

The life of Paul as a reflection of the life of Christ

After the Apostle points out that the genuine disciple of Christ, responds to the insults of men with prayer, to persecution, with toleration, and to their slanders, with kindness, he asks the Corinthians to regard him as their father, since he gave birth to them in the name of Christ with the preaching of the Gospel. That is why he imploringly urges them to imitate him, as he himself imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). The acceptance of Paul's paternal love, which is a radiation of Christ's life and love, helps the Corinthians to transcend divisions, schisms, complacency and whatever else hinders the work of salvation in Christ. The Apostle becomes light to those who are in darkness, when, to their unacceptable behavior, he continues offering them the love of God, which directs man to sanctification and redemption.

Archim. N.K

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13 2023 TENTH SUNDAY OF

MATTHEW *Apodosis of the Transfiguration Maxymus the Confessor, Our Righteous Fathers Sergius, Stephanus, Castor and Palamonius. Dorotheus Abba of Gaza, Tikhon of Zaonsk.*

EPISTLE READING : St. Paul's First Letter to Corinthians 4:9-16

GOSPEL READING : Matthew 17:14—23

TONE OF THE WEEK : First Tone

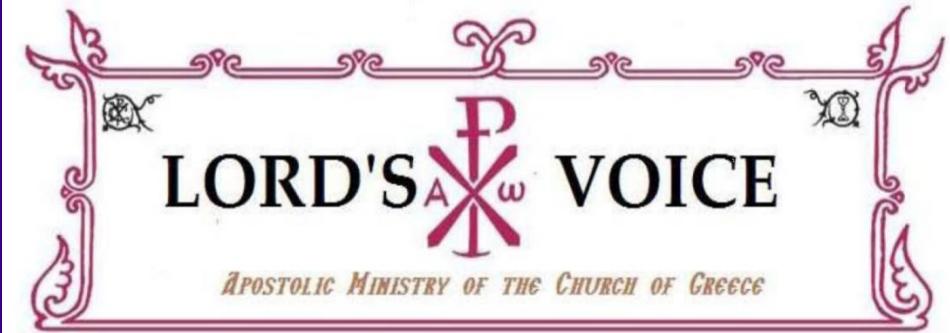
EOTHINON : Tenth Eothinon

SUNDAY, AUGUST 20 2023 ELEVENTH SUNDAY OF

MATTHEW *Samuel the Prophet, Holy Martyr Luke the Bouleutou, Stephen, First King of Hungary, Hierotheos Bishop of Hungary, Oswin the Martyr, King of Deira, Afterfeast of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary.*

EPISTLE READING : St. Paul's First Letter to Corinthians 9:2-12

GOSPEL READING : Matthew 18:23—35



71ST YEAR AUGUST 13 2024 PAMPHLET # 33 (3663)

THE TOIL OF THE APOSTLES FOR THE SOWING OF THE WORD OF GOD

We have pointed out at other times, that the Apostle Paul often faces the problem of the division of the Christians of Corinth. In this church, groups had been created, each of which showed admiration and appreciation to one Apostle, whom they considered superior to others. In the first four chapters of his Epistle, Paul tries to deal with the disintegration of unity of the Church of Corinth.

The present passage is taken from the fourth chapter of the Epistle, where the Apostle, in vivid colors, describes the difficulties in the mission of spreading the Gospel, and the effort the Apostles put forth to establish the local Churches. However, with this heavy and arduous work, Paul is aware that he is participating in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and that he is obtaining the privilege of exposing himself to the danger of death, for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. That's also why, juxtaposing the arduous apostolic life to the self-satisfaction and spiritual complacency of the Corinthians, who believed that they had already received the fullness of the blessedness of the age to come, he is forced to present the sufferings, the dangers, and the humiliations that the true Apostles undergo. That is, those

EPISTLE ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO CORINTHIANS 4:9-16

Brethren, God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all things. I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.

elements that contribute more than anything else to the authenticity of the Christian life, as a life of martyrdom and testimony of the truth.

"Theatre to the world to both angels and men"

So, wanting to remind them what apostolic life means, as a pending threat of death, he writes; "it seems to me, however, that God gave us Apostles the last place, as if we are condemned to death. Because we became a theater, that is, a spectacle, to the

world, to angels and humans". Here with the word "theatre," he implies the Roman theater, the arena with the terrible scenes of those condemned to death, and indeed in front of everyone. "Neither in a corner or in a small area of the world, are we suffering these things" notes the sacred Chrysostom, "but everywhere and before everyone", i.e. everywhere and in front of everyone.

Paul's crucifixion theology

Strong contrasting patterns immediately follow, which are understood within the perspective of Paul's crucifixion theology, in the model of the prophet of the Old Testament and, of course, of Christ himself. Paul describes the Corinthians as "prudent, strong, and glorious", while, on the contrary, he calls the Apostles "fools, weak and dishonorable". With the first determinations, he disapproves, with a slight irony mixed with bitterness, the self-sufficiency and selfishness of the Corinthians. With the latter ones, he singles out three fundamental contributors to the apostolic life and ministry in the body of Church. Since the sermon about the Cross was taken by unbelievers as "foolishness" and as a "scandal" (1 Cor. 1:18- 21:23), it followed that the preachers of mystery of the Cross would be characterized as foolish. The persecutions and contempt towards them, the lack of human dignity and recognition, reveal that their main concern was the crucifactory ethos that inspired their apostolic activity.

The Apostles are hungry, thirsty, suffer from nakedness, receive insults, toil and work with their own hands so as not to burden anyone. Paul accepts all this willingly, that is, with the freedom of his existence in Christ. His complete dedication and ministry to the work of Christ makes him become a theater and spectacle to the world and to angels who admire him, but also to humans, most of whom mock him.