

break us off from the luring crafts of the devil, projects the finish line to us. She speaks to us of the Kingdom of the Heavens as the infallible promise of God. She reminds us of Abraham's patience for whole decades, not in order to obtain a son and a successor, but in order to be granted the Paradise of delight. She stresses to us the infallibility of the divine promises and the important magnitude of all which God allows as our inheritance.

In other words, the Apostle Paul presenting "the consolation of the aforesaid hope" as "the safe and certain anchor of soul", doesn't do anything else than to prove that the promises of God in the person of Christ have been realized and consequently, for all those who from here on are struggling, to stress that there is that comfort and the certainty of the sure hope in the safety of the realization of what was promised.

Paradise is something very important. The most important thing of all which man must be concerned with in his life! And this because this is why life was given to him, as an opportunity to obtain Paradise. So if, for the small and corrupt things of this world we put forth so much effort and spend ourselves daily, for the Paradise of Glory is it not worth us persisting in the struggle until the end, when furthermore we don't have a simple relative promise, but the certainty of the promise?

Archim. I. N.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 22 2015 SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS**, *Basil the Holy Martyr of Ancyra, Kalliniki & Vassilisa the Martyrs, Euthemios the New Martyr.*

**TONE OF THE WEEK:** Plagal 4<sup>th</sup> Tone, **Eothinon** 8<sup>th</sup> Eothinon

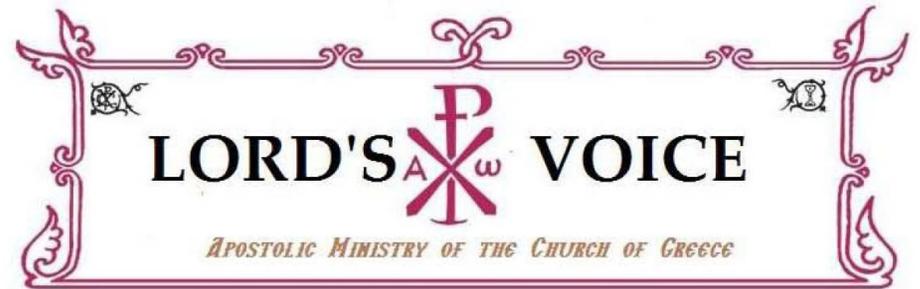
**EPISTLE** *St. Paul's First Letter to Hebrews 6:13-20*

**GOSPEL** Mark 9:17-31

**NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2015 SUNDAY OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT**, *Mark, Bishop of Arethusa, Martyr Cyril the Deacon and Those with him, The Holy Martyrs Jonas and Barachesium, Eustathios the Confessor, Bishop of Bithynia.*

**EPISTLE** *St. Paul's First Letter to Hebrews 6:13-20*

**GOSPEL** Mark 9:17-31



63<sup>rd</sup> Year

MARCH 22, 2015

Pamphlet # 12 (3225)

## THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROMISE

There is no one else who knows man better than God and his Church. And this because God, on the one hand, is the all-wise creator and consequently He knows his creatures, while the Church, on the other hand, with a pastoral experience of centuries, has indisputable experience of the tendencies and inclinations of human nature. For this reason, she undergoes every available means in order to spiritually support the struggling Christian. And if on the previous Sunday she projected the consolation of the Cross as an invincible weapon and instrument of certain glory, today with the Epistle Reading she projects the certainty of the infallible promises of God.

### The case of Abraham

The Apostle Paul addressing his compatriot Jews, uses their familiar texts of the Old Testament in order to convince them about the realization of all the prophecies and of the many yearlong awaiting of the savior, in the person of Jesus Christ. He takes cause from Abraham and reminds them of the vow which God gave, calling upon Himself, since he didn't have something higher to vow with. What does this vow consist of? In that both Abraham, as well as his descendants would receive "the land of promise".

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 6:13-20

Prokeimenon. Grave Mode.

Psalm 28.11,1

The Lord will give strength to his people.

Verse: Bring to the Lord, O sons of God, bring to the Lord honor and glory.

BRETHREN, when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore to himself, saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you." And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

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Without saying it directly, so that he would not be considered a blasphemer, the Apostle Paul wants to convince his compatriots that the interpretations which they are giving to this promise of God, especially those which are dealing with the claiming of the specific compartment of land, are all mistaken! Why? Why because from the text itself of the Old Testament it arises that God promised "the land of promise" both to Abraham and to his descendants.

However, from the Old Testament itself again we know that Abraham never obtained "the land of promise". He may have

dwelt there, and furthermore in tents as a nomad, however he never obtained, ownership rights up of the land ever! Furthermore in the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the same Epistle, Paul referring to Abraham, stresses that he did not obtain even one little stone upon the earth, awaiting his entrance into the heavenly city. So what's going on? Is God, furthermore with a vow, saying lies?

The Apostle Paul takes advantage of this impasse in the interpretation of the Jews to say that God is not a liar in any case, it's just that people with their hardhearted and selfish interpretations do not understand the divine words. While the promise of God to Abraham that He would give both to him, as well as to his descendants "the land of promise", doesn't have to do with geographic areas and worldly occupying aims. This promise, the Apostle Paul says, was realized when Christ as the eternal High Priest entered into "the inner side of the curtain, according to the order of Melchizedek", in other words into the Paradise of divine glory,

Leading in the righteous ones of the Old Testament and awaiting all of us also who are struggling the good struggle. Consequently, the promised "land of promise", which Abraham longed for so much, was none other than the Kingdom of the Heavens, which thanks to his unswerving awaiting, he managed to gain.

### **Courage in the struggle**

What is our Church saying with today's Reading? She understands that just as Great Lent is continuing, signs of exhaustion may have appeared. Man is vulnerable and tends to fall until the moment of his death, when his spiritual condition becomes frozen. It is logical as the fourth week of the Fast and of asceticism is finishing, that he feels tired, has lost the enthusiasm of the beginning of Lent and has lessened the effort.

Precisely however, because the struggle is unto the end and not till the middle, the Church in order to strengthen us, but also to