

Make Up Your Mind!

This weekly bulletin insert complements the curriculum published by the Department of Christian Education of the Orthodox Church in America. This and many other Christian Education resources are available at <http://dce.oca.org>.



Two Scripture readings for October 4th tell us that we need to decide, as people called to follow Christ, what we will do when the time to follow actually comes.

The Gospel reading is Luke 7: 31-35. These are Jesus' words, comparing the people who reject Him to two groups of children who refuse to agree on how to play together. Each group insists that the game they play must be the one they have chosen. They can't adapt themselves to play the game chosen by the others.

The people of this generation, Christ goes on to say, are much like those children. When John the Baptist preached among them, they dismissed his self-discipline and fasting--"neither eating bread nor drinking wine,"--as too severe. So, they said, it must be the work of a demon.

But when they saw another kind of living practiced by the Son of Man, they didn't like that either, for the opposite reason. Jesus "has come eating and drinking" and so they call Him a glutton and a drunkard. They add to this another charge that apparently strikes them as going right along with gluttony and drunkenness: He is a "friend of tax collectors and sinners."

Jesus assures His listeners, though, that "wisdom is justified by all her children." No matter what criticisms people may dream up to reject John and the Son of Man, they both are doing God's work, and the fruits of that work will become evident. The faith will spread, the numbers of disciples will grow, and those who have made up their minds to follow Christ will know that He is the Truth.

An epistle reading for this day is Galatians 4: 8-21. Paul agonizes as he asks a question of the Galatians. Before they knew God, they were in "bondage to beings that by nature are no gods." But "...now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?"

Paul makes a specific complaint: "You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years." He is addressing Christians still young in the faith. They are being urged by certain teachers to go back to the Old Testament calendar, and to observe the Jewish laws that go with it. Paul wants them to remember, instead, how joyfully they responded when he preached the Gospel to them. They received him "as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus."

But now, cajoled by false teachers, they are hostile to him. "What has become of the satisfaction you felt?" he asks in bewilderment. What has become of the faithfulness to the Gospel they once made up their minds to live by?

Jesus wants His hearers not to manufacture reasons to reject the truth. Paul wants his hearers not to turn back from the faith he preached. It's time for all of them, and all of us, to make up our minds and follow.