

as a cause of shame, but as a cause for greater struggle, so that “through one’s own virtue to brighten them as well.”

Adoption of divine gifts

The three part division of the geneology of Christ in periods when the Jews – after Joshua of Nun – were ruled successively by Judges, kings and high priests, takes away another, not rare, justification for stupidity and indolence: that those governing are to blame for everything. The golden-tongued John silences whoever invokes such justifications noting: “Neither with the states being changed” did the Jews become better. They remained in the same evils in all the states. But also when the true Judge, King and Priest, Christ came, the only one who “evangelizes, not sensorial opponents, but - the incomparably greater thing –deliverance of sins”, even then the majority of the crowd “did not wish to understand”.

The deliverance from sins, the highest gift of the Incarnated Christ, is not granted without our own persistent request and free cooperation. Admitting with our firm repentance that “God is with us”, let us seek not justifications for despondency, but constant causes for glorifying Emmanuel, the Son of God and of the Theotokos.

Archim. B. L

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2018, 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE

Ten Martyrs of Crete, Paul, Archbishop of Neo-Caesarea, Remembrance of the Founding of the Holy and Great Church of Christ, Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, Naoum the Illuminator of The Bulgarians, Nicholas & John the New Martyrs.

TONE OF THE WEEK : *First Plagal Tone*

EOTHINON : *Eigth Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 1:1-25*

NEXT SUNDAY, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2018 SUNDAY AFTER

NATIVITY, Anysia the Virgin-martyr of Thessaloniki Gideon the New Martyr of Mount Athos, Holy Martyr Philetaerus, Righteous Father Leondus the Archimandrite.

EPISTLE READING: *Galatians 1:11-19*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 2:13-23*



66TH YEAR DECEMBER 23 2018 PAMPHLET #51 (3421)

“GOD IS WITH US”

Today’s gospel passage is the beginning of the Gospel according to Matthew and of course of the entire New Testament. From a first glance, the first page of this sacred book seems to be the most boring and probably the most repulsive page of worldwide literature, because it comprises a tiresome list of Hebrew names. A more careful glance however, reveals to us that it contains the joyous premessage of our salvation, since it comprises the geneological “tree” of our Savior Jesus Christ. It documents by name, Christ’s forefathers, beginning from Abraham and concluding in the righteous Joseph, the seeming “husband of Mary”, who nevertheless in reality had as a mission: (duty) the protection of the Ever virgin.

“Glory to your condescension”

Joseph is geneologized and not the Theotokos Mary, because “it was not a law with the Jews for women to be geneologized” (sacred Chrysostom), even though –according to the witness of the evangelist Luke – also “the Virgin hailed from “the house and tribe of David”. “The Golden tongued one considers it necessary to mention also another “more mystical reason”, for which Joseph is geneologized, even if he does not contribute “anything for the birth”: “Just as Christ from the beginning, shadowed his quality to the Father, calling himself the “son of man”, thus also Joseph appears as the “husband” of Mary, so that the All Holy

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO *MATTHEW 1:1-25*

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord

commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Virgin Mary would be delivered of "every wicked suspicion" and not be in danger of being stoned. Because, if after the so many miracles, they continued calling Christ "son of Joseph", how, before these, could they have believed that he was born of a Virgin? Can, I wonder, a human mind conceive the magnitude of the philanthropy and of the humility of the Son of God who for us condescends to face the danger of a dishonorable death, while he was still being born in the womb.

The reference to the forefathers of Christ witnesses in the clearest manner, how humbly God entered into human history adopting "human flesh" from a people, for the most part "disobeying and retorting, who did not proceed on the true path but after their own sins" (Is. 65:2). So for this reason, a tiresome catalogue of names is shone forth to be a triumphant proof of God's love for man.

Unacceptable excuses or causes for struggles?

This condescension of God becomes even more manifest, if we notice that in this catalogue, forefathers of Christ are included, who were born from improper relationships, such as: 1) Fares, who came from the relationship of Judah with his daughter in law, even if he did not realize it, because she had disguised herself as a prostitute. 2) Boaz, who was born from the prostitute Rahab. And 3) Solomon, who was born from the adultery that David committed with Bathsheba. "Christ condescended to have such relatives", Saint John Chrysostom says, wondering. He was not ashamed of our lewdnesses. He came not to avoid them, but in order to abolish them."

And he adds something very important: with this, he taught us that we should not justify our sins, invoking evil forebears, but we should seek only one thing, virtue. Whoever struggles for virtue, it will not harm him at all, that he happened to have sinful forefathers." Thus it is at least laughable, sometimes down to our old age that we invoke inheritances and childhood wounds, in order to justify our lack of the eagerness to struggle for our liberation from passions. The gift of personal freedom is so great, in other words, "The opinion and manner of the soul", so that - in cooperation with the almighty grace of God- is able to overturn and cure even the worst inherited tendencies, the most deeply rooted habits and the most long lasting passions. Furthermore, Saint Theophylactos adds that we must "utilize" the evil forefathers not