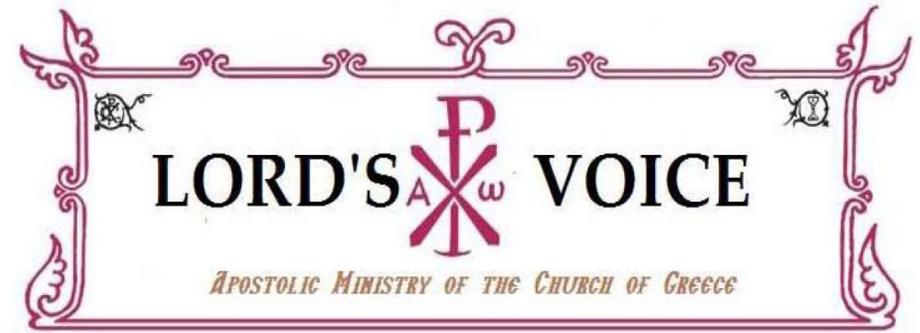


It is the fire that consumes every sick egotism and leads, according to Pascal, to “the humility of the heart”. And this humility brings joy, joy, joy. Tears of joy”. The triple repetition of the word, tries to render the ineffable abundance of joy, that whoever “edifies” in the edifice of Christ “gold, silver and precious stones”, tastes.

The “wise architect” Apostle Paul, will close this portion of his Epistle revealing to us that, in the end, the edifice of Christ is not an edifice outside of us, but it is we ourselves. We become the “temple of God”, to the degree that we “construct ourselves, able to contain the Holy Spirit”. On the contrary, when we allow our passions to corrupt this temple, God withdraws His grace, and as a natural result, our own “downfall” and perdition comes about. “Spare us, O Lord”!

Archim. B. L.



67TH YEAR AUGUST 18 2019 PAMPHLET #33 (3455)

ARCHITECT AND COLLEAGUES

Many have characterized the civil war as the greatest tragedy, from the time of the German Occupation. Obviously the wounds of this division still trouble our country. As a consolation and a wakeup call, the self evident ascertainment is often heard “that we do great works when we are united”. And justly the prime workers each time of this unity are honored and glorified.

How do you edify?

In today’s Epistle Reading the divinely preaching Paul calls us to an incomparably greater honor and glory in us becoming colleagues of God in the cultivation and making firm of the unity of the Church. It regards a chief cooperation, that aims in making all people, partakers of the Kingdom of God. And the Apostle, wanting to stress the honor but also our responsibility, characterizes the community of believers a “field” (and not fields of God) and “edifice (and not edifices) of God”. Justly, consequently, Saint John Damascene will ask: “How will we be a unified field of God, if we’re not walled in only by one fence, the fence of harmony, but we lift up between us, dividing walls? And how will we be the edifice of God, if we are broken up? And let us not forget that the field and the edifice do not get their name correspondingly from their cultivators or their builders, but from the owner. And the owner is one: God.

NEXT, SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2019 9TH SUNDAY OF

MATTHEW, *Floros & Lauros the Monk-martyrs of Illyria, Hermos the Martyr, Leontus the martyr, John & George, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Relics of Arsenios the Righteous of Paros, Afterfeast of the Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary, Constantine the New Martyr of Capua, Matthew the New Martyr of Gerakari*

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

EOTHINON : *Ninth Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians 3:9-17*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 14:22-34*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2019 10TH SUNDAY OF

MATTHEW, *Return of the Body of Bartholomew the Glorious Apostle, Titus the Apostle of the 70, John the Cappadocian, Epiphanius and Menas, Patriarchs of Constantinople, Holy Father John of Carpathia, Ebba, First Abbess of Coldingham*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians 4:9-16*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 17:14-23*

Brethren, we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it. For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw - each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

Paul will insist in the image of the edifice, and being in danger of being accused of boasting, he will call himself "a wise architect". He scatters however, our suspicions about boasting, saying that the "architectural degree" was not his own achievement but God gave it to me as a gift. "The Apostle is not being puffed up", Saint Theophylactos notes. "He simply wants to show that the wise architect is only he, who sets Christ as the foundation". From there on, each one must pay attention how he edifies. The building cannot exist, if we remain only at the foundations. Merely the foundation is not enough in a common Orthodox confession. Building is needed with the works. Faith becomes "gold, silver and precious stones", only when it is transubstantiated into a healthy ascesis, works of love and generally in a fruitfulness of virtues. If faith remains only words, then it ends up having a meager value of "wood, of grass and of reed". The final value and endurance of the materials will be judged and tried on the day of the Second Coming of Christ. Then the "fire of the love of God" will appear and act in all its glory.

An "illuminating fire" and a "burning fire"

According to the holy Fathers, the "God is love" of the Evangelist John, not only does not contradict the "our God is a burning fire" of the god-seer Moses, but the one definition completes the other one. Basil the Great will say: "The fire of the love of God is divided into two energies: the burning one, on the one hand, acts on the sinners, while the illuminating one, on the other hand, on the righteous ones". Both in the one, however, and in the other case, it does not cease being the "fire of love". Whoever freely responded to the love of God and worked in the field and in the edifice of the Church with the unifying humility and selfless zeal, are shown forth – both they and their works – "pure gold and silver". In other words, materials, that the fire of divine love "makes brighter".

On the contrary, whoever mixed up in their work, egotistical, selfish and passionate ambitions, ends up "grass and reed", which are devoured and "consumed" by the fire of the love of God. And naturally they would not be the "fire of love", if God leaves them and their works forever to defile and break up his Kingdom. The sacred Chrysostom says, in no uncertain terms, that the divine fire does not consume only the evil "edifice" of grass and reed, but also the badly "edifying" workers. He interprets, in other words, the "salvation by fire" not as a temporal burning, but as ceaseless and eternal hell.

Become the temple of God

Naturally, the "fire of eternal hell" will become the fire of divine love – according to the hymnology of the Triodion – for those who "never repented." Whoever freely called the divine fire to consume his sins with firm repentance, begins from here and from now, to enjoy the illuminating, sanctifying and saving power of the divine fire. Thus the chief scholar Pascal lived it, from then when he converted to faith, at 31 years of age. Describing the moving experience of meeting Christ, that he had, on the night of November 23, 1654, he begins with the word "fire". It regards a fire that is not an impersonal energy. It is "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and not the god of the philosophers".