

12/08/2020

## **His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America - Homily for the Service of Paraklesis**



August 10, 2020

Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church

New York, New York

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am so very glad to be with you this evening, as we chant together the Service of *Paraklesis*, the Canon of Supplication to the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. These services are part of our preparation for her glorious feast of the Dormition, which is approaching at the end of this week, together with the conclusion of our Fast.

It seems to me most appropriate that this year the Dormition falls on a Saturday, the Sabbath, the Day of Rest. 2020 has been a difficult and challenging year for all of us. To have a spiritual respite from all that we have endured in this year's Feast of the Κοίμησις, is both a gift and an opportunity.

It is a gift, because in the midst of our trials and tribulations, the Church extends to

each and every one of us these services of Supplication, of *Paraklesis*. In our hymns and prayers, we come together as a community to make known our requests, and our intentions. Our expressions of appeal and calls for ἔλεος lift heavy burdens from our souls. In our chants are the music of mercy we soothe these burdens of anxiety, worry, and fear.

But the *Paraklesis* services are also an opportunity. They are a touch-point where we can be free to go beyond our concerns about only self and those that are near and dear to us. Tonight, and every *Paraklesis*, is an occasion for us to practice compassion for others, as we call even strangers to mind, and invoke upon them the tender mercies of the Mother of God.

Therefore, my beloved Christians, our gift and opportunity tonight, and indeed every night, is to remember both ourselves, those we love, and most importantly, those we neither love, nor even know.

For it is in expanding our empathy beyond our close circle of family and friends that we expand our capacity to reflect God. We all know that this world can be a very dark and dreary place for many around us, our neighbors whose physical proximity to our lives in no way represents a real and vital relationship.

And this is precisely why we pray for them, why we reflect and meditate on their needs and happiness, and why we list their names in such services as these Canons of Supplication.

It is as our Lord Jesus Christ taught:

*So if you only love those who love you, what grace, what χάρις, is that for you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you only treat well those people who do the same to you, what grace is that for you? Again, even sinners do as much. And if you only lend to those whom you expect to pay you back, what grace is that for you? For even sinners lend to sinners in order to be paid back as much. But you must love your enemies, and treat them well, and lend without expecting to be repaid. Not only will your reward be a great one, but you will become children of the Most High, for He is gracious and kind to the ungrateful and to the wicked. Therefore, be compassionate, even as your Father is compassionate.*[\[\\*\]](#)

If we would appeal to the Most Holy Theotokos for her compassion toward us, can we not also show compassion to others? If we wish her to pray for us, shall we not also pray for others?

My beloved Christians: This is the secret of a happy life, even in the midst of trials and tribulations. When you offer yourself for the sake of others, even with the most

modest amount of time and energy, it is an offering of spiritual fragrance unto the Lord. It may not seem like much to the world or even to yourself – like the two coins, the λεπτά, of the woman mentioned in the Gospel.[\[†\]](#)

But the same Lord Who remembered her sacrifice, so much so that it is recorded in the Holy Gospels to this very day, He will regard your prayers and intentions. And you will become, in word and in deed, the daughters and sons of God, through His grace and His love for every person in the world.

Amen.

[\[\\*\]](#) Luke 6:32-36.

[\[†\]](#) Luke 21:1-4.

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[Source](#)