

concludes many times in action, from the will of God. So where does room remain for our idol-like grandiose fantasies to find refuge, we as supposed proper Orthodox Christians, when our Saints ground us in their way, who are, not only Ortho-doxia (correct – belief) but also Ortho- praxia (correct - action)?

Saint Nektarios calls the Roman Catholics “wounded Christianity”, while the Protestants he likened to the Catechumens of the first Church! He was, like the Apostle Paul, much more lenient than us, even though he had studied the faith certainly better. So he distinguished, beyond the correct faith, the primacy of ministry and not of authority in the Orthodox. Let us be attentive, my brethren, maybe “we took our life in a mistaken way” according to the novelist poet and we need to change our life, through repentance and humility, which the first heretic, the devil does not have.

Archim. E. T.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2017, 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, *Daniel the Prophet & Ananias, Azarias, & Misail, the Three Holy Youths, Dionysius of Zakynthos*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Tone Three*

EOTHINON : *Sixth Orthros Gospel*

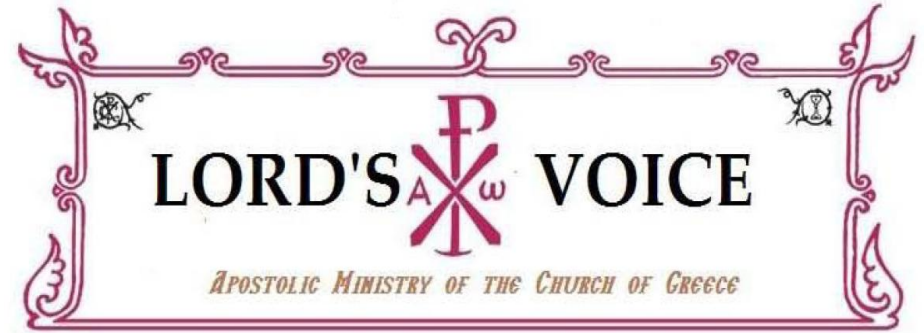
EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter Colossians 3:4-11*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 14:16-24*

NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2017 SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY, *Eve of the Nativity of Christ, Eugenia the Righteous Nun-martyr of Rome*

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

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 1:1-25 Luke*



65TH YEAR

DECEMBER 17 2017

PAMPHLET # 51 (3368)

TRANSFIGURING THE OLD MAN

Paul, my brethren, urges us in today's passage from the Epistle to the Colossians to cast off, in other words, “to take off” the old man and to “put on” the new, repented and graceful man. He speaks about the life giving deadening for which the spiritual person must struggle, when the suggestions of the passions and of the demons tried to sway him.

Our various idolatries

The Apostle especially calls the greedy person an idolater. However every passion, like the ones the passage commemorates, such as fornication, impurity, wrath, anger, blasphemy, lewd speech etc. do not cease being a form of idolatry, which tries to impose its state on the struggling Christian, taking him away from Christ. While if he succeeds or not, depends not so much from the “rights” which he gave in his previous life and the time he squandered, as much as from the fervor with which he repented and is constantly repenting. Repentance is translated also into a constant opposition, opposing disposition of the believer towards the constant and sometimes stormy suggestions of his passions and desires.

ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO COLOSSIANS 3:4-11

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

The battle from the past

The Apostle speaks about the sinful habits of the past and the corresponding life of the believing Colossians, underlining to them that during their conversion, after the catechism, the baptism and their participation in the breaking of bread, they must be careful.

Yes, on the one hand, repentance creates to the believer a noetic flying which separates him, as if with a divorce of his whole being from the past, however he has in mind, the Fathers say it further more later on, that the passions and passionate thoughts and habits "love to return", which means that they return, and furthermore stronger, when the believer neglects and is not careful. One moment of carelessness suffices for the soul to undergo great danger, he might even fall. Because however he is speaking to people in whom Christ has been revealed, in other words, His aid shows in their life and they are sheltered in His

consoling light, where they are "glorified together", these commandments of His have meaning.

To the person who has repented of his past, who lives ecclesiastically, who constantly calls Christ to help, his prayer, mournful and beseeching, causes shaking and an earthquake in the ground of his heart, such that nothing remains standing and all the idols, such as attachments, passionate and sinful habits, fall, they are crushed. They pass through the fire of prayer, until their dead remnants remain, like thin dispassionate memories so that the danger of returning back does not exist.

Christ is for everyone

Paul continuing, shows through his preaching the ecumenicity of Christ: He addresses everyone, teaches, works miracles, is crucified, enters the tomb, resurrects, undertakes and sends the Holy Spirit to His Church, aiming for everyone to receive it and be saved. Christ does not make distinctions, He sees within us. We people who are broken up into pieces and passionate, make distinctions, sometimes our "ready answers" reaches the point of saying who is saved and who not, replacing our Christ upon the earth, to Whom nevertheless the Father has already entrusted every judgment (John 5:22). For us to think a bit when we make that kind of judgments, instead of Christ, what word befits us and characterizes us, O woe!

The Saints, on the contrary, consider themselves the last ones on the earth and all the others better. They believe this, so for this reason also, the divine Grace illumined them. Furthermore an ancient Saint, Abba John from the much suffering Syria, who was together with Abba Barsanouphios tells us that heretic is he who sins and does his own thing. In other words, he falls because he prefers -heresy means preference - his own thought, which