

joy" and "gladness": "Let the infants leap for joy who are sacrificed for Christ". Bethlehem, do not be gloomy, but be glad, because the infants are offered as a perfect sacrifice to the Master Christ and they will reign forever with Him". "Do not cry Rachel, your children are in the embrace of Abraham full of gladness". These "strange" hymns are not supported on false consolations, but on true ones. Or rather on the Truth, who for us took flesh and became a Man. "The Truth came. God was revealed to us, who were sitting in the shadow of delusion in order to save us".

Without the Appeared Christ, who is the Truth and the Life, "our world" as our father among the saints Justyn Popovich observes, is a chaotic presentation of abhorrent foolishnesses. Without Him there exists nothing more absurd than this world. There exists no greater despair than this life. There is no more unfortunate being than the person, who does not believe in Him. It would be better if that man had not been born", concludes Saint Justyn using the words of Christ about Judas, which obviously applies also for "King" Herod and for all those who without repenting, have the same mind as him.

Archim. B. L

**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.

**-tone of the week :** *Plagal of the Second Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Ninth Orthros Gospel*

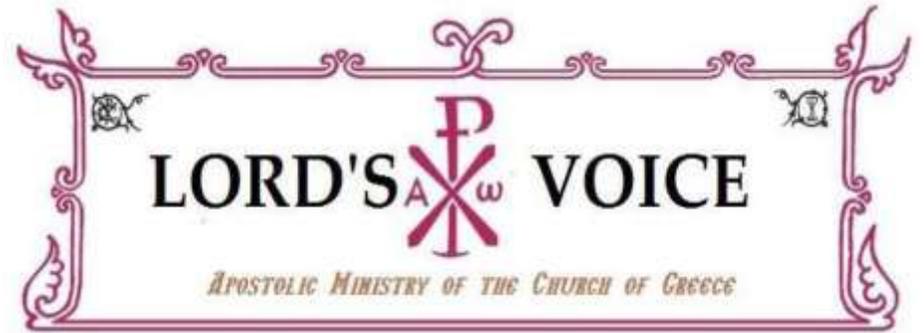
**EPISTLE READING:** *Galatians 1:11-19*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Matthew 2:13-23*

**NEXT SUNDAY SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2019** The Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Theophan the Recluse

**EPISTLE READING:** *Titus 2:11-14;3:4-7*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Matthew 3:13-17*



**66<sup>TH</sup> YEAR DECEMBER 30 2018 PAMPHLET #52 (3422)**

## HIS OWN DID NOT RECEIVE HIM

A week is not passed from the day of Christmas when we chant "the universe today is filled with joy" and we hear in today's gospel passage about "mourning and crying and much wailing". The joy that the Birth of the Savior brought to us, aside from the fact that it "cost" Him the Kenosis of His Incarnation, from the first day of His Descent, it began "costing" Him bitternesses. To begin with, He found the doors of our homes closed, and He was forced to be born in a stable, because "there was no room for him in the inn". And today we hear about a threat of slaughter which forces Him to take – while still an infant – the road of exile.

### Foreign from infancy

So the characteristic detail in Orthodox icon of the Birth is not aimless, that depicts the manger in the shape of a tomb. The "hospitality" on the earth of the Divine Infant, begins from a manger of irrational animals and concludes in a tomb – and furthermore a foreign tomb – after a dishonorable death! It would not be consequently completely timeless, in these Christmas days, for us to remember something from the mournful troparion, that we chant at the exit of the Sepulcher on Holy Friday.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 2:13-23

When the wise men departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more." But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaos reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

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There Saint Joseph of Arimathea is presented seeking permission from Pilate to unvail the Body of Christ from the Cross, saying: "Give me this foreigner, who from an infant as a foreigner was estranged".

The Lord and creator of the universe comes to save the world, and almost everyone faces him as a foreigner. "He came to his own and his own did not receive him". Only some shepherds and three "magi Persian Kings" from the depths of the East recognize Him and worship Him. Foreigners had to come to wake up "his own" who considered

Him a foreigner and to reveal to them that He is their awaited King. But where can a throne be found for such a King, in hearts fired up by wickedness and hypocrisy, and much more so, in the full of ambition heart of Herod.

### **Incurable mania**

"Herod should not have gotten angry" says the sacred Chrysostom "with the departure of the magi through another road. He should've gotten scared and hesitated, since he had causes for cure: and they spoke to him about the star, and the high priests and the scribes about the prophecies. But when the soul is ungrateful and incurable, none of the medicines which God gives is able to bring a result". "O the hardness of Herod!", says the sticheron of the ainous. Since a mania overcame him against God who became an infant, he allows his anger to break out to the infants".

Thus both Herod and the Jews, instead of being filled with joy from the coming of the Messiah, whom they supposedly awaited with longing, they are disturbed and hurt. The Oikos of the feast says characteristically: "whereas the things above and the ones below rejoice together and celebrate with the appearance of the King of all, only Herod is suffering together with the prophet-killing Jews. And it is natural only for them to be wailing, because now their kingdom is finishing. The only true and eternal henceforth King will be the Lord, who now appears in the manger lying as an infant".

### **"Let the infants leap for joy"**

Truly. The joy that the Infant of Bethlehem brings, the joy that filled the universe on the night of Christmas, is not temporary. No one can henceforth take it from us, even if temporarily there is heard in Ramah mourning and crying and much wailing". Many babble, says the Golden-tongued one, about the injustice that occurred with the slaughter of the infants. However Christ is not the cause of the slaughter, but the inhumaneness of the king. So in what were the infants harmed who were quickly led to the stormless port? They were not treated unjustly. On the contrary, their passion granted them incorrupt crowns."

So for this reason, the so "optimistic" tongue of the hymnographers should not scandalize, who speak about "leapings of