

we must toil with diligence but also with discretion. A discretion which will keep in mind also, the easily scandalizable brothers. They also are members of the Body of Christ, members of His Church. And “whoever”, according to Chrysostom, scorns their salvation, saying those satanic words “what do I care if so and so is scandalized”, he should know that he is sharing the devil’s coarseness and his hate against people”. Let it not be, O Lord!

Archim. B. L

**APOSTOLIC MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE  
RECEPTION OF THE SACRED ICON  
OF THE ALL HOLY MOTHER OF MERCY OF TICHVIN OF  
RUSSIA**

With spiritual joy, glorifying and praising the Holy Triune God, the Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece has the honor to invite you to the Service of the Reception of the sacred and venerable Icon of The All Holy Virgin of Tichvin, Russia, an old copy of 1700, which will occur at the sacred pilgrimage church of Saint Barbara of the Municipality of the same name of Attica, on the 3rd Sunday of Lent – Veneration of the Cross, March 31, 2019, at 630 pm in the afternoon. A Compunctionate Vespers and Sacred Supplication service to the Most Holy Theotokos will follow.

Daily, from Monday, April 1 until including Friday, April 12, at the Pilgrimage Church of Saint Barbara, sacred services will be held with a program. Whichever priests desire to organize with their Parishes a pilgrimage visit, are able to take part in these. For information, you may communicate with us at the tel. 210-727-2305, fax: 210-727-2310, e-mail: [internet@apostoliki-diakonia.gr](mailto:internet@apostoliki-diakonia.gr)

**SUNDAY MARCH 10, 2019 FORGIVENESS SUNDAY**, *Quadratus the Martyr & his Companions, Anastasia of Alexandria, Michael Mauroudes the New-Martyr.*

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

**EOTHINON :** *Eighth Orthros Gospel*

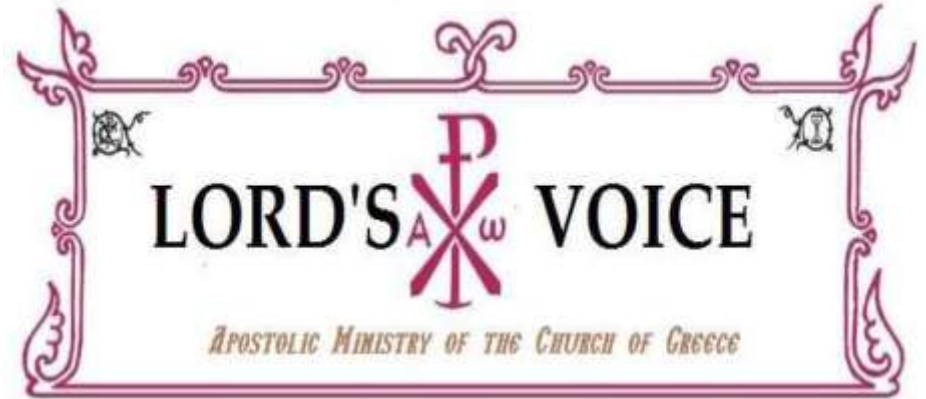
**EPISTLE READING:** *Letter to Romans 13:11-14;14:1-4*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Mathew 6: 14 -21*

**NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2019 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY**, *Alexis the Man of God, Patrick the Enlightener of Ireland, Marinos the Martyr, Theocteristos the Confessor, Paul the Righteous Martyr*

**EPISTLE READING:** *Letter to Hebrews 11:24-26,32-40*

**GOSPEL READING:** *John 1:43 - 51*



**67<sup>TH</sup> YEAR**

**MARCH 10, 2019**

**PAMPHLET # 10 (3432)**

**FROM THE DARKNESS TO THE LIGHT**

On the eve of the entrance to Great Lent, everything in Church speaks of repentance. The wonderful hymnology poetically “dresses” the sermon of repentance. The Gospel Reading gives us the “keys” for us to open the gates of repentance. And the Epistle Reading reminds us of one of the most awakening exhortations of the Apostle Paul on repentance. Essentially, the preeminent apostle repeats in his own descriptive manner the sermon of Christ and of His Forerunner: “Be ye repenting. For the kingdom of the heavens is at hand.”

