

THREE HIERARCHS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN June 3rd, 2018
V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas

SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS



Icon of All Saints

The Sunday of All Saints

Prokeimenon. Mode 4.

Psalm 67.35,26

God is wonderful among his saints.

Verse: Bless God in the congregations.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:33-40; 12:1-2

Brethren, all the saints through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Προκείμενον. Ἦχος δ'.

ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 67.35,26

Θαυμαστός ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τοῖς Ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ.

Στίχ. Ἐν Ἐκκλησίαις εὐλογεῖτε τὸν Θεόν.

Πρὸς Ἑβραίους 11:33-40, 12:1-2 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα εἶναι ἀπο

Ἀδελφοί, οἱ Ἅγιοι πάντες διὰ πίστεως κατηγωνίσαντο βασιλείας, εἰργάσαντο δικαιοσύνην, ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν, ἔφραξαν στόματα λεόντων, ἔσβεσαν δύναμιν πυρός, ἔφυγον στόματα μαχαίρας, ἐνεδυναμώθησαν ἀπὸ ἀσθενείας, ἐγενήθησαν ἰσχυροὶ ἐν πολέμῳ, παρεμβολὰς ἔκλιναν ἀλλοτρίων. Ἔλαβον γυναῖκες ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τοὺς νεκροὺς αὐτῶν· ἄλλοι δὲ ἐτυμpanίσθησαν, οὐ προσδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τύχωσιν· ἕτεροι δὲ ἐμπαιγμῶν καὶ μαστίγων πείραν ἔλαβον, ἔτι δὲ δεσμῶν καὶ φυλακῆς· ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπρίσθησαν, ἐπειράσθησαν, ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρας ἀπέθανον· περιῆλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι - ὧν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος - ἐν ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσιν καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὁπαῖς τῆς γῆς. Καὶ οὗτοι πάντες, μαρτυρηθέντες διὰ τῆς πίστεως, οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν κρείττονι τι προβλεψαμένου, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσιν. Τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς, τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων, ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν ὑπερίστατον ἁμαρτίαν, δι' ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα, ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν.

The Sunday of All Saints

The Gospel According to Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30

The Lord said to his disciples, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Then Peter said in reply, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first."

Ἐκ τοῦ Κατὰ Ματθαῖον 10:32-33, 37-38,

19:27-30 Εὐαγγελίου τὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τοῖς ἐαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς· Πᾶς οὖν ὅστις ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐμοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὁμολογήσω καὶ ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς. ὅστις δ' ἂν ἀρνήσεται με ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀρνήσομαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἐγὼ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς. Ὁ φιλῶν πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστι μου ἄξιος· καὶ ὁ φιλῶν υἱὸν ἢ θυγατέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστι μου ἄξιος· καὶ ὁς οὐ λαμβάνει τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖ ὀπίσω μου, οὐκ ἔστι μου ἄξιος. Τότε ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν πάντα καὶ ἠκολουθήσαμεν σοι· τί ἄρα ἔσται ἡμῖν; ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ὑμεῖς οἱ ἀκολουθήσαντές μοι, ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ, ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐπὶ θρόνονι δόξης αὐτοῦ, καθίσεσθε καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπὶ δώδεκα θρόνους κρίνοντες τὰς δώδεκα φυλὰς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. καὶ πᾶς ὁς ἀφήκεν οἰκίαν ἢ ἀδελφοὺς ἢ ἀδελφὰς ἢ πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ἢ γυναῖκα ἢ τέκνα ἢ ἀγροὺς ἕνεκεν τοῦ ὀνόματός μου, ἑκατονταπλασίονα λήψεται καὶ ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσει. Πολλοὶ δὲ ἔσονται πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι.

AGAPE COFFEE FELLOWSHIP is being served on the Plaza. Please join us for lunch ,desserts, drinks and sweets for gift visits for those who can't make it to the event.

TODAY GREEK SCHOOL GRADUATION and PROMOTION CEREMONIES will be held at the Divine Liturgy. We are indeed proud of our students and of course the administration and faculty of the academic program. We encourage all families to consider enrolling youngsters in the **HELLENIC STUDIES PROGRAM** which includes, written, read and spoken Greek, culture, heritage, faith, history and ethnic pride in one's roots. **GIVE A KID A CHANCE!**

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR STUDENTS.

