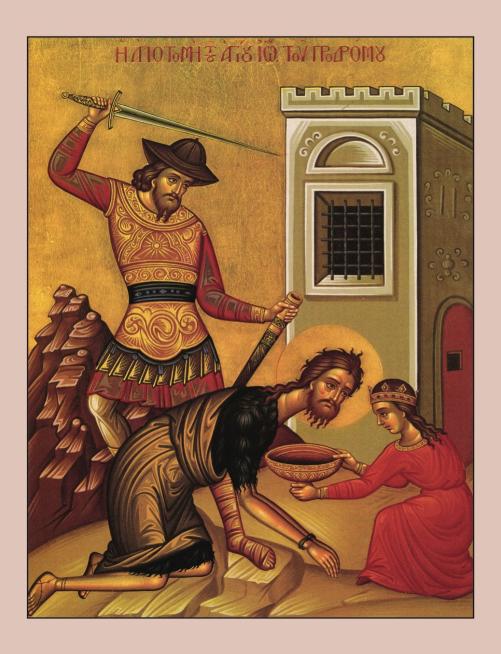


THREE HIERARCHS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN August 27th, 2023 V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas

TWELFTH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW



Icon of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist -- August 29th

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Prokeimenon. Mode 3 Psalm 46.6,1

Sing praises to our God, sing praises. Verse: Clap your hands, all you nations.

The reading is from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 15:1-11

Brethren, I would remind you in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast -- unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

Ποοκείμενον. Ήχος γ' ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 46.6,1

Ψάλατε τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν, ψάλατε. Στίχ. Πάντα τὰ ἔθνη κοοτήσατε χεῖοας. Πρὸς Κορινθίους α' 15:1-11 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα

Αδελφοί, γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὁ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, ὁ καὶ παρελάβετε, ἐν ῷ καὶ ἐστήκατε, δι' οὖ καὶ σῷζεσθε· τίνι λόγῳ εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν, εἰ κατέχετε, ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ εἰκῃ ἐπιστεύσατε. Παρέδωκα γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐν πρώτοις, ὁ καὶ παρέλαβον, ὅτι Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν κατὰ τὰς γραφάς. καὶ ὅτι ἐτάφη· καὶ ὅτι ἐγήγερται τῃ τρίτῃ ἡμέρα κατὰ τὰς γραφάς· καὶ ὅτι ὤφθη Κηφᾳ, εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα· ἔπειτα ὤφθη ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς ἐφάπαξ, ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείους μένουσιν ἕως ἄρτι, τινὲς δὲ καὶ ἐκοιμήθησαν· ἔπειτα ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ, εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν· ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων, ὡσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι, ὤφθη κάμοί. Ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι ὁ ἐλάχιστος τῶν ἀποστόλων, ὸς οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς καλεῖσθαι ἀπόστολος, διότι ἐδίωξα τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ. Χάριτι δὲ θεοῦ εἰμι ὅ εἰμι, καὶ ἡ χάρις αὐτοῦ ἡ εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ κενὴ ἐγενήθη, ἀλλὰ περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα, οὐκ ἐγὼ δέ, ἀλλ' ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ σὺν ἐμοί. Εἴτε οὖν ἐγώ, εἴτε ἐκεῖνοι, οὕτως κηρύσσομεν καὶ οὕτως ἐπιστεύσατε.

