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His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America - Homily at the Divine Liturgy (Chorostasia) for Saturday of Souls and Memorial Service



June 6, 2020

Saint Basil Greek Orthodox Church

Troy, New York

Beloved Faithful,

Today, both the Epistle and the Gospel Readings are endings – the ending to the Acts of the Apostles, and the ending of the Gospel of John. And here we are, gathered in this pious church of Saint Basil in Troy, New York, on this Saturday of Souls that precedes the Great and Holy Pentecost, to commemorate the ending of our loved ones, and all those who have perished in the global pandemic of COVID-19.

We remember all of them in this Holy Liturgy, which our Lord Jesus Christ

commanded that we do “in remembrance” of Him, for as we remember God, He remembers us.

We remember all our loved ones who have gone before us in the hope of the Resurrection and eternal life, because death cannot separate those who truly love one another.

We remember all the righteous from ages past who have built up the Body of Christ in every generation, who have been well pleasing to the Lord, and whose sacrifice has enabled us to pursue a righteous ministry.

And, in these days of the pandemic, we remember those whose lives were not spared by this plague, and we remember the grief and sadness of their families and loved ones.

For those who have passed from this world to the next, we pray for their comfort in the bosom of Abraham. For those whose lives have been shattered by the sudden and unexpected demise of their fathers and mothers, children, friends and neighbors, we pray for their consolation and solace.

As we pray at the ending of life, we also recognize, on this day before the Holy Pentecost, that in the end is also a beginning, for τέλος does not only mean “end,” but purpose as well.

Each and every one of us has a purpose, a goal, which extends far beyond the details and facts of our life and livelihood. It even extends beyond death.

So often, when people ask us to share who we are, we talk about what we do – our education, our job, our family, but not our purpose. Because the goal and core of our lives is spiritual in nature; how we ultimately relate to God and to one another.

Sadly, there are many among us who arrive at the end of our physical life without having given much thought or reflection to the goal of life, which is the Kingdom of God. In the aftermath of passing there are projects undone, resources unspent, and closets full of clothes and shoes never to be worn again. The sadness of the family even after the funeral of a loved one is revisited when the last will and testament is read, a final statement of the departed to those left behind.

But for us, as Christians, the most important last will and testament is that of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He said at the Mystical Supper:

“This Chalice is the New Testament in My Blood, Which is shed for you.”[\[*\]](#)

It is this Testament – not the last ... but the new – that is the one that speaks to

every human being, in every condition, culture, language, and race. For it speaks of purpose, of the goal of life, which is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength – and our neighbor as ourselves.[\[†\]](#)

Love is the purpose of our very existence and, at the same time, love gives purpose to all our endeavors. Without it, our lives end with nothing “but a whimper,” as the poet once observed.[\[‡\]](#) But with love – for God and for each other, as the Scripture says:

“... with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”[\[§\]](#)

Therefore, by the Spirit of the Lord in these Holy Days of Pentecost, let us look deeply into the faces of one another. Let us acknowledge the “glory of the Lord” that exists intrinsically in every person created in the image and likeness of God.

Let us be willing to be changed, transformed, and be transfigured from glory to glory. And thus at the end of our lives we will be at peace with God, with one another, and with ourselves, possessing the good answer in the presence of the awesome judgment Seat of Christ. Amen.

[\[*\]](#) Luke 22:20.

[\[†\]](#) Cf. Mark 12:30,31.

[\[‡\]](#) The closing words of “The Hollow Men” by T.S. Eliot (1925).

[\[§\]](#) II Corinthians 3:18.

[Source](#)