LAST DAY GRECIAN FESTIVAL: The Annual Parish GREEK FEAST is hosted on the Plaza of our community center TODAY June 3. Please join as we celebrate our Hellenic heritage, legacy and ethnic pride. Music, dancing, singing, dining, games, Greek cuisine, desserts, full bar, sodas and beer. Everything will be celebrated under the great white tents 'UNDER THE STARS'. **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF THE GRANDE RAFFLE** drawn on Saturday night of the feast.

FLEA MARKET: The GRECIAN FESTIVAL will present a flea market for the public during the FESTIVAL WEEK-END. Any articles from home or office you may wish to donate are gratefully received. **NO CLOTHING PLEASE!** Kitchen , dining room, bath bed and beyond, garden items....whatever you do not need and deem valuable to others please submit it to the Church Office for the 'MARKET'.....Thank you.

CLERGY LAITY CONGRESS of the National Church is scheduled for July 1-5th, in Boston , Massachusetts. This is the highest legislative body of the Greek Orthodox faith in the United States of America. Father Eugene will be representing our parish and community at the CONGRESS. In these trying times of financial stress facing the Archdiocese input and change is essential. **RESPONSIBILITY, ACCOUNTABILITY and TRANSPARENCY** on all parts, that's the course;

NIGERIAN PRIEST: Fr. Chrysostomos will con-celebrate the Liturgy of ALL SAINTS TODAY THE CLERGYMAN FROM NIGERIA IS A PRIEST OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT. He will deliver the homily of the day.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY: is to be convened NEXT Sunday, June 10 at 12:30 P.M. in WHITEHALL. All registered and recorded 'stewards' members of the parish are privileged to speak and vote on all issues. **ARE YOU REGISTERED FOR THIS YEAR?**

ELEVATOR PROPOSAL: is one of the many important issues to be presented for discussion and resolution. Elevator plans will be described by the official architect designated by the Parish Council. **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION FOR THE ELDERS OF THE PARISH AND FUTURE PROGRAMMING.** Please make every effort to attend.

ALTAR BOY AWARDS SUNDAY: is scheduled for SUNDAY – JUNE 17th. (FATHERS'S DAY) with presentations to the young men who diligently and devotedly serve the sacred services of our church week after week. We are indeed proud of them and the parents who have nurtured them in the 'faith of our fathers'. **B R A V O T O T H E L A D S !**

APOSTLE'S FAST begins Monday, Tomorrow June 04th.

UP-COMING EVENTS:

1. DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE Social (dinner) at Perry's Thursday – June 07th.
2. HOLY ORDER MEMORIAL TRIBUTE Sunday – June 10th.
3. A.H.E.P.A. B.B.Q PLAZA -7:00 P.M. JUNE 11th.
4. PHILOPTOCHOS LADIES June Social on Thursday – June 14th.

Please give ample advance notice if you wish to have a memorial announced in the church weekly bulletin and /or if you intend to order 'KOLLYVA' boiled wheat for the tribute commemoration. **MAY THEIR MEMORY BE ETERNAL !**

RADIO MINISTRY: Each Saturday at 1:15PM Fr. Eugene hosts and produces the radio broadcast MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE NOW IN it's 19TH 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](#))

NOTE – WELL: Three Hierarchs Church 'MEMORIAL CARDS' sent by the Church Office upon request of the donor to the bereaved family may be secured through the OFFICE SECRETARY only. The minimum offering is \$25.(twenty –five dollars) for each acknowledgment. **ALL MEMORIAL DONATIONS** for the card are directed to the **THREE HIERARCHS PARISH.** Thank you.

