

Πάρος, περίοδος Γερμανικῆς Κατοχῆς. Μετὰ ἀπὸ δολιοφθορὰ Ἑλλήνων ἐναντίον τῶν κατακτητῶν, ὁ Γερμανὸς διοικητὴς μάζεψε καὶ ἀποφάσισε νὰ ἐκτελέσει, ὡς ἀντίποινα, ἑκατὸν πενήντα νέους τοῦ νησιοῦ. Ἡ ἀπόφαση ἦταν τελεσίδικη καὶ παρ' ὅλες τὶς παρακλήσεις καὶ μεσολαβήσεις δημάρχων, ἐπισκόπων καὶ ἄλλων ἐπιφανῶν τοῦ νησιοῦ, ὁ Γερμανὸς παρέμεινε ἀμετάπειστος.

Ὁ ὁσιακῆς μνήμης Γέροντας π. Φιλόθεος Ζερβάκος, ἡγούμενος τῆς Ἱερᾶς Μονῆς Λογγοβάρδας, προσκάλεσε τὸν Γερμανὸ διοικητὴ καὶ τὴν ἀκολουθία του στὸ μοναστήρι του, γιὰ νὰ τοὺς φιλοξενήσει. Τοὺς παρέθεσε πλουσιοπάροχη τράπεζα, ζήτησε τὰ ὀνόματα τῶν οἰκείων τους καὶ τέλεσε τὴν Παράκληση τῆς Παναγίας, ὑπὲρ ὑγείας αὐτῶν τῶν προσώπων. Ὁ Γερμανὸς συγκινήθηκε, ἡμέρευε, «ἀλλοιώθηκε» μετὰ τὸ τέλος τῆς ἀκολουθίας καὶ παρακάλεσε τὸν Γέροντα Φιλόθεον νὰ τοῦ ζητήσει ὅποια-δήποτε χάρη, ἐκτὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ νὰ μὴ γίνῃ ἡ ἐκτέλεση τῶν δύστυχων ὁμήρων, τῶν νέων τῆς νήσου.

Ὁ πατὴρ Φιλόθεος τοῦ εἶπε: «Πρὶν σὰς ζητήσω ὅτιδήποτε, θέλω νὰ μοῦ δώσετε τὸν λόγο τῆς στρατιωτικῆς σας τιμῆς ὅτι θὰ κάνετε αὐτὸ ποῦ θὰ σὰς πῶ».

«Ἐχετε τὸν λόγο τῆς στρατιωτικῆς μου τιμῆς», ἀπάντησε ὁ Γερμανός. Τοῦ εἶπε τότε ὁ ἀειμνηστος Γέροντας: «Θέλω νὰ βάλετε κι ἐμένα ἀνάμεσα στοὺς ἑκατὸν πενήντα καὶ νὰ με ἐκτελέσετε πρῶτον». Μετὰ ἀπὸ αὐτὴν τὴν συγκλονιστικὴ πρόταση ὁ Γερμανὸς «νικίθηκε» καὶ ὑπέγραψε τὴν ἀπελευθέρωση τῶν μελλοθανάτων Παριανῶν.

Ἀγαπητοὶ μας ἀδελφοί,

Μέσα στὴν ἀφθονία καὶ στὴν πλησμονὴ τῆς ἐποχῆς μας, τίποτα περισσότερο δὲν φαίνεται, σήμερα, νὰ ἔχει ἀνάγκη ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅσο τὴν ἀγάπην. Τὴν ἀγάπην, ὄχι τὴν περιστατικὴ, τὴν ἀγάπην ὄχι τῆς ιδιοτέλειας, τὴν ἀγάπην ὄχι τῆς πρόσκαιρης ἀπόλαυσης, οὔτε τὴν προσποιητὴ, ἀλλὰ, αὐτὴν ποὺ θυσιάζεται στὴν ἀνάγκη τοῦ ἄλλου, αὐτὴν ποὺ φανερώνει τὴν ὁμοίωση τοῦ Θεοῦ Προσώπου στὶς καθαρὲς καὶ φωτισμένες τοῦ Θεοῦ ψυχές.

Αὐτὴν τὴν ὁμορφὴν, ἀληθινὴ καὶ γνήσια ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ, παρακαλῶ καὶ εὐχομαί ἡ Χάρις τοῦ Γεννηθέντος Χριστοῦ μας, νὰ χαρίσει σὲ ὅλους μας.

Εὐχόμεθα σὲ ὅλους σας καλὰ, εὐλογημένα Χριστούγεννα καὶ μὲ χάριτες Θεοῦ καὶ εἰρήνη τὸ 2022.

The following occurred on the island of Paros during the German Occupation. After an act of sabotage by the Greeks against their conquerors, the German commander in retaliation apprehended and decided to execute one hundred and fifty young inhabitants of the island. His decision was final, and despite the supplications and mediations of mayors, bishops, and other prominent islanders, the German commander remained unyielding.

Elder Philotheos Zervakos of blessed memory, the abbot of the sacred monastery of Logovarda at that time, invited the German commander along with his entourage to his monastery, intending to offer them hospitality. He gave them a warm reception and offered them a generous meal. He asked for the names of their family members, and conducted a Supplicatory Canon to the Mother of God on their behalf. All this deeply touched the German commander. He was soothed, he was transformed, and at the completion of the service he asked Elder Philotheos to request any favor from him, except to revoke the execution of the unfortunate young hostages of the island.

Father Philotheos said, "Before making any request, I first want you to give me your word of military honor that you will carry out what I ask." "You have my word of military honor," replied the German commander. Then, the ever-memorable Elder said, "I want you to include me with the one hundred

and fifty hostages and execute me first." This astonishing proposal "vanquished" the German commander, and, subsequently, he ordered that all the islanders who had been sentenced to death be released.

My beloved brothers and sisters,

In our present times, which are filled with an abundance and surplus of material goods, more than anything else, man is in need of love.

Not the love that arises out of necessity, or the love that issues from self interest. Not the love that is fueled by transient pleasure, or love that rests upon pretentiousness, but, rather, the love that makes sacrifices when others are in need, the love that reveals the likeness of the Divine Face within pure and enlightened godly souls.

I beseech and pray for the Grace of our Newborn Christ to grant us all this beautiful, true, and genuine love.

I wish you all a good, blessed Christmas, and may the New Year 2022 be peaceful and filled with the graces of God.

Μὲ πολλὴν τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ τεχθέντι ἀγάπην
With much love in the newborn Christ,

Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἰωσήφ
καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφοί

