



SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN December 22nd, 2019
V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas



An icon depicting the Nativity of Christ. The Virgin Mary is seated on the right, holding the infant Jesus. The infant lies in a manger with a horse and ox. Angels are present, and the scene is set in a rocky landscape. The text "H XPICTO" and "ΓΕΝΗΣΙC" is visible at the top.

Daniel 3.26,27

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers. Verse: For you are just in all you have done.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40

BRETHREN, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who 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.

Προκείμενον. Ἦχος δ'. Δανιήλ 3.26-27 Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, Κύριε, ὁ Θεὸς τῶν Πατέρων ἡμῶν.

Πρὸς Ἑβραίους 11:9-10, 32-40 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα

Ἀδελφοί, πίστει παρώκησεν Ἀβραὰμ εἰς τὴν γῆν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ὡς ἄλλοτρίαν, ἐν σκηναῖς κατοικήσας μετὰ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ τῶν συγκληρονόμων τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῆς αὐτῆς· ἐξεδέχετο γὰρ τὴν τοὺς θεμελίους ἔχουσιν πόλιν, ἧς τεχνίτης καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ Θεός. Καὶ τί ἔτι λέγω; Ἐπιλείπει γὰρ με διηγούμενον ὁ χρόνος περὶ Γεδεών, Βαράκ τε καὶ Σαμψών καὶ Ἰεφθάε, Δαυὶδ τε καὶ Σαμουὴλ καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, οἱ διὰ πίστεως κατηγωνίσαντο βασιλείας, ἐργάσαντο δικαιοσύνην, ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν, ἔφραξαν στόματα λεόντων, ἔσβεσαν δὲ ὕναμιν πυρός, ἔφυγον στόματα μαχαίρας, ἐνεδυναμώθησαν ἀπὸ ἀσθενείας, ἐγενήθησαν ἰσχυροὶ ἐν πολέμῳ, παρεμβολὰς ἔκλιναν ἄλλοτρίων· ἔλαβον γυναῖκες ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τοὺς νεκροὺς αὐτῶν· ἄλλοι δὲ ἐτύμπανίσθησαν, οἱ προσδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τυχῶσιν· ἕτεροι δὲ ἐμπαιγμῶν καὶ μαστίγων πείραν ἔλαβον, ἔτι δὲ δεσμῶν καὶ φυλακῆς· ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἐπρίσθησαν, ἐπειράσθησαν, ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρας ἀπέθανον, περιήλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι, ὧν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος, ἐν ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσι καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὁπαῖς τῆς γῆς. Καὶ οὗτοι πάντες μαρτυρηθέντες διὰ τῆς πίστεως οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν, τοῦ Θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν κρείττον τι προβλεψαμένου, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσι.

Ἐκ τοῦ Κατὰ Ματθαῖον 1:1-25 Εὐαγγελίου τὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα

Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραὰμ. Ἀβραὰμ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰσαὰκ, Ἰσαὰκ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰακώβ, Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰούδαν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ, Ἰούδας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Φαρέσ καὶ τὸν Ζαρὰ ἐκ τῆς Θάμαρ, Φαρέσ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἑσρῶν, Ἑσρῶν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀράμ, Ἀράμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀμιναδάβ, Ἀμιναδάβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ναασσών, Ναασσών δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Σαλμών, Σαλμών δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Βοὺζ ἐκ τῆς Ραχάβ, Βοὺζ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ὠβὴδ ἐκ τῆς Ρούθ, Ὠβὴδ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰεσσαί, Ἰεσσαί δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Δαυὶδ τὸν βασιλέα. Δαυὶδ δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐγέννησε τὸν Σολομῶνα ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Οὐρίου, Σολομῶν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ῥοβοάμ, Ῥοβοάμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀβιά, Ἀβιά δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀσά, Ἀσά δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωσαφάτ, Ἰωσαφάτ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωράμ, Ἰωράμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ὀζιαν, Ὀζιαν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωάθαμ, Ἰωάθαμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀχαζ, Ἀχαζ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐζεκίαν, Ἐζεκίας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Μανασσῆ, Μανασσῆς δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀμὼν, Ἀμὼν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωσίαν, Ἰωσίας δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰεχονίαν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος. Μετὰ δὲ τὴν μετοικεσίαν Βαβυλῶνος Ἰεχονίας ἐγέννησε τὸν Σαλαθιήλ, Σαλαθιήλ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ζοροβάβελ, Ζοροβάβελ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀβιούδ, Ἀβιούδ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐλιακίμ, Ἐλιακίμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀζώρ, Ἀζώρ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Σαδώκ, Σαδώκ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἀχεὶμ, Ἀχεὶμ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐλιούδ, Ἐλιούδ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἐλεάζαρ, Ἐλεάζαρ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ματθάν, Ματθάν δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰακώβ, Ἰακώβ δὲ ἐγέννησε τὸν Ἰωσήφ τὸν ἄνδρα Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός. Πᾶσαι οὖν αἱ γενεαὶ ἀπὸ Ἀβραὰμ ἕως Δαυὶδ γενεαὶ δεκατέσσαρες, καὶ ἀπὸ Δαυὶδ ἕως τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος γενεαὶ δεκατέσσαρες, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος ἕως τοῦ Χριστοῦ γενεαὶ δεκατέσσαρες. Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ γέννησις οὕτως ἦν. μνηστευθείσης γὰρ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ Μαρίας τῇ Ἰωσήφ, πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτοὺς εὐρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου. Ἰωσήφ δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς, δίκαιος ὢν καὶ μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν παραδειγματίσαι, ἐβουλήθη λάθρα ἀπολύσαι αὐτήν. ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμηθέντος ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος Κυρίου κατ' ὄναρ ἐφάνη αὐτῷ λέγων· Ἰωσήφ υἱὸς Δαυὶδ, μὴ φοβηθῆς παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκά σου· τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ Πνεύματος ἁγίου ἐστιν Ἁγίου. τέξεται δὲ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν· αὐτὸς γὰρ σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν. Τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ, ὃ ἐστὶ μεθερμηνευόμενον μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός. Διεγερθεὶς δὲ ὁ Ἰωσήφ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου ἐποίησεν ὡς προσέταξεν αὐτῷ ὁ ἄγγελος Κυρίου καὶ παρέλαβε τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτήν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον, καὶ ἐκάλεσε τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν.

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP HOUR: is being hosted by the Joyce Mitchell Family in Whitehall directly after the Divine Liturgy. Please join us for refreshments.

Many thanks are extended to our gracious and generous FLORISTS in the parish who decorate our church proper and exterior during the HIGH HOLY DAYS throughout the year! By name we celebrate Avenue "J", HENRY'S, Madison, Marine Park, Irene's, Plaza, Ellingville, Modern, Ben's FLORIST establishments. We also hail the Deno and Susan Christakos Family that donate the church 'TREE' each year for the solea. What a joy to see the beauty of the Lord's House.

Up-coming schedule OF DIVINE SERVICES for Christmas , New Year 2020, Holy Epiphany, AGIASMOS SERVICES and the Feast of John the Baptist:

Christmas Eve:	December 24th,	Evening Divine Service	10:00 – 12:00 P.M.
		Doxology and Solemn Procession	
Christmas Day:	December 25th,	Divine Liturgy	10:00 - 12:00 P.M.
Holy Innocents:	December 29th,	Divine Liturgy	10:00 - 12:00 P.M.
Saint Basil Day:	January 01st,	Divine Liturgy	10:00 - 12:00 P.M.
Theophany Eve:	January 05th,	Divine Liturgy	9:30 A.M.
	Minor Agiasmos		12:00 P.M.
EPIPHANY Day:	January 06th,	Divine Liturgy	9:30 A.M.
	Greater Blessing of the Water		11:30 A.M.
Saint John Baptist	January 07th,	Divine Liturgy	9:30 A.M.

HOLY WATER BOTTLES will be distributed upon request after the Liturgies of January 5,6,7th.

