



SUNDAY WEEKLY BULLETIN February 25th, 2024
V. Rev. Archimandrite Eugene N. Pappas

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE



Icon of the Publican and Pharisee

Prokeimenon. Mode Plagal 1

Psalm 11.7,1

You, O Lord, shall keep us and preserve us.

Verse: Save me, O Lord, for the godly man has failed.

The reading is from St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 3:10-15

TIMOTHY, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Προκείμενον. Ἦχος πλ. α'

ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 11.7,1

Σὺ Κύριε, φυλάξαις ἡμᾶς καὶ διατηρήσῃς ἡμᾶς.

Στίχ. Σῶσον με, Κύριε, ὅτι ἐκλέλοιπεν ὁσῖος.

Πρὸς Τιμόθεον β' 3:10-15 τὸ ἀνάγνωσμα

Τέκνον Τιμόθεε, παρηκολούθηκάς μου τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, τῇ ἀγωγῇ, τῇ προθέσει, τῇ πίστει, τῇ μακροθυμίᾳ, τῇ ἀγάπῃ, τῇ ὑπομονῇ, τοῖς διωγμοῖς, τοῖς παθήμασιν, οἷά μοι ἐγένετο ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ, ἐν Ἰκονίῳ, ἐν Λύστροις, οἷους διωγμοὺς ὑπήνεγκα· καὶ ἐκ πάντων με ἐρρύσατο ὁ κύριος. Καὶ πάντες δὲ οἱ θέλοντες εὐσεβῶς ζῆν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διωχθήσονται. Πονηροὶ δὲ ἄνθρωποι καὶ γόητες προκόψουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον, πλανῶντες καὶ πλανώμενοι. Σὺ δὲ μένε ἐν οἷς ἔμαθες καὶ ἐπιστώθης, εἰδὼς παρὰ τίνος ἔμαθες, καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ βρέφους τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα οἶδας, τὰ δυνάμενά σε σοφίᾳ εἰς σωτηρίαν διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

The Gospel According to Luke 18:10-14

The Lord said this parable, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην· Ἄνθρωποι δύο ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν προσεύξασθαι, ὁ εἷς Φαρισαῖος καὶ ὁ ἕτερος τελώνης. ὁ Φαρισαῖος σταθεὶς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ταῦτα προσηύχετο· ὁ Θεός, εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ ὥσπερ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἄρπαγες, ἄδικοι, μοιχοί, ἢ καὶ ὡς οὗτος ὁ τελώνης· νηστεύω δις τοῦ σαββάτου, ἀποδεκατῶ πάντα ὅσα κτῶμαι. καὶ ὁ τελώνης μακρόθεν ἐστῶς οὐκ ἠθέλην οὐδὲ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐπάραι, ἀλλ' ἔτυπεν εἰς τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ λέγων· ὁ Θεός, ἰλάσθητί μοι τῷ ἁμαρτωλῷ. λέγω ὑμῖν, κατέβη οὗτος δεδικαιωμένος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ ἢ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος· ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν ταπεινωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ταπεινῶν ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται.

Coffee FELLOWSHIP Hour: TODAY is being hosted and served by the Parish Council in Whitehall after the Divine Liturgy:

Congratulations are extended to EIRINI CRUZ and JOHN McGRATH who celebrated their 25th, civil marriage anniversary with the Consecration of the Matrimony by SACRAMENT on Friday, February 23rd. It was a joyous occasion for all in the family, kin and friends.

PHILOTOCHOS LADIES will convene a General Membership Meeting today, February 25th, directly after Divine Liturgy and the Coffee Fellowship Hour.

HOLY CROSS OUTREACH CENTER: will celebrate the 10th ANNIVERSARY of the philanthropic Pan – Orthodox distribution center of food, clothes, toiletries and other items to those in need. The celebration – OPEN TO ALL is at the CEBU RESTURANT on tomorrow, February 26th, (BAY RIDGE 3rd AVENUE AND 88th STREET) from 6:00 TO 9:00 P.M. Political dignitaries will attend. OPEN TO ALL!

