

Father and participation in the Divine Communion with the preparation according to our ability, comprises the triple therapy of today's man harmed by sin.

The Divine Liturgy comprises really one such workshop of repentance. In the Divine Liturgy, with our participation in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ we manage to achieve the goal of our life as Christians, which is according to Saint Seraphim of Sarov "the acquisition of the Holy Spirit". So for this reason also the Divine Liturgy concludes with the triumphant victory hymn: "We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith worshipping the indivisible Trinity. For this has saved us".

Archim. E. T.

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 Syncletike of Alexandria

Tone Third, **Eothinon** Sixth, - **Epistle** St. Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 4:5-8, **Gospel** Mark 1:1-8

NEXT SUNDAY January 12, 2014 Sunday after Epiphany ,

Tatiana the Martyr of Rome, Martyr Mertios

Epistle St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel Matthew 4:12-17



62nd Year

January 5, 2014

Pamphlet #1 (3162)

THE PRECIOUS FORERUNNER THE SPINAL CHORD OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

After the feast of Christmas and the feast of the Circumcision of Christ, this Sunday, our Church prepares us to celebrate the holy Theophany. She projects a par excellence ascetical personality, that of the Saint John the Forerunner, who with his work, smoothed out the ground for Christ, "made the prologue" for the work of our Christ. This activity of John, Malachi and Isaiah had foretold, with prophecies which also are mentioned in today's gospel reading (1:2,3). We see here how beautifully the Old Testament "breathes" in the New [Testament] and the New Testament "dawns" through the Old [Testament].

Ascetical life

The Precious Forerunner, whom the monastic ranks consider their first Abbot, fought in the desert against the triple evil, the world, the flesh and the devil and he completely crushed it in Christ through a lifelong struggle of fasting, vigil and prayer. While at the end, for the sake of Christ, he underwent death through beheading. He preached repentance to people, he was baptizing them in the Jordan and he was confessing them. All the Judeans and the Jerusalemites were hastening to him recognizing obviously his exceptionally holy manner of life, while they were avoiding the scribes, Pharisees, those educated in the

SUNDAY BEFORE EPIPHANY, THE GOSPEL OF MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

law, teachers, high priests and priests, who, even though they possessed the Law and the Prophets, by not being careful with the manner of their life they were scandalizing the people. On the contrary, the manner of life of John which drew the people, is literally a slap for us, Christians of the last times, who have lost our face beneath the consumer masks we are wearing. We forgot that one of the characteristics of Orthodoxy is its ascetical character

A baptism of repentance, a baptism of remission and works

The baptism in the Jordan River say the Fathers is a baptism of repentance. Its type, through immersion, foreshadowed our own baptism in Christ, which furthermore is a baptism of remission. According to Saint Gregory Palamas, during the moment of our baptism the divine Grace "ineffably grows" that is "is secretly planted"

in our heart. When the blessed time comes and the person is fired up with repentance, this same Grace "from above flies upon" says the divine Father and the whole life of the person changes. Then the gifts of the Holy Spirit are also activated which we received during the sacred Chrism. With holy Baptism we are embodied in the Body of Christ, with our participation in the Divine Eucharist we become one body with Christ. We have the same body and the same blood flows in our veins and in a spiritual manner we become "relatives by blood" all Orthodox Christians.

All Orthodox were once baptized and this is our second birth, with God as Father and the Church as Mother. In the baptismal font we were buried with Christ and we coresurrected. We did not pay attention however to our life and with wicked works we defiled the bright resurrection garment of our Baptism. Here now repentance and her tears now come, which cleanse the soils of sins and we become again all bright. So for this reason we should be careful of our works and with the voice of the Precious Forerunner who from the depths of our conscience, calls us through the ages to repentance.

Not despair, but participation in the Divine Liturgy

It would be good for the reminder of our sins to not lead us to despair and hopelessness. "It is not evil for you to sin" says Saint John Chrysostom, "it is evil for you to not repent for the sin you did". When a person will realize the multitude of his sins, let him constantly and ceaselessly shout to the only one able to save him, Christ. Ceaseless prayer in the almighty name of the Lord "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me" combined with confession to the Spiritual