Light a Candle & Say a Prayer at Ascension Church, Fairview, NJ

“I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

To light a candle, please click the link below and after you select the candle(s) that you would like us to light and before pressing the "Place Order" button, please submit the names of your loved ones, those who are alive and/or those who have departed this life.

Your candles will be lit at the next Liturgy or service. Thank you and God bless!

http://ascensionfairviewnj.square.site/
ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ

Κυριακή, 15 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Π’ Λουκά – Αρχή Νηστείας
8:30 π.μ. – 11:30 π.μ. Όρθρος, Θ. Λειτουργία

Δευτέρα, 16 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Απόστολος και Ευαγγελιστής Ματθαίος
9:00 π.μ. – 10:30 π.μ. Όρθρος, Θ. Λειτουργία

Τρίτη, 17 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Γρηγόριος ο Θαυματουργός
9:00 π.μ. – 10:30 π.μ. Όρθρος, Θ. Λειτουργία
6:00 μ.μ. Παράκληση

Τετάρτη, 18 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Πλάτων Μάρτυς, Μάρτυς Ρωμανός
9:00 π.μ. – 10:30 π.μ. Όρθρος, Θ. Λειτουργία
Ελληνικό Σχολείο – Διαδικτυακή διδασκαλία

Πέμπτη, 19 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Αβδιού Προφήτης - 9:00 π.μ. – 10:30 π.μ. Όρθρος, Θ. Λειτουργία
7:00 μ.μ. Γενική Συνέλευση

Παρασκευή, 20 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Προσόρτια εν τω Ναώ Εισόδου
9:00 π.μ. – 10:30 π.μ. Όρθρος, Θ. Λειτουργία
Ελληνικό Σχολείο – Διαδικτυακή διδασκαλία

Σάββατο, 21 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Είσοδος της Υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου
9:00 π.μ. – 11:30 π.μ. Αρχιερατική Θεία Λειτουργία
από τον Επίσκοπο Μηδείας Απόστολο

Κυριακή, 22 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Θ’ Λουκά – Αρχή Νηστείας
8:30 π.μ. – 11:30 π.μ. Όρθρος, Θ. Λειτουργία

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday, November 15, 2020
8th Sunday of Luke – Nativity Fast Begins
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Orthros, Divine Liturgy

Monday, November 16, 2020
Matthew the Apostle & Evangelist
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Orthros, Divine Liturgy

Tuesday, November 17, 2020
Gregory the Wonderworker
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Orthros, Divine Liturgy
6:00 p.m. Paraklisis

Wednesday, November 18, 2020
Plato of Ancyra - 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Orthros, D. Liturgy
Greek School Virtual Teaching

Thursday, November 19, 2020
Obadiah the Prophet - 9:00 – 10:30 a.m. Orthros, D. Liturgy
7:00 p.m. General Assembly Meeting
Greek School Virtual Teaching

Friday, November 20, 2020
Forefeast of the Entrance
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Orthros, Divine Liturgy
Greek School Virtual Teaching

Saturday, November 21, 2020
The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple
9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
Presiding His Grace Bishop Apostolos of Medeia

Sunday, November 22, 2020
9th Sunday of Luke
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Orthros, Divine Liturgy
Psalm 27.9,1
O Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.
Verse: To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:4-10

Brethren, God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God: not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
At that time, a lawyer stood up to put Jesus to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live."

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."
Άγιος Ματθαίος Απόστολος και Ευαγγελιστής