CHRONIA POLLA: ME YGEIA, HARA and ZOE to all celebrating their patronal name day during these holy high holidays: Christos Christa, Emmanuel, Emmanuella, Basilios, Basilissa, Basiliki, John Joanna, Theophanis, Theophania, Epiphany, Epiphania. ARTKLASIES are most welcomed as you celebrate your holy patronal name-day! Please inform the church office of your intentions. Please cooperate with the schedule.

ELECTION COMMITTEE LADIES are to be highlighted for their efforts last week at the 2020-2022 ELECTIONS for the Parish Council. The ladies EVA THEODOSAKIS, SUSAN JANNACE and GEORGIA STAMOS manned the polling booth for 5 hours until 3:00 P.M. with the following duly elected members listed below:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1) George Annis | 7) George Giannopoulos | 13) Maria Lambrianakos Fisher |
| 2) Billy Apostolou | 8) Connie Ioannidis | 14) Haritini Pandis |
| 3) Julia Demakakos | 9) Anthony Kallinikos | 15) Dimitrios Papaspyrou |
| 4) Alexandra Diolis | 10) Robert Kelly | 16) Nick Paras |
| 5) John Eugenis | 11) Harry Lambrakis | 17) George Stoilas |
| 6) Demetria Gavaris Bauso | 12) John Lambrakis | 18) Gus Vellios |

CHRISTMAS EVE AND DAY services are scheduled as follows:

December 24th. Eve Service 10:00 P.M. with solemn procession and Doxology
December 25th Christmas Liturgy 9:30 – 12:00 noon

ALTAR BOY CHRISTMAS outing is scheduled with a dinner and movie night on THURSDAY DEC. 26th 4 P.M.

We thank the lads who grace our services week after week, and the parents who nurture them to do so! BLESS THE WHOLE FAMILY

We ARE having a New Year's Eve 2019 – 2020 Dinner Dance in Rosehall this year! Plan to share an evening of sumptuous dining and dancing until dawn.

2020 GREEK ORTHODOX ECCLESIASTICAL CALENDARS are mailed to all registered stewards of the Parish. You will receive your by mail. ARE YOU REGISTERED?

PARKING LOT PERMITS are being prepared upon request by the Church Office for the 2020 YEAR. Please update your present placard to avoid any towing issues. **PLACARDS** must be prominently displayed **AT ALLTIMES IN THE** in the lot:

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: + **GEORGE MITCHELL AND + JAMES MITCHELL**
+ **HERCULES AND + STAMATIA ANGELOPOULOS**

CHRIST
IS BORN,
GLORIFY
HIM!

CHRISTMAS
OPEN HOUSE

Monday,
December 23
4-6 p.m.



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

8 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10021-0106 · Telephone: (212) 570-3500
Web: www.goarch.org · E-mail: archdiocese@goarch.org

Christ Is Born!

"...And the Whole of Creation Rejoices."



*"Behold the days are coming, says the Lord,
when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David;
As king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall
do what is just and right in the land. "Jeremiah 23:3*

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh is
JUSTICE, WISDOM and HOPE

The Advent season is a 40 day period of anticipation of a promise fulfilled. The Old Testament of the Hebrews sets the tone of proclaiming THE GREATEST EVENT in the cosmic history of mankind. Jeremiah indicates with fervor the solemn condescension of the Almighty to enter His creation with tender compassion to save US from OURSELVES! This is the significant "Christian gift" among the many under your tree. This ruler of the cosmos is just, wise, and enveloped in hope! Dikaïos, Sophos, and Elpidophoros is He who lacks nothing in preparing the way to salvation. What a gift to know and believe that Jesus the Christ came intimately for you and all whom you love.

Ponder that our Lord Jesus was from conception influence by the WISDOM of His Mother Mary and guided through His formation of years by the JUSTICE of Joseph the Betrothed who served and honored the Mother of the Lord. Wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit that enables one to discern the will of God and respond accordingly. In a complex and fickle world we must be ready and prepared to respond to the slightest stirrings and whisperings of the Lord. He is there even now as you read these lines. He is directing your conscience in righteousness and redemption. Heed the unspoken words, travel the course untrod, rejoice in gratitude for the myriad of unsolicited blessings in your life. These are the real "gifts" under your tree. Open your heart, mind and will to the fragrance of the Holy Spirit at work in you.

