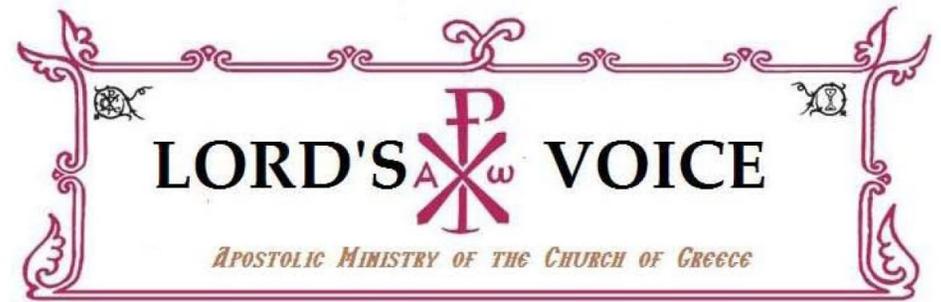


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70TH YEAR DECEMBER 11 2022 PAMPHLET # 50 (36268)

THE SUPPER OF THE KINGDOM

Sunday of the Forefathers today, and as we are hopefully approaching the great and solemn feast of the Nativity of our Lord in the flesh, our Church considers it appropriate to remind us of one of the more instructive Gospel parables. A certain man wanted to host a great supper, a brilliant reception, we would say, and he decided to invite many to attend as dinner guests, and to participate in the feast. Everything was organized to perfection; invitations had been prepared and delivered to the recipients from a while before. Who, therefore, wouldn't want to receive such an invitation? Who, then, would not envy the guests of the honorable host, and would not wish to be in their place?

But when the appointed hour arrived, and while the supper was already ready, that man sent his servant to inform those invited, to come to his house, where he was waiting to receive them personally, to taste the exquisite dishes, and to enjoy its rich goods. But then something very odd happened; the guests of the host, one after the other, sent the servant away, unsuccessful, some with kindness, others more abruptly, and they rejected the host's invitation, citing various seemingly good excuses for their refusal to attend the dinner, but also to honor in this way, the one who had invited them.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2022 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE.

Daniel the Stylite of Constantinople , Luke the New Stylite of Chalcedon , Martyrs Acepisus and Aeithalas. *Holy Martyrs Miracus and Barsabas , Leontios the Righteous of Monemvasia , The Glorious King Nikephoros Phokas.*

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 14:16 - 24*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *First Tone*

EOTHINON : *Fourth Eothinon*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2022 SUNDAY BEFORE

NATIVITY

Sebastian the Martyr & his Companions, Our Righteous Father Michael Syngellon the Confessor.

EPISTLE READING: *St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40*

GOSPEL READING: *Matthew 1:1-25*

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Lk. 14, Mt. 24:14)

The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'

A thoughtless rejection

The dinner guests were certainly not obliged to initially accept the host's invitation; moreover, their various obligations were certainly very important to them. However, by rejecting the invitation, these people showed in the clearest way, that they assessed their personal affairs as more urgent than the dinner, and that they despised him who with such a disposition to offer, had prepared it. As indeed, they had been invited a long time ago, they could have adjusted

their schedule in time, so as to both settle their obligations, but also to not be prevented from attending the great feast that awaited them. Instead of this, however, they chose to ignore and insult the host, just so they wouldn't be discomforted themselves.

God himself, is my brethren, the honorable host who invites us to the eternal Supper of His Kingdom. However, we very often, invoking various pretexts, reasonable and legitimate, possibly, do not respond to His invitation. We do not, alas, rate His invitation as incomparably more important than any earthly care and secular occupation. We have ordered our priorities in a distorted way, eliminating God from our daily lives, and being indifferent towards the great gift of salvation that He offers us with all His love. This is how we ourselves condemn our own selves to misery, since we choose to live without God, far from His presence, which gives us life, and we turn our existence into an infinite hell.

The chosen are few

Man seems, unfortunately, many times not to realize that it is he himself who needs God, and not God who needs man. The Kingdom of God is already present, and its coming does not depend on our own attitude towards it. The Host will definitely provide the great supper; even if those who were originally destined to attend it, miss the mark and fail, their place will in no case remain vacant. It will be replaced by others, who will willingly respond to God's love and will be worthy of the Master's joy, even if apparently they did not meet the criteria of the invitation from before; however, they have the desire to participate in the great supper, as they fully realize its value, and possess the awareness that they have not been rightfully invited to it, but by grace, justified by the infinite mercy of God.

Archim. A. A