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Homily of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros - Feast of Saint Paraskevi



Homily of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Archieratical Divine Liturgy for the Feast of Saint Paraskevi

Saint Paraskevi Greek Orthodox Shrine Church

Greenlawn, New York

July 26, 2019

My Dear Sisters and Brothers, Beloved Children in the Lord!

As King David sang in the Psalms (67:36), so do we declare today: Θαυμαστός ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ! Wondrous is God in His saints!

It is truly with “fear of God, faith, and love” that we gather today in this holy house, in this church and shrine where the Lord has worked so many wonders of grace, so many miracles of healing. This community is blessed with the *Agiasmó* of Saint Paraskevi, whose memory we celebrate today; and also with the relics of Saint Panteleimon, whom we commemorate tomorrow.

It is an awesome thing to worship Christ in the direct company of His holy martyrs. By the miracles that occur through them, the Lord demonstrates the truth of their testimony. By these wonders, He also assures us that those who died for Him are alive even now in His Kingdom. Adorned with crowns of victory, the martyrs have a special *boldness* before God’s throne of grace, making intercession for us and for all the world (cf. Hebrews 4:16). May we never become indifferent to the divine power that is manifested in our midst! May we always remain amazed by the nearness of God, who through mercy and kindness shows Himself wondrous in His saints!

The miracles that take place here in the Shrine Church of Saint Paraskevi continue a long history of healings from her. She was martyred in the year 180, in the imperial reign of Marcus Aurelius, and from that time forward she has been responsible for countless cures through the boldness of her heavenly intercessions.

But what about that first miracle that she worked, the healing of the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius, when he was blinded by the very means of torture he had appointed for Saint Paraskevi?

What made her confident then that the Lord would grant her intercessions?

What gave her the boldness to announce that Christ would open again the eyes of this blasphemer and persecutor of His people?

The answer is clear from the Scripture readings of the feast today.

In the Epistle reading from Galatians (3:23-4:5), the Apostle Paul explains that under the Law of Moses, the people were like children and servants, without rights or authority. But now, through faith in Christ, we have become like full-grown sons and daughters, inheritors of all God’s riches, exercising our rights and privileges as adults. In the business world, an employee acts very differently from the owner’s son or daughter. An employee is timid and conservative with the company’s

resources; but a son or daughter operates with confidence and authority.

This would have been Paraskevi's own experience as the sole heir to her parents' wealth. When they died, she distributed their riches freely to the poor; and the Lord blessed her generosity. A mere steward or trustee would never do this; only a daughter and heir could be so daring with the fortune of an earthly father. So then—as a daughter and heir of her *Heavenly* Father—should she not be all the more bold in distributing the riches of healing that come from Him?

Consider also the Gospel passage for the day (Mark 5:24-34), which we often hear in connection with the feasts of female martyrs. It is the story of the *Aimorrhousa*, the woman with the flow of blood. She seeks from Christ a healing which no physician in twelve years could give her. For this healing, she does not halt the Lord on His journey; she does not call out from afar like a leper; she does not say even a single word to Him. Boldly she reaches for the hem of His garment, in order to draw power and wholeness from Him. She presumes—correctly!—that the Lord's will is for her to be strong and well. And see how Christ addresses her in the end: Θύγατερ! Daughter! For she displayed the confidence of a true child of God.

How did Saint Paraskevi find the boldness to declare that the Lord would open the emperor's eyes? It is because *the Lord first opened her own eyes spiritually*, to comprehend His will for His children. In her was fulfilled the prayer of Saint Paul (Ephesians 1:18-19a):

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe.

Saint Paraskevi's eyes were opened spiritually to see and believe that Christ is the true God who reigns in heaven, far above all authority and dominion; and that He rules on earth through His body, the Church, with whom He shares "His incomparably great power." This glorious vision was the source of her boldness when she, acting as a true daughter of the Heavenly King, declared that an earthly emperor's eyes would be opened and healed.

My beloved brothers and sisters:

"Wondrous is God in His saints!" This saying is not merely a tribute to God's work in times past. It is a truth that can apply also to us, here and now. You and I are equally sons and daughters of our Father in heaven. We are equally heirs of His riches. We are equally blessed with His power from on high through faith in Christ.

We should therefore be always a people of hope and optimism; people of joy and thanksgiving; people of fervent prayer and bold intercession, as was the saint for whom this Shrine Church is named. Through the intercessions of the holy Great-Martyr Paraskevi, may the Lord grant us eyes that are open always to the possibilities of His incomparably great power in us.

May God bless this parish on your feast today, granting you also, His sons and daughters, many years of wondrous service as His holy saints!

– Source: goarch.org