

The Sunday of the Holy Ancestors of God



*... "For we, O Lord, have become fewer than any other nation, and are brought low this day in all the world because of our sins. In our day we have no ruler, or prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, no place to make an offering before you and to find mercy. **Yet with a contrite heart and a humble spirit may we be accepted.**"*

We often look for humility in our life. And these days even more so. God is emptying Himself. Christ comes in humility. And it is only in humility that we can approach him. The Mother of God walks in humility to Bethlehem and in humility she accepts the rejection of the city, the lack of hospitality. We look for humility in our life so we can see the joy. So that we can look over our depression and our anxiety. To look through the pain and suffering is not easy, especially when you must face the reality of the loss. And we did lose, not in the quality of life, but in its value. Our life is valued less. Again, 30 pieces of silver. Or whatever we value more than life itself: money, a job, a land or a country, health or even all the goods of the earth. This week at the mission people were confessing to be ready to give up on life because of the loss they experienced.

Humility helps us find the joy within the loss. And it comes only when we understand that the harm done to life today, manifested in so many ways, is a direct result of my sins. Then the prayer becomes real, and the joy that comes through the cracks of the earth, is no longer an illusion. However, in a generation that has partaken in sin for a long time, repentance seems to be out of reach. That's why the prayer of repentance comes out of the mouths of babes. Out of the innocents' mouths. They pray for our sins, and they show us a path to humility, so we don't wonder in a deserted place but see the light that comes from the cave. To see and dare to approach him.

The dinner on Wednesday brought us again in front of today's reality. There is less food and more people hungry. We lived at the mission with the sense of a partial hospitality, having people lining up outside for food. It is humiliating for them and for us. Inside though, there are people eating and the spaces are taken. However, those who stay in line prefer to take out the food and not come inside. It seems that with all our failings to do hospitality full heartedly, naturally there is a common sharing of food where all seem to be grateful. The first person in line is an older one. He really receives the food with gratitude saying that the line for food in the city is getting longer while the food diminishes. Within the multitude of people lining up there are three children who wait their turn. A young adult is taking care of them. It hurts to see people in line, not able to come inside to eat together. It hurts even more to see the elderly in that situation. Whereas for children, it seems incomprehensible. What does it do to their heart? Do they feel humiliated? Should they wait anyway? The young adult says he is their uncle, and they cannot come inside now. Maybe they would on a Saturday. They are happy to have food. He is light and thankful. He is honest. They are just happy to have good food. The children seemed even more lighthearted. If someone approached them expecting to find shame and humiliation, they discovered instead joy and innocence. They like chocolate and they are happy to share it with each other. On

Wednesday, we had buns. The dinner came with butter and a bun on top of the takeout container. The little girl, who seemed to be the middle child, took the container, visibly happy, and kissed the bread on top of it. They left with the promise to return.

Amelia is coming every week now to paint for us the icon of the Sunday gospel. We cannot be thankful enough to her. She asks for nothing in return. She is just happy that she can do it for all of us. However, the beautiful drawing of the three holy children in the furnace has a response for her this week. Maybe more to God Himself and so she is becoming a partaker of that. The God who protects the innocents who suffer in a sinful time is receiving in response the gratitude of the child who, with joy, is kissing the bread on top of the container, while waiting in the line for food. With her kiss, she restores the kiss of Judah, with her joy, she restores innocence so that no other life may be valued only 30 pieces of silver but covered instead with mercy. The gesture of the young child is the perfect icon of poverty, humility and joy, who kisses Jesus full heartedly, with innocence. It is what humanity has to offer to God who covers us all within the shelter of his wings. She teaches us to kiss Him with joy and gratitude without betrayal. Without asking for something in return because He gives Himself to us. He comes in humility; the young girl is showing us the path to encounter him. The perfect icon is not so perfect in our own life. However, we see many times that joy comes out of humility, where humility is the coat of poverty, who confesses her shame to the Lord that gives to us a wedding garment.

Angels during the week:

There were a few events this week that were announcing to us the coming of the angels. They are flying around at this time. If on Wednesday we found out that the angels are hungry and like the food we cook at the mission, on Thursday morning they were thirsty. A young child came through the doors, just after breakfast, asking for a cup of tea, on her way to school. The backpack looked like a pair of wings. She was looking at us in a funny way, as we were trying to fit the lid on top of the cup. An angel who was part of the play on Saturday said that it was fine to feel miserable all year, since you could be an angel for one day at the mission. She did fly on Saturday through the room. We also learned this week that angels, at times, are not flying so fast as we thought. L. told br Luke that she cannot “fly” on Saturday for the play because she has crutches, and she would be too slow. On Thursday, we found out that the joy of a visitation has no age. A friend in his 90’s came to the mission, visiting us from the States. He makes donations to us and he loves the Newsletter that he reads several times. He used to be a priest in the United Church, serving in the Anglican rite. He is very fond of the mission and of what we live here. His only regret, he could not pray with us at the Liturgy on Sunday, since he flies back to the States on Friday. He is light and joyful with a strong sense of humour while having a sore back. He promises that he will be visiting us again next year. In the meantime, he will be waiting for the newsletter. On Saturday, the mission was flooded by angels, of different ages and different nations. It was, as somebody said, too much: to have song, and gospel, and food and presents, and babies and a donkey and the sheep all together. And St Nicholas being as genuine as ever. Even the devil did his part so well that people took him for real. The multitude of the “bodyless hosts” had a guidance. That was with them all the time pointing to the light. We are thankful to br Luke for bringing all of us together. To taste the joy from its very source and learn from those who are humble of heart, from those who, because of refusing to worship the graven image of death, are given by God in return the gift of prayer and mercy to value any human life. By their faith “they quell the power of the fire” (Daniel 3: 25).



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

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