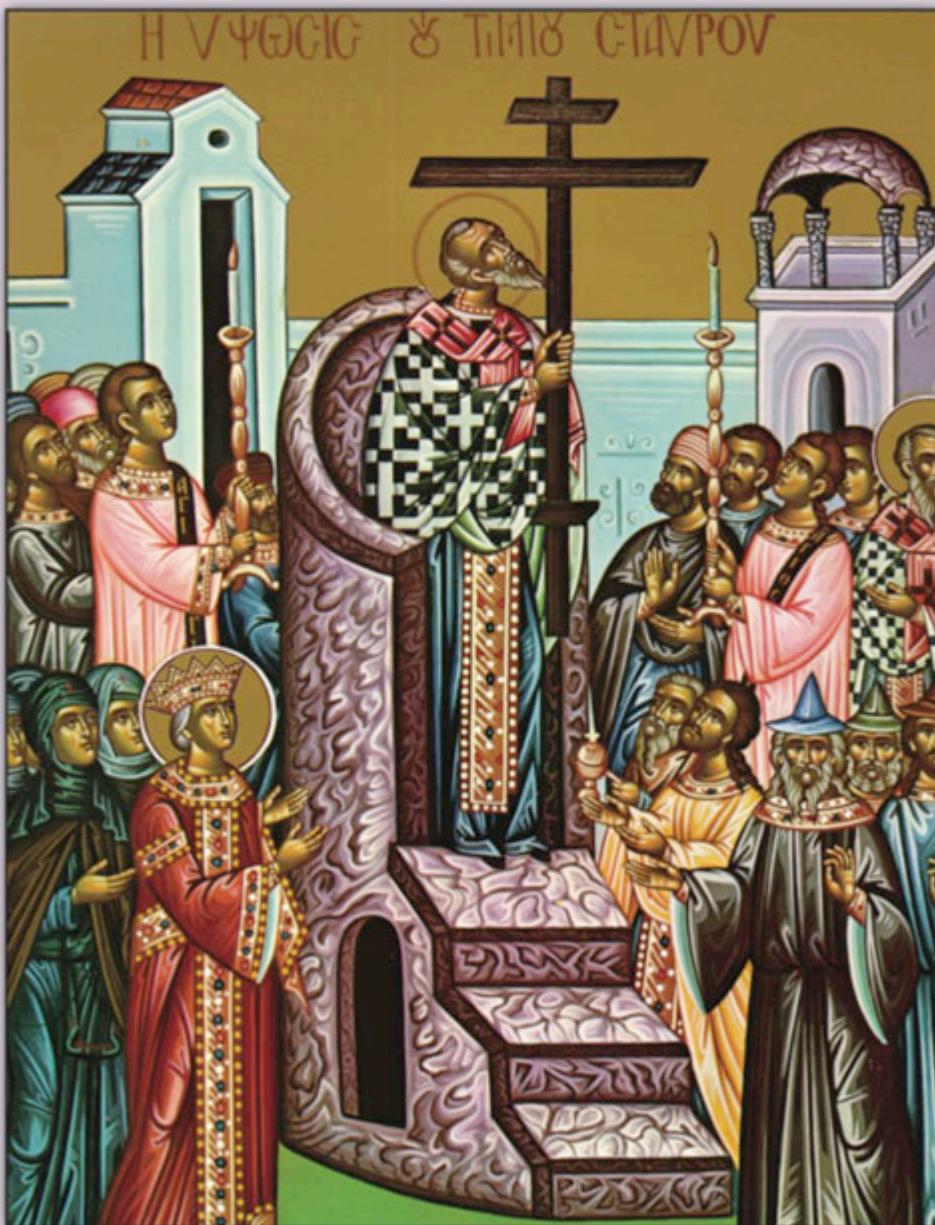


DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN
DISTRICT

THREE HIERARCHS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN September 8th, 2019
V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas

SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS



Icon of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross -- September 14th

Sunday before Holy Cross
St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 6:11-18

**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.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 6:11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.