Έκ τοῦ Κατὰ Ματθαῖον 19:16-26 Εὐαγγελίου τὸ Ἀνάγνωσμα

At that time, a young man came up to Jesus, kneeling and saying, "Good Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?" And he said to him, "Why do you call me good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to him, "Which?" And Jesus said, "You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to him, "All these I have observed; what do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, νεανίσκος τις προσῆλθε τῷ Ἰησοῦ, γονυπετῶν αὐτόν, καὶ λέγων· Διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ, τί ἀγαθὸν ποιήσω ἵνα ἔχω ζωὴν αἰώνιον; 'Ο δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἶς ὁ Θεός. εἰ δὲ θέλεις εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ζωήν, τήρησον τὰς ἐντολάς. λέγει αὐτῷ· ποίας; ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπε· τὸ οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ κλέψεις, οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις, τίμα τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα, καὶ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ νεανίσκος· πάντα ταῦτα ἐφυλαξάμην ἐκ νεότητός μου· τί ἔτι ὑστερῷ; ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· εἰ θέλεις τέλειος εἶναι, ὕπαγε πώλησόν σου τὰ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ δὸς πτωχοῖς, καὶ ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῷ, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι. ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ νεανίσκος τὸν λόγον ἀπῆλθε λυπούμενος· ἦν γὰρ ἔχων κτήματα πολλά. 'Ο δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι δυσκόλως πλούσιος εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῷν. πάλιν δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, εὐκοπώτερόν ἐστι κάμηλον διὰ τρυπήματος ῥαφίδος διελθεῖν ἢ πλούσιον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. ἀκούσαντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐξεπλήσσοντο σφόδρα λέγοντες· τίς ἄρα δύναται σωθῆναι; ἐμβλέψας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· παρὰ ἀνθρώποις τοῦτο ἀδύνατόν ἐστι, παρὰ δὲ Θεῷ πάντα δυνατά ἐστι.

Many thanks are extended to the faithful parishioners who joyfully offered altar sacramental wine for the sacred Eucharist and other rites of the Church. The LORD knows who you are and will abundantly bestow blessings on you and those for whom you care.

TAKE NOTE: On the occasion of the National Observance of 'LABOR DAY, the Church and School Offices will be closed on Monday – September 04th,

HOLY WATER BLESSING: for the month of September will be observed on FRIDAY, September 01st, at 11:00 A.M. Bottles of water will be available for distribution. Upon request.

ECCLESIATICAL NEW YEAR: The official Church New Year is SEPTEMBER FIRST. This designation is an ancient calculation since at the end of summer season begins the 'hibernation' of the new 'cycle' of life. This observance is indicted also in the Hebrew celebration of 'ROSH HASHONA' – Jewish New Year this year (Friday-September 15th.) ROSH HASHANAH. AUTUMN THIS YEAR COMMENCIES on Saturday – September 23rd.

GRAND-PARENTS DAY: Will be observed on Sunday, September 10th. This is a clarion call for all 'yiayias' and papous' to gather their grandchildren for Sunday Liturgy and to bring them in hand to the altar to receive the EUCHARIST (Holy Communion). It is also an opportunity to teach them how and why to light a candle in Church. It's a learning lesson from the elders!

Basiliko plants (BASIL) are requested for the Feast of the Exaltation of the HOLY CROSS on Thursday, September 14th. Please cultivate the plants and carry them to church on Sunday – September 10th. The cross will be erected for veneration. Basil 'sprigs' will be distributed to all the faithful on the feast day-14th. Chronia Polla to every STAVROS and STAVROULA.

GREEK SCHOOL REGISTRATIONS are commencing. Please consider enrolling your child or grand-child in the program which fosters Hellenic scholarship learning language, history, religion and culture of GREECE. IT IS THEIR HERITAGE and LEGACY! It's certainly worth the effort. KALES SPOUDES!

Feast of Saint Phanourios is TODAY, AUGUST 27th. This remarkable holy centurion (ROMAN) was martyred on the Greek Island of Rhodes. This particular saint martyr suffered many persecutions of the flesh by his enemies. The tortures were many because as a Roman Officer he refused to recognize Caesar as both KING and GOD. He pledged his allegiance to Caesar as Emperor but NOT as god! Phanourios was a devout CHRISTIAN during the early persecutions of the fledgling faith. His mother was a devout 'pagan' offering her sacrifices to the myriad gods of Rome. Despite his constant appeals for her to accept JESUS as the CHRIST (Messsiah of the world) she refused. This was a major disappointment for blessed Phanourios who was devoted to his maternal love. Each icon of the martyr evidences Phanourios holding a lighted candle searching throughout the heavens for his mother's lost and wandering soul. Saint Phanourios is the 'patron' of lost things, lost causes, lost direction. If you lose something, call out in supplication for the saint's assistance and it SHALL BE FOUND!

