



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday is a momentous day, both in spiritual and secular terms, for today we are blessed to observe both the Feast of Pentecost & our American celebration of Father's Day.

I begin this week's message, however, with the stork. This will not seem so strange when you understand that the stork is a creature which remains devoted to its children long after their offspring can feed themselves. In the minds of the Ancient Greeks, this devotion also passed from parent to child: younger storks were thought to fly in groups, carrying their aged parents to help them feed when they could no longer fly. Indeed, the Ancient Greek law which required a grown citizen to take care of his aging parents was called *Pelargonia*, which comes from the word stork, and *antipelargesis* is defined as "*the reciprocal love of children to their Parents.*"

However, it is also known that in a city-state like Sparta, strength in defense was prized above all things. Weak children who were unfit to serve as soldiers were abandoned, and so were the old men who had served. Our parable begins with a Spartan man who wrapped his elderly father in a blanket, bringing him to a mountain to end his earthly life by starvation and exposure. However, as the soldier walked away, he heard his father call over his shoulder, "*Take this blanket! Your son will need it when he brings you here.*" Hearing this, the son returned to his father a wiser man, and carried him home into the city so that his fellow citizens could see correct behavior. From that moment the practice stopped, with the aged parents treated with *antipelargesis*.

With this surprising and moving story, I also think of how St. Peter quotes from the Book of Joel to the crowd in Jerusalem, on the Day of Pentecost: "*In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*" (Acts 2:16-17) St. Peter illustrated how the coming of the Holy Spirit had bestowed gifts upon the Church, but I believe that on Father's Day, this passage can be used to demonstrate that all are created in the image and likeness of Christ, and that all have value, from the young to the wise.

May we take time this day to thank our fathers for all they have done for us, and may we demonstrate the proper *antipelargesis* for all they continue to do for us. For those whose fathers have departed this life, may we offer up prayers for our fathers and grandfathers during the coming Saturday of Souls, remembering the mercy and compassion of our Triune God, when our Lord said, "*...the Father...will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever... the Spirit of truth...*"

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta