

characterization of love, he adds: “loving caring in brotherly love”. Love must not just be unhypocritical, but also full of loving care, it should not just be fervent but also fiery. And the unsurpassable interpreter of the Apostle will add, giving us the golden principle of love: “Do not wait for the other to first show his love, but you run first to show him your own. Thus you will also gain the reward of his love.”

Obviously, only in such a plenitude of love is someone able to manage the, quite difficult to achieve, apostolic exhortation, that is found at the end of the passage: «Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse.» He did not just say “do not have revenge», but also “pray for them”. And it is not by chance that the only exhortation of the Apostle in his Epistle, which is also repeated twice in the same verse is the “rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). Is there, I wonder, a greater source of joy than for someone to “be steadfast” with the King of glory in His last prayer on the Cross?

Archim. B. L.

NEXT, SUNDAY, JULY 28, 2019 6TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW

*Prochoros, Nicanor, Timon, & Parmenas the Apostles of the 70 ,
Irene the Righteous of Chrysovalantou Our Righteous Father
Paul of Xeropotamou*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Plagal First Tone*

EOTHINON : *Sixth Orthros Gospel*

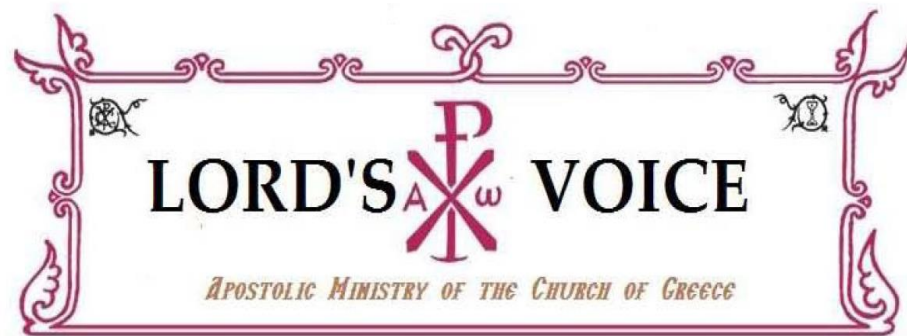
EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Romans 12; 61-24*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 9:1-8*

NEXT, SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 2019 7TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW
Seven Holy Youths of Ephesus

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to Romans 15; 1-17*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 9:27-35*



67TH YEAR JULY 28 2019 PAMPHLET #30 (3452)

GIFTS AND THE CHURCH

The definition of the Church was handed down to us from her former persecutor and her later preeminent Apostle, Paul: The Church is the body of Christ. Often the Apostle revolves around this god-given reality, trying to help us to correctly perceive its saving dimensions. Initially he reminds us that every body has many members: “if everything were one member, then where is the body?” (1 Cor. 12:19). And a little before today’s Epistle Passage of his to the Romans will give us a wonderful definition of Christians: “Members of one another”.

Members of Christ

In two words, he expresses the strongest and most fervent form of human sociability: the one is the member of the other. And all of us, the many, are one body in Christ. This is the only true and saving sociability, that is not based on emotional altruisms, but in the fact that Christ was pleased to make us members of His body. Only in this framework are we able to understand the teaching concerning divine gifts, that we read in today’s Epistle Reading. Three are the windows, which give the necessary light for us to see it better:

THE GOSPEL ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO ROMANS 12: 6-14

Brethren, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

1) Christ is the source but also the purpose of divine gifts, we're not dealing with human achievements but with divine gifts. Consequently there is no room for human haughtiness and projection. The genuine charismatics, when they felt the temptation of egotism threatening, were asking from God to take back their gift. And one works his gift authentic only, when he "works for the Lord". The aim of the asceticism of all the gifts is the glory of Christ and of His Church. Furthermore, in the person of the other member, who reaps the ministry of our gift, we must always see Christ. Thus to Him "we return" the gift that He gave us. Only thus is the gift correctly utilized and it bears fruit for us "unto thirty and unto sixty and unto one hundred".

Receive and offer

1) The gifts are given according to the measure of each one's receptivity. Each one himself becomes cause of receiving the greater or lesser gift" (Zygvavnos). The river of divine gifts, says the sacred Chrysostom, flows richly but fills "as much as it finds a vessel of faith offered to it". A certain peculiar king told his subjects to bring him a gift to his birthday of a little water. Most people took small vessels and some in an undignifiedly settled in [bringing] a thimble. When however, the king returned their

vessels to them full of gold coins, everyone blessed those least "naïve ones", who sweated carrying water with a barrel. The "water" that we give to the heavenly King, is our good disposition and our zeal to work honorably. All the "gold" of the gifts and their fruitfulness is God's. The honorable utilization of all the gifts, the Apostle exhorts with intensity. He did not simply say give something but with abundance. Nor simply that you preside in good works but with zeal. Nor simply to give charity but with joy. Nor simply to show interest in the others, but also without lethargy. In everything, he wants us to be not of the lesser but of the greater effort.

2) The asceticism of the gifts does not have any relationship with individual championships. It is an ecclesiastical event. It aims only at the edification of the body of the Church. Even the anchorites did not go to the desert, in order to achieve individual ascetical feats, or to self improve as individuals. They went as members of the Church. Every drop from their ascetical sweats, waters and cools the entire Church. «Being steadfast in prayer» the hermit Anthony the Great «supported the universe with his prayers». All the gifts without exception, which are commemorated in today's reading, refer to the relationships of brothers and cultivate communion between them. Even the «individual» joy from the hope of the future goods as well as the «individual» patience in afflictions, not only illumines and supports the entire Church, but they also call those outside of her, to enter and to become communicants of her gifts.

"Love is greater than everything"

After all these things, how can Chrysostom not characterize love as the "mother of all gifts"? This chief gift, in order to be able to "give birth" and to strengthen the asceticism of all the other gifts, must, according to Paul, not be artificial but "unhypocritical". And as if the Apostle is not satisfied merely by this