

HOW WE OUGHT TO FAST

“Are you fasting? Prove it to me through the works themselves. Which works does he mean? If you see a poor person, give him charity. If you see an enemy, be reconciled with him. If you see a beautiful woman, pass by her. So, let not only the mouth be fasting, but also the eye and the hearing, and the feet and the hands and all the members of our body. Let the hands be fasting, remaining pure from thievery and greed. Let the feet be fasting, cutting away from roads which lead to sinful sites. Let the eyes be fasting, being exercised in not ever falling lewdly on beautiful faces, nor gazing at the beauties of others... Let the hearing also be fasting. And the fasting of hearing is to not accept evil speech and slanders... Let the mouth also be fasting from lewd words and mockeries. Because what benefit do we have, when we are abstaining from poultry and fish, but we are biting and devouring our brethren?”

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

SUNDAY, MARCH 01 2020, FORGIVENESS SUNDAY, *The Holy Righteous Martyr Eudocia the Samaritan , Andonina the New Martyr, David the Archbishop*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Fourth Tone*

EOTHINON : *Fourth Eothinon Gospel*

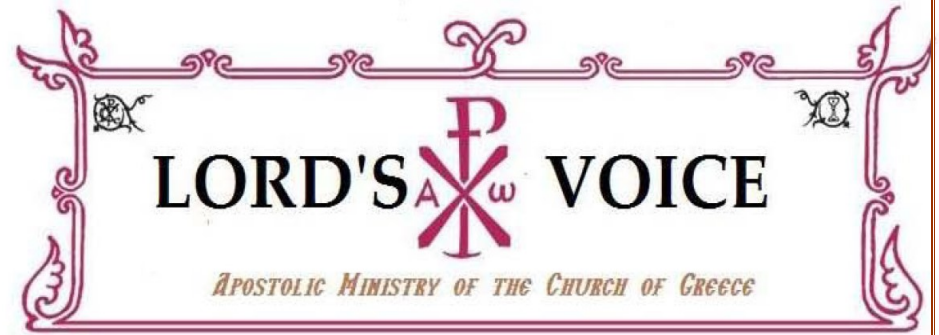
EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 6:14-21*

SUNDAY, MARCH 08, 2020, SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY, *Theophylact the Confessor, Bishop of Nicomedia , Hermas the Apostle of the 70, Paul the Confessor, Dometios the Righteous, Felix of Burgundy, Enlightener of East Anglia*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40*

GOSPEL READING: *John 1:43-51*



68TH YEAR MARCH 01 2020 PAMPHLET #09 (3483)

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF LENT

We are living in a reality where Lent has lost much of its true meaning. Usually we limit ourselves to fasting, which means a change of food, and we strengthen our presence in the ecclesiastical life with our participation in the Divine Liturgy of Sunday and in the service of the Salutations, awaiting Holy Week. It is not easy however, for us to change the program of our life. Nevertheless, we see that Christ is not asking us to abandon the world and our occupations. He is seeking a change of our heart, of the way with which we think and act, and the beginning within us of a mystical revolution that has to do with three presuppositions which He himself and the Church pose, and this shows clearly in the gospel of Cheesefare Sunday.

Forgiveness

The first presupposition has to do with the remission of people's transgressions. We usually pray to God to forgive our own sins. Christ, however, seeks that we set out from the transgressions, from the mistakes, the evil which people have done to us. The difficult thing is for us to forgive the others, especially when they have not asked for our forgiveness. On the social level, this shows clearly from our refusal to be

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 6:14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

"And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

lenient to the others, whereas we justify our own selves for our mistakes. This path, however, does not belong to God and the relationship which He wants with us.

God functions paternally for each one of us. He embraces and forgives. But if we do not first forgive, then our heart is not able to be receptive to the forgiveness of God. He grants it to us, we however, do not change through it.

Not showing off

The second presupposition is disassociating fasting from showing off. Fasting concerns a person's relationship with God. We may be fasting as the body of Christ, which is the Church. However, fasting is not done in order for others to be seeing us and praising us, but in order for God our Father to know it "in secret". The word of Christ completely opposes the pharisaical-hypocritical spirit of His age, in which those fasting, wanted to show that they are keeping the commandments of the

Mosaic law, by not washing their face, and by appearing gloomy. However, for Christ, fasting is the beginning of a mystical, heartfelt, approach of man and God, a proof that a person wants God to dwell in his heart, and not to be receiving praises from people. Fasting is the beginning of us conceiving the mystical seed of the kingdom of God within us, a conversation with heaven, and a patient expectation of Christ saying: "O good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord" (Mt. 25:21).

Storing up treasure in heaven

The third presupposition is storing up treasure in heaven. We people have certain priorities in our life. These include material goods, our relationships, our family, our work, our amusement. Faith does not reject all these things, especially when they are dealing with love, which makes us share its fruits with our neighbor. However, they are not enough to give the meaning of eternity to our life, because they make us consider what is temporal as eternal. Lent is our opportunity to struggle to cast off to the side "every earthly care" and to seek "the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt. 6:33). Lent is our opportunity to understand and live Christ, as the meaning and treasure of our life. Christ becomes a man and makes man god. Then, having Christ as our treasure, we can enjoy our every occupation, our every relationship, our time itself, because everything obtains a new perspective, illumined by the love of God, and separated from evil and sin.

In the world which makes us question why, therefore, we need to fast, since fasting does not secure glory for us, since we combine it with forgiveness, which presupposes abdicating our right to be right, since it makes us be deprived for the sake of Christ, our Church calls us to not fear! May we be granted to follow the path of Lent and to meet with Christ and our neighbor in the kingdom of God! Have a good struggle!

Fr. T. M.