

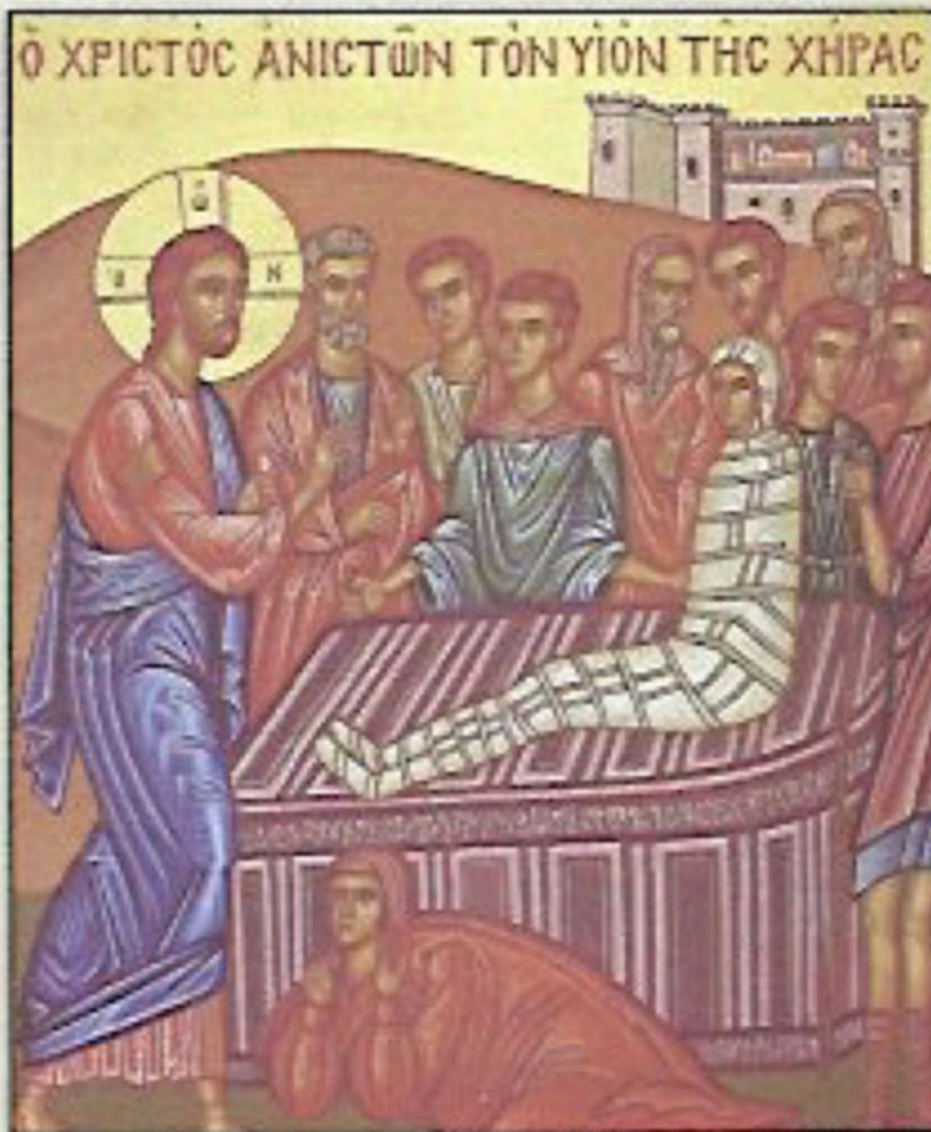


DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN
DISTRICT

THREE HIERARCHS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN October 7th, 2018
V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas

THIRD SUNDAY OF LUKE



Jesus of Christ Raising the Widow's Son (Luke 7:11-16)

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St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9

Prokeimenon. Mode 2.

Psalm 117.14,18

The Lord is my strength and my song.

Verse: The Lord has chastened me sorely.

The reading is from St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 11:31-33; 12:1-9

Brethren, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed for ever, knows that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands. I must boast; there is nothing to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven -- whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise --whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows -- and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. Though if I wish to boast, I shall not be a fool, for I shall be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

3rd Sunday of Luke

Πρὸς Κορινθίους β' 11:31-33, 12:1-9

Προκείμενον. Ύμνος β'.

ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 117.14,18

Ἴσχύς μου καὶ ὑμνησίς μου ὁ Κύριος.

Στίχ. Παιδεύων ἐπαίδευσέ με ὁ Κύριος.