MEMORIALS NEXT WEEK

+ HOLY ORDER DECEASED MEMBERS
+ MICHAEL PETERS

+ FATHER STAVROS (Iero – monachos)
+ RUFUS JACOB DANIELS

May

2018

Pentecost

Pentecost occurred in Jerusalem, fifty days after Easter. As Judas was a suicide and Matthias had not yet replaced him, eleven apostles were gathered, along with Mary, the mother of Jesus. There was **Andrew**, one of the first apostles, **Peter**, the “rock”, upon which Jesus built His church: **James the Greater**, the pilgrim: **John**, the “most beloved” by Jesus, **Thomas**, the doubter: **Philip**, the pragmatist: **Bartholomew**, who was “without deceit,” **Matthew**, the tax collector: **Jude**, who would become patron Saint of Desperate Cases: **Simon the Zealot**, a member of a Jewish political sect: and **James the Less**, the son of Alphaeus. Suddenly, with a sound like thunder, a rush of wind filled the room and flames of fire hovered above the head of each apostle. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended and the apostles began speaking in tongues. This was the miracle of Pentecost. French artist Louis Galloche captures the event in this beautiful, imaginative work.

Louis Galloche, Pentecost (18th century)
Musee des beaux – arts, Nantes, France
photo credit: Bridgeman Images



June

2018

The Apostle Saint Peter

Jesus named Peter His “rock” and made him the foundation of His church, promising him the Keys to Heaven. When the apostles witnessed Jesus walking upon the water in the Sea of Galilee, Jesus beckoned Peter to do the same, only to see him fail when he became afraid. Said Jesus, “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*” (Matthew 14:31) This ordinary fisherman was with Jesus throughout His public ministry. When Roman soldiers arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter became violent, attacking the servant of high priest in an attempt to save Him. As Jesus predicted, however, Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed, to save himself. After the Resurrection, Peter preached in Rome and was imprisoned by Emperor Nero. Chained and guarded, he was freed by an angel while his guards slept. This work by the great Flemish Renaissance painter Peter Paul Rubens depicts Jesus giving Peter a Traditio clavium (symbol) of the Keys to Heaven

Peter Paul Rubens, *Christ's Charge to Peter*
(c 1616) © Wallace Collection, London, UK
Photo credit: Bridgeman Images





ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ

ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΝ ΚΗΡΥΓΜΑ



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

Ἐκδίδεται ἀπὸ τὴν Κοινοβιακὴ Γυναικίᾳ Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Ἁγίου Λύγουστίνου Φλωρίνης - 531 00 ΦΛΩΡΙΝΑ - τηλ. 23856-28610 - imazflo@yahoo.gr

Περίοδος Δ' - Ἔτος ΛΕ' Φλώρινα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 2096	Κυριακὴ Ἁγ. Πάντων (Ἔβρ. 11,33 - 12,2) 3 Ἰουνίου 2018	Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος Ν. Καντιώτης
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«Νέφος μαρτύρων»

(Ἔβρ. 12,1)

Οἱ πρῶτοι Χριστιανοί, ἀγαπητοί μου, καὶ μάλιστα ὅσοι προέρχονταν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἰουδαϊκὴ θρησκεία, **ὑπέφεραν πολὺ** ἐκ μέρους τῶν ἄλλων ποὺ δὲν εἶχαν πιστέψει στὸ Χριστό. Ἐκεῖνοι ποὺ δὲν εἶχαν γνωρίσει τὸ φῶς τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, οἱ ἄνθρωποι τοῦ σκότους, δὶσκον ἀγρίως τοὺς «*υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός*» (Ἰω. 12,35. 1 Κορ. 13,8). τὰ πιδ σατανικά μέσα χρησιμοποιοῦσαν γιὰ νὰ ἐξοντώσουν τὰ τέκνα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Καὶ οἱ περισσότεροι μὲν ἀπὸ τοὺς Χριστιανούς ἔμεναν πιστοὶ καὶ ἀφωσιωμένοι στὸν «*ἀρχηγὸν τῆς πίστεως*», ποὺ λέει σήμερα ὁ ἀπόστολος (Ἔβρ. 12,2), τὸν Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν· **μερικοὶ** ὅμως, μπροστὰ στὴν ἄγρια θύελλα τῶν διωγμῶν, ἄρχισαν νὰ κάμπτονται, **ἐδειχναν σημάδια λιποψυχίας**.