PHANOUROPITES are special cakes that are prepared as thanksgiving to honor this martyr for 'things FOUND' Traditionally each cake or 'pita' is cut into portions to be shared with others celebrating his 'heavenly birthday'his holy martyrdom. I'm sure that you have something to be thankful for that was lost. Come and share the JOY, the STORY, the CAKE.

Observance of the beheading of the BAPTIST JOHN: MONDAY – AUGUST 28th. Solemn Vespers welcome the faithful at the Gramercy Park CHURCH of Saint John the Baptist. 143 East 17th, Street – Manhattan at 7:00 P.M. celebrated by Bishop Athenagoras of Nanzianzos. The following morning TUESDAY – AUGUST 29TH the Divine Liturgy in solemn observance of the BEHEADING of the BAPTIST will be offered at 10:00 A.M. by the Pastor- Rev. Fr. Nicholas Samaras.

ICON SHRINE VISITATION; of the Baptist's beheading will be available on the solea of the church proper from Today August 27th through Labor Day week-end Sunday September 03rd. This ancient Icon in the strict Byzantine tradition is one of the prize artifacts of the Parish. COME! VISIT! PRAY! VENERATE! BE INSPIRED BY THE BAPTIST!

MEMORIALS TODAY: + NICHOLAS and + CALLIOPE DEMAKAKOS

NEXT SUNDAY: + IRENE ARGYROS + IOANNIS BOLANOS

Eternal be the memory of the faithfully departed!









«Ἐγενόμην ἐν Πνεύματι ἐν τῆ Κυριακῆ ἡμέρα καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν ὀπίσω μου μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος» (Ἀπ. 1,10)

'Εκδίδεται ἀπὸ τὴν Κοινοβιακὴ Γυναικεία Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Άγίου Αὐγουστίνου Φλωρίνης – 531 00 ΦΛΩΡΙΝΑ – τηλ. 23850-28610 –imaaflo@yahoo.gr

Περίοδος Δ΄ - "Ετος Μ΄ Φλώρινα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 2579 Κυριακὴ ΙΒ΄ Ματθαίου (Ματθ. 19,16-26) 27 Αὐγούστου 2023 Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος Αὐγουστῖνος Ν. Καντιώτης

Όλοι ἁμαρτωλοὶ

«Ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν; οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἶς ὁ Θεός» (Ματθ. 19,17)

¯ὸ εὐαγγέλιο σήμερα (βλ. Ματθ. 19,16-26) λέει, ἀγαπητοί μου, ὅτι ἕνας ἄνθρωπος ἦρθε στὸ Χριστὸ καὶ τὸν παρακαλοῦσε. Ποιός νὰ ἦταν αὐτός; μήπως κανένας ἄρρωστος ποὺ ζητοῦσε θεραπεία ἢ φτωχὸς ποὺ ζητοῦσε βοήθεια; Δὲν ἦταν φτωχός, πλούσιος ἦταν δὲν ἦταν ἄρρωστος, ἦταν ὑγιὴς καὶ νέος, στὴν ἀκμὴ τῆς ήλικίας του ήταν ἀκόμα καὶ ἔνδοξος, ὅπως πληροφορεῖ ὁ ἄλλος εὐαγγελιστής εἶχε ἀξίωμα, ἦταν «ἄρχων» (Λουκ. 18,18), εἶχε ἐξουσία. Τρία πράγματα εἶχε ὁ ἄνθρωπος αὐτός νιᾶτα, λεφτά, δόξα. Αὐτὰ δὲν ζητᾶνε σήμερα οἱ πολλοί; Καὶ ὅποιον ἔχει λεφτά, ἐξουσία, νιᾶτα, ὑγεία, τὸν θεωροῦν εὐτυχισμένο. Αὐτὸς τὰ εἶχε ὅλα αὐτά· ἤταν λοιπὸν εὐτυχισμένος: Θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ εἶνε. Καὶ ὅμως δὲν φαίνεται εὐχαριστημένος. Μπορεῖ κανεὶς νὰ μὴν ἔχη φράγκο στὴν τσέπη, νὰ κατοικῆ σὲ μιὰ καλύβα, νά 'νε ἀκόμα καὶ μέσ' στὴ φυλακή, ὅπως ἦταν ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος, ποὺ τὸν ἀκοῦμε σήμερα (βλ. Α΄ Κορ. 15,1-11), μπορεῖ ἀκόμα νὰ τὸν ὁδηγοῦν στὸ ἐκτελεστικὸ ἀπόσπασμα, καὶ ὅμως νὰ εἶνε εὐτυχισμένος τί μυστήριο εἶνε ὁ ἄνθρωπος! Καὶ μπορεῖ κανείς νὰ ἔχη ὅλες τὶς ἀνέσεις καὶ τ' ἀγαθὰ τῆς ζωῆς, νὰ κάθεται σὲ μέγαρα καὶ παλάτια, νὰ ἔχη λεφτὰ καὶ μεγαλεῖα καὶ δόξες, καὶ ὅμως νά 'νε δυστυχισμένος. ή εὐτυχία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου -τὸ δείχνει τὸ εὐαγγέλιο σήμερα- δὲν βρίσκεται στὰ ἐξωτερικὰ ἀγαθά· ἐλάχιστα συμβάλλουν αὐτά· κατ' ἐξοχὴν ἐξαρτᾶται ἀπὸ τὸν έσωτερικό πλοῦτο, τὸν πλοῦτο τῆς ψυχῆς.

Αὐτὸς λοιπόν, ὁ πλούσιος καὶ ἔνδοξος νερός, ἔρχεται ἐνώπιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Τί ζητάει, τί τὸν ἀπασχολεῖ; τί τοῦ λείπει; "Αν ἦταν ζῷο, μὲ ὅλα αὐτὰ ποὺ εἶχε θά 'μενε ἱκανοποιημένος. Μὰ δὲν εἶνε ζῷο ὁ ἄνθρωπος! Κάποια σοβαρὴ σκέψι τὸν ἐνοχλεῖ κι αὐτὸν ὅπως καὶ ὅλους μας 'Καλά, θὰ ζήσω εἴκοσι, τριάντα, ἑκατὸ ἔστω χρόνια 'καὶ μετά; ποῦ πᾶνε τὰ μέγαρα, τὰ λεφτά, οἱ δόξες καὶ οἱ τιμές; τί θὰ γίνη μετά; ὑπάρχει ἄλλος κόσμος; παράδεισος κόλασι; τί θὰ γίνω ἐγώ, θὰ σωθῶ;... Αὐτὲς οἱ σκέψεις δὲν τὸν ἄφηναν ἤσυχο. 'Ρώτησε δα

σκάλους καὶ γραμματεῖς, φτωχοὺς καὶ πλουσίους, μὰ δὲν πῆρε ἀπάντησι. Καὶ ἔτσι καταφεύγει στὸ Χριστό, τὸ ἀληθινὸ Διδάσκαλο.

-Τί νὰ κάνω, λέει, «διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ»;...

