

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
on Sunday, February 14, 2016*

YEAR C - FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

O God make speed to save me; O Lord make haste to help me. Greetings my brethren on this first Sunday in the Lenten season. Being February 14th, it is also the day that we celebrate the Feast of Holy Valentinus, and important Gnostic father of the 2nd century. Valentinus was from Northern Africa, educated in Alexandria, and eventually moved to Rome. He sought to reform the Church from within, restoring its primitive Gnostic doctrine. He was very popular among those he served and nearly became the bishop of Rome, one of the ancient sees of St. Peter whose occupant today is called by the Roman Church, the Pope. Oh, how different history may have unfolded if our venerable Father of the Gnosis could have helped lead the young Church in the ways of wisdom!

Let us turn, then, to our readings for the day. In our first reading we continue the Hymn of the Soul, begun on Wednesday. We see here our royal traveler enter into Egypt, close to where the serpent is guarding the pearl. He puts on clothes similar to the native population so that he can move about undetected. This reminds us of both the descent of the psychic Adam into the hylic realms, as well as the Incarnation of Jesus. This journey represents the archetype of the mythic hero. And just like in the old Greek myths, if the food of the underworld is eaten, it will trap the unsuspecting hero. This is precisely what happens to our hero here. He eats of the "food" of the lower realms and "fell into a deep sleep," forgetting who he is and why he has come.

This somnabulistic stupor is attributed to the "heaviness" of the food. This agrees with our other Gnostic texts that state that the denseness of the hylic world suppresses the higher mental and spiritual faculties of man. It is this same denseness of matter that causes Adam to forget who he is and whence he came; that is, until he eats of a different type of food - not the fruit of unrighteousness, but a pneumatic nourishment, the fruit of gnosis.

In our Gospel reading from Luke, we read of Jesus' temptation in the desert. The desert, here, is very similar to Egypt in our first reading. It is the devil's domain. And the very first thing that we are told is that Jesus "ate nothing during those days." And Satan's very first temptation is to try to entice Jesus to eat; for if he eats here, his mission will have been for naught. But our Jesus not only follows the pattern of the mythic hero, he is its very embodiment. He is therefore not spared the hero's trials, but as the very basis of the archetype itself, he knows exactly and perfectly what must be done to succeed in every ordeal.

Our Lenten season is traditionally a time of fasting, of abstinence, of temperance. Fasting for its own sake accomplishes very little. But fasting with a knowledge of deeper things can be quite rewarding. On one level, fasting is an act of training the will, of setting yourself against the base, unconscious instincts. Now, these instincts are not bad. In fact they are quite necessary. But to become aware of them and to exert some control over them is a step towards self-mastery. So when you fast, think of our royal traveler in Egypt, and his dire mistake. And think of our Lord Jesus Christ in the desert and his utter mastery over the temporal things. Make a conscious effort to deny those dense and heavy "foods" that lull us into complacency and spiritual slumber. For the day is coming soon that we may eat of the true bread, and drink of the true wine, the wholesome and vivifying fruit of the tree of gnosis. Until that time, do not be satisfied with weak imitations.