

hand, from the infinite love of God, but precisely for this reason, it is not imposed without our condescension. And, naturally, a simple agreeing with a nod does not suffice. Our wholehearted repentance is necessary, which will not be merely words, but the eager working of the lifegiving commandments of God. Simply, "whoever insists on working in dead works, is not able to worship Him

who is real life", St. John Chrysostom will say. And this occurs - according to Saint Theophylactos - very simply, because "man working in his dead passions, essentially deifies them, ending up an idolater."

Saint Mary of Egypt, as a troparion of hers says, "eagerly stirred up herself in godly zeal and only after she deadened the leapings of the passions, docked in the port of dispassion". With her intercessions, let us also struggle for this life making deadening.

Archim. B. L

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

Tone of the week : *Plagal First Tone*

Eothinon : *Second Orthros Gospel*

Epistle Reading: *Letter to Hebrews 9:11-14*

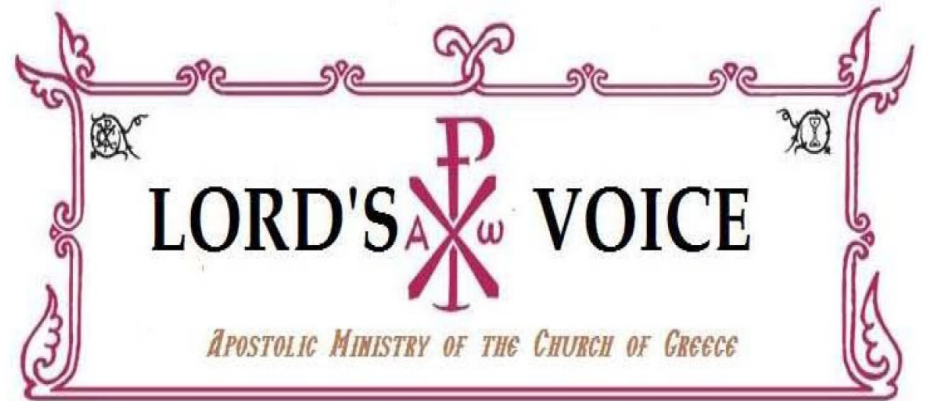
Gospel Reading: *Mark 10:32-45*

Next Sunday, April 21, 2019 Palm Sunday, Our Holy

Father Maximian, Patriarch of Constantinople, Theodore the Holy Martyr & his mother Philippa of Perge

Epistle Reading: *Letter to Philippians 4:4-8*

Gospel Reading: *John 12:1-18*



67TH YEAR

APRIL 14, 2019

PAMPHLET # 15 (3437)

THE LIFEMAKING DEADENING

Approaching the end of Great Lent, as a last push "to raise up the indolent", as the synaxarion of the day tells us, our Church reminds us of the amazing example of repentance of Saint Mary of Egypt. Because lack of hope in God's mercy and sometimes complete disappointment, due to a many year-long immersion in the mire of passions, is often the cause of indolence, the repentance of a woman is presented, who despite the fact that she ended up in an abyss of perdition, did not despair. She dared such a dynamic struggle of repentance, so that she wasn't merely saved, but she became a saint. How was hope of salvation born in the prostitute's heart? "Hope gives birth to the experience of the Lord's gifts" answers the Sinaite Saint John.

The gift and the gate

About an incomparably greater gift and an immeasurably more important the divinely preaching, Paul speaks to us in today's Epistle Reading. The gift is our deliverance through Christ's high priesthood. And the gate which He opened for us and First entered in with the flesh, is the gate of the heavenly Temple and its Altar. The Old Testament presented in a shadowy way the divine gifts which the inheritors of the New Testament would reap,

St. Paul's *First Letter to Hebrews* 9:11-14)

BRETHREN, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

when the prophecies would be fulfilled. All these things depend on the crucifictional sacrifice of Christ and on His high priestly mediation. The gifts which we already enjoy, as well as those which will be showered upon us in the glory and the blessedness of heaven, all spring up from the high priesthood of Christ and are based on His sacrifice. So for this reason also, the Apostle calls Him "the high priest of the future goods".

In the Old Testament the high priest, in order to enter once a year, on the day of expiation, into the Holy of Holies, in the most sacred area of the Tent of Witness, and to offer the sacrifice of the incense, had to first sacrifice and offer the blood of calves for his own sins and then the blood of goats for the sins of the people. With this blood he sprinkled the expiation seat and the altar. Analogous purifying sprinklings occurred also with water mixed with the ashes of a heifer. What comparisons, I wonder, could be made between these foreshadowings and the sacrifice of Christ?

Comparing the incomparable

1) To begin with the sacrifice of Christ was not offered in a handmade earthly temple, as was the Tent of Witness. His Flesh, which was created without human intervention, made it a superior and a more perfect a Tent, with "the entire fullness of Godhead

physically" inhabiting in it. And with this "Tent not made with hands" He entered into the heavenly altar, where He remains our High Priest "unto the ages".

2) The Great High Priest Christ, as sinless, did not need to first offer a sacrifice for His own self. His blood was offered only for our own salvation.

3) The blood which the priests of the Mosaic Law offered was the blood of beasts. Whereas the blood in the perfect sacrifice of the New Testament is the immaculate blood of the God-man Christ, which "is not only the blood of a rational victim but also united with the Godhead" (Zygavenos). So Christ offered Himself in the heavenly Holy of Holies, which is also the throne of His Godhead. Consequently, He himself was sacrificer, victim and altar.

4) The rational and involuntary victims of the Lawful sacrifices were not conscious of the sacrifice's purpose, nor the capability to freely accept their slaughtering. On the contrary, Christ voluntarily sacrificed Himself, once He completely freely submitted His will to the will of His Father.

5) With the blood, finally, of the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the various sprinklings, only the temporal purity of the body was secured, so that those who were defiled by any whatsoever transgression of the Law could be able to participate in the worship. It could not also internally cleanse those for whom it was being offered nor secure the remission of sins. On the contrary, the blood of Christ cleanses and sanctifies the entire person from sin and its results, which is corruption and death. The partaker of the priesthood of Christ, liturgist of the New Testament, assures us of it, when he imparts the Precious Gifts to us: "the servant of God partakes unto remission of sins and unto life eternal".

Eager cooperation

These gifts however, of indescribable value, are not given magically and without presuppositions. In order for our conscience to be cleansed of the dead works of sin and for us to be able thus to worship the living God, a complete resurrection from the dead is needed. This is a great miracle, which springs on the one