

29/06/2020

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America - Homily for the Third Sunday of Matthew



June 28, 2020

Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church – Newburgh, New York

My Beloved Christians,

I am so very pleased to be here in Newburgh at our community of Saint Nicholas. I have been determined to visit every community in the Direct Archdiocese District, and being with you today brings me one step closer to accomplishing that goal.

There is something very important for us in the readings of the day, as indeed, there always is a treasure of spiritual value to be discovered in all the Sacred Scripture. When these treasures appear, we must not be too quick to simply hear them, and then let them go. They merit our meditation and our consideration to apply them in our own lives.

Today, we find this precious gem in the Epistle reading of Saint Paul to the Church at Rome (5:8):

God has given sure and certain proof of His love for us, because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What a wondrous declaration of God's love for us. We were yet in our sins, recalcitrant and disobedient, but God sent His Only-Begotten Son, to give Himself utterly and totally to redeem us, to heal us, and to save us.

Compare this to how we act in our daily lives. We love those who love us. We are good to those who are good to us. We repay those who repay us. And we know what our Lord says of this behavior:

So if you only love those who love you, what grace is that for you? ποία ὑμῖν χάρις ἐστί;[]*

The Lord recognizes our natural inclinations, but He calls us very forcefully to, “*Love your enemies, and treat them well, and lend without expecting to be repaid ... be compassionate, even as your Father is compassionate.*”[†]

My beloved Christians, we want and we need access to the grace of God in every aspect of our lives. And where is that grace to be found? In loving others. In treating others well. In being compassionate, and doing all this when those around us do nothing at all to deserve our goodness.

When we act in such a way, we imitate our Heavenly Father, and we access the grace that abounds upon the Throne of Grace.[‡] We can see a literal transformation in our own lives, as we cease obsessing over our own personal concerns, and set others and their needs before our own. And the secret is to do so when the others around us have done nothing to merit our love and our compassion. It has been said that love is seeking only the happiness of the other and that compassion is seeking only the relief of their suffering. In both cases, the “other” is placed first and foremost.

Consider for a moment the sacrifice of the Father, His divine *kenosis*, because He was willing to give up His Son unto death, the death on the Cross, so that the very people who rejected Him, who despised Him, who nailed Him to that Cross, could be redeemed and healed.

Would we do the same? With our own children? Our godchildren? Our grandchildren? Our spiritual children? I dare say that we would not, especially in the face of such meanness and hatred, such despising and vitriol.

And yet... this is what God did for our sakes. And He invites us to participate in this

“grace” – this gift freely given that can only be freely received.[\[§\]](#)

The only thing our Lord requires is that we show some of the amazing generosity that He has shown to us. Love without demands. Give without reward. Show compassion without expectation of being thanked.

When we can begin to live like this, like our Father Who is in Heaven, then we shall see transformation in our own lives, even transfiguration of our very existence!

This is how the Saints became saints. This is how they raised the dead and performed all manner of miracles. And it is how we shall enter the Kingdom of God, loving, giving, and with the empathy and compassion of a little child.

Through the prayers of the Holy Mother of God and all the Saints.

Amen.

[\[*\]](#) Luke 6:32.

[\[†\]](#) Ibid. 6:35, 36.

[\[‡\]](#) Cf. Hebrews 4:16 (τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος).

[\[§\]](#) Cf. Matthew 10:8 (δωρεὰν ἐλάβετε, δωρεὰν δότε).

[Source](#)