KALA CHRISTOUGENNA! A MOST HOLY CHRISTMAS!


V. Rev. Eugene N. Pappas,
Archimandrite, Pastor



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 Γυναικεία Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Ἁγίου Αὐγουστίνου Φλωρίνης - 531 00 ΦΛΩΡΙΝΑ - τηλ. 23850-28610 - imaflo@yahoo.gr

Περίοδος Δ' - Ἔτος ΛΣΤ'
Φλώρινα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 2246

Κυρ. πρὸ Χρ. Γεννήσεως (Ἐβρ. 11,9-10,32-40)
22 Δεκεμβρίου 2019

Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος
Αὐγουστίνος Ν. Καντιώτης

Δός μας, Κύριε, τὴν πίστι!

(Ἐβρ. 11,9, 33, 40)

Εἴμαστε, ἀγαπητοί μου, **μικροὶ καὶ ἁμαρτωλοί** αὐτὴ εἶνε ἡ ἀλήθεια, εἴτε θέλουμε νὰ τὸ παραδεχθοῦμε εἴτε ὄχι. Ἡ φιλαυτία, βλέπετε, ἐξιδανικεύει τὶς ἀτέλειές μας καὶ ἐξωραίζει τὶς ἀσχημίες μας. Καὶ ἐδῶ βρίσκεται ἡ αἰτία ποῦ, ἐνῶ εἴμαστε μικροὶ καὶ ἁμαρτωλοί, δὲν τὸ συναισθανόμαστε ὅσο θὰ ἔπρεπε.

Γιὰ νὰ καταλάβουμε καὶ νὰ συναισθανθοῦμε πόσο μικροὶ εἴμαστε, φτάνει νὰ **συγκρίνουμε τὸν ἑαυτὸ μας μὲ μεγάλα ἀναστήματα καὶ ἁγίους ἀνθρώπους**, μὲ τοὺς μάρτυρες, μὲ τοὺς μεγάλους ἀνδρες τῆς παλαιᾶς καὶ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης. Ὅπως ὅταν βρεθοῦμε στοὺς πρόποδες ἑνὸς βουνοῦ ὕψηλου καὶ ἀτενίζουμε τὴν κορυφὴν τοῦ αἰσθανόμαστε ὅτι τὸ ἀνάστημά μας εἶνε σπιθαμιαῖο, μηδαμινὸ ἐμπρὸς στοῦ ὕψους, στοῦ «ἀνάστημα» τοῦ βουνοῦ, ἔτσι καὶ ὅταν γιὰ μιὰ στιγμή σταθοῦμε καὶ συγκρίνουμε τὴν ζωὴ ἑνὸς ἁμαρτωλοῦ μὲ τὸν ἅγιο βίον τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων, τότε βλέπουμε ὅτι δὲν εἴμαστε τίποτα, ὅτι εἴμαστε μικροὶ μπροστὰ στοῦ μεγαλεῖο τους καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ μπροστὰ στὴν ἀγιωσύνη τους. **Εἴμαστε νᾶνοι μπροστὰ σὲ γίγαντες**· νᾶνοι ἐμεῖς, γίγαντες ἐκεῖνοι.

Ἐκπληκτοὶ μπροστὰ στοῦ μεγαλεῖο τῶν ἁγίων ἀπορούμε καὶ σκεπτόμαστε· πῶς ἐκεῖνοι κατάρθωσαν νὰ φτάσουν σὲ τόσο μεγάλα ὕψη ἀρετῆς; πῶς μπόρεσαν νὰ πετάξουν τόσο ψηλά, ἐκεῖ ποῦ ἐμεῖς οὔτε ν' ἀτενίσουμε δὲν μπορούμε; Τί τοὺς ὕψωσε ὥς ἐκεῖ, **ποῖά ἦταν ἡ δύναμις ἐκείνη ποῦ τοὺς ἀγίασε;**