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos: SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE TO Cyprus from February 29-March 10th is commencing. For information and reservations for future dates email bishopdemetrios@aol.com. There's always room for one more!

BIG-GUY'S DINNER: hosted by the Golden Greek Boy Scout Troop #531 will be served to honored lumina of the TROOP, EAGLE SCOUT RECIPIENTS AND DEVOTEES OF THE program these many decades of service to youth, scouting, God and country on FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 1st, COMMENCING AT 7:00 P.M. FOR DETAILS CALL: DEAN VEROUTIS (917) 623-6221 or NICK PARAS (646) 831-8530.

PASTA LUNCHEON: Each year the 'GOLDEN GREEKS' BOY SCOUT TROOP #531 hosts and serves the spectacular fundraiser for the young lads. Mark your calendar from NOW: SUNDAY – MARCH 03rd. The Gospel of the PRODIGAL SON). Since the event will be before LENT commences, a variety of sauces, eats, marinara, garlic and oil and many other GRECO-ITALO savory treats will be presented. Beer Wine, Soda and desserts will be offered. The afternoon of food fun and fellowship will include the 'myriad' of raffle prizes and the GRANDE 50/50 cash drawing, join us

AGIASMOS HOLY WATER BLESSING) is offered on the FIRST of EACH MONTH! Except when it falls on a Sunday and is transferred to the next day (MONDAY). Please keep this in mind with every FIRST KALO MINA! MARCH 1st. at 11:00 A.M. PLEASE TAKE NOTE: AGIASMOS: Will be offered for the month of MARCH on Friday, March 01st, 11:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M. PREPARE YOURSELF WITH HOLY WATER FOR LENT (Tessarakosti).

PHYCHO-SABBATA SCHEDULED: The traditional three (3) Saturday of Souls will commence on SATURDAY- March 09th, with Divine Liturgy at 10:00 A.M. and memorial commemorations at the conclusion of the service 11:00 A.M. SECOND PSYCHOSABBATON- MARCH 16th, at 10:00 A.M. THIRD PSYCHOSABBATON - MARCH 23rd, at 10:00 A.M.

This is also the Feast Day of Saint Theodore. The plain kollyva of the Sainted General will be distributed to ONLY THE MALE and FEMALE UN-WED: Learn the rest of the story at the service.

LENT COMMENCES: At the conclusion of the March 17th, (St Patrick's Day) CHEESEFARE the faithful will witness the stripping of the altar from the RED and GOLD of Epiphany to the purple and black sacred coverings of LENT. It is a moving, inspirational and encouraging step into Lent to attend and witness. The solemnity is awesome. BE THERE AND SEE!

MONDAY- MARCH 18th Strict Fast begins. The Coney Island Chapter of AHEPA #200 invites everyone in the evening to share in the Lenten dinner of Grecian cuisine and folk music. IT IS FREE FOR EVERYONE! 6:00 P.M. THE BUFFET DINNER IS HOSTED IN Whitehall. Reserve a seat.

WEDNESDAY – March 20th, FIRST PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY (Evening) 6 – 7 P.M

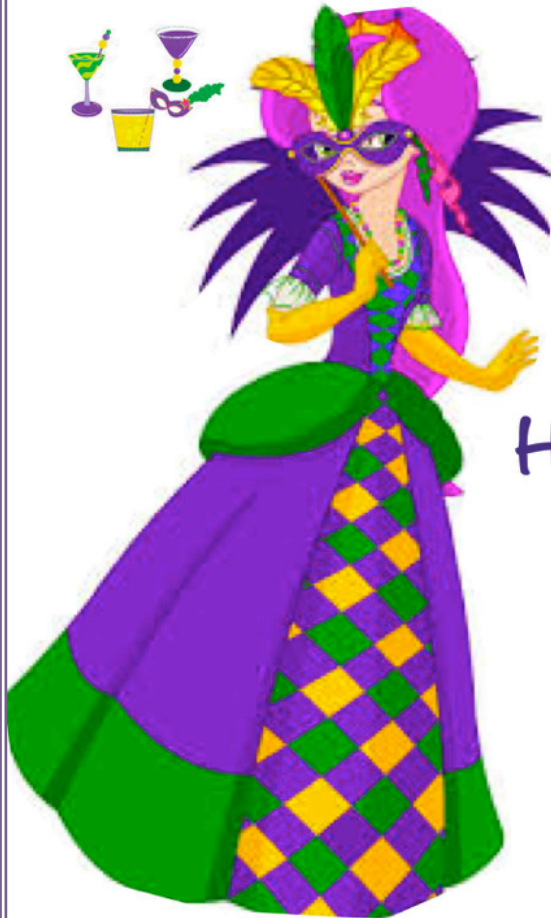
FRIDAY- March 22nd- FIRST SALUTATIONS to the VIRGIN MARY (7:00-8:00P.M.