Ο Απόστολος και Ευαγγελιστής Ματθαίος, πριν γίνει μαθητής του Κυρίου Ιησού Χριστού, ονομαζόταν Λευίς. Ο πατέρας του λεγόταν Αλφαίος και ήταν από τη Γαλιλαία. Ο Ματθαίος έκανε το επάγγελμα του τελώνη, και ο Ιησούς τον βρήκε να κάθεται στο τελωνείο έξω από την Καπερναούμ. Και είπε προς αυτόν: «Ἀκολούθει μοι». Ο Ματθαίος, χωρίς καμιά καθυστέρηση, αμέσως τον ακολούθησε. Και όχι μόνο εγκατέλειψε το αμαρτωλό επάγγελμα του τελώνη, αλλά και με χαρά φιλοξένησε τον Κύριο στο σπίτι του. Εκεί, μάλιστα, ήλθαν και πολλοί τελώνες και άλλοι αμαρτωλοί ανθρώποι, με τους οποίους ο Ιησούς συνέφαγε και συζήτησε. Οι φαρισαίοι, όμως, που είχαν πωρωμένη συνείδηση, όταν είδαν αυτή την ενέργεια του Κυρίου, αμέσως τον κατηγόρησαν ότι συντρώγει με τελώνες και αμαρτωλούς. Ο Ιησούς το άκουσε και είπε εκείνα τα θαυμάσια λόγια: «Οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους, ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλούς εἰς μετάνοιαν» (Ματθαίου, θ' 13). Δηλαδή, λέει ο Κύριος, δεν ήλθα για να καλέσω εκείνους που νομίζουν τους επίσης τους δίκαιους, αλλά ήλθα να καλέσω τους αμαρτωλούς, για να μετανοήσουν και να σωθούν.

Στο Ματθαίο οφείλει η Εκκλησία μας το πρώτο κατά σειρά στην Καινή Διαθήκη Ευαγγέλιο, που γράφτηκε το 64 μ.Χ. Ο Ματθαίος κατά την παράδοση κήρυξε το Ευαγγέλιο στην Αιθιοπία, όπου και πέθανε μαρτυρικά.

Saint Matthew: Tax-Collector, Apostle and Evangelist

In the lists of the Twelve disciples who are recorded in the New Testament, the name Matthew is mentioned. He calls himself this in the list of disciples he quotes in his Gospel (Matth. 10, 3), and also in the narrative of his call to the role of apostle. In the narrative of his call, he talks about a man who was sitting at his tax booth, which is why he calls himself “Matthew the Tax-Collector [Publican]”. In Mark’s Gospel (2, 4), this tax-collector is called “Levi, the son of Alpheus” and in Luke’s (5, 27) he is called simply “Levi”. We should mention that in the list of disciples, the apostle James is also called “the son of Alpheus”, but he was not Matthew’s brother. Had he been, this would have been mentioned in the Gospels, as is the case with other apostles.
who were brothers, such as Peter and Andrew, and James and John.

Matthew the tax-collector and Levi are the same person [in this instance]. The name Matthew, which he received after the call from Jesus, means “Gift of God”. It is a contraction of the Hebrew Mattityahu. At Matth. 10, 3, Tatian adds “also the Lebbaeus”. We do not know when or why the Lord gave him the name by which he is now best known in the Church. Out of respect for their fellow apostle, neither Luke nor Mark mentions Matthew’s profession, because tax-collectors were hated. Matthew himself, however, reports that the Lord “saw a man called Matthew, sitting at the tax-booth”, that is a man already known as Matthew. As Saint John Chrysostom notes: “The apostle is deserving of admiration for not concealing his former life, and also giving his name, which the others concealed with another appellation”. The apostle does not deny his former life, but acknowledges his alteration after being called. This demonstrates his humility.

Matthew lived in Capernaum, a city that belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod. As a clerk, he would have been in the service of some larger employer who had paid the tax revenues of the city, or even the region, to the Romans and then had the right to keep whatever monies he had raised. Matthew would certainly have known the Aramaic spoken by the Jews in the area, and Greek as well.

When the Lord said: “Follow me”, he left immediately, abandoning everything without hesitation. This indicates that he already knew and respected the Lord. He, too, belonged to the tax-collectors who approached the Lord and concerning whom the Pharisees condemned Him for being “a friend of tax-collectors” (Luke 7, 35; 15, 1). Matthew must have been a rich man. This is apparent from the fact that he had his own house. It was there that, to celebrate his call and the abandonment of his profession, he gave a farewell meal, to which he invited a good many people. It is not clear from the Gospels whether he, too, was a disciple of Saint John the Baptist, as other disciples of Christ seem to have been.

After his call, he was not prominent among the circle of disciples. Not when the Lord was alive, nor after the resurrection. His name is not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament [except as we have indicated above]. This was almost certainly because of his humility. Clement the Alexandrian provides us with details of his strictly ascetic life: “For the Apostle Matthew ate cereals, nuts and vegetables, without meat”.

