



73rd Year

May 18, 2025

Pamphlet #20 (3755)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Acts 11:19-30)

The Apostles evangelize Christ

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.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

Today's Epistle reading holds historical significance. Among other things, we learn about the missionary work carried

out in Antioch by the Apostles Paul and Barnabas. It is the first time that believers in Christ are called Christians. From then on, all those baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity are called Christians. But are they truly Christians? Baptism introduces us into the Church. However, does it make us true Christians? Or must we be distinguished by certain qualitative characteristics that activate the grace of the Holy Spirit within us and validate our Christian identity in all aspects of our lives?

A journey of the Cross and Resurrection

A true Christian is a person of pain and the Cross. "Anyone who wishes to follow Christ must understand that he will partake in two conditions, as the Savior did: mockery and crucifixion. He must realize that in the eyes of most people, he will always appear ridiculous and that from the moment he is called a Christian, pain and the Cross will become his lifelong companions" (Fr. Nikolai Steinhardt).

The Christian life is not paved with rose petals. It is a continuous journey towards one's personal Golgotha. However, for the Christian, the joy of life, even through various trials, is the anticipation of the Resurrection.

A foretaste of God's Kingdom

A true Christian is one who ignores hypocrisy and makes God's will a way of life. As has been pointed out, "with hypocrisy and a perverted spirit one may hide the reality from earthly judges and expect to be forgotten. But for the Christian, the reality is entirely different. The very existence of hypocrisy is inconceivable to him because he knows that nothing can deceive the eyes of God, that forgetfulness is inconceivable in God's memory, and that before Him, nothing can be hidden." Hypocrisy is the fruit of misguided and deficient faith, entirely foreign to the ethos of love and the peace of Jesus Christ.

A true Christian is one who experiences the Kingdom of God from this life. As a contemporary hieromonk writes, "The role of Christians in the world is to filter the atmosphere of the earth so that the atmosphere of the Kingdom of God may continuously gain ground. We can safeguard the whole world, preserving the atmosphere of Paradise within us, because if we lose the Kingdom of Heaven, we will save neither ourselves nor the others. The one who carries the Kingdom of God within him will transmit it subtly to others also" (Elder Thaddeus).

A true Christian is a person of love and continuous repentance – a love that is unconditional, does not discriminate among people, but embraces them equally as living images of God. Likewise, repentance is the only way and path for returning to God's love and communion.

The present dangers

The question remains: If these are the characteristics of a true Christian, why has the so-called Christian world fallen into such decline in our age? Clearly, because we are not truly Christians, since instead of the pain and the Cross, we have chosen the numbness of material affluence, which has led to morals becoming beastly. Instead of authentic Orthodoxy, we have limited ourselves to religious formalities, experiencing a hypocritical and easy religiosity. Instead of love, we have chosen egotism, being indifferent to whatever happens around us. Instead of repentance, we have adjusted Christ to fit the measures our weaknesses, making destructive compromises within ourselves.

The solution to the crisis we are experiencing is to once again become true Christians, and then everything around us will begin to transform, because we will have changed within ourselves first!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

May 18, 2025: 5th Sunday of Pascha
The Feast of the Samaritan Woman, in which Christ acknowledged
Himself as the Messiah.

Peter, Dionysius, Andrew, Paul, Christina, Heracleius, Paulinus,
and Beneditimos the martyrs (3rd century).

4th Tone – Eothinon: 7 – Epistle: Acts 11:19-30 – Gospel: John 4:5-42

NEXT SUNDAY: May 25, Sunday of the Blind Man
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15 – Gospel: John 9:1-38

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ΤΟ ΜΕΤΑΘΕΤΟ ΤΩΝ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΩΝ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΗ ΚΑΝΟΝΙΚΗ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΣΗ

*(THE TRANSFERABILITY OF BISHOPS IN
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1st Edition, in Greek, Size 16x23 cm, 120 pages

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