SATURDAY- March 23rd- FIRST PHYCHO-SABBATON (SATURDAY OF SOULS) 10 A.M. – 11 A.M. Youth Programs are in full review. All youngsters male and female are invited to enroll at any time in our CUB SCOUT, BOY SCOUT, GIRL SCOUT and T.H.Y. programs that meet every Friday evening from 7:00-9:00 P.M. in Whitehall, Rosehall and the GYM! This is an opportunity for mental physical, spiritual and moral health building. We are indeed proud of our YOUTH! Congratulations to our leaders and chaperones.

MEMORIALS TODAY: + PANAGOS DIAMANTIS + KATIE (Kyriakoula) HAMBAS + JOHN VLAHOS
MEMORIALS NEXT WEEK: + NIKOLAOS GIKAS + MICHAEL PAPADATOS



Three Hierarchs
Ladies Philoptochos



Luncheon
Honoring Three Ladies

HELEN KALOGERAS
JOYCE MITCHELL
HELEN KOKIS



Sunday

March 10th, 2024

Three Hierarchs Church

Rose Room- 12:30 P.M.



Donation - \$65.00 - Pre Paid
\$70.00 - at the Door



Reservations:-
Effie Paraponiaris-
718-253-7219
Mary Plessias
718-232-1177

PASTA LUNCHEON



HOSTED BY: TROOP 531



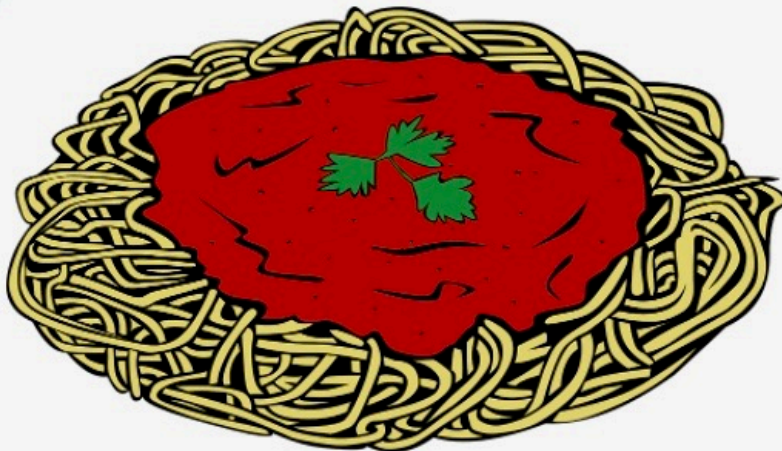
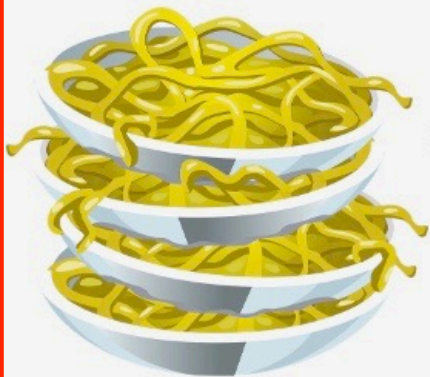
SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2024 @ 1PM

THREE HIERARCHS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
1724 AVENUE P. BROOKLYN, NY, 11229