Clement, Efsevios [Eusebius] and Irinaios [Irenaeus] report that, after the Lord’s resurrection, Matthew preached Christ for about eight years to the Jews. It was here that, between 60-66 A.D., he
wrote the Gospel, originally in Aramaic, and then either translated it himself or had it translated into Greek [There is also a school of thought that the Gospel was written first in Greek. While it is certainly true that some of the expressions are Hellenized versions of Aramaic equivalents, it is not possible to know whether this is because of the translator or because they had passed into the ordinary Greek of the region and were therefore included in an original text. Rather like using, say, “a blank slate” [tabula rasa] in English. WJL]. It contains narratives of the events in the life of the Lord and also teachings which He used in His catechesis. Irinaios is the first to mention that “the Gospel according to Saint Matthew was written to the Jews”, meaning that the recipients were Jews who had become Christians or, as Origen says: “those who believed from Judaism”.

he purpose behind the writing of the Gospel of Saint Matthew was to make manifest that Christ came “from the seed of Abraham”, which is why the narrative begins with His nativity. As Saint John Chrysostom says: “He wanted nothing more than to show that He was of the seed of Abraham and David… for nothing would soothe a Jew so much as to know that Christ was the descendant of Abraham and David”. This is why he selects important events in the life of Christ, compiles His sayings and presents them in such a way that they demonstrate that Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Messiah Who was foretold for the Jews. By quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament, he makes it clear that they were fulfilled in the person of Christ.

As for his later activities, we cannot regard what has been handed down to us as either accurate or historical. Rufinus, Gregory the Great and the Church historian Socrates, all declare that he went to Ethiopia. Paulinus of Nola mentions that he converted the pagan Parthians to Christ, while Saint Nikodimos the Athonite declares that: “later he was put to death by fire by the infidels”, in Ierapolis, in Syria. It may be that this is confirmed by a verse in his Life: “‘Jesus You also save tax-collectors; grace belongs to You’. This is what Matthew cried, when he was in the midst of the fire”.

By the prayers of Your apostle, God, have mercy upon us. Amen.
Saint Gregory, Wonderworker of Neocaesarea

Saint Gregory the Wonderworker, Bishop of Neocaesarea, was born in the city of Neocaesarea (northern Asia Minor) into a pagan family. Having received a fine education, from his youth he strived for Truth, but the thinkers of antiquity were not able to quench his thirst for knowledge. Truth was revealed to him only in the Holy Gospel, and the youth became a Christian.

For the continuation of his studies Saint Gregory went to Alexandria, known then as a center for pagan and Christian learning. The youth, eager for knowledge, went to the Alexandrian Catechetical School, where the presbyter Origen taught. Origen was a famous teacher, possessing a great strength of mind and profound knowledge. Saint Gregory became a student of Origen. Afterwards, the saint wrote about his mentor: “This man received from God a sublime gift, to be an interpreter of the Word of God for people, to apprehend the Word of God, as God Himself did use it, and to explain it to people, insofar as they were able to understand it.” Saint Gregory studied for eight years with Origen, and was baptized by him.

The ascetic life of Saint Gregory, his continence, purity and lack of covetousness aroused envy among his conceited and sin-loving peers, pagans that they were, and they decided to slander Saint Gregory. Once, when he was conversing with philosophers and teachers in the city square, a notorious harlot came up to him and demanded payment for the sin he had supposedly committed with her. At first Saint Gregory gently remonstrated with her, saying that she perhaps mistook him for someone else. But the profligate woman would not be quieted. He then asked a friend to give her the money. Just as the woman took the unjust payment, she immediately fell to the ground in a demonic fit, and the fraud became evident. Saint Gregory said a prayer over her, and the devil left her. This was the beginning of Saint Gregory’s miracles.

Having returned to Neocaesarea, the saint fled from the worldly affairs into which influential townsmen persistently sought to push him. He went into the desert, where by fasting and prayer he attained to high spiritual accomplishment and the gifts of clairvoyance and prophecy. Saint Gregory loved life in the wilderness and wanted to remain in solitude until the end of his days, but the Lord willed otherwise.

