

31/10/2022

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily at the Divine Liturgy Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church



Your Eminence, my beloved Brother in Christ and Concelebrant in the Holy Spirit,
Metropolitan Savas,

Reverend Clergy,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

The celebrations of this wonderful community of Saint Demetrios in Warren, Ohio continue today, with this celebration of the Holy and Divine Liturgy - our quintessential act of worship as Orthodox Christians.

Yesterday, we began the festivities with Great Vespers and a Banquet that was as full of love and fellowship, as it was good food, music, and dancing. You should all be very proud of the way you have observed this historic anniversary.

Nevertheless, in today's Gospel reading – which is not a parable, as an for it never says that that Lord was using a parable – a different kind of banquet is described, with very different results.

The story that our Lord relates, of Lazaros and the “Rich Man,” is a story that speaks to the heart of every person. It is a story that reminds us of how God receives our actions and intentions, and how He transforms us.

The “Rich Man” in the story – who is called “Dives” in the Latin Tradition, which simply means, Ὁ Πλούσιος – holds what is essentially a banquet for one ... only himself. He “feasted sumptuously every day,” as the Lord relates, avoiding poor Lazaros who lay at his door, desiring the leftover scraps that might fall from his table. It truly is a heartbreaking picture. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that the reason the “Rich Man” is never named is because his lack of generosity and compassion makes him invisible before God, and even to himself. His self-awareness as a human being has been ruined by his selfishness.

Compare that banquet of one, with our Banquet of last evening. And with the Divine Liturgy today. This parish of Saint Demetrios is a place of inclusion, of love, of acceptance; where no one is turned aside. Last night was a feast of ἀγάπη, and we were all filled with every measure of God's goodness. In today's Divine Liturgy, we also are filled, but in a different way – in our souls and in our hearts, where love and compassion are both the nourishment we receive, and the nourishment we can then give to others.

This is why the demise of Lazaros and the “Rich Man” are so important for us to consider. Even though he was literally starving at the “Rich Man's” gates, we never hear Lazaros complain or curse the “Rich Man's” good fortune. Then when he dies, the Lord says Lazaros was “carried by the Angels to Abraham's bosom,” an image of heavenly rest. On the other hand, when the “Rich Man” dies, we only hear of a burial. Not even a single mourner is mentioned.

And the status of each ma after death is most revealing. Lazaros is peaceful, while the “Rich Man” is tormented ἐν τῇ φλογὶ ταύτῃ – “in this flame.” * But this is not a punishment for the “Rich Man.” Rather, my beloved friends, this is his experience of God – Who is the “living flame of love,” and it is based in his lack of generosity, decency, and compassion.

So we see that God does not finish with us just in this life, but takes us throughout all eternity. In that “living flame of love,” the “Rich Man” suddenly thinks about his five brothers, and this turn of his awareness to the needs of someone else is a real

first for him. It is the mark of growth in love, even though that love torments him.

My friends, God is not finished with us yet. This story should be of great comfort to us, for it shows not only heavenly reward, but how we are created to go “from glory to glory,” as I preached last evening.†

Therefore, in this wonderful time when we observe the accomplishments of Saint Demetrios in Warren, be certain that God is not finished with you yet. The Banquet of Faith that you engage every week here is the miracle of God that calls all people to a life of spiritual satisfaction and peace. It is not a Banquet for one ... it is a Banquet for all.

It is God’s way of feeding us with His Love and Mercy, so that we may share them with others. We are fed to feed others. To give to others. To serve others.

Thus, in this precious Parish of Saint Demetrios, where so many have given of themselves so that this milestone may be enjoyed, I encourage all of you to continue in these wonderful traditions. Keep nourishing one another with love, with faith, with hope in tomorrow.

And, through the intercessions of your Heavenly Protector, Saint Demetrios, you will continue the journey from glory to glory, and one day all find heavenly rest in the Bosom of Abraham, together with Lazaros and all the Saints.

Amen

* Luke 16:24.

† II Corinthian 3:18.

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