THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST, THE VICTORY OVER DARKNESS, AND THE JOY OF SALVATION

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Sunday, 18 October 2026 | Luke 10:16–21 | Sunday of St Luke the Evangelist

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Beloved in Christ,

Today's Gospel is a passage about the Church, her prerogatives, and her intimate relationship with the master! The seventy disciples return rejoicing because even the demons are subject to them in the name of Jesus. Yet our Lord directs their attention to something infinitely greater: "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). This highlights the Church's heavenly identity! In this passage, Christ reveals four important truths: the authority entrusted to His Church, her victory over the powers of darkness, the greater joy of salvation, and the necessity of a humble and childlike heart for the Church and her followers to receive divine wisdom.

First, Christ has entrusted His authority to His Church.

Our Lord declares, "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). As Orthodox Christians, we confess the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Church is not merely a human organisation. Still, the Body of Christ, in which the apostolic faith is preserved, the Holy Mysteries are celebrated, and the grace of God is communicated to His people. St Ignatius of Antioch writes: "Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church" (Letter to the Smyrnaeans, 8.2). We cannot separate Christ from His Body, nor can we claim to receive Him while deliberately rejecting the apostolic faith and the sacramental life He has entrusted to His Church. There is no Christianity without the Church, and there is no Christ outside the Church's teaching and witness! Any other Jesus is not our Jesus! We believe in and have a relationship with the risen Jesus, whom we celebrate in the Church.

Second, Christ gives His Church authority to confront the powers of darkness. Christ gives the disciples authority "over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). This is His victory over sin, deception, and death. The Church proclaims the Gospel against false teachings, destructive ideologies, and all beliefs that lead humanity away from the living Christ. We must defend the truth with courage, humility, and compassion. Through Baptism, Chrismation, the Holy Eucharist, repentance, and prayer, we participate in Christ's victory. These are not magical instruments, nor do they give us licence to live carelessly. They are gifts of divine grace that unite us with Christ and strengthen us to live faithfully. St Irenaeus of Lyons writes: "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace" (Against Heresies, 3.24.1). The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit! Wherever the Holy Spirit is found, humanity finds true happiness and freedom. Thus, in worship we experience peace and true happiness in its highest form, free from darkness within and without!

Third, our greatest joy is the gift of salvation and everlasting life.

Christ tells the disciples not to make authority over demons their greatest joy, but to rejoice that their names are written in heaven. Miracles and theological knowledge are not our ultimate purpose; we may know much yet still fail to love our neighbour. Our greatest treasure is not happiness or beauty that we feel in worship, but belonging to Christ. Salvation is God's gift of grace, lived out in repentance, love, and perseverance. Our calling is to let Christ's light overcome the darkness within us and draw us into communion with God.

Fourth, God reveals His truth to the humble and childlike heart.

Christ thanks the Father for revealing divine things "to babes" (Luke 10:21). He is not condemning education, reason, or intellectual inquiry; He warns against pride that leaves no room for God to teach us. The little ones approach Him with humble, open, trusting, and teachable hearts. St John Chrysostom praises "simplicity, humility, unworldliness" (Homily 55 on Matthew). We must be childlike, not childish: ready to receive God's revelation and follow Christ even when His truth challenges our perceptions. We receive the apostolic faith, preserved in Scripture, the Holy Mysteries, the Fathers, and the life of the Church, and study it carefully and humbly.

As we commemorate St Luke the Evangelist, who was a great example of wisdom as a physician and an artist, yet his treasure was his faithfulness to the apostolic faith that he received with simplicity, let us remain faithful to the apostolic Church, treasure her Holy Mysteries, stand firm in truth, and resist darkness through prayer and holiness. Above all, let us remember Christ's words: "Rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

To Him, together with His eternal Father and His all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, be all glory, honour, and worship, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.