Πρὸς Κορινθίους β' 11:31-33, 12:1-9 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα εἶναι ἀπο

Ἀδελφοί, Ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ οἶδεν, ὁ ὢν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι. Ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὁ ἐθνάρχης Ἀρέτα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφρούρει τὴν Δαμασκηῶν πόλιν, πιάσαι με θέλων· καὶ διὰ θυρίδος ἐν σαργάνῃ ἐχαλάσθην διὰ τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἐξέφυγον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ. Καυχᾶσθαι δὴ οὐ συμφέρει μοι· ἐλεύσομαι γὰρ εἰς ὄπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου. Οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων - εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα· εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα· ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν - ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ. Καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον - εἴτε ἐν σώματι, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος, οὐκ οἶδα· ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν - ὅτι ἠρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον, καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα, ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι. Ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοιούτου καυχῆσομαι· ὑπὲρ δὲ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχῆσομαι, εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου· ἐὰν γὰρ θελήσω καυχῆσασθαι, οὐκ ἔσομαι ἄφρων· ἀλήθειαν γὰρ ἔρω· φείδομαι δέ, μή τις εἰς ἐμὲ λογίσθῃ ὑπὲρ ὃ βλέπει με, ἢ ἀκούει τι ἐξ ἐμοῦ. Καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος Σατᾶν, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι. Ὑπὲρ τούτου τρις τὸν κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστῇ ἀπ' ἐμοῦ. Καὶ εἰρηκέν μοι, Ἀρκεῖ σοι ἡ χάρις μου· ἢ γὰρ δύναμις μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται. Ἥδιστα οὖν μᾶλλον καυχῆσομαι ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις μου, ἵνα ἐπισκηνώσῃ ἐπ' ἐμὲ ἡ δύναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

3rd Sunday of Luke

The Gospel According to Luke 7:11-16

At that time, Jesus went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"

3rd Sunday of Luke

Ἐκ τοῦ Κατὰ Λουκᾶν 7:11-16

Εὐαγγελίου τὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, ἐπορεύετο εἰς πόλιν καλουμένην Ναϊν· καὶ συνεπορεύοντο αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἱκανοὶ καὶ ὄχλος πολὺς. ὡς δὲ ἤγγισε τῇ πόλει τῆς πόλεως, καὶ ἰδὼν ἐξεκομίζετο τεθνηκὼς υἱὸς μονογενῆς τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ αὕτη ἦν χήρα, καὶ ὄχλος τῆς πόλεως ἱκανὸς ἦν σὺν αὐτῇ. καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὴν ὁ Κύριος ἐσπλαγχνίσθη ἐπ' αὐτὴν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· μὴ κλαῖε· καὶ προσελθὼν ἤψατο τῆς σοροῦ, οἱ δὲ βαστάζοντες ἔστησαν, καὶ εἶπε· νεανίσκε, σοὶ λέγω, ἐγέρθητι. καὶ ἀνεκάθισεν ὁ νεκρὸς καὶ ἤρξατο λαλεῖν, καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτὸν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτοῦ. ἔλαβε δὲ φόβος πάντας καὶ ἐδόξαζον τὸν Θεόν, λέγοντες ὅτι προφήτης μέγας ἐγήγερται ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο ὁ Θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ.

SPECIAL INVITATION: is extended to everyone to ‘meet and greet’ **HIS ALL HOLINESS THADDEAS Patriarch of the Egyptian Orthodox COPTIC Church** this coming Saturday - October 6th, from 10 A.M. – 12 P.M. at the Community Center at 63rd, Street and 11th Avenue. Father Eugene will be present on behalf of the Greek Archdiocese faithful.

AGAPE FELLOWSHIP COFFEE today is being hosted and served on the 35th, Memorial Anniversary of +**ANTHONY ERNESTO JANNACE** by his beloved spouse Mary and devoted children. Eternal be his memory.

Please take note from now that the **ANNUAL PHILOPTOCHOS LUNCHEON** at Russo’s on the Bay is scheduled for **MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY OBSERVANCE: Monday, January 21st.** Mark your calendar from **NOW!** The Ladies Society will also host their **HELLENIC COLLEGE/HOLY CROSS SEMINARY luncheon** on Sunday, November 04th, in Whitehall. Support our schools of higher learning! We train tomorrow’s priests at HC/HC.

CHURCHING TODAY: The Holy Mother Church will embrace the new born daughter ‘**PENELOPE**’ of Paul and Maria (Koutros) **GRECH. N A S A S Z E S E!**

ARTOKLASIA TODAY: by the members of the Church Choir in tribute to Saint Romanos o Melodos their patron. Congratulations choristers for the beautiful sacred rendering we hear each week. Sometimes.... it’s unbelievable !

