

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ
ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ
ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΝΙΑΣ

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
ARCHDIOCESE OF
THYATEIRA & GREAT BRITAIN



ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ THE WORD OF OUR LORD

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΠΡΟ ΤΩΝ ΦΩΤΩΝ
31 Δεκεμβρίου 2023
Ἦχος πλ. α΄. Αριθμ. 209

SUNDAY BEFORE THEOPHANY
31 December 2023
Plagal of the 1st Mode. No. 209

Μελάνης ὁσίας τῆς Ρωμαίας, Ζωτικοῦ τοῦ ὀρφανοτρόφου, Γελασίου, Γεωργίου ὁσίου τοῦ Κυπρίου
Melanē the Younger, Zoticus, Gelasius, 10 Virgins of Nicomedia, George the Cyprian

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Β΄ Τιμ. δ΄, 5-8

Τέκνον Τιμόθεε, νῆφε ἐν πᾶσιν, κακοπάθησον, ἔργον ποιήσον εὐαγγελιστοῦ, τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον. Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη σπένδομαι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἐμῆς ἀναλύσεως ἐφέστηκεν. Τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν ἠγώνισμαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα· λοιπὸν, ἀπόκειται μοι ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος, ὃν ἀποδώσει μοι ὁ κύριος ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, ὁ δίκαιος κριτῆς· οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐμοί, ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἠγαπηκόσιν τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτοῦ.

EPISTLE READING

2 Tim. 4: 5-8

Timothy, my son, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry. For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.



ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος πλ. α΄.

Τὸν συνάναρχον Λόγον Πατρὶ καὶ Πνεύματι, τὸν ἐκ Παρθένου τεχθέντα εἰς σωτηρίαν ἡμῶν, ἀνυμνήσωμεν, πιστοὶ καὶ προσκυνήσωμεν· ὅτι ἠδύοκησε, σαρκὶ ἀνελθεῖν ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ, καὶ θάνατον ὑπομεῖναι, καὶ ἐγεῖραι τοὺς τεθνεῶτας, ἐν τῇ ἐνδόξῳ Ἀναστάσει αὐτοῦ.

RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

Plagal of the 1st Mode

Let us believers praise and let us worship the Word, who like the Father and the Spirit is without beginning, born from a Virgin for our Salvation; for he was well pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and undergo death, and to raise those who had died, by his glorious Resurrection.

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Μάρκ. α', 1-8

Αρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὡς γέγραπται ἐν τοῖς προφήταις, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου· φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ, ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. Καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται, καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο πάντες ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. Ἦν δὲ ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐσθίων ἀκρίδας καὶ μέλι ἄγριον. Καὶ ἐκήρυσσε λέγων· ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· ἐγὼ μὲν ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ἐν ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 1: 1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophets, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' John was baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΥ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑΤΟΣ

Στὴ σημερινὴ Κυριακὴ, τὴν Κυριακὴ πρὸ τῶν Φώτων, ἀναγινώσκεται ἡ περικοπὴ ποὺ ἀναφαίρεται στὴν περίοδο κατὰ τὴν ὁποία ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἦταν τριάντα ἐτῶν, ὅταν δηλαδὴ βαπτίσθηκε στὸν Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμὸ ἀπὸ τὸν Πρόδρομο καὶ Βαπτιστὴ Ἰωάννη. Ὁ Πρόδρομος Ἰωάννης ἐγένετο ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Στὸν προφήτη Μαλαχία ὁ Θεὸς ὁμιλεῖ στὸν Υἱό του καὶ λέγει: «Νά, ἐγὼ στέλνω τὸν ἀγγελιοφόρο μου πρὶν ἀπὸ σένα, ποὺ θὰ προετοιμάσει μπροστά σου τὸ δρόμο σου». Ἔτσι λοιπόν, ὅπως εἶναι γραμμένο στοὺς προφήτες, ἐμφανίσθηκε ὁ Ἰωάννης νὰ βαπτίζει στὴν ἔρημο καὶ νὰ κηρύττει στοὺς ἀνθρώπους νὰ μετανοήσουν καὶ νὰ βαπτισθοῦν, πρὸς συγχώρηση τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τους.