A COMPLETE PASTA LUNCHEON WITH MEAT
SAUCE, RED SAUCE, AND GARLIC & OIL WILL BE
SERVED. BEER, WINE, SODA, AND WATER
INCLUDED

RAFFLE PRIZES AND A 50/50 DRAWING

\$20.00 PER PERSON
CHILDREN 10 & UNDER FREE





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 Τετὰ Μονὴ Ἁγίου Αὐγουστίνου Φλωρίνης - 531 00 ΦΛΩΡΙΝΑ - τηλ. 23850-28610 - imassio@yahoo.gr

Περίοδος Δ' - Ἔτος Κ'
Φλώρινα - ἀριθμ. φύλλου 962²

Κυριακὴ Τελώνου & Φαρισαίου
25 Φεβρουαρίου 2024 ἐσπέρας (2003)

Συντάκτης (†) ἐπίσκοπος
Αὐγουστίνος Ν. Καντιώτης

Ἡ ἐξομολόγησις

Ἱερὰ ἐξομολόγησις, ἀγαπητοί μου, **δὲν εἶνε μία διάταξις ἀνθρώπινη**. Δὲν εἶνε κάτι ποῦ τὸ φτειάξαμε ἡμεῖς οἱ παπᾶδες γιὰ νὰ κυριαρχήσουμε ἐπάνω στὶς ψυχές, γιὰ νὰ μάθουμε τὰ μυστικά τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ νὰ γίνουμε τρόπον τινὰ ἡ μυστικὴ ἀστυνομία τῶν ψυχῶν, ὅπως μᾶς κατηγοροῦν οἱ ἄθεοι. Δὲν ἔχουμε ἀνάγκη νὰ μάθουμε τὰ μυστικά τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ὅποιος γνωρίζει τὰ μυστικά τῆς καρδιάς του, γνωρίζει τὰ μυστικά δλου τοῦ κόσμου· διότι ὁ,τι ἔχει ἡ καρδιὰ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου, ἔχει ὁλόκληρη ἡ ἀνθρωπότητα, ὅπως μία σταγόνα τοῦ ὠκεανοῦ περιέχει ἐν μικρογραφίᾳ ὁ,τι περιέχει ὁ ἀπέραντος ὠκεανός. Δὲν θεσπίσθηκε λοιπὸν γι' αὐτὸ ἡ ἐξομολόγησις. Κι ἂν σημειώθηκαν παρεκτροπές γύρω ἀπὸ αὐτήν, αὐτὲς σημειώθηκαν στὸν παπισμὸ καὶ ὄχι στὴν Ὁρθοδοξία, ποῦ διακρίνεται πάντοτε γιὰ τὸν σεβασμὸ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης προσωπικότητος. Στὴν Ἐκκλησία μας ὁ πνευματικὸς ἀπὸ θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπινους νόμους εἶνε ἐντεταλμένος νὰ θάψῃ στὰ βάθη τῆς ψυχῆς του τὰ μυστικά τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν.

Δὲν εἶνε ἡ ἐξομολόγησις κάτι ἀνθρώπινο. **Εἶνε μυστήριο**, ἓνα ἀπὸ τὰ ἑπτὰ μυστήρια, τὰ ὁποῖα συνέστησε αὐτὸς ὁ ἰδρυτὴς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. Πότε συνέστησε τὸ μυστήριο τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως; Μετὰ τὴν ἑνδοξο ἀνάστασί του, στὸ διάστημα μετὰξὺ Ἀναστάσεως καὶ Ἀναλήψεως. Τότε ὁ Κύριος, μετὰξὺ τῶν πολυτίμων δωρεῶν ποῦ ἔδωσε στοὺς μαθητάς του, ἔδωσε καὶ αὐτήν· «*Λάβετε Πνεῦμα ἅγιον· ἂν τινων ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας, ἀφίενται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινων κρατῆτε, κεκράτηνται*» (Ματθ. 23,23).

