

teaching work are also the Corinthians, who were reborn by his preaching and had him as spiritual father. "You forced me to boast", he will say to the Corinthians in his Second Epistle. It was a necessary boasting, without which his children were in danger of tripping also into the even greater scandal of disputing his apostleship.

With today's Epistle Reading, the Church with the mouth of the preeminent Apostle, reminds us that in our every contesting effort, and especially in the ascesis of fasting of Lent, which naturally is not only abstaining from foods but "the estrangement from all the passions", we must toil with diligence but also with discretion. A discretion which will keep in mind also, the easily scandalizable brothers. They also are members of the Body of Christ, members of His Church. And "whoever", according to Chrysostom, scorns their salvation, saying those satanic words "what do I care if so and so is scandalized", he should know that he is sharing the devil's coarseness and his hate against people". Let it not be, O Lord!

Archim. B. L

SUNDAY MARCH 3, 2019 JUDGMENT SUNDAY (MEATFARE SUNDAY) , *The Holy Martyrs Eutropius, Cleonicus, and Basiliscus , Theodore the Holy Martyr of Antioch, Nonnita, mother of Saint David.*

tone of the week : *Plagal Third Tone*

EOTHINON : *Seventh Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *First Letter to Corinthians 8:8-13*

GOSPEL READING: *Mathew 25: 31-46*

NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 10, 2019 FORGIVENESS SUNDAY ,
Quadratus the Martyr & his Companions, Anastasia of Alexandria, Michael Mauroudes the New-Martyr

EPISTLE READING: *Letter to Romans 13:11-14;14:1-4*

GOSPEL READING: *Mathew 6:14-21*



THE FEAR OF SCANDAL

One week before Great Lent, our Church prepares for the "arena of virtues". The main contests which we will be called particularly to toil in, are fasting and prayer. This refers however, to ascetes which do not aim at autonomous rewards, and furthermore, in rewards which threaten to fill us with self satisfaction and haughtiness. The aim of all the ascetes is the chief crown of love, a crown of blossoms that sprout only in the ground of humility. So humility and love is the inseparable twin –the one can never exist without the other- in which we must aim with our contest in the aforesaid Lent.

Especially love

The Epistle Reading helps us to delve in the correct meaning, especially of fasting. For the Church, "fasting" does not mean either dieting or vaguely some ascesis of self control. For one to eat or not eat, the Apostle Paul says, is a moral and religiously indifferent deed. It obtains a spiritual dimension, when it is associated with the person of Christ. For the believer, "I fast" means, "I'm not eating out of love for Christ and out of obedience to His Church". For the believer, "I'm fasting" means I'm not eating out of love for Christ and out of obedience to His "Church". Love, of course, for Christ, cannot be

ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO CORINTHIANS 8:8-13

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.

understood without love for each person, who wasn't just simply formed "in the image of God" but also "Christ died" for his salvation. So for this reason, whoever brings even the slightest obstacle to his fellow man's salvation, "sins to Christ". Because the work that He built with His crucifactory sacrifice, the scandal-maker destroys it with his selfishness.

In the first Christian years, the believers lived together with the idolaters. There were many who recently had abandoned idolatry, and quite a few, with the one foot in and the other outside, "close to abstaining completely from the idols" according to the sacred Chrysostom. Human nature is always changeable and there always are those who are unstable and weaker in conscience. If furthermore, we keep in mind also, the battle from the demons, we are able to understand how easily these people were in danger of returning again to the delusion of the idols.

The Church did not forbid the Christians to sit with and eat with the pagans at the tables of the idol worshipping temples. On the other hand however, the unsupported souls, whom we mentioned,

often were scandalized seeing the Christians entering with ease and amusing themselves in such areas. "Instead of exhortation they accepted the matter". They considered this behavior as an urging for them to remain or return to idolatry. What else was this behavior, than a strong strike to their weak conscience, which became a cause not only for confusion but also of perdition of soul.

The quadruple crime.

So for this reason, the Apostle Paul exhorted to a peculiar fasting. Abstaining from specific meals, sacrificed to idols. Furthermore, the Golden-tongued one, rendering the Apostle's words a little more strictly, says that "even if no one was not harmed nor was there danger of scandalizing one's neighbor, neither then ought one to proceed to eating the food sacrificed to idols. Because being present in such a meal, not only would be a vain toil, but it essentially would be a participation in the table of demons". So whoever, thoughtlessly was eating food sacrificed to idols, became –not rarely – a cause for the perdition of weak brothers; they were committing, in other words, a mortal sin, which Saint John characterizes a "quadruple crime": First, because it is your brother being scandalized. Second, because he is weak in his faith. Third, because Christ was so interested in him that He died for his sake. And forth that, beyond all these things, a soul is being lost, on account of a...food."

Consequently justifiably, the divinely preaching Apostle, putting love above everything, concludes in a decision, which he does not impose on the others, but he witnesses about his agony for the salvation also of the weaker ones in conscience: "if food becomes cause for my brother to trip and fall, I will never eat meats, so that I do not become cause for my brother to be scandalized". He abdicates from a self evident right of his, surpassing also the boundaries which the Mosaic law posed. It was a right that all the Apostles had.

Justified boasting

Here the great Paul, because he had faced the slander of his apostolic office, is forced to stress his equal value with the other Apostles. And they who also are able to witness about his