Διαφέρει, βλέπετε, ὁ ἄνθρωπος αὐτός. Οἱ πολλοὶ λένε τί νὰ κάνω γιὰ νὰ πλουτήσω, πῶς νὰ γλεντήσω καλύτερα, νὰ φάω καὶ νὰ πιῶ...; Τὸ μικρόβιο τῆς ἀνησυχίας ὑπάρχει σὲ ὅλους, ἀλλὰ τὸ δικό του «μικρόβιο» εἶνε εὐγενές. Σήμερα, μέσ' στοὺς χίλιους - δυὸ χιλιάδες ἀνθρώπους, εἶνε ζήτημα ἀν θὰ βρῆς ἕναν ποὺ νὰ λέῃ Τί ὑπάρχει ἐκεῖ πάνω; πῶς θὰ πάω, τί θὰ βρῶ στὸν ἄλλο κόσμο!... Δὲν πιστεύουν δυστυχῶς σὲ ἄλλο κόσμο. Αὐτὸς πίστευε. Παρ' ὅλη τὴν κοσμικὴ ἄνεσί του, ῥωτοῦσε Τί πρέπει νὰ κάνω, γιὰ νὰ σώσω τὴν ψυχή μου;

Καὶ ὁ Χριστός; Δὲν ἀπήντησε ἀμέσως στὸ ἐρώτημά του, ἀλλὰ στάθηκε πρῶτα στὴν προσφώνησί του· -«Τί με λέγεις ἀγαθόν;», λέει, «**οὐ**δεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἶς ὁ Θεός» (Ματθ. 19,16-17). Γνωρίζουμε ὅτι στὴν πραγματικότητα ὁ Χριστός, ὡς Θεός, εἶνε «ἀγαθὸς» καὶ πανάγαθος, κατὰ πάντα ἄγιος. Γιατί λοιπὸν ἀπήντησε ἔτσι; Ὁ Χριστὸς ἐδῶ ὁμιλεῖ ὄχι κατὰ τὴν πραγματικότητα άλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἰδέα ποὺ ἔχει ὁ ἄλλος γι' αὐτόν. Ο νεαρὸς ἄρχοντας, ποὺ ῥωτοῦσε, θεωροῦσε τὸ Χριστὸ ἄνθρωπο, σπουδαῖο διδάσκαλο βέβαια, άλλὰ δὲν πίστευε ἀκόμα ὅτι εἶνε Θεός. Καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τοῦ ἀπαντῷ κατὰ τὴν ἰδέα ποὺ εἶχε· - "Αν μὲ θεωρῆς ἄνθρωπο, μὴ μὲ λὲς «άγαθόν», διότι «ἀγαθός» έκατὸ τοῖς έκατὸ εἶνε μόνο ὁ Θεός. "Ας σταθοῦμε ὅμως ἐμεῖς σήμερα σ' αὐτὴ τὴν ἀπάντησι τοῦ Κυρίου, ποὺ ἔχει σπουδαῖο νόημα νὰ μᾶς διδάξη.

Ό Χριστὸς εἶνε Θεάνθρωπος, ἀναμάρτητος, καὶ γι' αὐτὸ σὲ ἄλλη ὥρα εἶπε «Τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας;» (١ω. 8,46). Ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τὸν Θεάνθρωπο Χριστὸ δὲν ὑπάρχει ἄνθρωπος ποὺ νὰ μὴν ἔχῃ ἁμαρτίες. Καὶ μία ἀκόμα ἡμέρα νὰ ζήσουμε πάνω στὴ γῆ, εἶνε ἀδύνατο ν' ἀποφύγουμε τὴν ἁμαρτία (βλ. Ἰώβ14,45καὶ Ποροιμ. 20.9). "Οποιος πῆ ὅτι δὲν ἔχει ἁμαρτίες, εἶ-

