

love of God, to the fact that He is calling us to trust Him, because He is present in our life. In the manifest and unseen benefactions which have occurred for us.

However, faith is a gift, because we do not acquire it as a knowledge which we read, but as revelation, as a revealing of the truth. And the transfiguration of our being becomes the truth that God is, because the gift is joy, is hope, is life. Nothing is the same, if we pass from the habit of faith to the acceptance of its gift. It was giving to us to be children of God. And faith is a decision. That we will seek God and His will behind everything, defeating our own self, coming into a clash, and leaving aside whatever the world considers pleasant, and is not according to the will of God.

Christmas with Christ is a blessing, truth, and the new beginning. So, for this reason also, the feast has meaning in the Church!

Fr. Th. M.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19 2021 SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY,

Martyrs Boniface, Probus, Ares, Timothy, Polyuktos, Eutychios, and Thessaloniki. Our Righteous Father Gregentius, Bishop of Ethiopia, Aglaia the Righteous of Rome.

TONE OF THE WEEK : First Tone

EOTHINON : Fourth Eothinon

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

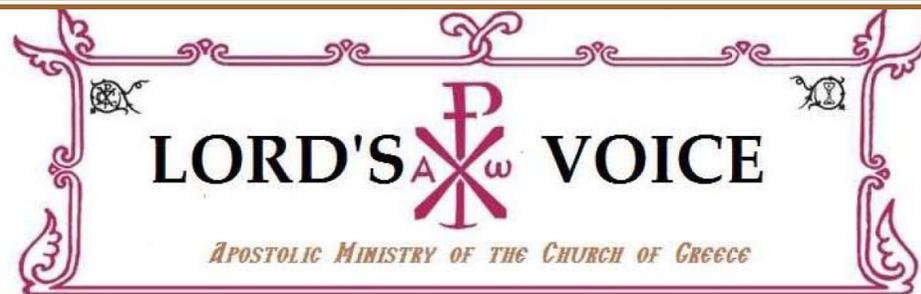
GOSPEL READING : Matthew 1:1-25.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26 2021 SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY,

Afterfast of the Nativity, Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos, Euthymios the Confessor, Bishop of Sardis, Holy New Hieronartyr Constantine of Russia, Constantius the Holy Martyr, Barlaam the Righteous of Varlaam.

EPISTLE READING : St. Paul's Letter to Galatians 1:11-19

GOSPEL READING : Matthew 2:13-23.



69TH YEAR DECEMBER 19 2021 PAMPHLET # 51 (3577)

CHRISTMAS: FROM HABIT TO FAITH

Christmas, like every Christian feast, presupposes the blessing, the gift and the decision of faith. We people celebrate because thus we have grown up, and because our culture has associated religiosity with its own manner of approaching time. Everyone, furthermore, gains. The feast becomes a stop and a journey of life, except that its meaning does not interest the majority. So long as it exists!

Changing course

Whoever of us, however, are interested in what a feast shows us, and what it calls us to, need to again see what faith is. And here our Church, on the Sunday before the Nativity, makes a reference to people who were distinct, as regards faith, setting out from the first one to whom God revealed Himself: the forefather of the Old Testament, Abraham. The Jews were the inheritors of the faith of Abraham down to the years of Christ. Afterwards, the inheritance passed to all of humanity, to each person and people who obtained the covenant, and the agreement of faith that God made with Abraham. So, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Jews, shows us that faith is not only a dogmatic truth that the believer accepts in his mind and thought, as much as a "residence," a "settling," in "a foreign land" (Heb. 11:9).

EPISTLE READING : ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO 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.

He who believes, has decided to abandon the way of his life, henceforth, since abandoning the land is not a presupposition, since Christianity has spread to almost the entire universe. The way of the foreign land presupposes a decision to clash. No one accepts a foreigner who comes not as a guest, but in order to take his land. And the "invader" has to have decided that he will come to clash, not only with his own self, but also with whoever he meets. Some will accept him, others won't. Life is not rosy. Everything is not rosy on the way and the manner of faith. It demands dwelling in

tents, in other words, a feeling that everything in life changes, the dispositions of the earthly authority, of other people, of models of culture. The only firm thing is faith, trust, in other words, in the person of God, Who knows what we need and what will give us genuine progress. Abraham won thanks to faith in God. And we today are called, to the world's refusal to live the meaning of the presence of Christ beyond the custom, to juxtapose faith and the changing of the heart.

The priorities of culture

Our Church calls us to abdicate from the self-sufficiency of our rights. From the deification of our passions and desires. From "I'm like that, even if you don't like it, I'm not changing". From the persistence to not want to see the events of life through the perspective of God's providence. From our remaining in wanting to explain everything based on our ego and rationalism, such as also based on who we think that God is, in other words, He who ought to give us everything in our hand. The truth is that love for God needs trust, sometimes battling and adventure, and surely a clash with our own self and with the mindset of the world.

We again find our identity

Through the coming of Christ to the world, we are called to again find the meaning of our Christian identity. Each event, each person, each moment cannot leave untouched the manner with which we see God and our life. The same thing with every feast. It is a blessing, to which we are called to leave ourselves. We are to not only philosophize its meaning, but to live the presence of God. Because this is the meaning of the feast. To leave ourselves to the