

will guide us to more refined and difficult forms of fasting, as those from the passions, sinful desires, passionate thoughts and sins. This is the so-called spiritual fasting: "let us fast brethren physically, let us also fast spiritually", as we chant.

Spiritual fasting, with physical fasting as a presupposition, precisely as our holy Church appoints, when a person has his physical health, introduces man to the area of prayer, of refinement, in other words, and "fasting" of his mind, of spiritual attention, of the many consoling tears and sighs in the heart, to a spiritual struggle for christification with self denial, the sanctification of the whole believer and to spiritual charity for other believers, who nevertheless are our own body, the body of Christ, but also to those who do not declare themselves faithful, the atheists, heretics, people living a lewd life, slanderers, independent of race, gender, language, religion, who nevertheless are images of God. Christ was crucified for everyone on the earth, and He wants everyone to be saved and to come "to the knowledge of truth". So let us embrace them, brethren, with our prayers, our vigilant heart, but also with our body, humbled by the whatsoever coarseness of the fast and of asceticism. Bending the divine mercy, with a Paulian train of thought, heroic self denial, spiritual joy and optimism, let us this year also enter into the beginning of spiritual struggles, the fast. Have a good arena!

Archimandrite E. T

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2017 JUDGMENT SUNDAY (MEATFARE**

**SUNDAY)** *The Holy Apostles of the Seventy, Philemon, Apphia, Archippus, and Onesimus, Philothei the Righteous Martyr of Athens, Niketas the Younger.*

**TONE OF THE WEEK** *Second Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Second Eothinon*

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's First Letter to Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2*

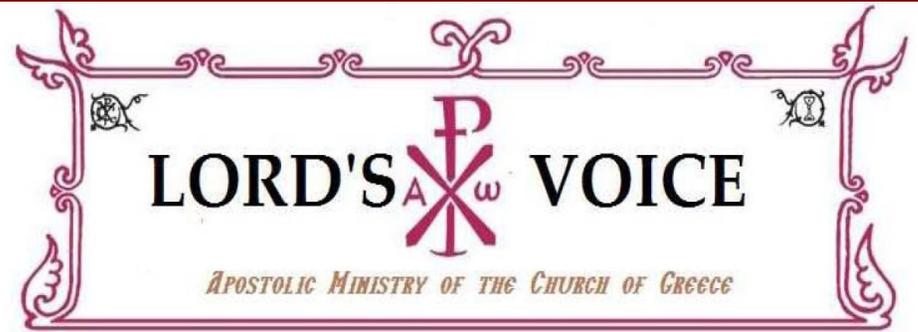
**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 25:31-46*

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2017 FORGIVENESS SUNDAY,**

*Porphyrius, Bishop of Gaza, The Holy Great Martyr Photine, the Samaritan Women, Holy Martyr Theocletus, John Claphas the new Martyr.*

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's Letter to Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4*

**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 6:14-21*



65<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

February 19 2017

PAMPHLET # 8 (3325)

## THE SCANDALS AND THE SCANDALIZED

Today's Epistle Reading, my beloved brethren, with the opportunity of our preintroduction to the fast of Great Lent from tomorrow, speaks about the scandals, those scandalized, those scandalizing and the believer dealing with them, who freely cooperating with divine Grace, overcomes the various problems which are created both – mainly - by his own self and his pathology, as well as the various "scandals", no matter where they come from.

### Am I not free? Did I not meet Jesus Christ?

The matter of freedom which the Apostle Paul touches on here is important. The freedom which he feels flooding his being, is closely associated with the person of Christ. He feels free because he met Christ. True freedom is Christ, Who when a person meets Him, he is freed from the slavery of the passions and of the demons and also becomes by Grace truly free, in the freedom of Christ. Consequently, the asceticism of virtues specifically of God-given fasting - but also the keeping of the commandments of Christ, is founded on such a freedom.

**ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO CORINTHIANS** 8:8-13; 9:1-2

**Prokeimenon. Fourth Mode.: Great is our Lord, and great is his power..**

**Verse: Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good..**

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

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A person free in Christ, is not scandalized by anything and by anyone, because he is creatively occupied with the unpleasant facets and surprises of his own self, overcoming them in Christ. On the contrary, with the vigilant eye of his mind, as well as with an exceptional delicacy, he tries to not scandalize his neighbor. He gives up from his "rights" even, in order to make room in his heart, unforcedly, in a natural manner, to accept his weak brother. He does not create within him false thoughts of superiority or sorrow, which if he believes them, are easily are changed into their contrary falsehoods, but he feels love, loving care for his brother whom he sees as a member of Christ. In any case Paul, furthermore also as a pastor, has the feeling that his brothers

comprise fruits of spiritual offspring, his own births in Christ, his children (1 Cor. 4:15).

### **When you are scandalized**

A person needs to observe himself very carefully, in order to see, in the light of the Gospel and of the Fathers, how his thought functions in the case of a scandal. The scandalized person reacts usually upset and with a rage against the other person. He is bothered that the other person, behaves, even badly, who has a completely careless behavior. The Fathers advise that we should not proceed to correct our neighbor, if we feel disturbance, because we make the situation graver. After we calm down, carefully, let us correct the fault of our neighbor, without however losing the sense that we are more fearful probably, if the Grace of God does not preserve us. Usually our loquacity sets into function the spiritual law and we fall into those things that we're criticizing. Whereas the humble correcting of our brother corrects both us in points that probably escape us, but which God knows.

In each case much fervent prayer benefits very much, which, as an internal working on ourselves invisibly and mystically, is altered into a mystical therapeutic intervention in the heart of our neighbor, whether he is to blame against us, whether he sometime scandalized us. This way of working on our own self, in the Church and with her saving mysteries, focuses our interest on our own many "scandals", and then, in time, we are not occupied at all with our neighbors, considering them furthermore better than us and we, constantly having received mercy from God.

### **Fasting from passions also**

One way of creatively forgetting our own self is to fast for Christ, the sweetest thing and name on the earth. At this period also we are presented the opportunity to do it, for this reason let us take advantage of it. Fasting in simple things, such as is food,