

First Sunday of Kiahk
"And they were both righteous before God"
Fr. Luke Sidarous - Dec 15, 2019

In the name of the Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.

These days we live days which carry a unique flavour—the Son of God descending in humility to our earth, His incarnation into our nature, and His embrace of humankind whom He loved.

This season commenced with the opening of Heaven. Was it closed? Yes, for hundreds of years. And all of a sudden, the heavens opened. An Archangel descended and announced to Zachariah the birth of John the Baptist (the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ)

The 4 gospels for the month of Kiahk are:

- The first Sunday: The Annunciation to Zachariah
- The second Sunday: The Annunciation to Saint Mary, Gabriel descending and announcing the birth of our Lord.
- The third Sunday: Our Lady, The Virgin Mary, visiting Elizabeth and Zechariah
- The fourth Sunday: The birth of John The Baptist.

The setting starts with the opening of Heaven. The holy Bible describes this season like long years without a drop of rain. The world is dry, a dead world, harbours all kinds of evil, and man is separated from God. And then, Heaven was opened!

A prophecy in the Old Testament, in the book of Judges, talks about a young man named Gideon, when the Midianites subdued the nation of Israel, and they were under heavy oppression.

Gideon threshed wheat in the wine press hiding from the Midianites. The Angel of the Lord appeared to this young man and said: "The Lord is with you, mighty one of the armies!" Gideon said: We are destitute, I am from the smallest house of the smallest clan of Israel, and I'm a young lad; you're addressing me as a mighty warrior? The Angel said "Go with your strength."

When Gideon was humbled and said "I have nothing," The Angel told him "Go with your strength."

Gideon asked "How will I know?" (that God is with us). Gideon asked the Angel for a sign, he asked: "I shall spread this sheep's fleece, dew shall fall on it, but the ground around it remains dry." The Angel gave Gideon the sign he asked for. Gideon woke up and found that the fleece was soaking wet while the ground around it remained dry.

Gideon asked the Angel for a second sign : "I shall spread this sheep's fleece, dew shall not fall on it, but the ground around it becomes wet." The Angel gave Gideon the second sign he asked for. Gideon woke up and found that the fleece was dry while the ground around it was wet.

This event is in the book of Judges, of the holy Bible after the Children of God entered the promised land.

Our saintly fathers interpreted this Old Testament event that the wetted fleece being the Nation of Israel—the flock. What about around it? It is the world. The world was dry. So in the Old Testament, what the Nation of Israel had— their relationship with God, their communication with Him, the prophets, the covenants, and the law— the world didn't know anything at all. The world was in death, in an indefinite drought.

What about the New Testament? The holy fathers said the New Testament is the opposite. The dew and blessing, The Spirit will drench the world, and they, the Jewish nation, will remain dry.

This season, the greatest mystery was manifest: The mystery of the Son of God coming down and His visitation to the world. And His visitation to the gentiles of the world.

We are of the gentiles; we aren't Jewish. And to drench us with blessings—this matter one must strongly consider. The opening of heaven and the falling of the dew and the coming down of the Son of

God in the flesh, His entry into the world, His sanctification of our nature and He made us, who are strangers, associated with Him and became His children. It really matters!

During this season, the church keeps us living at the height of joy. We just heard the gospel, the "Alleluia" we sang before the gospel. It just needs us to concentrate our thoughts a bit more.

What is this joy! The heavens were opened! One who is barren and was old in age gave birth. What a marvel? Prayers that were considered as forgotten. They would pray in their youth; Elizabeth and Zechariah, this matter was almost forgotten. Years and decades, the prayers had appeared to be forgotten, they stopped asking. But their prayers were answered!

Heavens were opened! Sorrow transformed to joy! Our Lord opened heavens, came down and touched the earth. He touched it! And walked upon it. Impossibilities became realities!

Of course, the Church is living this great joy. The Church enables us to live in it, with praise, joy, and preparation.

John the Baptist and his calls for repentance. Because Christ, to Whom is glory, He emptied Himself, and took the appearance of a slave. So the external noise wasn't visible, but the internal work had begun. He emptied Himself; He came into the world as a child born in a manger. So the lowest poverty, He was impoverished for our sake.