Οἱ Χριστιανοὶ αὐτοὶ εἶχαν ἀνάγκη ἀπὸ παρηγορία καὶ ἐνίσχυσι. Καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος, ποὺ ἡ μεγάλη καρδιά του λυπόταν γιὰ τὴν ἀπώλεια καὶ ἐνὸς ἀκόμη Χριστιανοῦ, **ἐνδιαφέρεται νὰ τονώσῃ τὶς ψυχές τους**, ὥστε κανεὶς νὰ μὴν ἐγκαταλείψῃ τὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἀλλὰ ὅλοι νὰ μείνουν πιστοὶ στὸ Χριστὸ μέχρι θανάτου. Γράφει λοιπὸν πρὸς ὅλους αὐτοὺς τὴν πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐπιστολή του· καὶ ἡ φωνή του, σὰν ἐγερτήριος σάλπιγγα, ἀκούγεται παντοῦ. Καὶ τί λέει; Καὶ τί δὲν λέει!

Ἀδελφοί μου, λέει, **μείνετε ὅλοι στὶς θέσεις σας!** Κανεὶς σας μὴν πετάξῃ τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ Χριστιανοῦ, κανεὶς σας μὴ ντροπιάσῃ τὴν παράταξι τοῦ Κυρίου. Κάντε ὑπομονή. Ἀγωνιστῆτε, κ' ἐτοιμαστῆτε γιὰ νὰ δώσετε μάχες ἀκόμη πιδ σκληρὲς ἀπ' ὅ,τι μέχρι τώρα. Ὁ ἐχθρὸς εἶνε ὑπουλος, θὰ πετάγεται μπροστὰ σας σὲ κάθε βῆμα. Ἀλλ' ὅ,τι καὶ ἂν συμβῇ, σὰς παρακαλῶ νὰ μείνετε στὶς θέσεις σας. Καὶ γιὰ νὰ ἔχετε μία δυνατὴ ἐνίσχυσι μέσα σὲ ὅλους τοὺς διωγμούς σας, σὰς συμβουλεύω καὶ σὰς συνιστῶ τὸ ἑξῆς.

Μὴ λησμονεῖτε τὶς θυσίες καὶ τὸ αἷμα ποὺ ἔχυσαν τόσοι καὶ τόσοι **ἀδελφοί σας**, ποὺ προηγήθηκαν καὶ **ἀναδείχθηκαν ἤδη μάρτυρες** τῆς πίστεώς μας. Δεῖτε τὴν ὑπομονή καὶ τὴν ἀνδρεία ποὺ ἔδειξαν ὅλοι αὐτοί. Μισήστε τὴν ἁμαρτία, τὴν προδοσία, τὸ συμβιβασμό· **ζηλώστε τὸ θάρρος καὶ τὴν παρρησία τους**, **μὴ μνησθῆτε** τὴ συνέπεια καὶ τὴν ἀκεραιότητά τους, **μὴ καμφθῆτε**. Στὸ δρόμο σας προπορεύονται οἱ μάρτυρες ἀδελφοί σας καὶ ἰδίως ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν μαρτύρων, ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Χριστός...

