

## **Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America - Homily for the Sixteenth Sunday of Saint Matthew**



Beloved Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

I come among you this morning, here in our wonderful Cathedral in Brooklyn, with a very special feeling in my heart. The commemoration of the wonder-working Father of Lampsakos, the Holy Bishop Parthenios, holds deep meaning for this Parish.

For many years now, Saints Constantine and Helen has celebrated a vigil on the eve of the Feast of Saint Parthenios, hosted by the Freozoulis family. Historically, this yearly vigil has had participants from all across the Tri-state area, especially those who are currently suffering from cancer. This year, since the feast falls on a Sunday, we are not celebrating a vigil, but we are dedicating this Divine Liturgy to this sacred cause and mission.

Especially in this time of the Covid-19 Pandemic, when there has been so much loss and suffering in our communities, the complications of those afflicted by cancer of any kind have only been worsened. Hospitals are taxed, providers exhausted, and patients are asked for even more patience.

Thus, my beloved Christians, our intercessions to Saint Parthenios are even more fervent and even more urgent! His prayers and supplications to our Merciful God are even more necessary. For we know that he was a good and faithful steward of the Mysteries of God, as was the servant we read of today in the Gospel. One of them took the five talents with which he was entrusted and made five more talents. This is Saint Parthenios. A true and genuine Θαυματουργός. Through the ages, his intercessions have brought about healing, comfort, and saving grace in the lives of those who run to him in faith.

We will dedicate the Ἀρτοκλασία today to this great Saint and Bishop, and as the wheat, wine and oil are offered in thanksgiving for his intercessions, let us remember that God offers these intercessors, not because He needs them, but because we do.

The Saints – and this Saint in particular – are gifts to us, adornments of the Church that fit the needs and the desires of every Christian. We are all so different, but our needs are not so different. Having intercessors throughout the ages, who can speak to us, is one of the ways that God finds His way into our hearts.

Think of it like this: if you felt you needed to speak to the President of the United States, you just wouldn't show up at the White House! You would seek out those close to him (or her), and ask them to facilitate your petition. You would rely on their proximity to the Oval Office, and their role in assisting the Commander-in-Chief.

The Saints are not so different from such aides to the President. They are God's helpers. They help to bring us closer to God from our point of view. Because God is always present to us. However, it is we who are not always present to God.

Saint Parthenios acts on our behalf, just like the First-Called Disciple Saint Andrew. He was always introducing people to the Lord Jesus. The boy with the five barley loaves that fed the Five Thousand – the origin of our Artoklasia today. Or the Greeks who had come to see Jesus. Or even his own blood brother, Peter.

Saint Parthenios carries our petitions to the Lord, and prays with us and for us. He listens to us in silence, and in our inner silence we are able to hear the Voice of

God. Our illness does not fall on deaf ears, even when the answers are not what we desire.

My beloved friends, at this moment, when we face such challenges, let us rely all the more on Saint Parthenios and his compassion. Let us learn to practice that same compassion with each other, so that through the intercessions of Saint Parthenios, God may reveal His compassion in us.

To His glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – this day and forevermore, unto the ages of ages. Amen.

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