

## The lifegiving deadening

Something like this shows what probably our own Kazantzakis did not wish to understand. In a work of his, he describes the experience of his childhood age, from the exhumation of a certain neighborhood woman. When he saw her skull, he started shouting and throwing stones at the grave digger. His uncle who was present took him in his embrace and told him: "Why are you crying? We will all die". "Why? Why? I don't want to!", the little Nick shouts. "When you grow up you will learn the why" his uncle answered. And mature now, the author concludes in his work: "I grew up, I got old, but I never learned it"!

Without the saving deadening of the egotistical train of thought, it is impossible for room to be made, so that the grace of God can come "which raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and to answer to this great "why". The chief preacher of the Resurrection, the Apostle Paul, and all the saints, didn't merely accept this grace, but with their struggle, they multiplied it. Thus "abounding," it satiated first them, and afterwards whoever imitated them. And "through the majority," the doxology of the name of God abounded and will always abound.

Archim. B. L

**SUNDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2019 SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON** *First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist, Romanos, Prince of Uglich, Boswell, Abbot of Melrose Abbey, Cumine the White, Abbot of Iona*

**TONE OF THE WEEK :** *Plagal Second Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Sixth Orthros Gospel*

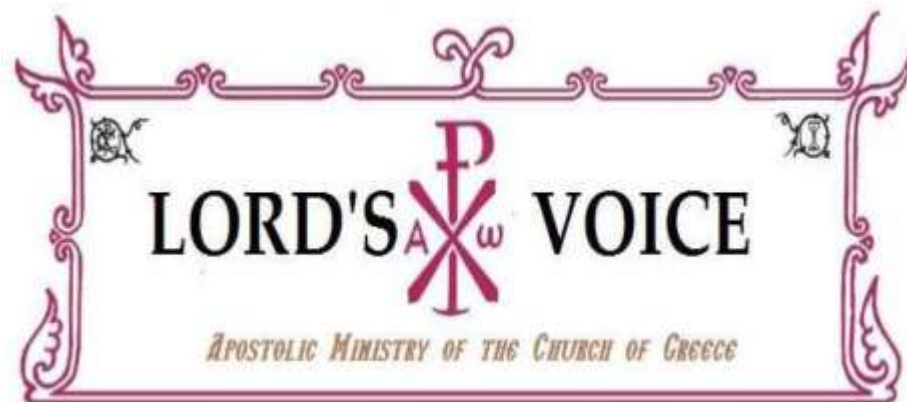
**EPISTLE READING:** *Second Letter to Corinthians 4:6-15*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Luke 15: 11-32*

**NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 3, 2019 JUDGMENT SUNDAY (MEATFARE SUNDAY)**, *The Holy Martyrs Eutropius, Cleonicus, and Basiliscus, Theodoretos the Holy Martyr of Antioch, Nonnita, mother of Saint David.*

**EPISTLE READING:** *First Letter to Corinthians 8:8-13*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Mathew 25: 31-46*



67<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

FEBRUARY 24, 2019

PAMPHLET # 8 (3430)

## ALL VENERABLE RELIQUARY OF DIVINE THOUGHTS

In a work of a theatrical author of the West, the burial of a rich maiden is presented in a shaking manner. There the gravedigger, digging for the tomb, finds the skull of the former jester of the king. Then the prince who is present, taking it in his hands, remembers how – when he was a child – the jester played with him. And now he sees him, a lifeless skull, gazing with "unlocked chins". Disgusted, he throws it in the dirt and shouts: "To what a nothing-like use we will return".

### The choice of a correct use

Today we are celebrating the first and second finding of the precious head of Saint John the Baptist. It is a sacred relic of the holiest person after the Most Holy Theotokos. So for this reason, the Church presents it to us, not for us to be disgusted like that prince, but in order to venerate it, celebrating. And we honor it with the certainty that we have before us, not a lifeless skull which ended up in a "nothing-like use", but –according to the hymnology of the feast – a "treasure of godly gifts", a light-shining sun", a "spring of miracles".

Usually, when we put down a person, we say: "I can't understand what he is carrying in his head. Maybe is it

## ST. PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO CORINTHIANS 4:6-15

Brethren, it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

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completely empty?" And it is natural for a person's inner content to regulate his life and to predetermine his behavior, since there, the ruling mind lies, which together with the heart, direct everything. So, how does a person not only put out the danger of ending up an empty vessel of nothing-like use, but obtain the amazing capability of becoming a "light-shining sun" unto the ages of ages?

The Apostle Paul clearly answers in today's Epistle Reading: This wondrous change is truly capable, only if we freely wish to accept in the "earthen vessel" of our physical being, "the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ". The head and the body of the Precious Forerunner is an earthen vessel. But because, for an entire life, he struggled to make them and, more

importantly, to keep them, "an all venerable reliquary of divine thoughts", so for this reason, he was praised by Christ Himself as the greatest of saints.

## How does the treasure come in earthen vessels

It is a contest that demands bravery, genuine love for Christ, and firmness. The Apostle Paul – who became preeminent in this contest – remind us that, if we wish to enter into the arena, afflictions, persecutions and constant "hide and seek" with death await us. Simultaneously however, he encourages us, saying that we can endure all these things and surpass them, not with our own powers, but with the power of God. He is God, who through Christ defeated death also, and so He will resurrect us all, so as to present us at His glorious throne.

The Precious Forerunner, the Apostle Paul and all the prime contestants of the Gospel of Christ, preached, toiled and martyred, in order to give us the capability of filling our earthen vessels with the illumination of the glory of God, with the "divine thoughts" which the troparion of the feast mentions. These "divine thoughts" are not beautiful philosophical or theological ponderings, but the living words of Christ. They are the "words of life", which truly nourish us and make us forever, living and "ever shining suns". Just that, for us to be able to accept such "thoughts", we have to be emptied of the excessive trust in our smartness and be cleansed of the egotistical and passionate thoughts and images.

For this purpose, the Divine Baptist chose the lifestyle, equal to the angels, becoming not only a model for monastics but also a guide for every believer who honorably wishes to struggle for the purification from the passions, giving room to the Spirit of God to indwell in him. This necessary room clearly is related to the time which we give, on the one hand, to hear the word of God, reading his Gospel, and on the other hand, for us to be speaking with the Incarnate Word and God, doing prayer. Only thus is one able to reach to the lifegiving deadening of the "ego", a deadening which Saint John always "bore in his body". So for this reason also, "in his body" the Life and the Resurrection of Christ were always being revealed.