

My Beloved Ones,

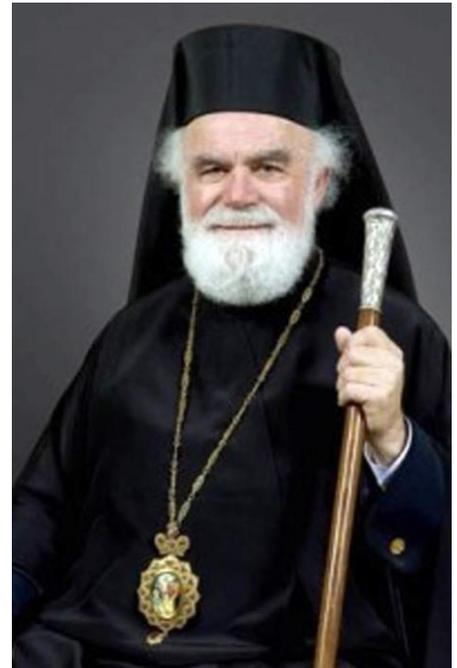
I give thanks to our Lord, for having allowed us to celebrate Mid-Pentecost in our Metropolis Chapel this past Wednesday, as we continue to observe our Lord's Resurrection. This week's Gospel tells of a unique event in the life of our Lord, which is His meeting with the Samaritan Woman. For us to understand the importance of this event, we must first know the difference between Jews and Samaritans during Christ's ministry. Each group thought about and worshipped God in different ways. Jews, of course, did so in the Temple, but the Samaritans worshipped Him on Mount Gerizim.

It is for this reason, and many others, that the Jews and Samaritans considered each an anathema. This is why the Parable of the Good Samaritan makes such a strong point. Jesus uses the Levite, the Priest as examples of Jewish people who fail to demonstrate God's mercy. Instead, it is a stranger—and not only a stranger, but an enemy, who shows us how to enact love and kindness to the needy. The Orthodox Church also draws no distinction between nationality and the faith. We need only look at Ss. Cyril and Methodius, who had to first create a written language, and then translate the Scriptures and Orthodox liturgical books for the Slavic peoples to understand Orthodoxy.

Jesus demonstrates this openness again when, sitting alone at midday near a Samaritan well, he greets a passing woman, asking for a drink. Knowing only that that He is a Jewish stranger, she answers, *"How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"* (John 4:9) Jesus responds with a beautiful figure of speech, that He is the living water, and *"...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life"* (John 4:13-14)

Now, thinking as a tired person, she asks, *"Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."* (John 4:15). He reveals His knowledge of her life as a sinner, but speaks His Word to her compassionately, *"The hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:21; 23-24).

Here we have a woman, who, like the Myrrh Bearers and so many saints throughout the ages, believes in our Lord, and testifies to the Truth of the Divine Law, rather than the



earthly Law. She returns to her home, and to her village, enthusiastically preaching His Gospel. The people were so moved and amazed, that they forget about her sinful life, and instead came to Him. Here we are given yet another group of people, strangers and outcasts, who are brought together as one by the Word of God.

I hope and pray that this message serves as an example that we as believers, also have an obligation to share the Good News with others; and not only our non-Orthodox brothers and sisters, but even our Orthodox friends who need understanding and support as well.

I greet you once again with **Χριστός ἀνέστη!** wishing you the best during this, the happiest time of our Ecclesiastical year! **Χριστός ἀνέστη!** *Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!*

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta