

haughtiness and pride, charms and sways many. The Apostle Paul will now this subsequently in his epistle to Timothy. He forewarns him “that the time will come when people will not forbear the healthy teaching, but according to their passionate desires they will listen to deluded teachings – and such are many – whose ears are delighted with these”.

Despite all these things, the true worker of the Gospel should not be daunted. “You, Timothy,” he tells him, “remain unshakable in those things you learned, and were assured of their truth, from personal experience. Because you know well from which teacher you learned them”. He reminds him, of course, that he was nurtured with faith already from his infant age, having as mother and grandmother the most pious Eunice and Lois. The teacher however, who definitively influenced Timothy, is the Apostle Paul. He is the most ideal teacher, who combined not simply the exercising of the works of a blameless pharisee with a humble train of thought of the publican, but the suffering of hardship above all of the preeminent Apostles, with the perfect love. A love which made him pray – if it were possible - to be separated from Christ and to lose his soul, so that his compatriot Israelites could be saved (Rom. 9:3). Archim. B. L

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2019 SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND

PHARISEE: TRIODION BEGINS TODAY Theodore the Tyro, Great Martyr, Mariamne, Sister of Apostle Philip, Righteous Auxentius, Theodore the New Martyr of Byzantium, Hermogenes (Germogen), Patriarch of Moscow, The Pious Rulers Marcian and Pulcheria

TONE OF THE WEEK : Plagal First Tone

EOTHINON : Fifth Orthros Gospel

EPISTLE READING: Second Letter to Timothy 3: 10-15

GOSPEL READING: Luke 18: 10-14

NEXT SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2019 SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL

SON, First & Second Finding of the Venerable Head of John the Baptist, Romanos, Prince of Uglich, Boswell, Abbot of Melrose Abbey, Cumine the White, Abbot of Iona

EPISTLE READING: Second Letter to Corinthians 4:6-15

GOSPEL READING: Luke 15: 11-32



GENUINE AND FALSE PIETY

During the entrance into the compunctionate period of the Triodion, our Church hastens to remind us of the clear distinction between genuine and false piety. At the starting out of the spiritual struggle, which in a bit will be intensified also, with the entrance into Great Lent, she denotes to us the danger of deviating into hypocrisy, which threatens to make every toil for the cultivation of virtues useless. And it is not only the Gospel Reading with the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee which so descriptively denounces this danger. The Epistle Reading also, in the same tone, wants to impart the same message: the need for vigilance, so that we do not fall into false piety.

A pharisee with the train of thought of the publican

A little before, in the same (third) chapter of the Second Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul refers to those who “present, on the one hand, the external form of piety, however they have denied its true power”. And speaking with the harshest language, he

characterizes them “corrupted in mind and inexperienced about the faith”. So he exhorts Timothy to avoid them.

ST. PAUL'S SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY 3:10-15

TIMOTHY, my son, you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconion, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus

and spiritual consolations, the faithful workers of the

Contrary to those supposed “pious” Christians, the Apostle Paul is forced to refer to himself, without however any disposition of pharisaical speaking about oneself. In another of his Epistles, of course, he is not ashamed to admit that he was “by law a Pharisee”, and furthermore “according to the justice of the law, blameless”. However, all these things which **he once thought gains, these** things now that he believed in Christ, he considers a harm (Phil. 3:5). So it would be an injustice for us to render the blame of pharisaism to the preeminent holy Apostle, who surpasses henceforth in humility, the publican of the parable, characterizing himself the “offscouring” and “first of all the sinners”. Thus, being certain that Timothy will not misunderstand this reference of his to his toils, he reminds him of the experience of their common journey up to then.

The criteria of genuine piety

This refers to a rich experience of common apostolic life, according to which Timothy had all the comfort to ascertain to

what degree, the piety of the Apostle Paul was false or true. He was satiated with his unadulterated teaching, he saw his bright example, he lived his fiery faith, he understood his good disposition, he tasted the longsuffering and his genuine love and finally, he admired his inexhaustible patience. He knew the persecutions of Paul in Antioch of Pisidia, where the Jews stirred up the rulers and persecuted the apostles Paul and Barnabas, “from their borders”. He remembered that in Iconium, a stoning of Paul was planned, which in the end, he did not avoid in Lystra and furthermore, they dragged him outside of the city, thinking that he had died.

So it is clear-cut for Timothy that the Apostle Paul – as the sacred Chrysostom will verify also – is “neither vainglorious nor ambitious. And all these things he enumerates, not in order to show off, but in order to console and to support his child”. Furthermore, how could the sick prosperity and boasting of the hypocrite be reconciled with the genuine love of the Apostle for the hardship for Christ’s sake? The genuine speaker of the words of Paul, the Golden-tongued one, renders very eloquently the message of his spiritual father to his child. From the things I went through, you can learn that it is not possible for him who is fighting the devil to not go through afflictions. It is inconceivable that the true athlete will live in delight and comforts. Others are the times of comfort. Now is the time of struggles, afflictions and trials”. However through these the sweats and pains, the genuine progress in patience, in faith, in love, and in all the true virtues will come.

An Unwavering journey in the traces of the genuine teachers

On the contrary, the wicked and the hypocrites will “progress” advancing from bad to the worse. And what is worse than deceiving not only the others, but also their own self. Probably the wicked and the charmers will advance in number as well, since the caressing of the passions, and especially of