FATHER EUGENE : is privileged with the honor of being appointed by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios to serve for the next two year term on the **NATIONAL ARCHDIOCESAN COUNCIL.** He was also elected to serve on the Archdiocese of **NEW YORK** for the next two years. We are proud of this honor to our parish acknowledging the services and efforts of our pastor.

SENIOR CLUB : Meets every Wednesday at 1:00 -5:00 P.M. with games, Bingo, Luncheons, Birthdays, Holiday events. Is there anyone at ‘**HOME:** Yiayia, Papou, Theo, or Thea who would love to get out and enjoy an afternoon with friends? Please make the gracious effort of compassionate outreach to bring them or have their ‘aide’ accompany them for the fun filled fellowship. It’s truly an act of love and thanksgiving to those who we love. **CHECK** the church bulletin board for the weekly activities. **NEXT WEDNESDAY –ON October 03rd.--** ---- it’s **CHINESE AUCTION DAY!** Everyone’s a winner..... more or less.

Open House Reception for His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America

On Friday, October 26th, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, will be celebrating his Name Day, on the occasion of the Feast Day of his patron St. Demetrios the Myrrh-Streamer. In light of this most auspicious celebration, an Open House reception will be held Friday evening, October 26th 2018 at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (10 East 79th Street) in Manhattan. There will be a Doxology service beginning at 5:45 P.M. for the continued good health and blessed service of His Eminence , followed by a reception from 6:00 P.M. to 7:30 P.M.

ST. MICHAEL’S HOME

On Sunday November 11th, 2018 St. Michael’s will be hosting its Annual Name Day Gala at the Metropolitan Club in Manhattan Held in conjunction with the feast day of the Archangels. This event is an opportunity to herald the quality care that is being offered to our Greek Orthodox community and to raise critically needed funds.

St. Michael’s presents the annual Archangel Michael Award, an honor bestowed upon those who embody the finest qualities of the Greek Orthodox heritage and tradition. We are very proud to announce that this years recipient is **Madeline Singas, Nassau County District Attorney .** Your participation and support is critical to honor the legacy and heritage of the Home’s contribution to the elderly community.

RADIO MINISTRY: Each Saturday at 1:15PM Fr. Eugene hosts and produces the radio broadcast **MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE NOW IN it’s 20TH 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:

+ **MARGARET MARY AGGE**
+ **ANTHONY ERNESTO JANNACE**
+ **IRENE STYLIANI ZERVOS**

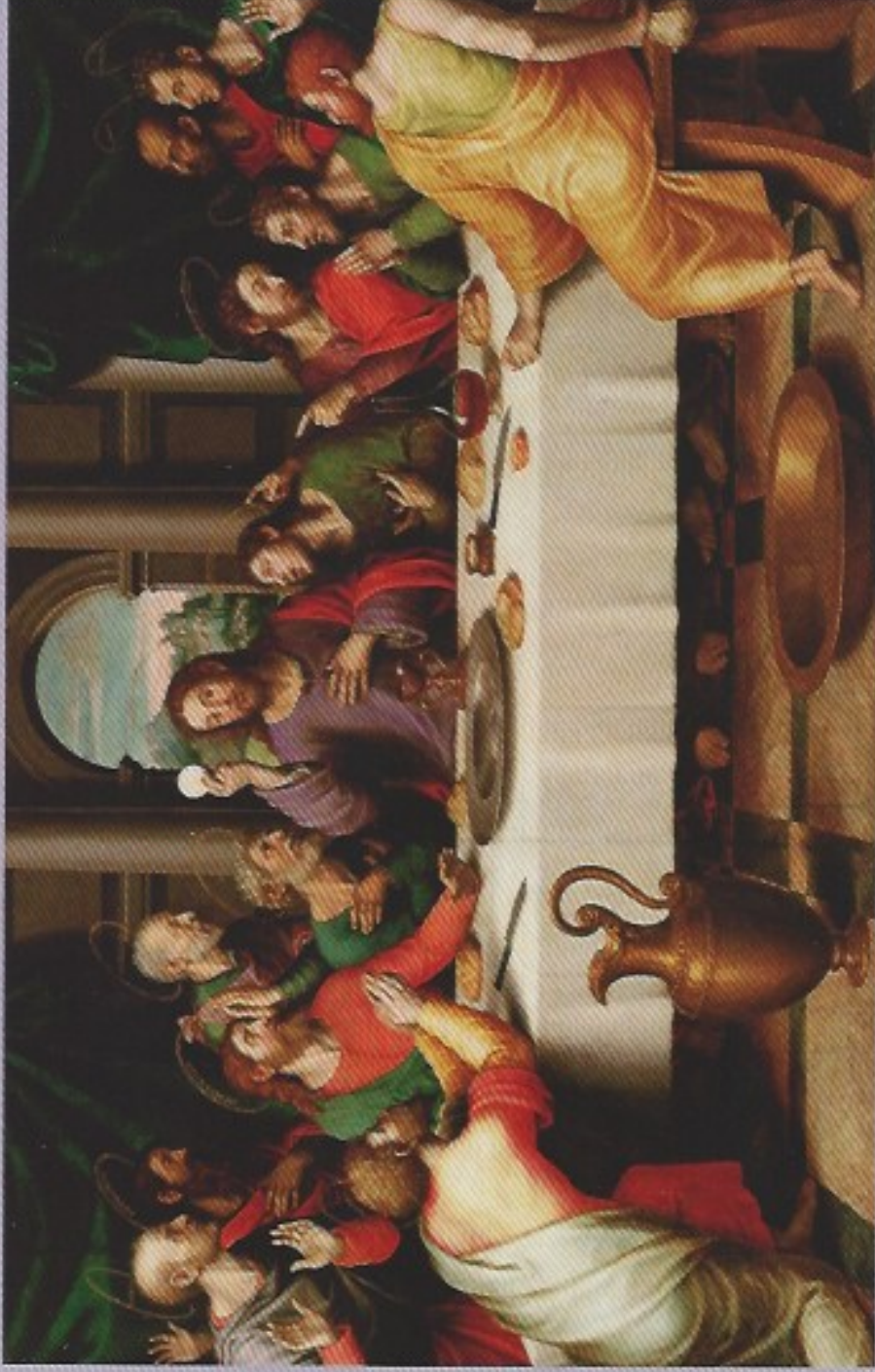
MEMORIALS NEXT WEEK:

+ **MARIA KOULLIAS** +**PANTELEIMON EUGENIS**

The Last Supper

The Last Supper was a Passover meal that was the final time Jesus and The Twelve would be together before the Resurrection. Jesus was arrested that night by Roman soldiers, then tried and crucified. Although the Mass was codified centuries after His death, here the great Spanish Renaissance artist Juan de Juanes depicts Jesus celebrating the Eucharist. As described in the Gospel of Mark.

“While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them and said “Take it: this is my body.” (Mark 14:22). The apostles may be identified by the halos bearing their names. Only the traitor Judas, seated near the end of the table, is without a halo. His hair is red (an artistic reference to the devil), and he clutches in his right hand the thirty pieces of silver he received for his betrayal of Jesus. Ridden with guilt, Judas hanged himself after Jesus was crucified.



Juan de Juanes, The Last Supper (c 1560-55)
© Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain
Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource, NY

The Apostle St. Philip and The Feeding of the Five Thousand

After one of His sermons, a crowd of multitudes tracked Jesus and the apostles to a desolate place. The Twelve watched as a throng of thousands gathered. It was nearing time to eat and Jesus wanted to feed all the people. He asked Philip, the most pragmatic of the apostles, where they might buy bread. but Jesus knew He already had the resolution to the problem and was only asking in order to test Philip. "This he said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. "John 6.6) Philip's pessimistic vision was overwhelmed by the size of the need, and he was at a loss to know what to do. Andrew spoke, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish." (John 6-9) Jesus took the loaves and fish and, after giving thanks, He miraculously multiplied the food, supplying more than enough for all. Flemish Renaissance artist Hendrick de Clerck depicted the event with Philip in the foreground holding a book of his plans and statistics.

Hendrick de Clerck, *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* (c 1600)
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria
Photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY





ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ

ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΝ ΚΗΡΥΓΜΑ



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

Ἐκδίδεται ἀπὸ τὴν Κοινοβιακὴ Γεννακία Τετρὴ Μονὴ Ἁγίου Αὐγουστίνου Φλωρίνης - 531 00 ΦΛΩΡΙΝΑ - τηλ. 23850-23610 - imazflo@yzoo.gr

Περίοδος Δ' - Ἔτος ΛΕ' Φλώρινα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 2124	Κυρ. ΙΘ' [Β' Λουκ.] (Β' Κορ. 11,31 - 12,9) 7 Ὀκτωβρίου 2018	Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος Ν. Καντιώτης
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Ἐμπόδιο ὀδυνηρὸ ἀλλὰ ὠφέλιμο

«Καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατάν, ἵνα με κολαφίξῃ ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι» (Β' Κορ. 12,7)

Ἡ θλίψις, ἀγαπητοί μου, εἶνε **χρήσιμη, πολὺ χρήσιμη**, γιὰ ὅλους ἀνεξαιρέτως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. Φαίνεται αὐτὸ παράδοξο; Μὴ βιαστήτε, παρακαλῶ, νὰ διαφωνήσετε· ἔχετε λίγη ὑπομονή. Ὅσο καὶ ἂν αὐτὸ ποὺ λέω φαίνεται ἀκατανόητο καὶ δυσάρεστο, εἶνε μιά ἀλήθεια. Καὶ θὰ προσπαθήσω νὰ τὴν ἀναλύσω.