νε στὴν πλάνη. "Όταν ὡς ἀρχιμανδρίτης ἐξωμολογοῦσα, ταραζόμουν –πιστέψτε με– ὅταν ἔρχονταν καὶ μοῦ ἔλεγαν Ἐγὼ εἶμαι καλὸς ἄνθρωπος, δὲν ἔκανα τίποτα!... "Όλοι νόμιζαν πώς είνε ἄγιοι, ἔρχονταν στὸ ἐξομολογητήριο ζητώντας νὰ πάρουν τὴν εὐχὴ γιὰ νὰ κοινωνήσουν. Καὶ μόνο κάπου - κάπου, μέσα σὲ τόσους Χριστιανούς, νά 'ρθη μιὰ γυναίκα ἢ ἕνας ἄντρας νὰ κλάψη καὶ νὰ πῆ «"Ημαρτον» (Λουκ. 15,18,21). Αὐτὸ λοιπόν εἶνε τὸ κατηραμένο ῥῆμα· Ἐγὼ εἶμαι καλός!... Γέμισε ὁ κόσμος ἀπὸ «καλούς». Άλλὰ θὰ γεμίση καὶ ἡ κόλασις ἀπὸ «καλούς». Μὰ ἐδῶ ὁ Χριστὸς μᾶς τὸ λέει. Ένας εἶνε ὁ καλὸς καὶ ἄγιος, ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός δλοι οἱ ἄλλοι εἴμαστε ἁμαρτωλοί, μετέχουμε τοῦ προπατορικοῦ ἁμαρτήματος.

Καὶ ποιός δὲν ἁμαρτάνει; Άμαρτάνουμε μὲ τὸ κορμί• μάτια, αὐτιά, χέρια, πόδια, γλῶσσα – ἄχ αὐτὴ ἡ γλῶσσα! «κόκκαλα δὲν ἔχει καὶ κόκκαλα τσακίζει»· άμαρτάνουμε μὲ τὴ σκέψι· άμαρτάνουμε τὴν ἡμέρα - τὴ νύχτα, στὸ δρόμο, στὰ καφφενεῖα, στὰ νυχτερινὰ κέντρα, στ' αὐτοκίνητα, στὰ τραῖνα· ἁμαρτάνουμε τὸ πρωί - τὸ βράδυ· άμαρτάνουν οί μικροί καὶ οί μεγάλοι, οί πλούσιοι καί οί φτωχοί· οί γυναῖκες καί οί ἄντρες· οί άγράμματοι καὶ οἱ ἐγγράμματοι καὶ ἐπιστήμονες• άμαρτάνουν οἱ ἄσημοι καὶ οἱ ἐπίσημοι. Άμαρτία παντοῦ ὅπου νὰ πᾶς, στὸν Βόρειο ἢ στὸ Νότιο Πόλο, σὲ ὁποιαδήποτε γωνία τοῦ κόσμου. Ηταν κάποτε ή γῆ καθαρή, ὁ ἀέρας καθαρὸς ἀπὸ μικρόβια τώρα δὲν ὑπάρχει γωνία ἀμόλυντη. Άμαρτάνει ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἀμέτρητη ἡ ἄμμος τῆς θαλάσσης, ἀμέτρητα καὶ τ' ἁμαρτήματά μας.

Λοιπὸν ν' ἀπελπιστοῦμε; "Όταν ἤμουν στὴν Ἀθήνα, ἦρθε ἕνας νέος καὶ μοῦ λέει μὲ κλάμα Θ' αὐτοκτονήσω, θὰ πάω νὰ πέσω ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀκρόπολι. Τί ἔχεις; ἄρρωστος εἶσαι, καρκίνο ἔχεις; -Κάτι χειρότερο ἦρθα ἀπ' τὸ χωριό μου καθαρός, ἀμόλυντος, καὶ μ' ἔφαγε ἡ Ἀθήνα, μ' ἔρριξε στὴν ἁμαρτία ἔπεσα σ' αὐτὰ κι αὐτά... μαῦρο κομπολόι. Ἀπελπίστηκα, δὲν μοῦ μένει παρὰ ν' αὐτοκτονήσω... Ὁ διάβολος, ἀφοῦ τὸν ἔβαλε νὰ φάῃ τὴν ἁμαρτία μὲ τὴν κουτάλα, τὸν ἔσπρωχνε στὸ τέλος τοῦ Ἰούδα.