Ὡς θεοοὐσίαστο τὸ μυστήριο αὐτὸ **εἶνε ἀναγκαιότατο**. Οἱ πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας λένε, ὅτι εἶνε ἡ **θύρα τοῦ παραδείσου**. Ὑπάρχει σπίτι χωρὶς πόρτα; Ἀπὸ τὴν πόρτα μπαίνετε μὲ

τὸ κλειδί ποῦ ἔχετε. Ὅπως λοιπὸν τὸ σπίτι καὶ ἡ ἐκκλησία ἔχουν κεντρικὴ θύρα εἰσόδου, ἔτσι καὶ ὁ παράδεισος ἔχει μία καὶ μόνο πύλη, μία καὶ μόνο θύρα. Εἶνε ἀκόμα ἀνοιχτὴ ἡ θύρα αὐτή· θὰ κλείσῃ ὁμως· σύντομα θὰ κλείσῃ. Ἔως ὅτου εἶνε ἀνοιχτὴ, ἂς σπεύσουμε νὰ εἰσέλθουμε δι' αὐτῆς στὴ γαλάζια πατρίδα μας, στὴν αἰωνία βασιλεία καὶ μακαριότητα.

Ἐὰν δὲν ὑπῆρχε τὸ μυστήριο τῆς μετανοίας καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως, ποιοὶ θὰ ἦταν στὸν παράδεισο; Μόνο ἄγγελοι καὶ ἀρχάγγελοι, καὶ κοντὰ σ' αὐτοὺς ὅσοι πέθαναν νήπια. Μὴν τὰ κλαῖτε αὐτὰ τὰ νήπια· μακάρι νὰ μᾶς ἀξίωνε ὁ Θεὸς νὰ πεθαίναμε κ' ἡμεῖς μικρὰ παιδιὰ, γιὰ νὰ πετάξουμε σὰν ἀγγελούδια στὸν κόσμον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Ἐνα μόνον νὰ προσέξετε· νὰ βαπτίζωνται. Γιατὶ ἡ εὐθύνη τῶν γονέων εἶνε μεγάλη ἂν ἀφήσουν παιδί νὰ πεθάνῃ ἀβάπτιστο. Τὰ βαπτισμένα παιδιὰ πετοῦν σὰν περιστέρια στὸν κόσμον τῶν πνευμάτων.

Χωρὶς μετάνοια καὶ ἐξομολόγησι στὸν παράδεισον θὰ ἦταν μόνο οἱ ἄγγελοι καὶ τὰ βρέφη. Ἀπὸ τοὺς ἄλλους **κανεῖς**. Σὰς ἐρωτῶ· ὕστερα ἀπὸ τὸ Χριστὸ ποῖός ἔρχεται μετὰξὺ τῶν ἀνδρῶν; Ὁ ἀπόστολος Παῦλος· αὐτὸς «*ἡρπάγη*» μέχρι «*τρίτου οὐρανοῦ*» καὶ «*ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα, ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι*» (Β' Κορ. 12,4). Οὐτε ὁμως αὐτὸς θὰ ἦταν στὸν παράδεισον χωρὶς τὸ μυστήριο τῆς ἐξομολογήσεως. Οὐτε Παῦλος, οὐτε Βασίλειος, οὐτε Χρυσόστομος, οὐτε Μέγας Ἀντώνιος, οὐτε κανεῖς ἄλλος ἀνεξαίρετος.

Εὐλογητὸς ὁ Θεός, ποῦ θέσπισε τὸ θεῖο τοῦτο μυστήριο. Αὐτὸς ἀνοιξε αὐτὴ τὴν πόρτα. Ἐκτοτε χιλιάδες καὶ μυριάδες ἁμαρτωλοὶ πλένονται στὰ ρεῖθρα τοῦ πνευματικοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰορδάνου. Καθαρίζονται, ἀγνίζονται, ἐξαυλῶνται, καὶ εἰσέρχονται στὸν παράδεισον διὰ τῆς πύλης τῆς μετανοίας καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως.

