

will it ever be abolished like the covenant of the law.

In other words, Christ, whom we are preparing to see being born “of a Virgin” and reclining as “an infant in the manger”, comes, in order to hand the definitive covenant of God over to men and to sign it with his Blood in order to stress its inconceivable and eternal validity. In other words, He’s coming in order to die! So for this reason also in Orthodox Iconography the manger, where the Divine Infant is placed, resembles more like a tomb and furthermore with the Life-Giving Tomb of our Lord, a commentary that before this Infant, we are not able to stand with a joyous disposition and happiness, as in all the other infants of the world, but with respect and gratitude for the great and all-super-perfect sacrifice which He comes to offer, a sacrifice of His own self.

Our Christ comes in order to be sacrificed for us, in order to definitely show God’s utmost care for the human race. The proof, throughout time, of this care and protection is the existence of Saints in every age and every place. Saint Nicholas exists and is put forth by our Church as one such living proof of God’s constant care for His world. Let us ask Him to care also and to cover all of us, especially however, our sailors, no matter where they are, but also our fleet so that it can fulfill its mission to protect all of Greece, Cyprus and our islands”!

Archimandrite I. N

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2015: 10TH SUNDAY OF LUKE** *Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra , Nicholas the New Martyr of Asia Minor.*

**TONE OF THE WEEK:** *Second Tone*

**EOTHINON** *Fifth Eothinon*

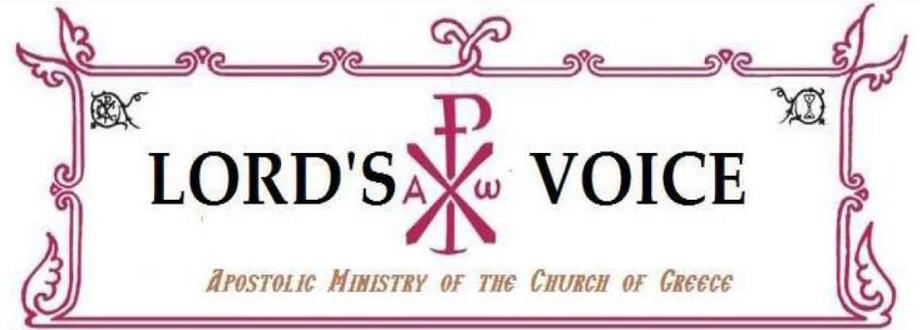
**EPISTLE** *St. Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews 13:17-21*

**GOSPEL** *Luke 13:10-17*

**NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2015 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE,** *Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska & First Saint of America, The Holy Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius, and Orestes of Greater Armenia Lucia the Virgin-martyr, Gabriel the Hieromartyr, Archbishop of Serbia.*

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11*

**GOSPEL:** *Luke 14:16-24*



**63<sup>RD</sup> YEAR DECEMBER 6, 2015 PAMPHLET # 49 (3262)**

## THE GREAT ONE

As we are proceeding towards Christmas, the wisdom of our Fathers has instituted, in the festive cycle of this period that the memories of the Prophets are a majority and the feasts of certain Saints, who as Great Fathers of our Church were distinguished in speaking about Christ. And this occurs so that just as the Metropolis of Feasts approaches, we obtain the feeling of who and why He will be born. Truly, our Church, strives in this period of preparation for Christmas, to impart to us her genuine experience concerning Christ, so that we do not misinterpret, but understand experientially that which we are grasping as the ineffable mystery of the divine Oeconomy.

One of these Fathers, beloved to Christians all over the world, is also Saint Nicholas Bishop of Myra of Lycia who celebrates today. He participated however, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Synod of our Church and there with his precious vote and his godly zeal he correctly divided the Word of Truth, so that the insolences of impiety and more especially, the untheological blasphemies of the heresiarch Arius could be put down. So for this reason also, in his memory the special Epistle Reading is presented which we read in the memories of the Fathers of the Church

**St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 13:17-21**

**Prokeimenon. Grave Mode**

**Psalm 115.15, 12**

**Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.**

**Verse: What shall I render to the Lord for all that he has given me?**

Brethren, obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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**The shepherd of the sheep**

Many give the reason for the presentation of the specific Epistle Reading keeping in mind its beginning, where the Apostle Paul's exhortation is presented concerning obedience of Christians to their spiritual presiders, as they keep vigil for the salvation of the souls of people, because they will give account to God for them. They consider that because Saint Nicholas was also a spiritual father, the due honor is rendered. The reason however, that the wisdom of the Fathers selected this text is completely different.

And this reason is imprinted in the last sentence of the text, where the Apostle Paul refers to the person of Christ, in order to show Him forth as the essential shepherd of the rational sheep. Without our Church wanting to undermine or to lessen any of her Saints, she strives to put matters in their correct place. Whichever Saint, the matter how important a shepherd of the Church he was shown forth to be, no matter how precise and infallible he was proven in his dogmatic formation and pastoral activity, no matter how projected he was shown forth by his contemporaries and those who followed, he does not also cease being pastored by the great and only shepherd of the souls of men. All the other pastors of his Church are his underlings and caretakers, while they do everything in his name!

**“In the blood of the eternal covenant”**

Why does our Church call Christ the Archpastor of the rational sheep and the Apostles and their successors, pastors? In order to show forth the interest for the people of God! Just as, in other words, the pastor of the sheep cares for them and furthermore keeps vigil at night, in order to protect them from the wild animals, thus also the Spiritual Pastor, with the Archpastor Christ being first, keeps vigil for the protection of the rational sheep, he strives caring for them and expends himself for their sake.

While The Archpastor Christ proved this exceeding caring of His for us with His own Blood, which was poured forth for the life and salvation of the world, so that not only would the results of the disobedience of Adam be wiped out, but so that holiness would be also secured as our inheritance. While this Blood of Christ signs furthermore the new covenant between the God of peace and the human race. While this covenant is characterized as eternal, in order for it to be evidently shown that it will never be replaced by another, since the love of God for man prevails unchanging, nor