

ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ
ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ
ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΩΝ & Μ. ΒΡΕΤΑΝΝΙΑΣ

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THYATEIRA & GREAT BRITAIN



ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ
THE WORD OF OUR LORD



ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΠΡΟ ΤΗΣ ΥΨΩΣΕΩΣ
ΤΟΥ ΤΙΜΙΟΥ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΥ 8 Σεπτεμβρίου 2024
Ἦχος β'. Ἀριθμ. 245

SUNDAY BEFORE THE EXALTATION OF
THE HOLY CROSS 8 September 2024
2nd Mode. No. 245

Γενέθλιον τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου
The Nativity of the All-Holy Mother of God

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Γαλ. στ', 11-18

Αδελφοί, ἴδετε πηλίκους ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρὶ. Ὅσοι θέλουσιν εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί, οὗτοι ἀναγκάζουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, μόνον ἵνα μὴ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Χριστοῦ διώκωνται. Οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ περιτετημένοι αὐτοὶ νόμον φυλάσσουσιν, ἀλλὰ θέλουσιν ὑμᾶς περιτέμεσθαι, ἵνα ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ σαρκὶ καυχῶνται. Ἐμοὶ δὲ μὴ γένοιτο καυχᾶσθαι εἰ μὴ ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· δι' οὗ ἔμοι κόσμος ἐσταύρωται, καγὼ τῷ κόσμῳ. Ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομὴ τι ἰσχύει, οὔτε ἀκροβυστία, ἀλλὰ καινὴ κτίσις. Καὶ ὅσοι τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν, εἰρήνη ἐπ' αὐτούς, καὶ ἔλεος, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τοῦ λοιποῦ, κόπους μοι μηδεὶς παρεχέτω· ἐγὼ γὰρ τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματί μου βαστάζω. Ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί. Ἀμήν.

EPISTLE READING

Gal. 6: 11-18

Brethren, see with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that would compel you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For even those who receive circumcision do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh. But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. Peace and mercy be upon all who walk by this rule, upon the Israel of God. Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.



ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΙΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ

Ἦχος β'

Οτε κατήλθες πρὸς τὸν θάνατον, ἡ ζωὴ ἢ ἀθάνατος, τότε τὸν Ἄδη ἐνέκρωσας, τῇ ἀστραπῇ τῆς θεότητος· ὅτε δὲ καὶ τοὺς τεθνεῶτας ἐκ τῶν καταχθονίων ἀνέστησας, πᾶσαι αἱ Δυνάμεις τῶν ἐπουρανίων ἐκραύγαζον· Ζωοδότα Χριστέ, ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, δόξα σοι.

RESURRECTION APOLYTIKION

2nd Mode

When you went down to death, O immortal life, then you slew Hell with the lightning flash of your Godhead; but when from the depths below the earth you raised the dead, all the Powers in the heavens cried out: Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to you!

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ἰωάν. γ', 13-17

Εἶπεν ὁ Κύριος· οὐδεὶς ἀναβέβηκεν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰ μὴ ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὑψωσε τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Οὕτω γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνη τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ' ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ.

GOSPEL READING

John 3: 13-17

The Lord said, No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΥ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑΤΟΣ

“Οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἵνα κρίνη τὸν κόσμον, ἀλλ' ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ”.

Μέ αὐτὴ τὴ φράση ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ὅπως μᾶς περιγράφει ὁ Εὐαγγελιστὴς Ἰωάννης, ἐκφράζει τὴν πραγματικότητα τῆς ἐλεύσεώς Του, στὴν γῆ, τὴν ἀλήθεια πού δέν εἶναι ἄλλη ἀπὸ τὴν ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ γιὰ τὸ πλάσμα Του. Ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δέν ἦρθε στὸν κόσμο γιὰ νὰ τὸν κρίνει ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ σωθεῖ ὁ κόσμος ἀπὸ Αὐτόν. Ὁ Θεός ἔστειλε τὸν Υἱό Του στοὺς ἀνθρώπους μέ σκοπὸ νὰ τοὺς λυτρῶσει ἀπὸ τὸν θάνατο πού φορτώθηκαν κατὰ τὴν πτώση τους.

