

To allow Him to touch the deepest chords of our soul with His grace and to become in us our personal revelation. That He is the cause of our life. He is the source of our life. He is the great starting point and the destination of our being. For the being of our existence to come to know, the One who Is, the Hypostasis of the Word of God, as the Evangelist of love reveals to us: "In the beginning was the Word".

Whatsoever other principle we would place in our earthly journey for the mystery of life would have neither end, nor result. He is the eternal principle and cause of all things, who has no end because He extends to the eternity of His divine glory and has given to us an eternal result and future, which is life in His eternal life, is the mystery of life, is "the wood of life" and of immortality, the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Whoever of us tastes this knowledge of grace, receives "grace for grace" life and sanctification, joy and Resurrection. And we understand, we recognize and we admire with gratitude the preaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who revealed to us the godhead and humanity of Christ to our souls and made us members of the body of the Church. In the sacramental life of the Church we certify our chief choice in the calling of god and our calling becomes the content of our life and the true expectation of our heart.

Archim. Ch. N.

SUNDAY December 29th Sunday after Nativity, 14,000 infants (Holy Innocents) slain by Herod in Bethlehem, Our Righteous Father Marcellus, Abbot of the Monastery of the Unsleeping Ones, Our Righteous Father Thaddeus the Confessor

Second Tone, Fifth Eothinon, - Epistle St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 1:11-19, **Gospel** Matthew 2:13-23

NEXT SUNDAY January 5, 2014 Sunday before Epiphany, Eve of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, The Holy Martyrs Theopemptus and Theonas, Righteous Synkletike of Alexandria

Epistle St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8

Gospel Mark 1:1-8



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RECEIVERS OF THE CALLING OF GOD

Just as Joseph the Betrothed was appointed by the angel's calling to become the protector of the Mother of God and of the child Jesus, likewise also the Apostle Paul was appointed by God to impart the Gospel mainly to the gentiles.

The Evangelist Matthew mentions Joseph's calling from God through the angel: "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word" (Mt. 2:13). And the Apostle defines this great mission already from his birth saying: "God who separated me from my mother's womb" (Gal. 1:15). He was already, in other words, destined by the Lord for this great apostolic work. However God did not impose this on him. He left him free to be troubled in the labyrinth of Jewish and Rabbinical godly piety and teaching, to make his own choices in the religious atmosphere of his homeland. He himself refers to his upbringing in strict religious frameworks: "you heard my own upbringing once in Judaism" and the zeal he showed in attachment and implementation of the Jewish traditions, "being a zealot of my paternal traditions".

Calling and acceptance

The will of God showed for the Ap. Paul, when He called him on the way to Damascus and He told him: "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 22:7). Up till then he was ignorant of the calling, in contradiction to Joseph who had already realized his calling from

SUNDAY'S EPISTLE: ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS 1:11-19

BRETHREN, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Christ's birth. In other words, his calling took on flesh and bones, it was activated when he himself had the stunning experience of Jesus' presence in his life and he responded to His calling. Our voluntary and not forced response to God's calling is very basic. Because God respects the freedom of man's will, independent of if He has destined him to serve His will. Many, in other words, may be called by God, but few respond to His calling. "Many are called while the chosen are few" says the Lord, referring to the parable of the workers of the vineyard (Mt. 20:20). The words which Christ addressed to His disciples are also characteristic, when he saw some of those who initially followed him, "maybe do you also want to follow the others and to leave?"

The main reason of the calling of the Apostle

When God intervenes in such a revealing way and so intensely in the life of such exceptional people, like Joseph and Paul, He certainly has some weighty and important reason. To entrust, in other words, to the specific people, to Joseph and to Paul, to serve, to evangelize, each

one with their distinct manner, to announce, to preach and to teach people about His Only Begotten Son: "to reveal His Son, for me to evangelize Him among the gentiles," writes the Apostle himself. For the prophecy to be fulfilled: "from Egypt I called my son" as the Evangelist Matthew writes (Mt. 2:15). In other words, God provided to reveal His Son, Christ, to the Ap. Paul, for Jesus to be projected both in the land of Promise (Israel), as well as to all the nations, so that the Lord Jesus (who is the Almighty One) would be universal and worldwide for all people, for all of His creation, for Paul to subsequently preach Him to all the nations. So for this reason He destined him and for this reason He called him.

The calling of each one of us and our journey to God

There are sacred persons in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament who understood and accepted God's calling in their life, without wandering on the footpaths of ignorance, of disputing and probably of disbelief also.

Most of us however, and especially in our times, wandered in the values which the previous ones gave us, we searched and got lost in our own doubts, we struggled and found our spiritual pace again. We were troubled in the difficult to traverse footpaths which others showed us, but we again found the good path. Because in us there existed, the whisper of the truth was slowly burning and the moment came when God's love opened the eyes of our soul to accept what was easily understood, to make our calling a life, to realize our journey in the will of God.

So why did God allow us to live this wandering, this trip which changes destinations until the true destination is found? The spiritual risk was great: for us to come to know, to believe make our life His, who became a man for us and was crucified for us. And for us to agree to such a knowledge and experience God called us to love His Son, through the personal experience of our life.