καὶ νὰ τηρῇ τὸ θέλημά του, ν' ἀποκτήσῃ καὶ νὰ διατηρῇ τὴν καθαρότητα τῆς καρδιᾶς ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη, νὰ ἀπεκδυθῇ τὸν παλαιὸ ἀνθρώπο καὶ νὰ ἐνδυθῇ τὸν νέο, νὰ μιμηθῇ τὸ Χριστὸ καὶ τέλος νὰ ἐνωθῇ μαζί του αἰώνίως. Αὐτὰ δὲν εἶνε εὐκόλα ἀσφαλῶς μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία ὁμως μὲ τὴ χάρι τοῦ Κυρίου γίνονται κατορθωτὰ καὶ καθιερώνονται ἰσοβίως ὡς ἕνα καθημερινὸ πρόγραμμά ζωῆς.

Ὅπως **στὸ σχολεῖο** ὁ μαθητῆς ὅλο τὸ χρόνο μελετᾷ, ἀλλὰ ἰδιαίτερος κοπιᾷ στὶς ἡμέρες τῶν ἐξετάσεων, ἔτσι καὶ στὴν ἐκκλη-

σιαστικῃ ζωῇ. Καὶ ὅπως **στὸν ἀθλητισμὸ** οἱ ἀθληταὶ πάντοτε προσπαθοῦν νὰ διατηροῦνται σὲ «φόρμα», ἀλλὰ ἰδιαίτερος προπονοῦνται ὅταν ἔχουν ἀγῶνες, κάτι παρόμοιο ἔχουμε καὶ στὴν πνευματικὴ μας ἀθλησι. Καὶ ὅπως **στὸ στρατὸ** οἱ στρατιῶτες πάντοτε βέβαια γυμνάζονται στὶς διάφορες μονάδες, ἀλλὰ ὑπάρχουν καὶ ἰδιαίτερες ἡμέρες ἐκτεταμένων γυμνασιῶν καὶ ἀσκήσεων, κατὰ τὶς ὁποῖες συμμετέχουν στὰ γυμνάσια ὅλες οἱ δυνάμεις, καὶ τῶν τριῶν ὄπλων, κατὰ παρόμοιο τρόπο καὶ οἱ Χριστιανοί, ποῦ ἀποτελοῦν τὴν πνευματικὴ στρατιὰ τοῦ Κυρίου, ἀσκούνται βέβαια καὶ γυμνάζονται ὅλες τὶς ἡμέρες τῆς ζωῆς τους καὶ ὅλες τὶς ἡμέρες τοῦ ἔτους, ἀλλὰ ἔχουν καὶ ὠρισμένες περιόδους κατὰ τὶς ὁποῖες ὅλα τὰ γυμνάσματα ἐντείνονται καὶ ὅλες οἱ ἀσκήσεις συντονίζονται ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐκκλησία μὲ σκοπὸ τὸν τελειότερο καταρτισμὸ τῶν πιστῶν.

Τέσσερις εἶνε οἱ ἐποχὲς τοῦ ἔτους (χειμῶνας, ἀνοιξί, καλοκαίρι, φθινόπωρο), **τέσσερις εἶνε καὶ οἱ περίοδοι** αὐτῆς τῶν ἐντατικῶν πνευματικῶν γυμνασιῶν ἀντιστοιχοῦν δηλαδὴ περίπου μία σὲ κάθε ἐποχῇ. Ἡ Μεγάλῃ Τεσσαρακοστὴ πρὸ τοῦ Πάσχα, μεταξὺ χειμῶνος καὶ ἀνοιξέως. Ἡ νηστεία πρὸ τῆς ἑορτῆς τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων, μεταξὺ ἀνοιξέως καὶ θέρους. Ἡ νηστεία τοῦ Δεκαπενταυγούστου πρὸ τῆς ἑορτῆς τῆς Κοιμήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ ἐν ὄψει τοῦ φθινοπώρου. Καὶ τέλος ἡ περίοδος τοῦ Σαρανταήμερου πρὸ τῆς ἑορτῆς τῶν Χριστουγέννων καὶ στὴν ἀρχὴ τοῦ χειμῶνος.