Ἀφοῦ τὸ μυστήριο τῆς μετανοίας καὶ ἐξομο-

λογήσεως εἶνε θεοσύστατο καὶ τόσο ἀναγκαῖο, **θὰ ἔπρεπε νὰ εἶνε καὶ τὸ πιὸ ἀγαπητό.** Θὰ ἔπρεπε «πατεῖς με πατῶ σε» νὰ τρέχουμε σ' αὐτὸ ὅλοι, ἀπὸ τὸν πατριάρχη μέχρι τὸ διάκονο καὶ ἀπὸ τὸ βασιλιά μέχρι τὸν τελευταῖο ὑπῆκοο καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν ἀγιώτερο μέχρι τὸν ἁμαρτωλότερο ἄνθρωπο. Ἄν κάποιος ἔλεγε ὅτι ἐπᾶνω στὰ ὕψη τοῦ Ὀλύμπου ὑπάρχει μιὰ βρύσι, ποὺ ὅποιος πάη καὶ πλυθῇ στὰ νερά της καὶ μὲ μιὰ χούφτα νερὸ βρέξῃ τὸ πρόσωπό του, ἂν εἶνε ἄσχημος, ἄντρας ἢ γυναῖκα, θὰ γίνῃ ὁ ὠραιότερος ἄνθρωπος τῆς γῆς, καὶ ἂν εἶνε γέρος θὰ γίνῃ νέος, καὶ ἂν εἶνε φτωχὸς θὰ γίνῃ πλούσιος· ἐὰν ὑπῆρχε μιὰ τέτοια πηγὴ καὶ στὰ πιὸ ἀπόκρημνα ὕψη, ὅπου ὅποιος θὰ λουζόταν θ' ἀνακαινιζόταν ἐξ ὁλοκλήρου, ποιὸς δὲν θὰ πήγαινε; Ὅλοι ἀσφαλῶς θὰ ἔτρεχαν σ' αὐτήν. Ἀλλὰ τέτοια βρύσι, βρύσι ποὺ ῥέει ἀπὸ τὴς πληγῆς τοῦ Ἑσταυρωμένου, ἀπὸ τὰ καρφιά τοῦ σταυροῦ του, εἶνε ἡ μετάνοια. Διότι ἡ μετάνοια, ὅπως καὶ ὅλα τὰ μυστήρια, ἔχουν δύναμι, ἀντλοῦν δύναμι, ἀπὸ κάπου. Ἡ πηγὴ ὧν τῶν μυστηρίων –ἄς μὴ τὸ λησμονοῦμε αὐτό– ποὺ βρίσκεται; Ὅπως ἓνας ποταμὸς ἔχει τὴς πηγῆς του, ἔτσι καὶ τὰ ἑπτὰ αὐτὰ μεγάλα ποτάμια, τὰ ἑπτὰ μυστήρια ἐννοῶ, ἔχουν τὴς πηγῆς τους. Καὶ οἱ πηγῆς, ἀπὸ τὴς ὁποῖες ῥέουν διὰ μέσου τῶν αἰώνων τὰ ἑπτὰ αὐτὰ μυστήρια, οἱ μεγάλοι καὶ ἀνεξάντλητοι αὐτοὶ ποταμοὶ τῆς χάριτος, ποὺ εἶνε; Οἱ πηγῆς τοῦ Ἀλιάκμονος εἶνε πάνω στὴν Πίνδο· καὶ οἱ πηγῆς τοῦ καθενὸς ἀπὸ τὰ ἑπτὰ μυστήρια εἶνε τὸ ὄρος Γολγοθᾶ, τὸ φρικτὸ ὄρος Γολγοθᾶ. Ἀπὸ τὴν ὥρα ποὺ ὁ Χριστὸς σταυρώθηκε καὶ πάνω στὴ γῆ ἔπεσαν οἱ ῥανίδες τοῦ αἱματός του, ἀπὸ τότε οἱ ῥανίδες αὐτὲς ἔγιναν ἑπτὰ ποτάμια, μέσα στὰ ὁποῖα λούζονται οἱ ἄνθρωποι.

