



My dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

In the Gospel of the Sunday before Christ's Nativity, St. Matthew discusses the genealogy of our Lord. This is the reading which begins, "*Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...*" (Matthew 1:2)

This list continues, from the foundation of the Covenant, to the deportation into Babylon, before finally ending with God's Messiah: "...*Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ*" (Matthew 1:15-16).

Obviously, the Evangelist seeks to connect the Old and New Testaments by showing how Christ's human nature is the perfection of the Covenant promised to Abraham and his descendants—but the Evangelist is also making a much quieter point about families.

As members of this Metropolis, we place great emphasis on the importance of family. Parents are expected to raise their children in a way that helps them on their journey toward *theosis*, and children are called to love and honor their parents. However, this does not mean that families are perfect; as long as there is sin, no one who lives is perfect, save Christ. We may be painfully aware of this fact when holidays approach, for even as we try to exhibit the true Christian spirit of the Nativity season, there will be disagreements or conflicts. The beautiful thing about this Gospel passage, is that St. Matthew knows this as well. We are told that "...*Judah [was] the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar...*" but what Matthew leaves unsaid is that Tamar was Judah's own daughter-in-law (Matthew 1:3). Of course, better known is the fact that "...*David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah...*" after God's anointed King sent Uriah into battle to be killed, to have Bathsheba for himself (Matthew 1:6).

The point Matthew raises, is not to dwell upon the sins of these individuals, but to demonstrate that human weakness is a part of everyone's family—even Christ's. No one can achieve the image of a "perfect family". Matthew asks us instead to consider that what we need are spirits of patience and humility—as well as a sincere desire to repent, as David does in the Psalms. So, as we prepare to gather with family—whether they might argue, boast, or show some other sin, let us rest in the fact that God knows our weaknesses. After all, He brought his Son forth from descendants who were less than perfect. All we can do, is demonstrate Christ's love and patience, and trust that He understands our hearts and intentions, even when we ourselves also fall short of His Word.

**+SEVASTIANOS**  
**Metropolitan of Atlanta**