Μία τέτοια περίοδος, πρώτη μεταξὺ ὄλων τῶν ἄλλων, εἶνε ἡ **περίοδος αὐτῆς τῆς Μεγάλῃς Τεσσαρακοστῆς**. Κατ' αὐτήν, ὅπως ψάλλει ὠραία ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας, «*Τὸ στάδιον τῶν ἀρετῶν ἠνέωκται*» (ἔχει ἀνοίξει τὸ στάδιο τῶν ἀρετῶν - ἀπὸ κηρ. ἱερ.) καὶ «*Ἐφθασε καιρὸς, ἡ τῶν πνευματικῶν ἀγῶνων ἀρχή, ἡ κατὰ τῶν*

δαιμόνων νίκη» (ἦρθε ὁ καιρὸς ποὺ ἀρχίζουν οἱ πνευματικοὶ ἀγῶνες, ἡ νίκη ἐναντίον τῶν δαιμόνων – *δεξ. ἀν. Καρ. Τικν.*).

Χαρακτηριστικὸ γνῶρισμα τῆς περιόδου αὐτῆς εἶνε ἡ **νηστεία**, ἡ αὐστηρὴ νηστεία. Εἶνε τὸ ἀρχαιότερο καὶ τὸ γνωστότερο εἶδος ἀσκήσεως. Τὴν περίοδο αὐτὴ ἡ **Ἐκκλησία** μᾶς καλεῖ νὰ νηστεύσουμε ὅλοι, ἐκτὸς μόνο ἀπὸ ἐκείνους ποὺ γιὰ κάποια σωματικὴ ἀσθένεια ἐμποδίζονται νὰ λάβουν μέρος στὸ ἱερὸ αὐτὸ ἀγώνισμα.

Ἀλλὰ νηστεύουν σήμερα οἱ Χριστιανοί;

Ἀλλοίμονο! Τὰ τελευταῖα χρόνια ἡ νηστεία, τὸ ἱερὸ αὐτὸ κειμήλιο τῆς φυλῆς μας, περιφρονεῖται ἀπὸ τοὺς πολλούς, τοὺς περισσοτέρους μπορούμε νὰ ποῦμε Χριστιανούς. Μὲ διάφορες προφάσεις, σχεδὸν πάντα ἀμαρτωλές, ἀποφεύγουν τὴ νηστεία. **Οἱ κάτοικοι ἰδίως τῶν πόλεων** στὴν μεγίστη πλειονότητα ἔχουν ἐξορίσει ἀπὸ τὰ σπίτια τους τὴ νηστεία· καὶ αὐτὴ, σὰν διωγμένη καὶ περιλυπη δέσποινα, βρῆκε καταφύγιο στὰ μικρὰ χωριά καὶ στὶς κωμοπόλεις τῆς πατρίδος μας.

Ἀλλὰ τελευταῖα παρατηρεῖται κ' ἐκεῖ τάσις νὰ ἐκδιωχθῆ ὡς ἀνεπιθύμητη! **Οἱ χωρικοὶ καὶ οἱ ἀγράμματοι**, ποὺ σέβονται καὶ ἔχουν σὲ μεγάλη ὑπόληψιν τὸν ἅγιο θεσμὸ τῆς νηστείας, καὶ ἴσως μάλιστα γιὰ πολλοὺς ἀπὸ αὐτοὺς εἶνε ἡ μόνη κλωστή, ἀπ' τὴν ὁποία κρέμεται ἡ θρησκευτικὴ τους ζωὴ, αὐτοὶ, πρὸς μεγάλο σκανδαλισμὸ τους, βλέπουν τοὺς λίγους ἐγγράμματοις(;) τοῦ χωριοῦ τους, ἢ καὶ τοὺς τυχόν διερχομένους ἀπὸ τὸ χωριὸ τους δημοσίους ὑπαλλήλους, νὰ καταλύουν μπροστὰ σὲ ὅλους τὴ νηστεία, καὶ πολλὰς φορὰς τοὺς ἀκοῦνε νὰ ἐκφράζονται γιὰ τὴ νηστεία μὲ τέτοιο τρόπο, ὥστε μέσα στὴ συνείδησι τοῦ χωρικοῦ νὰ γκρεμίζεται ὁ σεβασμὸς στὶς ἁγίες παραδόσεις τῆς θρησκείας μας, μία ἀπ' τὶς ὁποῖες εἶνε καὶ ἡ νηστεία.

Καὶ νὰ σκεφτῆ κανεὶς ὅτι ἡ νηστεία εἶνε **θεσμὸς τόσο ἀρχαῖος** ὅσο καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀφοῦ νομοθετήθηκε μέσα στὸν παράδεισο μὲ τὴν ἐντολὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ νὰ μὴ γευθοῦν οἱ πρωτόπλαστοι τὸν ἀπηγορευμένον καρπὸ· καὶ γι' αὐτὸ οἱ πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τὴν χαρακτηρίζουν *συνηλικιώτιν*, συνομήλικη δηλαδὴ, τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (Μ. Βασ. Μigne 31, 168Α).

Δυστυχῶς ἡ γενεὰ μας, ὑλόφρων καθὼς εἶνε, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ δῆ μὲ βλέμμα συμπαθείας καὶ βαθείας ἐκτιμήσεως τὴ νηστεία, ὅπως τὴν ἔβλεπαν αἱ προηγούμενες γενεές, ὅπως τὴν εἶδαν οἱ σοφοὶ τῆς ἀρχαιότητος καὶ οἱ ἁγιάτατοι πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, οἱ ὁποῖοι

ὄχι μόνον εἶπαν καὶ ἔγραφαν τὰ ὠραιότερα λόγια καὶ ἐγκώμια γιὰ τὴ νηστεία, ἀλλὰ καὶ μὲ τὴν ἴδια τὴ ζωὴ τους ἔδωσαν σὲ ὅλους τοὺς Χριστιανούς τὸ παράδειγμα τῆς πραγματικῆς νηστείας. **Ναί, ὄλων τῶν ἁγίων σύντροφος καὶ φίλη ἀχώριστη** ὑπῆρξε ἡ νηστεία, ἡ «*πάνοπλος ἐγκράτεια, ἡ τῶν ἀγγέλων εὐπρέπεια, ἡ πρὸς Θεὸν παρρησία*» (ἡ ἐγκράτεια ποὺ εἶνε ἐφωδιασμένη μὲ ὅλα τὰ ὄπλα, ποὺ μιμεῖται τὴν ἀγγελικὴ εὐπρέπεια, ποὺ χαρίζει θάρρος νὰ σταθῆ κανεὶς ἐμπρὸς στὸ Θεό – *δεξ. ἀν. Καρ. Τικν.*).

Ἄν ἦταν δυνατόν καὶ σ' ἐμᾶς νὰ δοῦμε τὴ νηστεία μὲ τὸ μάτι τῆς καθαρῆς διανοίας τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων, θὰ τὴ βλέπαμε ὄχι σὰν μία ἀνεπιθύμητη κυρία ἀλλὰ σὰν μία βασίλισσα, ποὺ εἶνε ἔτοιμη νὰ δώσῃ στοὺς πιστοὺς ἀκολουθούς της δῶρα, **τὰ πολύτιμα δῶρα της**. Γιατὶ ἡ νηστεία, ὅπως λέει γι' αὐτὴν μὲ ἐνθουσιασμὸ ὄχι κάποιος μικρὸς κήρυκας ἢ θεολόγος ἀπ' τοὺς σημερινούς, ἀλλὰ ἕνας μεγάλος πατὴρ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ φιλόσοφος βαθύς, ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος, ἡ νηστεία εἶνε «*οἴκων αὔξησης, ὑγείας μήτηρ, νεότητος παιδαγωγός, κόσμος πρεσβύταις, ἀγαθὴ συνέμπορος ὁδοιπόροις, ἀσφαλὴς ὁμόσκηνος τοῖς συνοίκοις*»· καὶ ἀλλοῦ «*πόλεως εὐσχημοσύνη, ἀγορᾶς εὐστάθεια, οἴκων εἰρήνη, σωτηρία τῶν ὑπαρχόντων*»· καὶ ἄλλοῦ «*νηστεία προφήτας γεννᾷ, δυνατοὺς ῥώννυσι* (=ἐνδυναμώνει)· *νηστεία νομοθέτας σοφίζει, ψυχῆς ἀγαθὸν φυλακτήριον, σώματι σύνοικος ἀσφαλής, ὄπλον ἀριστεύουσιν, ἀθληταῖς γυμνάσιον... σωφροσύνης δημιουργός. Ἐν πολέμοις ἀνδραγαθεῖ, ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἡσυχίαν διδάσκει*» (Μ. Βασ., Περὶ νηστείας λόγ. Α'· Μigne 31, 173C, 183B, 172B).

