

The holy icons transport the center of our being to the courtyards of a joy which we dare to call Paradise. Of a joy which gives meaning to our life, to our past, to the present, to the future. Our life is built on the joy which the holy Icons send us.

We avoid the path of hopelessness, the trap of despair, gazing merely at one icon. The Icon reminds us that no matter how difficult things are, we should not despair because there always exists a step beyond. It teaches us that we must be optimistic no matter what is going on.

### Very sweet Orthodoxy

So beloved brethren, we need to find our lost center, which is the infallible most sweet experience of our Holy Fathers. The experience of martyrdom, petition-worship, ascesis, from which we have departed due to the consumer and secular spirit which prevails. We departed from the service, the prostrations, the kneelings, the bowing of our heads, the lifting of hands, the prayer rope, fasting and especially from the Divine Liturgy and its sweet fruit, the Divine Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, something which today the honored persons of our faith eloquently narrate.

Archim. E. T.

#### **SUNDAY March 9, 2014 Sunday of Orthodoxy**

The Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebastia , Caesarios the Righteous, **Tone 4<sup>th</sup> Eothinon 4<sup>th</sup>. Epistle** Epistle St. Paul's Letter Hebrews 12:1-10 13:11-14; 14:1-4, **Gospel** John 1:43-51

**NEXT SUNDAY March 16 , 2014 Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas**, Sabine the Martyr of Egypt, Christodulus the Wonderworker of Patmos, Aristovoulos, Apostle of the 70, Julian the Martyr.

**Epistle** St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3

**Gospel** Mark 2:1-12



62<sup>nd</sup> Year

March 9, 2014

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## THE TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

Today's Sunday, beloved brethren, is called the Sunday of Orthodoxy. The Christian's spiritual struggle cannot bear fruit if it is not based on the correct faith. The Orthodox Church has the privilege of preserving the correct faith about God, man, and the world. The Fathers of the Church many times underwent harsh struggles to preserve it.

### “Come and See”

The experience of Phillip and Nathaniel's acquaintance Christ is described in today's gospel passage. The argument that Phillip puts forth to Nathaniel who is wondering why he believes that nothing good can come from Nazareth, is disarming: “Come and see”, he tells him, suggesting that he try the experience himself, on his own. Nathaniel agrees. In the brief conversation which follows Nathaniel is impressed and confesses Christ as Son of God and king of Israel. His faith is considered guileless, because previously, even if he doubted about the person of Christ based on his descent, the Lord characterized him truly guileless, focusing on his disposition and not on his words.

## Sunday of Orthodoxy The Gospel of John 1:43-51

At that time, Jesus decided to go to Galilee. And he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and he said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

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So, faith in Christ not ideology, is not a matter of intellectual admittance, it is a matter of the response of a direct disposition to a personal invitation "come", which concludes in an infallible vision ("see"). Faith grants hypostasis to the things not seen but hoped for, making man capable of censuring, having knowledge about these things not seen but which are real (Heb. 11:1)

### Icons: Entrances to eternity

This Sunday our Church celebrates the restoration of the holy icons. An ungraceful and difficult period concluded with a triumph

against Iconoclasm. Jesus Christ the incarnate God, since he took human form, was a historical person who associated with us, he maybe depicted. There doesn't exist a photograph of a nonexistent person.

Thus we are able to depict him, to pray before his icon as well as to the icons of the All Holy Virgin Mary, the Angels and all the Saints, the monastic saints, martyrs and confessors of the faith. The honor we render to the icon and its veneration is transferred to the depicted person, as Basil the Great tells us.

In venerating an icon of Christ, we're inviting him to come our life and simultaneously this action which "surpasses the mind" according to Nicholas Pentzike, corrects in time both our disposition and our life.

In venerating an icon of the All Holy Virgin Mary, we feel her as consolation, as the joy of all, as the cause of our salvation. We address ourselves to the Mother of God and we also taste the mystery of the incarnation of her Son and God.

In venerating the icons of the Saints, we are considered beloved children who have received the mercy of Christ and we want to become imitators of His imitators. We are considered very joyous that these are our real relatives, our real friends, our real parents.

We venerate the Cross of the Lord, on which we see not an exhausted man, a person ready to die who is suffering or a dead pale fellow dotted with wounds, beloved in western perceptions. On the contrary we are before the ineffable mystery of a God who voluntarily is extended on the Precious Wood. The measure of His love for us is His Cross. The Cross of Christ literally becomes "the geography of the horizons of human existence." We form it upon our body and we are renewed "as eagles" (Ps. 102:5).