**Πρὸς Γαλάτας 6:11-18
Προκείμενον. mode-0.**

Πρὸς Γαλάτας 6:11-18 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα

Ἄδελφοί, ἴδετε πηλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί. "Οσοι θέλουσιν εύπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκὶ, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα μὴ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διώκωνται. Οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτετμένοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν, ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμνεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχήσωνται. Ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· δι' οὐ ἐμοὶ κόσμος ἐσταύρωται, κάγὼ τῷ κόσμῳ. Ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὕτε περιτομή τι ισχύει, οὕτε ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ καὶνὴ κτίσις. Καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνη ἐπ' αὐτούς, καὶ ἔλεος, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ. Τοῦ λοιποῦ, κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω· ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω. Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί. Ἀμήν.

**Sunday before Holy Cross
The Gospel According to John 3:13-17**

he Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

'Εκ τοῦ Κατὰ Ἰωάννην 3:13-17 Εὐαγγελίου τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα

Ἐπεν ὁ Κύριος· καὶ οὓδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ οὐδὲς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὥν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὑψώσε τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν οὐδὲν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Οὕτω γὰρ ἡγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν οὐδὲν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενὴν ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον. οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐδὲν αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνῃ τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ' ἵνα σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ.

AGAPE COFFEE HOUR: is being sponsored by the COUTSOURADIS Family in loving memorial tribute to their parents + MARY and + NICHOLAS. Please join us in fellowship for refreshments.

HOECOMING LITURGY for the CHOIR: Our choristers returns to the balcony, to commence the chorale hymnology of our divine services on SUNDAY – SEPTEMBER - 8TH. We welcome back all the ‘ good singers ‘ and others who pop in once in a while to join the heavenly ‘ host ‘. GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK!

TODAY: September 8th, our parish will welcome METROPOLITAN ANTHONY, Primate Of The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Of America under the omophorion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. His Eminence the Archbishop will officiate at the 12:30 P.M. Divine Liturgy assisted by visiting priests, deacons and seminarians. A reception of coffee and sweets will welcome the visiting delegation in Whitehall at 4:00 P.M.

UP-COMING EVENTS:

GREAT VESPER of HOLY CROSS FEAST Friday; September 13th.

Holy Cross Church (Ridge Boulevard) 7P.M.

DIVINE LITURGY of the EXALTATION of HOLY CROSS

THREE HIERarchs CHURCH: September 14th.at 9:30 – 11:00 A.M.

Veneration of the Cross at 9:30 – 11:00 A.M.

Distribution of the Blessed BASILIKO to all!

ARTOKLASIES OFFERINGS: Mary Nicholas in loving tribute to the Theotokos and in blessed memory of + JOHN and + PATRICIA NICHOLAS on September 08th.

MAY THEIR MEMORY BE BLESSED!

We welcome the MARY KAPSALIS family that is offering TODAY an artoklasia in tribute and honor of Our Blessed Virgin Mary’s NATIVITY FEAST. Chronia polla to all those celebrating their birthday this month and especially to all ‘MARIAS’ .

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM: highlighting the theme HOLY COMMUNION and the SANCTITY of SUNDAYS sponsored by the Holy Archdiocese open to all the faithful. The event is hosted at the Saint Nicholas Parish of Flushing, N.Y. on Saturday, October 05th, from 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Please see the centerfold flyer for full details. It’s a family event!

BASILIKO PLANTS and cuttings are requested for the festive observance of the Exaltation of the HOLY CROSS on Saturday, September 14th. The blessing and distribution of the sacred greens will occur at the conclusion of the Eucharistic Liturgy at 11:00 A.M. The large cross of the crucifixion erected on the solea will remain there for the OCTAVE of the feast. Come and venerate the wood of the Cross! Wear and display your personal crosses a witness of faith. Be proud of your Christian Orthodoxy.

CONGRATULATIONS to our PROTO-PSALTI LEONIDAS KOUTSOFLAKIS and his wife who celebrate their 60th WEDDING ANNIVERSARY. May our Lord bless them, their children and their children’s children with joy.

