05/08/2021

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Homily for the Service of the Paraklesis to the Theotokos



Beloved Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

I am so pleased to be worshipping with you this evening, especially during these Holy Days of Δεκαπενταύγουστος. This sanctified season in the liturgical life of the Church affords us a pause from the mere recreation of Summer. It brings into focus the meaning of the Virgin Mary's Dormition for us all. And especially, as we chant the Paraklesis Canon, where we hear these words:

Σοὶ γὰρ νῦν προσφεύγων ἀνατείνω, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν.

For now, I run to you for refuge, with both my soul and my reasoning.

What exactly, then, does both soul and reason mean?

My beloved friends: the Panagia is our refuge – our καταφύγιον. She is the space within every Temple that we call "Πλατυτέρα τῶν Οὐρανῶν – "More Spacious than the Heavens."

Meaning – she can contain all our difficulties, all our challenges, even all our pain and suffering.

The Panagia is the Church – the Body of Christ. Because it was from her human nature that God the Word received His human nature. As the Apostle Paul says:

Ὅτε δὲ ἦλθε τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός ….

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent for His Son, born of a woman ….[1]

You can never overstate the significance of this verse of Holy Scripture. It states the reality of the Incarnation in a very concrete way. Moreover, it demonstrates the essential part that the Mother of God plays in our salvation. And it is a part that does not end on Christmas morning. It stretches through the lifetime of our Savior and into eternity. For the Mother of God entered into the reality of the Resurrection of her Son, as was foretold by the Prophet David when he sang:

Ἀνάστηθι, Κύριε, εἰς τὴν ἀνάπαυσίν σου, σὺ καὶ ἡ κιβωτὸς τοῦ ἁγιάσματός σου

Arise, O Lord, into Your rest; You and the Ark of your Holiness. [2]

Thus, the Virgin dwells in the Heavens with her Son and God, and waits for us to come to her with our prayers and intentions; with the aspirations of our souls, and the purposes of our minds.

My beloved Christians,

Let us include, with the names of our loved ones and friends that we list to be read, our deepest intentions and purposes for the Panagia to hear. We may not even be able to express them in words, but she knows the longing of our hearts and the aching of our souls. Let us direct our minds and thoughts to her.

Let us look to her icons, especially the Πλατυτέρα τῶν Οὐρανῶν, which show her loving embrace for the world. She is ready to receive our petitions, and pray to her Only-Begotten Son to fulfill our every need.

As we contemplate her love for us, and the place in Heaven that she has with her Son, let us remember that wonderful verse of Scripture that every priest reads at the Proskomidi, when he places the particle of bread on the sacred paten, which represents Panagia. He recites the Psalm:

Παρέστη ἡ βασίλισσα ἐκ δεξιῶν σου, ἐν ἱματισμῷ διαχρύσῳ περιβεβλημένη, πεποικιλμένη.

The Queen stood at Your right hand, in a vesture of woven gold, arrayed in diverse colors. [3]

For, indeed, she is the Queen of the Kingdom of Heaven. She is next to the King, her Son, at all times. She is adorned in beauty forever. And she intercedes on our behalf, as the same Psalm says, ‘those close to Her are brought to the King.’ [4]

Therefore, let us always run to her for refuge with mind and soul. Let us make our supplications known to her. And let us always hold her in contemplation of her great role in our salvation, and the salvation of the world.

Amen.

[1] Galatians 4:4.

[2] Psalm 131:8 (LXX).

[3] Psalm 44:9 (LXX).

[4] Psalm 44:14 (LXX).

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