

thanksgiving, of gratitude, and of doxology. The sacred Chrysostom said that even if you don't receive what you asked of God, you were greatly benefited. Because there is no greater benefit than to remain united with God through prayer. May the Risen Lord, with the intercessions of the Greatmartyr George and all the Saints, free us from every form of captivity, enlighten us with the light of His commandments, and help us to prayerfully present "ourselves and one another and all our lives" to Him.

Archim. N.K

SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2023 THOMAS SUNDAY *George the Great Martyr and Triumphant , Martyrs Emmanuel, Theodore, George, Michael and the other George of Samothrace*

EPISTLE READING: *Acts of the Apostles 12:1-11*

GOSPEL READING : *John 20: 19-31*

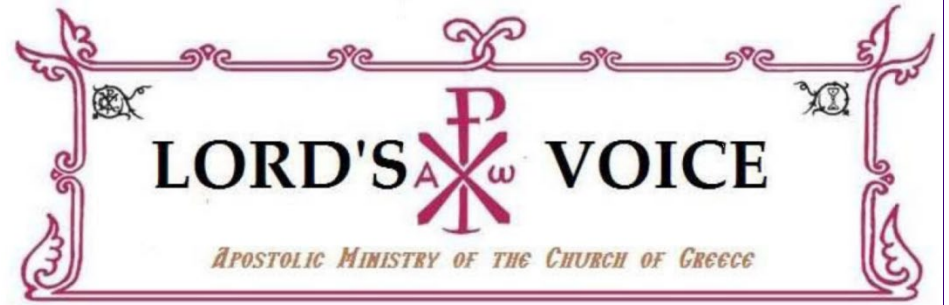
TONE OF THE WEEK :

EOTHINON : *First Eothinon*

SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2023 SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN , James the Apostle and brother of St. John the Theologian, Argyra the New Martyr, Clement the Hymnographer, Jason and Sosipater the Apostles of the 70 and their Companions ,Holy Martyr Cercyra , Our Holy Father John of Kaloktenos, Metropolitan of Thebes, Basil, Bishop of Montenegro, Nektarios the New Martyr of Optina

EPISTLE READING : *Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7*

GOSPEL READING : *Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8*



71ST YEAR APRIL 23 2023 PAMPHLET # 17 (3647)

LIBERATOR OF THE CAPTIVES

Today is the first Sunday after the feast of feasts, Holy Pascha, that is, our passing over from the slavery of sin to the freedom of the children of God.

In fact, this year it also coincides with the celebration of the holy Greatmartyr George the Trophy Bearer, who was born in the saint-producing Cappadocia of eminent parents, around the end of the 3rd c. AD. He quickly rose to higher military positions. He boldly protested when the Emperor Diocletian, among other measures against Christianity, forbade the Christians to have political offices, while those who remained steadfast in the faith, faced death. George did not hesitate to confess Christ, as the only true God, resulting in him suffering horrible tortures and, finally, beheading. Since then, the young martyr has been honored by the faithful, and praised throughout the Christian world, and not only, especially as a liberator of captives. I wonder, does it only refer to the physical captivity of people in times of wars, raids etc.? We think that, just as the Risen Lord Jesus frees man from the captivity of sin, the devil and death, so also Saint George, as an imitator of the

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 12:1 - 11)

About that time, Herod the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword; and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the Church. The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison; and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Wrap your mantle around you and follow me." And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him. And Peter came to himself, and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

Liberator of our souls, frees those who call upon him in faith, from captivity to the passions; from the confinement to submissiveness, and from the attachment to the worship of the idols of every age.

The prayer of the Church

Our Epistle reading also refers to persecutions; and specifically, to the persecution unleashed against the Church by King Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod, the slaughterer of the innocent infants of Bethlehem. Initially, "he slayed James the brother of John the (Theologian) by the sword - he killed him by beheading -" (Acts 12:2). And he did not settle for this abominable thing, but, in the days of the Passover, he arrested Peter and imprisoned him, closely guarding him by four quartets of soldiers, intending to bring him to public trial after the Passover. However, "there was extensive prayer done by the church to God for him - - the church was ceaselessly praying to God for Peter". And the grace of God freed Peter from the shackles of prison, and by the power of the Risen One, he continued to preach the name of Christ, and to convince people to believe in the Gospel of salvation. For this reason, the Church has always exhorted the faithful to pray with vigilance and piety; love and devotion, for themselves and for others.

Ontological request

But what is prayer? Prayer is the reference of man to God, his conversation with God or, as Saint John of Sinai notes, the union of man and God. Because prayer leads man up to his archetype, God, and makes him a true hypostasis. It is the greatest privilege that man has, which, however, he cannot appreciate, when he does not have a corresponding spiritual experience and maturity. And, of course, this experience is gained with the constant effort and striving for us to learn to pray; to have the memory of God. What the sunlight is for physical eyes, prayer also is, for the eyes of the soul.

With this, man comes to know God better, and he partakes in the divine life. He defeats the carnal train of thought, he expands his conscience, and correctly orients his being. That is why prayer cannot possibly be limited to the narrow context of the request and the fulfillment. First of all, it has the character of