The bishop of the Cappadocian city of Amasea, Thedimos, having learned of Saint Gregory’s ascetic life, decided to have him made Bishop of Neocaesarea. But having foreseen in spirit the intent of Bishop Thedimos, the saint hid himself from the
messengers of the bishop who were entrusted to find him. Then Bishop Thedimos ordained the absent saint as Bishop of Neocaesarea, beseeching the Lord that He Himself would sanctify the unusual ordination. Saint Gregory perceived the extraordinary event as a manifestation of the will of God and he did not dare to protest. This episode in the life of Saint Gregory was recorded by Saint Gregory of Nyssa (January 10). He relates that Saint Gregory of Neocaesarea received the episcopal dignity only after Bishop Thedimos of Amasea performed all the canonical rites over him.

During this time, the heresy of Sabellius and Paul of Samosata began to spread. They taught falsely concerning the Holy Trinity. Saint Gregory prayed fervently and diligently imploring God and His most pure Mother to reveal to him the true faith. The All-Holy Virgin Mary appeared to him, radiant like the sun, and with Her was the Apostle John the Theologian dressed in archepiscopal vestments.

By the command of the Mother of God, the Apostle John taught the saint how to correctly and properly confess the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Saint Gregory wrote down everything that Saint John the Theologian revealed to him. The Mystery of the Symbol of the Faith, written down by Saint Gregory of Neocaesarea, is a great divine revelation in the history of the Church. The teaching about the Holy Trinity in Orthodox Theology is based on it. Subsequently it was used by the holy Fathers of the Church: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory of Nyssa. The Symbol of Saint Gregory of Neocaesarea was later examined and affirmed in the year 325 by the First Ecumenical Council, showing his enduring significance for Orthodoxy.

Having become a bishop, Saint Gregory set off to Neocaesarea. Along the way from Amasea he expelled devils from a pagan temple, the priest of which he converted to Christ. The convert was witness to still another miracle of the saint, at his word a large stone shifted from its place.

The preaching of the saint was direct, lively and fruitful. He taught and worked miracles in the name of Christ: he healed the sick, he helped the needy, he settled quarrels and complaints. Two brothers sharing an inheritance were not able to agree over the property of their dead father. There was a large lake over which they argued, for each of the brothers wanted the lake for himself. They both gathered their friends together, and were ready to come to blows. Saint Gregory persuaded them to delay their fight until the following day, and he himself prayed all night long at the shore of the lake which sparked the quarrel. When dawn broke, everyone saw that the lake had dried up or gone underground. Through the intense prayer of the saint, now there was only a stream, and its course defined the boundary line.

Another time, during the construction of a church, he commanded a hill to move and make room at the place of the foundation.

When a persecution against Christians began under the emperor Decius (249-251), Saint Gregory led his flock to a faraway mountain. A certain pagan, knowing about the hiding place of the Christians, informed the persecutors. Soldiers surrounded the
mountain. The saint went out into an open place, raised up his hands to heaven and ordered to his deacon to do the same. The soldiers searched the whole mountain, and they went several times right past those praying, but not seeing them, they gave up and went away. In the city they reported that there was nowhere to hide on the mountain: no one was there, and only two trees stood beside each other. The informer was struck with amazement, he repented of his ways and became a fervent Christian.

Saint Gregory returned to Neocaesarea after the end of the persecution. By his blessing church Feasts were established in honor of the martyrs who had suffered for Christ.

By his saintly life, his effective preaching, working of miracles and graced guiding of his flock, the saint steadily increased the number of converts to Christ. When Saint Gregory first ascended his cathedra, there were only seventeen Christians in Neocaesarea. At his death, only seventeen pagans remained in the city.