Άλλ' ὄχι! Εἴμαστε ὅλοι ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅλοι μέσα στὸ σωτήριο δίχτυ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ὁ ἔνας ἄπλωσε τὸ βρωμερό του χέρι στὸ Εὐαγγέλιο κ' ἔδωσε ὅρκο ψεύτικο μάλιστα, ἄλλος βρώμισε τὴ γλῶσσα του μὲ τὴ βλαστήμια, ἄλλος μπῆκε σὰν τὸ φίδι νύχτα στὸ ξένο σπίτι καὶ ἀτίμασε τὴ γυναῖκα τοῦ φίλου του, ἄλλος ἀδίκησε, ἄλλος ἔκλεψε... Λοιπόν, μὴ μοῦ λές, ὅτι εἶσαι καλός. "Ενας εἶνε ὁ καλὸς καὶ ἅγιος, «Εἶς ἄγιος, εἶς Κύριος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ Πατρός· ἀμήν» (Φλ. 2,1 καὶ θ. Λεπ.).

Τί πρέπει λοιπὸν νὰ κάνουμε, ἀδελφοί μου; Νὰ μὴν ἀπελπιστοῦμε. Νὰ πιστέψουμε, ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν εἶνε ἁπλῶς, ὅπως λένε κάποιοι, δάσκαλος, κοινωνιολόγος, σοφός, ἕνας ἀπὸ τοὺς μεγάλους ἄντρες τῆς Ἱστορίας ὁ Χριστὸς εἶνε ὁ Θεός, ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεός, ποὺ κατέβηκε ἀπὸ τὰ οὐράνια ἐδῶ στὴ γῆ καὶ ἔλαβε σάρκα ἀνθρώπινη, γιὰ νὰ μᾶς σώση νὰ πιστέψουμε, ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς ἔχει δύναμι καὶ ἐξουσία «ἀφιέναι ἀμαρτίας» (Ματθ. 9.6. Μῶρκ. 2,10. Λουκ. 5,24) · νὰ πιστέψουμε, ὅτι ὅποιος ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐξομολογεῖται μὲ μετάνοια, αὐτὸς ἀνοίγει λάκκο καὶ θάβει τ' ἀμαρτήματά του, ὅσο μεγάλα κι ἂν εἶνε.

Νὰ ζήσουμε λοιπὸν κατὰ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, νὰ τηροῦμε τὶς ἐντολὲς τοῦ Κυρίου. Καὶ ἄν πέσουμε μία ἢ πολλὲς φορές, πάντα νὰ σηκωνώμαστε. Καλὸ εἶνε νὰ μὴν πέσης στὸ δρόμο ἀλλὰ ὅσες φορὲς κι ἄν πέσης, καὶ ἑκατὸ καὶ διακόσες, νὰ σηκωθῆς καὶ νὰ πῆς Δόξα σοι ὁ Θεός, «Πάτερ, ἤμαρτον», καὶ «Μνήσθητί μου, Κύριε, ὅταν ἔλθης ἐν τῆ βασιλεία σου» (ΛΟυκ. 15,18,21:23,42). Ἔτσι μᾶς διδάσκει τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο.

«Στενή ή πύλη καὶ τεθλιμμένη ή ὁδός» (Μπθ. 7,13-15.Λουκ. 13,24) τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, δύσκολη ἡ σωτηρία. Πῶς νὰ παιδαγωγήσης σήμερα τὸ παιδί, ποὺ μόλις ἀνοίξη τὸ ῥαδιόφωνο ἢ τὴν τηλεόρασι βλέπει κι ἀκούει πράγματα ἀκατονόμαστα; πῶς νὰ κατηχηθῆ ὁ νέος ποὺ ζῆ μέσ' στὴ φωτιὰ τῆς κολάσεως; πῶς νὰ συνετίσης τὸν ἄντρα ποὺ περπατάει ἀνάμεσα στὶς παγίδες τῆς ἀκολασίας καὶ διαφθορᾶς, πῶς νὰ σωφρονίσης τὴ γυναῖκα ποὺ ξελογιάζεται ἀπὸ τὴ δαιμονικὴ μόδα; πῶς νὰ κατηχηθῆ αὐτὸς ὁ λαός; Πῶς; μόνο διὰ τῆς χάριτος καὶ βοηθείας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. "Οποιος πιστεύει, τὸν ἐπικαλεῖται καὶ ζῆ κατὰ τὸ θέλημά του, νικῷ τὸν διάβολο καὶ τὴν ἁμαρτία.

