

without the longing and hunger for the slaughtered Lamb, who will be presented to us mainly at the Resurrectional Table, all the exercises of the virtues remain human-centric techniques of self improvement, cut off from every expectation of the crucifidtory-resurrectional joy.

“Those who trust in their own selves that they are just” (Luke 18:9) have themselves closed themselves off from the Resurrectional Supper of Christ. They have sufficed in their virtues, in the egotistical satisfaction of their moral progress. For us to put on the wedding garment, which will allow us to sit at the Table of the Kingdom we must first be unrobed not only of our sins but also of every self satisfaction and self justification, which our supposed moral “achievements” usually load us with.

Archim. B. L.

SUNDAY, , FEBRUARY 18, 2018 FAST DAY DAIRY, EGGS, AND FISH

ALLOWED FORGIVENESS SUNDAY , *Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Agapetus the Confessor, Bishop of Sinai, Flavian the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople*

tone of the week : *Fourth Tone*

EOTHINON : *Fourth Orthros Gospel*

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

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 6:14-21*

NEXT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2018 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

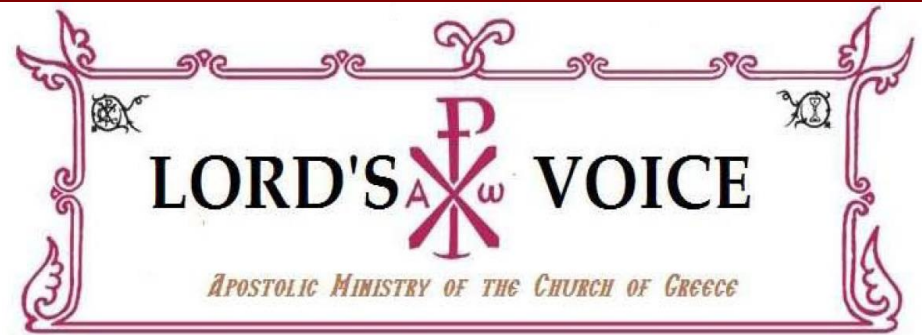
Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, Reginos, Bishop of Skopelos , Holy Martyr Alexander of Thrace, Markellos, Bishop of Apamea

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40*

GOSPEL READING: *John 1:43-51*

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66TH YEAR

FEBRUARY 18 2018

PAMPHLET # 7 (3377)

THE THREE KEYS

Our Church, with today's Gospel, takes three pieces of gold from the Sermon on the Mount of Christ, and gives them to us, to make them keys, to open the door of Great Lent.

1. Forgiveness of those being unjust

The first key is our eagerness to forgive whoever in whatsoever manner has mistreated us. Essentially here Christ is repeating whatever a little while before (Matthew 6:12) He included in the Lord's Prayer: “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”. As we see, the command for us to forgive those who are mistreating us, does not aim at the betterment of our social profile or simply at our peaceful coexistence with the others. Primarily it is a calling for us to resemble Christ. It aims to teach us to love, just as Christ, Who forgave upon the cross us, His crucifiers. And this Christ-imitating opening of our love even to our enemies, Christ rewards with the forgiveness of our own sins. In other words, with our salvation itself.

Entering Great Lent we are setting out on a journey which will end in the worshipping of the Passion of Christ, Who was crucified on account of our sins and with their forgiveness as aim. He was

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

loaded with our sins, not simply in order to comfort us, but in order to deliver us from their destructive results, corruption, death and our final separation from Him. So now that we're getting ready to worship Him, Christ is calling us to cooperate with Him for this saving deliverance, carrying the light burden on our part, of forgiving the transgressions of the others.

In this so honorable for us, but also necessary for our salvation, cooperation, shows the excess of divine philanthropy, one interpreter says. "Christ makes us lords of the remission of our sins". If our sins will be forgiven, does not depend any longer on God, but on us. To the degree that we forgive the others, He will also forgive us.

2 True fasting

The second necessary key also, for us to enter in and to rejoice with Great Lent, is the correct ascesis of fasting. The god-given command of fasting already from the Mosaic law, does not aim either at

the projection and showing off, nor at the advertised today, safeguarding of health. Fasting is the voluntary restraint of the egocentric flesh loving train of thought, in order for us to express our love and gratitude to Christ. We thank Him, Who didn't simply fast strictly but also underwent a crucifactory death, in order to grant us the Resurrection also of our bodies. We fast out of obedience and love for Christ.

And here Christ stresses to us that obedience to His will becomes pleasing to Him, when it is done without hypocrisy and a disposition to project oneself. A Pharisaical showing off, and a hypocritical gloominess have no relationship with the publican humility and repentance, which comprise the aims of the fasting of Great Lent. The "manifest" recompense "of the resurrectional joy, only those who worked honorably "in secret," will taste, chasing away firmly every thought of vainglory and self pleasing.

3. Abundant charity

The third key of the entrance to Great Lent is related to fighting off of another expression of the egotistical fleshly train of thought, avarice. The crucified Lord of Glory, whom we will worship on Holy Friday, didn't simply die naked on the Cross and allow them to take even His last clothing, but He does not even have one span of earth to be buried in. With this voluntary complete possessionlessness He wants to heal our foolish greed, which treasures things upon the earth, which usually become food for the worms or the plunder of thieves. And He urges us to exercise ourselves in the holy greed of charity, with which we treasure treasures in heaven that cannot be captured.

And Christ, in today's Gospel, concludes with a phrase, which summarizes all three golden keys of Great Lent in one. Forgiveness, fasting and charity, in the end, open the door of Great Lent and make it the true journey to Pascha, when and so long as, the treasure of our heart is Christ. In Him Whom we consider the invaluable treasure of our life, in Him whom we give our heart to. Without this love for the Crucified and Resurrected Christ,