Άγιος Γρηγόριος Νεοκαισαρείας ο Θαυματουργός

Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος γεννήθηκε περίπου το 210 με 215 μ.Χ. Αρχικά ονομαζόταν Θεόδωρος και οι γονείς του ήταν Έλληνες ειδωλολάτρες και είχαν μεγάλη κοινωνική θέση στη Νεοκαισάρεια του Πόντου (γνωστή στην αρχαιότητα και ως Καβηρία, Διάσπολις και Σεβαστή, το σημερινό Νικσάρ). Μετά τη στοιχειώδη εκπαίδευσή του, ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος μαζί με τον αδελφό του Γρηγόριο ή (σύμφωνα με μερικές αγιολογικές πηγές) Αθηνόδωρο, (βλέπε και για τους δύο στις 7 Νοεμβρίου) πήγαν στη Βηρυτό για να σπουδάσουν νομικά. Ο Θεός όμως είχε άλλα σχέδια για το Γρηγόριο. Όταν περνούσε από την Καισαρεία, άκουσε το δεινό ερμηνευτή των Γραφών, Ωριγένη. Ο Γρηγόριος τόσο πολύ ενθουσιάστηκε μαζί του, ώστε άφησε τα νομικά και διετέλεσε επί χρόνια μαθητής του. Ονομαστός είναι ο αποχαιρετιστήριος λόγος του μετά το πέρας των σπουδών του. Εκεί φαίνεται η μεγάλη αξία του Ωριγένη, σαν διδασκάλου και η βαθειά ευγνώμοσύνη του Γρηγορίου, σαν μαθητού. «Απασαν προσήγε την παρ' αυτού τέχνην και επιμέλειαν και κατειργάσατο ημάς», γράφει για το διδάσκαλό του.

Κατόπιν πήγε στην Αλεξάνδρεια, και από εκεί επέστρεψε στη Νεοκαισάρεια με πλήρη θεολογική μόρφωση και άγιο ζήλο. Τότε ο Μητροπολίτης Αμασίας Φαιδήμος διέκρινε τα χαρίσματα του και τον έκανε επίσκοπο Νεοκαισαρείας η οποία είχε μόνο 17
χριστιανούς! Ο Γρηγόριος, όμως, δεν το θεώρησε υποτιμητικό. Βασιζόταν πολύ στη δύναμη της θείας χάριτος και πάντα είχε στο μυαλό του τα ενθαρρυντικά λόγια του θείου Πάυλου: «Ἐνδυναμοῦ ἐν τῇ χάριτι τῇ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ» (Β' πρός Τιμόθεον, β' 1), δηλαδή να ενδυναμώνεσαι με τη χάρη που μας δίνεται από τη σχέση και την ένωση μας με τον Ιησού Χριστό. Πράγματι, με τη χάρη του Θεού, ο Γρηγόριος έκανε καταπληκτικό αγώνα και εκχριστιάνισε σχεδόν όλη την πόλη. Και ενώ είχε παραλάβει 17 χριστιανούς, όταν πέθανε ειρηνικά στα τέλη του 270 μ.Χ., είχαν απομείνει στην επισκοπική του περιφέρεια μόνο 17 ειδωλολάτρες! Υπήρξε δε τόσο εγκρατής στη γλώσσα του, ώστε δεν βγήκε απ' αυτή κανένας κακός, περιττός ή αργός λόγος. Γι' αυτό και ο Θεός τον κόσμησε και με το χάρισμα της θαυματουργίας.

Στον Γρηγόριο αποδίδεται η καθιέρωση εορτασμών προς τιμήν των μαρτύρων, των διδασκαλιών σχετικά με τους αγίους και η τήρηση εορτών για τους αγίους, που αποτέλεσε επίσης μέσο για να προσελκύσει ειδωλολάτρες στην εκκλησία. Ονομαστός θαυματουργός μένει ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Επίσκοπος Νύσσης, αδελφός του Μεγάλου Βασίλειου, ο οποίος αποτελεί την πρώτη και ταυτόσημη διδακτική δομή της εκκλησίας της Νύσσης, στη συνέχεια και την εκκλησία της Νύσσης. Άλλα έργα του που σώζονται είναι η Κοινωνική Περί των εν τη Καταδρομή των Βαρβάρων Ειδωλολάτρων, η Κατάδρομη Φαγώνων και Επιστολή προς Τατιανόν Περί Ψυχής Λόγος Κεφαλαίωδης, Λόγοι εις τους Αγίους Πάντας, Ομιλία Εις τον Εκκλησιαστήν και Η Φροντίδα του Πατριάρχη Νέας Εκκλησίας της Νύσσης. Προς Τατιανόν Περί Ψυχής Λόγος Κεφαλαίωδης, Λόγοι εις τους Αγίους Πάντας, Ομιλία Εις τον Εκκλησιαστήν, αποσπάσματα από σχολιολόγια στον Ευαγγέλιο του Ματθαίου, στον Ιερεμία και στον Ιώβ.
Η εν τω Ναώ Είσοδος της Υπεραγίας Θεοτόκου και Αειπαρθένου Μαρίας

