

the Great first, interpreting the words of Paul “one God and father of all, who is above all and through all and in everyone” say: “above all as Father, as a beginning and source, while through all, through the Word, while in everyone in the Holy Spirit”. With these words it is very clear that in the Church we are living the mystery of unity in both its dimensions: both with other people and with God. And in both “unities” however, man does not lose his integrity, his self consciousness and freedom”. Nor in his union with others does he become a will-less piece of a formless and impersonal mass, nor in his union with God is he dissolved, like a drop that falls in the ocean.

A very triumphant proof that the unity of the body of the Church is the most ideal «greenhouse» for the distinct beauty of each human person to be developed, is the last verse of today’s passage, where the Apostle refers to the variety of gifts which are given by God «well and for the benefit» of each one and «for the good» of the whole Church.

Archim. B. L

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2019 10TH SUNDAY OF LUKE ,

Forefeast of the Conception by St. Anna of the Most Holy Theotokos , Patapius the Righteous of Thebes, Apollo, Tychikos, Sosthenes, Cephas, Epaphroditos, Caesar, & Onesiphoros, Apostles of the 70.

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

EOETHINON : *Third Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *St.Paul’s Letter to Ephesians 4 : 1 - 7*

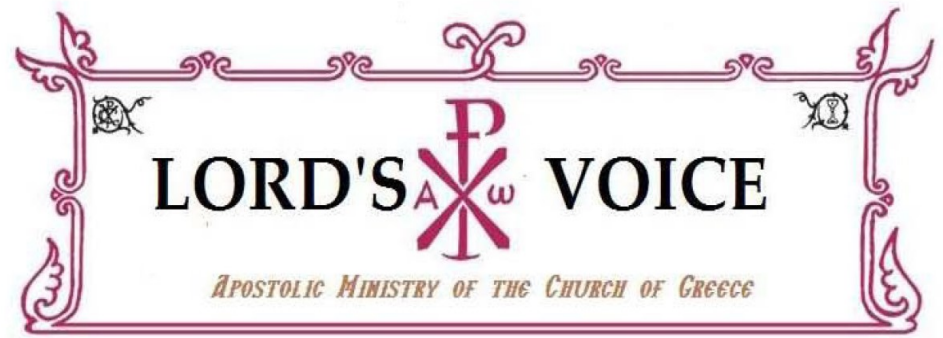
GOSPEL READING: *Luke 13 :10 - 17*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2019 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE

Eleutherios the Hieromartyr, Bishop of Illyricum, and his mother Anthia, The Martyr Susannah the Deaconess .

EPISTLE READING: *St.Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy 1:8-18*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 14:16 - 24*



67TH YEAR DECEMBER 8 2019 PAMPHLET #49 (3471)

THE SAVING UNITY

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Hebrews says that “the word of God is sharper than every double edged sword” (4:7). Today the use of double edged swords is not customary. We find them more often in museum collections or as decorations in living rooms. O woe, however, if we make “the sword of the Spirit” a living room decoration. “What meaning has a theology, which is not action?” a contemporary theologian justifiably asks. But also, what meaning has a theology that is wielded as a weapon against unbelievers and does not knead those who formulate it?»

The fruits of humble-mindedness

Paul wants to avert such a danger in beginning today’s Epistle Reading from the second part of his Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first part, he presented the teaching about the delivering work of Christ, which embraces Jews and gentiles without discretion. Now he presents the practical results of this teaching. For the Apostle, dogma and life are two views of the same reality. So for this reason, it is very natural for him to emphasize in his exhortations, by reminding again, that he is “bound in the Lord”. “The memory of the bonds suffices”, Theodoretos will also note,

EPISTLE ST. PAUL'S LETTER TO EPHESIANS 4:1 - 7

Brethren, I, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

"in order to stir even the most senseless people to the working of virtues.

." While it is worth it for one to admire that the Apostle boasts about his bonds more than a king about his diadems". And how can Paul not boast of these, when together with the sacred Chrysostom he remembers "that our own Master was also bound, who loosed the sins of the universe". So for this reason, "let us also rejoice, even if we are not in sensorial bonds, by being bound to the obedience of His commandments". Only with such a binding, are we able to follow a way of life worthy of our high calling. Is there a higher calling, asks Saint Theophylactus, than "for us to be sitting together with Christ on His throne and reigning together with him"?

However, contrary to royal enthronements, this honorary calling presupposes primarily, ascesis and humble-mindedness. Humble-mindedness, as a "virtue of every matter" according to the Golden-tongued one, is the first thing the Apostle seeks. The words "humble" and "humility", as they were transplanted from the ancient Greek world to the Christian one, changed meaning, showing very clearly how the Christian spirit reformed human society. In ancient Greek literature, the word 'humble' usually means the socially unimportant one, and befits mainly slaves. For

the first time, it obtains a completely positive content in the New Testament, where, as a model of humility, Christ is projected (Phil. 2:6). And subsequently, humility is considered a foundational mark of the "new" man. The following virtues that Paul presents, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and love, are not able to "blossom" without humble-mindedness.

The fire that unites

The image, of course, of flowers contains the danger of competition about "which is the most beautiful and most fragrant one". Probably for this reason, the Golden-tongued John, instead of the image of a refreshing bouquet of flowers, prefers the image of dry wood, in order to liken souls delivered from "dampness" and the puffing up of haughtiness. Thus, as easily flammable, it is easier for them to unite with the fire of the Holy Spirit: fire, when it finds dry wood, "makes one and all fire. While when they are dry, it neither acts nor does it stick together".

"Fired up" from this fire, the Apostle will break out in the most wonderful hymn of unity of Christians, with words that remind only of panegyric cannon shots: "One body, one Spirit, "one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God". He will make the same loud proclamation— here with much pain —to the Corinthians who are threatened by tendencies to break up. "We all, in one spirit, in one body were baptized". Saint John will also share his pain asking: "how is it possible for you to have disputes who received one Spirit, were watered from one spring and support yourselves on the same hope? God wants us to not merely be bound between us, to not merely be peaceful and have love between us, but to all be one soul and one body".

United and distinct

This wondrous unity of Christians is not a human achievement, but a work of the Holy Trinity. The holy Fathers, with Athanasius