Ἐνα λοιπὸν ἀπὸ τὰ ποτάμια αὐτὰ εἶνε καὶ τὸ μυστήριον τῆς μετανοίας καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως. Καὶ θὰ ἔπρεπε τὸ μυστήριον αὐτὸ νὰ εἶνε πολὺ ἀγαπητό. Καὶ ὅμως τί συμβαίνει; **Ἐγίνε τὸ πιὸ δυσάρεστο.** Εὐκόλα τρέχει κανεὶς στὸ γάμο, εὐκόλα τρέχει στὴ βάπτισι, εὐκόλα στὰ ἄλλα μυστήρια· τοῦτο εἶνε τὸ πιὸ δυσάρεστο μυστήριον. Γιατί; Ἀπὸ τοὺς ἑκατὸ ἀνθρώπους ἓνας ἐξομολογεῖται· αὐτὴ εἶνε ἡ ἀναλογία στὴν Ἑλλάδα. Σὲ πολλὰ μάλιστα ἄλλα μέρη ἀπὸ τοὺς χίλιους ἓνας ἐξομολογεῖται. Κι αὐτὸς ὁ ἓνας δὲν μετανοεῖ καὶ δὲν ἐξομολογεῖται ὅπως πρέπει. **Ποιά ἡ αἰτία;**

Πολλὲς φορὲς ἐρεῦνησα τὸ ζήτημα αὐτό. Καὶ τὸ ἐξέτασα ὅχι μόνο ἐγὼ ἀλλ' ἐν συμφωνίᾳ καὶ μὲ ἄλλους πνευματικούς πατέρες θεολόγους. Καὶ λέω, ὅτι **τὰ αἶτια εἶνε τὰ ἐξῆς.**

Πρῶτον ἄγνοια τοῦ μυστηρίου. Δεύτερον συκοφαντία καὶ παρεξήγησις. Τρίτον σκάνδαλα πνευματικῶν πατέρων. Τέταρτον ἑλλειψὶς πνευματικῶν. Πέμπτον... Ἑκτον... Ἐβδομον...

Πέστε ὅσα θέλετε· τὰ παραδέχομαι. Τὸ κυριώτερον ποῖο εἶνε; Τὸ κυριώτερον ἐμπόδιο, ἔνεκα τοῦ ὁποῖου οἱ ἄνθρωποι δὲν προσέρχονται στὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἱερᾶς ἐξομολογήσεως, εἶνε ἡ **ὑπερηφάνεια** τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Δὲν ὑπάρχει ἄλλο μυστήριον ποὺ νὰ θίγῃ τὸ ἐγὼ ὅπως ἡ ἐξομολόγησις. Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο χτυπᾷ τὴν ὑπερηφάνεια κατακέφαλα. Καὶ μόνο ὅσοι εἶνε ταπεινὲς ψυχῆς, αὐτοὶ πάνε καὶ ἐξομολογοῦνται. Ὅσοι εἶνε ὑπερήφανες ψυχῆς, δὲν κάμπτονται καὶ δὲν προσέρχονται στὸ μυστήριον. Διότι τί εἶπαμε· ὅτι ἡ μετάνοια εἶνε πόρτα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Ναί, εἶνε πόρτα, ἀλλὰ μιὰ πόρτα ὅχι εὐρύχωρη. Εἶνε μιὰ πόρτα χαμηλὴ καὶ στενὴ, εἶνε ἡ «*στενὴ πύλη*», ὅπως εἶπε ὁ Χριστὸς (Μαθ. 7,13-14). Καὶ πρέπει ἐσύ, ποὺ κάνεις τὸν ὕψηλὸ καὶ τὸ μεγάλο, νὰ σκύψῃς. Ἐχετε μπερὴ ποτὲ μέσα σὲ σπηλαία, τὰ ὁποῖα ἔχουν μιὰ μικρὴ ὀπή; Πόσο δυσκολεύεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος νὰ μπερῇ, καὶ πόσο στενοχωριέται! Ἀλλ' ἐὰν μπερῇ μέσα στὸ σπηλαίον, θὰ δῇ κρυστάλλους, θέαμα ὠραιότατο, μαγευτικόν.

