

At the beginning of the 16th century a certain Turk in Constantinople took his possessed wife to the holy Patriarch Nephon. And when the Saint began reading, the Turk saw the roof of the Church opening and light descending from heaven. His wife was healed. He revealed the event to his friend, a Romeic merchant, a certain James from Kastoria, concluding with amazement: "truly you Christians have a great faith!" We don't know if that Turk became a Christian. We know however, that on account of this the event, which the person of another religion experienced, the former lukewarm Orthodox James, became a monk and later was granted to become a martyr for Christ. His memory is honored on November 1.

For us it is enough to emulate and imitate the guileless faith and the true thirst for salvation in Christ of Nathaniel, who even before seeing the "heavens opened", confessed Christ as God and followed Him with his whole heart.

Archim. B. L.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2018 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY *Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, Reginos, Bishop of Skopelos, Holy Martyr Alexander of Thrace, Markellos, Bishop of Apamea*

tone of the week : *Plagal First Tone*

EOETHINON : *Fifth Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 1:10-14, 2:1-3*

GOSPEL READING: *John 1:43-51*

NEXT SUNDAY, SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 2018 SUNDAY OF ST.

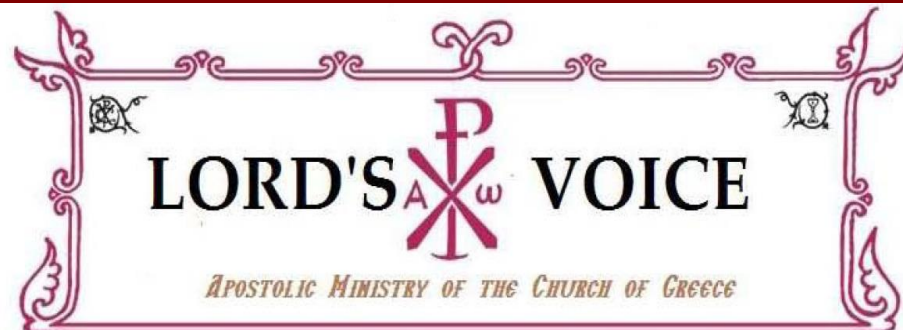
GREGORY PALAMAS *Gerasimus the Righteous of Jordan, Paul & his sister Juliana and their Companions, Daniel, Prince of Moscow, Gregory, Bishop of Constance*

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

GOSPEL Reading: *Mark 2:1-12*

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66TH YEAR

FEBRUARY 25 2018

PAMPHLET # 8 (3378)

PRESUPPOSITIONS OF ORTHODOXY

Today's Gospel, certainly doesn't have anything to say to whoever embraces the contemporary "gospels" of auto-salvation, which all spring from the demonic "gospel of the snake": "you are able to become gods without God". Whoever shares the words of the contemporary song: "let me make a mistake. I don't desire to be saved" will also hear today's Gospel even more indifferently. The self-sufficient, comfortable person, fights to be assured about himself with false ways. And he ends up saying lies not only to the others, but also to his own self, trying to convince himself that he does not need any salvation.

Do you want to be saved?

Philip not only wanted to be saved, but zealously studying the Mosaic Law and the Prophets, he awaited the true Savior of the world, whom they predeclared. He was granted to meet this God Messiah and to come to know Him through his fellow villagers, Peter and Andrew. Christ, seeing his sincere longing for salvation, called him to follow Him. And His voice lit up in Philip such a fire of love for Him, as Saint Theophylactos of Bulgaria observes, that he ran to impart it also to his friend, Nathaniel.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN 1:43-51

At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and he said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Nathaniel, obeying the realistic exhortation of his friend "come and see", surpasses his reservations related to the Messiah's place of the descent that had a bad reputation, and he is startled hearing Christ welcoming him with the words: behold, a true Israelite, who has a guileless heart. "How do you know me?" he asks Christ spontaneously. Christ reveals to him that, before Philip called him, he had seen him sitting beneath a fig tree. And Nathaniel, ascertaining that Christ saw him in a place where his eye could not reach in a human manner, wondered. And he confessed him Son of God and King of Israel. Then Christ told him: if you believe in Me only from what I told you, know, you will see much greater "signs" than this. And He reminded him of the vision that that also guileless Israelite, the patriarch Jacob had seen, whom the Old Testament calls "unfalse". The heavens

opened and a ladder appeared, on which the angels were going up and down glorifying God.

Guileless faith

It is not by chance that the Church, today, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, reminds us of this event of the meeting and acquaintance of Philip and Nathaniel with Christ. This passage reveals to us the basic presuppositions for our entrance into the Orthodox Church.

An Orthodox person is not the person who knows the Symbol of Faith by heart, or keeps some external habits of piety, whenever he remembers it, because simply he found them from his grandmother. The Orthodox person is he who with a guileless and sincere heart, struggles firmly to build a conscientious relationship with Christ in his One and Holy Church, constantly studying his life and words and humbly implementing his will. This relationship, from the moment when God took on human flesh and became describable and tangible, is not limited only to an optical contact through His holy icon but is heightened in the communion of His Immaculate Body and his Precious Blood in the Divine Eucharist.

The heavens opened for us also, at least at every Divine Liturgy. And at the time of the Small Entrance, when the priest enters with the Gospel in the Holy Altar, he prays to the Lord of Glory that holy Angels enter into the Altar, to concelebrate with him.

Open heavens

The times are not rare when God reveals the heavens "open" even to people of other religions, not naturally to justify their delusion, but in order to reward their sincere seeking, and to call them to the knowledge of the One Truth.