Εἶνε **χρήσιμη** ἡ θλίψις, πρῶτον, **γιὰ τοὺς ἁμαρτωλοὺς**. Αὐτοί, καθὼς ἔχουν παραδοθῆ σὲ μία μεθυστικὴ ἀπόλαυσι ἀπατηλῶν τέρψεων, βρίσκονται σὲ ζάλη καὶ νάρκη. Δὲν ἐννοοῦν νὰ ξεπνήσουν ἀπὸ τὸ λήθαργο τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ νὰ ἐπιστρέψουν στὸ Θεό. Μόνο ἂν βρεθοῦν κάτω ἀπὸ ἀλλεπάλληλα χτυπήματα θλίψεων, τότε ἀφυπνίζονται. Ἡ θλίψις ἐνεργεῖ ὡς παιδαγωγικὴ ράβδος, ὡς εὐεργετικὸ μαστίγιο. Naί, αὐτὴ κάνει καὶ τοὺς πιδὸ σκληροὺς νὰ κάμψουν τὸν αὐχένα, νὰ ταπεινωθοῦν, νὰ συναισθανθοῦν τὰ λάθη τους, νὰ ζητήσουν συγχώρησι ἀπὸ τὸν Πλάστη καὶ Θεό τους.

Χρήσιμη λοιπὸν ἡ θλίψις **γιὰ ὄσους ζοῦν** στὴν ἁμαρτία, **χρήσιμη** ὁμοίως καὶ **γιὰ ὄσους βαδίζουν τὴν ὁδὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς**. Ἡ θλίψις ἦταν, εἶνε, καὶ θὰ εἶνε πάντα ὁ ἀχώριστος σύντροφος ὄλων τῶν ἁγίων. Μ' αὐτὴν ἐξαγνίσθηκαν ἀπὸ τὰ μικρὰ τοὺς ἐλαττώματα - ποὺ εἶχαν κι αὐτοὶ ὡς ἄνθρωποι, μ' αὐτὴν ἐξυψώθηκαν ἀκόμη περισσότερο σὲ ὕψη οὐράνια, μ' αὐτὴν ἔγιναν συμμέτοχοι στίς θλίψεις καὶ τὰ παθήματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (πρβλ. Β' Κορ. 15,7), μ' αὐτὴν ἡ ἀρετὴ τους τελειοποιήθηκε.

Ἔχουμε τέτοια παραδείγματα; Ἀμέτρητα. Ἄνοιξτε τοὺς βίους τῶν ἁγίων, μελετήστε τους, καὶ μετὰ ἐλάτε νὰ μοῦ πῆτε, ἂν ὑπῆρξε θνητὸς ποὺ μπῆκε στὸν παράδεισο χωρὶς θλίψι.

Σὰς συνιστῶ **ἰδιαίτέρως** νὰ μελετήσετε τὴν **ζωὴ τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου**. Τί θὰ δῆτε σ' αὐτόν; Θλίψι, καὶ θλίψι πολλῶν εἰδῶν! Σὰν νὰ μὴν ἔφταναν οἱ ἄλλες του θλίψεις, «ἐδόθη»

σ' αὐτόν καὶ «**σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατάν**» (ἐξ. 12), ἀγκάθι στὴ ζωὴ του, σατανικὸ ἔμπόδιο στὴ διακονία του.

«**Σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἄγγελος σατάν**». Αὐτὴ ἡ θλίψι, ἀγαπητοί μου, τὸν στενοχωροῦσε πολὺ. Σὰν **αἰχμηρὸ κεντρί**, σὰν **μυτερὴ βελόνα**, σὰν σουβλερὸ ἀγκάθι (αὐτὸ σημαίνει **σκόλοψ**), καὶ σὰν **δαιμονικὸς ἀντίπαλος** (αὐτὸ σημαίνει **σατάν**), ἐνωχλοῦσε τὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο καθημερινῶς, σὲ κάθε του βῆμα. Παντοῦ τὸν εὔρισκε μπροστά του, δὲν τὸν ἄφηνε νὰ ἡσυχάσῃ, ἔκανε τὴ ζωὴ του δύσκολη, ἔφερε πρόσκομμα στὸ ἱερὸ ἔργο του.

