

# Fearless Love

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



**On February 17 and 18 we read a long passage from the First Epistle of John (2:18 to 3:20), in which he writes about many aspects of love.**

The first verses express both sorrow and urgency. John reminds his readers that they have heard that the "antichrist is coming." In the next verses he describes the "antichrist" as people who "went out from us." They left the body of believers to which they once belonged, and now teach falsehoods, denying "that Jesus is the Christ."

Of course John is sorrowful because these souls have abandoned the faith, but he is also reminding his readers, who have continued to be followers of Christ, that they were "anointed by the Holy One." He urgently warns them to "let what you heard in the beginning abide in you." This is essential for us if we are to "have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming."

The Greek word translated as "confidence" means a kind of boldness, the kind we ask for in the Divine Liturgy when we pray that God will enable us to say the Lord's Prayer "with boldness and without condemnation." Only those who love Christ enough to accept Him as what He says He is—God's divine Son—can have this boldness or confidence. They trust Him and believe He tells the truth. Their love is not shadowed by the doubt that turned the "antichrists" away from Him. Doubt creates fear, but their love is a fearless love.

Chapter 3 begins with a wonderful declaration: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God." Then, immediately following these stirring words, John writes that if we accept this incredible love, the world will not know us, because it does not know God.

For some people, the idea of being "unknown" by the world causes great fear. They take pride in their worldly position and achievement, and would fear losing those things if they focused on the life to come. They are too fearful to have fearless love.

Next John writes that "we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when He is revealed, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is." These words call us to trust God, like children, and leave the future to Him rather than try to figure it out. But this lack of control causes fear in some people. They attempt to determine the date of the Second Coming, or the day the world will end.

On the 17th we celebrate a saint who is an example of fearless love. She is Mariamna, the sister of the apostle Philip. She accompanied her brother as he traveled to spread the Gospel, and preached with him. Even when he was killed, she didn't give up, she didn't become angry at God, or embittered by her loss. She continued to trust God's plan, and went on preaching for many more years.

That is fearless love.