Στὴν ἀπορία μας ἀπαντᾷ τὸ σημερινὸ ἀποστολικὸ ἀνάγνωσμα, ποῦ εἶνε παρμένο ἀπὸ τὴν θεόπνευστη πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ ἀποστόλου Παύλου. Ἡ δύναμις λοιπὸν αὐτὴ ἡ μεγάλη ἦταν –μία λέξις– **ἡ πίστις**. Ἡ λέξις «πίστις» ἀκούγεται κατ' ἐπανάληψιν στοῦ ἀποστολικοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀνάγνωσμα (Ἐβρ. 11,9,33,40). **Μὲ τὴν πίστι οἱ ἅγιοι νίκησαν τοὺς πάντες καὶ τὰ πάν-**

τα. Καὶ συγκεκριμένα νίκησαν **1ον** στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως. **2ον** θηρία. **3ον** βασιλεῖς καὶ τυράννους. Καὶ **4ον** νίκησαν καὶ αὐτὰ ἀκόμη τὰ τρομερὰ μαρτύρια. Ἄς τὰ πάρουμε αὐτὰ ἕνα - ἕνα.

1ον. Οἱ ἅγιοι νίκησαν στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως. Ὑπάρχει φοβερώτερο ἀπὸ τὴν φωτιά; Νά ὁμως ποῦ κάποιοι νίκησαν τὴν φωτιά. Ὁ Ναβουχοδονόσορ, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῆς Βαβυλώνης, ἔρριξε μέσα σ' ἕνα πυρακτωμένο καμίνι δεμένους τοὺς **Τρεῖς Παῖδας**, τὸν Ἀνανία, τὸν Ἀζαρία καὶ τὸν Μισαήλ (στὰ βαβυλωνιακὰ *Σεδράχ, Μισάχ, καὶ Ἀβδενεγάω*), καὶ δὲν ἔπαθαν τίποτα! «*Οὐχ ἦψατο αὐτῶν τὸ καθόλου τὸ πῦρ*», δὲν τοὺς ἄγγιξε καθόλου ἡ φωτιά. Γιατί; Γιατί εἶχαν πίστι ὅτι ὁ Κύριος, ὁ μόνος ἀληθινὸς Θεός, δὲν θὰ τοὺς ἀφήσῃ ἀβοήθητους. Καὶ πράγματι ὁ Μέγας Θεὸς ἔστειλε τὸν ἀγγελό του καὶ τοὺς ἔσωσε. Ὁ Κύριος μετέβαλε τὸ καμίνι σὲ δροσιά. Καὶ ἐνῶ δὲν μπορούσε νὰ πλησιάσῃ ἐκεῖ κανεὶς, ἀφοῦ οἱ φλόγες ἔφταναν σὲ πολλὰ μέτρα ὕψους, ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ Κυρίου «*ἔξετίναξε τὴν φλόγα τοῦ πυρὸς ἐκ τῆς καμίνου καὶ ἐποίησε τὸ μέσον τῆς καμίνου ὡς πνεῦμα δρόσου διασυρίζον*». Ἀντὶ νὰ καοῦν καὶ νὰ γίνουν στάχτη, αὐτοὶ στὴ μέση τῆς καμίνου ἐνιωσαν νὰ τοὺς δροσίξῃ ἕνα ἐξαίσιο ἀεράκι. Τότε καὶ οἱ τρεῖς μ' ἕνα στόμα «*ὑμνοῦν καὶ ἐδόξαζον καὶ ὑμολόγουν τὸν Θεὸν ἐν τῇ καμίνῳ...*» (Ἀπ. 3,52). Ποιὸς ἔκανε τὸ θαῦμα αὐτό; Ἡ πίστις.

