

answering him “shush, you will eat in heaven!” Before this perversion, which distinguishes so water tightly, life on earth from the heavenly one, and hopelessly relativizes the importance of the first one, contemporary man naturally is appalled at it. “If there is a sin against life,” writes the philosopher Camus, “it is not so much that we despair from it, as that we hope in another life. That we allow our love for the specific life to be stolen by the majesty of a supposed eternal life”. And in the name of daily, tangible life, Camus refuses to believe in another one, beautiful, even if eternal, but nevertheless “another life.

We certainly aren’t allowed to allow the witness “concerning the hope in us” to fall away into a barren metaphysics, which merely philosophizes exclusively about the hereafter, forgetting that we don’t have two lives but one. Our life is Christ, Who “became flesh and dwelt among us”. And the chief gift of His Crucifactory sacrifice is a Supper, where He becomes for us Edible and Drinkable, here and now. Saint John will proclaim it: “Yes, we are still in the world. We did not yet depart from this life. And nevertheless, in the Church we already enjoy the promises of God for the inheritance of His Kingdom”.
Archim. B. L

SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2019 SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN

CLIMACUS *Calliopos and Akylina the Martyrs , Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America , Righteous Father Savvas the New of Kalymnos*

tone of the week : *Fourth Tone*

EOTHINON : *First Orthros Gospel*

Epistle Reading: *Letter to Hebrews 6:13-20*

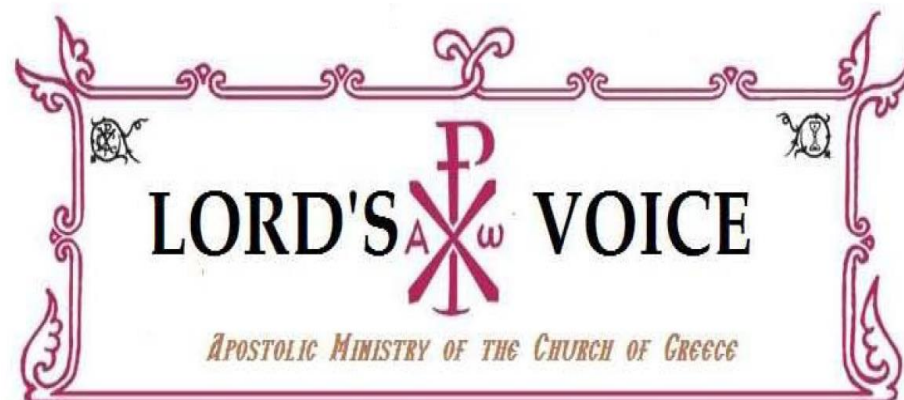
Gospel Reading: *Mark 9:17-31*

NEXT SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2019 SUNDAY OF ST. MARY OF

EGYPT *Aristarchus, Pudens, Trophimus the Apostles of the 70 , Thomais the Martyr of Alexandria, Ardalion the Actor and Martyr*

EPISTLE READING: *Letter to Hebrews 9:11-14*

GOSPEL READING: *Mark 10:32-45*



67TH YEAR

APRIL 7, 2019

PAMPHLET # 14 (3436)

THE SUREST PROMISE

In the wonderful book of “The Ladder of Divine Ascent” Saint John the Sinaite, who celebrates today, speaks also about the struggle against the passion of lying. And presenting its destructive results, he says: “Lying is the annihilation of love and false oaths, [are] the rejection of God”. An incomparably greater, consequently, fall from lying to others, is the use of a false oath, since with it, man is mocking God, and essentially he is denying Him and is estranged from Him.

The condescension of the divine oath

The oath is a means of verifying the truth, which the Mosaic law forbears, due to the spiritual infancy of the people of God. The philanthropic God put up with being called as a witness, in order to support the shaken trustworthiness of fallen man. After His Incarnation, of course, Christ expects the reborn person to be so truth-loving, that his “yes” be truly “yes” and his “no” truly “no” and, consequently, in such a directness of conscience of words, the oath is superfluous, and in the end is forbidden.

ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO HEBREWS 6:13-20

BRETHREN, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

In the Old Testament, however, God out of utter condescension to our lack of trust, condescended to use the crutches of the oath, in order to verify the truth of His promises.

"Because people", says the sacred Chrysostom, "are not only of weak faith, but also unbelieving, God condescends to their measures. Even though it is belittling for Him to not be trusted, He is vowed for their sake". And, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, "because God did not have anyone greater than Him in whom to vow, He vowed to Himself", in order to assure the promises which He gave to Abraham.

The necessary cooperation

Naturally, these two things, the promise and its assurance by oath, did not leave, on the one hand, any space that God may be lying, but no matter how "irrevocable", they are not sufficient for the fulfillment of the promise. Our own cooperation is also

necessary, which is comprised of absolute trust in God, in patience and in fortitude, which does not yield, even when everything is plotting to quench our hope. When God promised Abraham the land of Canaan and an innumerable multitude of descendants, Abraham continues staying in tents wandering, and Sarah had become old and barren. Despite these things, the holy patriarch, not even for a minute, allowed his faith in God to be shaken, not even when God later on, asked him to sacrifice his child. And after he passed the harshest "exams" of faith with "A+", he didn't merely richly enjoy the fulfillment of all the promises, but he was honored to have Christ name Paradise "the bosom of Abraham" and the Apostle Paul to call him the "father of all the believers".

Thus, all us believers are spiritual descendants of Abraham, "who are likened to him in faith" (Zygavenos). To the degree that we resemble him in faith with which we take refuge in God, we are also able to enjoy the consolation, the courage, and the certainty of a hope so firm, as is an anchor for a ship, which keeps it safely protected from storms in the port. The anchor, of course, of our own hope, does not keep us simply in the relative safety of a port. It is not held by sand, but by the Lord of glory Himself, Who is not sitting in an unstable sea bottom, but Who has entered into Heaven before us, in order for Him to open up for us a path, and to prepare a place for us. And Christ entered there as a Godman henceforth, not only to be our King, but also our Eternal High Priest, ceaselessly offering Himself as a sacrifice for our sanctification and our salvation.

Orthodox "metaphysics"

This sermon of hope in the promised Kingdom of God, was slandered that it supposedly "exiles" God from the here and now. And that it offers as a solution to the hardship of earthly life, the promise for blessedness in a life after death. Varnalis satirized such a perception in his poem "The ballad of Mr-Mediou", presenting a donkey saying "I'm dizzy. I'm hungry" and a priest