

Probably because he wants to do some slight good thing, in case it would counterbalance the great evil.

And after he ascertains that he really died, he hands the body of Jesus over to the most honest person of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Pay attention to the verb which the Gospel uses: "he granted". It was a customary practice-because the bodies of those condemned to die with the most dishonorable death of crucifixion were not handed over to burial, but according to the law they had to be exposed-the relatives to bribe the appropriate persons to get the relic. Pilate gave the body of Jesus, because he did not accept that any discussion take place about any exchange whatsoever. The Gospel, showing forth once more, the objectivity which characterizes it, does not lessen the person of Pilate, but whatever good thing he does it gives him recognition for it.

Joseph dares, ignoring all the things he had to lose, with the only weapon being obedience to his conscience as the voice of God! Pilate, even if late, does that which he should do. In the end, Holy God blesses him who decided according to the divine will, advertising him in eternity, wherever the Gospel is preached!

Archimandrite I. N

**SUNDAY, MAY 15, 2016 SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN,**

*Pachomius the Great, Achillius the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Larissa, Barbaros the Myrrhbearer of Kerkyra, Andrew the Hermit & Wonderworker, Placing of the Honorable Head of the Apostle Titus*

**TONE OF THE WEEK: Tone Two**

**EOTHINON :** Fourth Eothinon

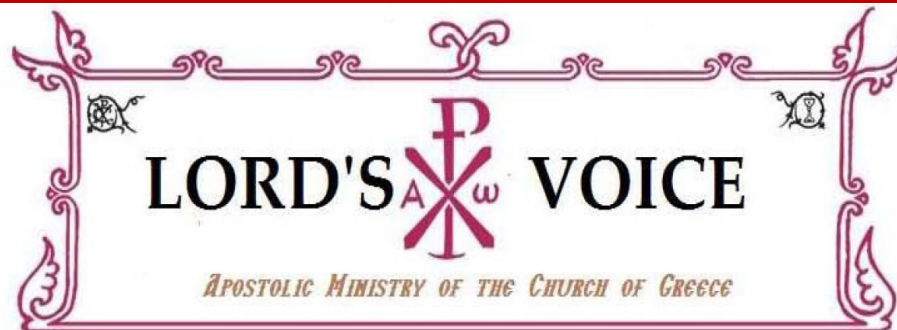
**EPISTLE:** *Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7*

**GOSPEL:** *Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8*

**NEXT SUNDAY, MAY 22, 2016 SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC,** *Basiliscus the Martyr, Bishop of Comana, Holy New Martyrs Demetrius and Paul of Tripoli, John-Vladimir, Ruler of Serbia*

**EPISTLE:** *Acts of the Apostles 9:32-42*

**GOSPEL:** *John 5:1-15*



64<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

MAY 15, 2016

PAMPHLET # 20 (3285)

## “THE VOICE OF THE CONSCIENCE”

Infinite are the moments of our life, during which we are in doubt about what we should do. And in most of these we hesitate not because we don't know what to decide, what to do or how to act. Even though we know what is the correct thing, even though we feel what is morally imposed, even though we realize what Holy God expects from us, despite these things we do something completely different, if not opposite as well, or we stand undecided, merely because we are calculating the reactions of people, our personal advantage or per chance pressures which are exercised on us in various ways. If furthermore our whatsoever decision also has a personal cost, this primarily seems to influence our decision and not the divine will, or even the moral order.

And this hesitation, which the excessive introversion of our age has called human weakness, is nothing other than condescending to the principle of performing a crime, since whatsoever sin, no matter how "small" in human terms it is considered, in the eyes of God it does not cease being an excessive offense of divine mercy, but also history has proven that it is the cause for the increase of evil on the earth. Truly, the wrong decision, especially one that was made with selfishness, advantageousness or with a disposition of transferring the problem, is responsible according to the historical documentation for much pain and destruction in humanity. On the contrary, the decision which is made, based on moral principles and values, especially on the true faith, even if it costs whoever makes it, brings forth blessing, comfort and peace of consciences.

## SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK 15:43-47; 16:1-8

At that time, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. And he bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

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### Joseph of Arimathea

Today's gospel passage, among the many characters which it presents, shows forth also the figure of Joseph of Arimathea. It defines him initially as a "a respected member of the council". The characterization of respected refers to the good and proper way of external behavior, to politeness and courteousness to everyone. The quality of member of the council refers the position of the member of the

Sanhedrin, the highest instrument for administrating the people of Israel, but also of the Law of Solomon. The Roman Empire preserved this instrument, in the framework of forbearing area local administrations, in order to cultivate the false sense of some autonomy in the conquered peoples.

So Joseph was a notable member of Jewish Society, and furthermore respected and universally accepted by everyone. He is among the figures that, even though rich and exercising authority, the Gospel praises, so that it can show clearly that wealth and authority are not by definition evil, nor are they demonized according to the viewpoint of Christian morality. On the contrary, the problem is in their handlers, when instead of using them as tools and opportunities of service, they change them into means of abuse and oppression.

And this notable, rich, powerful person, at the critical hour cares for someone seemingly weak. "Having dared he entered to Pilate and requested the body of Jesus". The sun was setting and it was comprising a great offense, according to Jewish customs, that a dead body remain hanging and unburied during the night. No one had, however, risked to ask for the body of that person who with so much rage the rulers of Israel and their followers led to a dishonorable death on the Cross. So for this reason also, it is stressed that Joseph dared. Even though a member of the Sanhedrin, even though rich, even though notable, he doesn't consider anything, nor is he overcome by the fear of the revengefulness of the Jews, who could deprive him of his position, and confiscate his estate, but they were also able to slander, in a society which plotted isolations and casting people aside. Despite all these things, he dared! He did whatever the voice of his conscience dictated, unrelated to personal cost!

### Pilate

Pilate also seems changed. Although co-responsible for the unjust condemnation, although with full realization, he also took part in the greatest crime in the history of humanity, although at the critical moment for reasons of selfishness, he silenced his conscience, now he does what he should do. Probably because he doesn't have the pressure of the crowd. Probably because he no longer fears for his position.