Ποιά ἀκριβῶς ὁμοίως ἦταν ἡ θλίψις του αὐτῆ; **Οἱ ἐρμηνευταὶ διαφωνοῦν** στὸ σημεῖο αὐτὸ καὶ ἔχουν διατυπωθῆ ποικίλες ἐρμηνευτικὲς ἀπόψεις γιὰ τὴ φύσι τῆς θλίψεως αὐτῆς τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου. Ἄλλοι εἶπαν, ὅτι ὁ «**σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί**» ἦταν κάποια πάθησι σωματικὴ, κάποια ἀσθένεια χρονία ποὺ τὸν ἐνωχλοῦσε καὶ τὸν ταλαιπωροῦσε συνεχῶς, ἴσως μία κεφαλαλγία ἢ μία πάθησι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν. Ἄλλοι εἶπαν, ὅτι ὁ «**σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί**» ἦταν ὁ σαρκικὸς πειρασμός, ποὺ δὲν ἀφήνει ἀπείραστον κανένα ἀλλὰ ἐνοχλεῖ καὶ ἁγίους ἀκόμη ἀνθρώπους. Καμμία ὁμοίως ἀπὸ τίς ἐρμηνεῖες αὐτὲς δὲν φαίνεται πιθανή.

Κατὰ κοινὴ ὁμολογία, ἐκεῖνος ποὺ ἐρμήνευσε ὀρθότερα τὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο φωτιζόμενος ἀπὸ αὐτὸ τὸ πανάγιο Πνεῦμα ποὺ εἶχε ἐμπνεύσει τὸν κορυφαῖο ἀπόστολο, εἶνε ὁ **ἱερὸς Χρυσόστομος**. Σύμφωνα λοιπὸν μετὰ τὴν ἐρμηνεία τοῦ ἱεροῦ Χρυσόστομου, ποὺ θεωρεῖται ἡ ἐπικρατέστερη, ὁ πειρασμός τοῦ μεγάλου ἀποστόλου δὲν ἦταν μιά κατάστασι ἀπρόσωπη, δὲν ἦταν κάτι τὸ ἄψυχο· ἦταν κάτι ἔμψυχο, ἦταν ἕνας ἄνθρωπος. Καὶ ὁ **ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης**, ἀκολουθώντας τὸν ἱ-

ερὸ Χρυσόστομο καὶ ἄλλους ἁγίους πατέρας, λέει: «*Σατᾶν*» κατὰ τὴν ἐβραϊκὴν διάλεκτον λέγεται ὁ ἀντικείμενος. Ὅλοι λοιπὸν ἐκεῖνοι ὅπου ἦτον ἀντικείμενοι εἰς τὸ κήρυγμα τοῦ Παύλου ἄγγελοι ἦτον τοῦ σατανᾶ. Ὅποιοι ἦτον Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ χαλκεύς, Ἐλύμας ὁ μάγος, ὁ Ὑμέναιος, ὁ Φιλητὸς καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ ὅπου ἔθλιβον καὶ ἐκακοποιῶν αὐτόν, ἐπειδὴ αὐτοὶ ἐπραττον τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σατανᾶ» (Ἐρμηνεία εἰς τὸν 13^{ον} Ἐπιστολᾶς τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου, τ. Β', βιβλ. «Ὁρθόδοξος Κληρῖκ», Θεσσαλονίκη 1991, σ. 207).

Ὁ «σκόλοψ» λοιπὸν τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου ἦταν κάποιος ἄνθρωπος, τοῦ στενοῦ μάλιστα περιβάλλοντός του, ἕνας ἀπὸ τοὺς μαθητὰς καὶ συνεργάτες του, ὅπως αὐτοὶ τοὺς ὁποίους ἀναφέρει ὁ ἅγιος Νικόδημος ὁ Ἁγιορείτης. Οἱ ἐχθροὶ καὶ διῶκτες τῆς πίστεως, ὅπως π.χ. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀρχιερεῖς ἢ ὁ εἰδωλολάτρης Νέρων, δὲν τὸν ἔθλιβαν τόσο πολὺ ὅσο τὸν ἔθλιβαν καὶ τὸν πίκραιναν ἄνθρωποι δικοὶ του, ἀπὸ τοὺς ὁποίους δὲν περιέμενε τέτοια συμπεριφορά. Συνηθισμένο δυστυχῶς τὸ φαινόμενο αὐτό. Καὶ ὁ Κύριός μας δὲν δοκίμασε τόση θλίψι ἀπὸ τὴν ἀδικία τοῦ Ἄννα, τοῦ Καϊάφα καὶ τοῦ Πιλάτου ὅση τοῦ προξένησε ὁ ὕπνος τῶν μαθητῶν στὴ Γεθσημανῆ, ἢ προδοσία τοῦ Ἰουδα, ἢ ἄρνησι τοῦ Πέτρου. Καὶ ὁ ἱερὸς Χρυσόστομος δὲν πικράθηκε τόσο ἀπὸ τῆ συμπεριφορά τῆς αὐτοκράτειρας Εὐδοξίας ὅσο ἀπὸ τὴν ἀχαριστία μαθητῶν του, ὅπως π.χ. τοῦ Σεβηριανοῦ ἐπισκόπου Γαβάλων.