Ὅπως ὁ Μωϋσῆς ὑψωσε τὸ χάλκινο φίδι πάνω σὲ ξύλο, κατόπιν τῆς ἐντολῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὥστε νὰ τὸ κοιτοῦν οἱ Ἰσραηλιῆτες καὶ νὰ ἐπιβιώνουν ἀπὸ τὰ θανατηφόρα τσιμπήματα τῶν δηλητηριωδῶν ὄφρων πού εἶχαν ζῶσει τὸν λαό τους, ἔτσι καὶ ὁ Θεός ὑψωσε τὸν Υἱό Του στὸν Σταυρό γιὰ νὰ σωθεῖ ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

Τὸ χάλκινο φίδι, ἀναρτημένο πάνω στό ξύλο, χωρὶς τὸ δηλητήριο πού μολύνει τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἐγίνε ἡ σωτηρία τῆς ζωῆς τῶν Ἰσραηλιτῶν πού ὑπέφεραν στὴν ἔρημο. Ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ἄσπιλος καὶ ἀμόλυντος, ὁ μόνος ἀναμάρτητος, ἀναρτᾶται παρομοίως στὸν σταυρό καὶ σώζει τὴν ἀνθρώπινη ψυχὴ. Αὐτός ὁ παραλληλισμὸς τῶν δύο πραγματικοτήτων, τῆς σωτηρίας τῆς υγείας καὶ τῆς σωματικῆς ἀκεραιότητος τῶν Ἰσραηλιτῶν ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ διὰ τοῦ Μωϋσέως, καὶ ἡ σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ διὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ Του, δέν ἀποτελεῖ μία ἀναλυση ἢ προσέγγιση στὰ πλαίσια κάποιας θεολογικῆς πραγματείας. Ἀποτελεῖ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν λόγο τοῦ Ἰησοῦ στό σημερινὸ εὐαγγελικὸ χωρίο, ὅπως παρατίθεται ἀπὸ τὸν Εὐαγγελιστὴ Ἰωάννη. Καὶ εἶναι αὐτὸ τὸ χωρίο πού προαναγγέλλει τὴν ὑψωση τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ καὶ τὴν σωτηριώδη σημασία του. Ἀναγινώσκεται ἔτσι μίαν ἐβδομάδα πρὶν ἀπὸ τὴν ὑψωση τοῦ ξύλου τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς.

Ἡ Ὑψωσις τοῦ Τιμίου Σταυροῦ ἀποτελεῖ ἕναν σπουδαῖο ἐορτολογικὸ σταθμὸ τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς Χριστιανοσύνης γενικότερα. Ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης ὁ Χρυσόστομος λέει πὼς στό παρελθόν ὁ Σταυρός ἦταν συνώνυμος τῆς καταδίκης καὶ τοῦ θανάτου, ὅμως πλέον ἀποτελεῖ ἀντικείμενο πολύτιμο καὶ ἅγιο, σύμβολο τῆς Σωτηρίας καὶ τῆς Ἀναστάσεως. Προσθέτει δέ, πὼς ὁ παλαιὸς Ἀδάμ τρώγοντας τὸ ξύλο κατέπεσε, ἐνῶ ὁ νέος

Ἄδάμ, μέ τό ξύλο τοῦ Σταυροῦ, ἐξύψωσε τόν ἄνθρωπο.

