

doesn't matter if we are speaking about his first or his second coming. It matters how we will appear before Him, at His appearance.

Upon this, the Apostle Paul gives us the measure of preparation. Both awaiting Christmas, as much as expecting also the Lord's Second Coming, moral purity is our responsibility. The perspective of our meeting with Christ, our acceptance on His part as being His own and the living of our communion with Him, passes through the complete rejection of sin, on the one hand, and the fully eager cultivation of virtues on the basis of love, on the other hand!

Thus we conclude in that which in a few words our Fathers handed us down as a way of spiritual life: Confession and Divine Communion. Christmas cannot be lived without these. One is not considered a Christian without these. There are no other means of preparation for the dreadful Second Coming of our Christ. From these they set out and with these all the other things are cultivated which characterize the total spiritual life: prayer, charity, vigilance, temperance, prudence, discretion, love....

My brethren, in the final stretch before Christmas, let us spend ourselves in an essential effort of spiritual preparation for us to live them indelibly. The stole of the Spiritual Father awaits to guide us to the Cup of life, so that Christ can appear to us also. Amen.

Archimandrite I. N

**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**

**tone of the week: Third Tone**

**EOthinon Sixth Eothinon**

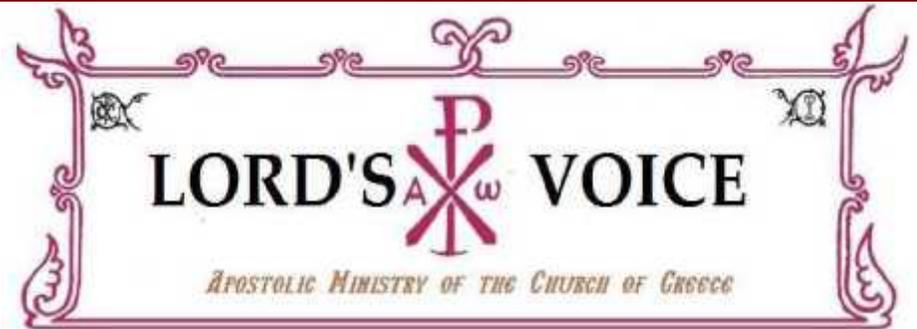
**EPistle St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11**

**GOSPEL Luke 14:16-24**

**NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2015 SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY, Stephen, Archdeacon & First Martyr, Theodore the Confessor, Brothers Theophanes and Poietus, Afterfeast of the Nativity, Theodore, Patriarch of Constantinople**

**EPistle: Acts of the Apostles 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 2:13-23**



**63<sup>RD</sup> YEAR DECEMBER 13, 2015 PAMPHLET # 50 (3263)**

## THE REVELATION

As we are proceeding towards Christmas, our Church intensifies her efforts so as to rightly divide the word about Christ unadulterated and genuinely. And this so that we be able not simply to celebrate, but to live Christmas and furthermore with realization of who is being born, with what purpose, what perspective and what this means for us. While she understands that this, the celebration, in other words, of Christmas experientially and not superficially, this the aim which consequently may need years to be achieved, it's as it is a function of the spiritual age and maturity of each believer.

So for this reason also, our Church does not exhaust herself by presenting us an intellectual teaching about Christ, the precise imprinting of her dogmas and a theoretical development of ideas or events. Mainly she expends herself in exhorting our alignment to a life, which will exclude sin and in which virtue will prevail. And she does this because a conscientious Christian is not whoever has read a lot concerning Christ, the Church and God, but whoever is able, along with Paul, to ascertain: "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). So the spiritual struggle, for perfection in Christ is the imperative for an essential spiritual life and mainly for experiencing God!

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

**Prokeimenon. Grave Mode**

**Daniel 3.26,27**

**Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers.**

**Verse: For you are just in all you have done**

BRETHREN, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away; anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all..

---

## **The end**

If our Church wants to introduce us to the essence of the feast of Christmas and with experiencing it as the perspective, why is she selecting today's Epistle Reading? At a first glance it does not have any relationship of Christmas. It is speaking about the Second Coming of the

Lord and completely turns our attention to it. Before we proceed to interpret why this is happening, allow us an observation. The Apostle Paul is speaking about the end times, without caring about anything which is shaking us up each time we refer to these things. He neither speaks about dreadful signs, nor about trumpets, vials and the other parabolical things, nor does he refer to the coming of

the Antichrist, nor to whatever will precede. And this comprises proof of the contemporary perversion!

In our age the perspective of eternity is undermined. In our day Orthodox Eschatology has been replaced by the ceaseless reference to the coming of the Antichrist. The sweet hope of our eternal restoration in the Kingdom of the Heavens has been cast aside, in order for the fear of the coming of the Antichrist to prevail in what is written, in what is spoken and projected and this with the responsibility, for the most part, of some people who either are projecting themselves, or their "followers" are advertising them as "enlightened Elders", whereas in reality they are responsible for the dogmatic perversion which we are describing. The undermining, they exceptive presentation of Orthodox Eschatology, has ended up concerning the inserts of newspapers, usually not the most serious ones, whereas the folklorish and non Orthodox interpretation of the projection of prophecies, foretellings and parables has given ground to a peculiar postmodern syncretism which mixes up elements of prophecy from various traditions, mowing down the truth of the divine Word and abolishing the consoling dimension of the divine foretellings, whose meaning lies in the cultivation of the conviction that many dreadful things will happen, on the one hand, but in the end, whatever happens, Christ and "those with Him will be victorious unto the ages".

## **The responsibility**

Let's return to our question. Why is today's Epistle Reading selected, whereas it is not at all related to Christmas, but with the appearance of the Lord at the Second Coming? Precisely because Christmas is the first revelation and coming of our Lord. And because the Church does not want to remind us of the events, or to cultivate emotions, but to convince us to live Christmas, for this reason also, she borrows from the Apostle Paul. What? Why the manner of preparation which he recommends for us to receive our Savior and Deliverer. It