

and which is called Antimension (instead of a table) on its upper portion relics of saints are also sewn into it. This action shows that our Church is founded on the holy blood of her martyrs, whom we meet present at every Divine Liturgy, in the light of Christ. Thus in particular, we also meet the Apostle Thomas who is referred to today in the Gospel, but also the celebrating great martyr George, beloved by the people, miraculous and our helper in every difficulty, and we ask him, as also the apostles of the Lord, to strengthen us, to preserve us flourishing and robust in Christ, in a society which is constantly becoming unchristian, especially in a Greek society which, unfortunately “in a demonic manner” one could say, does everything to forget its roots. The worldly system knows very well, that the Church is the only consoler, supporter of people, infallible and their only gratis benefactor, so for this reason it does whatever it “can” to fight her through ludicrous, silly accusations and mainly aiming to destroy man, not God, furthermore God never suffered anything from his persecutors. So let us beseech, beloved brethren, the three holy martyrs, George, Peter and Thomas to intercede for us!

Archim. E. T.

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2017 THOMAS SUNDAY. St. George the Great Martyr and Triumphant

Tone of the week : *Grave Tone*

Eothinon : *First Orthros Gospel*

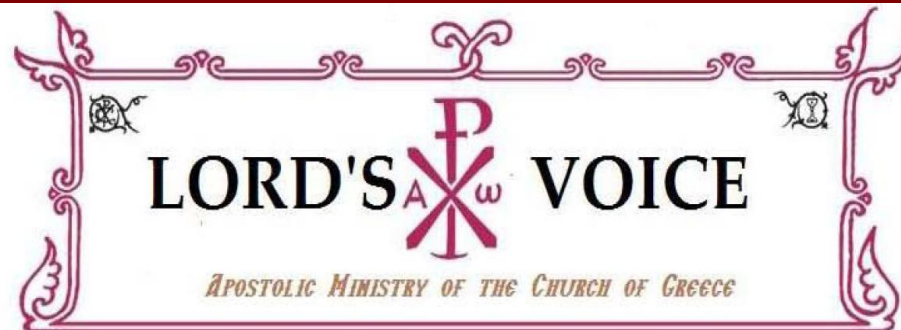
EPISTLE READING: *Acts 12:1-11*

GOSPEL READING: *John 20:19-31*

NEXT SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2017 SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN, *James the Apostle and brother of St. John the Theologian, Argyra the New Martyr, Clement the Hymnographer, Erconwald, Bishop of London.*

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

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



65TH YEAR

April 23 2017

PAMPHLET # 17 (3334)

MARTYRDOM AND WITNESS OF CHRIST

Today's Epistle reading, beloved brethren, speaks briefly about the death by beheading of Saint James, the brother in the flesh of the evangelist John, the sons of Zebedee, and then makes an extensive reference to the capture by Herod and the miraculous preservation of the Apostle Peter.

Brief reference

Herod Agrippas the 1st was the grandson of Herod the Great, and equally wild as him. During his days, he unleashed a mortal persecution against the members of the first Church, among whom a victim of it was also Saint James, as was previously mentioned. This merciless persecution of the first Christians gave joy, as was natural to the Jews. So he also decides to capture the Apostle Peter as well during the period of the feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days after the Jewish Passover (14-21 of Nisan). He imprisoned him under the oversight of sixteen soldiers, in order to try him after the feast and before the people. While Peter was being guarded, the Church of Jerusalem knew about the event and the believers were sending forth extensive, constant petitions to the Lord to save Peter. On the eve of the trial and as Peter was sleeping, bound in chains, while the

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 12:1-11

ABOUT THAT TIME, Herod the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword; and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the Church.

The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Wrap your mantle around you and follow me." And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him. And Peter came to himself, and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

soldiers were guarding him, a light-bearing angel appears, makes the place shine, the angel wakes Peter up, the chains fall from his hands and the Apostle gets dressed and follows the angel. He hadn't realized yet if it was a vision or a real event. Traversing the area where he was being guarded, they arrived up to the outer gate, it opened on its own and, they ended up in the city. Then the

angel disappeared and Peter remained alone, realizing the reality and simultaneously God's benefaction.

Forbearing the will of God

The Apostle Peter with his activity, both on a level of teaching as well as on a level of miracles, it's a fact that, not only did he make them ponder but he irritated and challenged the corrupt Jewish-Pharisaical establishment, to which Christ never identified himself, and which decided, causing a great persecution against the Christians, to take revenge on him also, murdering him, for the people to "rejoice".

Christ forewarned that whoever wants to follow Him, takes up his cross and goes out behind Him, ready to drink the cup of martyrdom, at whatsoever cost. Left however to the grace of God thus, the person of God lives an amazing freedom telling God "thy will be done" and meaning it. Precisely here is the Apostle Peter remaining, forbearing and awaiting imprisoned, the expression of the divine will. And Christ saves him miraculously, sending His angel, who simply, with "angelic nobility, as well as the seriousness of the angel" we would say, takes the Apostle and takes him out of the prison, leaving him before the city to continue his work. He realizes the benefaction and is ready for what will follow.

Train of thought, life and the end of a martyr

We know that the Apostle Peter martyred in Rome, in the year 64 or according to others in 67 A.D. at the Hippodrome of Nero. At the spot where he was martyred a small prayer home was set up, "a "martyrium", as the first Christians used to do, performing Divine Liturgies over the martyrical bodies and the blood of whoever died for Christ. So for this reason also, and during the consecration of the Holy Altar Table of an Orthodox Church, relics of martyrs are buried at the center of the Holy Altar Table, but also in the special cloth on which we Priests liturgize