

to the side of caring for their soul. So for this reason also, they were granted themselves, to obtain greater value than the entire world. Thus, the other scale, which on the one side had the entire world, with its supposedly important things and its supposed important people, and on the other side, the saints, always turns to the side of the saints, since “the world was not worthy” of them.

### **They are awaiting us at the table**

Stressing the great glory of the saints does not aim at creating feelings of inferiority in us. The true pastor, the Apostle Paul, in a healthy manner, strengthens self confidence, reminding us that the Archpastor Christ “foresaw something greater for us”. Not that we are enjoying a “better salvation”, but that we were granted to live in years where the deliverance through Christ has been performed and the period of waiting for the final glory is sooner for us. Thus, without mistreating those chief contestants of the faith, he also honored us. Saint John explains that “what is occurring is the same as occurs with a loving, caring father”. For his advanced children, he commands that they do not give them to eat, until their other brothers also come as well. Thus together with us, they who have contested so many years before, will also receive the crowns. And they, full of love for us, joyfully await it, so that we can rejoice all together”.

After these things, who would be justified to “not give everything”, so as to not lose the crown of faith?

Archim. B. L

### **SUNDAY MARCH 17, 2019 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY,**

*Alexis the Man of God, Patrick the Enlightener of Ireland, Marinos the Martyr, Theocteristos the Confessor, Paul the Righteous Martyr.*

**TONE OF THE WEEK :** First Tone

**EOTHINON :** Nineth Orthros Gospel

**EPISTLE READING:** Letter to Hebrews 11:24-26,32-40

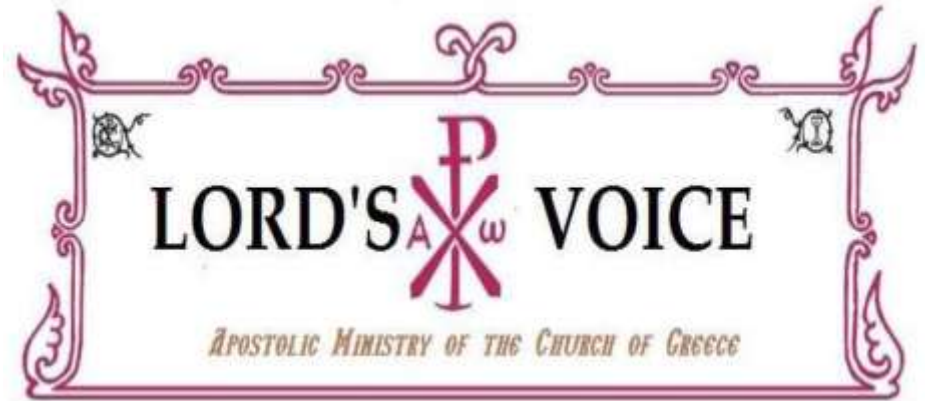
**GOSPEL READING:** John 1:43 - 51

### **NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2019 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY,**

*Alexis the Man of God, Patrick the Enlightener of Ireland, Marinos the Martyr, Theocteristos the Confessor, Paul the Righteous Martyr*

**EPISTLE READING:** Letter to Hebrews 11:24-26,32-40

**GOSPEL READING:** John 1:43 - 51



**67<sup>TH</sup> YEAR**

**MARCH 17, 2019**

**PAMPHLET # 11 (3433)**

## **THE ICONOSTASS OF FATIH**

The Sunday of Orthodoxy, today, and during the litany of the sacred icons we commemorate those who made firm the Orthodox faith not only with their teachings but also with their contests unto death. So justifiably, our Church selects as the Epistle Reading a passage from the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans, a chapter which has been correctly characterized as the “iconostass of faith”.

### **Real wealth or adornment?**

The Prophet Moses has a dominating place in this iconostass. The saint’s cost was huge, since he denied – “hated” - Chrysostom will say –to be considered a son of a princess of another religion with all the comforts and enjoyments which go along with it, and he preferred to suffer hardship with his enslaved compatriots. He found the strength for such a saving overturning in his life by firmly gazing at the contest or rewarding God and the aiming at a “greater wealth”. Which wealth? The Golden-tongued one together with the Apostle, recognizing that, as regards the Prophet Moses, this “greater wealth” was not “heaven and the things in the heavens” but the “chastisement of Christ”. In other words, to suffer down to his

**ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO HEBREWS 11:24-26,32-40**

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign enemies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated -- of whom the world was not worthy -- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

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last breath out of obedience to the will of God, and to be chastised and even mocked by even those whom the benefactored. last breath out of obedience to the will of God, and to be chastised and even mocked by even those whom the benefactored. After these things, Saint John asks: "you, for whom are you suffering? Maybe only for your own self? Moses however, was suffering also for the salvation of the people of God". The truth, of course, is that we often are not suffering for the salvation of our own self. And we end up making the faith, the "sword of the Spirit" - as a contemporary theologian aptly notes -, a decoration of our living room without action and without the ability to cut. Up On the

double edged sword, the one edge looks at the opponent, the other one looks at the user. You are called to cut, only if you are ready to be cut. The faith does not have the dead safety of a decoration. It seeks toil and readiness for correction, firstly our own". The Orthodox faith, whose triumph we are celebrating today against delusion, is truly a "double edged sword". It is not destined however, only for the "slaughter" of the heretics, from a safe point. It primarily aims to "operate" on us, cleansing us not only from our superficial wounds, but reaching down to our "bones and marrow" (Heb. 4:12), down to the marrow of our bones, in order to distinguish what is rotten from what is healthy, what is dead from what is living, what is false from what is true.

**The two scales**

The Apostle Paul subsequently presents a series of contestants of the faith, referring first to four of the Judge's and afterwards the prophets David and Samuel. He begins with contestants of the faith, who may not have all been models of a "bright life", but they contested sincerely and honorably. Immediately afterwards, of course, he will refer to the achievements of the first contestants of the faith, martyrs and ascetics, who suffered all kinds of harms and denied all the corrupt and earthly things, on account of their unshakable faith and their flaming love for God. Among the fruits of their faith, he also mentions two points which seem contradictory: "the ones, on the one hand, escaped the mouths of the sword, while the others, on the other hand, died, murdered by the sword". "In the end, which of the two are you praising and admiring?" the Golden-tongued one asks the Apostle. And he himself answers: "both the one and the other. Both are miracles of faith. Both that he achieves great things, and that he suffers many things".

The saints forbore with fortitude, so many afflictions, because they had deeply believed within them - as Christ also assured - "that it will benefit man nothing, if he gains the entire world and loses his soul". For them, the scale, which on the one side had the world, and on the other side their soul, was always turning