

Adam, the Lord of glory, the only one who could free us from the dreadful bonds: of sin and of death.

The great cooperation

For the creation of the first Adam, God cooperated with His only begotten Son saying: "let us make man". Today however, when God judged that the time arrived to "introduce the firstborn one to the universe", and to make the second Adam, He cooperates with the Virgin Mary. That great "will" of God, about which the Prophet Isaiah spoke, God seeks to validate -and it is validated by- the up to now unknown, chaste maiden of Nazareth.

In this manner, the incarnation of the Word, was a work not only of the Father, who was "well pleased" and of His power, which "overshadowed", but also of the Virgin, who freely willed and accepted to serve in the mystery of our salvation. Because, just as without them, it was not possible for the decision of the incarnation of the Word to exist and be offered to men, thus without the free "yes" and the free obedience of the All Pure Virgin, the realization of the divine will would be impossible. This is the glory of the Virgin. This is her saving benefaction to humanity. Therefore let us also cry out to the Theotokos: Rejoice Thou Full of grace, the Lord is with You".

Archim. B. L.

SUNDAY MARCH 25, 2018 *Annunciation of the Theotokos*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Firts Tone*

EOTHINON : *Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 10:11-18*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 1:24-38*

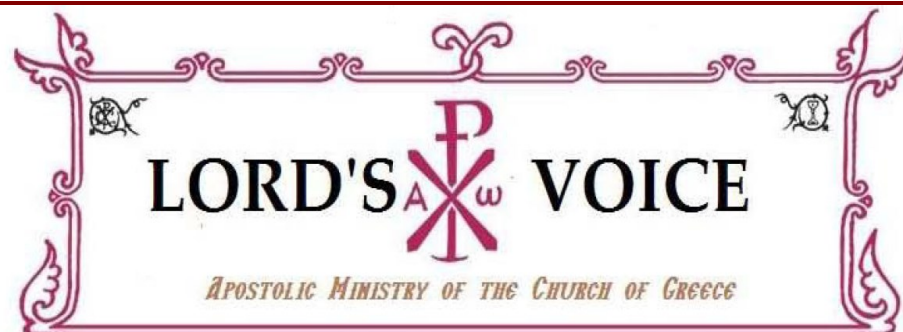
NEXT SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2018 PALM SUNDAY , MARY OF EGYPT , Gerontios & Vasilides the Martyrs , Euthemios of Suzdal

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Philippians 4:4-9*

GOSPEL READING: *John 12:1-18*

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66TH YEAR

MARCH 25 2018

PAMPHLET # 12 (3382)

A SOURCE OF LIFE AND FREEDOM

A feast of freedom, the Annunciation of the Theotokos. Finally our true liberator is coming, whom centuries before, the Prophets preannounced, and with longing, the righteous ones awaited. He is not an angel nor a human. He is the Son of God, who day becomes also the son of the Virgin. He, with incomparably greater longing than with what we awaited him, awaited for a person to be found, who would prepare for him "a place to dwell".

The preparation of the throne

And the Virgin Mariam was found from the lineage of David, who from the moment she was born, was constructing a habitation for Him, and she was struggling to set herself a habitation of God, so beautiful that it would be worthy of him. Thus, when he came, the King found nothing to criticize in the palace (Saint Nicholas Cabasilas). So pure and holy was the "palace", that the Virgin prepared. A troparion of the feast says it also characteristically: the soul she purified, and the body she sanctified, she worked a temple capable of containing God, a divinely adorned tent, and living temple".

How did the small maiden of Nazareth manage to do it? She managed to do it, because she had learned to guard the door of the "palace" well. She strictly censured every visiting thought, desire, emotion, fantasy, every movement of the soul and body. Thus she

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE 1:24-38

In those days, Elizabeth the wife of Zacharias conceived and for five months she hid herself, saying, "Thus the Lord had done to me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men." In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

exercised and dynamically kept her freedom, protecting herself from occupiers and thieves.

This showed very clearly also in the visit of the Archangel Gabriel. As soon as she saw him, "she was disturbed", the Evangelist Luke tells us. She feared that maybe he is some deceptive angel, "robbing those careless ones according to Eve" (Saint Gregory Palamas). Once a fallen

angel deceived the careless Eve and robbed from her, whatever more precious she had: the healthy fear of God and the saving obedience to his commandment. And this carelessness of Eve became cause of slavery and death for her and for the entire human race. So for this reason also, the All Holy Virgin "did not accept the embrace without examination". And only when the archangel dissolved her god-loving fear, "did she open the door to him", for him to impart the most joyous news, which humanity ever heard.

The saving answer

But also when she heard that God is calling her to become his mother, the disturbance was succeeded by the apt question: "how will this happen to me, who am and want to remain a virgin?" Her question was not an expression neither of doubt nor of disbelief, as occurred with Saint Zachariah. On the contrary "being wise and prudent, she seeks to learn the manner of the matter" (Saint Theophylactos). Thus the Archangel Gabriel does not criticize her, but explains to her: "the Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you". What glory monger would not boast of vainglory and pride, realizing that she was selected by God for such an honor?

However Mary who was full of humility, neither when she heard the archangel address her as "full of grace", nor when she was assured that God selected her for his mother, allowed haughtiness to change her. But the only thing she found to answer was: "behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to thy word"! In other words, she told him: "lifelong I'm struggling to have as my unique boast, my highest joy and the perfect enjoyment of my freedom, to be a handmaiden of God. To freely always submit my will to His own will. Let whatever He wants occur".

With the harsh struggle of her lifelong obedience, which peaked at this response from her whole soul to God's calling to give him birth in the flesh, the All Holy Virgin became "the source and root of freedom of the human race" (Saint Gregory Palamas). With this perfect obedience of hers, she corrected the mortal disobedience of Eve, and granted to the world true freedom and true life. She brought to the world the second