

everyone, as has been given to each one, the Church of Christ maybe edified and increased. As Archpastor, it is he who has the responsibility of the navigating of the local Church so that all of us, Clergy and Laity, are lead “unto saving pastures”.

Archim. E. T.

Four great events in which Constantine the Great and Saint Helen sealed the history of Europe, they changed and formulated the history of the world more generally. This refers to:

1. The decision of the Edict the Milan, in the year 313, which proclaims freedom of religion and stops the persecutions against the Christians.
2. The decision for the transferral of the capital of the empire from the Ancient to New Rome, Constantinople, whose consecration took place on May 11 of the year 330.
3. The calling of the 1st in Nicaea Ecumenical Synod, in 325, which condemned Arianism.
4. The finding of the Precious Cross and the Holy Lands.

The above defined the content of worldwide history in a unique manner. Without these, neither would Europe have a specific spiritual inheritance, nor would the world have such a flourishing radiating of the Christian message for God and man. So for this reason the Church justly named them Equal to the Apostles.

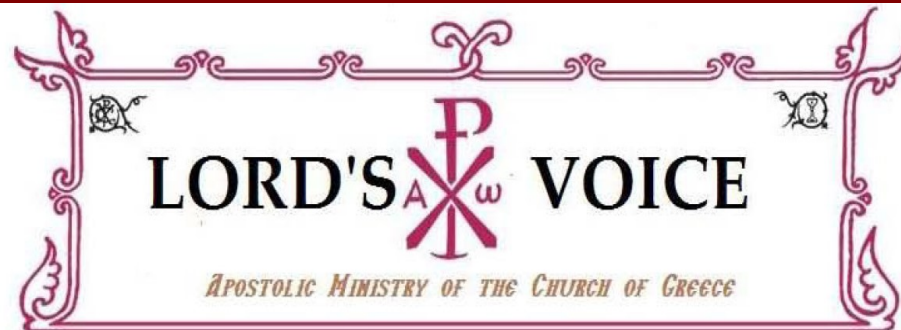
**WELCOMING OF THE SACRED RELIC OF SAINT HELEN  
EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES AND OF THE PRECIOUS WOOD**  
Sunday May 14, 2017, time 6:30 PM before the City Hall of Aigaleo (Avenue Sacred Way), by His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens and all of Greece Sir Jerome the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The Sacred Relic and the Precious Wood will remain at the Sacred Pilgrimage of Saint Barbara of the Municipality of Attica of the same name (near Aigaleo) from May 14 until June 15, 2017.

For more information visit the website:

[www.agiaeleni.gr](http://www.agiaeleni.gr)

“THE VOICE OF THE LORD” in the whole world through the Internet: [www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr](http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr)



65<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

March 19 2017

PAMPHLET # 12 (3329)

## JESUS, THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Very serious, my beloved brethren, is what the Apostle Paul is mentioning in today's passage, which speaks to us of the high priestly office of the Lord, and the effects of this event in the spiritual journey of our salvation.

### The high priests of the Judeans

In the years of the Old Testament, or as we call it, in other words, in the age of the levitical priesthood – from the tribe of Levi, from which the high priests came- every high priest, with Aaron being the most ancient of all, “was distinguished” from people and was instituted as high priest, so that people would be benefited from their participation in the works of worship which refer to God, with the high priest presiding, who offered gifts and sacrifices for the sins of the people to be forgiven.

This high priest needed to sympathize with the people of the country, the cause they were sinning out of ignorance and delusion, but also because he himself, being a sinner, knew about moral sickness and sin and weaknesses. So as the Law foresaw, as he offered sacrifices for the sake of the people, he needed to offer sacrifices also for his own self, so that his sins would be forgiven.

No one is able on his own and from his own self to receive the such high honor of the high priesthood, but he is called by God, Who according to His own judgment calls him who receives the honor from Him, precisely as happened also with Aaron.

**ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER to Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6**

BRETHREN, since we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"; as he says also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

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## **Melchizedek**

Melchizedek is the Old Testament person who foreshadows the high priesthood of Christ. He is a priest and king of Salem, and purposefully in the text, his descent was silenced, so that he seems fatherless, motherless and therefore ungenealogized also, precisely as Christ is fatherless as regards human nature, motherless as regards the divine nature and consequently He cannot be genealogized. Also during the return of Abraham from his victory over the four kings, Melchizedek offered a sacrifice with bread and wine as a foreshadowing of the Divine Liturgy, while the Abraham bowed to Melchizedek, consequently his "loins" also bowed, his descendants, consequently also the levites, recognizing the superiority of a high priesthood of Christ, which is foreshadowed in Melchizedek, towards the levitical priesthood. His name means "king of righteousness" and the name of the city Salem means "peace".

He remains ungenealogized, as we said before, in order to be an image of the successionless and eternal character of the high priesthood of Christ. So for this reason also prophetically the Old Testament witnesses that the Father is speaking to his incarnate Son telling him:

You are a priest unto the ages according to the rank of Melchizedek (Ps. 109:4). He himself proclaims Him high priest, not according to the model of the high priests of Israel, but according to the type and rank of Melchizedek. He has directly from the Father a unique and everlasting high priesthood.

## **The high priesthood of Christ**

So we have, a great high priest, brethren. He lived among us, offered himself as a sacrifice and ransomed our sins, but also He Himself as eternal High Priest continually offers a sacrifice to God, being himself both sacrificer and sacrifice, as the Fathers say. He is continually interested in us, co-suffering and condescending to our moral and natural weaknesses, because He also was tempted in all ways with which human nature can be tempted, similar to us, but without falling into any sin.

With his Ascension to the heavens, he is sitting now at the right side of the Father, as eternal High Priest, having glorified "all the race of Adam", in other words all of human nature which he put on and awaits us also. He is not a simple human, but the Son of God, and let us confess this truth both with our lips and our heart. Let us approach him with courage, it is implied with the good boldness, "having cried out with a strong cry and tears" to the royal throne of his glory, the spring of Grace, which irrigates the whole body of the Church. We will receive from Him the remission of sins, favor, gifts and various divine qualities, help in critical times of temptations, so long as before and continually we deposit before him the sins, insufficiencies, invalidities, wounds and fragments of our wretched self.

"In the type and place of Christ" as eternal high priest, every Orthodox bishop stands, bearing within him through his ordination, the continuation and extension of the work of the High Priest Christ, both as the successor of the throne, as well as "a partaker as regards ways" of the work and of the ministry of the apostles whom Christ settled upon the earth, in order to pastor his Church, going to all the nations, in order to teach all those things that they were taught by Him Himself.

The bishop preaches the divine word, performs all the sacraments and pastors the Church of the unique eternal High Priest, of Christ. He has as his helpers in this work, the presbyters and the deacons, but also the monks, even the lay people, so that by