

with that which faith does not forbid, when the many people are not ready to accept it. The fullness of time will come. The matter of the food sacrificed to idols was solved definitively in Church with the abolition of idolatry. God knows when the whatsoever updating of the message of faith is able to become accepted by the believers.

Authority in Church means sacrifice and humility. It means discretion and condescension. It means primarily, an encounter of the persons who believe, in the framework of an ecclesiastical community. All three points have to do with love. That which leads man to the path of the Kingdom of the Heavens, that which the Church will always be and maintain.

Fr. Th. M.

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2021 JUDGMENT SUNDAY (MEATFARE SUNDAY) The Holy Martyred Bishops of Cherson: Basileus, Ephraim, Eugene, Capito, Aetherius, Agathodorus, and Elpidius, Lavrentios of Megara, the Righteous, Paul the Simple

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Plagal Second Tone*

EOTHINON : *Sixth Eothinon*

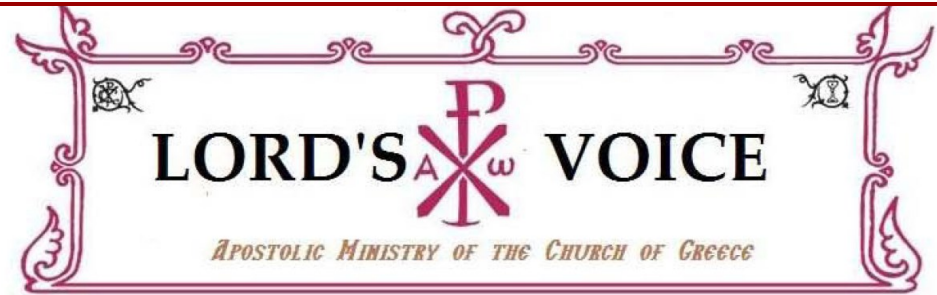
EPISTLE READING : *St. Paul's 1st Letter to Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2*

GOSPEL READING : *Matthew 25:31-46*

SUNDAY MARCH 14, 2021 FORGIVENESS SUNDAY, *Benedict the Righteous of Nursia, Euschemon the Confessor, Bishop of Lampasakos*

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

GOSPEL READING : *Matthew 6:14-21*



69TH YEAR MARCH 07 2021 PAMPHLET # 10 (3536)

THE OBSTACLE OF AUTHORITY

In life, there always are the strong and the weak ones. Strength doesn't only have to do with physical strength or authority. It also exists in man's relationship with the Church and with those whom she has appointed to be in charge of people. These are the bishops, the spiritual fathers, the priests in the parishes, but also whoever, thanks to knowledge, their spiritual progress, their dedication to the work of God, have become distinguished. To everyone, the gifts were given by God in order to serve their least brethren. Especially to the pastors, the believers owe obedience, respect, recognition of God's work which they are performing. However, the pastors also, because they are a typos of Christ to their flock, should not allow themselves to make the authority that was given to them, a "stumbling block for the weaker ones", obstacles for the weak ones (1 Cor. 8:9).

The Apostle Paul gives this counsel, since he sees the problem of food from the sacrifices to the idols, having brought a stir in the ecclesiastical community of Corinth. It is not the foods, of course, that define a man's position before God. However, Paul sees that a portion of the people are being scandalized. So, he suggests to the pastors, even if they have the authority to eat from the meat of the idols, to not do it, to cure the thought of the weaker ones.

EPISTLE ST. PAUL 1ST LETTER TO CORINTHIANS 8:8-13;9:1-2

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

The Apostle's exhortation has a wider content. How much are the others, within or outside the ecclesiastical community, able to regulate our behavior? If they associate faith in Christ with unimportant and daily things, what attitude are we called to keep, not only the pastors, but also every Christian, in order for them to not be scandalized?

The critique of those outside the community

Paul poses three presuppositions. First, he refers to the life of the community itself. The Christian is not able to think and act, based on how and what all those who maintain that they believe, desire, but who in essence are far from the life of the diocese, of the parish, of the monastery. People want to have an opinion about everything. This, in our age, has intensified with the almightiness of the Means of Mass Communications, and especially the Internet. The criterion for many people, is what will be said, how it will be commented on, and what will be written or uploaded, about their works. Thus, they are in a hurry to judge those within the Church, based on the general ideas about faith.

Here we Christians are called to show mainly philanthropy and moderation. It is, furthermore, the only thing that those outside the community see. We answer, but we also proceed on the path of faith.

The work for progress in faith

The second presupposition is the reminder that in Church, authority is not a dynastic behavior or a reward for a per chance personal advancement in faith, for them who excelled to be glorified. Paul asks from the more advanced people to condescend to the weakness of the weaker ones. To not offend them, but to work, so that they can also distinguish what is essential and what is not. This is love. It takes in mind, the needs of everyone in the community, and does not function with haughtiness. The realization of what faith means, makes him who knows to place himself in the position of the weaker person. This does not mean a reconciliation to weakness, but a struggle so that gradually, the weaker person can also be enlightened and progress to what is essential.

Tradition and rights

Finally, authority in the ecclesiastical community is also associated with the abdication from the whatsoever rights flow out of it, for the sake of love. The Christian prefers to be deprived himself, rather than to become cause for the others to be scandalized, and to be in danger of perishing. Deprivation today, has to do more with the calling of Christianity, especially of the pastors, for balance between the letter and spirit of the tradition. The tradition should not function as an imitation of the past, but also as an opening to the present. To become timely, without the Christians ceasing to be the salt of the earth. To discuss with the today, without however, being indifferent about the fact that the word, the manner, the customs, and the symbols, have a history. We Christians preserve everything with moderation. We cast the seed of faith in the way that it can touch contemporary man, but also, we suspend the right to live