2ον. Οἱ ἅγιοι νίκησαν θηρία. Ὑπάρχει θηρίο πιὸ φοβερό ἀπὸ τὸ **λιοντάρι**; Ἡ πίστις ὁμως νίκησε καὶ ἄγρια θηρία· δὲν ἔσβησε μόνο τὴν «*δύναμιν πυρός*», ἀλλὰ ἔφραξε καὶ «*στόματα λεόντων*» (Ἐβρ. 11,34). Ἄς θυμηθοῦμε τὸν **Σαμψών**, ποῦ ὅταν κάποτε τοῦ ἐπιτέθηκε ἕνας «*σκύμνος λέοντος ὠρυόμενος*» τσάκισε τὸ λιοντάρι λὲς καὶ ἦταν κανένα κατσικάκι (βλ. Κριτ. 14,5-6). Νὰ θυμηθοῦμε καὶ τὸν **Δαυὶδ**, ποῦ σὰν νεαρὸς βο-

σκός χτυπούσε καὶ θανάτωνε λιοντάρια καὶ ἀρκούδες ὅταν πήγαιναν νὰ κατασπαράξουν τὰ πρόβατά του (βλ. Α' Βαα. 17,34-35). Ὡς θυμηθοῦμε καὶ τὸν προφήτη **Δανιήλ**, ποὺ δὲν φοβήθηκε ὅταν τὸν ἔρριξαν στὸ λάκκο τῶν λεόντων· ὁ Θεὸς προστάτευσε τὸν ἐκλεκτὸ δοῦλο του καὶ τὰ λιοντάρια δὲν τὸν πείραξαν (βλ. Δαν. 6,1-18). Ἡ πίστι τῶν ἁγίων αὐτῶν ἀνδρῶν νίκησε· αὐτὴ ἔφραζε τὰ στόματα τῶν λεόντων.

3ον. Οἱ ἅγιοι λοιπὸν νίκησαν τὴ φωτιά, νίκησαν τὰ ἄγρια θηρία· **νίκησαν ἐπίσης βασιλεῖς καὶ τυράννους.** Ὁ Μωυσεὺς νικᾷ τὸ φαραῶ βασιλιά τῶν Αἰγυπτίων, «μὴ φοβηθεῖς τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ βασιλέως» (Ἔβρ. 11,27). Ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοῦ Ναυῆ νικᾷ τοὺς 29 βασιλεῖς τῶν Χαναναίων (βλ. Ἰηρ. Ναυ. 10-12) περ. «Τεταρτὸς 1972 σελ. 88-9, 124-5». Ὁ Σαμψὼν τοὺς τυράννους τοῦ (βλ. Κριτ. 13-16). Ὁ Δαυὶδ νικᾷ τὸν σιδηρόφρακτο γίγαντα Γολιάθ (βλ. Α' Βαα. 17). Ὅλοι αὐτοὶ δὲν εἶχαν πολλὰ στρατεύματα, δὲν εἶχαν ἄρματα, ἱππικὸ, κανόνια καὶ ὅπλα· εἶχαν ὅμως μέσα τους πίστι στὸν Κύριο, τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸ Θεό. Αὐτὴ ἡ πίστι εἶνε τὸ μεγαλύτερο καὶ ἰσχυρότερο ὅπλο, καὶ μ' αὐτὸ ἔτρεψαν σὲ φυγὴ πολυάριθμα στρατεύματα. **Οἱ λίγοι νίκησαν τοὺς πολλούς,** οἱ ἄσπλοι τοὺς ὀπλισμένους, οἱ ἀδύνατοι τοὺς ἰσχυρούς, οἱ μικροὶ τοὺς μεγάλους. Πῶς ἔγινε τὸ θαῦμα; Μόνον μὲ τὴν πίστι, τὴ θερμὴ καὶ μεγάλη.

