

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ
ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ
ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΝΙΑΣ



ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
ARCHDIOCESE OF
THYATEIRA & GREAT BRITAIN



ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ
THE WORD OF OUR LORD

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Δ' ΝΗΣΤΕΙΩΝ (ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΤΗΣ
ΚΛΙΜΑΚΟΣ) 14 Ἀπριλίου 2024
Ἦχος δ'. Ἀριθμ. 224

4th SUNDAY OF LENT (OF JOHN OF THE
LADDER) 14 April 2024
4th Mode. No. 224

Ἀριστάρχου, Πούδη & Τροφίμου ἀποστόλων ἐκ τῶν Ὁ, Θωμαΐδος μάρτυρος, Δημητρίου νεομάρτυρος
Aristarchus, Pudens & Trophimus apostles of the Seventy, Thomaïs martyr, Demetrius neomartyr

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ἑβρ. στ', 13-20

Αδελφοί, τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἐπαγγειλάμενος ὁ Θεός, ἐπεὶ κατ' οὐδενὸς εἶχεν μείζονος ὁμόσαι, ὥμοσεν καθ' ἑαυτοῦ, λέγων, Ἥ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω σε, καὶ πληθύνων πληθυνῶ σε. Καὶ οὕτως μακροθυμήσας ἐπέτυχεν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας. Ἄνθρωποι μὲν γὰρ κατὰ τοῦ μείζονος ὁμνύουσιν, καὶ πάσης αὐτοῖς ἀντιλογίας πέρας εἰς βεβαίωσιν ὁ ὄρκος. Ἐν ᾧ περισσότερον βουλόμενος ὁ Θεὸς ἐπιδειῖξαι τοῖς κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τὸ ἀμετάθετον τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ, ἐμεσίτευσεν ὄρκῳ, ἵνα διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, ἐν οἷς ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι Θεόν, ἰσχυρὰν παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν οἱ καταφυγόντες κρατῆσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος· ἦν ὡς ἄγκυραν ἔχομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν, καὶ εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος· ὅπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσηλθεν Ἰησοῦς, κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδέκ ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος δ'.

Τὸ φαιδρὸν τῆς Ἀναστάσεως κήρυγμα, ἐκ τοῦ Ἀγγέλου μαθοῦσαι αἱ τοῦ Κυρίου Μαθήτριάι, καὶ τὴν προγονικὴν ἀπόφασιν ἀπορρίψασαι, τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις καυχώμεναι ἔλεγον· Ἐσκύλευται ὁ θάνατος, ἡγέρθη Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός, δωρούμενος τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

EPISTLE READING

Heb. 6: 13-20

Brethren, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, Surely I will bless you and multiply you. And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

4th Mode

When the women Disciples of the Lord learned from the Angel the joyful message of the Resurrection and cast away the ancestral sentence, triumphantly they said to the Apostles: Death has been despoiled, Christ God has risen, granting the world his great mercy.