Αὐτὴ τὴν ἐννοια ἔχει, νομίζω, ἡ **θαυμάσια περικοπὴ τοῦ ἀποστόλου** ποὺ ἀκούσαμε σήμερα στοὺς ναοὺς μας καὶ ποὺ τελειώνει—καὶ συνεχίζει παρακάτω— μὲ τὰ λόγια· «*Τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς* (=Κ' ἐμεῖς λοιπόν), *τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων* (=ἔχοντας γύρω μας τόσο μεγάλο σύννεφο ἀπὸ μάρτυρες), *ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν εὐπερίστατον ἁμαρτίαν* (=πετώντας ἀπὸ πάνω μας κάθε βάρος καὶ τὴν ἁμαρτία ποὺ εὐκολα μπορεῖ νὰ μᾶς νικήσῃ), *δι' ὑπομονῆς τρέχουμε τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα* (=ἄς τρέχουμε μὲ ὑπομονή τὸν ἀγῶνα δρόμου ποὺ ἔχουμε μπροστὰ μας), *ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν* (=ἔχοντας τὸ βλέμμα μας στραμμένο στὸν ἀρχηγὸ τῆς πίστεώς μας ποὺ μᾶς ὁδηγεῖ στὴν τελειότητα), *ὅς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινε σταυρόν, αἰσχύνῃς καταφρονήσας* (=ὁ ὁποῖος, ἀντὶ ν' ἀπολαμβάνῃ τὴ χαρὰ ποὺ τοῦ ἀνῆκε, ὑπέμεινε σταυρικὸ θάνατο περιφρονώντας τὴ ντροπή), *ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ Θεοῦ κεκάθικεν* (=καὶ τώρα ἔχει καθίσει στὰ δεξιὰ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ Θεοῦ). *Ἀναλογίσασθε γάρ τὸν τοιαύτην ὑπομεμενηκότα ὑπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν εἰς αὐτὸν ἀντιλογίαν* (=Ἀναλογιστῆτε λοιπὸν αὐτὸν ποὺ ἔχει ὑπομείνει τέτοια ἀντιλογία ἀπ' τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς ποὺ τὸν βασάνισαν), *ἵνα μὴ κάμῃτε ταῖς ψυ-*

χαῖς ὑμῶν ἐκλυόμενοι (=για νά μὴν κουραστοῦν οἱ ψυχές σας κ' ἐξαντληθῆτε)» (βλ. 12,13).

«**Νέφος μαρτύρων**»! Δηλαδή, δὲν εἶνε λίγοι οἱ μάρτυρες· **εἶνε πολλοί, ἀναρίθμητοι**, ἀποτελοῦν νέφος ὁλόκληρο.

Ἄν ἦταν δύο ἢ τρεῖς, θὰ μπορούσε κανεὶς νὰ φέρῃ καὶ ἀντίρρηση λέγοντας· Λίγοι μόνο κατῴρθωσαν νὰ μείνουν πιστοὶ στὸ Χριστό, συνεπῶς δὲν εἶνε δίκαιο νὰ ζητῆται ἀπὸ μᾶς κάτι ποὺ ἐλάχιστοι τὸ πέτυχαν. Ἐν τούτοις οὔτε ἡ ἀντίρρηση αὐτὴ στέκει, **δὲν εἶνε σοβαρή**· διότι, ἀκόμη καὶ ἕνας ἀπ' τὰ ἑκατομμύρια τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀν βρισκόταν νὰ μείνῃ μέχρι τέλους πιστὸς στὸ Χριστό καὶ νὰ ἐφαρμόσῃ στὴ ζωὴ του τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, θὰ ἔφτανε αὐτὸς καὶ μόνο ὁ ἕνας νὰ δείξῃ, ὅτι ἡ χριστιανικὴ πίστις καὶ ζωὴ δὲν εἶνε κάτι τὸ ἀκατόρθωτο. Νὰ ὁμῶς ὅτι ὄχι ἕνας ἀλλὰ πολλοί, «**ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους**» (βλ. 5), πιστεύουν στὸν Κύριο, ζοῦν ἐν Κυρίῳ καὶ πεθαίνουν γιὰ τὸν Κύριο.

Τὸ φωτεινὸ αὐτὸ νέφος τῶν μαρτύρων, ποὺ δὲν διαλύεται ἀλλ' ἀντιθέτως κάθε μέρα πυκνώνει μὲ νέους μάρτυρες τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς, εἶνε τὸ **καύχημα τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ**, ἡ **λύπη τῶν δαιμόνων**, ἀλλὰ —ἐκεῖνο ποὺ κυρίως μᾶς ἐνδιαφέρει ἐδῶ— εἶνε ὁ τρομερὸς **ἐλεγχος τῶν ἀμελῶν καὶ ἀδιαφόρων** ψυχῶν.

