



My Beloved Ones,

As we continue our journey to the cavern and the manger, our Church is mindful of the lessons we are to keep in our hearts and minds in preparation for the Nativity. Therefore, this Sunday is ordained the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers, when we commemorate those who lived righteously awaiting the coming of Christ.

Special attention is first paid to the Patriarch Abraham, who was blessed by God with a son, even in his 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 did the Twelve Tribes of Israel begin through Isaac's son Jacob, but Christ's life and ministry were prefigured in these forefathers and mothers.

Through Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac, we can see God offering up His only Son. A "type" of Christ's betrayal at the hands of his disciple Judas Iscariot, is seen when Jacob's favorite son Joseph is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. 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 Him who is without beginning and without end.

There are also great and courageous women, who were important to God's plan. Had Ruth not chosen to remain with the mother of her deceased husband, she would never have met Boaz, and so she could not have been the grandmother of The Great King and Prophet David, who was born in the city of Bethlehem. And of course, there is the work of Isaiah, who prophesied, *"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 a very different kind of Nativity, we may feel lost or confused. We will miss our own families this year, but the church assures us that we should also focus on these righteous family members of Jesus; we should follow them in their steadfastness, in their purity, and in their hope.

How wonderful it is that we can observe the coming of the person who had been awaited by our righteous forefathers for thousands of years? We must take great joy and strength in the fulfillment of the Incarnation of our Lord; just as we ask them to intercede to God, for a quick end to this pandemic, and for all time.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta