

In whatsoever position of this noetic edifice we are in, let us not leave the much, painful prayer and attention, so that the essential rudder - driver of the vessel, who is Christ, rejoices that we are living with Him for Him in his saving ark. This is what is sought for, nothing else.

Let us pay attention to our behavior, brethren. Let us not wound the body of Christ, his Church. We have absolute need of it; it is the oxygen of our existence. Let our life become a constant fiery prayer of the fired up heart of all of us, as one body. This body has as its head, the Bishop- Christ and his Bishops upon the earth, as "in his type and his place", his eyes the Clergymen, his hair and beard, our glorious monastic ranks, the trunk, his upper and lower extremities, the believers and of the heart, the Sacred Altars of our churches all over the earth, from where the Divine Communion is sent forth to all his parts and members for him to live and be fed, crucified and resurrected. Let each one of us stand inside him unto the ages!

Archim. E. T.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2017 SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN,

James the Apostle and brother of St. John the Theologian, Argyra the New Martyr, Clement the Hymnographer, Erconwald, Bishop of London.

TONE OF THE WEEK : Tone Two

EOTHINON : *Second Orthros Gospel*

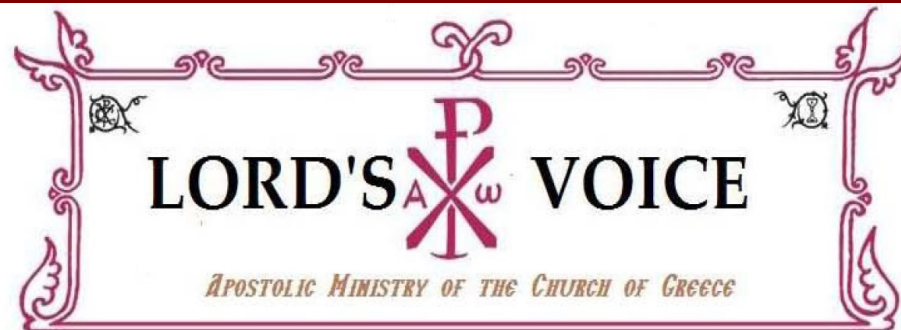
EPISTLE READING: *Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7*

GOSPEL READING: *Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8*

NEXT SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2017 SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC , *Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem, Commemoration of the Precious Cross that appeared in the sky over Jerusalem in 351 A.D. Repose of St. Nilus, abbot of Sora, Akakios the Centurion of Byzantium Pachomios the New Martyr of Patmos.*

EPISTLE READING: *Acts 9:32-42*

GOSPEL READING: *John 5:1-15*



65TH YEAR

April 30 2017

PAMPHLET # 18 (3335)

OBEDIENCE TO THE BISHOPS AND THE BLESSING OF MINISTRY

In today's Epistle reading, from the book of Acts, brethren, there is talk about the creation of an issue between the Jewish Christians, who were speaking the Aramaic language and the Jewish Christians, who were from foreign lands and were speaking Greek. The problem was solved through the election of the seven deacons, following the suggestion of the apostles, so that the work of the Church could continue without obstacles.

Human passions and problems

The first Church was living in an enviable condition of Grace, where everyone was one body and one soul, living altogether, and as one family they had everything in common. They were also selling their estates and whatever they were gaining they were giving to those in need, so that, as much as possible, an equal distribution could be achieved. They were furthermore dedicated with zeal to listening to the apostolic teaching, with naiveté of heart and loving care they were communicating with each other, living unity in Christ, while the center of this loving coexistence was participation in the Divine Eucharist.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 6:1-7

IN THOSE DAYS, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochoros, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaos, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The devil, not enduring this wondrous unity, crafted to cause the first crack. The Greek speakers, Christians from a Jewish background complained that they were being neglected by the local Jewish Christians, both in daily care, as also in the service of distributing food and charity. Thus this noteworthy first graceful condition seems to be vanishing. But the "very crafty" and "good crafting"-according to the sacred Chrysostom -Spirit tramples on the seeming victory of the devil, in order to realize a triumphant victory.

Election of the seven deacons

God enlightens the apostles, who were also the first Bishops of the Church, they call together the whole multitude of believers and tell them that it is not proper for they themselves to abandon the very serious ministry of preaching and the Divine Liturgy and to be constantly occupied with matters of a practical nature such as the ministry of tables, care and charities. So they suggest to the body of the

believers that they select seven men, who would have a good witness from everyone, "the most important vessels" of the ecclesiastical body, we would say in a Chrysostomian tongue. They would be burdened with the specific ministry. The believers obeying, select Stephen, who visibly had the marks of divine Grace on him, as we read, as also Philip, Prochorus, Nikanor, Parmenas, Timon and Nicholas, who before becoming a Christian had embraced Judaism, whereas even earlier on he was an idolater.

By the laying on of their hands and amidst the totality of believers, the apostles imparted the special Grace for this ministry. Because our Church has an Episcopal-centric character, the ministries and the gifts, necessary for the good functioning of the body, are imparted through the bishop to the believers. Thus, the obstacle left and the apostles, unobstructedly henceforth, were dedicated to their main ministry of the annunciation of souls and the imparting of the Divine Eucharist with the daily breaking of the bread. They spread out the wide wings of their theology and as high flyers taught down to the ends of the universe. A small temptation brought even more grace of Christ. There was, however earlier on, a presupposition: everyone was obedient to the indication of the apostles for the election of the seven deacons.

Obedience to the Church

So long as we're obeying the Bishops, who are the successors of the apostles in time, we surpass the temptations, and Christ and his Church are magnified. In the flock the ram precedes and the flock follows. Factions and clandestine gatherings wound the body of Christ, and the challenge of schismatic conditions cannot be washed away even with the martyrdom of blood. Fanaticism is foreign to the children of God, while it shows the sickness of someone who is moving ideologically, religiously, without having the slightest idea about the ecclesiastical way of life.

So for this reason, my brethren, let us avoid fanaticism as a great illness and let us obey our Church. Christ knows very well whom he puts at the rudders of the noetic vessel of his Church. In essence He lifts up and puts down! He knows how to produce sweetness from what is bitter. But we also, clergymen of every degree and lay people,