Τί προφασίζονται οἱ ψυχές αὐτές· Θέλου-με, λένε, νὰ ζήσουμε καὶ νὰ πεθάνουμε ὡς πιστοὶ Χριστιανοί, ἀλλὰ χίλια ἐμπόδια δὲν μᾶς ἀφήνουν. Σήμερα οἱ περιστάσεις εἶνε δύσκολες· τὸ ἐπάγγελμά μας εἶνε πολυάσχολο, οἱ πειρασμοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ διάφοροι... Αὐτὰ καὶ ἄλλα τέτοια προφασίζονται οἱ πολλοί, γιὰ νὰ δικαιολογήσουν τὴν ἀμέλεια, τὴν ὀκνηρία καὶ τὴν δειλία τῶν ψυχῶν τους.

Νὰ ὁμῶς οἱ μάρτυρες! Ἐζησαν κάτω ἀπὸ τίς χειρότερες συνθήκες. Ἡ θλίψις μὲ ὅλα τὰ εἶδη τῆς ὥρμησε λυσσαλέα ἐναντίον τους, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς ἀπογοητεύσῃ καὶ τοὺς καταβάλῃ· ὁ σατανᾶς ἔρριξε πάντω τους ὅλους τοὺς πειρασμούς· ὁ κόσμος ξεσηκώθηκε σύσσωμος. Καὶ ὁμῶς αὐτοὶ ἔμειναν σταθεροὶ μέχρι τέλους. Ἄν τολμᾶμε, ἂς συγκρίνουμε τὰ δικά μας «μαρτύρια» μὲ τὰ μαρτύρια τῶν ἁγίων, καὶ θὰ δοῦμε ὅτι οὔτε τὸ ἕνα χιλιοστὸ τῶν ὧσων ὑπέφεραν ἐκεῖνοι δὲν ὑποφέρουμε ἐμεῖς, οἱ περισσότεροι ἀπὸ μᾶς. Λέω οἱ περισσότεροι ἀπὸ μᾶς, γιατί δὲν ἀρνοῦμαι ὅτι **ὑπάρχουν καὶ σήμερα** σὲ διάφορες ἀντιχριστιανικὲς χώρες Χριστιανοὶ ποὺ ἀνανεώνουν καὶ στὸν αἰῶνα αὐτὸν τὰ μαρτύρια τῶν παλαιῶν μαρτύρων.

Ἄλλ' αὐτοὶ εἶνε οἱ ἐκλεκτοί. **Οἱ ἄλλοι ἐμεῖς τί κάνουμε;** Τί ἔχουμε ν' ἀναφέρουμε ἀπὸ τοὺς πειρασμούς μας ὅσο νὰ συγκριθῇ μὲ τοὺς πειρασμούς τῶν μαρτύρων; Γιὰ μᾶς, ποὺ δὲν πέσαμε ἀκόμη στοὺς μεγάλους πειρασμούς καὶ δὲν δοκιμάσαμε τὸ βάθος τῆς θλίψεως, καὶ δὲν παλέψαμε στῆθος μὲ στῆθος ἐναντίον τῆς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, γιὰ μᾶς ποὺ τόσο εὐκολὰ ἀπογοητευόμαστε κ' ἐγκαταλείπουμε θανά-δρα τὰ τιμημένα πεδία τῶν ἀγώνων, τὸ μέτωπο τῆς στρατευομένης Ἐκκλησίας, ναί, γιὰ μᾶς τοὺς σημερινούς Χριστιανούς **θὰ μπορούσε ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος νὰ ξαναπῇ** τὰ μεγάλα του ἐκεῖνα ἀφυπνιστικά λόγια (βλ. 12,17)· «**Οὕτω μέχρις αἵματος ἀντικατέστητε πρὸς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι** (=δὲν ἀντισταθῆκατε ὡς τώρα μέχρι αἵματος ἀγωνιζόμενοι κατὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας), καὶ ἐκλέλησθε τῆς παρακλήσεως, ἣτις ὑμῖν ὡς υἱοῖς διαλέγεται (=καὶ ἐσχάσατε τὸν παρηγορητικὸ λόγον ποὺ ἀπευθύνει ὁ Κύριος σ' ἐσᾶς σὰν σὲ παιδιὰ του)· **Ἰδέ μου, μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας Κυρίου, μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐλεγ-χόμενος** (=Γιὰ ἐμεῖς, μὴν ἀμελεῖς νὰ δέχεσαι τὴν παιδαγωγία τοῦ Κυρίου, μήτε νὰ παραλύ-ῃς ὅταν ἐλέγχῃς ἀπὸ αὐτόν). **Ὁν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ Κύριος παιδεύει, μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν πα-ραδέχεται** (=γιατὶ ὁ Κύριος ὅποιον ἀγαπᾷ τὸν παιδεύει, καὶ μαστιγώνει ὅποιον τὸν ἀναγνωρί-ζει ὡς δικό του παιδί). **εἰ παιδεῖται ὑπομένετε, ὡς υἱοῖς ὑμῖν προσφέρεται ὁ Θεός...** (=ἂν ὑπο-φέρετε τὴν παιδαγωγία, αὐτὸ δείχνει ὅτι ὁ Θε-ὸς σᾶς συμπεριφέρεται σὰν σὲ υἱούς του...)).»