GREEK SCHOOL REGISTRATION: for the academic year 2019-2020 commences Thursday September 12th, at 3:30 P.M. Orientation and AGIASMOS opening the faculty/student presentation is at 4:00 P.M. Please join us for the annual event. Classes begin Monday September 16th, at 3:45 P.M.

ARCHDIOCESEAN CONCLAVE: Father Eugene is privileged to attend two major clergy/laity conferences at the Holy Archdiocese as a representative – DIRECT ARCHIOCESAN DISTRICT COUNCIL Tuesday – September 24th – Headquarters NY - NATIONAL ARCHDIOCESAN COUNCIL-Hilton Thursday – Friday; October 17 – 18th.

RADIO MINISTRY: Each Saturday at 1:15PM Fr. Eugene hosts and produces the radio broadcast MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE NOW IN it’s 21st 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: + RONALD KEURIAN + NICHOLAS and + MARY COUTSOURADIS

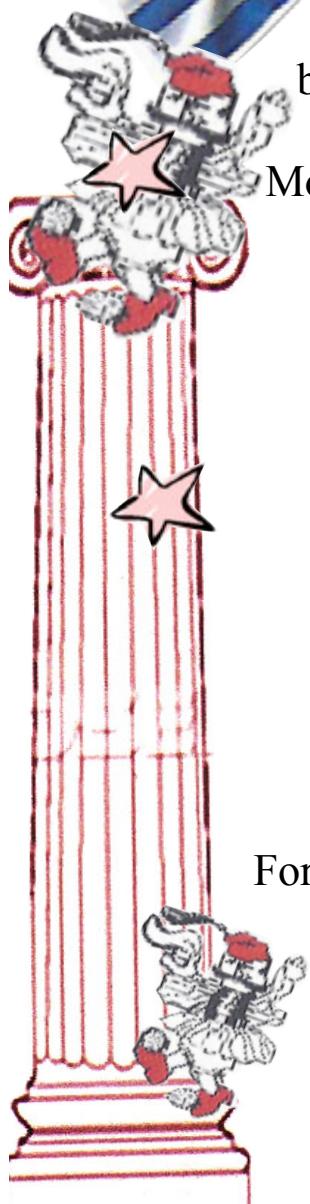
MEMORIAL NEXT WEEK: + SPYRIDON GALIATSOTOS (our Church Secretary’s beloved husband)



Greek Afternoon School

Registration

Children aged 5 through 13 years old may
be inscribed for weekday Greek Language, History ,
Religion and Culture lessons from
Monday through Thursdays 3:45 P.M to 5:30 P.M.



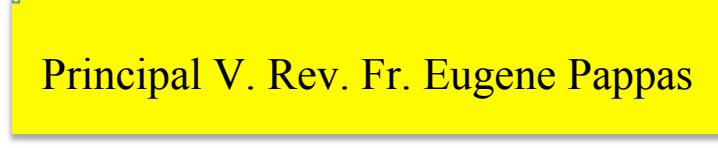
Α Β Γ Δ Ε Ζ Η Θ Ι Κ Λ Μ
Ν Ξ Ο Π Ρ Σ Τ Υ Φ Χ Ψ Ω



Registration and Agiasmos

Thursday, September 12th – 4:00. - 5:00 P.M
Classes Begin Monday September 16^h 3:45 P.M.
Books and Tuition: 1 child \$650 per year
 2 children \$950 per year

For further details contact the church Office at 718 -339-0280



Principal V. Rev. Fr. Eugene Pappas



The Religious Education Committee of the Direct Archdiocesan District presents:

A Religious Education Symposium: Holy Communion & the Sanctity of Sundays

SAVE THE DATE !



Saturday, October 5, 2019 * 10:00am – 3:00pm
St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Flushing, NY
Registration is Free!

