

holy virtues of Christ. And this fruitfulness, is that which, more than every other “social offering”, is able to cover the real “necessary needs” of the person who is hungry for the true meaning of life. That’s why Anthony the Great’s visitor did not ask him questions, but he could not get his fill of looking at him. “It suffices for me to be seeing you, father”, he told him. In the person of the Saint, essentially “he was venerating” the icon of the person healed of the passions, who had reached to the “in the likeness” of the incarnate God.

Every struggle to make firm the Orthodox theology of the holy icons, in the end also supports Orthodox anthropology and soteriology. Only it does not refer to “struggles” of academic discussions, but primarily to a struggle for purification and personal sanctification.

Archim. B. L

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2019 SUNDAY OF THE 7TH
ECUMENICAL COUNCIL,** *Carpus, Papyrus, Agathodorus, &
Agathonica, the Martyrs of Pergamus, Chryssi the New Martyr of
Greece, Benjamin the Deacon, Florentios the Martyr of Thessaloniki,
Meletios of Pegas, Patriarch of Alexandria*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Plagal fourth Tone*

EOTHINON : *Sixth Orthros Gospel*

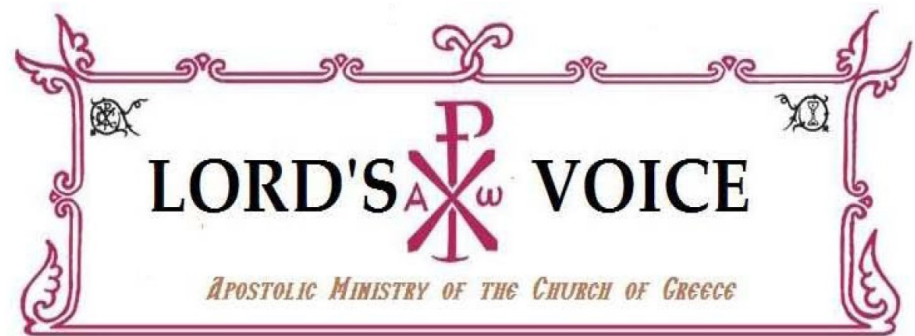
EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul’s Second Letter to Titus 3:8-15*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 8:5-15*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2019 6TH SUNDAY OF LUKE ,
*Artemius the Great Martyr of Antioch, Matrona the Righteous of
Chios, Gerasimus of Cephalonia, Andronicus the Righteous
Martyr*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul’s Second Letter to Corinthians 9:6-11*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 8:26-39*



67TH YEAR OCTOBER 13 2019 PAMPHLET #41 (3463)

LIVING ICONS

On today’s Sunday, our Church is holding the memory of the holy Fathers of the Seventh Holy and Ecumenical Synod, that was convoked in Nicaea of Bithynia in the year 787, under the presidency of the Patriarch of Constantinople Saint Tarasius. Three hundred fifty Orthodox bishops, to whom another seventeen hierarchs were added, with the intense presence of one hundred six monks who had suffered harsh persecutions by the iconoclast emperors Leo the 3rd Isaurus and his son Constantine the 5th, anathematized the heretics, who for more than fifty years, forbade the Orthodox Christians from honoring the venerable icons of Christ and His saints, because this comprised a supposed idolatry.

The most trustworthy truth

Today’s Epistle Reading, at a first glance, seems completely unrelated to the event. The Apostle Paul, writing to Titus, twice repeats the exhortation that the faithful should not simply perform, but should also preside in good works. However a more careful reading, witnesses that here, it is not simply an exhortation to a colorless altruism. The double exhortation of the true pastor is based on a “faithful saying”, to a trustworthy truth, about which Titus is called to speak with assurance and with authority.

EPISTLE ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO TITUS (TIT. 3:8-15)

Titus, my son, the saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned.

When I send Artemas or Tychicos to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful.

All who are with me send greeting to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

And this truth is anything other than a vague moralistic speech. As is shown by the three previous verses, it is the par excellence "good work" of God, the philanthropy of our Saviour Christ, who gave us rebirth with holy Baptism and gave us the capability of salvation and the inheritance of His Kingdom.

Thus it is stressed that our salvation is not based on our good works, but only on the infinite compassion of our Lord and God, who for us became a perfect man and was sacrificed on the Cross, becoming obedient to His Father unto death. Consequently, only then are our good works truly god-pleasing, and obtain a soteriological value, when they are placed in this obedience to the divine will, and when, in the person of our needy brother, we see the very incarnate Christ. The Image of God – no matter how much

"it was corrupted" or even if "blackened" – is each brother of ours, and furthermore, our helpless and destitute brother.

Theology of the icons

The Godbearing Fathers who comprised the 7th Ecumenical Synod, declared all these saving truths in the clearest manner. So for this reason, in the end, this Epistle Reading is the best summary of the meaning of the great feast of their memory. The holy Fathers did not say something new. They did not "invent" a new theology. They simply recapitulated the dogmas of all the previous Holy Synods, articulating with clarity the truth revealed by Christ related to his Theandric person.

This treasure, the holy Apostles first handed down to us, with Paul being preeminent. And the holy Fathers, the "precise guardians of the apostolic traditions," preached that God became man for us, by uniting in the one Person of Christ, the divine with the human nature. His divine nature is uncreated, invisible, dispassionate and indescribable. His human nature is created, visible, passible and describable. And since as a man, Christ is describable and visible, we are able to have His icon and venerate it, expressing our good worship to Him. We render worship and veneration not to the material of the icon and to the colors, but to His God-manly person. Analogously we venerate the icons of His Saints, not of course, worshipfully, but honoring them as his genuine friends and imitators.

Become a living icon

Each believer however, - and why not -, becomes a venerable icon of Christ, who struggles to resemble Christ, keeping the "faithful saying", that the holy Apostles handed down to us. Thus he does not remain "fruitless", but he bears the fruit of the