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Μάρκ. θ', 17-31

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, ἄνθρωπός τις προσῆλθε τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγων, διδάσκαλε, ἤνεγκα τὸν υἱόν μου πρὸς σε, ἔχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλον. καὶ ὅπου ἂν αὐτὸν καταλάβῃ, ῥήσσει αὐτόν, καὶ ἀφρίζει καὶ τρίζει τοὺς ὀδόντας αὐτοῦ, καὶ ξηραίνεται· καὶ εἶπον τοῖς μαθηταῖς σου ἵνα αὐτὸ ἐκβάλωσι, καὶ οὐκ ἴσχυσαν. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ λέγει· ὦ γενεὰ ἄπιστος, ἕως πότε πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἔσομαι; ἕως πότε ἀνέξομαι ὑμῶν; φέρετε αὐτὸν πρὸς με. καὶ ἤνεγκαν αὐτὸν πρὸς αὐτόν. καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν εὐθέως τὸ πνεῦμα ἐσπάραξεν αὐτόν, καὶ πεσὼν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐκυλίετο ἀφρίζων. καὶ ἐπηρώτησε τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ· πόσος χρόνος ἐστὶν ὡς τοῦτο γέγονεν αὐτῷ; ὁ δὲ εἶπε· παιδιόθεν. καὶ πολλάκις αὐτὸν καὶ εἰς πῦρ ἔβαλε καὶ εἰς ὕδατα, ἵνα ἀπολέσῃ αὐτόν· ἀλλ' εἴ τι δύνασαι, βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεὶς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ εἰ δύνασαι πιστεῦσαι, πάντα δυνατὰ τῷ πιστεύοντι. καὶ εὐθέως κράζας ὁ πατὴρ τοῦ παιδίου μετὰ δακρύων ἔλεγε· πιστεύω, Κύριε· βοήθει μου τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ. ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἐπισυντρέχει ὄχλος, ἐπέτιμησε τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἀκαθάρτῳ λέγων αὐτῷ· τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφόν, ἐγὼ σοι ἐπιτάσσω, ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ μηκέτι εἰσέλθῃς εἰς αὐτόν. καὶ κράζαν καὶ πολλὰ σπαράζαν αὐτὸν ἐξῆλθε, καὶ ἐγένετο ὡσεὶ νεκρός, ὥστε πολλοὺς λέγειν ὅτι ἀπέθανεν. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς κρατήσας αὐτόν τῆς χειρὸς ἤγειρεν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀνέστη. Καὶ εἰσελθόντα αὐτόν εἰς οἶκον οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπηρώτων αὐτόν κατ' ἰδίαν, ὅτι ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἠδυνήθημεν ἐκβαλεῖν αὐτό. καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελθεῖν εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ. Καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ἐξελθόντες παρεπορεύοντο διὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἵνα τις γινῶ· ἐδίδασκε γὰρ τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀποκτανθεὶς τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστήσεται.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 9: 17-31

At that time, a man came to Jesus kneeling and saying: Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able. And he answered them, O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me. And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, How long has he had this? And he said, From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us. And Jesus said to him, If you can! All things are possible to him who believes. Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, I believe; help my unbelief! And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again. And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could we not cast it out? And he said to them, This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer and fasting. They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise.

ΕΝ ΠΡΟΣΕΥΧῃ ΚΑΙ ΝΗΣΤΕΙΑ

Στο ευαγγελικό ανάγνωσμα της ημέρας διαβάζουμε σήμερα για τη θεραπεία του σεληνιαζομένου νέου. Στο πλαίσιο της ιστορίας αυτής ο Κύριος δίνει ένα εμφιατικό μάθημα στους μαθητές Του, λέγοντας πως: «Τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελθεῖν εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ». Ο Ιησοῦς αναφέρεται στο σημείο αυτό ειδικά στις πονηρές και δαιμονικές δυνάμεις, οι οποίες

μπορούν να επηρεάσουν και να εγκλωβίσουν κάποτε στα γράναζια τους τον άνθρωπο, κάνοντάς τον υποχείριό τους.

Το σημαντικό στοιχείο της ιστορίας αυτής είναι ότι πραγματικά υπάρχει διέξοδος, όντως παρέχεται μόνιμη και ουσιαστική θεραπεία, κι αυτή σχετίζεται φυσικά με τα στοιχεία που ανέφερε ο Κύριος, την προσευχή και τη νηστεία. Αυτά είναι πνευματικά στοιχεία, που αποτελούν δώρα του Αγίου Θεού και είναι από τα βασικά μέσα που χρησιμοποιούν και αξιοποιούν οι Ορθόδοξοι χριστιανοί ειδικά κατά την παρούσα περίοδο της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής.

