

which exceeds the possibilities of logical interpretation. That's how we understand the fact that the Saints of the Old Testament lived with expectation to see the fulfillment of the divine Proclamation for the coming of the Messiah; however, they left life without seeing its fulfillment. However, all these, as the Apostle says, await all people of all ages, until the end of the ages, so all together as one body, the Body of Christ, with Him as head, to enjoy the glory of God and to become sharers and communicants of the ineffable bliss and the goods that God has prepared for those who loved Him.

May their faith and trust in God imbue our own existence as well, so that we become a clean and undefiled inn, where the "completely uncontainable one" Who became an "infant for us, the Lord Jesus" will recline.

**Archim. N.K**

**NATIVITY, EVE OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.** *Eugenia the Righteous Nun-Martyr of Rome and those with her.*

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

**GOSPEL READING :** *Matthew 14:1- 25.*

**TONE OF THE WEEK :** *Fourth Tone*

**ETHINON :** *Seventh Eothinon*

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31 , 2023. SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY,**

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 Orphan\_

**EPISTLE READING :** *ST. PAUL'S 2ND LETTER TO TIMOTHY 4:5- 8*

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



**71<sup>ST</sup> YEAR DECEMBER 24 2023 PAMPHLET # 52 (3682)**

## **"CHRIST IS BORN, GLORIFY "**

Today's Sunday is the Sunday before the feast of the Lord's Nativity in the flesh, and the Church invites us to consider the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God with the eyes of faith. In fact, with the texts of the Epistle and Gospel reading, as well as with the magnificent Christmas hymnology of the Church, the entire sacred history of the Old Testament passes before us. Given that, on the one hand, the genealogical tree of the Lord according to flesh, that is, according to human nature are presented, and on the other hand, those "who pleased God from the centuries from Adam up to Joseph the betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos" are presented.

The Nativity of the Lord is the culmination of the divine Economy. Of the history, that is, of God's actions in history to create true contact with man, society and, therefore, a new reality; the "new creation", the new creation, to which the Apostle Paul often refers. In this context, the incarnation of Christ can only be understood against the background of the Old Testament. There God creates man in His own image and places great and high objectives for mankind. With vividness and powerful images, the Holy Scripture tells how man fell

## **EPISTLE ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO *HEBREWS 11:32-40***

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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from where he had been placed by God and how he found himself trapped in crime (fratricide of Abel from Cain), division (Babel), superstition and, with one phrase, in every form of wickedness and sin.

## **The infinite love of God**

However, with the Birth of Christ, the restoration of human nature takes place and bridges whatever separated God from man. This mysterious act of God's grace emanates from His infinite love and establishes the rebirth of man, in a new life, with the new Adam as the progenitor, the incarnate Word of God. Christ enters the world of our own slavery into sin and death and redeems the captives, in order to restore them to the "freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8,21), that is, into the state of divine adoption.

## **The model of the Saints**

The Apostle in today's Epistle reading presents to us the way in which the Saints of the Old Testament stood before God and His promises. And this is none other than faith, deep trust in God, which with unique clarity is described in the present passage from Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. Because the Saints with the power of faith waited for the Redeemer and were living salvation in Christ from their own years, since God the Word embraces all the dimensions of time and extends into infinite eternity. In this way, they gave the good testimony of faith and for the sake of God they endured all types of harms. They were strengthened by the incorporeal Word of the Old Testament, Whom we believers of the New Testament put on, as light and as grace, and we commune Him through the Divine Eucharist, as the incarnate Word, partaking in the Cross, the Resurrection and His holy Glory.

## **Salvation in Christ**

The faith and sacrifice of the Saints, as described in our reading, project the ultimate destiny of man, i.e. the elevation of the created existence into the place of God, the salvation, the redemption, the deification of man. That is why the economy of God for the salvation of the world is a mystery of His love