



61st Year

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THOSE STRONG AND WEAK IN FAITH

The Apostle Paul distinguishes between the members of the Church those who are firm in faith and in the spiritual life, and those who are unstable and have need of help. In other words, he speaks about those spiritually strong and those spiritually weak. And both to the ones as well as to the others “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit” unites them. In this spirit, which characterizes the world of the Church, the expression of support, girding up and help between them is self evident, a given. So for this reason, the Apostle Paul also calls this practical expression of supporting one another, “a debt”.

The obligation of those who are strong

It is a duty of the believers who feel strong in the spiritual struggle to support those spiritually weak brothers. “We strong ones in faith ought (have a debt) to forbear (put up with) the weaknesses, the sicknesses of our weak brethren” (Rom. 15:1). If the Lord teaches us that every help we offer “to the least of our brethren” it is as if we’re offering it to Him Himself, one can perceive what great value it has, that we support whichever believers show a weak character.

If we limit our interest to our own spiritual progress and we are indifferent to the imperfections and the delays of the other believers, then we come into opposition to Christ. He: “did not please himself” (verse 3), in other words he did not strive, he did not look, he did not even seek his own advantage. He overlooked the “as I wish” which by rights belonged to him, both as Holy God but also as a sinless human, and “for our own salvation he handed himself over to death” (Theodoretus of Cyrus). He carried upon his Cross, our iniquities, he forbore being crucified, our disobedience, he endured the mockery of people for our sake.

And the Apostle exhorts us to not please our own selves, but to eagerly show our patience, our forbearance, to endure in the per chance bitternesses from our brethren in Christ, so that we can give them time to be supported, as they receive strength from our example. In this way we will edify their souls in goodness, inspiring in them the spirit of kindness, of leniency and love of God.

The virtues and gifts of those who are strong

In order to achieve this, we need certain virtues and gifts which will give us the power to endure the cross of our neighbor. The first is patience. The virtue which associates all the gifts and

the other virtues. With patience, the Apostle Paul says, the spiritual struggle is conducted. Patience certifies faith, makes it firm. It calms down egotism and inspires fortitude, forbearance, and understanding.

The second virtue is the gift of comfort which we draw both from studying the Holy Scripture as well as from the gift of God himself. From within the sacred texts we find much comfort in our soul, taking an example from the lives of the Saints and from Christ himself.

Saint James projects the patience of Job and blesses whoever has patience: “we bless whoever forebears” (5:11). Because the result will be wondrous. The compassion of the Lord leads to a favorable end (Rom. 15:11). The weak one will be supported and the strong one will feel the divine satisfaction. This fills the hearts with hope in Christ. And this hope does not disappoint, but it certifies the faith and supports both the strong ones and the weak ones.

These three virtues, these three gifts, in other words, patience, comfort and hope, which are associated with each other (John Chrysostom) give us the power to “think the same thing among one another” (Rom. 15:5). In other words, all believers, strong and weak, should be of one mind, have the same opinion in Christ, the one to understand the other and to support one another, so that God is glorified and they themselves live in the grace and glory of Jesus.

The contribution of the believers in the weakness of the contemporary world

Aside from the practical material philanthropy today’s society has very great need of spiritual support. The majority of people, because they supported their hopes on unskillful and empty promises of every irresponsible sociology and pneumatology, need true spiritual support and help. The fervor of divine loving care and fatherhood is lacking, because many people have superficially departed from the worship life of the Church. They are deprived of the divine comfort and love which Christ so abundantly disperses to whoever approaches him with faith and eagerness. Our contribution consists in projecting faith in the power of God, which is incalculable, and to encourage whoever hesitates, to believe in His divine power, “because everything is possible to him who believes”. With a good disposition and patience we can convince many people to make the decision to entrust themselves and to support themselves on the power of God, which in a living and tangible way supports, saves and sanctifies.

Archim. Ch. N.

THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS

The Church celebrates with spiritual gladness and worshipful brilliance the Dormition and the Translation of the Most Holy Theotokos. No woman was granted in the world the most great honor of the holy Virgin of Nazareth, who became the mother of God on earth. Generations of people bless the Theotokos, who is “the undefiled treasury of virginity”, as Saint Proclus praises her. The Church preserved the most beautiful hymns for the All Holy Virgin Mary and every Christian soul turns always with trust to the mother of the Lord. She is precisely the mother, and in her all holy person each believer sees his own mother, the woman who nurtured him in her womb, who nursed him with her milk, who held him in her hands, who protected him in her embrace. “...having the motherly strength toward God, even to those who excessively sin she gains in excess the forgiveness”.

From the book of Bishop Dionysius L. Psarianos (Metropolitan of Kozani).
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