

obligates, imposes and punishes. The Church, supplicates, exhorts and trains. She teaches that “to the righteous person the law is not placed”, not in order to fight the law, but in order to show that the person of God does not need human law in order to do that which he ought. Spontaneously and simply he acts as a free being with love being the only limitation. “Love and do whatever you want”, the sacred Augustine will say in an expressive overstatement, in order to emphatically denote how much love perfects man when it prevails in his being, because there is no way it will lead him to mistakes or deviations.

My brethren, today’s Epistle Reading taking cause from the rights of man in food and its selection, comes to pose the matter of discernment. Man is free to do many things. Also many times he obtains the capability of doing even whatever he ought not to and what does not honor him. What does he select? Or rather, how does he select? The criterion in choice, is the love of brother. I do that which will distress, scandalize, which will make my brother question, less down to not at all. And I select mainly that which will benefit, teach, set an example, more for him even when he is not mature enough to understand it. God will give and the time will come when he will feel it and recognize it. So long as my own way of being is not egotistical but loving, not claiming but beneficial, not at all utilitarian but beneficial. In one word, as the love of God dictates to my conscience.

Archim. I. N.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2015 JUDGMENT SUNDAY (MEATFARE**

**SUNDAY)**, *Onesimus the Apostle of the 70, Our Righteous Father Anthimus the Elder of Chios, Eusebius the Righteous of Syria*

**tone of the week:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Tone, **Eothinon** 3<sup>rd</sup> Eothinon

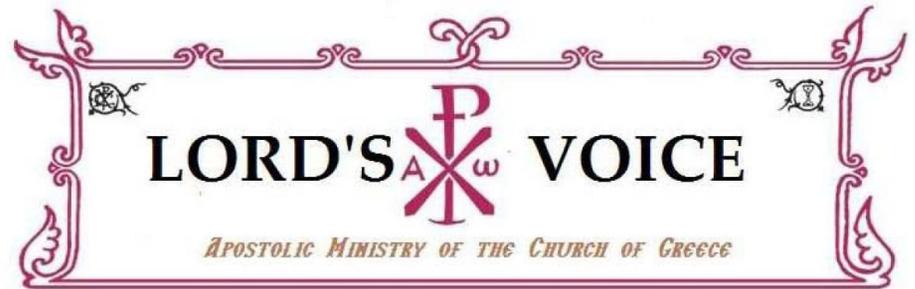
**EPISTLE** *St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2*

**GOSPEL** *Matthew 25:31-46*

**NEXT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2015 FORGIVENESS SUNDAY**, *The Finding of the Precious Relics of the Holy Martyrs in the Quarter of Eugenius, Our Righteous Fathers Thalassius and Baradatus, Anthousa the Martyr & her 12 Servants*

**EPISTLE** *St. Paul’s First Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4*

**GOSPEL** *Matthew 6:14-21*



63<sup>rd</sup> Year

February 15, 2015

Pamphlet # 07 (3220)

## THE FREEDOM OF LOVE

As the period of the Triodion has begun and we’re proceeding to the dawning of Holy and Great Lent, the Church strives to introduce us gradually to the climate and the spirit of the struggle of effort in Christ. She doesn’t only cut meat from the daily diet, as the first step to strict fasting. Simultaneously she urges, exhorts, but also clarifies. She does not obligate, does not impose, does not exert persuasion. In the most sacred period of the ecclesiastical year, human freedom and the challenge of correctly handling it, is shown to prevail.

### Fasting a cause for the neighbor to gain

The Apostle Paul clarifies from the beginning, “food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.” It is not the food which presents us as pleasing, in the eyes of God, because neither if we eat do we gain in virtue, nor if we don’t eat are we deprived of something. Then, why does fasting have such great importance for our Church? Why does the Church insist in great periods of fasting in the year, and why does she urge it, as cleansing of the passions? The Apostle explains, forewarning, “take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.”

**ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS 8:8-13; 9:1-2**

***Prokeimenon. Mode 4.***

***Psalm 146.5;134.3***

*Great is our Lord, and great is his power.*

*Verse: Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good.*

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

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Be careful, so that maybe this right which you have to eat or to not eat freely, become an obstacle to your weaker brethren, who observe and are scandalized, not being able to explain your behavior. The problem consequently, is not the food, but man's voluntary limitation in order for his brother to gain.

From the beginning our Church understood fasting in this way. As a cause for the other, for the neighbor, to gain. The Christians would cut from their food in order for their money for philanthropy to remain. They remained hungry in order for the others to be satiated. It was and is a very high reason for asceticism and charity. But, simultaneously they presented themselves as models for the weaker people, mainly because they refused to

behave like all the others, as "all the world does". They differentiated themselves in this way, not in the framework of some self admiration or secret pharisaical egotism, but because they had to make the difference, to become the salt in humanity, which would make life tasty, but would also protect it from rotting.

**When was a struggle made for the rights of the other?**

In our age talk of human rights prevails. Claims, efforts, struggles, everything is done with the flag of claiming our rights. And to a degree, well and justly! When was a struggle made for the rights of the other? When, without ulterior motives and secret thoughts, were chests put forth for the sake of those who are weaker, of the neighbor, of the brothers? Only after Christianity prevailed and under the influence which the train of thought of love exercised, was man convinced to seek "not only his own things, but each one that of the other". But also the legislation, mainly of our Orthodox homeland Greece, influenced by this disposition for the sake of the other, before it renders and validates whatsoever right, institutes the forbidding of its abusive exercising. In other words it forbids the exercising of individual rights, and furthermore with the article 25 of the highest state law, of the Constitution, so long as these are exercised to the detriment of society. But also with the foundational law of private relationships, the Civil Codex (in article 281), it foresees a limitation of the rights of the individual, when it's exercising surpasses the limits of good faith, of useful habits and of the social and financial aim of the right, terminology which directly refers to Christian morality and its timeless influence on human societies. "Love and do whatever you want"

However, this way of the law's functioning is completely different from our Church's pastoral methodology. The law