

for our sake became Son of man also. And we are called to realize this on the night of His Resurrection! Because this night is the guarantee of our own resurrection also. Whoever of us are children of God, or at least we are struggling to become so, we understand tonight, that so long as our older brother resurrected, he prepared for us the same path, of the resurrection of soul and body, of the abolition of whatsoever authority of death, of corruption, of sadness upon the human race, of the domination of real life in the unsetting light of his Kingdom.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

Archimandrite I. N

### ON HOLY PASCHA

Today the tyranny of the devil is dissolved. Today the bonds of death were loosened, the domination of Hades was wiped out. Today is the opportunity for to again mention those prophetic words: "O death what happened to your sting? O Hades what happened to your domination?" Today our Lord, Christ, crushed the copper gates and wiped out death itself. But why do I say that He wiped out death. Even his name changed. Because we no longer call it death, but dormition and sleep.

**SUNDAY, MAY 1, 2016 GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA** *Jeremias the Prophet, New Martyr Maria of Fourná, Mirabella in Crete, Saint Tamara (Tamar), Queen of Georgia, Nikiforos the Monk of Chios, Synaxis of the Three New Righteous Martyrs of the Holy Mountain, Euthymius, Ignatius, and Acacius*

**TONE OF THE WEEK:**

**EOTHINON**

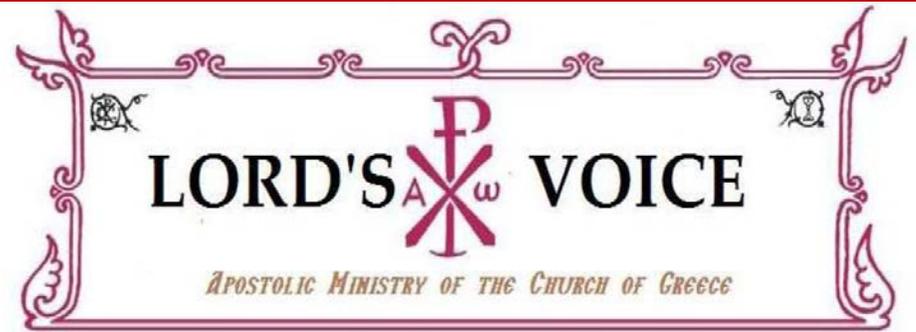
**EPISTLE:** *St. John's First Universal Letter 1:1-7*

**GOSPEL:** *John 20:19-31*

**NEXT SUNDAY, MAY 8, 2016, THOMAS SUNDAY,** *John the Apostle, Evangelist, & Theologian, Synaxis of the Holy Powder (or manna) which emitted from the tomb of Saint John the Theologian, Arsenios the Great, Emelia, mother of St. Basil the Great.*

**EPISTLE:** *Acts of the Apostles 1:1-8*

**GOSPEL:** *John 1:1-17*



64<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

MAY 1, 2016

PAMPHLET # 18 (3283)

## CHRIST IS RISEN!

Come receive light from the unsetting light and glorify Christ who Resurrected from the dead", we hear today as an invitation from our Holy Church, a little before the resurrectional victory song "Christ is risen" is proclaimed...". And as many people are elbowing each other before the Royal Gate of the Church to light our candle from priest's candle, we seem to exhaust there, in the keeping of the liturgical custom, all our participation in the event of the Resurrection. And nevertheless, the invitation is not for us to simply receive light, sensorial light from a breath, a blowing suffices to wipe it out and to blow it out. The invitation clearly speaks about unsetting light, a light which is not overcome not only by breaths, but also by even raging winds, which don't vanish, it never sets!

Many people might consider these things high letters. Especially whoever hastens irrationally and superficially to abandon the Church after the first "Christ is Risen!", underlining thus the formality and externality of a secular religiosity, incapable of understanding the great message of the greatest feast of Christianity. And nevertheless, for the importance of this night, for the experience of this feast, for the majesty of God's gift to man, a fast of almost fifty days preceded, of ten weeks of preparation with a systematic cultivation of repentance and prayerful asceticism, whereas for the celebration of the event, a joyous period of forty days follows! And the only thing some people find to do, is to turn their backs and to leave, treating unjustly their own selves first....

## GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN 1:1-17

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'") And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

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#### **"The light of men"**

The gospel passage of the Sunday of Pascha doesn't have any reference to the event of the Resurrection of our Christ. It seems to refer more to his Birth. So why then did the wisdom of the Fathers choose it as the gospel reading of the chief feast? For many reasons, only two of which we are able to analyze in our limited space.

The first, the passage is speaking about light. And furthermore it personifies the light defining the Only Begotten Son and Word of God. Basil the Great will interpret that whatever sensorial light is for the eye, analogous in a multitude more measures, is God the Word for the soul

And just as we need the light to live in this, perceiving the surrounding world, thus also Christ is the light who enlightens our light, just as he enlightens not bodies but "with bodiless power, the bodiless mind".

In what does the light of the Godhead enlighten the mind? "Into all the truth" (Jn. 16:13), in other words, in its truth and the knowledge and hence, in holiness. It is not per chance that in Orthodox iconography, the saints are depicted with a bright crown of light, a symbol of their enlightened mind, which after it was cleansed, received the light of truth, and was lead to sanctification. The light of Christ is the cause of knowledge that leads to the saving truth. And tonight, without this enlightenment, we are not able to live, to touch experientially, to understand the event of the resurrection of our Christ.

#### **"To become children of God"**

The second reason for which paschally the specific gospel passage is read, is the reference to the creation of the children of God. Who comprises the children of God? And how does one become a child of God? Before we answer, let's remain on the fact, that before the evangelist John spoke about the children of God, he speaks about those who turned away and rejected Christ, whereas they were called, and furthermore some by priority!

Whoever "received Him", in other words, whoever embraced Him and accepted Him as their Savior and their Deliverer became and become throughout time, children of God, as the Church continues her historical journey! Many, in all the periods of human history, had a good opinion about Christ and hastened to define Him as "a great mystic", "a social revolutionary", "a social reformer", a "theoretician of love", as also with other good words which humanly seems to honor Him, while essentially they even offend Him. And this because they denude and deprive Him of the unique quality that He came to project in the world, and with which He genuinely preached. That of the Only Begotten Son and Word of God!

The Church tonight calls us to clarify our faith in Christ as the Only Begotten Son and Word of God, perfect God and perfect man, as such to receive Him and confess Him. We are not following a whatsoever human, even an important ruler. We are following the Son of God who