

public shaming could also be achieved. Of course, after the Roman conquest, because the Romans claimed the right of imposing the death sentence for themselves, the Mosaic regulation tended to be limited as regards the taking away of life, not however as regards public shaming. And Joseph is characterized as righteous, at the moment when he is thinking of not implementing the Law.

Why is this? Why, so that right from the beginning, it could be declared, that the Mosaic Law was not the full and revealed will of God, but a covenant which aimed at restraining matters until the Deliverer of the human race would appear. It was not this that God wanted, but that which, the blackened by sin, man could endure. It was this which restrained hardhearted man until he would mature, so that he could be able to accept that which God wanted. And that which God wanted, is that which we see blossoming in the heart of Joseph, as a proof of the majority of humanity to accept something superior and perfect. A combination of forbearance, leniency, love, kindness, as a proof of all that God and life near Him cultivate as experiences of truth in His own people. Joseph surpasses legality in order to reach to love. He grafts what is just with what is good and what is lenient, in order to realize, in his life, the truth that "a law is not set for the righteous one" (1 Tim. 1:9), since the only commitment which henceforth prevails is love.

Archimandrite I. N

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>, 2016 SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY,**  
*Sebastian the Martyr & his Companions, Our Righteous Father Michael Syngellon the Confessor*

**TONE OF THE WEEK** *Tone One*

**EOTHINON :** *Fourth Eothinon*

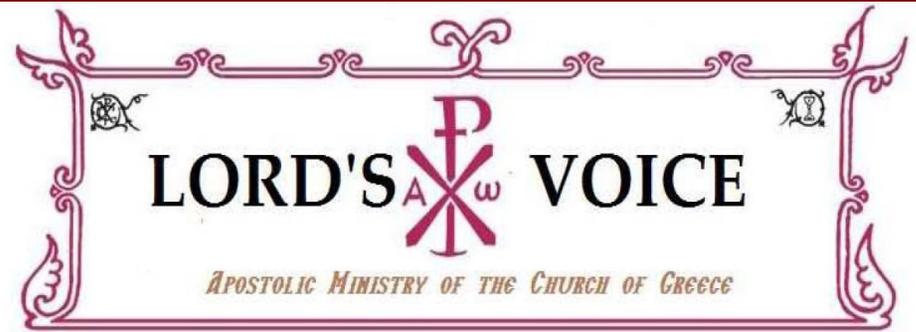
**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40*

**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 1:1-25*

**NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2016 THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST, The Adoration of the Magi: Melchior, Gaspar, & Balthasar. The Commemoration of the Shepherds in Bethlehem who were . watching their flocks and came to see the Lord**

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians 4:4-7*

**GOSPEL:** *Matthew 2:1-12*



**64<sup>TH</sup> YEAR      DECEMBER 18 2016      PAMPHLET # 51 (3316)**

### **THE RIGHTEOUS ONE AS "LAWLESS"**

As we are entering the final stretch for the Metropolis of feasts, Christmas, the Church with the same gospel reading always, prepares us for the panegyric and simultaneously humble entrance of the King of Glory in the historical forefront. And whereas we are preparing for the doxologies of the angels, the confession of the shepherds, the worship of the magi, the star, the cave, the manger, a series of names comes, which is not historically full, since it doesn't set out from Adam, but from Abraham, in order to show forth Christ's right to be defined according to the criteria of the Jewish people, as the awaited Messiah. Of course, this is due to the evangelist Matthew's desire to address his Gospel initially to his compatriots and then to the universe, and consequently, he had to convince about the descent of Christ "from the house and lineage of David". The presentation however of the list of so many names, does not satisfy only the historical limited targeting of Matthew. He manages simultaneously to show forth a series of forbearers of Christ in the flesh, who may, on the one hand, be related to each other as relatives, they comprise however, simultaneously an incongruous whole, in which the pathogenicity of all of humanity is reflected. And this, because the presented names prove that the forbearers of our Christ were not holy, and many of them could not be characterized even good people. Sin, which the "Savior of our souls" is coming to abolish, seems to have inundated the world so much, that it dominates even the genealogical tree of its abolisher.

### **The man of God**

We are not able in the limited space of the sermon, to develop as much as is necessary, related to each mentioned name. Something like this would be tantamount to a copying of extensive excerpts from the Old Testament. It helps us however, to realize how right the interpreters are when they stress that

## SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY

### THE GOSPEL MATTHEW 1:1-25

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph

woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

today's gospel passage is the bridge which connects the Old and New Testament, showing forth the continuation of the sacred story and underlining the mystical manner in which Holy God acts, so as to activate the events of the Divine Economy for the salvation of the world.

We ought, nevertheless, to stand with particular respect for one person who belongs, on the one hand, to the world of the Old Testament, however he is not mentioned in it. Simultaneously, he is mentioned in the New Testament showing an ethos of a person of God, such that the Holy Spirit shows forth in great Fathers and Monastic Saints of our faith. The talk about Joseph, the betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, who is mentioned by Matthew in order to validate the Lord's right from the offspring of the males, to be considered a descendant of David. Simultaneously the temptation is also described which he faced as soon as he realized that the Theotokos "was found to be with child", without being able initially to understand what is "of the Holy Spirit". Matthew, describing the scene with much respect, mentions that after the betrothal, for reasons of protection of Mary, with the much older in age Joseph, before they dwelt together as spouses, the pregnancy of the Theotokos from the Holy Spirit is ascertained. The first thing which is concluded from the description, is our All Holy Virgin Mary's absolute silence. She doesn't try to justify herself, she doesn't try to explain, she doesn't seem to react to whatever is happening around her and concerns her. Her absolute trust in God's providence is shown forth, in Whose hands it lies to give a solution.

### Joseph's forbearance

How does Joseph react? The least that could be said is calmly and prudently, if not also in a holy manner. He does not publicize the event. He does not go to the Priests of the Temple in order to seek the reason they betrothed him to an already pregnant girl. Showing the characterization which was rendered to him as protector of the Most Holy Theotokos, he thinks of her not undergoing moral or humiliating consequences, without thinking of himself or being trapped in the view that he was insulted.

Furthermore Matthew writes characteristically: "Joseph (...) being righteous and not wanting to make an example of her, wished to dismiss her secretly". Joseph is defined as righteous at the same moment when he appears to plan the iniquity. According to Mosaic Law (Lev. 20:10), the punishment for adultery was death by stoning, so that the