



61st Year

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THE PROPRIETY OF THE CHURCH

Today the Church is celebrating the memory of the holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Synod which made firm the faith in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ and proclaimed the consubstantiality of His godhead with God the Father. And the entire Orthodox people in their worship gatherings addresses the “one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God... light of light, true God of true God, born not created, of one essence with the Father” (Symbol of Faith). This is the propriety of the Church, the defense of the truth and its confession. This event adorns, projects, brightens the Church. Because the Church is the ark of the truth.

The sacred duty of the pastors of the Church

The concern for the spiritual propriety of the Church, the keeping of the dogmatic truths, the preservation of the character revealed by God has been undertaken by the spiritual pastors, the bishops and by extension the priests. So for this reason, the Apostle Paul urges the presbyters of the Church to be careful saying: “Be careful you and the whole (rational) flock which the Holy Spirit has placed you bishops over, so that you pastor the Church of God, which He united with Him with His own blood”.

The duty of those who serve the mysteries of the Church and handle the grace of God, with the main goal being the salvation of souls, is great. First, because they received the spiritual office from the All Holy Spirit through their ordination. Secondly, because the aim is the illumination of people in the faith that the Godman Christ revealed. A revelation which He sealed with His blood on the Cross and He certified with His brilliant Resurrection.

In other words, the pastors of the Church ought to dispose spiritual vigilance and to feel the sacred duty of their mission. Because pastoral ministry is not strewn with the rose petals, but hides traps, it has many ascents and the pastor is called to take many people out of the impasses of sin.

The traps which are hidden in the spiritual work of the pastor

The apostle Paul denotes the nets of traps which Satan spreads in order to trap believers and pastors and to put to naught the work of the Church. The Apostle writes that “grave wolves” will appear and “from among them...men speaking perverted things”. People will appear outside the body but also within the body of the Church who will be perverting the truth.

1. There truly are spirits of delusion and teachings of demons which have impressive external wrappings. A philosophical manner of offering deception covers its sly goal and draws those who love “knowledge” and meditation. However the truth concerning God is not revealed “in the teachings of the words of human wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:13), in other words, it is not taught with words of human wisdom but with the words which the Holy Spirit inspires. God is truth beyond reasoning, impossible to be comprehended without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. No philosophy, no matter how much it exercises charm in thought, is able to replace the wisdom of God. So for this reason also, the Christian truth concerning God is truth by revelation.

2. There are however simpler teachings which use the written sacred texts, they misinterpret them and sway many naive people. These are heresies which set out from the age of Christ and continue through the centuries in the history of the Church. The variety of heresies is very great, so for this reason also the pastors of the Church need much care in discerning them and locating them.

The Apostle Paul says: “be vigilant”, so that we are, in other words, in constant spiritual wakefulness, and whatever is presented as Christian we should compare it with the teaching of the holy Fathers of the Church, so that we see where the deception lies, where the traps lurk.

This teaching, the Fathers received from the Apostles and they preserved it, with the illumination of God, as the apple of their eye, through the sacred dogmas of the Church. And constantly in the liturgical life, whether with hymns and troparia, or through the sacred preaching, these teachings are projected, interpreted, repeated.

The teaching of the Church in the spiritual propriety of the believers

The propriety of the truth which distinguishes the sacramental life and teaching of the Church must be reflected also in the believers. So that they can be recognized as true members of her body and not as fake ones.

The truth must be clear-cut, bright, living, full of grace and sanctification and be accompanied by the virtues which the Holy Spirit inspires. It should not be shadowed by outbreaks all by outbreaks of secularization. The forbearance of falsehood with the excuse of understanding does not enlighten the truth. It is a result of lukewarm faith and acquiescing to deception. Falsehood must be denounced and the truth confessed. Forbearance according to Basil the Great is joint guilt. It is one thing for you to perceive the weakness of the other to accept the truth, and it is another thing to participate with your forbearance.

Also selfishness and individualism are characteristics which distinguish the person of the world and not of the Church. The Apostle Paul says about himself that “I did not desire silver or gold or clothing at all”. The wealth of the world did not sway him but he remained frugal and self-sufficient in order to teach the truth of Christ in an unobstructed manner. And he always did everything to help whoever had need. In other words, love for neighbor is a basic virtue for every pastor but also for every Christian, who wants to correctly divide the word of the truth.

The propriety of the Church and of the believers is the preserving of the truth unadulterated and authentic, just as Christ revealed it and the Apostles and Fathers taught it. So that through the worship life of the Church, the witness of the Gospel is constantly projected that “no one ever saw God. Only the only begotten Son, who is united, as God, with the Father, He made him known to us” (John 1:18).

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