

THE DENIAL OF OURSELF

The denial of our own self and the taking up of the cross is not projected on a theoretical level, for a theological understanding of self denial and of a sacrificial decision. It also has the practical side. The believer is called whereas he knows very well his advantage and is capable of obtaining it, while he knows the lawful and natural demands of life, his lawful rights in work, in wealth, in social advancement, he dares in the name of Christ, the casting off and deprivation of all these things. The logic of Christ is contrary and is different from the logic of the world. The believer is called to deny the nonessential daily life in order to gain the true life. Not only the in the sense of eternal life, but also of the present one. He is called to be delivered from the anxious and destructive care to obtain goods. To surpass his own self and the logic of the world, which lead to a real tyranny for wealth, power and glory. Man is called to a real quality of life. And in this sense, Christ makes use of the term "soul". He calls man to lose his "soul", in other words, his biological life, which crawls on low and base ground. Whoever obtains real life, must be ready to sacrifice quite a few things from the daily life of the present world.

Archim. B. L.

SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 2018 SUNDAY OF THE HOLY CROSS,

Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Pionios the Presbyter, Theodora the Righteous, George the New Wonderworker of Constantinople, Trophimos and Thallos the Martyrs

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Grave Tone*

EOTHINON : *Seventh Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:1-6*

GOSPEL Reading: *Mark 8:34-38, 9:1*

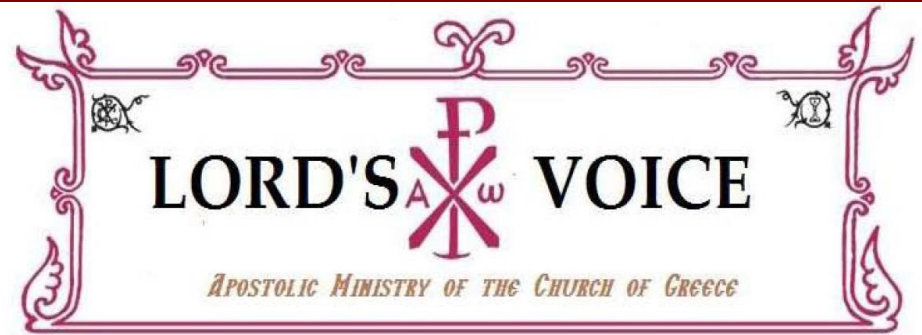
NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 2018 SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN

CLIMACUS *Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem Trophimos & Eukarpion, Monk-martyrs of Nicomedeia, Edward the Martyr, King of England*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 6:13-20*

GOSPEL Reading: *Mark 9:17-31*

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66TH YEAR

MARCH 11 2018

PAMPHLET # 10 (3380)

OUR CROSS, HIS CROSS

We're in the middle of our journey to Pascha. And our Church presents the indisputable victor of the Paschal triumph! Our incarnate Lord and God, whose Pascha, we will see defeating death, freely choosing unto death, obedience to His Father, calls us also to freely choose our Savior, being obedient to his will.

Free choice

The King of glory, coming to save us, reveals the huge value of the god-given gift of our freedom. And he makes us the highest honor to ask us to cooperate with Him, not for His own benefit, but for our own salvation. Freely choosing our Deliverer, the victory of His Resurrection will certainly become more glorious. Not however, because He needs our choice, but because He, the only unneeding and self sufficient one, condescends to consider his glory our own free participation in His own victory against sin and death.

Only that this victory presupposes, both for Him and for us, a carrying of the cross. Just as He "emptied" Himself, He emptied from His divine glory and carried the cross of obedience to His Father unto death, thus we also are called to deny and to empty from our sinful self, and to take up our own cross.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK 8:34-38; 9:1

The Lord said: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power."

Our cross is, on the one hand, the voluntary external afflictions, such as injustices, illnesses, indigence, and on the other hand, the inner struggle for us to defeat the passions of our soul. "Vain and unbeneficial is our cross, even if it is heavy", says Saint Ignatius Brianchanninov, "if it is not altered into the cross of Christ, by us following Christ". Neither patience in afflictions nor our essential cure from the passions, are able to be fruits of anthropocentric techniques. Only if we "lose" our soul "for the sake of Christ and his Gospel," are we truly able to be saved.

The saving loss

What is the "soul" which we must "lose"? Saint Ignatius again explains: "sin became so great and so firmly kneaded with our fall and nature, that the Word of God does not cease to call it, the soul of fallen man". Consequently, in order for someone to "lose" his soul for the sake of Christ, it means that he must healthily despair from his fallen self, to forget the fairy tale that he is self-light, self-law and self-sufficient, to cease believing in self deliverance and sell cure, and to understand that he is lit by another and has the law from another, in other words, that he is

saved only by his free and wholehearted obedience to the divine will. Only then does man find his (lost) soul". Only then does he live the psalm verse: "the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want. He returned my soul" (22:1).

In order for Christ to return our soul from its captivity to sin and to death, He freely gave His life, pouring out His precious blood upon the cross. So for this reason, no exchange is able to counterbalance the value of His sacrifice. Not even the whole world. And so for this reason, the cross of Christ is our greatest boast. And it becomes all the greater glory and boast of ours, as much as we voluntarily accept to be crucified together with Christ, crucifying our egotism, passions and sinful desires. So long, however as we remain enslaved to these, so much, we show that we "are ashamed" and deny Christ and His words. And then He will be ashamed to confess us as His own children before His Father, on the day of His Second Coming.

Don't delay!

Full of this light, which shows what is true glory for man and what shame is, a holy mother, in the years of the Turkish Occupation, closed the door to her son who had denied Christ and chased him away with the words: "who are you? Leave! I did not give birth to a Turk, but to Nicholas, a Christian". The correct love of his mother, woke up the apostate ragia. He truly repented, became a monk of the Holy Mountain named Nektarios, and washed away his denial, with the blood of his martyrdom, on July 11, 1820 at Vourla, Asia Minor.

We know well from the example of the traitor Judas, that the philanthropic calling of Christ to salvation with the words, "whoever wishes to follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" is subject to time limits. Saint innocent Veniaminov denotes it: "for years and years, Christ knocks on the door of our heart, in order to wake us up and to stir in us the longing of salvation. But, oh misfortune of that person, who insists being deaf. And finally Christ will abandon him and as a son of perdition He will deny him" Let it not be O Lord!