4ον. Οἱ ἅγιοι τέλος μὲ τὴν πίστι **νίκησαν καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ φοβερά μαρτύρια.** Ὡ καὶ τί δοκιμασίαις ὑπέφεραν οἱ ἅγιοι! Ἄλλους, ὅπως εἶδαμε, τοὺς ἔρριξαν στὴ φωτιά (=τοὺς Τρεῖς Παῖδας), ἄλλον στὰ λιοντάρια (=τὸν προφήτη Δανιήλ), ἄλλον σὲ βόρβορο - ἀποχωρητήρια (=τὸν προφήτη Ἰερεμία), ἄλλον τὸν πριόνισαν, ἄλλους τοὺς λιθοβόλησαν, ἄλλον τὸν ἐφόνευσαν μὲ ἄλλο τρόπο (π.χ. τὸν προφήτη Ἰεζεκιήλ). Γι' αὐτὸ λέει σήμερα ὁ ἀπόστολος, ὅτι «ἄλλοι ἐτυμπανίσθησαν (=τοὺς ἔδεσαν στὸ ὄργανο βασιανισμοῦ ποὺ λέγεται τύμπανο)..., ἕτεροι δὲ ἐμπαιγμῶν καὶ μαστίγων πείραν ἔλαβον (=τοὺς περιέπειξαν καὶ τοὺς μαστίγωσαν), ἔτι δὲ δεσμῶν καὶ φυλακῆς (=τοὺς ἔδεσαν καὶ τοὺς φυλάκισαν)· ἐλιθάσθησαν (=τοὺς λιθοβόλησαν, π.χ. τὸν προφήτη Ἰερεμία καὶ τὸν πρωτομάρτυρα Στέφανο), ἐπρίσθησαν (=τοὺς πριόνισαν, π.χ. τὸν προφήτη Ἡσαΐα ποὺ τὸν πριόνισαν ζωντανὸ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι), ἐπειράσθησαν (=πέρασαν δυνατοὺς πειρασμούς), ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρας ἀπέθανον (=τοὺς ἐσφαξαν μὲ μαχαίρι), περιήλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν (=περιφέρονταν σκεπασμένοι μὲ δέρματα ἀπὸ πρόβατα καὶ κατσίκια), ὑστερούμενοι θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι, ὧν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος, ἐν ἐρημίαις πλανώ-

μενοι καὶ ὄρεσι καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὁπαῖς τῆς γῆς» (Ἔβρ. 11,35-38). Ἄλλοι, δηλαδή, ἔζησαν μέσα σὲ σπηλιές, γιὰ ν' ἀποφύγουν τοὺς διώκτες καὶ μὴ ἔχοντας τί νὰ ρίξουν πάνω τους φοροῦσαν προβειές, ὅπως ὁ προφήτης Ἠλίας.

Ὅλα τὰ ὑπέμειναν γιὰ τὸν Κύριο. **Τίποτα δὲν στάθηκε ἱκανὸ νὰ τοὺς κλονίσῃ**· οὔτε φωτιές, οὔτε λιοντάρια, οὔτε τύραννοι, οὔτε φυλακές, οὔτε σπαθιά, οὔτε μαχαίρια καὶ πριόνια, οὔτε τίποτε ἄλλο φοβερό. Ὅλοι οἱ ἅγιοι τοὺς ὁποίους ἀναφέρει ὁ ἀπόστολος σήμερα βάδισαν μὲ ἀπόφασι, μὲ ὑπομονὴ καὶ καρτερία πρὸς τὸ μαρτύριο, πρὸς τὸ θάνατο.

Καὶ τὰ νίκησαν ὅλα αὐτά, γιατί **εἶχαν πίστι** μέσα τους. Πίστευαν θερμὰ στὸν Κύριο. Πίστευαν στὴ μέλλουσα ζωὴ, στὴν ἀθανασία τῆς ψυχῆς. Πίστευαν σὲ μέλλουσα κρίσι καὶ ἀνταπόδοσι. Πίστευαν ἀκράδαντα, ἀκλόνητα, ὅτι ἐκεῖ πάνω ὑπάρχει ἡ πραγματικὴ ζωὴ. Προσδοκοῦσαν νὰ κατοικήσουν στὴν πόλι ἐκείνη, ποὺ τὴν ἔχουν χτίσει ὅχι χέρια ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ ὁ ἴδιος ὁ Μέγας Θεός (βλ. Ἰά 1,1).

