31/05/2021

Homily for the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman



His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral

My dear Sisters and Brothers in the Risen Lord,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! [and in response: Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!]

Christ is Risen! [and in response: Truly He is Risen!]

I am delighted to be with this beloved Cathedral, especially on the fiftieth anniversary of the Annunciation Orthodox School. It truly is the pride of the entire Archdiocese, and you should all take deep satisfaction in the accomplishment of your community. You are a welcoming and inclusive community that is growing – much like the town of the Samaritans that came running out to meet the Lord Jesus in today's Gospel Reading.

Being with various constituencies of your community, this weekend has been particularly inspiring for me. Annunciation has truly embraced its calling to be the Body of Christ here in Houston. You set a marvelous example for the entire

Metropolis of Denver and, indeed, for the national Church.

In today's Gospel – the second of the three Sundays of the Pentecostarion that speak of the mystery of Baptism, because of the water references – we see the enthusiasm of a town of outsiders, the Samaritans, for the Lord.

And this woman, whom Tradition reveals as Photini, "the enlightened one," was an "outsider's outsider" to the Lord. She was a Samaritan; He was a Jew. She was a woman; He was a man. She was five times married, well beyond the moral limit in her culture, and living with a man who was not her husband! The Lord was known to be a Rabbi, with whom such a woman as the Samaritan Woman would never associate, or even engage in the slightest way. In fact, when the Disciples returned from their errand to find food, and found the Lord speaking with her, they were scandalized and even shocked. The Gospel says:

They were surprised that Jesus was speaking to a woman. (However, nobody said, "What were you looking for?" or "Why were you speaking with her?")[*]

But in their encounter at the Well of Jacob, our Lord did not reject her, or avoid her, or condemn her. Instead, he dialogued with her; He accepted her as she was; and He allowed her to grow in self-knowledge, to the point where she even forgot the water that she had come to Jacob's well to draw. And then she wanted to share her experience of Christ with others.

This, my beloved brother and sisters, is the effect that acceptance, listening, truth and love have on people – even when their lives have become based on lies. And this is how we are called to live in the light of the Resurrection.

The Lord Jesus violated many social norms to have this encounter with the Samaritan Woman. By reaching out beyond the conventions of society, He led her – with patience and understanding – to come to her own conclusions about her life. And what did she do? She went to her fellow townspeople and told them:

"Come on! See a man who told me everything I have ever done! Is it possible that this man is the Christ?" [†]

She was transformed from a town pariah to the town preacher – even the town Evangelist! See the gentleness in how she approaches others without demands; for she wants them to see for themselves.

What a wonderful example for every Christian and for every parish to follow! Listen compassionately to one another, with patience and understanding, without

judgment or condemnation. And make room for conversation about the faith, that is open and accepting of others, just as we all want to be accepted before God.

For when we live our faith like this – like the Samaritan Woman – we will see what the Disciples themselves saw:

How people were running out of the town, and were coming to Jesus. [‡]

So shall it be with you, my dear faithful. So shall it be for your wonderful Cathedral. And so shall it be for your marvelous School.

May the Lord bless you always.

May the Lord lift up the light of His Divine Countenance upon you, your families and all that you love.

And may the Lord grant you abiding peace – the very peace of mind and heart that surpasses all human expectation and understanding.

Now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! [Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!]

[*] John 4:27.

[†] John 4:29.

[‡] John 4:30.

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