Όταν το άγιο και πανάχραντο τέκνο που ο Θεός εχάρισε στο ανθρώπινο γένος –το προ πολλού παλιού εξαιτίας της αμαρτίας, τον παθών και του θανάτου– έφθασε στην ηλικία των δύο χρόνων, ο πατέρας του Ιωακείμ είπε στη σύζυγό του: «Ας το οδηγήσουμε στον Ναό του Κυρίου, για να εκπληρώσουμε την υπόσχεση που εδώσαμε να το αφιερώσουμε από τρυφερή ηλικία στον Παντοδύναμο». Η Άννα, όμως, απάντησε: «Ας περιμένουμε να γίνει τριών ετών, γιατί μπορεί να ζητά τον πατέρα και τη μητέρα της, και να μη μείνει στον Ναό του Κυρίου».

Όταν το παιδί έγινε τριών ετών, οι γονείς του αποφάσισαν να εκπληρώσουν τις υποσχέσεις τους και να προσφέρουν το τέκνο τους στον Ναό. Ο Ιωακείμ κάλεσε τότε κόρες Εβραίων από καθαρή φυλή να το συνοδεύσουν στον Ναό προσπορευόμενες με αναμμένες λαμπάδες, έτσι ώστε το φως να τραβήξει το ενδιαφέρον του παιδιού και να μη μπει αυτό στον πειρασμό να στραφεί πίσω προς τους γονείς του.

Η πάναγνος Παρθένος όμως, υπό του Θεού εκ γενετής υψωθείσα σε βαθμό αρετής και αγάπης των ουρανίων πραγμάτων ανώτερο από κάθε άλλο πλάσμα, όρμησε τρέχοντας προς τον Ναό. Πέρασε μπροστά από τις παρθένες της συνοδείας της και πάθος ένα βλέμμα για τον κόσμο ρίχθηκε στην αγκαλιά του Αρχιερέα Ζαχαρία που την περίμενε στον πρόναο συνοδευόμενος από τους πρεσβυτέρους.

Ο Ζαχαρίας την ευλόγησε, λέγοντας: «Ο Κύριος εδόξασε το όνομά σου σε πάσα γενεά. Στο πρόσωπό σου θα αποκαλύψει κατά τις έσχατες ημέρες τη Λύτρωση που ετοίμασε για τον λαό Του». Και πράγμα ανήκουστο για τους ανθρώπους της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης, εισήγαγε το παιδί στα Άγια των Αγίων, όπου μόνον ο αρχιερέας μπορούσε να εισέλθει μία φορά, τον χρόνο κατά την εορτή του Εξιλασμού. Το έβαλε να καθήσει στο τρίτο σκαλί του θυσιαστηρίου και η Χάρη του Κυρίου από τότε την επεσκίασε. Σηκώθηκε και άρχισε να χορεύει για να δείξει τη χαρά της. Όσοι ήταν εκεί παρόντες εθαύμασαν τούτο το θέαμα που υποσχόταν
μεγάλα θαύματα τα οποία ο Θεός επρόκειτο σύντομα να πραγματοποιήσει στο πρόσωπό της.

Έχοντας έτσι εγκαταλείπει τον κόσμο, τους γονείς της και κάθε δεσμό με τα αισθήματα πράγματα, η αγία Παρθένος παρέμεινε στον ναό μέχρι την ηλικία των δώδεκα ετών. Φθάνοντας λοιπόν σε ηλικία γάμου, οι ιερείς και οι πρεσβύτεροι φοβήθηκαν μήπως μολύνει το άδυτο και την εμπιστεύθηκαν στον αγνό Ιωσήφ που ήταν χήρος, για να διαφυλάξει την παρθενία της, παρουσιαζόμενος ως μηνιστήρας της.

Κατά τα εννέα αυτά χρόνια, η Παναγία τρεφόταν με τροφή πνευματική που της έφερνε άγγελος Κυρίου. Διήγη βιο ουράνιο, ανώτερο εκείνου των προπατόρων μας στον Παράδεισο. Δίχως μέριμνες, δίχως πάθη, έχοντας ξεπεράσει τις ανάγκες της φύσεως και την πυραννία των ηδονών, δεν ζούσε παρά μόνον για τον Θεό, με τον νου της προσηλωμένο κάθε στιγμή στη θεωρία του κάλλους Του.