Καὶ ἀκριβῶς γι' αὐτὸ ὑπάρχει ἡ Ἐκκλησία του, ποὺ εἶνε τὸ ἰατρεῖο τῶν ψυχῶν. Γιατρὸς μοναδικός ψυχῶν καὶ σωμάτων ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. Κάθε πονεμένος, θλιμμένος, διωγμένος, συκοφαντημένος, κάθε χήρα καὶ ὀρφανό, ἐλᾶτε στὴν Ἐκκλησία! Τὰ φάρμακα τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἶνε τὰ λόγια του, τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο, ἡ ἁγία Γραφή, ἐξομολόγησις, ἡ θεία κοινωνία, τὸ εὐχέλαιο, ὁ ἁγιασμός, ἡ παράκλησις· καὶ ὅλα αὐτὰ δωρεάν. Ποιός ἦρθε στὴν έκκλησιὰ καὶ δὲν θεραπεύθηκε, ποιός ἀπελπισμένος δὲν βρῆκε παρηγορία, ποιά χήρα καὶ όρφανὸ δὲν βρῆκε προστασία; ποιός ἁμαρτωλὸς δὲν βρῆκε σωτηρία; Δὲν εἶνε ψέμα, εἶνε άλήθεια. Στὴν Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ νὰ κατα-**Φεύνουμε**. Καμμιὰ δύναμι δὲν θὰ μπορέση ποτὲ νὰ τὴ γκρεμίση. Καὶ ἂν ἐχθροὶ τινάξουν στὸν ἀέρα τοὺς ναούς μας, ἡ Ἐκκλησία δὲν εἶνε τὰ κτήρια, εἶνε οἱ ψυχές. Δὲν φοβόμαστε• ἐκκλησιὰ ἔχουμε τὸν οὐρανό. Καὶ τελικῶς θὰ νικήση ή ἀλήθεια καὶ τὸ φῶς, πρὸς δόξαν τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος ἀμήν.

(†) 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 2023 commitment **TODAY!** The benefits you shall receive beyond grace include the satisfaction and knowledge that this Church and community thrive thanks to your outreach.

The Passion of John the Baptist

Today while the virtue of John and the ferocity of Herod are related to us, our innards were shaken, our hearts trembled, our sight grew dim, our mind became dull, our hearing deserted us. For is there anything within human sensation that remains undisturbed when a large amount of vice destroys a large amount of virtue?

Herod, it says, apprehended John, and had him bound, and put in prison (Mt 14:3). John was the school of the virtues, the instructor of life, the model of sanctity, the pattern of morality, the mirror of virginity, the epitome of purity, the example of chastity, the way of penitence, the pardon of sins, the discipline of faith. John was greater than a human being, equal to the angels, the apex of the Law, the seed of the Gospel, the harbinger of the Apostles, the silence of the prophets, the lamp of the world, the herald of the Judge, the forerunner of Christ, the

preparer for the Lord, the witness of God, the mediator of the whole Trinity.

But Herod is the very one who desecrated the Temple, ruined the priesthood, disturbed its proper order, profaned the kingdom, corrupted anything that had to do with religion, the Law, life and morals, faith, and discipline. Herod was ever an assassin toward his fellow citizens, a brigand toward people of any distinction, a ravager toward his allies, a robber toward those of his own household, a killer of the common folk, a murderer of his children, a slayer of foreigners, a murderer towards his own, drenching the land with gore in his bloodthirstiness. And, so it is that he gulped down the hallowed blood of John from his enormous cup of cruelty.

St. Peter Chrysologus

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