

eyewitness and hearers witnesses of His life, the holy Apostles, and afterwards by their successors, the holy Fathers. For this salvation, of course, Christ not only spoke, but was also sacrificed. He himself became our Savior.

And He did not save us from the tyranny of the Egyptians, or other earthly enemies, like the old Israel. The salvation that Christ granted us is incomparably higher than that salvation. Salvation in Christ is, according to Saint Chrysostom, "the abolishing of death and the perdition of the devil". Nor did He simply give us again, some temporal Land of Promise, but He granted us "the kingdom of the heavens and life eternal".

How, condemnable, I wonder, will be, whoever will neglect to attentively and honorably work, and cooperate with the Savior Christ for a salvation of such dimensions? A salvation that, if we wish it, is able to also make us, by grace, co-enthroned and co-kings with the entire Holy Trinity.

Archim. B. L

**SUNDAY, MARCH 24, 2019 SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY**

**PALAMAS**, *Forefeast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, Artemon the Presbyter, Our Holy Father Theonas, Archbishop of Thessalonica.*

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

**EOTHINON :** *Tenth Orthros Gospel*

**EPISTLE READING:** *Letter to Hebrews 1:10-14*

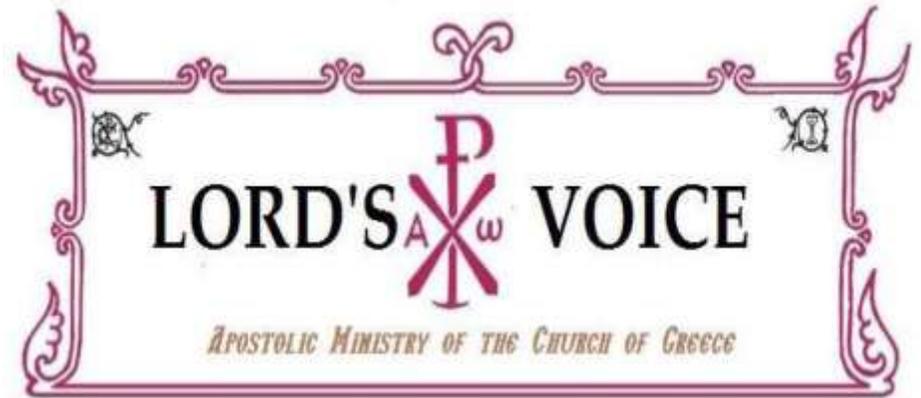
**GOSPEL READING:** *Mark 2:1 - 12*

**NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2019 SUNDAY OF THE HOLY CROSS,**

*The Holy Hieromartyr Hypatius, Bishop of Gangra , Innocent, Enlightener of Siberia & Alaska, Akakios the Confessor*

**EPISTLE READING:** *Letter to Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:1-6*

**GOSPEL READING:** *Mark 8:34-38; 9:1*



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

**MARCH 24, 2019**

**PAMPHLET # 12 (3434)**

## THE TRUE SALVATION

The Church presents to us today a skillful gymnast, the champion of the faith, Saint Gregory Palamas, in order to encourage us in the ascesis of the virtues in the "arena" of Great Lent. A troparion of his service verifies it also, saying: "the awakening language of your teaching, resounding in our ears, chases away the indolence from our souls."

### Creator and unchangeable

However equally awakening is also the language of the Apostle Paul in today's Epistle Reading. He calls us to chase away the darkness of negligence, and to diligently worked for our salvation. And negligence truly leads the soul to a thick0 darkness, as Saint Gregory the Sinaite also notes. The Saint, interpreting the words of Christ "night is coming when no one will be able to work", says: "the night which is coming is not so much the years of the antichrist or the eternal hell, as much as daily negligence of God's commandments." Consequently, it is not something future, but something which sets out from today. From each day. And this negligence prepares us for the insufferable and destructive inactivity which will prevail also in the other two.

The Apostle Paul, in order to encourage us in the struggle against negligence, presents the majesty of the salvation **which**

## ST. PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO HEBREWS 1:10-14; 2:1-3

"IN THE BEGINNING, Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end." But to what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

Christ grants us. Previously however, he stresses two great truths about the Person of our Savior: first that He is the Creator and Lord of irrational creation, and afterwards that He is the Creator and Lord of the heavenly Angelic powers, of the logical creations that are higher than man. And using an excellent manner in order to express the truths about the identity of the Messiah: he borrows passages from the psalms, where with a descriptive poetic language, he presents God-Father speaking to His Only Begotten Son.

The witness that the Messiah Christ: is co-unbeginning and co-creator of all the creation with His Father he takes it from the 101<sup>st</sup> Psalm (6:25-27). There the superiority of the Savior Christ is particularly stressed before the rational creation, since He is its Creator. And the creation, on the one hand, gets old and corrupts, in order to change and give its place to "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Peter 3:13. Christ however, remains unchanging in the unending ages. As much as it is "no small consolation", says

Saint Theophylactos, "for us to know that a new habitation awaits us", much more so it consoles us that in all the unstable circumstances of our life, we always have our firm support in the unchanging Savior Christ.

## Above the angels and the Victor

The witnesses about the second truth, the Christ is incomparably higher than the angels, the Apostle takes from the 109<sup>th</sup> Psalm (vs. one). Here the superiority of the Messiah to the Angelic ranks is shown by the fact that He is always: coenthroned with his coessential Father. Not only before, but also after His incarnation. Now furthermore, after His Ascension, His Father has placed all His enemies, the devil, in other words, and those like minded with him, defeated and crushed "beneath the feet of His Son." This expression, according to the interpreters, does not mean, of course, that the Son was not able to do this. He simply stresses the identity of the opinion of the Father and of the Son, Who henceforth garbed with His human nature continues to coreign with His Father. Maybe is the security which the assurance of this crushing victory against the enemies of our salvation, a small encouragement?

The angels do not have this glory of Christ. They do not coreign with God. They only function, glorifying Him and serving our salvation. "How great is God's care for us humans", Saint Theophylactos admires, "to place angels, in other words, higher than us, to serve us in this high work". In the synaxaria of the saints of our Church, not rarely, conversions of people of other religions to the knowledge of God are mentioned, because they saw angels protecting the Christians. Indicatively, we mention the case of the Muslim Mousa, son of the pasha of Paramythia, who in visiting the holy neomartyr Anastasios (1750) in prison, and seeing two brightly shining angels guarding him, was led to the faith and later on, also became a monk.

## Condemnable and destructive negligence

So He, above every rational and irrational creation, cocreator and coenthroned with the Heavenly Father, the Son of God and Lord of the world, came and spoke to us and preached to us His own salvation. Not henceforth through angels or prophets, as in the Old Testament, but in person. And His preaching was transported unadulterated by the