

## Calling sinners of all ages

Christ addresses the weak people who are put down, the offscouring of the world, those who are insufficient and invalid, those who are abused and bankrupt, those who are rejected and scorned, those who have failed and are exhausted, those who are frustrated and marked, those marginalized and chased away, of all ages with the same invitation that He address to Matthew: “come, follow me”. Yes, on the one hand, the invitation to him presages the special apostolic gift which the Saint will receive after a little while, however the same invitation is addressed by Christ to us and to every baptized Orthodox Christian, so that he who will follow Him can be a light of sweetness and consolation, a missionary lighthouse of a vigilant heart and of blessed works to the brothers around him.

Archim. E. T.

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2014 Matthew the Apostle & Evangelist**

**tone of the week:** Plagal of the 2nd Tone **Eothinon** First Eothinon

**EPISTLE** St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 10:11-21; 11:1-2

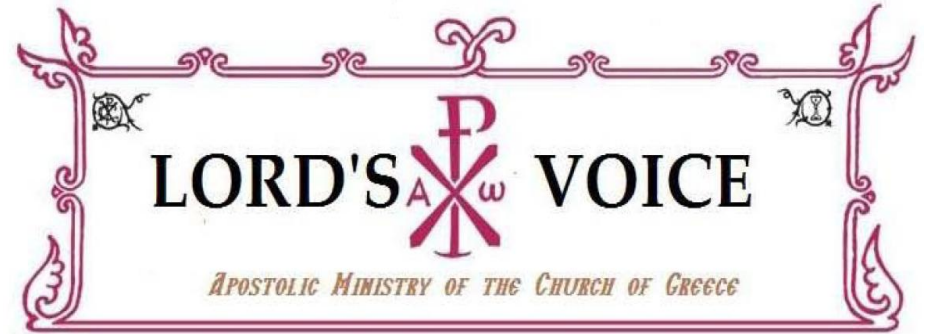
**GOSPEL** Matthew 9:9-13

**NEXT SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2014 9TH SUNDAY OF LUKE,**

Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, Gregory, Bishop of Agrigentum, Ischyron, Bishop of Egypt, Afterfeast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple

**EPISTLE** St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 2:14-22

**GOSPEL** Luke 12:16-21



62<sup>nd</sup> Year

November 16, 2014

Pamphlet #46 (3207)

### WE LEFT EVERYTHING AND FOLLOWED HIM”

Today’s gospel passage, beloved brethren, refers to the calling of Matthew, one of the Disciples, by Christ himself. He was a publican by trade. In today’s terminology we would say a tax collector or a customs officer. His name was Levi and he was the author of the first Gospel. The publicans, in that age, had a bad reputation, because they would collect more than they needed to. Christ, knowing Matthew’s disposition and surpassing, rather being completely indifferent about his reputation, addresses a direct calling to him: “Come, follow me”. The later on apostle and evangelist follows Him. And not just that, but he calls people “of every kind” and receives Christ at his home. The Jewish Pharisaical establishment reacts against Christ’s company, being censured by his moralism. Christ very beautifully answers them that they who think they are righteous don’t have need of Him, but rather they who recognize their sinfulness.

### Unwavering obedience

The eagerness with which Matthew responds to Christ’s calling impresses us. He doesn’t sit to consider who it is who is calling him, nor what shall be his journey, what he’s called to face,

## Matthew the Apostle & Evangelist

### The Gospel of Matthew 9:9-13

At that time, as Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

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nor who he is leaving behind him. He doesn't think of the possible difficulties. He simply obeys. This is also what is praiseworthy and worthy of imitation for the publican of a more or less bad reputation. It reminds us of the Peter's unhesitating eagerness, who, obeying Christ's commandment to cast his nets again, does it without speaking with his mind. It reminds us furthermore of Jesus' saying in the gospel according to Luke (9:62) that he who puts his hand upon the plow and turns his head backwards isn't fit to be a farmer. Much more so, he who undertakes the spiritual ministry, he must be completely dedicated to it. Matthew would later on undertake the ministry of an Apostle, of him, in other words, who everywhere and always evangelizes Christ.

By running immediately to the invitation which Christ addresses him, Matthew shows already that for him his life up till now comprises the past. Essentially his handing himself over to the word of Christ without any hesitation, marks his divorce from his previous life. Thus he also who is truly called by Christ- because there also are false callings- and answers Him- with complete freedom, positively, takes a definitive and irrevocable

divorce from his previous life. Furthermore whatsoever Christian would want to walk in the footsteps of the Saints and heroes of the faith, rejects the works of darkness and the sinful life. Repentance, we would say "swallows" his past. The divine Grace divides his life with a mental flight to a life before and after Christ.

### The problem of the moralists of every age

The Lord did not shoot the fearful "o woes" against the sinners, but against the hypocrites. I remember the blessed Metropolitan of Nicopolis Meletios, who called hypocrisy and the Pharisaism, the psychopathy of spiritual life. The Pharisee is censured, when he sees that the Lord forgives sinners and those suffering and he rages against them and God. He considers God obligated to save him, based on his keeping of some moral requirements which most of the time he keeps out of habit and furthermore from a young age, while the sinners who are not living like him, he considers worthy of hell. So for this reason also, Christ responding to the evil thoughts of the Pharisees of today's Gospel, but also to the hypocrites of every age, reminds them of the Prophet Hosea' saying (6:6) "I want mercy and not sacrifice", I see, in other words, the love a soul has, in which case also, the work which proceeds from it is blessed, and not the external good works in and of themselves.

The moralist in essence condemns in the others, those things from which he himself is suffering. He pushes down to the depths his problem and he projects it, "he sees it" in the persons of his fellow men. While especially for the falls of a "moral type" he reacts with unnatural wickedness and instead of understanding sin as a personal harming of his brother, probably considering himself more hazardous, he behaves like someone who is envying because he didn't commit the same sin, for us to not say that sometimes he even rejoices furthermore! (Professor Elijah Voulgarakis). Such hardening and spiritual blindness.