

TRUE JOY

"Elder, sometimes I can't be happy, and then I think that maybe joy is not for me."

"What do you say? Isn't joy for you? And who is it for? For the tangalaki (the little demon)? Have you lost it? Joy is for man. God did not give sadness; he only gave joy.

"But why, Elder, do I not always have joy within me?"

"When your mind is not on God, how can you feel the joy of God? You forget Christ and your mind keeps turning to the jobs and to the engines, and thus your spiritual engine stops. So, start the Jesus Prayer and soft chanting, and then you will run and turn like a top around Christ.

Only near Christ does one find real, genuine joy, because only Christ gives real joy and consolation. Where Christ, there is true joy and paradisaic rejoicing. Those who are far from Christ, have no real joy.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28 , 2024. 15TH SUNDAY OF

LUKE *Ephraim the Syrian, Isaac the Syrian, Bishop of Ninevah, James the Righteous, Palladios the Hermit of Antioch, Theodosius of Totma , Grace the Martyr*

EPISTLE READING : *St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy 4:9-15*

GOSPEL READING : *Luke 19:1 -10*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *First Tone*

ETHINON : *First Eothinon*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4 , 2024. 15TH SUNDAY OF

MATTHEW *Afterfeast of the Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple, Isidore of Pelusium , Nicholas the Confessor , Hieromartyr Abramius , John the Righteous, Bishop of Irinopolis , Theodosios the Righteous , Joseph the New Martyr of Aleppo*

EPISTLE READING : *St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:6-15*

GOSPEL READING : *Matthew 22:35-46*



72ST YEAR JANUARY 28 2024 PAMPHLET #04 (3687)

OUR MEETING WITH CHRIST

We could say that today's Gospel passage is an acquired hope and joy for us, because the love of God, if we would wish, will save each of us, no matter how sinful we may be. Until the end of our lives, Christ will be trying to meet us many times. If we accept Him once personally, He will change our lives and will lead us to salvation. Let us follow Zacchaeus in the search for Christ.

Jesus and Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, a person hated in society, since his profession was intertwined with theft, fraud and lying. There was no respect, no appreciation for his person from anyone. People hated him and he lived and coexisted with the passion of avarice.

But he learned that Christ came to Jericho. He was sure that if he would meet Him, he could change his passionate life. It seems that his greed, but also his isolation from society had tired him out. Riches and material pleasures did not give him the happiness he was waiting for. So, he heard that

GOSPEL READING : LUKE 19:1-10)

At that time, Jesus was passing through Jericho. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

Christ embraces and speaks with the just and the unjust, with the healthy and the sick, with Jews and foreigners. Perhaps he recognized his apostasy from God, and he found the opportunity to change his life. He didn't care what people would say, nor what he had done in the past. He just wanted to meet Christ. Because he was short, he climbed a tree, a sycamore, to call out to Christ, for Him to see him. Immediately Christ's gaze falls on Zacchaeus, whom He calls by his name. This personal call shows that Zacchaeus had repented and wanted to be saved. He publicly confesses, he corrects his mistakes, returning the

money fourfold. Practical repentance leads to salvation and invites Christ into our lives.

Meeting Christ

In order to meet Christ, we must also follow the tactics of Zacchaeus. First, we must hear the voice our conscience, which urges us to find Christ. Secondly, we must decide to leave our own tax office, which we feed with our egotism mainly, and to put Christ in the center of our life, instead of ourselves. Third, we should not count the opinion of people when it is opposed to the word of Christ. We should not be interested in people's opinion, but in the example of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints. When we meet Christ, then our rebirth will come about. When Zacchaeus met Christ, he became made charitable instead of avaricious, from a god-hater, i.e. a denier of God - a god-lover, and from being a sinner, a repentant image of God. Let us always remember the person of the sinful publican in our lives, because it will remind us that Christ is love, and wants every sinner to be saved, so long as we meet Him with a disposition to repent, in order to enjoy all that He has prepared in the Kingdom of Heaven for us sinners.

May the person of the head publican Zacchaeus inspire us on our way, and let us have repentance as the purpose of our life so that we can meet Christ