**Joy-producing awakening**

“Repentance” for the holy Apostle means a transfer from the darkness to the light. So long as we are attached to the dreamy and deceptive things of this life, and even worse, to the works of shame, so much do we walk in the darkness of the night and we sink into the sleep of sin. Truly, man sinks into a deadly sleep, where he departs from God. A sleep, which – according to Saint Mark the Ascetic – is fed by negligence, forgetfulness and ignorance. These three narcotic passions, Saint Mark calls “the dreadful man-killing dragons”.

On the contrary, that which should wake us up, is not the dread of the threat of an court trial, but a joy-producing memory that every day and that passes, we are, if we really want to be, closer to our salvation. Because, if we are preparing correctly, “the day of judgment will be salutary for us”, says a commentator. Saint

#### ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO ROMANS 13:11-14; 14:1-4

Brethren, salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for God is able to make him stand.

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John Damascene makes a realistic observation. "Usually, we start out something with enthusiasm, gradually the eagerness for work lessens. Here though, the Apostle urges us to the opposite: the more the time of the King's coming approaches, and of the distribution of the rewards, with all the more zeal should we prepare".

The preparation is comprised of us denying the works of darkness. Elsewhere in (Gal. 5:19) the holy Apostle will call them "the works of the flesh", in which - just as here also- he will include not only intoxication, fornication and lewdness, but also jealousy, anger, envy, arguments and the like. Thus, after we take off these "clothes of the night", we will have to put on the brilliant garments of the day, which he calls "weapons of light". "Weapons of light" are the Godly virtues. And he calls them "weapons", because - according to the sacred Chrysostom -they make the soul feel safety in its battle against sin and the devil. So in this struggle, which the Church calls us to, especially now in Lent, let us put on, according to the hymnodist, "the panoply of the Cross, having as a breastplate, prayer, as a helmet, charity and as a battle sword, fasting, which cuts off every wickedness from the heart". Of course, our garment and panoply are not our own ascetic achievements, but in the end it is Christ Himself. "Put on Christ", the Apostle Paul exhorts us immediately afterwards. Him we put on with our baptism. So for this reason also, the struggle of Lent essentially must aim at the renewal and regaining of Divine Grace which we received in baptism.

#### The weak and the strong ones

The "new creation", to which a baptism leads us, is not something given and self implied. Then also, just as today also, those coming to Church could not easily cast off all the dead elements of their previous light. Passions, superstitions and deceived religious habits were deeply rooted in them, and much toil was needed for them to be uprooted. Thus, then there were the Judaizing Christians, who continued preserving elements of the Jewish religiosity. For example, they would not eat pork meat. Subsequently, so that they were not commented on, they decided to not eat meat at all and they appeared with excessive fasting tendencies.

The Apostle Paul calls them "weak" who ought, whoever had correct faith and did not make such distinctions of foods, to accept them and to not condemn them. On the other hand of course, these "weak ones" also ought to not condemn "those eating", because we are all servants of God and only He has the right to judge, as our only Lord and Judge. Furthermore, even if truly, the ones or the others truly are sinning, they are sinning to God. And consequently, the sacred Chrysostom says, "if God, to whom they are sinning does not judge anyone prematurely, but He longsuffers, awaiting the sinners' return, who are you who are untimely and indiscriminately are making those who are guilty, anxious and oppressing them?"

#### God is strong who set them up

A chief example of godly imitating longsuffering and prayer for salvation not only of a "weak one" but of a man sunk in sin, is Saint Monica. With the tears of her prayer, she led not only to repentance but also to sanctity, her son, Saint Augustine. He himself describes, in a moving manner, the moment of his conversion: "from within me, cries of despair were coming out: how long will this last, O Lord? Why am I continually delaying my return? Why do I not putting, at this moment an end to my shame? And suddenly I hear a voice: Take and read: I took the book of the Apostle and read the first piece which fell to my gaze". The excerpt that Augustine read, was today's Epistle Reading. It was the beginning of a dynamic repentance, of a journey from the darkness of sin, to the light of Christ. With his intercessions, let us firmly proceed on our own journey of repentance, utilizing also, the rich opportunities of this year's Lent. With today's Epistle Reading, the Church with the mouth of the preeminent Apostle, reminds us that in our every contesting effort, and especially in the ascesis of fasting of Lent, which naturally is not only abstaining from foods but "the estrangement from all the passions",