But the eternal matters pertaining to our eternity were clear as the sun. The Angels and the Archangels are praising. Because the blessing of Christ's salvation, which He ensured that we could live, surpasses the minds of the angels.

I hope we can move this joy into our home. It's good to come to church and be happy, feeling that heaven was opened. And that we are in reconciliation with God and that we are children of God, that He visited us, shining from above. And that the sun rose, the light shined from Mary; It was dark. He shone in the flesh.

He said "But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise." (Malachi 4:2)

I invite you to duplicate this environment in our homes, to your children. Well at home, we get a tree and we light it. Good. And we decorate the house. Scenes of the nativity outside. It's beautiful.

Whenever I go out and see the lights and those things, even if people don't mean it, I feel happy! Because the entry of Christ to the world means that He is the light of the world!

The entry of Christ into our homes this season, with this aroma, this flavor is so beautiful, I want our homes to live it, to live this joy, for the heavens to open in our homes!

And this Gabriel the messenger who stood beside the altar of incense. Well, our house has an altar! Doesn't our house have an altar of incense or not? There is. We stand and pray! It says "May my prayer be set before you like incense." (Ps. 141:2)

We all have an altar in our house. The Archangel can be seen by the altar of incense. Because he raises our prayers. He takes the prayers and raises them above. The angel said to Cornelius: "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial." (Acts 10:4) "I carried them."

Every time we stand and pray at home, we have to feel this very well. That the angel carries the prayers and raises them to God. He said to Zechariah: "Your supplication" Zechariah said, "What supplication?" Trust me that every word we pray at home, the angel takes them and raises them. "My supplication arises to your presence."

So let this environment of the nativity into our homes. The environment of prayer and incense and acceptance of prayer. To feel it. He hears us! He hears every word we say! And the angel raises every supplication above. Keep this environment in your home.

Truly, if our home, during this season, this time, lives with this understanding, Will there be arguing? Will there be yelling? Or disputes? Or grudges? No. God forbid, immoralities? Or greed? No, it will be a different environment. Heaven has opened! That's why I'm saying: why don't we live this month in this grace? The grace of prayer and the answering of prayers and the vision of the angels and the doing of the impossible.

Of course, Elizabeth heard these words. The barren, who was considered dead! To give birth!? To nurse!?

Long ago, when God said to Sarah will have a child at her old age. She laughed! There are matters one can believe and matters that can happen, and other matters that can never happen. The things that could never happen happened. God asked "why is Sarah laughing?" "Is anything impossible for God?" Don't laugh. This time is a time of fulfilling the impossible.

And God will come down to earth? Yes. Will God take the flesh of mankind and become a child? Yes! Nothing is impossible! Erase from your mind that there is anything that is finished or forgotten or that is impossible. That is this season. By the grace of Christ, everything is possible.

But I will tell you more. A word that Christ said to one whose son was sick. He asked Him to heal his son. He said "if you believe." He replied "Of I course!" Christ, to whom is glory, said: "Everything is possible for the one who believes." (Mark 9:23) That is, everything is possible for God. And St. Paul translated this in the epistle "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) Nothing is impossible anymore. Forget the impossible that can never happen.

And let us live in our homes these days, at the height of joy. That God visited us, shining from above. And that "the light shined upon those living in darkness and the shadow of death." (Matt. 4:16) True joy, that covers the church, and covers every home and every person. Of course this start is beautiful, and good. That is strongly supported by the Bible, we should read the Bible often these days, read the Word of God with depth; It is good.

Play these Kiahk praises at home. Now they're on the kids' phones and on iPads. It only takes a seconds to get them going. You'll find the house filled with hymns. Whoever knows them can recite, and those who don't can listen and take solace. Keep the hymns playing all day in the house. The little kids will ask what is happening? Heaven opened and the eternal joy is upon us.

It is not a temporary joy. It is a joy and gladness that we were dead and now we live. And that we were sinners and Christ washed us with His blood from our sins. And that we were strangers and now we became close to Him and became children of God.

To our Lord everlasting glory. Amen.