



73rd Year

November 23, 2025

Pamphlet #47 (3782)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Ephesians 2:14-22)

Jesus Christ, the cornerstone

Brethren, Christ is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

THE CHURCH OF UNITY AND PEACE

In today's Epistle reading, Paul addresses the Christians of Ephesus who came from a pagan background and reminds them of their past, far from God, when the worship of idols kept them excluded from the Church and from the prospect of salvation. The Apostle teaches that Christ, through His sacrifice on the Cross, tore down the walls of hostility and opposition that dominated between the Jewish and Gentile worlds and created a

new humanity, bringing peace. This new humanity is His Church, the Church of unity and peace.

These two supreme spiritual principles constitute the necessary prerequisites for the secure journey of the Church through time. For this reason, they were served with special care and painful struggles by the Fathers of the Church and the Saints of our faith. But how is their attainment and preservation ensured? Through daily well wishes or through specific actions? By God's Grace alone, or through the constant and loving cooperation and collaboration of all members of the ecclesiastical body?

The twofold unity of the Church

The unity of the Church has a dual character. First, it concerns the unity of faith, which is achieved through the unconditional acceptance of its dogmatic teaching, shaped by the decisions of the seven Holy Ecumenical Councils, as well as the recognized local Councils. It is, in every respect, inviolable. Any attempts to distort or question the dogma throughout time have been characterized as heresies which wounded the unity of the Body of Christ and were irrevocably condemned by the Church.

The second dimension of ecclesiastical unity concerns governance. The Church is not a headless spiritual organism. Its head may be the Lord Jesus, but He Himself appointed successors and stewards of the Church's daily matters, the Bishops and Presbyters, who hold a responsible and ministerial position within the Church. The administrative system of the Orthodox Church is Synodal, for general issues of the Autocephalous Churches, and Episcopocentric, for matters of local Churches, Metropolises, and Dioceses. Unity is preserved through the obedience and cooperation of clergy and laity under the omophorion of their Bishop, when he lives according to Christ, and diligently applies the dogmatic and theological teachings of the Church. Refusal to obey the Bishop, and factional movements within a local Church, lead to schisms,

which, when they appear in history, wound and irreparably damage its unity.

Preserving unity in Christ

The unity of the Church secures the second spiritual principle – peace – which Christ brought to the world. Yet, while Christ is the personification of peace, He Himself declared: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). A terrifying statement. How can this be reconciled with the Christ of peace? Saint Nicholas Velimirovich explains: “I did not come to reconcile truth with falsehood, wisdom with foolishness, good with evil, justice with violence, brutality with inhumanity, purity with debauchery, God with mammon. Rather, I brought the sword to cut the one from the other, so that they do not mix. The sword of truth or the sword of the word of God, which is the same thing. For truth is the word of God, and the word of God is truth.”

Peace in the Church does not mean compromise with the current of the world, retreat before expediency, concessions in morality, or distortion of truth. Above all, it does not mean revising the faith on the altar of a false and fleeting unity. We, the clergy and laity alike, are obliged to preserve peace and unity, and keep it alive and flourishing, because only then does the Church function as the Body of Christ and as the ark of salvation.

Archimandrite E. Oik.

November 23, 2025: 9th Sunday of Luke

Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (†394), Gregory of Agrigentum, and
Sisinius the Confessor (3rd century).

Grave Tone – Eothinon: 2 – Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22
– Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

NEXT SUNDAY: November 30, The Apostle Andrew
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 – Gospel: John 1:35-52

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