

become an earthly king, but in order to defeat death with His Resurrection and to grant us the true and eternal life.

The genuine resurrectional witness

This demand and commandment of Christ condemns the contemporary profuse prophecy speech and futurism and focuses the preaching of the Church in the witness and victory shout: “Christ is risen! Deviations from the pure resurrectional preaching of the Church costs the confusion and - not rarely – the loss of souls. Thus the agnostic youth Anthony Bloom was almost led to an abyss of despair, the later bishop of Sourozh and preacher of Orthodoxy in Western Europe. “I had decided,” Anthony confesses, “that if in one year I would not find some meaning in life, I would commit suicide. Near the end of the deadline, a religious speech where they took me by force completely disappointed me. So wanting to ascertain if the Gospel maintained the monstrous impression I reaped from the speech, I decided to read the smallest Gospel, according to Mark. And then, before I reached the third chapter, suddenly I realized that Someone was at the other end of my desk. And the certainty that it was Christ was so intense, that it never abandoned me. I became acquainted with the Resurrection henceforth as a fact”.

The Acts of the Apostles continue to be written in our age also.

Archim. B. L

SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 2019 GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

The Holy Nine Martyrs of Cyzicus, John the Martyr of Romania, Memnon the Wonderworker

tone of the week : --

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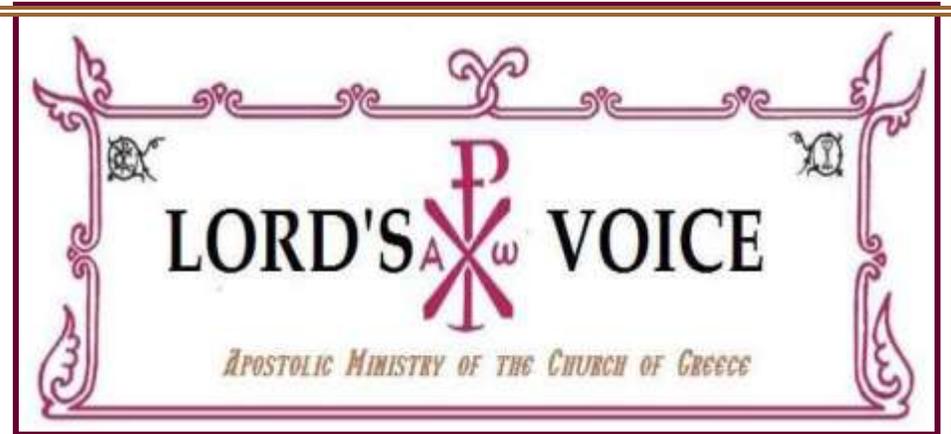
Epistle Reading: *Acts of the Apostles 1:1-8*

GOSPEL READING: John 1:1-17

NEXT SUNDAY, MAY 05, 2019 THOMAS SUNDAY, Irene the Great Martyr , Neophytos, Gaius, & Caianus the Monk-martyrs, The Righteous Martyr Ephraim the Younger

EPISTLE READING: *Acts of the Apostles 5:12-20*

GOSPEL READING: John 20:19-31



67TH YEAR APRIL 28, 2019 PAMPHLET # 17 (3439)

“HAVING BEHELD THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST”

Christ is risen, brethren! After our Lord Jesus Christ and our God defeated death by His death, He “transported us” from death to life and from the earth to heaven. And our Church calls us for forty days to celebrate this triumph, chanting the victory hymn “Christ is risen from the dead...” and saying the resurrectional prayer “Having beheld the resurrection of Christ...”.

The evidence of the Resurrection

If we pay attention however, to this prayer, probably we will feel a little uncomfortable, because we will ascertain that our Church is calling us to confess that not merely do we believe in the resurrection of Christ, but also that we have seen it. Where and when did we see it? The answer is double: first we are called to see it – as the first troparion of the resurrectional canon says – in our personal life, cleansing our senses. This is a lifelong struggle, which gives us the capability to obtain those so clear eyes, with which we are truly able to see the resurrected Christ “glistening”. The second “area” where we are able to see the resurrection of Christ, is the life of the Church, and especially the life of the first Church.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1:1-8

In the first book, O Theophilos, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" He said to them, "it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

This is the reason why the holy Fathers appointed the Epistle Reading from Pascha up till Pentecost to be from the Book of the "Acts of the Apostles", which the holy evangelist Luke wrote. Its characteristic title shows that he is referring not so much to teachings but mainly to events. If we use a contemporary movie term, we would say that it comprises a documentary of the life of the Apostles and of the first Church. And the main truth this document indicates is the resurrection of Christ. The entire Book of the Acts shouts "Christ is risen"!

From the first lines of the Book, the evangelist Luke tells us that Christ "after His death, for forty entire days appears to His disciples – and He was verifying His resurrection – with many proofs". With His infinite love and condescension, He was supporting His disciples in faith, granting also to us, trustworthy

witnesses of His victory over death. And this condescension reached to Him eating and drinking with them, so that the Apostles would not think that He is a ghost. There was, of course, a difference. Before the Resurrection, He was eating together with them because His sinless human nature had the blameless passion of hunger. However, after the resurrection His dispassionate and incorrupt Body did not have need of food. He ate only to verify that He is present with His resurrected Body, with which "he voluntarily suffered and resurrected god-befittingly" (Saint Theophylactos).

The "baptism" of the Holy Spirit

And although He called them through the myrrhbearing women and He appeared to them in Galilee, now He orders them to not depart from Jerusalem, but there to await the fulfillment of the promise of the descent of the Holy Spirit. There Christ, according to the prophecy, would be established as king "upon his holy mountain Sion". In the city where the Lord became "the mockery of men and the humiliation of the people", there He had to be honored and His Church to be "born".

This "birthday" would begin with the "baptism" of the holy Apostles "in the Holy Spirit". This is an incomparably higher baptism than the baptism of the Precious Forerunner. That simply helped people to realize their sins and feel the necessity to be cleansed, and of the mercy of God. With the "baptism" of Pentecost, the Apostles would be receiving the entire wealth of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and would be led "into all the truth". Now they are still imperfect. And so for this reason also, after the resurrection, they put forth their hopes for the restoration of the worldly majesty of Israel and they seek in Christ, their future earthly king. Christ however, turns them away from such futuristic curiosities. And He reveals to them that the main fruit of their "baptism" in the Holy Spirit would be for Him to strengthen them, so that they can give the correct witness about Him. But to preach that He came, not in order to