Τὸ κήρυγμα καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ Ἰωάννη ἦταν μία προετοιμασία τῶν ἀνθρώπων γιὰ νὰ δεχθοῦν τὸ κήρυγμα καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἦταν κήρυγμα καὶ βάπτισμα μετανοίας. Ἡ μετάνοια εἶναι τὸ πρῶτο ποὺ χρειάζεται σὰν ἀρχὴ καὶ σὰν θύρα στὸ δρόμο τῆς σωτηρίας. Χωρὶς μετάνοια σωτηρία δὲν ὑπάρχει. Γιατὶ μετάνοια σημαίνει νὰ ἀλλάξεις τὸν τρόπο ποὺ σκέπτεσαι, νὰ κατανοήσεις τί δὲν πῆγαινε καλά, νὰ ἀφήσεις τὶς παλιὲς συνήθειες καὶ νὰ ἀλλάξεις τὴν ζωὴ σου. Σημαίνει νὰ πάρεις μία γενναία ἀπόφαση καὶ νὰ ἐλευθερωθεῖς ἀπὸ κακίες καὶ πάθη ποὺ σὲ κρατᾶνε δέσμιο καὶ ταπεινώνουν τὴν προσωπικότητά σου, νὰ μισήσεις τὸν ἑαυτό σου καὶ νὰ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν Θεό, νὰ ἀψύξεις νὰ ἔχεις ἐμπιστοσύνη στὴν κρίση σου καὶ νὰ ἀνοίξεις τὰ μάτια τῆς πίστεως. Νὰ πενήθεις γιὰ τὶς ἁμαρτίες σου καὶ νὰ ἐκζητήσεις τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ὅλα αὐτὰ εἶναι ἡ μετάνοια, σὰν προετοιμασία γιὰ νὰ ἔρθει νὰ κατοικήσει μέσα μας ὁ Χριστός. Αὐτὴ τὴν μετάνοια κήρυττε ὁ Ἰωάννης, ὡς προετοιμασία γιὰ τὴν ὑποδοχὴ Ἐκεῖνου ποὺ εἶχε γεννηθεῖ πρὶν ἀπὸ τριάντα χρόνια καὶ προσερχόταν γιὰ νὰ ἀρχίσει τὸ ἔργο του ἀνάμεσα στοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

Ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐφώναζε στήν ἔρημο, μὰ ὁ ἀντίλαλος τῆς φωνῆς του ἔφτανε σὲ πόλεις καὶ χωριά. Τόση ἀπήχηση εἶχε τὸ κήρυγμά του πὸ πολλοὶ Ἰουδαῖοι προσερχόταν καὶ βαπτίζοταν στὸν Ἰορδάνη ἐξομολογούμενοι τὶς ἀμαρτίες τους. Ὁ Εὐαγγελιστὴς Μάρκος περιγράφει τὴν ἐξωτερικὴ του εἰκόνα. Πράγματι, ἡ ἐμφάνιση τοῦ ἐρημίτη εἶχε ἄμεση σχέση μὲ τὴν ἐπιτυχία τοῦ κηρύγματός του. Ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲν εἶναι ἀπρόσωπη, ἄσχετη μὲ ἐκείνους πὸ τὴν κηρύττουν. Ἡ ἐγγύηση τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου εἶναι ἡ Ἐκκλησία, τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἡ κοινωμία τῶν πιστῶν.

Ὁ Ἰωάννης ἦταν ἡ ἐνσάρκωση τοῦ κηρύγματός του. Ἐκήρυττε μετάνοια καὶ ὁ ἴδιος ἦταν ζωντανὴ εἰκόνα μετανοίας. Ἀσκητικὸς, νηστευτὴς, ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος πὸ κόντευε νὰ ξεχάσει τὴ σωματικὴ του ὑπόσταση καὶ τὶς ὑλικές του ἀνάγκες. Ὁ Βαπτιστὴς ἐνδύοταν ροῦχο ὑφασμένο μὲ τρίχες καμήλας, ζωσμένος στὴ μέση μὲ δερμάτινη ζώνη, ἐνῶ ἔτρωγε ἀκρίδες καὶ μέλι ἄγριο. Τὸ ἴδιο ροῦχο γιὰ ἐνδυμα καὶ γιὰ σκέπασμα στὸν ὕπνο. Ἡ ἐμφάνιση τοῦ Ἰωάννη ἦταν μία ἐμφανὴς ἐκδήλωση ἀσκητισμοῦ. Ἀσκητισμὸς σημαίνει κυριαρχία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου στὴν ὑλικὴ του φύση καὶ τὸν γύρω κόσμο, καὶ περιορισμὸς τῶν ἀναγκῶν του στὸ ἔσχατο.

Ὁ Βαπτιστὴς Ἰωάννης ἦλθε νὰ σημάνει τὸν ἐρχομὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὴν παρουσία τοῦ Λυτρωτοῦ πὸ ἀνέμεναν οἱ ἄνθρωποι. Ἐξηγοῦσε μὲ σαφήνεια τὴν μεγάλη διαφορὰ ἀνάμεσα στὸ δικό του βάπτισμα καὶ στὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ: «ἐγὼ σὰς βάπτισα στὸ νερό, αὐτὸς θὰ σὰς βαπτίσει στὸ Ἅγιο Πνεῦμα». Τὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ Προδρόμου ἦταν ὁ προφητικὸς τύπος τοῦ βαπτίσματος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Ἦταν βάπτισμα ἀφέσεως τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν, βάπτισμα μετανοίας. Ἐνῶ τὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, δηλαδὴ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, εἶναι τὸ βάπτισμα μὲ τὸ ὁποῖο οἱ ἄνθρωποι λαμβάνουν τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, τὸ βάπτισμα τῆς υἰοθεσίας. Ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν ἦρθε νὰ καταργήσει τὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ Ἰωάννη, ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ τὸ συμπληρώσει.