«**Νέφος μαρτύρων**»! Ἀδελφέ μου, σοῦ δίνω μιὰ ταπεινὴ συμβουλή, ἢ μάλλον σοῦ τὴ δίνει ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος. Στοὺς πειρασμούς καὶ τὴς θλίψεως σου, ποὺ ἀσφαλῶς θὰ σὲ βροῦν ἐφ' ὅσον βαδίζεις τὸ δρόμο τοῦ Χριστοῦ, θὰ αἰ-σθάνεσαι μεγάλη ψυχικὴ ἀνακούφισις, θὰ ἐμ-πνέεσαι καὶ θὰ παίρνῃς θάρρος γιὰ νὰ συνεχί-σης μέχρι τέλους τὸν ἀγῶνα, **ἂν θυμᾶσαι τί ἔ-παθαν καὶ τί ὑπέφεραν** γιὰ τὴ δόξα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἑκατομμύρια μάρτυρες. Ἔτσι θ' ἀποδιώχνης ἀπ' τὴν ψυχὴ σου τὴ δειλία, τὴν ἀπελπισία καὶ τὴν ἀπογοήτευσίς, καὶ γεμάτος πίστις θὰ βαδί-ζῃς πρὸς τὰ ἐμπρός, ἕως ὅτου φθάσῃς στὸ τέρμα τῆς νικηφόρου πορείας σου, **στὸν οὐρα-νό**, ὅπου μὲ ἀπερίγραπτη χαρὰ θὰ σὲ ὑποδε-χθοῦν τὰ πλήθη τῶν μαρτύρων καὶ τῶν ἀγγέ-λων καὶ θὰ ποῦν καὶ γιὰ σένα· Ὁ ἀδελφός μας αὐτὸς **ἐρχεται** «**ἐκ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης, καὶ ἔπλυνε τὴν στολὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐλεύκανεν αὐτὴν ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου**» (βλ. 7,14).

(†) **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 2018 commitment **TODAY!** The benefits you shall receive beyond grace include the satisfaction and knowledge that this Church and community thrive thanks to your outreach.

YOU ARE PART OF THE GREAT FRESCO OF FAITH

Their Death is More like Dreaming

We ought to honor the saints. They are Christ's friends, children and heirs of God. This is the teaching of the theologian and evangelist John: 'To all who received him ... the Word gave power to become children of God' (John 1:12). The Creator of all things is called in Scripture Lord of lords, King of kings, God of gods. The saints are precisely lords, kings and gods, not in their own nature but because they have become lords over themselves, they have ruled their passions, they have kept intact that image of God in which they were created. Indeed, the saints of their own choice are united to God, they have welcomed Him as a guest in their hearts, and by sharing with Him have become what He is by nature.

They have become God's servants, friends and children. The honor given to His faithful ser-

vants of which they are the witness is a test of our love for our Lord and theirs. He has found in them a spotless dwelling place and has performed his promise: 'I will make my abode among you ... and I will walk among you and will be your God' (Lev. 26:11-12).

It is of the saints that Scripture says: 'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and the torment of death shall not touch them' (Wisd. 3:1). In fact, their death is more like dreaming than dying. God is life and light, and those who are in the hand of God are themselves life and light. By means of the Spirit, God is dwelling in the bodies of the saints. Why then should we not honor the temple of the living God?

St. John of Damascus

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