"The Divine Liturgy is the way we know God, and the way God becomes known to us..."
- Elder Sophrony of Essex

**Sunday School Teachers,
Ministry workers, Parents, etc. ALL welcome!**

Please RSVP to: Fr. Demetrios Kazakis - demetrios.kazakis@gmail.com
Hosted by: St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church
196-10 Northern Blvd Flushing, NY 11358 -- 718.357.4200



ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ

ΣΥΝΤΟΜΟΝ ΚΗΡΥΓΜΑ



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

Έκδίδεται ἀπὸ τὴν Κοινοβιακή Γυναικεία Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Ἀγίου Αὐγουστίνου Φλωρίνης – 531 00 ΦΛΩΡΙΝΑ – τηλ. 23850-28610 –imaaflo@yahoo.gr

Περίοδος Δ' - "Ετος ΛΣΤ'" Φλωρίνα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 2221	Κυριακὴ πρὸ τῆς Ὑψώσεως (Ἰω. 3,13-17) 8 Σεπτεμβρίου 2019	Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστίνος Ν. Καντιώτης
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Αῖμα Φάρμακο Ψυχῆς!

«Καὶ καθὼς Μωυσῆς ὑψώσει τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται, ἀλλ᾽ ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον» (Ἰω. 3,14-15)

Ἔντοντας, ἀγαπητοί μου, μυστήρια στὴ ζωὴ μας, ποὺ ζαλίζουν τὴ διάνοια τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Ὑπάρχουν μυστήρια στὴ φύσι, ποὺ δὲν μποροῦν νὰ λύσουν οἱ ἐγκέφαλοι τῶν φυσικῶν. Τί εἶνε π.χ. ζωὴ; ἢ τί καίει ὁ ἥλιος ὅστε νὰ μᾶς φωτίζῃ καὶ νὰ μᾶς θερμαίνῃ;... Καὶ τόσα καὶ τόσα ἄλλα δύσκολα γιὰ τοὺς ἐπιστήμονες.

Ὑπάρχουν ὅμως μυστήρια καὶ στὴν πνευματικὴ σφαῖρα, στὶς ἀλήθειες τῆς πίστεώς μας. Γιατί π.χ. ὁ Θεὸς ἔγινε ἄνθρωπος; ποιός ἦταν ὁ σκοπὸς τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεώς του; ἢ πῶς ἐνώθηκαν στὸ πρόσωπό του ἡ θεία φύσις μὲ τὴν ἀνθρώπινη φύσι;... Αὐτὰ εἶνε πραγματικότητες τὶς ὅποιες δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ χωρέσῃ τὸ ἀνθρώπινο μυαλό· τὶς δεχόμεθα μὲ τὴν πίστι.

Ο Θεάνθρωπος Κύριος μας Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς γνωρίζει ὅλα τὰ μυστήρια. Καὶ ὅταν ὅμιλει σ' ἐμᾶς γιὰ τὰ οὐράνια μὲ τὴν πεπερασμένη ἀνθρώπινη γλῶσσα, μᾶς ἀποκαλύπτει τόσα ὅσα μπορεῖ νὰ χωρέσῃ ὁ δικός μας νοῦς. Αὐτὸς βλέπουμε καὶ στὸ σημερινὸ εὐαγγέλιο.

Ο Χριστὸς συνομίλει μὲ τὸ Νικόδημο, ἔναν ἄρχοντα τῶν Ἐβραίων ποὺ ἔρθεται νύχτα νὰ τὸν συναντήσῃ γιὰ νὰ ζητήσῃ ἐξηγήσεις ἐπάνω σὲ τέτοια ζητήματα τῆς πίστεως. Γιατί ὁ Θεὸς θέλησε νὰ γίνη ἄνθρωπος; Στὸ ζήτημα αὐτὸλοιπὸν ὁ Χριστὸς ἔδωσε, ὅπως ἀκούσαμε, ἐξήγησι μὲ ἔνα βοηθητικὸ παράδειγμα ἀπὸ τὴν ιστορία τοῦ περιουσίου λαοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Οι Ἐβραῖοι, ἀγαπητοί μου, ἐπὶ 400 χρόνια ζοῦσαν σκλάβοι κάτω ἀπὸ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς Αἰγύπτου, τοὺς φαραώ. Ὑπέφεραν τὰ πάνδεινα. Δούλευαν στὰ κτήματα καὶ σὲ ἄλλες ἐργασίες τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἀπ' τὸ πρωὶ ὡς τὸ βράδυ· ἔχτιζαν παλάτια, μέγαρα καὶ τὶς περίφημες πυραμίδες. Παρ' ὅλα αὐτὰ οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι δὲν τοὺς ἀγαποῦσαν· τοὺς ἄφηναν νὰ κατοικοῦν σὲ καλύβες, σὲ ἄθλιες συνθῆκες, τοὺς καταπίεζαν.