Ὅσοι λοιπὸν ἐπιθυμοῦμε ν' ἀποκτήσουμε καὶ ν' ἀπολαύσουμε ἕνα ἀπ' τὰ πολλὰ δῶρα καὶ ἀγαθὰ, ποὺ προσφέρει στοὺς Χριστιανούς ἡ νηστεία, ἂς τηρήσουμε τὴν χριστιανικὴ καὶ ἁγία νηστεία. Ἄς φράξουμε τὰ αὐτιά μας νὰ μὴν ἀκοῦμε τῶν ἀπίστων, τῶν ὑλοφρόνων καὶ ἀδιαφόρων τὶς εἰρωνεῖες, τὶς ἀντιρρήσεις καὶ τὶς «*προφάσεις ἐν ἁμαρτίαις*» (Καθ. 14), κατὰ τοῦ ἁγίου θεσμοῦ τῆς νηστείας. **Κι ἂς ἀκούσουμε τὴ φωνὴ τῆς μητέρας μας Ἐκκλησίας**, ἡ ὁποία μελωδικὰ ψάλλει: «*Προκαθάρωμεν ἑαυτοὺς, ἀδελφοί, τῇ βασιλίδι τῶν ἀρετῶν· ἰδοὺ γὰρ παραγένετο πλοῦτον ἡμῖν ἀγαθῶν κομίζουσα· τῶν παθῶν κατευνάζει τὰ οἰδήματα καὶ τῷ Δεσπότη καταλλάττει τοὺς παισῶντας· διὸ μετ' εὐφροσύνης ταύτην ὑποδεξώμεθα, βοῶντες Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ· Ὁ ἀναστὰς ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἀκατακρίτους ἡμᾶς διαφύλαξον, δοξολογοῦντάς σε, τὸν μόνον ἀναμάρτητον*» (*δεξ. ἀν. Καρ. Ἰπῆρ.*).

(†) **ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος**

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 2017 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

A Sacrifice to God is a Contrite Spirit

I acknowledge my transgression, says David. If I admit my fault, then you will pardon it. Let us never assume that if we live good lives we will be without sin; our lives should be praised only when we continue to beg for pardon. But men are hopeless creatures, and the less they concentrate on their own sins, the more interested they become in the sins of others. They seek to criticize, not to correct. Unable to excuse themselves, they are ready to accuse others. This was not the way that David showed us how to pray and make amends to God, when he said: I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. He did not concentrate on others' sins; he turned his thoughts on himself. He did not merely stroke the surface, but he plunged inside and went deep down within himself. He did not spare himself, and therefore was not impudent in asking to be spared.

Do you want God to be appeased? Learn what you are to do that God may be pleased with you. Consider the psalm again: If you wanted sacrifice,

I would indeed have given it; in burnt offerings you will take no delight. Are you then to be without sacrifice? Are you to offer nothing? Will you please God without an offering? Consider what you read in the same psalm: If you wanted sacrifice, I would indeed have given it; in burnt offerings you will take no delight. But continue to listen, and say with David: A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God does not despise a contrite and humble heart. Cast aside your former offerings, for now you have found out what you are to offer. In the days of your fathers you would have made offerings of cattle – these were the sacrifices. If you wanted sacrifice, I would indeed have given it. These then, Lord, you do not want, and yet you do want sacrifice.

A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God does not despise a contrite and humble heart. You now have the offering you are to make.

St. Augustine of Hippo

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