

had begun to reveal the answer, 800 years prior to Christ. "Let us discuss, says the Lord, and if your sins are as deep purple, I shall whiten as snow, while if they are as red, I shall whiten as a fleece". Come let us discuss says the Lord, come let us give account, come let us find where and how you mistreated me. And if your sins are like the bright red, I will make them white as snow. And even if they are deep red, I will make them completely white like the wool of the sheep, in other words, I will write them off and will completely wipe them out. The secret is hidden in the invitation "Come let us discuss!" Man must convince God that he wants to approach, to dialogue with Him. It's not the unknown one with whom he is not speaking, nor the enemy. These things were now abolished! It is the familiar one, the Father, who is awaiting his child, in order to cultivate this relationship and to grant to his child whatever is his. This is the spiritual effort. A constant dialogue with God, who familiarizes us and especially through prayer, proves our longing for us to keep and hold the gifts of the Holy Spirit as sons of God, brethren and fellow inheritors of Christ.?

Archim. I. N.

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 Barachisus, Eustathios the Confessor, Bishop of Bithynia.*

TONE OF THE WEEK: Tone One, Eothinon 9th Eothinon

EPISTLE St. Paul's First Letter to Hebrews 9:11-14

GOSPEL Mark 10:32-45

NEXT SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 2015 PALM SUNDAY, *Monk-Martyrs Claudius, Diodore, Victor, Victorinus, and those with them, Theodora the Righteous of Thessaloniki, Agathopodes and Theodulos the Martyrs, George the new Martyr.*

EPISTLE St. Paul's Letter Philippians 4:4-9

GOSPEL John 12:1-18



63rd Year

MARCH 29, 2015

Pamphlet # 13 (3226)

THE HUMAN STRUGGLE AND THE GIFTS OF GOD

As we are entering last week of Holy and Great Lent, our Church with deep experience of human nature but also of the traps and the methods of our opponent, comes again to safeguard us from the delicate battle of the thoughts and to cultivate the Orthodox ascetical train of thought. It is logical after such a time period of fasting, services, and spiritual effort, that we consider that we did something, or that with our own powers we were able to gain a piece of heaven. If furthermore, we also have a tendency towards emotionalism, then easily, due to the climate of the days and the special services, we think that because we're moved to tears, we are living that which our Church has to offer, or that we managed to reach to some spiritual measures.

Human effort

Nevertheless, the spiritual life is not a composition of how emotional we are. On the contrary, the Church forewarns that there are tears of real repentance, which like another bath, wash away and cleanse the soul, and there also exist the tears of false emotion which simply blur the eyes and prevent them from distinguishing the correct spiritual journey.

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 9:11-14

Prokeimenon. Mode Plagal 4.

Make your vows to the Lord our God and perform them.

Verse: God is known in Judah; his name is great in Israel.

BRETHREN, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

And analogously the Church stresses today what the Apostle Paul does to his compatriot Jews. He uses the teleturgical manner of worship of the Israelites and focuses especially on the sacrifice of the irrational animals, which were sacrificed as expiatory victims for the sins of the people, but also for the High Priest himself of the Levitical priesthood who was offering the sacrifices, who had before everything else, to offer a sacrifice of expiation for himself. Challenging, the Apostle Paul cultivates the question of why all the sacrifices were happening? What result did they have? "For the purity of the flesh" he himself will answer. In other words, they were human efforts to approach God and to gain a symbolical purity in body. In body, not in soul!

The purity concerned the ritual transgression of regulations

of the mosaic law and the external defilement of sin, mainly if someone had touched an impure or dead animal or person. The sacrifices were the equivalent to physical pains which the transgressors of the regulations of the law, would have to undergo, including the High Priest. This form, however, of worship, the blood of "oxen and calves", was not able to wipe out sin from the soul and secure divine forgiveness. The only thing it could do- and for this reason God put up with it -was to cultivate the emotion of sinfulness of the people, so that they would await the coming of their deliverer.

The divine gift

How were the people delivered- not only of Israel, but all nations and tribes of the world? With the invaluable in magnitude and unique, once and for all, offered sacrifice of Christ himself, which was voluntary and free, according to which Christ was simultaneously the Great and Eternal High Priest and a voluntary victim, being characterized by absolute purity, so for this reason also, the result was absolute and unique, "having found eternal deliverance". The world, man, on his own was not able to be saved, despite all his efforts. The only begotten Son and Word of God had to come in order to grant, as a gift from God, deliverance and salvation and hence to yield the right of deliverance and salvation to whoever throughout the centuries longs for it and struggles for it. Furthermore, the divine gift is not limited to the remission of sins alone, but extends also to something inconceivable. To theosis, sanctification, our adoption by God the Father and our eternal restoration as his sons and inheritors of his Kingdom.

Then, since we're speaking of the gift of God, why is the spiritual struggle and the ascetical train of thought necessary? Since human effort is irrelevant, why must it be abolished? Isaiah