

01/10/2019

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The following is the homily of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America:

Homily of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America

Archieratical Divine Liturgy
2nd Sunday of Luke

Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church
Orange, Connecticut

September 29, 2019

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the readings today we heard a teaching that is at the heart of the Gospel. The Lord said, “As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them” (Luke 6:31). This saying is called “the Golden Rule.” It is a teaching that is found in some form in almost every faith and philosophy around the world.

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” It is a simple instruction. Simple, but not easy. This command requires us to think about those around us, and to do so at all times and in every place. It requires us to care about friends and enemies alike. It requires us to be thoughtful about the needs and concerns of others—and not only to be thoughtful, but to count their interests as equal to our own.

This is very difficult. It goes against human nature. The human instinct for self-preservation is strong. It can give people extraordinary strength, so that they can do things they normally could not do. The Lord commands us, however, to use that strength on behalf of our neighbor, to love him as ourselves.

We all know the special love we have for our family and our closest friends. For our mother or father, for our brother or sister, we would do anything. We would give them our last dollar and our last piece of bread. We would give even our lives for our family. This is true of everyone on earth, good people and bad. As Christ says, “Even sinners love those who love them.”

Christ shows us how to go even further along the path of love. He teaches us to treat every human being like a member of the family. He makes the whole world our brothers and our sisters: and not only those who love us, but also those who hate us. We must treat them as we hope to be treated ourselves. We wish for ourselves: mercy, kindness, forgiveness. And so we are called to grant freely to others—even to the thankless and undeserving—mercy, kindness, and forgiveness. Christ says, “Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in

return; and your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish.”

The Lord’s teaching is simple, but it is by no means easy. It is, in essence, the message of Calvary. It is a call to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ. We said before that nearly every faith and philosophy has its own version of the Golden Rule: but only in Christianity do we find the fullest realization and incarnation of that rule, in the person of Jesus Christ our true God.

On this weekend we celebrate one hundred years of God’s grace to this community. Over that span of time, your parish has received many blessings, spiritual and material. However, an abundance of blessings alone does not ensure long life for a parish. A community like this grows and thrives only when the members see each other as family, and not merely as fellow parishioners. A parish truly prospers only when the people take to heart this Golden Rule. The Lord said, “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). Agape, love, preaches the Gospel more eloquently than any sermon could do.

As you look ahead to the next century of service to our God, commit yourselves anew to the law of love. Work together gladly. Give generously. Forgive freely. Love one another sincerely. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And so you will truly be children of the Most High God, and great will be your reward in the coming Kingdom that has no end.

May the Lord bless and keep this beautiful community forever!



GOA/D. Panagos

- Source: goarch.org