Η προσευχή παραμένει πάντα το πρώτο μέλημα του χριστιανού κι ένα εξαιρετικά δυναμικό όπλο της Ορθόδοξης Πνευματικότητας. Ο όσιος Παΐσιος αναφέρει χαρακτηριστικά τον εξής επίκαιρο λόγο: «Να καταφύγεις στην προσευχή. Και μόνον το κεφάλι σου να ακουμπήσεις σε μια εικόνα, θα βρεις παρηγοριά. Μια χρονιά, στις 26 Μαρτίου, που γιορτάζουμε τη Σύναξη του Αρχαγγέλου Γαβριήλ, προσευχόμουν όρθιος μπροστά στις εικόνες του Χριστού και της Παναγίας. Για μια στιγμή βλέπω τον Χριστό και την Παναγία να κινούνται σαν ζωντανοί! “Χριστέ μου, είπα, ευλόγησέ με”. Και, καθώς έπεφτα να προσκυνήσω, μια έντονη ευωδία γέμισε το κελλί. Το χαλάκι που είχα στρωμένο κάτω, αν και ήταν γεμάτο χρώμα, ακόμη και αυτό ευωδίαζε. Έμεινα γονατιστός και ασπαζόμουν αυτό το χαλάκι. Τέτοια ευωδία!»

Η νηστεία, επίσης, όπως έχει χαρακτηριστικά λεχθεί, «δίνει φτερά στην προσευχή, γιατί ταπεινώνει τον άνθρωπο. Τον γυμνάζει σωματικά και ψυχικά. Απονεκρώνει τις σαρκικές επιθυμίες και ηδονές και προετοιμάζει το σώμα κατάλληλα για να μην καταστεί εμπόδιο, αλλά να υπηρετήσει την ψυχή την ώρα της προσευχής».

Αξίζει οπωσδήποτε να υπογραμμίσουμε και τον ευεργετικό ρόλο που διαδραματίζει στην προκειμένη περίπτωση ο πατέρας του ασθενούς νέου. Παρατηρώντας το αγαπημένο του παιδί να δοκιμάζεται σκληρά από το πονηρό πνεύμα δεν μένει απαθής, ούτε αφήνει το παιδί του να το φροντίσουν άλλοι. Προσφέρει με τη στάση του ένα μεγάλο δίδαγμα σε όλους τους χριστιανούς γονείς. Αναλαμβάνει ο ίδιος, ως πιστός άνθρωπος, έχοντας εμπιστοσύνη στον Αληθινό Θεό, να οδηγήσει το βασανιζόμενο παιδί του στον Κύριο, και να παρακαλέσει επίμονα για τη θεραπεία του. Και φυσικά ο Σωτήρας μας Ιησούς Χριστός, διαπιστώνοντας την πνευματική καθαρότητα και την ποιότητα της προσευχόμενης ψυχής του πατέρα, τον ανταμείβει με τη θεραπεία του παιδιού του.

Τα δύο αυτά πνευματικά όπλα, τα οποία μας προτείνει σήμερα ο Κύριος, την προσευχή συνδυασμένη με τη νηστεία, μας καλεί η Αγία Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία μας να τα αξιοποιήσουμε περισσότερο κατά την τρέχουσα περίοδο της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής. Μας προσφέρει δε πολλές και πλούσιες βιωματικές εμπειρίες, όπως ιδιαίτερες και κατανυκτικές Ιερές Ακολουθίες, και βέβαια αυστηρότερη νηστεία και εντατικότερη άσκηση. Καλούμαστε, λοιπόν, να αναλάβουμε έναν προσωπικό αγώνα στον πνευματικό στίβο, έχοντας ως βασικό μας εφόδιο τα όπλα αυτά, με την απόλυτη βεβαιότητα πως μας συνοδεύει και μας ενισχύει η ακατανίκητη δύναμη της Χάριτος του Θεού.