Ὁ Βαπτιστὴς Ἰωάννης, ἀγαπητοὶ ἀδελφοί, μέσα στὸ μυστήριό τῆς θείας Οἰκονομίας εὐρίσκεται στὸ μεταίχιμο μεταξὺ Παλαιᾶς καὶ Καινῆς Διαθήκης. Εἶναι ὁ τελευταῖος προφήτης τοῦ Νόμου καὶ ὁ πρῶτος τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου. Σὲ αὐτὸν τελειώνει ἡ σειρά τῶν προφητῶν καὶ ἀπὸ αὐτὸν ἀρχίζει ἡ σειρά τῶν Ἀποστόλων.

Ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἀρχίζει τὸ κήρυγμά του μὲ τὴν προτροπὴ τοῦ Ἰωάννη. «Μετανοεῖτε» κήρυττε ὁ Ἰωάννης, «μετανοεῖτε» πρωτοεῖπε καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς. Τὸ «μετανοεῖτε» εἶναι ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου καὶ ἡ θύρα τῆς μετανοίας. Ἀπὸ τὴν πλευρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ προσφέρεται ἡ χάρις καὶ ἀπὸ τὴν μεριὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἡ μετάνοια. Ἐκεῖ πὸ συναντῶνται ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ μετάνοια ἐκεῖ εὐρίσκεται καὶ ἡ σωτηρία. Τώρα, στὴν ἀρχὴ τῆς νέας χρονιάς, ἄς βάλουμε κι ἐμεῖς ἀρχὴ καὶ βάση στὸν βίο μας τὸ «μετανοεῖτε», ὥστε νὰ ἔρθει καὶ σὲ μᾶς ἡ χάρις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ πὸ θὰ μᾶς ὀδηγήσει στὴν σωτηρία μας.

SAINT JAMES, THE BROTHER OF THE LORD

The Sunday which follows immediately after Christmas, bears the name *Sunday after the Nativity of the Lord* (although Sunday today is dedicated to the feast of Theophania for special reasons due to the Typikon). On this very day the Church honours three persons: Joseph the Betrothed, David the King and Prophet, and James, the brother of the Lord. In this instance we have chosen to write a few words about St James. Why is James called the brother of the Lord or the Lord's brother? A number of people in the Bible bear this designation. They are the children of Joseph the Betrothed, who were the fruit of a previous marriage, before he took the Virgin Mary under his protection. We know that there were

four male children: James, Simon, Judas and Joses and at least two daughters. These children grew up in the same family, the 'holy family', under the same roof with Jesus the Lord. The people were not aware of the internal matters of this family. It was natural for the people, therefore, to call all of them brothers and sisters. Thus, the designation 'brother of the Lord', is derived from this circumstance.

The presence of these persons is recorded in the texts of the Holy Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In one instance we read that, accompanied by the Virgin Mary, His brothers were seeking to see the Lord while He was teaching the multitudes. "*He was told, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside, and they want to see You.'*" (Luk. 8:20). The brothers of Jesus were not in agreement with Him nor were they on His side. "*For even His brothers did not believe in Him.*" (Joh. 7:5). When they asked Him to go to Jerusalem with them at the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles, He refused to present Himself and advised them to go there without Him. Later on, however, He did go, without being noticed, and taught the people. (Joh. 7: 3, 7:14)

Following the events of the Passion, the Crucifixion, the Burial and the Resurrection, the brothers of the Lord accepted His teaching. This becomes apparent from the major role St James played within the life of the Ancient Church of Jerusalem. Shortly afterwards he was considered one of the pillars of the Church and we learn that his word bore influence on the decisions made at the Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem. "*And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, 'Men and brethren, listen to me.'*" (Act. 15:13) James, the brother of the Lord, was called the Just and in this way he was accepted by Christians and Jews alike. His opinion was accepted by all sides. Tradition also informs us that when the time came to distribute the estate of his departed father Joseph, James pointed out that Jesus Christ should also be included in the inheritance. The others did not accept this position, so James divided his own part into two and gave half to Jesus, and therefore he was called the Just. James was also a man of prayer. It is generally accepted that, because of the long hours of kneeling and praying, his knees became as hard as those of a camel.

St James the brother of Christ is the author of the first of the seven *Catholic Epistles* in the New Testament. His epistle contains many didactic and practical teachings. A very ancient text of a *Divine Liturgy* is also ascribed to him. This Liturgy is celebrated, wherever possible, on the day of his annual commemoration, which is the 23rd October, as well as on this particular Sunday. St James was appointed the very first Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem. His life was terminated through martyrdom. His fellow Jews led him to the edge of the roof of the temple of Jerusalem, where he was asked to speak about the person of the Lord. He confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of man, who is seated at the right hand of the glory of God the Father. Someone then pushed him off the roof and the rest of them killed him using clubs. The personality of St James, the brother of the Lord, has been venerated greatly through the course of the centuries, but also in the life of the early church. The respect towards his person is apparent, in accordance with the confession of divine Paul, which occurred after his conversion and his visit to Jerusalem. "*But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother*" (Gal. 1:19).

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