



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, Isaac, even though he and his wife Sarah were already advanced in 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. In the Prophet Jonah's three-days spent in the belly of the whale, we see a pre-figurement of our Lord's death, burial, and Resurrection, also after three days.

In this week's Gospel, our Lord says that *"Many are called, but few are chosen"* to enter the eternal banquet in His Heavenly Kingdom. These great and righteous forefathers and foremothers of God declare this as well. Consider that after the deaths of their husbands, Ruth's sister-in-law Orpah chose to return to her pagan homeland and worship, rather than staying with her former mother-in-law, Naomi. The choice to leave this strange new life was hers as well, but Ruth decided to forsake a life of comfort in her homeland to serve the God she chose to worship. And how great was her reward! Through her, she becomes the great-grandmother of the mighty King and Prophet David, who gives us not only the Psalms, but our promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

How wonderful it is that we can observe the coming of the person who had been awaited by our righteous forefathers and foremothers for thousands of years? Imagining them, we must take great joy and strength in the fulfillment of the Incarnation of our Lord; just as we ask them to intercede to Him, for the health and peace of this world, now and always.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta