



73<sup>rd</sup> Year

March 23, 2025

Pamphlet #12 (3747)

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## **THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Hebrews 4:14-5:6)** **Jesus, the Great High Priest**

*Brethren, since we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"; as he says also in another place, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."*

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## **THE SINLESS CHRIST**

The superiority of the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, over the High Priests of the Jewish religion is highlighted in today's Sunday Epistle reading. It is based on specific aspects that

characterize His High Priesthood. Christ is the Son of God, born timelessly from God the Father; He passed through the heavens to put on human nature. Thus, He can stand with compassion towards humans who are tempted, for He Himself endured the same temptations, with one significant difference: He did not succumb to sin. This occurred because He was sinless by nature, meaning He could not sin since His divinity did not allow deviation into sin.

## **God offers salvation**

The Church's teaching on the sinlessness of the Lord is fundamental, based on Scripture and the teachings of the Church Fathers. The sacred Chrysostom directly links it to the salvation of people, emphasizing: "How could He die entirely for sinners if He Himself were in sin? For the one who dies for sinners, must Himself be sinless. For if He too sins, how could He die for other sinners? If He did not die for the sins of all people, He died sinless."

We must understand that this teaching of our Church is of critical importance because the salvation of the human race rests upon it. Man looks for salvation from God, as only He can offer it. However, attributing the frailty and sinfulness of human nature to Christ, recognizing Him as an ordinary human like all of us, undermines and tears down the structure of salvation and turns it into a utopia.

## **Timeless polemic**

This is why the enemies of the Church have consistently fought against this particular aspect of the person of Christ, using common and familiar methods to deceive even the elect. They have employed art, literature, theater, and cinema to present a purely human Christ who participates fully in the breadth of human nature without exceptions. A Christ who forms carnal

relationships, presents his wife, has children, creates a family, and is buried in a family tomb!

These views, even if hidden behind the veil of artistic freedom, are deliberately aimed at undermining the teaching of the Church, according to which Christ was and is the perfect God and perfect human, in every way, except for sin.

### **Christ as the foundation of faith**

This is why the reaction of the official institutions of the Church against such decadent, so-called artistic phenomena, is fully justified, not because Christ needs protection, but because the weak conscience of people requires support and help. In this context, the Sacred Synod of the Church of Greece, years ago, in order to address similar phenomena, appealed to the people, explaining its stance: "A basic teaching of our Church is that Christ is the God-man, meaning perfect God and perfect man. This belief is the foundation of our ecclesiastical life. It is not a detail which, if shaken, causes no alteration in the Church's organization, but a central foundation of faith. For, as Christ is the head of the Church, this means that if this teaching is shaken, then automatically the Church itself is classified among human-centered systems, and consequently, man remains eternally unredeemed."

This is the faith of our Church about the Savior Christ. We must accept and adopt this faith, without terms and conditions. We must also condemn within ourselves any attempt to defame the person of the Lord, while connecting even more deeply with the life of the Church, where the Sinless One continues to sacrifice Himself for our sins.

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Archimandrite E. Oik.

March 23, 2025: 3rd Sunday of Lent (Veneration of the Cross)

Martyrs Nikon the monk and his 199 disciples († 251).

Pl. 2nd Tone – Eothinon: 6 – Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6  
– Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1

NEXT SUNDAY: March 30, 4th Sunday of Lent (St. John of the Ladder)  
Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 – Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

## HOW WE SHOULD FAST

"Are you fasting? Prove it to me through your actions. Which actions? If you see someone poor, help them. If you see an enemy, reconcile with them. If you see a beautiful woman, pass her by. Let the mouth not be the only part fasting, but also the eyes, the ears, the feet, the hands, and all the parts of our body.

"Let the hands fast by remaining clean from greed and plundering. Let the feet fast by refraining from paths that lead to sinful spectacles. Let the eyes fast by avoiding lustful glances at beautiful faces or scrutinizing the beauty of others. Let the ears fast by not accepting evil speech and slanders. Let the mouth fast from obscene words and insults. For what benefit is there if we abstain from poultry and fish but bite and devour our brothers?"

Saint John Chrysostom

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