Προσευχήμενη αδιαλείπτως και επαγρυπνώντας στον εαυτό της, η αγία παιδίσκη κατόρθωσε κατά την παραμονή της στον Ναό να καθαρίσει την καρδιά της, ώστε να γίνει ακηλίδωτος καθρέψτης, όπου ανταγωνίζεται η δόξα του Θεού. Θέρεσε τη λαμπρή στολή των αρετών, ως μελλόνυμφη, για να προετοιμασθεί για την εν αυτή έλευση του θείου Νυμφίου Χριστού. Κατόρθωσε τέτοια τελειότητα, που συνόψισε στο πρόσωπό της όλη την αγώνια του κόσμου και, ομοιοθείς διά της αρετής με τον Θεό, προσεύχηκε τον Θεό να «ομοιωθεί» με τους ανθρώπους διά της Ενανθρωπίσεως.

Από τα βάθη του αδύτου, όπου εισήλθε στην ηλικία που τα άλλα παιδιά αρχίζουν να μαθαίνουν, η Παναγία άκουε κάθε Σάββατο τα αναγνώσματα του Νόμου και των Προφητῶν που απευθύνονταν στον λαό στο κοινό τμήμα του Ναού. Με τη διάνοια της οξύμμενη από την ησυχία και την προσευχή, έφθασε έτσι στη γνώση του βαθύτερου νοήματος των μυστηρίων των Γραφών. Ζώντας εν μέσω αγίων μυστηρίων και θεωρώντας την ιδία της την αγώνια, κατανόησε πού ήταν το σχέδιο του Θεού καθ’ όλη την ιστορία του περιούσιου λαού Του.

Διέγνωσε ότι όλος αυτός ο χρόνος ήταν αναγκαίος για να ετοιμάσει ο Θεός μία μητέρα στους κόλπους της αποστάτιδος αυτής ανθρωπότητος και ότι αυτή, παιδίον άγιο που διάλεξε ο Θεός, έπρεπε να γίνει ο αληθινός, ως Ναός της θεότητος. Τοποθετημένη στα Αγία των Αγίων, όπου φυλάσσονταν τα τεκμήρια της επαγγελίας του Θεού, η Παρθένος αποκάλυπτε ότι τα σύμβολα και τα προτυπώσεις έπρεπε να εκπληρωθούν στο πρόσωπό της.

Αύτη η ιδία ήταν το Άδυτο, η Σκηνή του Λόγου του Θεού, η Κιβωτος της Καινής Διαθήκης, η Στάμνος η φέρουσα το εξ ουρανού μάννα, η βλαστήσασα Ράβδος του Ααρών, η Πλαζ του Νόμου της Χάριτος.
Σε αυτή διασφαλίζονται οι σκιώδεις προφητείες: είναι η Κλίμαξ που ενώνει τη γη με τον ουρανό, την οποία είδε στο όνειρό του ο πατριάρχης Ιακώβ, η Στήλη νεφέλης που αποκαλύπτει τη δόξα του Θεού, η κούφη Νεφέλη του προφήτη Ησαΐα, το αλατόμητο Όρος του Δανιήλ, η κλειστή Πύλη του Ιεζεκιήλ διά της οποίας ο Θεός ήρθε να επισκεφθεί τους ανθρώπους, η ζώσα και εσφραγισμένη Πηγή που αναβλύζει εντός μας τα υδάτα της αιωνίου ζωής.

Θεωρώντας πνευματικώς τα θαύματα τουτά που επρόκειτο να λάβουν χώρα στο πρόσωπό της, δίχως ακόμη να κατανοεί σαφώς πώς θα πραγματοποιούνταν, η Παναγία ανέπεμψε την προσευχή και μεσιτεία της προς τον Θεό με μεγαλύτερη ακόμη ένταση, για να σπεύσει ο Κύριος να εκπληρώσει τις υποσχέσεις του και να σώσει το ανθρώπινο γένος ερχόμενο να κατοικήσει μεταξύ των ανθρώπων.