Νὰ λοιπὸν γιατί ὁ πειρασμὸς τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου ἦταν τόσο ἐνοχλητικὸς καὶ βαρὺς, ὥστε νὰ παρακαλῆ πάλι καὶ πάλι τὸν Κύριο νὰ τὸν ἀπαλλάξῃ ἀπ' αὐτόν. Καὶ ὅμως τὸ αἴτημά του αὐτὸ δὲν εἰσακούσθηκε! Γιατί; Τὸ ἐξηγεῖ σήμερα ὁ ἴδιος.

Ὁ λόγος, γιὰ τὸν ὁποῖον δόθηκε στὸν κορυφαῖο ἀπόστολο τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ θλίψι αὐτῆ, κρύβει ἱερὴ σκοπιμότητα. «*Ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ*», λέει, «*ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι*», γιὰ νὰ μὴν ὑπερηφανεύωμαι [β' Κορ. 1,7]! Νὰ ἡ ὑπηρεσία, νὰ ἡ ὠφέλεια ποὺ χάριζε στὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο ἡ θλίψι: τὸν ἔκανε νὰ ἔχη συναισθησι τῆς ἀδυναμίας του, νὰ μὴ φαντάζεται μεγάλα καὶ ὑψηλά γιὰ τὸν ἑαυτό του, νὰ συγκρατῆται μέσα στὰ ὅρια τῆς ἁγίας ταπεινοφροσύνης.

Γιατί ὁ μεγάλος ἀπόστολος, ὡς ἄνθρωπος, διέτρεχε καὶ αὐτὸς κίνδυνο, τὸν φοβερὸ κίνδυνο τῆς ὑπερηφανείας. Γιατί; Διότι ἦταν κορυφαῖος ἀπόστολος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, κατεῖχε μοναδικὸ ἀξίωμα μέσα στὴν Ἐκκλησία: εἶχε χαρίσματα πολλὰ ἐργάστηκε καὶ κοπίασε ὅσο κανένας ἄλλος ἀπόστολος: ἔσπειρε παντοῦ τὸ σπόρο τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ἵδρυσε πολλὰς το-

πικὲς ἐκκλησίες, ἔκανε θαύματα, προσεῖλκυσε πλήθη εἰδωλολατρῶν στὴν πίστι τοῦ Χριστοῦ: ἀξιώθηκε νὰ λάβῃ θεῖες ἀποκαλύψεις, ἔφθασε μέχρι τρίτου οὐρανοῦ. Γιὰ ὅλα αὐτὰ κινδύνευε νὰ ὑπερηφανευθῆ, νὰ φανταστῆ ὅτι ὀφείλονται στὶς δικές του δυνάμεις καὶ στὶς δικές του προσπάθειας. Γι' αὐτὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ δόθηκε ὁ «σκόλοψ τῆ σαρκί», σὰν μία διαρκὴς ὑπόμνησις τοῦ πόσο ἀσθενὴς καὶ ἀδύνατος εἶνε. Κι ὁ πειρασμὸς ἦταν τόσο δυνατός, ὥστε τρεῖς φορές παρακάλεσε τὸν Κύριο νὰ τὸν ἀπαλλάξῃ ἀπὸ τὴ μάλιστα αὐτῆ τῆς θλίψεως. Ἀλλὰ ὁ Κύριος δὲν τὸν ἀπήλλαξε, γιατί εἶχε τὸ σκοπὸ του. «*ὑπὲρ τούτου*», λέει, «*τρὶς τὸν Κύριον παρεκάλεσα ἵνα ἀποστῆ ἀπ' ἐμοῦ: καὶ εἶρηκέ μοι ἄρκει σοι ἡ χάρις μου: ἡ γὰρ δύναμις μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται*». Σοῦ ἄρκει ἡ χάρις μου, γιατί μέσα ἀπὸ τὴ δική σου ἀσθένεια φαίνεται πιὸ καθαρὰ ἡ δική μου δύναμις [εἰ 12,8].