Ἐμεῖς, ἀγαπητοί μου, τί κάνουμε; Ἐχουμε ἄραγε τὴν πίστι ποὺ εἶχαν οἱ ἅγιοι ἐκεῖνοι ἄνδρες; Ἀχ, εἶνε λυπηρό, ἀλλὰ πρέπει νὰ τὸ ὁμολογήσουμε μὲ συντριβή· **δὲν ἔχουμε πίστι.**

Γι' αὐτὸ, ἀντὶ νὰ τὰ νικοῦμε ὅλα, ἀντιθέτως **μᾶς νικοῦν ὅλα.** Μᾶς νικοῦν τὰ δαιμόνια· δὲν ἔχουμε τὴ δύναμι νὰ ἐκδιώξουμε ἓνα δαίμονα. Μᾶς νικοῦν οἱ ἄπιστοι· ἀντὶ νὰ τοὺς τραβήξουμε ἐμεῖς στὸ δρόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ, μᾶς παρασύρουν αὐτοὶ στὸ δρόμο τοῦ διαβόλου. Μᾶς νικοῦν οἱ πειρασμοί· μᾶς δελεάζει ἡ σάρκα, μᾶς ἐλκύει ὁ κόσμος, μᾶς παγιδεύει ὁ διάβολος. Γιατί; Γιατί δὲν καίει μέσα μας ἡ πίστις.

Ὡ καὶ ἂν εἶχαμε μέσα μας **μὴ σπῖθα** ἀπὸ τὴν πίστι ποὺ εἶχαν οἱ ἅγιοι τοῦ Θεοῦ! **πόσο διαφορετικὴ θὰ ἦταν ἡ ζωὴ μας!** Θὰ νικούσαμε τὸν κόσμον, τὴ σάρκα, τὸν διάβολο, καὶ νικηταί θὰ πηγαίναμε ν' ἀνταμώσουμε ὅλους τοὺς ἁγίους, ποὺ μὲ ἀνοιχτὲς ἀγκάλες μᾶς περιμένουν, γιὰ νὰ ζήσουμε ὅλοι μακάριοι κ' εὐτυχημένοι κοντὰ στὸν οὐράνιο Πατέρα μας.

Ἀδελφοί μου, ὁ Θεὸς μᾶς περιμένει. Κοντὰ τοῦ μᾶς περιμένει καὶ ὁλος ὁ οὐράνιος κόσμος, οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ οἱ ἅγιοι. Ἀξίζει **νὰ ζήσουμε κ' ἐμεῖς μὲ πίστι.** Καὶ ἂν δὲν τὴν ἔχουμε, **ἂς τὴν ζητήσουμε** λέγοντας πάντα καὶ θερμὰ στὶς προσευχὲς μας· Κύριε, εἴμαστε ὀλιγόπιστοι· σὲ παρακαλοῦμε, «**πρόσθετε ἡμῖν πίστιν**» (Λουκ. 17,5), δίνε μας πίστι, γιὰ ν' ἀξιωθοῦμε τῆς βασιλείας σου τῆς ἐπουρανίου.

(†) **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: \$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

Jesus Our Joy and Peace

When our Lord and Savior came to earth and made Himself bodily present, the angels appeared in chorus and gave the good news to the shepherds: I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all the people. We, too, borrow this hymn from these holy angels and announce great joy to you.

Today, very dearly beloved, the people of Christ have been exalted, and the enemies of truth have been humbled. Today, dearly beloved, Christ is in joy, and the Devil in grief. Today, the angels are in exaltation, and the demons in confusion.

Today, Christ, the King of peace, has come forth with His peace and routed all discord, banished dissension, and dissipated conflict. As the brilliance of the sun lights up the sky, so He illumines the Church with the splendor of peace. For, the text says, there has been born to you today a Savior

of the world. O how desirable is the very name of peace! How firm a foundation peace is for the Christian religion, and what a heavenly ornament for the altar of the Lord! What can we utter worthy of peace? Peace is a name of Christ Himself, as even the Apostle says: For Christ is our peace. He it is who has made both one. The two were at variance, not over conflicting opinions or faith, but because of the Devil's envy. But, just as the streets are cleansed when the king comes forth, and the whole city decked with myriad flowers and banners to keep out of sight anything less worthy of the king's countenance, so also now, when Christ the King of peace comes forth, let everything depressing be removed from our midst. While truth is shining, let falsehood be banished, and discord flee, and concord be resplendent.

St. Peter Chrysologus

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