

Worthy partakers of the priesthood

The wealth of the “venerable, guileless and undelivered” pastors has not been exhausted in the Church even today. The Great High Priest Christ continues to show forth “vessels of myrrh” of the high gift of the priesthood, like the good levite Fr. Evangelos Chalkide who served for 30 years at Saint Basil, Langada and reposed in 1987. His biographer witnesses characteristically: “He spent most of his hours in the church praying and studying. One afternoon I found him reading in the altar. On his face an unusual brilliance could be clearly distinguished. I got startled. What light is this, father? I dared to ask. I don’t know, he answered with simplicity. This always happens when I am in the altar.”

Obviously thus it always happens with those “separated from the sinners” humble priests, who are granted from now to be illumined by the brilliance of the “throne of majesty in the heavens”.

Archim. B. L

SUNDAY SUNDAY, JANUARY 27, 2019 15TH SUNDAY OF LUKE,
Removal of the Relics of John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, Peter the Righteous of Egypt, Demetrios the New Martyr of Constantinople

TOPE OF THE WEEK : *Second Tone*

GOETHINON : *Second Orthros Gospel*

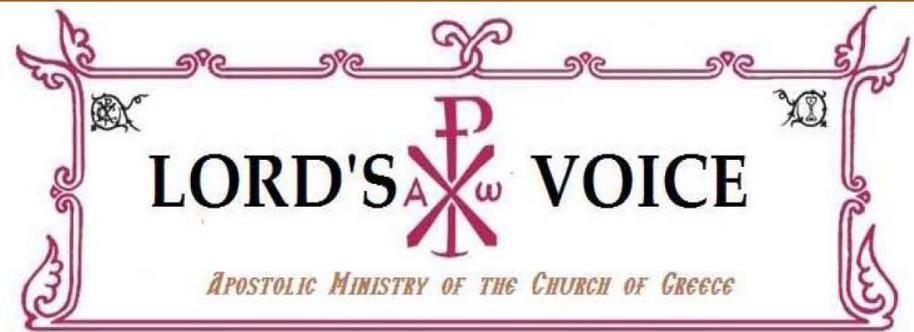
EPISTLE READING: *Hebrews 7:26-28, 8:1-2*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 19:1-10*

NEXT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2019 *The Synaxis of the Holy and Righteous Symeon the God-Receiver and the Holy Prophetess Anna, Stamatios, John, & Nicholas, New Martyrs of Spetses, Nicholas, Archbishop & Enlightener of Japan, Afterfeast of the Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple, Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos Werburga*

EPISTLE READING: *Second Letter to the Corinthians 6:1-10*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 25:14-30*



67TH YEAR JANUARY 27, 2019

PAMPHLET #4 (3426)

THE MAJESTY OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Like today the exhumation of the relic of Saint John Chrysostom took place and his return to Constantinople from Comana, where exiled, he died martyrically. Hymnologizing this chief pastor of hers, the Church called him “respect of her offices” and “rest of her eyelids”, because he honored and glorified the priesthood that Christ entrusted him with. So there would be no better opportunity for the Church to remind us of the Apostle Paul’s teaching about the majesty of Christ’s priesthood, and its superiority to the priesthood of the Old Testament.

Foreshadowing and fulfillment

This teaching summarizes also the essential superiority and difference of the New over the Old Testament. Both Testaments aim at our deliverance and salvation from the results of our fall, in other words, from the enslavement to sin, corruption and death. But in the Old Testament, on the one hand, this deliverance was prepared and foreshadowed, while in the New Testament, the foreshadowings were fulfilled and realized in the person of the Godman Christ.

ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO THE HEBREWS 7:26-28; 8:1-2

Brethren, it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever. Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord.

In the Old Testament the priesthood was imperfect. It could not lead man to perfect communion and reconciliation with God. It could not cleanse him from the dead works of sin nor deliver him from guilt. Also it was an inherited priesthood. After the father's death it was transferred to the older son. And the priests had to descend from the tribe of Levi. Furthermore, the priests, as weak humans, had to first offer sacrifices for their own sins.

The Godman Christ with His sacrifice on the Cross became the Great High Priest, the source of the perfect priesthood, which grants us remission of sins and eternal life". He reconciled us with God-the Father and secured for us "eternal deliverance" (Heb. 9:12). This sacrifice was offered one for all, once, only for our own sins, since the Victim is sinless. The majesty of God's love in this fearful Mystery, is that Christ did not offer a sacrifice of irrational animals but His own self for the salvation of the world. So Christ, completing His delivering work with His death on the Cross is "a priest unto the ages" as His Father proclaimed had Him through the Prophet David. And as a priest, He is the true "mediator between God and men", the only sinless and perfect one.

Thus the levitical priesthood was replaced by the priesthood of Christ, which it also foreshadowed. Because we need a holy high

priest, delivered from every evil and wickedness, who not only assures that no one is able to censure Him about sin (Jn. 8:46) for as long as He was living on earth, but He also sat at the right hand of His Father in the heavens. There He presides "over the mystical sacred service in Zion above" in the heavenly Church, which was not built by a man but by God.

The Sacred Chrysostom "The respect of the priestly office"

In this supercelestial gift of the priesthood of Christ, the priests of the New Testament partake, successors of the holy Apostles, who henceforth are chosen by the Church and do not have the priesthood by inheritance. This is, of course, a selection, which to the worthy ones, - like the sacred Chrysostom - causes dread. When the Bishop of Antioch wanted to ordain the twenty five year old John to presbyter, he panic struck, from the awe of the office of the priesthood, preferred to flee. Only after pressure from Saint Meletius, and after living for quite a while in a strict monastic life, did he accept to be ordained.

The Golden-tongued holy hierarch in his wonderful homilies on the priesthood, is shaken seeing even the Apostle Paul himself trembling before the height of the priesthood: "If he who was raised up to the third heaven and came to know the mysteries of God, he who forbore so many deaths as were the days of his life after his conversion, so if such a person was always in dread before the majesty of the office of the priesthood, then, what will we undergo who, most of the time transgress Christ's commandments?", concludes the Saint.

So how in today's memory of the exhumation of the relic of Saint John can the Church not glorify the Lord with the words: "Great is your glory, O Lord, who rendered back to us again the exiled leader of the bridegroom. He who with his life and teaching led us to the heavenly bridal chamber. You gave us again the support of the faith and the wealth which took us out of our poverty.