



My Beloved Ones,

As we continue our journey towards Bethlehem, our Church is mindful of the lessons she wishes us to keep in our hearts and minds during our preparation. It is for this reason that this Sunday is ordained as The Sunday of the Forefathers, in which we commemorate those who lived righteously both before the Law and during it, in hopeful expectation of the coming of God's Christ.

Special attention is paid to the Patriarch Abraham, who, if we remember from last Sunday's Epistle reading, was blessed by God with a son, even in Abraham and his wife Sarah's old age. This was done to fulfill the Lord's promise to Abraham that, *"I will bless those who bless you... and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."* (Genesis 12:13) Not only through Isaac's son Jacob did the Twelve Tribes of Israel begin, but in a more mystical sense, Christ's life and ministry were prefigured in all these forefathers and mothers.

By Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac, we can see God offering up His Only Son for our sakes. In the betrayal of Jacob's favorite son Joseph by his jealous brothers, Christ's betrayal by Judas is prefigured. After a time, when the Tribes fell into slavery in Egypt the holy Prophet Moses encountered God in the Burning Bush; and just as the bush was never consumed, so too was the womb of the Theotokos able to contain He who is without beginning and without end.

There of course, great and courageous women, who were important to God's plan. Had Ruth not chosen to remain steadfast and loyal, and stay with the mother of her deceased husband, she would never have met Boaz, and so could not have been the grandmother of The Great King and Prophet David, who foretold the coming of his ancestor the Messiah in the Psalms. And of course, there is Isaiah, whose prophecy directly stated, *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanu-el."* (Isaiah 7:14)

As we approach the Nativity, we may find ourselves increasingly busy. Old friends might wish to visit before the holiday, and we are occupied with trying to find the appropriate gifts which may demonstrate the love we have for our family. But the Church is instead here to remind us that the most important thing we need to do is to follow these righteous: follow them in their steadfastness, in their purity, and in their hope in the Lord. How wonderful it is that we can observe the coming of the person who had been waited for thousands of years, since the days of Abraham? We must take great joy and strength in these, our righteous forefathers and in the fulfillment of their hope through the coming Incarnation of our Lord, and ask them to intercede for us, both now, and always.

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