



72<sup>nd</sup> Year

August 4, 2024

Pamphlet #31 (3714)

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## **THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Matthew 9:1-8)**

### **"Son, your sins are forgiven"**

*At that time, getting into a boat Jesus crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He then said to the paralytic – "Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.*

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## **THE PASSION OF ENVY**

The Gospel reading of the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew gives us the opportunity to see one of the great illnesses of the soul, the disease of envy. Envy is mainly sadness for our neighbor's happiness and joy for his misfortune.

As Basil the Great characteristically notes, envy is "sorrow because of the prosperity of one's neighbor." Envy is a great wound, since no other passion is so harmful to the souls of men, since it is born from the root of all passions, which is pride.

Saint Thalassios emphasizes that a characteristic feature of vainglory is hypocrisy and falsehood, while a feature of pride is haughtiness and envy. Thus, when we are possessed by envy, it is certain that we are possessed by its mother, which is pride.

## **The envious person**

The person who is envious usually examines the life of his fellow human beings and seeks to compare his life with their life. When he finds that his brother is superior, then he lets the terrible passion of envy manifest itself. And usually the first manifestation is gloom, distress, and despondency. Even existing material goods become a cause of distress. That is why the envious person is no different from a naked person who is wounded by everyone. And this wound is very deep. It goes down to the heart.

The envious person is usually many-eyed. He diligently takes care to always find reasons to criticize. He observes how the other person will speak and how he will behave. Thus, behind the friendly criticism, the passion of envy is diligently hidden.

## **The results of envy**

The results of envy are very frightening. It distorts the person's soul. Perhaps it is a passion whose existence we do not sense very quickly. It doesn't hurt us much, as other passions do. However, it distorts our entire spiritual organism.

- a) Envy reveals the carnal life. Any passion that results in a person losing God's grace constitutes a carnal attitude. The Apostle Paul, enumerating the works of the flesh, also mentions envy.
- b) The envious person is spiritually blind. In other words, the eye of the soul, which is the mind, is blinded and thus cannot distinguish good from evil and furthermore, cannot feel the grace of God. Saint Thalassios says epigrammatically: "God blinds an envious mind."
- c) The person possessed by the passion of envy ends up in unbelief. Couldn't it be that, blinded by envy, the

contemporary Jews of Christ denied Him, so they fell into unbelief?

- d) Envious people have no love. The envious person cannot and does not want to love. That is why the envious person, according to Saint Maximus the Confessor, is a stranger to love and guilty of God's judgment.
- e) Envy, however, destroys the one who has it. St. Basil says that, just as when the arrows that come out of the bow meet a hard object, they return to the archer, in the same way, the actions of envy become wounds to him who envies. The envious person is constantly melting with envy.
- f) But the passion of envy also offends the people to whom it is directed. It does great harm, especially if the others do not have the strength and spiritual courage to face this situation.

### **The one who first taught**

The first to teach envy is the devil himself. He, because he was jealous of God's great love for man and because he could not succeed against God, went against His creation, man. The devil knows that the only ontological unity is the unity in Christ, that is why he tries in every way to abolish it. Thus, through envy, he creates the divisions that destroy us and do not let us feel that we are members of the Body of Christ and brothers.

### **The saving exhortation**

Basil the Great exhorts: "Let us avoid the disease of envy, which is a teacher of fighting God, confusion of nature, a foolish calamity, an intolerable evil, the invention of demons, the seed of Satan, the engagement to hell, an obstacle to piety, which deprives us of our entrance into the Kingdom of God."

† F. A.

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## Where Christ is, there is true joy

Worldly joy gives something temporary, something for that moment; it does not give what spiritual joy gives. Spiritual joy is a paradisaic life. Those who first passed through the Crucifixion and were resurrected spiritually live the paschal joy. "Pascha, the Lord's Pascha!" And then comes Pentecost!...

- *Elder, tell us something about heavenly joys.*

- In this life also, there are heavenly joys and pleasures, and one wonders if in the next life there is something higher than what he is living here. These joys are not expressed, only experienced.

- *Elder, how can you reach this state?*

- In order to get to the state where you can't contain the joy or express it, you need to pay attention to three things: To move simply, not to be occupied with others, and to be saying the Jesus Prayer. If you do these things, there will come a time when you will feel so much joy, that you will be telling me: "My dear Father, I have gone crazy! Am I not well? What is this that I feel?" You will have such crazy joy!

(From the book of the Apostolic Ministry:

*Anthology of Counsels of Saint Paisios the Hagiorite)*

August 4, 2024: 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW

Seven Children in Ephesus, Eudokia the Venerable Martyr

Tone: Pl. 1 – Eothinon: 6 – Epistle: Rom. 12:6-14 – Gospel: Matt. 9:1-8

NEXT SUNDAY: August 11, 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew

Epistle: Romans 15:1-7 – Gospel: Matthew 9:27-35

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