Όταν η Θεοτόκος εισήλθε στα Άγια των Αγίων, ο χρόνος δοκιμής και προετοιμασίας της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης πήρε τέλος και σήμερα εορτάζουμε τους αρραβώνες του Θεού με την ανθρώπινη φύση. Γι’ αυτό η Εκκλησία αγάλλεται και προτρέπει όλους τους φίλους του Θεού να αποσυρθούν κι αυτοί στον ναό της καρδιάς τους για να προετοιμάσουν την έλευση του Κυρίου με τη σιωπή και την προσευχή, απομακρυνόμενοι από τις απολαύσεις και τις μέριμνες του κόσμου.

Entrance of the Theotokos to the Temple

The second great feast of the Theotokos is the celebration of her entrance as a child into the Jerusalem Temple which is commemorated on the twenty-first of November. Like the feast of her nativity, this feast of Mary is without direct biblical and historical reference. But like the nativity, it is a feast filled with important spiritual significance for the Christian believer.

The texts of the service tells how Mary was brought as a small child to the temple by her parents in order to be raised there among the virgins consecrated to the service of the Lord until the time of their betrothal in marriage. According to Church tradition, Mary was solemnly received by the temple community which was headed by the priest Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.
She was led to the holy place to be “nourished” there by the angels in order to become herself the “holy of holies” of God, the living sanctuary and temple of the Divine child who was to be born in her.

There is no doubt that the verses of the Old Testamental Psalm 45, used extensively in the services of the feast, provided a great inspiration for the celebration of Mary’s consecration to the service of God in the Jerusalem Temple.

Hear, O Daughter, and consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father’s house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your Lord, bow to him . . .

The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes, in many-colored robes she is led to her king, with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train.

With joy and gladness they are led along, as they enter the palace of the king.

Instead of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations, therefore, the peoples will praise you forever and ever (Ps 45.10–17).

The Orthodox Church understands these words of the psalm to be a prophecy directly related to Mary the Theotokos. According to the Gospel of Saint Luke which is read at the Vigil of each of her feasts, Mary herself speaks the following words: My soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden. For behold, hence-forth all generations shall call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation (Lk 1.47–50).

The main theme of the feast of Mary’s entrance to the Temple, repeated many times in the liturgical services, is the fact that she enters the Temple to become herself the living temple of God, thus inaugurating the New Testament in which are fulfilled the prophecies of old that “the dwelling of God is with man” and that the human person is the sole proper dwelling place of the Divine Presence (Ezek 37.27; Jn 14.15–23; Acts 7.47; 2 Cor 6.11; Eph 2.18–22; 1 Pet 2.4; Rev 22.1–4).

Today is the preview of the good will of God, of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. The Virgin appears in the temple of God, in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. Let us rejoice and sing to her: Rejoice, O Divine Fulfillment of the Creator’s dispensation (Troparion).

The most pure Temple of the Saviour, the precious Chamber and Virgin, the Sacred Treasure of the Glory of God, is presented today to the house of the Lord. She brings with her the grace of the Spirit, which the angels of God do praise. Truly this woman is the Abode of Heaven! (Kontakion).

The fortieth chapter of Exodus about the building of the tabernacle is read at Vespers, together with passages from the First Book of Kings and the Prophecy of Ezekiel. Each one of these readings all end with exactly the same line, “for the glory
of the Lord filled the house [tabernacle] of the Lord God Almighty” (Ex 40.35; 1 Kg 8.11; Ezek 44.4).

Once again on this feast, the Old Testament readings are interpreted as symbols of the Mother of God. This “glory of the Lord” is referred to the Mother of Christ and it “fills” her and all people after her who “hear the word of God and keep it” as the Gospel of the festal liturgy proclaims (Lk 11.37–28). The epistle reading at the Divine Liturgy also proclaims this very same theme (Heb 9.1–7).

Thus, the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple is the feast which celebrates the end of the physical temple in Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God. When the child Mary enters the temple, the time of the temple comes to an end and the “preview of the good will of God” is shown forth. On this feast we celebrate—in the person of Christ’s mother—that we too are the house and tabernacle of the Lord.

... We are the temple of the living God, as God said, “I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Cor 6.16; Is 52.11).
MEMORIAL SERVICES
ΜΝΗΜΟΣΥΝΑ
6 μήνες: Κωσταντίνος Μπάμπαλης
6 months: Konstantinos Babalis

THE WEEKLY BULLETIN

SUNDAY, November 15, 2020
8th Sunday of Luke

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ, 15 Νοεμβρίου, 2020
Η’ Λουκά