

want them lead and borne about by the dispositions of the crowd and the historical happenstances. Simultaneously, it is one of the rare cases when the Son of God acts so as to seem that he is abandoning the people. He chases his disciples away. He himself withdraws in prayer. In general he hastens to be differentiated from the enthused people... And this happens because the preaching of the Kingdom of the Heavens is not allowed for be identified with whatsoever inner-worldly and earthly thing. And since the enthused crowd is not convinced in any other way, they're abandoned so that they can understand their mistake. It is God's saving reaction to the phenomenon of secularization. It is the result of all who leave the "first love" and run "behind foreign gods". It is a message also about our own decisions, energies and actions, so that they do not cause the divine abandonment.

Archimandrite I. N

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 2016** *9TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, The Holy Apostle Thaddaeus, The Holy Martyr Bassa and Her Sons: Theognis, Agapius, and Pistus, Afterfeast of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary, Athanasios Patelaros, Patriarch of Constantinople*

**TONE OF THE WEEK** *Plagal of the Fourth Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Ninth Eothinon*

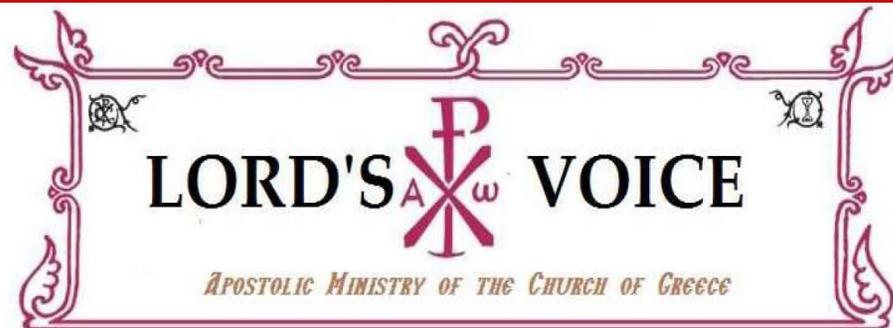
**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's Letter to Corinthians 3:9-17*

**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 14:22-34*

**NEXT SUNDAY, AUGUST 28, 2016 , 10TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW,** *Moses the Black of Scete, Diomedes & Laurence the Martyrs, 33 Martyrs of Nicomedeia, Job of Pochaev, Synaxis of the Kiev Cave Fathers*

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's Letter to Corinthians 4:9-16*

**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 17:14-23*



64<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

AUGUST 21, 2016

PAMPHLET # 34 (3299)

## CHURCH AND SECULARIZATION

The greatest danger for the Church throughout the ages is to deny herself and to cease being the Church. Instead of handling the grace of the Mysteries, instead of preserving the uninnovated truth which the infallible mouth of Christ handed to her, instead of being with the breath of the All Holy Spirit, a factory for producing Saints, to be posing other priorities, serving other aims, aiming elsewhere, invalidating the divine will and refuting the reason itself of her being.

This, unfortunately, we saw occur many times in ecclesiastical history, when whole local churches ripped themselves off from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church. While they fell away and lost the ecclesiastical quality, because they put forth some inner-worldly aim, usually yielding to the temptation of authority, in which case they legislated the deviation and the delusion, as something moral and canonical, with ruinous results. While in this journey toward falling and denying the ecclesiastical quality, we cannot cast responsibility exclusively on isolated persons, precisely due to the fact that the people follow along with and do not react, a proof that the orthodox sense has been dulled and lost and secularization has come about.

## 9<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 14:14-22

At that time, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many furlongs distant from the land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they entered the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.

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### The perversion of the miracle

Today's gospel passage is not important only because of the miracle which it describes, but also for the manner with which it begins. Jesus forced his disciples to enter into the boat and to go before him to the opposite shore, until he would dismiss the crowds". He who always stands with respect toward man, he who preserves and shows human freedom forth, forces, imposing on his disciples to enter in a boat and to pass over before himself, to the opposite shore of Lake Genessarit. Why?

Before Christ obligates his disciples to enter the boats and to depart in haste, he had done something else. He had done the familiar miracle of the multiplication of the five breads and the two fish! A miracle which caused such an impression, that the very great multitude of people who had gathered together, decided to express their gratitude to him who nourished them, just as their forefathers in the desert.

Instead however, of their gratitude taking on a spiritual character, it takes a completely worldly authoritative and ulterior-motived character. Thus, all those who had gone out to the desert, with a good disposition, in order to hear the teaching of the famous teacher, and consequently rather, have more spiritual interests than their other contemporaries, instead of receiving all that Christ was preaching and aligning their life, impressed by the miracle of their satiation, they adopt an advantageous logic and show their disposition to proclaim Christ an earthly king.

Irrationality and all its majesty! They, the more spiritual and good dispositioned people, in relation to the rest of their contemporaries, listeners of the preaching concerning the Kingdom of the Heavens, do not confess Christ as the eternal king, the incarnate Son of God, Savior and Deliverer of the world, as he himself defined himself. Instead, they hasten to essentially insult him, lowering him to an earthly king, of a narrow geographical area, perverting his preaching, the preaching of love, pursuing a clash with the Romans, and the taking over of authority. Of course, they're not to blame completely... They had grown up with the perverted messianic tradition of Judaism, according to which the Messiah's aim would not be to deliver humanity from the results of Adam's fall, but to restore "the kingdom to Israel", a delusion which unfortunately characterizes some people to this day.

### The reaction of Christ

How does Christ react to all these things? He reacts directly, absolutely without any delay. His first concern, that his disciples not be polluted by this sincere, on the one hand, but deluded enthusiasm of the multitude. So for this reason also, in such a manner, so that Matthew who is present at the events, is not able to use another verb to describe Jesus' behavior, except only that "he forced". He simultaneously gives them a lesson, that they not be influenced by the crowd, but that they persist in their positions, in their principles, in their beliefs. Christ wants his Apostles, the spiritual successors and continuers of his work, but also their successors, the guides of the people, rulers and indicators of the spiritual journey with the gospel principles as navigator. He does not