

## Awaiting to dwell in the heavenly city

Abraham loved God very much. Even more than Isaac, his precious only son, as he very triumphantly proved in that he wanted to sacrifice him, even though he had been informed that his descendants would multiply like the sand of the sea! He loved God even more than his wife. He was not bound by the senses and the temporality of phenomena, the alien, the foreign for him and not his own land of promise, but he aimed to become a citizen of heaven, he thirsted for God. So for this reason also, the text speaks about a city which has unshakable foundations: on the one hand, because the creator and craftsmen of this is God and on the other hand, Abraham, having his true and fervent faith in God for a foundation, proves to be a heavenly citizen, a victor of temptations and, prior to Christ, an example worthy of imitation unto the ages, for us also after Christ, now living in His Church.

So the life of the patriarch Abraham censures the lukewarmness of our own faith, the lethargy in our spiritual struggle, the coldness of our heart, our indifference towards the promises of God. We at least constantly have before us the measure of God's love for Man, which is His Cross. So let us ask, brethren, the patriarch Abraham to strengthen us in our difficult struggle, until we rest in his bosom.

Amen

Archim. E. T.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2017 SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY,** *Eve of the Nativity of Christ, Eugenia the Righteous Nun-martyr of Rome,*

**tone of the week :** *Tone Three*

**EOTHINON :** *Sixth Orthros Gospel*

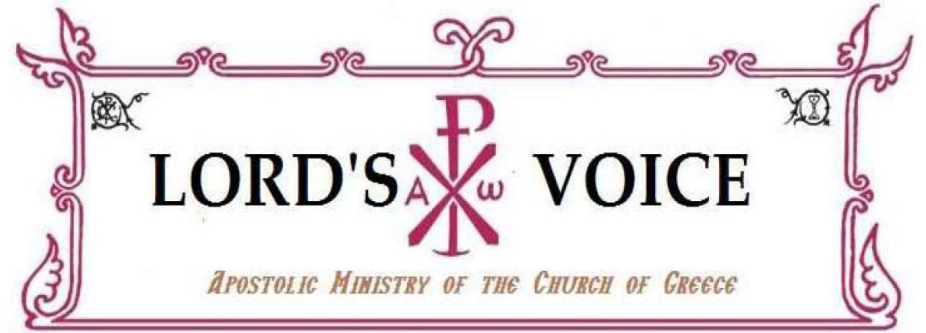
**EPISTLE READING:** *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Matthew 1:1-25*

**NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2017 SUNDAY BEFORE EPIPHANY,**  
*Apodosis of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Melania the Younger, Nun of Rome, The Martyr and Presbyter Zoticus of Rome, Patron of Orphans*

**EPISTLE READING:** *St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Mark 1:1-8*



65<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

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PAMPHLET # 52 (3369)

## THE HEAVENLY CITY

As an example, Paul presents Abraham in today's passage, beloved brethren. An example, especially of faith. Of correct, strong, fervent, unhypocritical faith and worthy of us imitating and worthily honored by God, because it was not lessened, even then when he saw the promises being "falsified" that he had received from Him. Other personalities of the Old Testament are also commemorated who loved God, like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Joseph, Moses and others, in the same chapter, and more especially in today's reading Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jethae, David and Samuel. All these were called friends of God, even though the gathering place did not exist then, even if the Holy Spirit acted spontaneously in their hearts. With the incarnation of Christ, the gathering place of the believers becomes His body, in other words, His Church, in which the Holy Spirit breathes and the believers become members of the same body, communing Christ. A basic difference!

### The temporality of life

Abraham lived nomadically, going from one place to another. He lived the vanity and the temporality of this world. He lived however also, its beauty, because in this world he was

### ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE HEBREWS 11:9-10; 32-40

BRETHREN, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

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discussing with God, as a friend and His faithful servant. He would pitch tents here and there. Following Abraham's train of thought, once an ascetic on Athos, showing us the Monastery cemetery was joyfully telling us: "there are the permanent things, and here the camps". It is the same feeling that was imparted to us when another one declared: "we are renters in the dependency of the world, from hour to hour, our exit occurs". Precisely as when one sees in or outside of the Monk's cell the familiar inscription "today it is mine, tomorrow it is another's and it is

never someone's". Another one again with tears of joy was grabbing his white beard and was saying publicly: "what does your white beard tell you, o monk? The time came"!

These, not for a flight from the worldly things and to cultivate a defeatist attitude to life, but for this attitude to be used as an encouragement, for an enthusiastic struggle against the secular train of thought, and the demons, which oppose our salvation. We call Christ to help and He, the great Succour and Artist, in the way He knows, crafts our soul and sanctifies our time and space, intersecting it with eternity. Thus our life is blessed. Here and now.

### Spiritual slips

Of course care is needed, because sometimes we turn so much to the so-called spiritual things, that there is the danger that we will forget that we are living in the world, and this may result in us scorning the world and the people around us, under the excuse of an increased spirituality. There's nothing more false than this.

Again Abraham here, comprises for us a safe spiritual guide, because even though he reached spiritually to converse with God, nevertheless he did not omit-he a great Patriarch and leader of the Jewish nation-to suffer hardships together, to censure, and at other times to rejoice, together with his people: together- and in God, but together with the people also. A friend of God means a true friend of man. If the one is missing, nothing exists.

Also we should be careful, my brethren, also of the danger of disappointment which, on and off, strikes those struggling spiritually, for them to weaken, for their struggling disposition to vanish, and in the end, that they become inert and despair. Here again, the proverbial faith of Abraham rejuvenates us and strengthens us, because if someone was tried more than all people in his relationship with God, referring to the fulfillment of His promises to him, this is Abraham.