

Fasting is not perceived only externally, in other words, abstinence from foods, but-and mainly-the spiritual fasting, in other words, the fasting of the senses, the fasting of the mind. This means avoiding serious falls, ceaseless attention, vigilance to the world of our soul and the thoughts and participation in the mystery of mysteries, the Divine Eucharist, always in communication with the spiritual Father.

Living thus, we will be able to escape the traps of the devil, without there being danger, either of us "being burned," or of us "being drowned", and consequently spiritually of us being lost. We are in danger, on the one hand, but Christ never allows us to drown and He fills us with His own joy, in a way so that we're able to cry out with a word of knowledge "we underwent fire and water and you brought us out unto refreshment".

Archim. E. T.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 17, 2014: 10th Sunday of Matthew, Myron the Martyr of Cyzicus, Straton, Philip, Eutychian, & Cyprian the Martyrs of Nicomedeia, Afterfeast of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary

tone of the week: Tone First **Eothinon** Tenth Eothinon

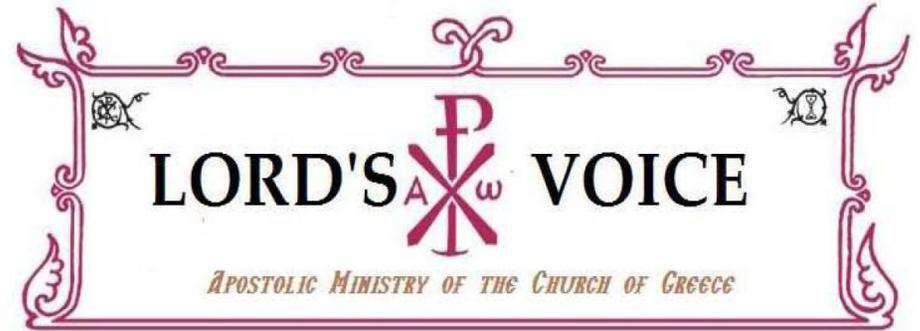
EPISTLE St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 4:9-16

GOSPEL Matthew 17:14-23

NEXT SUNDAY, AUGUST 24, 2014 11th Sunday of Matthew, Eutyches the Hieromartyr & Disciple of St. John the Theologian, Saint Cosmas of Aetolia, Equal to the Apostles, The Translation of the Relics of Dionysios of Zakynthos, Bishop of Aegina, The Translation of the Holy Relics of Saint Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow

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

GOSPEL Matthew 18:23-35



62nd Year

AUGUST 17, 2014

Pamphlet # 33 (3194)

THE POWER OF FERVENT PRAYER

Today's gospel reading, beloved brethren, mentions the miracle of Christ on the convulsive son of some unfortunate father. The father approached the Lord falling on his knees and mentioned his problem: the demon was striking his child from a young age, sometimes throwing him into the water in order to drown him and at other times into the fire in order to burn him. His disciples were not able to heal his son, although the unfortunate parent was asking them to. Christ being frustrated called his disciples "a faithless and perverse generation". He scolded the demon and he left from the child. To his disciples' question of why they were not able to cast out the demon, Christ answered that they didn't have even that slightest faith which, if someone has, he can move mountains. Furthermore he told them that the race of demons does not come out of man except through prayer and fasting.

Kneeling

The attitude of the father of the time when he is begging Christ, is an attitude of prostration. Great is the power of prayer which occurs with such an attitude of body and has particular sweetness. The devil hates such an attitude because he is prideful.

10th Sunday of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew 17:14-23

At that time, a man came up to Him and kneeling before Him said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move hence to yonder place,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. But this kind never comes out except by prayer and fasting." As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day."

It is not by chance that in our Tradition prostrations exist. They humble the haughty train of thought and strengthen the struggling train of thought. They are beneficial both for men, as well as for women, even for children also. Basil the Great explains the prostrations theologically saying that the upright stance denotes the integrity of man when he was created by God. Disobedience tore him to shreds. This is denoted by the kneeling. When Christ came, He restored the disturbed relationship of man with God and this is denoted with the return to the upright position.

So as much as we are able, let us do prostrations which are also soul benefiting, but they comprise the health of the body also, as the Elder Paisios would often also say.

Perverse and faithless generation

It is a fact that the perverse disposition and lack of faith prevent the expression of Grace with miracles. Once the Lord did not do many miracles in his homeland Nazareth, on account of the disbelief of its inhabitants (Mt. 13:58).

In the Divine Liturgy again, the Priest beseeches "for the sanctified precious gifts which are here presented". The already sanctified precious gifts which are presented do not need our prayers, but the priest at that moment prays that they impart their sanctification to us, so that our disbelief perchance not prevent our sanctification through Them.

So on account of their disbelief, the disciples were not able to cast out the demon and to deliver the child. It is truly fearful that Christ tells His disciples that faith the size of a mustard seed suffices to move a mountain. So not even this little faith existed in the disciples, which could have chased away not the mountain, but the temptation!

Prayer and fasting

Aside from faith, he adds another two gifts at the end of the passage, necessary to cast off the actions of the wicked spirits and these are prayer and fasting.

"With the name of Jesus chastise the opponents" Saint John the Sinaite urges us, repeating in his own way the "pray ceaselessly" of the Apostle Paul (1 Thess. 5:17). Prayer, especially the ceaseless invocation of the name of Christ, fortifies the Christian, so that it would be difficult for him to become the target of the Devil. So for this reason the saints, the monastic saints and the martyrs of our faith had the Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me as their staff, which very frequently they repeated with the mouth, the mind, the heart, ceaselessly being garbed with the grace of Christ.

The mechanical and mere repetition of the Jesus prayer does not suffice naturally, if it is not combined with a life in the Church. No gift of God becomes autonomous, can be perceived outside of the Church. "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus", Cyprian of Carthage reminds us, in other words, outside of the Church not simply and alone are the gifts made autonomous, but there is no salvation.