Ἡ Ἁγία Γραφή φανερώνει, ὡς συλλογή τῶν θεοπνεύστων κειμένων στό βάθος τῶν αἰώνων, μία μεγάλη πραγματικότητα. Τήν ἀμοιβαία συνάφεια καί αἰώνια ἐνότητα τῆς Παλαιᾶς καί τῆς Καινῆς Διαθήκης. Τήν προφητεία τῆς Καινῆς ἀπό τήν Παλαιά Διαθήκη καί τήν ἐπιβεβαίωση καί συμπλήρωση τῆς Παλαιᾶς ἀπό τή Νέα Διαθήκη. Ἔτσι, καί στήν παρούσα εὐαγγελική περικοπή, ἡ ἐξασφάλιση τῆς ἀκεραιότητος καί τῆς ζωῆς τῶν Ἰσραηλιτῶν ἀπό τά δηλητηριώδη ἔρπετά, μέ τήν παρέμβαση τοῦ Θεοῦ κατ' αὐτόν τόν θαυμαστό τρόπο, προμηνύει τήν σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀπό τόν Θεό δια τῆς ἐλεύσεως τοῦ Υἱοῦ Του πάνω στή γῆ καί τῆς σταυρικής Θυσίας Αὐτοῦ πάνω στόν σταυρό, καταργώντας ἔτσι τόν θάνατο ἀλλά καί ἀποδυναμώνοντας τόν ἐχθρό τῆς σωτηρίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τόν διάβολο. Στό κατά Ματθαῖον Εὐαγγέλιο, ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός διευκρινίζει μέ μεγάλη σαφήνεια αὐτήν τήν πραγματικότητα λέγοντας στους μαθητές Του, «*μή νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τόν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλά πληρῶσαι*».

Ἄς ὑψώσουμε λοιπόν ὅλοι τά μάτια μας καί ἄς δοῦμε τόν Ἐσταυρωμένο Χριστό καί τήν λαμπρή Του Ἀνάσταση. Ἄς δοῦμε τό ξύλο τῆς αἰώνιου ζωῆς, τόν Τίμιο Σταυρό νά ὑψώνεται ὡς σύμβολο νίκης καί λύτρωσης ὅπως εἶδαν οἱ Ἰσραηλιῆτες τόν χάλκινο ὄφη καί γλύτωσαν ἀπό τό δηλητήριο τῶν ἔρπετῶν. Ἄς γίνουμε ὅλοι κοινωνοί τοῦ Τιμίου Σώματος καί Ζωοποιοῦ Αἵματος τοῦ Κυρίου μας. Ἄς ἀπαρνηθοῦμε τόν ἑαυτό μας, ἄς σηκώσουμε τόν δικό μας Σταυρό καί ἄς Τόν ἀκολουθήσουμε.

SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

The verse «*For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*» expresses the essential message of the Gospel of John as the key to salvation. It is so very well known, yet it demands careful attention both with heart and mind.

The verse follows directly, «*and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*». Here the crucifixion is foretold indirectly. Jesus refers to the miracle performed by Moses, who lifted up the image of a serpent to cure the Israelites of the bites of snakes, which themselves were sent by God as a punishment for their failure to trust in Him (*Numb. 21, 4-9*). This prefigures the overthrowing of the power of sin and death by the death and resurrection of Christ.

But the key is the power of God's love. The extent of the love of God is beyond human comprehension, with all the power of infinite majesty, reaching out to embrace those who are so frail and small, continually falling into sin. How is the gulf to be bridged? We cannot respond to God's overwhelming love through our own abilities but only by belief in the saving power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ the only begotten Son.

Our response must be belief and love in our turn. We are assured that He was sent not to condemn but to save. But as Saint John Chrysostom reminds us, we must not be overconfident in our salvation. The great gift of love sets us free to respond with love, but we are also free to fall again into sin. We are shown the gift of grace, but we must grow into it. The First Coming was to bring salvation, the Second will bring judgement.

We are challenged by the overwhelming gift of the love of God, grace freely given, and the stern demands to follow the example of and the path taken by our Lord Himself, «if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me» (Mark 8, 34). But if we truly believe how could we do otherwise? As Saint James tells us, works of love must follow inevitably from true faith, «faith without works is dead» (Jam. 2, 26).

Having received the great gift of belief and the love of God, how can we do other than share it? But do we just hear this very familiar text and take easy comfort in it, or do we try to face the challenge to live out the consequences? How much do our lives really show true belief and love so that others whom we meet day by day see us transformed by the power of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ so that they also may come to belief and new life in Him?



*“We must chant in the church with understanding and attentiveness”
(St Isidore of Pelusium)*



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We would like to thank you for visiting and worshipping 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. Non-Orthodox Christians are kindly requested to refrain from receiving Communion. All are, however, 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.

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