Ἐν τούτοις οἱ σκλάβοι αὐξάνονταν καὶ πλήθαιναν. Ἡταν ὅμως τόση ἡ μανία τοῦ φαραὼ ἐναντίον τους, ὥστε στὸ τέλος ἀποφάσισε νὰ τοὺς ξεκληρίσῃ· ἔβγαλε διαταγή, κάθε ἀρσενικὸ Ἐβραίοπουλο ποὺ θὰ γεννιέται νὰ θανατώνεται! Ἐρχόταν πλέον τὸ τέλος τους· ἀνθρωπίνως ἦταν καταδικασμένοι σὲ ἀφανισμό.

Ἄλλα ἔρθεται κάποτε ἡ ὥρα ποὺ ὁ Θεός, ὁ ὄποιος προστατεύει τὰ φτωχὰ καὶ ἀδύνατα παιδιά του, ἀρχισε νὰ τιμωρῇ τοὺς τυράννους. Γιὰ νὰ ἐλευθερώσῃ τοὺς Ἐβραίους, ἔστειλε τὸ Μωυσῆ· καὶ, μὲ διάφορα τιμωρητικὰ θαύματα ποὺ ἔγιναν, ὁ φαραὼ ἀναγκάστηκε νὰ τοὺς ἐλευθερώσῃ. Ἄλυσίδες αἰώνων ἔπεσαν! Χαρούμενοι οἱ Ἐβραῖοι ἔφυγαν ἀπὸ τὴν Αἴγυπτο, ποὺ τὴν εἶχαν ποτίσει μὲ τὰ δάκρυα καὶ τὸ αἷμα τους. Ποῦ πήγαιναν; Ὁ Θεὸς τοὺς ὡδηγοῦσε γιὰ νὰ φτάσουν στὴν Παλαιστίνη, σὲ μιὰ χώρα ποὺ ἔρρεε μέλι καὶ γάλα (Βλ. Ἔξ. 3,8.17 κ.ά.).

Πρὶν φτάσουν ὅμως ἔκει, ἔπρεπε νὰ περάσουν ἀπὸ μὴ ἔρημο. Ὅπως οἱ δικοί μας στρατιῶτες κατὰ τὴν μικρασιατικὴ ἐκστρατεία ἦταν ὑποχρεωμένοι νὰ περάσουν ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀλμυρὰ ἔρημο, ἔτσι καὶ οἱ Ἐβραῖοι τότε. Ὅσοι ἀπὸ σᾶς δοκιμάσατε ὡς στρατιῶτες παρόμοιες καταστάσεις, μπορεῖτε νὰ καταλάβετε τί βασανισμὸς ζῇ ὁ ὁδοιπόρος στὴν ἔρημο· χωρὶς νερό, χωρὶς τροφή, μέσα στὸ καμίνι τῆς ζέστης...

