

for me. These were my life. And I left them with my heart and out of my love for Christ". Consequently what is important is not the material value of the things one leaves for Christ, but his disposition and the fact that he now makes Christ the treasure of his heart and the center of his life.

If perfect love for Christ is expressed by a complete abandonment even of our lawful loves and our blessed belongings, the principle of witness and of martyrdom for Christ is found in cutting our sinful wills and in the eager askesis of the god-making virtues. Martyrdom is a reality which is not related exclusively to Diocletian and Decius. Saint Symeon the New Theologian says characteristically: "he who does not keep the commandments of Christ, let him not think that he will not deny Him. Just as he who implements them, confesses Christ".

Archim. B.

**SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2018** *The Sunday of All Saints, Lucillian of Byzantium, 4 martyred Youths and Paula the Virgin, Athanasios the Wonderworker, Kevin, Abbot of Glendalough*

**tone of the week :** *Plagal of the Fourth Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *First Orthros Gospel*

**EPISTLE READING:** *Hebrews 11:33-40;12:1-2*

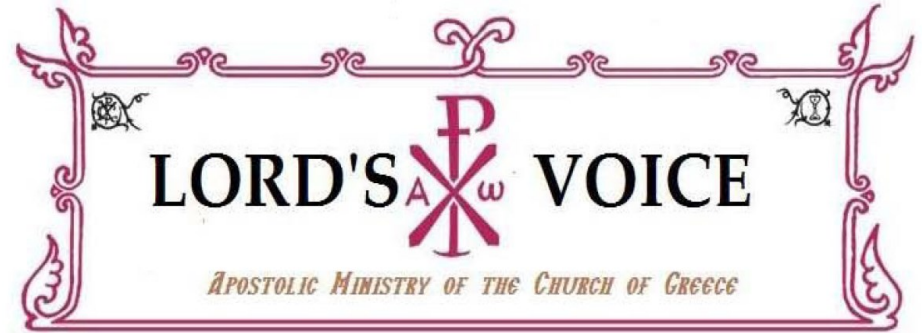
**GOSPEL READING:** *Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30*

**NEXT SUNDAY, JUNE 10, 2018 2ND SUNDAY OF**

**MATTHEW,** *Alexander and Antonina the Martyrs, Timothy, Bishop of Proussa, Our Holy Father Gregory, Bishop of Assos, Theophanes & Pansemne of Antioch, The Holy Martyrs of China.*

**EPISTLE READING:** *Romans 2:10-16*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Matthew 4:18-23*



**66<sup>TH</sup> YEAR JUNE 3 2018 PAMPHLET #22 (3392)**

## MARTYRDOM AND WITNESS

The feast of All Saints is a fruit of Pentecost. The synaxarion of today's Sunday explains this in a wonderful manner: "fire from its nature ascends upwards, whereas dirt by its nature goes downwards." On the day of Pentecost the odd thing occurred, the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, in the form of fire descended downwards, whereas the earth and human nature, of those who wished to receive it, ascended upwards".

### Before men

This Holy Spirit was what strengthened them to confess Christ before men. The "in me", that Christ said, means that only with the grace of the Holy Spirit, which He "sends", is someone able to confess Him. Then Christ also will confess before His Father in the heavens that this person is His faithful servant. And on the contrary, whoever denies Him before men, Christ will also deny him before His Father.

The phrase "before men" it's not a few times that it restrained in a firm confession of faith many, especially neomartyrs, when they were challenging them to deny in a fake manner and temporarily, Christ before the judges and to leave to areas where the faith is not being persecuted, so that they could continue living as Christians.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 10:32-33; 37-38;

The Lord said to his disciples, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Then Peter said in reply, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first."

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A similar spirit is pushed also by the contemporary culture, which wants the faith to be a private matter, without having a relationship with the life of the community. However, the healthy witness of the believer, comprises an ecclesiastical event, which aims at embracing the whole community. The leaven is small, which has been called to knead the whole dough.

### **For the sake of his name**

The confession, of course, of faith in Christ, is not exhausted in an unexpensive oral declaration. It presupposes love for Him, greater than love for the closest relatives: parents, spouse, children. It presupposes such self denial, that someone would be ready to give his life for Christ. "What are you talking to me," says the sacred Chrysostom, "about parents, siblings or your wife?

There is nothing more familiar than his own life to anyone. So if, you also placed this higher than your love for Christ, then you are very far from His true disciples. You are not worthy of Him".

All the martyrs comprised examples of such a love, just like the holy neomartyr George, who was martyred in Ioannina, leaving his young wife, a widow, and his newly illumined son, an orphan. Also bright is the choir of holy mothers, who surpassing the natural motherly loving care for their children, not only did not prevent them, but also encouraged them to martyrdom: Saint Solomone (mother of the seven Maccabees), the mother of Saint Meliton (one of the Forty Martyrs), Saint Anthia (mother of Saint Eleftherios), Saint Sophia with her three daughters and many others.

Furthermore, Christ referring to those who left father or mother for His name, hints, according to the interpreters, also at those who were martyred on account not of faith, but of the disbelief of their parents. Indicatively we mention saints Barbara, Markella, Christina, Kerkyra and Akilina, "who were shown to be children more prudent than unpius parents". Furthermore their child-killing fathers crowned the three first ones with a crown of martyrdom, with their own hands!

### **The Apostles worthy of imitation**

Chief models of complete dedication and love for Christ are the holy Apostles, who left everything; followed their Teacher and were all granted, except for the Evangelist John, to seal their love for Him with a martyrical death.

The Golden-worded John, obviously in order to avert some people who would dispute the value of the disattachment of the poor fisherman Peter, makes the rhetorical question: "which all things did you leave, Peter? What important thing did you leave? The rod? The net? The boat? Yes, he says. These are everything