



73rd Year

February 2, 2025

Pamphlet #5 (3740)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Hebrews 7:7-17)

The old and the new priesthood

BRETHREN, it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

Today's Epistle reading comes from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here, the fullness of the Lord's High Priesthood is described, which is contrasted with the Jewish high priesthood. The latter was incomplete and functioned as a guide for the

people towards the Messiah. It prefigured the High Priesthood of Christ, which is perfect and redemptive. Christ is the Great High Priest of the Church, He is completely perfect, and for this reason, He sat at the right hand of the majesty on the throne of God and serves the Holy of Holies, which He Himself established and not man.

Apostolic succession

Christ handed over His High Priesthood to the Apostles and they to their successors the Clergy, forming the unbroken chain of Apostolic Succession, which constitutes the criterion of the canonicity of the Clergy of all ages. Christ knew that by handing over the gift of High Priesthood and the Priesthood to men, He was giving it to weak and imperfect persons, prone to sin. This, however, in no way undermined or jeopardized the work of the Church in the world, as the mercy and energies of God always cover and complete the imperfections and weaknesses of men. Nevertheless, the ecclesiastical ministers are obliged to toil and expend themselves in order to shape within them the characteristics of Christ's High Priesthood.

Union of holiness and forgiveness

The first characteristic is holiness. It is a dynamic prospect for which every Christian is made, how much more so the Cleric. It is the result of the struggle with the inner man, as well as with the forces of the world, which strive to drag people out of the sanctifying and saving fold of the Church. The Clergyman, in order to become a source of sanctification for the people, must first sanctify himself, to be a "letter of Christ written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor. 3:3).

The next characteristic of the Clergyman must be the innocence of the Lord. The Clergyman must never think of evil, because only in this way will he do good. He must reject negative thoughts about people and events, which will harden his character and cause tendencies of hatred, condemnation, or

vindictiveness within him. Thus, he will always become a bearer of peace and reconciliation. He will become an imitator of the Saints, who always act with love, tolerance, patience, and forgiveness, even if they are wronged and slandered.

Departure from sin

The third characteristic of Clergymen must be the avoidance of sin. We know that Clergymen cannot avoid falls and sins to which all people tend. The goal, however, is the struggle against sin, so that it does not become entrenched, but is uprooted from the soul. This struggle, which applies to all people, is carried out with the mercy and assistance of God, and only within the Sacrament of Repentance and Holy Confession. This is the purifying fire that can renew spiritual strength, grace the Clergyman, and make him capable of continuing the work of shepherding the people of God.

The aforementioned characteristics that should distinguish the shepherds of the Church, no matter how self-evident they may seem, require continuous and strenuous effort to become a reality. They need the help and reinforcement of God, to whom the Clergyman must always be turned. They also need your love, tolerance, and mainly your prayer. It is true that the demands from your Shepherds are many; and rightly so. However, do not forget that just as you need their prayers, they also need your prayers, even more so. Therefore, pray for your Bishop and your Clergy, so that the Lord God preserves them in integrity in all things, so that they may work worthily the work of Christ for the salvation of people. Amen!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

February 2, 2025: The Presentation of Our Lord and God and Savior
Jesus Christ

Grave Tone – Epistle: Hebrews 7:7-17 – Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

NEXT SUNDAY: February 9, The Publican and the Pharisee
Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 – Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

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*ΧΑΙΡΟΙΣ ΠΑΝΤΕΥΛΟΓΗΤΕ ΜΑΡΙΑΜ
(HAIL, MOST BLESSED MARIAM)*

1st Edition, in Greek, Size 17x24 cm, 696 pages

by Metropolitan of Veria, Naousa, and Kampania,
Panteleimon Kalpakides

The book is a collection of sermons dedicated to the Theotokos (the Mother of God) from the years 2014-2024, including sermons for the Nativity, the Entrance, the Annunciation, the Akathist Hymn, the feast of the Life-Giving Spring, and the Holy Protection. It also includes festive circulars for the Annunciation and the Dormition of the Theotokos. This is the third collection of texts dedicated to the All-Holy Theotokos, following the previous two decades' collections of Metropolitan Panteleimon's episcopate (1994-2014) under the title "O All-Hymned Mother." The edition is prefaced by His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Hieronymos.

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