Τότε οἱ Ἐβραῖοι ἀρχισαν νὰ γογγύζουν. Τά βαλαν μὲ τὸ Μωυσῆ, ποὺ τοὺς ἔβγαλε στὴν ἔρημο. Θυμήθηκαν τί ἔτρωγαν στὴν Αἴγυπτο ξεχνώντας τὰ βάσανα ποὺ περνοῦσαν ἔκει. Προτιμοῦσαν τὴν σιγουριὰ τῆς σκλαβιᾶς ἀπὸ τὴν ἀβεβαιότητα τῆς ἐλευθερίας. Λησμόνησαν τὶς τόσες εὐεργεσίες τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἀρχισαν νὰ γογγύζουν. Ἔτσι εἶνε ὁ ἀνθρώπος· τὸν εὐεργετεῖ καθημερινῶς ὁ Κύριος· ἀλλ' ὅταν τοῦ λείψῃ τὸ παραμικρό, τότε τὰ βάζει μὲ τὸ Θεό. Καὶ οἱ Ἐβραῖοι τώρα δείχνουν ἀχαρι-

στία. Ή ἀχαριστία ὅμως εἶνε μεγάλη ἄμαρτία, ποὺ ὁ Κύριος δὲν τὴν ἀφήνει ἀτιμώρητη.

Μιὰ μέρα λοιπὸν **τὸ στρατόπεδό τους γέμισε φίδια!** Καὶ τί φίδια· μεγάλα καὶ φαρμακερά. Τί ἦταν πάλι αὐτό; ποιός τὰ γέννησε, ἡ ἄμμος τῆς ἐρήμου; Τὰ φίδια τοὺς ἔφεραν μεγάλη καταστροφή· ὅποιον δάγκωναν δὲν γλύτωνε, πέθαινε ἀπ' τὸ φαρμάκι. Κ' ἔβλεπες φοβερὸ θέαμα· γέροι καὶ νέοι, ἄντρες γυναικες παιδιὰ νὰ ξεψυχοῦν· γέμισε ἡ ἔρημος πτώματα.

Τί νὰ κάνουν τώρα; “Ἐνα τοὺς μένει· νὰ παρακαλέσουν τὸ Θεό. Πέφτουν λοιπὸν μετανοημένοι στὰ γόνατα καὶ διὰ τοῦ Μωυσέως τὸν παρακαλοῦν νὰ τοὺς λυπηθῇ. Καὶ ὁ **μακρόθυμος Κύριος**, ποὺ συγχωρεῖ ὅταν δῆ μετάνοια, **σπλαχνίζεται** καὶ δίνει τώρα στὸ Μωυσῆ τὴν ἔξῆς ἐντολή. Νὰ κατασκευάσῃ ἔνα φίδι ἀπὸ χαλκό, μπροῦτζο· νὰ τὸ κρεμάσῃ πάνω σ' ἔνα ξύλο, νὰ τὸ στήσῃ στὴ μέση τοῦ στρατοπέδου, καὶ νὰ τοὺς πῇ· “Οποιος δαγκώνεται, νὰ στρέψῃ τὰ μάτια του σ' αὐτό.” Ετσι καὶ ἔγινε· κι αὐτὸ τοὺς ἔσωσε. “Οποιος πληγωνόταν γύριζε, ἀτένιζε τὸ χάλκινο φίδι καὶ ζοῦσε [βλ. Ἀριθ. 21,4-9].

“Ο, τι ἔπαθαν, ἀγαπητοί μου, οἱ Ἐβραῖοι τότε στὴν ἔρημο, αὐτὸ παθαίνουμε κ' ἔμεῖς. Ἡ ζωὴ αὐτή, ποὺ ζοῦμε ἐδῶ στὸν κόσμο, εἶνε μία ἔρημος, μιὰ Σαχάρα, γεμάτη φίδια. Δὲν ἔννοῶ φίδια φυσικά, ποὺ ζοῦν κρυμμένα στὶς πέτρες· αὐτὰ εἶνε λίγα. Ὑπάρχουν κάποια ἄλλα φίδια φοβερώτερα· εἶνε **τὰ φίδια τῆς ἄμαρτίας**. Αὐτὰ εἶνε πολλά· καὶ δὲν ἔχουν φωλιὰ σὲ πέτρες καὶ κουφάλες· αὐτὰ –ἀλλοίμονοφωλιάζουν μέσα μας, φωλιάζουν στὴν καρδιά μας. Μᾶς κεντοῦν, μᾶς πληγώνουν, μᾶς θανατώνουν κάθε μέρα, κάθε στιγμή.

