

He wrote: "From me, Anthony, many greetings. I embrace the hands and feet of the priests and board members. Have no doubt. I, with the will of God, am shedding my blood. And I'm being beheaded – come, do not laugh –so that it can be heard at the seven kings. You pray for me and I for you. I ask you, that my name not be missing from inside the Church. Do not leave it without kollyva. And send to my mother a letter, so that she can also rejoice. And buy my relic. Do not say: we gave so much money and we did not drink even cup of water from his hand. Your mercy is mercy to friends and to those who love me. I greet all of you."

One is shaken by the light and the life which the letter of the death row inmate neomartyr overflows with. This is the «abounding grace» which the Apostle Paul mentions today and which gives to Anthony this strength to make even humor, a little before he martyrs for Christ. Thus «the thanksgiving unto the glory of God also abounds», Who glorifies back the earthen vessels who freely selected to be filled with His Light.

Archim. B. L

SUNDAY JANUARY 20, 2019 12TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, *Righteous Euthymius the Great, Zacharias the New Martyr of Patra, John the Hieromartyr*

-tone of the week : *First Tone*

EOTHINON : *First Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *Second Letter to the Corinthians 4:615*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 17:12-19*

NEXT SUNDAY SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 2019 15TH SUNDAY OF LUKE, *Removal of the Relics of John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, Peter the Righteous of Egypt, Demetrios the New Martyr of Constantinople*

EPISTLE READING: *Hebrews 7:26-28, 8:1-2*

GOSPEL READING: *Luke 19:1-10*



67TH YEAR JANUARY 20, 2019

PAMPHLET #3 (3425)

TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS

When the seventy disciples of Christ returned from the cities, where He had sent them as His forerunners, they joyfully mentioned that even the demons submit to them with the invocation of His name. Then Christ, greatly rejoicing, sent forth a doxology to His Father. "I glorify You, my Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You hid Your light from those who think that they are wise and prudent, and You revealed it to humble people, who consider themselves spiritual infants.

Created and uncreated light

Saul, before he was called by Christ to become the Apostle Paul, considered himself, on the one hand, wise and prudent, while the faith of the Christians, so foolish and blasphemous, that, with a rage, he persecuted them, to punish them and to go along with their condemnation to death. However Christ, embracing him with His Light, - brighter than the light of the sun- called him "to open the eyes of the gentiles and to return them from the darkness to the light" (Acts 26:18).

The Apostle Paul presents this experience also to the Corinthians, telling them that, He who granted us the created light on the first day of creation, wanted to bequeath to us also His incomparably more brilliant uncreated light, revealing to us His Face. Thus He granted us to obtain knowledge and a sensorial experience of His divine glory. And this, according to the sacred Chrysostom, did not happen

ST. PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS 4:615

Brethren, it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

"by Him simply saying let there be light, but He Himself became light for us. He himself shone."

The revelation of light in mortal flesh

Christ called the apostles to impart this true and saving Light to the world. It refers to a work which surpasses the powers and even the endurances of those chosen vessels of the grace of God. The most talented and most educated Apostle considers that his fragile mortal nature and his weak flesh are nothing more than an "earthen vessel". This however is the wondrous and – according to the Golden-tongued one – "greatest sign of the power of God, that an earthen vessel was able to contain such brilliance and to preserve such a great treasure"

amidst trials, in afflictions, in persecutions and in constant dangers. And almost daily, so great were the severity and the violence of the trials of the Apostles, that they reach the point, even physically of partaking in the death of the Lord Jesus. "Every day I am dying", says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. And just as in Christ, the pain and death are not iconic realities, thus also the Apostles were not going through the trials "unwrinkled". "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body", the Apostle Paul will boast to the Galatians. The scars on my body show what I have suffered for Christ".

The holy Apostles however, exposing themselves continually to death for the sake of Christ, were revealing in their mortal body, the life of Jesus and the power of His Resurrection. Here they were giving the strongest witness about the event of the Resurrection. "If someone does not believe," says Chrysostom, "that Christ died and resurrected, let him be assured of the truth of the events, seeing the Apostles daily dying for Him and being resurrected". And naturally, their chief consolation was supported on the hope of the final and definitive resurrection of the bodies, which will occur on the day of Christ's Second Coming, when He presents us all at His judgment seat to be judged.

The witness of the saints

This hope supported the entire cloud of holy Martyrs, who continued and are continuing the work of the holy Apostles "shining and glistening" the Light of Christ "in earthen vessels". As an indicative example, we mention the neomartyr Saint Anthony the Athenian. A few days before they beheaded him in Constantinople in 1774, he sent from the prison, a letter to the ecclesiastical council of his parish (Saint Nicholas Toumbali), a majestic text which witnesses how "the life of Jesus is revealed in the mortal flesh" of His Saints.

