



73rd Year

April 6, 2025

Pamphlet #14 (3749)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Hebrews 9:11-14)

Redemption through the Blood of Christ

Brethren, when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

THE ISSUE OF CONSCIENCE

As we approach the Divine Passion, the Church takes various measures for our spiritual preparation. This is also evident in today's Epistle reading. The Apostle addresses the issue of the conscience, which, after the fall of the first created humans, has been corrupted by sin to such an extent, that the human sacrifices of the Judaic tradition are insufficient for its purification. Instead, the Blood of the Incarnate God is necessary for its cleansing from dead works, enabling man to worship and live the one true God.

The knowledge of the moral law

But how does the Church perceive the concept of the conscience? St. Nektarios considers that the "conscience is the knowledge of the moral law, which the soul possesses to distinguish between good and evil acts, and to judge their quality impartially, condemning the bad and approving the good actions. The soul holds the conscience inherently... it received this innate power from God, so that the soul may know the divine will and align its own will with His. Once the conscience comes to know God's law, it declares the divine will to man... while due to its character, it can be regarded as a moral standard, a rule, and a guide by which the quality of our actions is judged."

At this point, it is worth distinguishing between a good and a guilty conscience. St. Mark the Ascetic links the attainment of a pure conscience to prayer: "The conscience is a natural book. The one who reads it and acts according to its guidance, gains experience of God's care for man. A good conscience is achieved through prayer, while pure prayer is a fruit of the conscience. Both prayer and conscience, by natural reason, depend on one another."

The guilty conscience

St. Nektarios describes the guilty conscience as a trait of a person who disregards the will of God: "The conscience of one who violates the moral law is a terrible tyranny. There is nothing more dreadful for the sinning soul than the reproach of conscience. For nothing agitates and wounds of the soul as much as the reproach of conscience. The court of the conscience is impartial and exceedingly strict."

This guilty conscience is what the redeeming Blood of Christ comes to cleanse and liberate from dead works, as noted in today's Epistle reading. The sacrifice of animals, as upheld by the Judaic tradition, was insufficient for the purification of the soul. That sacrifice had external characteristics and was offered by High Priests burdened by the weight of sin. The crucifixional sacrifice of the true and Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, and the voluntary offering of His Blood were necessary to free the human soul and cleanse the conscience from the burden of dead works caused by sin.

Struggle for redemption

The redeeming Blood of the God-Man was shed once on the Precious Cross; however, it is continuously offered in every Divine Liturgy to those who long for and struggle for the purification of their conscience, through the mystery of the Divine Eucharist. However, the effectiveness of Holy Communion depends on our spiritual state and is related to our personal and internal preparation. Analogous to this preparation, for some, Divine Communion becomes fire, and for others, light. Holy Communion does not operate magically. To partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, we must offer our own blood, our own spiritual labors, our personal spiritual struggles. We must offer fruits worthy of repentance. Only in this way, can we worthily experience the supernatural events of the Divine Passion – and not merely rejoice in the Resurrection, but our entire life should be a fruit and reflection of the Resurrection.

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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General Director of the Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece

The Apostolic Ministry proceeded with the publication of this spiritual book, which analyzes solitude, silence, and prayer as concepts of Orthodox spirituality

April 6, 2025: 5th Sunday of Lent (St. Mary of Egypt)

Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople († 582);
The 120 martyrs of Persia.

Pl. 4th Tone – Eothinon: 8 – Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14
– Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

NEXT SUNDAY: April 13, Palm Sunday
Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 – Gospel: John 12:1-18

Relevant Publications for Holy Week (in Greek)

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