Πρωτοπρεσβ. Αναστάσιος Σαλαπάτας

LIFE IN CHRIST: OVERCOMING EVIL

Today's Gospel reading, on the fourth Sunday of Holy Lent, presents our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ not only healing the troubled boy, possessed by demonic powers, but reminds us of Him being the very antidote to the greatest challenge and enemy of our human condition, that being sin and evil. Often young people, when faced with the question of God's existence and presence, ask us, 'why so much evil in this world?' 'Why does God allow people to suffer?' Such existential questions often lead to the beautiful realisation that the human person is indeed fundamentally good, as an image of God, created to share in His Triune Life, His eternal communion and everlasting kingdom 'where the light of His countenance forever shines.' We mistakenly describe violence, greed, thirst for power, lust, cruelty and all other expressions of sin as elements of human nature, however they are essentially external evil temptations.

In today's particular passage we are faced with a rather profound situation. The Fathers of the Church describe the deaf and mute young boy as being incapable of hearing the word of God

and praising and speaking good words from his lips. Evil powers had totally grasped his entire being. The Fathers explain the 'fire' described in the Gospel, not solely in literal terms, but also with the notion of burning anger, lust and envy. These are the burning desires and egocentric sins that unfortunately surround us, firstly as λογισμούς (thoughts) and can consequently grasp a hold of our decisions and way of life. Although these evil powers affected the troubled boy in a very apparent way, we can all identify with the pleading father in times of trouble and trial: 'Take pity on us and help us.' As the ultimate Καρδιογνώστης, the 'Knower of our hearts' (Acts 15:8) and Healer of our bodies and souls, the Lord proclaims that 'Everything is possible for one who believes,' offering His kenotic love (Phil 2:7) and healing grace to the suffering boy. We are all in need of His healing grace, for we all sin and 'fall short of the glory of God'. (Rom 3:23) Within the eucharistic life of the Church, through the ascetic struggle and through the cultivation of virtue in our own lives, we are continuously directed away from the temptations and traps of evil and are thus called to share in the transforming, enlightening and healing power of God. Even if we lack a certain fervency of faith let us pray with honesty and humility, in the same way as the possessed boy's father: 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'

Through His incarnation, crucifixion and glorious Resurrection, Christ truly allows us to overcome the 'age-old' problem of evil within the fallen world, for He shows us the real purpose and end of humanity, that being, holiness of life, sanctification, self-emptying and ultimately complete unity with our Creator and God. Our Lord's words, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?...' are as relevant as ever, in today's somewhat broken and unjust society, where faith seems to be disregarded on so many levels. At the same time, just as St Paul notes, 'where sin increased, grace abounded all the more'. (Rom 5:20) Each epoch will have its challenges but also its opportunities for holiness of life, for Christian witness and for the Church to express its mission. Although we may ourselves be surrounded by trials and temptations, by sin and evil - just as the father and his possessed son - we are never to lose hope nor our faith.

The Church - Christ's body - by preserving the truth of Christ, by upholding and passing down the Apostolic tradition and succession through the timeless work of the Holy Spirit, allows us to deepen this faith, to grow in our relationship with the Lord, to take example from His holy people, allowing us to struggle against the egoistic passions which bind us to the earth. Not only does Christ respect the father's sincerity, honesty and concern for his possessed son, consequently healing him. He also explains to his disciples why they themselves were unable to help the boy: 'The only way to defeat evil is through prayer and fasting.' For this reason, we are invited by the Church, to live out this Lenten period sacrificially, in prayer, repentance and through fasting, by attending the services of the Church and by increasing our own prayer rule and spiritual reading, so that we may truly experience and share in the joy and truth of the glorious Resurrection. Amen.

Deacon Gregorios-Palamas Florides

Visitors Welcome

We would like to thank you for visiting and worshiping with us today. Kindly know that although all are welcome to attend our Sacred Services, a prerequisite to receive Holy Communion is unity in the Faith, as well as spiritual preparation by prayer, fasting, and regular participation in the Sacrament of Holy Confession. All are welcome to partake of the "antidoron" (blessed bread) distributed by the clergy at the conclusion of the Service, as well as to introduce themselves while doing so.

To learn more about Orthodox Christianity and to join the online Archdiocesan Discover Orthodoxy Class, please email: archdiocesaprivateoffice@gmail.com

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