



61st Year

May 19, 2013

Pamphlet #20 (3129)

THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNION OF PEOPLE

In the Church the believer lives a double spiritual experience

The first is participation in the mystery of the incarnate economy of the Godman, in the communion of the grace of the Holy Spirit and he is trained in the miracle of his perfection in Christ.

The second experience is his communion with the other believers as a communion of believing people but also with all their weaknesses and imperfections. And in these they are called to show support for one another and understanding, so that in common they can struggle for the common goal which is their salvation and theosis. For each one to develop an ecclesiastical ethos and behavior before his fellow man of the same faith. As Saint John Chrysostom also says, from the moment one is a human it is natural and necessary for him to mix with and communicate with people.

In the common area of the Church man and his social behavior is not abolished. Already from the first Apostolic Church expressions of human weakness appeared. The Greek speakers complained that they are being cast aside in the agape meals by the Hebrew speaking believers (Acts 6:1). "A murmuring was occurring", in other words complaints and protests in the first Christian community. This shows that the believers in the Church don't cease being humans also. Their main purpose may be their enlightenment and sanctification, however this purpose they approach as people "bearing weakness", in other words with weaknesses and imperfections.

Divine grace heals and makes up for human weaknesses

Because man is not bodiless but, as Basil the Great mentions, is dual natured, in other words he is comprised of soul and body, it follows that, in order for him to approach the spiritual majesty of perfection in Christ, he needs help. And furthermore from Him who lived human nature as a real human, except for sin.

The Lord is perfect God but also perfect man. He does not cease however knowing as much as anyone our human weaknesses and imperfections. So for this reason also in the specific problem He enlightened the Apostles to care directly and to cover the needs which arose.

The solution was given with the composition of the institution of Deacons. They advised the believers to select seven men who would be distinguished for their virtue, divine enlightenment and their prudence, so that they could undertake the caring, covering the needs of food for everyone, without anyone being ignored.

The exhortation of the Apostles took on flesh and bones. The best ones were selected. Despite these things however, the Apostles needed to pray for them and to place their apostolic hands on the heads of the selected candidates so that the grace of the Holy Spirit could come. Because grace heals and strengthens the weakness of human nature and makes up with the gift of divine charismas for human deficiencies. In this way, in other words, the ordination of the Deacons by the Apostles, the need of the believers was covered who were gathering at the tables of love of the first Apostolic Church and simultaneously the first level of Priesthood, the degree of the Deacon was instituted.

Social support for one another a composing mark of the Church

Christ is the head of the Church and the only philanthropic Lord. He went through His life benefactoring His fellow men in society. He instituted boundaries in Christian social behavior saying “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”, in order to turn human society into a society of love and offering. It is He who has mercy without humiliating distinctions. And He wants all people to become one, a communion of God’s love “so that they may be one” as He asked His Father in His High Priestly prayer.

What, I wonder prevents contemporary societies from implementing this heavenly pursuit? The personal sins of each one? Our personal passions? Why don’t we cast them aside with His help? He exhorts us to go near Him, whoever of us is tired from our personal mistakes and loaded with frustration from the societies which made the various interests. And He has the power to comfort us, to give us rest. So long as we believe in Him. There lies the key which will unlock the hardness of our heart so that the simplicity of grace can enter in.

An example is St. Stephen who, for his faith and his offering to the love of neighbor, was granted to see the Son of God at the right of the Father, while the forgetful Pharisees and scribes swayed the crowd to stone him. An example is also the weak female nature of the Myrrhbearing women who offered their services for the spreading of the Gospel of peace and of love and were granted to become the first preachers of the Resurrection of the Lord.

On the other hand however, whoever of us feels that we are conscientious members of the Church let us not barricade ourselves in our personal salvation alone. But let us show a spirit of supporting one another without distinctions with as many more people as possible. For them to feel the warmth of Christian love. To be convinced that the Church is a communion of love and embraces all people.

Archim. Ch. N.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES

“The knowledge of the Scriptures is not aimless, but serves some end. It responds to some sacred goal. It enriches man with the wisdom of God “in finding salvation”, since as Chrysostom observes, “the Scriptures indicate the things to be done and to not be done”. In other words, “the Scriptures teach those things which we must do and those things which we ought to avoid”. True wisdom is that which leads to salvation”.

From the work of His Eminence of New Smyrna Sir Symeon, the Epistles of the Sundays, text – translation and interpretative commentaries, Second Volume By Apostolic Ministry Publications.