

They become poor and modest for the sake of Christ, and yet they enrich their fellow human beings with the love of God. They are dishonored, mocked, maligned and yet, they are glorified by God, because they have His own ethos. And while they do good to others, they are punished as if they were criminals".

These contrasting figures help the believer to understand the paradox of the Christian life in relation to the way of thinking of the world. That is why the author of the aforesaid letter says that true Christians are to the world, what the soul is to the human body. May we make every effort to resemble them, so that we are worthy of our name as Christians. A name that was given for the first time to the Disciples of Christ, in Antioch, during the period of the persecutions.

Archim. N.K

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2023 SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN, Isidore the Martyr of Chios , *The Holy Martyr Glyceria,* Holy Hieromartyr Therapontus , Holy New Martyrs Mark and John, *Sergios the Confessor , Alexandros the Martyr ,Pausikakos, Bishop of Synnada*

EPISTLE READING : *Acts of the Apostles 11:19-30*

GOSPEL READING : *John 4:5-42*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Mode 4*

EOTHINON : *Eothinon 7*

SUNDAY, MAY 21 2023 SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN, *Constantine and Helen Equals to the Apostles, Pachomios the Righteous New Martyr.*

EPISTLE READING : *Acts of the Apostles 26:1 12-20*

GOSPEL READING : *John 9:1-38*



71ST YEAR MAY 14 2023 PAMPHLET # 20 (3650)

THOSE PESECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE"

The first Church, as we see during this period, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, walks the way of the Lord with deep faith and evangelical love. The persecutions against the Christians, the sorrows, the adversities had reached their climax, taking into account the great persecution that had broken out around 36 AD due to the stoning of the Protomartyr Stephen. And yet, as it is mentioned in our passage, "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number, having believed, returned to the Lord." The power of God was with the Disciples of Christ, that is why many people, despite the persecutions, believed and came to the Lord.

And here we observe the following paradox: the Disciples are persecuted "for righteousness' sake", that is, because of their adherence to the word of God and their fidelity to the truth of the Gospel. And because the power of God overshadowed them, they overcame every personal and collective weakness and natural fear. A direct consequence of the persecution was their dispersion outside the narrow borders of Jerusalem and Palestine. However, with this exodus,

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 11:19-30)

In those days, those apostles who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none except Jews. But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord. News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company of people; and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians. Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabos stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world; and this took place in the days of Claudius. And the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea, and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

they preached the word of God in other countries as well, in Phoenicia (NW of Palestine on the Mediterranean coast), Cyprus and Antioch, and thus surprisingly much spiritual fruit came about to the glory God. In this way, we understand what the power of God means to change something particularly bitter into something sweet and beneficial.

The persecuted Christian conscience

So, we are talking about persecutions and martyrdom. Christianity from the beginning of its historical appearance, was persecuted with particular cruelty. There are innumerable multitudes of holy Martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Christ. In fact, it is characteristic that even in our days, Christianity is perhaps the only religion that is persecuted in every way, and has martyrs to present, all over the world, even today.

Martyrdom was considered by believers as the top of the scale of moral actions that a person can offer to God. Always, however, on the condition that it was not voluntary and impulsive, but connected with love and the consciousness that the Martyr is participating, through his martyrdom, in the passion and the Resurrection of Christ. And here precisely lies the significant difference, which fundamentally distinguishes Christian martyrdom from other forms of self-sacrifice and heroism. The power of Christ's love and forgiveness surpasses the temporary and apparent supremacy, the authority, the violence, and the power of the persecutors. Because all this is, in reality, an indication of extreme weakness, ignorance, passion and darkness of conscience.

The theology of martyrdom

The unknown author of the Letter to Diognetus, a famous apologetic text of the 2nd c. AD., referring to the presence of Christians in the world, and the persecutions that they unjustly undergo, writes, among other things, that the faithful: "Love everyone and are persecuted by everyone. The people of the world, while ignoring and scorning them, condemn them. They are killed and yet they are revived, they regain life.