

togetherness" of the Church. Only with such harmony are we able with "one mouth and one heart" to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The glorification of God without the one "adopting" the other is inconceivable. How are we able, keeping distances between us, to glorify the one God, Who, in order to adopt everyone, stretched out His hands on the Cross?

So is a God glorified or spoken against, when a former heterodox who converted to Orthodoxy bitterly confesses: "I have fought hard from then when I became Orthodox. The Orthodox Church, whereas, on the one hand, offers true worship, historical continuity and apostolic succession, on the other hand, it presents coldness, social formality and intense death ethnicism. Those attending church, did not make me feel like a member of the parish. It would be hard for me to return back to my previous confession, now that I live the truth. I have not however, tasted true love. Is there, I wonder, the truth without true love?"
Is there, really, strong Orthodox faith without love?

Archim. B. L.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4, 2019 7TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, *Seven*

Holy Youths of Ephesus.

tone of the week : *Plagal Second Tone*

Orthos : *Seventh Orthros Gospel*

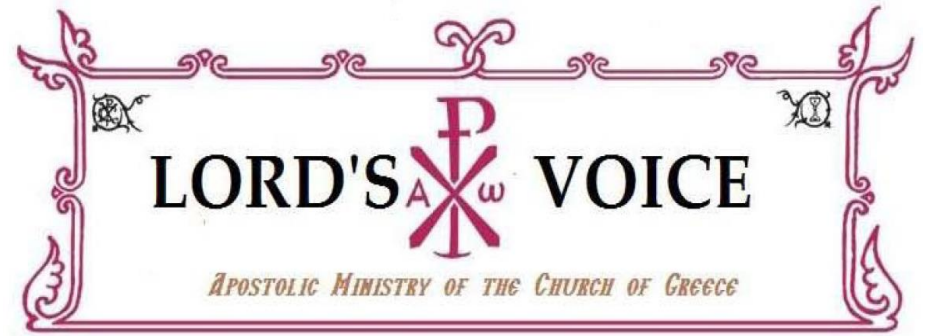
Epistle Reading: *St. Paul's Letter to Romans 15:1-7*

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 9:27-35*

NEXT, SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 2019 8TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, *Euplus the Holy Martyr & Archdeacon of Cantania, Our Holy Father Niphonus, Patriarch of Constantinople, Commemoration of St. Spyridon's Miracle in Corfu against the Turkish invasion of 1716, Blane, Bishop of Bute*

Epistle Reading: *St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 1:10-17*

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 14:14-22*



67TH YEAR AUGUST 4, 2019 PAMPHLET #31 (3453)

FAITH AND LOVE

Who would not be flattered, if they would tell him "you are strong", and furthermore in today's age, when optimism and the self esteem of most people are not at satisfactory levels. Probably however, he would "depart saddened", if they would add: "Because you are strong, you have more work. You will have to not be self-pleasing, but support also the weak ones, descending to their own level". We like praises for our whatsoever gifts, but we do not gladly accept the obligations that flow from them for their fruitful cultivation.

Condescending "for edification"

The highest gift is strong faith with deep knowledge of the truth in Christ, that is accompanied by prudence and discretion. A faith that will not easily be shaken by the inconsistency of people, by all types of afflictions and "silences of God". Such a faith sets out, of course, from sincere human seeking with prudent asceticism and study, but in the end it comprises a complete gift of God. He gives it from His infinite love and from His longing for our own salvation.

"To whoever however, accepts it, it creates responsibilities and a duty", the Apostle tells us today. And the sacred Chrysostom explains: "Did you become strong? To God render the reward that

THE GOSPEL ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO ROMANS 15:1-7

Brethren, we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

He strengthened you. And you will render it by helping your weak brother. Furthermore, we also were weak and God's grace strengthened us". This help has the not easily scornable price of us enduring the weaknesses of the weak ones, resulting in us not doing what is pleasing to our own self, but what is pleasing to them. Naturally, this has no relationship with selfish people-pleasing. We are not going to flatter them or to simply become likeable by them. "If with such a spirit, people like me, then I would not be a servant of Christ", Paul will say in another Epistle of his (Gal. 1:10). The criteria of such a condescension is only "the good" and the "edification" of the weak brothers.

Many times condescension entails also seeking the appropriate time to helpfully intervene to the weak brother. Very aptly Saint Theophylactos notes that "often, what you do help the other person, even if it is good, instead of edifying, tears down, because it happened untimely. For the untimely scolding does not edify". An event from the life of Saint Silouan the Athonite speaks on its own. Once in his youth, he stayed up all night being prodigal. The next day his father told him in a mild tone: "Where were you yesterday, my child? My heart was hurting". The Saint,

remembering the mild words of his father would say: "I did not reach the measures of my father. He, a meek and wise person, was always searching for the appropriate moment to make some comment to us. And he did this, so that he would not upset us".

"He did not please himself"

Christ is the unsurpassable model of utter condescension. That He first "did not please himself" does not mean that everything He did for our salvation, He did not do it voluntarily. It means that He voluntarily submitted the will of His human nature to the divine will "Father, not as I want, but as You do". The sacred Chrysostom explains: "Christ could have not been mocked. He could have not suffered all that He suffered, if He were seeking His own good as a human. But nevertheless, He did not wish to. He preferred our own salvation. So for this reason, Paul also did not want to simply show that Christ became a human, but that He accepted a dishonorable death for our sake, as has been prophesied also in the Psalms.

The reference to the Psalms, which was a basic object of study and content of Synagogue worship, gives cause to the Apostle to stress the importance of studying the Divine Scriptures. The par excellence fruits of this study are patience and hope, through which "we become strengthened and consoled" the Golden-tongued John will say. Without this "strengthening" and this consolation, which are always bound to one another, we are not able to find the strength to bear also "the weaknesses of the weak ones". And it is characteristic that Paul calls God here, "the God of patience and of consolation", distinguishing these so necessary gifts of His love for us.

In one mouth and one heart

The struggle of patience and understanding the weakness of others leads to oneness of mind, which is not a theoretical union of viewpoints but the harmony "in Christ Jesus", the "all