

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ  
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros  
to the Parish of St. Ambelain  
on Sunday, December 13, 2015*

YEAR C - THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Good morning brethren and welcome. As we enter into the second half of our Advent season we find some very interesting, if slightly disturbing, readings. Our first reading and our Gospel speak at length of the cleansing fires, and sandwiched in between them is the Epistle extolling the serenity of prayer. This is a very apt representation of the life of the mystic who is ever seeking that inner refuge amidst the tumult of daily life.

In both our first reading from the Book of Thomas and in the Gospel reading from Luke, not only are we told that the dross will be exorcised by fire, but we are exhorted not to complain about our lot in life if we wish to attain the supreme peace. For it creates a dichotomy between what we profess and how we act - which is, in a word, hypocrisy. In the Book of Thomas we are given the example of the one who claims, "We have come to do good and not to curse," but then goes on complaining about being born into the flesh and so on. Jesus calls them fools.

Likewise, in Luke, John the Baptist tells the tax collectors, the soldiers, and others to be fair, to be generous, and to be satisfied with what one has, not wishing to obtain more than one's due. This is very similar in spirit to the sentiments found in the first reading. That is, among the complainers and the cheaters there is the underlying sense that some external condition is responsible for their state of misery.

And this is where our Epistle reading from Philippians comes to show us how to remedy our dire condition. Let us examine each line of this short passage so that we may see how it applies. We are told first, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." As Gnostics we understand that limitless kingdom of heaven, from which we are exiles, not as some distant, remote, unattainable place. It is right here, everywhere, always. And Christ is the key to restore our soul to equilibrium, which is equivalent to our return to the Pleroma. Delighting in even the possibility of this restoration is a step towards it.

"Let your gentleness be known to all men." Whatever we wish for ourselves must likewise be extended to others. If we wish peace for our own soul, we must be exemplars of that peace in the world. As soon as we deny a right to others, we have forfeited our own claim to it.

"The Lord is near. In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer & petition, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." That is to say, it is not that we can never wish for anything more for ourselves. We need not simply resign ourselves to abject poverty. But in order to understand what our condition really is, and what we really need, we must be free of the anxiety of a disquieted soul. Then when we know properly what it is we need, when we ask we will assuredly receive.

"And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." This is the attainment of the kingdom of God, our reintegration into the Pleroma; that is the restoration of the equilibrium of our soul.