«*Σκόλοψ τῆ σαρκί*» λοιπὸν. Καὶ ἂν γιὰ τὸν ἀπόστολο Παῦλο χρειαζόταν ἕνας σκόλοψ, τέτοια θλίψι, πόσοι ἄραγε σκόλοπες - θλίψεις χρειάζονται γιὰ μᾶς; Ἄν ὁ μέγας Παῦλος, ὁ κολλοσοὺς τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἔπρεπε νὰ περάσῃ ἀπ' τὸ καμίνι τῆς θλίψεως, πόσο μάλλον ἐμεῖς;

* * *

Ναί, ἀδελφοί. Ἄς τὸ ἀναγνωρίσουμε καὶ ἂς τὸ κάνουμε φρόνημά μας: ἔχουμε τόση ἀνάγκη τῆ θλίψι ὅση ἀνάγκη ἔχει ὁ ἄρρωστος ἀπ' τὸ φάρμακο, ὅση ἀνάγκη ἔχει τὸ σκουριασμένο σίδηρο ἀπ' τὴ φωτιά στὸ καμίνι γιὰ νὰ καθαρισθῆ. Εἴμαστε ἀσθενεῖς ψυχικὰ καὶ πρέπει νὰ θεραπευθούμε, εἴμαστε ἀτελεῖς καὶ ἀκάθαρτοι πνευματικὰ, ἔχουμε πολλὴ σκουριά καὶ λάσπη στὸ χαρακτήρα μας, καὶ πρέπει νὰ καθαριστοῦμε, νὰ τελειωθοῦμε. Πῶς ὅμως θὰ θεραπευθοῦμε, πῶς θὰ καθαριστοῦμε; Μὲ πολλὰ μέσα τῆς θείας Χάριτος, ἕνα ἀπ' τὰ ὁποῖα εἶνε καὶ ἡ θλίψις. «*Διὰ πολλῶν θλίψεων δεῖ ἡμᾶς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ*» [β' Κορ. 12,9].

Ἦ, ἂν μᾶς φωτίσῃ ὁ Θεὸς καὶ καταλάβουμε τὴν ἀλήθεια αὐτῆ! Τότε ὄχι μόνο δὲν θὰ δυσανασχετοῦμε κατὰ τῆς θείας Προνοίας γιὰ τοὺς μικροὺς ἢ μεγάλους σκόλοπες τῆς ζωῆς μας, γιὰ τοὺς σταυροὺς τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας, ἀλλὰ καὶ θὰ εὐχαριστοῦμεθα ὅπως ὁ Παῦλος, ἡ μεγάλη αὐτῆ ψυχῆ, ποὺ μέσα στὸ καμίνι τῆς θλίψεως ἔγραφε τὰ ἀθάνατα αὐτὰ λόγια: «*Διὸ εὐδοκῶ* (=μένω εὐχαριστημένος, ἀρέσκομαι) *ἐν ἀσθενείαις, ἐν ὕβρεσιν, ἐν ἀνάγκαις, ἐν διωγμοῖς, ἐν στενοχωρίαις, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ: ὅταν γὰρ ἀσθενῶ, τότε δυνατὸς εἰμι*» [εἰ 12,10].

(†) ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστῖνος

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

Jesus, the Lord of Life

How do you respond to the misfortunes of others? In a number of places the gospel records that Jesus was "moved to the depths of His heart." Our English word "compassion" is a weak translation of the Hebrew word for "sympathy."

Why was Jesus so moved on this occasion? Jesus not only grieved the untimely death of a youth, but he showed the depth of his concern for a woman who lost not only a husband, but an only child as well. The scriptures make clear that God takes no pleasure in the death of anyone (e.g., Ezekiel 33:11); God desires life, not death. Jesus not only had compassion, He also had power - the ability to restore life and make whole again. Jesus, however, incurred grave

risk by approaching the bier, since contact with a dead body made one ritually impure. His touch not only restored life but brought freedom and wholeness to soul as well as body.

This miracle is reminiscent of the prophet Elisha who raised another mother's son (see 2 Kings 4:18-37). Jesus claimed as His own one whom death had seized as its prey. By His word of power He restored life for a young man marked for death. Jesus is Lord not only of the living but of the dead as well. Jesus triumphed over the grave and He promises that because He lives, we also shall live in Him (John 14:19). Do you trust in the Lord's power to give life and hope in the face of misfortune and despair?

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