

What don't we pay attention to, in this narration? We overlook that the Mosaic law foresaw a dishonorable death, by stoning, for whatsoever woman would remain pregnant without having gotten married. In the whole dialogue of our All-Holy One [Panagia] with the Archangel, there is not even a hint of a request on the part of the Theotokos to safe guard Her life and for protection from the social consequences. She knows that by accepting to have the Only Begotten Son of God be incarnated in Her womb, she is undergoing the highest danger of death. And nevertheless, she accepts it without discussion! Without bartering or even posing it as a question of what will happen to her! She entrusts herself so completely to Divine Providence and casts Herself with such trust in the Lord's will, that she is indifferent about death, or rather she accepts it, being obedient at all cost!

At least the martyrs had the consolation of the certainty of Paradise as they were proceeding to martyrdom. The Lady Theotokos didn't even have this. She only had her unshakable faith and complete obedience to the divine will. So for this reason, even though she was not martyred, our All-Holy One [Panagia] surpassed even the martyrs in sacrificial offering and disposition and she justly became the height of the martyrs.

Archimandrite I. N

**SUNDAY, , AUGUST 23, 2015 12TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Apodosis of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary. Our Holy Father Ireneaus, Bishop of Lyons, Our Holy Father Kallinikos, Patriarch of Constantinople, Lupus the Martyr, Our Righteous Father Nicholas of Sikelion, 38 Martyrs of Thrace, Our Holy Father Ireneaus, Bishop of Sirmium**

**tone of the week: Tone Three**

**EOthinon** First Eothinon

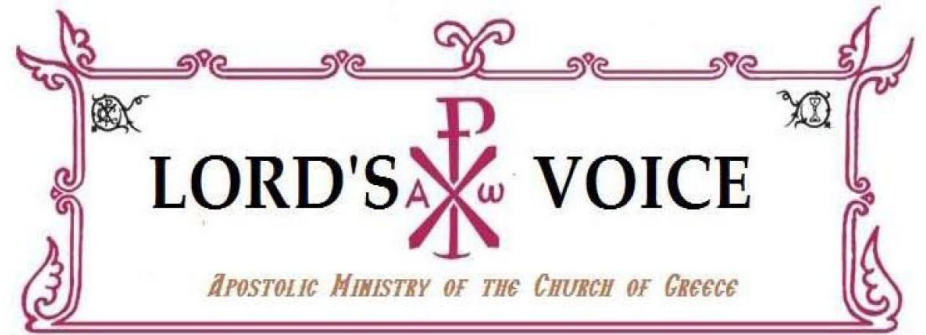
**EPistle** St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 15:1-11

**GOSPEL** Matthew 19:16-26

**NEXT SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2015 13TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Apodosis of the Feast of the Forerunner, Alexander, John, and Paul the New, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Phantinos the Righteous of Calabria, 16 Monk-martyrs of Thebes, 6 Martyrs of Melitene, The Synaxis of the Holy Hierarchs of Serbia, The Holy New Martyrs of Serbia.**

**EPistle** St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 16:13-24

**GOSPEL** Matthew 21:33-42



63<sup>RD</sup> YEAR

August 23, 2015

PAMPHLET # 34 (3247)

## THE PINNACLE OF THE MARTYRS

Blessed is the happenstance during the present Sunday that the leavetaking of the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos coincides also. The god after God, having the second place of the Trinity, who is beyond and above every other sanctified person, so for this reason also All-holy [Pan-agia in Greek], is projected today, the final day of the panhuman celebration of her Dormition, for her to be especially honored in her godmotherly pilgrimages scattered throughout the Greek area and the world. And the Orthodox Church projecting her chaste Figure, gives the speech to the Apostle Paul and reads a passage from his Epistle to the Philippians, which....doesn't speak anywhere about the Mother of our Christ.

### Self denial and humility

To what does this passage refer? Why to what else than the Lord of Glory! And specifically our Christ is projected as a model of self denial and humility, for every faithful imitator of His to be subsequently invited to follow Him in this manner of life, which concludes in divine glory. The Apostle Paul underlines three points during his reference to the Theandric person of Christ. His Incarnation, His Crucifictional Sacrifice and His Glory.

*ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS 15:1-11*

**Prokeimenon. Mode 3.**

**Psalm 46.6,1**

**Sing praises to our God, sing praises**

**Verse: Clap your hands, all you nations.**

BRETHREN, I would remind you in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

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We think that it is made henceforth obvious why this passage is read in the Feasts of the Mother of God. How was Christ incarnated? Of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary! Who was standing by the Cross of Christ and was hurting so much as if a sharp sword had pierced her heart? The Most Holy Theotokos! Who rejoiced beyond and above every other person with the glory of the Resurrection, but also of the Ascension? The All-Holy One [Panagia]!

In the three characteristic elements of the way with which Christ served our salvation, our All-Holy One [Panagia] is present! And each

time these three elements are mentioned, without her necessarily being mentioned, her chaste Person is implied and depicted. So for this reason also, today's Epistle Reading, even though it refers exclusively to Christ, it gives the meaning of the magnitude of the Theotokos' offering to the world's salvation, since "through her the savior appeared to the world", but also she herself is present and is living the events of the Divine Economy "above every other person".

### **The Theotokos' martyrical train of thought**

Is it possible for a person who reposed peacefully to be honored with an Epistle Reading which speaks of sacrifice and martyrdom? And why is our All-Holy One [Panagia], as above all the Saints, being honored more even than the martyrs who, in any case, forbore all types of tortures for the name of Christ?

The obvious answer is that the events of Jesus' earthly life comprised a constant martyrdom for His Mother! The scorning of men during the Birth, the persecution of Herod, the flight to Egypt, were only the beginning. The separation during Christ's public activity, with the increasing and very composite polemics against Him were the continuation, for the heightening to come with the events of the unjust trial and the Cross!

The essential however, answer is that the Theotokos was characterized by a martyrical train of thought and furthermore to such a degree that she is considered as the height of the martyrs! Before God and His will, she didn't consider the human or the demonic reaction, nor the personal cost. How do we realize this? We grasp it in the event of the Annunciation. Probably we read the gospel narration superficially, so for this reason also we don't pay attention to the important detail, which very clearly certifies the train of thought of the Theotokos' self denial and self sacrifice. The Archangel announced to her that she would give birth to the Son of God and the only thing she fears is the per chance transgression of the Divine law. So for this reason also, she asks: "how shall this be to me, since I know no man?" (Lk. 1:34). And as soon as she receives the assurance concerning the effects of the All Holy Spirit and the assurance of the sanctification of the whole event, she freely and all eagerly agrees to the divine will.