Ταπεινώσου λοιπόν, ἄνθρωπε. Χαμήλωσε τὸ ἀνάστημά σου. Γίνε μικρὸς καὶ ταπεινός, καὶ σκύψε μπροστὰ στὸν Ἑσταυρωμένο καὶ πέρασε ἀπὸ τὴν στενὴ πύλη τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Ὅπως τὸ φίδι τὸ καλοκαίρι στρυμώχνεται μέσα στοὺς τοίχους κι ἀφήνει τὸ πουκάμισό του γιὰ νὰ πάρῃ καινούργιον πουκάμισο, ἔτσι ἀκριβῶς κ' ἐσύ νὰ στρυμωχτῇς μέσα στὴς ὀπές τοῦ Ἑσταυρωμένου, μέσα στὴν πύλη αὐτή, γιὰ νὰ βγῇς κατόπιν ἀφήνοντας τὸ πουκάμισο τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ νὰ ντυθῇς τὸ νέο χιτῶνα, τὴ λαμπρὴ στολὴ τῆς μετανοίας καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως.

Νά λοιπὸν ποιά εἶνε ἡ κυριώτερη αἰτία τῆς ἀποχῆς ἀπὸ τὸ μυστήριον αὐτό. Αἰτία εἶνε ὁ **ἐγωισμὸς** τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Μόνο ταπεινοὶ καὶ καταφρονεμένοι, ὅπως λέει ὁ Ῥώσος Ντοστογιέφσκυ, αὐτοὶ πλησιάζουν τὸ μέγα μυστήριον. Οἱ ὑπερήφανες ψυχῆς δὲν πλησιάζουν. Καὶ ζοῦμε δυστυχῶς τὸν ἐγωισμό. Ζοῦμε σὲ μιὰ ἐποχὴ ποὺ τὸ ἐγὼ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κυριαρχεῖ. Τὸ ἐγὼ ἔγινε εἰδωλὸ καὶ θεός, ἐνώπιον τοῦ ὁποῖου γονατίζουν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ προσκυνοῦν. Ὅσοι ὅμως εἶνε ψυχῆς ταπεινῆς, προσέρχονται στὸ ἱερὸ τοῦτο μυστήριον καὶ σῶζονται.

(†) **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 2024 commitment **TODAY!** The benefits you shall receive beyond grace include the satisfaction and knowledge that this Church and community thrive thanks to your outreach.

Faults of the Pharisee

Many are the faults of the Pharisee. First of all, he is boastful, and without sense, for he praises himself, even though the Sacred Scriptures cry aloud, "Let a neighbor praise you, and not your own mouth: a stranger and not your own lips" (Prov. 27:2). ... Our virtue, therefore, must not be contaminated with fault, but must be single-minded and blameless and free from all that can bring reproach. For what profit is there in fasting twice a week, if you so doing serve only as a pretext for ignorance and vanity, and if it makes you prideful, haughty and selfish? You tithe your possessions and make a boast of it; but in another way you provoke God's anger, by condemning men generally on this account and accusing others. And you yourself are puffed up, though not crowned by the divine decree for righteousness, but on the contrary, heap praises upon yourself. For I am not, he says, as the rest of mankind. Moderate yourself, O Pharisee: "Set a guard, O Lord, over your mouth, keep watch over the door of

your lips" (Ps. 140:3). You speak to God Who knows all things. Await the decree of the Judge. None of those skilled in the practice of wrestling ever crowns himself; nor does any man receive the crown of himself, but awaits the summons of the arbiter. Lower your pride, for arrogance is both accursed and hated by God. Although, therefore, you fast with puffed up mind, your so doing will not avail you; your labor will be unrewarded; for you have mingled dung with your perfume. Even according to the law of Moses a sacrifice that had a blemish was not capable of being offered to God; for it was said unto him, "Of sheep, and ox, that is offered for sacrifice, there must be no blemish therein" (Lev. 22:21). ... You offer tithes, but you wrong in another way Him Who is honored by you, in that you condemn men generally. This is an act foreign to the mind that fears God.

St. Cyril of Alexandria

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RADIO MINISTRY: Each Saturday at 1:15 PM Fr. Eugene hosts the radio broadcast MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE NOW IN ITS 26th 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 radio)

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