

## WEEK OF EXTERNAL MISSION

### Witness of faith and hope

The Office of External Missions of the Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece strives for the following:

- Spreading the word of God, especially in the countries of Africa and of Asia.
- Monthly paying of the salaries of indigenous clergymen.
- A monthly grant to widows of reposed indigenous clergymen.
- A monthly subsidy of clergymen and lay people from Greece who are working in the missionary field of Africa and Asia.
- A Missionary Seminar.
- "All the Nations": A tri-monthly missionary magazine.

We thank you for your support in our missionary work.

Bank Account number of the National Bank: 146/558074-94

**SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2017 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY** *Conon the Gardener, Mark the Ascetic, Righteous Father Mark of Athens, John the Bulgarian, Mark the Faster, Parthenios the New Martyr who contested in Didymoteichos, George the New-Martyr of Rapsani, Eulogios the Martyr, Eulabios the Martyr, Conon the Isaurian, Archelaos the Martyr of Egypt.*

**TONE OF THE WEEK** *Fourth Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Fourth Eothinon*

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40*

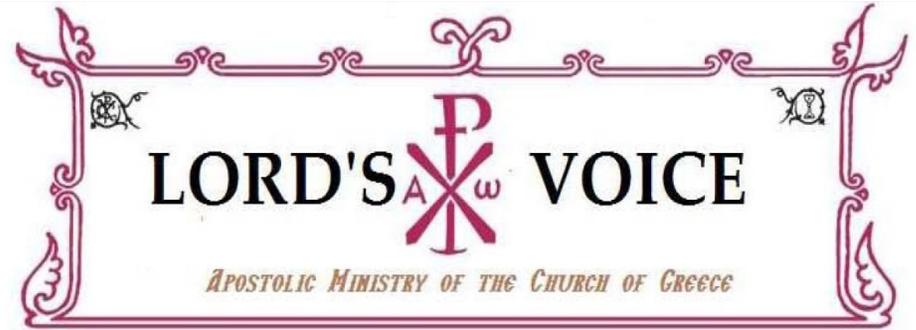
**GOSPEL:** *John 1:43-51*

**NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 2017 SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY**

**PALAMAS,** *Theophanes the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Dialogos, Bishop of Rome, Phineas, grandson of Prophet Aaron, Paul Aurelian, Bishop of Brittany.*

**EPISTLE:** *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3*

**GOSPEL:** *Mark 2:1-12*



65<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

March 5 2017

PAMPHLET # 10 (3327)

## WITNESS OF CHRIST UNTO THE AGES

Today's Epistle passage, my beloved brethren, speaks to us about the saints of all the ages, of the Old and New Testament, and about all they forbore for the world to live and be saved in the truth of Christ. They themselves became slaughters of Christ and comprised for us safe examples and models for imitation.

### The friends of God in the Old Testament

Paul mentions as an example the great Moses, great in both words and works. Moses preferred to leave the palaces and the luxurious life in the court of Pharaoh and he descended to the field of History, obviously to suffer hardships together with the people of God and to be able to guide them back: from slavery and dependency on the land of Egypt, to the land of Canaan where milk and honey flowed. A journey with unbelievable difficulties and trials, with denials on the part of the people, with spiritual backsliding, with much ingratitude, but also glaring succours of divine Grace. In the end God, sending other important personalities also, such as Aaron or Joshua of Nun, protects and blesses His people. With the incarnate Word as center, the friends of God, as all those who pleased God in the years of the Old Testament-were called, either guiding, either censuring-and furthermore harshly-the stiff necked Israel, comprised safe guide posts for it and for us, the New Israel of Grace.

### **ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER to Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40**

Brethren, by faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets -- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign enemies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated -- of whom the world was not worthy -- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

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### **The saints of the New Testament**

In the Old Testament the place for gathering the people of God was missing. With Christ's entrance into History through the incarnation, the place of gathering becomes the body of Christ, His Church. Precisely just as a hen gathers the chicks beneath her wings (Mat. 23:37), thus also the Church of Christ calls and houses, in her bosom, every goodly-disposed person, from all races, lengths and widths of the earth, in order to save him. Thus, in the Church we learn, with the grace of the sacraments and the spiritual struggle, to abandon, like another land of Egypt, our passions, passionate thoughts and ugly desires, tendencies and inclinations of our heart and, cleansing it, we encounter Christ. In this journey we have our saints and the Apostle Paul himself as spiritual guides, who suffering annihilating trials, such as those which he mentions in the Epistle text, were united with Christ, inundated by His light and comprised the hope and our lean to for us remaining ones, until the Lord of History closes the ages.

A very numerous army, everywhere today, are the struggling Christians. Either in the world, family people, lay people and clergymen, married and unmarried ones, either in the glorious monasteries, our heroic monastic ranks, who comprise our spiritual "Evzones" in the front lines of the many-faceted battle, they give the stigma of life in Christ, forbearing the many year long bloodless martyrdom of conscious, many times more dreadful than the physical tortures of the martyrs, who are not lacking even today, as we also see and hear in the means of mass communication. No matter how the matter is, Christ is proclaimed and Christ is glorified.

### **The Divine Liturgy, a witness of the living Christ**

The faith of the Christian finds its full expression, when it is confessed really and essentially at the time of the Divine Liturgy, where the believer approaching Divine Communion declares: "I believe, Lord, and I confess that this is Your body and Your blood". The divine Grace through the communing of the body and of the blood of Christ, "socially squeezes together", as Saint Maximus says, the members of the ecclesiastical gathering, altering them into members of Christ, but also members of each other. Merely for this joy, it is worth it, for the believing Christians to be living, surpassing by far the righteous people of the Old Testament, even also the disciples of Christ on Mount Tabor!

In the Divine Liturgy something infinitely more fearful occurs, an infinite, indescribable gift of God: Mount Tabor "is transferred" by the grace of Christ, to our heart and its Light, from inside, inside our heart, inundates our soul and body!

It burns up the passions, the lewd passionate thoughts and the perverted desires of our inner man, and fills a person with the joy of the Resurrection, informing him that already from here, a place of refreshment has been prepared for him. Thus a person is filled with bravery and courage, especially in today's very wintry times and transfuses his joy to his neighborly indigent and spiritually poor people, who are struggling the good struggle of faith in Christ. The great Moses - allow us to say - had not even conceived of such a gift. But also how many of us Christians of the latter times, know or live such a gift of God, beloved brethren?

Archimandrite E. T

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### HOW WE OUGHT TO FAST

"Are you fasting? Prove it to me through your own works. What works does he mean? If you see a poor person, have mercy on him. If you see an enemy, be reconciled with him. If you see a beautiful woman, pass by her. So let not only the mouth fast, but also the eye and hearing, and the feet and the hands and all the members of our body.

Let the hands fast, remaining pure from grabbing and greed. Let the feet fast, going away from roads which lead to sinful sights. Let the eyes fast, exercising themselves in not falling ever lustfully on beautiful faces, nor examining the beauty of others... Let the hearing also fast. And fasting of the hearing is for him to not accept evil speech and slanders.... Let the mouth also fast from lewd words and mockeries. Because what benefit do we have, when we are abstaining from birds and fish, we're biting however and devouring our brothers?"

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM