

and prayer as weapons, the Church petitions that the All Holy Spirit enlighten us so that we embrace the truth and live according to it.

And nevertheless, there are in our faith elements, which could be considered to “pressure” us into a conscientious spiritual journey. When one considers the delivering sacrifice of the Lord, His voluntary death, the height of the Cross, how can he remain unmoved and not honorably love to respond to this benefaction? When one studies the lives of the Saints and sees the rivers of blood of our martyrs and the toils of our ascetics, how could he not admire and not envy being honorably loving to resemble them in something? When one delves into the wealth of the texts of the Fathers of our Church and in the Sacred Tradition which they support, how could he not long, being honorably loving, to be baptized in these, in order to be reborn “of water in the Spirit”?

The love of God knows to hunt us and capture us, not in nets of violence or compulsion, but in an atmosphere of freedom, prodding us to honorable love, strengthening the voice of our conscience, granting holy and unique experiences. How much we accept to respond to all of these, also shows what type of people we are in the end.

Archimandrite I. N

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11TH, 2016 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, *Daniel the Stylite of Constantinople, Luke the New Stylite of Chalcedon, Holy Martyrs Ascepsia and Aethal, Holy Martyrs Miracus and Barsabas, Leontios the Righteous of Monemvasia, The Glorious King Nikephoros Phokas*

TONE OF THE WEEK *Plagal of the Fourth Tone*

EOTHINON : *Third Eothinon*

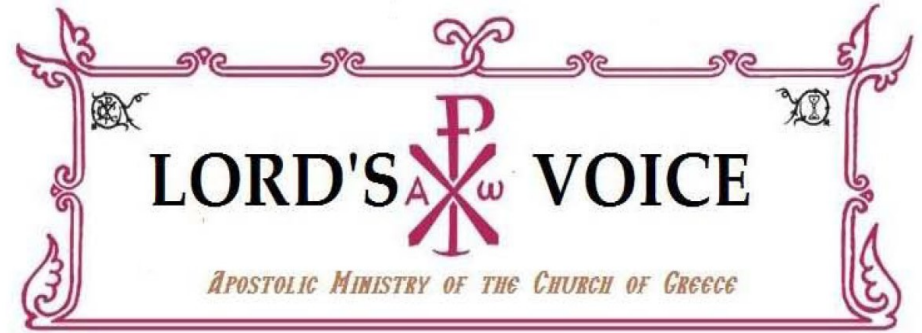
EPISTLE: *St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians 3:4-11*

GOSPEL: *Luke 14:16-24*

NEXT SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2016 SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY, *Sebastian the Martyr & his Companions, Our Righteous Father Michael Syngellon the Confessor*

EPISTLE: *St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40*

GOSPEL: *Matthew 1:1-25*



64TH YEAR

DECEMBER 11 2016

PAMPHLET # 50 (3315)

COERCION AND CHURCH

Even though our age claims to validate conditions of freedom and capabilities of choices, it is characterized by a brutal intimidation and manipulation. Despite all the relative struggles of many people, probably the vision of freedom fails, and the reality of coercion prevails. In the name of ideas, noble goals, even religions as well, obligation is caused and various forms of violence are exercised, either by bodies of authority who invoke well-founded or improperly, their jurisdiction for this, or by bodies who claim authority and invoke their right for this, or from groups who go against whatsoever form of authority, but they invoke the necessity to clash with it, in order to justify their actions. However even beyond the authority, from the financial-economic field, coercion and enslavement springs forth, with a dominating imperative being the subjection of everyone in the production of profits, the right and access to which, everyone does not have, with criteria of justice and morality, but with jungle conditions. And in the ideological arena however, obsession and stubborn persistence in views and beliefs, entrapment in unfounded or utopian ideas, inflexibilities of semi-learnedness and the enlisted education, don't cause and don't cultivate anything, other than rivalries, which don't develop into dialogue, but into multiple social polarizations, which in their turn, bring about clashes with a main claim, being imposition and domination, excluding the capability of whatsoever other person, to exist.

We ought here to make a special talk about religions, since from certain centers, the viewpoint is craftily cultivated that they have the first say in coercion and imposition. We ought to clarify that in the name of

11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE

THE GOSPEL LUKE 14:16-24

The Lord said this parable: "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many; and at the time of the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for all is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I must go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and there is still room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. For many are called, but few are chosen.'

the whatsoever god, dreadful crimes have been committed, for which nevertheless, people are responsible. It's usually not the really faithful ones, but those who, taking advantage of the religious emotion, for their own benefit, diligently pursue inner worldly aims and purposes, with the vehicle being the idealizing of whatsoever faith. We ought to stress that in no religion does coercion comprise a means of spreading, since even for Islam, sacred war (jihad) is not one of the five obligatory pillars of the life of a Muslim, rather it is considered as an exception.

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The exhortation "force"

And nevertheless, in the Gospel there is the exhortation "force". We read it in today's passage, which deals with the parable of the great supper.

In the beginning of the parable, it describes the offensive for the housemaster rejection of his invitation, by those whom he initially considered as the most noble ones, those worthy to be invited. Their choking however, from earthly cares, did not allow them to correctly evaluate the invitation, and they reach the point of turning their back on him who aims to offer them not simply one more favor, but the only saving and sanctifying benefaction.

How does the house master react to the rejection of his invitation? The Gospel stresses that he gets angry, in order to underline the responsibility of whoever rejects the invitation which Holy God addresses to him, and furthermore in order of priority. Subsequently he gives a new command to his people, to pour out into the squares and the streets and to gather whoever is there, as scorned, the poor, the invalids, the sick and blind, in order for them to come to the important supper and to enjoy whatever the others were not able to evaluate as superior and saving. And when this process is completed, and it is ascertained that there's still room at the spread table, again the house master gives a commandment to one of his servants to go out to the even more remote streets, to the most forgotten and cast off to the side people, and to force them to enter into the house of his master, for them to enjoy the rich supper.

What meaning does this "force" have in the context of the text? Or rather, one person on his own, how could he "force" all those who his master is inviting? And how is the "force" associated with the "great supper"? It is obvious that the "force" here, means for the one servant alone to pressure all those invited people who either out of selfconsciousness for their condition, or out of natural restraint, would hesitate to respond to the invitation. How could a poor person, a person cast off to the side, an invalid or a scared person, believe that there is an invitation for him, there where he has never dreamed that he could end up. Therefore, the servant is called to pressure, convincing, so that the fear, the cowardice, the hesitation could be overcome. Religious persecutions are not amnestied, but supplicating convincing is validated, as a methodology of mission.

Honorable love

And the Church handles us today in the same way. She does not manipulate us, nor does she coerce us. How could she furthermore, in a secular environment, where even the simple reference to matters of faith brings about, in the best case, ironic smiles, if not insulting references? But even in the past, when our Church was considered to be "prevailing", when did she obligate? When did she bind? When did she force? With preaching