Θέλετε **νὰ σᾶς δείξω μερικά;**

✓ Νά ἔνα φίδι ποὺ λέγεται **θυμός**. Εἶνε φαρμακερό, σοῦ δηλητηριάζει τὴ ζωὴ· σὲ ταράζει, σὲ ἀναστατώνει, σοῦ θολώνει τὴ σκέψη, σὲ κάνει νὰ χάνης τὴν ἡρεμία καὶ τὸν ὑπνό σου.

✓ Ἄλλο φίδι ἡ **μέθη**. Σὲ ποτίζει ὡς τὸ τελευταῖο σου κύτταρο μὲ τὸ φαρμάκι ποὺ λέγεται ἀλκοόλ· σὲ ὑποδουλώνει, σὲ κάνει παράφρονα («ὁ τρελλὸς εἶδε τὸ μεθυσμένο κ' ἔφυγε» λέει μιὰ παροιμία), σὲ μεταβάλλει ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπῳ σὲ κτῆνος, σὲ κάνει ἔνα πτῶμα ἄταφο.

✓ Ἄλλο φίδι ἡ **συκοφαντία**. Ἄχ αὐτή! μεταβάλλει τὴ γλῶσσα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου σὲ γλῶσσα ὀχιάς. Πληγώνει σὲ τέτοιο βαθμὸ τὸν ἄλλο, ὥστε φτάνει κάποτε ὁ συκοφαντημένος στὸ σημεῖο νὰ σκέπτεται· Καλύτερα νὰ μὲ δάγκωνε φίδι παρὰ ἡ γλῶσσα τοῦ συκοφάντου!

✓ Τὸ πιὸ φαρμακερὸ φίδι πάντως εἶνε ἡ **βλα-**

σφημία. Εἶνε ἡ χειρότερη μορφὴ ἄμαρτίας. Γιατὶ τολμᾶ νὰ «δαγκώσῃ» ὅχι πλέον ἀνθρώπους ἀλλὰ αὐτὸν τὸν Θεό.

Δὲν ἔχουν τελειωμὸ τὰ φίδια αὐτὰ τῶν ἄμαρτωλῶν παθῶν. Καὶ **πόσο ὑπουλα εῖνε!** Κρύβονται μερικὲς φορὲς τόσο καλά, ὥστε, ἐνῶ φωλιάζουν μέσα στὴν καρδιά, ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς δὲν τὰ καταλαβαίνει, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ χαιδεύει καὶ τὰ περιποιεῖται καὶ τὰ τρέφει τὰ θερμαίνει «σὰν φίδι στὸν κόρφο του» ὅπως λέμε συχνά.

Κάποιος πῆγε σ' ἔνα δάσος καὶ χαιρόταν νὰ βλέπῃ τὰ δέντρα, τὴ βλάστησι, τὴ χλόη, τὰ λουλούδια· ἄπλωνε μὲ ἀφέλεια τὸ χέρι στὰ πολύχρωμα λουλούδια. Ἄλλὰ ξαφνικὰ αἰσθάνθηκε στὴν παλάμη πόνο ὁδυνηρό· δὲν εἶχε προσέξει ὅτι **κάτω ἀπὸ τὰ μυρωδᾶτα τριαντάφυλλα** μὲ τὰ ώραῖα χρώματα ἦταν κουλουριασμένο ἔνα **φαρμακερὸ φίδι**, καὶ τὸν δάγκωσε θανάσιμα. ”Ετσι εἶνε ἡ ἄμαρτία. Φαίνεται ἀκίνδυνη, ώραία σὰν τὰ τριαντάφυλλα, ἐλκυστική. Σὲ τραβᾶ. Πρόσεξε ὅμως, γιατὶ πίσω της εἶνε κρυμμένο τὸ μεγάλο φίδι, ὁ θάνατος.

Ταλαίπωρος ὁ ἀνθρωπὸς, ἀγαπητοί μου. Τί μπορεῖ νὰ πάθῃ; Καὶ ποιός μπορέσῃ νὰ τὸν προστατεύσῃ καὶ νὰ ἔξοντώσῃ τὰ φαρμακερὰ φίδια τῶν παθῶν; Μόνο ὁ Χριστός· αὐτὸ σήμαινε τὸ χάλκινο φίδι στὴν ἔρημο. **Ο Χριστὸς μᾶς ἔσωσε μὲ τὸ αἷμα του.** ”Ω πόσο μεγάλη ἀγάπη ἔδειξε σ' ἐμᾶς ὁ Χριστός!

Γνωρίζουμε ὅλοι τὸν **πελεκάνο**. Συμβαίνει λοιπὸν κάποτε, σὲ ὥρα ποὺ αὐτὸς ἀπουσιάζει, νὰ φτάσῃ ὡς τὴ φωλιά του κακὸ φίδι καὶ νὰ δηλητηριάσῃ τὰ πουλιά του. Τί κάνει τότε ὁ πελεκάνος; Μόλις γυρίσῃ καὶ δῆ τὰ παιδιά του ἐτοιμοθάνατα, τρυπάει μὲ τὸ ράμφος τὸ πλευρό του, τὰ ποτίζει μὲ τὸ καθαρὸ αἷμα του, κι αὐτὰ σώζονται. ”Ετσι κ' ἔμεῖς ἥμασταν δηλητηριασμένοι ἀπὸ τὴν ἄμαρτία, ἔτοιμοι νὰ πεθάνουμε πνευματικά· ἀλλὰ ἥρθε ὁ Χριστός, κρεμάστηκε στὸ σταυρό, καὶ τὸ αἷμα ποὺ ἔχυσε ἔγινε τὸ φάρμακο ποὺ ζωγονεῖ τὴν ὑπαρξί μας.

Ἄδελφοί μου! ὅλοι οἱ φαρμακωμένοι ἀπὸ τὴν ἄμαρτία, ἃς πλησιάζουμε τὸν Ἐσταυρωμένο μὲ μετάνοια καὶ δάκρυα. «Καὶ δάκρυον στάξαν ἰσοδυναμεῖ λουτρῷ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἐπανάγει τὴν χάριν», λέει ὁ ἄγιος Γρηγόριος Νύσσης (περὶ μετανοίας), **τὸ δάκρυ** δηλαδὴ ἀνανεώνει τὴ χάρι τοῦ ἄγιου βαπτίσματος. Αὔτὸς θὰ μᾶς ὁδηγήσῃ στὴ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν· ἐκεῖ ποὺ βασιλεύει ὅχι ὁ δράκων τῆς ἄμαρτίας ἀλλὰ ἡ χαρά, τῆς ὁποίας εἴθε ὅλοι ν' ἀξιωθοῦμε.

(†) **ἐπίσκοπος Αύγουστηνος**

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: \$300 PER YEAR

SINGLE MEMBERSHIP: \$250 PER YEAR

SENIOR CITIZEN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP \$200 PER YEAR

SENIOR CITIZEN HUSBAND & WIFE MEMBERSHIP: \$225 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 2019 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

Confession, the Forgiveness of Sins

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [Jesus] said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'" (John 20:19-23)

There, the risen Christ gives to His disciples the power of binding and loosing sins – a juridical power. This task of binding and loosing was transmitted from the apostles to their successors, the bishops. In the early church, the

administration of penance was something public; it didn't involve the private giving of counsel or advice. It was something exceptional. You hoped, by God's mercy, that you wouldn't have to be involved in penance. Indeed, the penances that were imposed were by our standards extremely severe. It often requires a leap of the imagination on our part to think of how life was in the ancient church. For example, for fornication – I mean, sex outside of marriage – St. Gregory of Nyssa assigns a penance of nine years without communion. St. Basil is a little more merciful, he says seven years without communion. Finally, in the sixth and seventh century, in the canonical legislation of St. John the Faster, it's been reduced to two years. Even so, by our standard, that may well seem severe.

Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware)

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