



72nd Year

Sept. 29, 2024

Pamphlet #39 (3722)

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL (Luke 6:31-36)

Become ye therefore merciful

The Lord said, "As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

PRESUPPOSITIONS FOR A LIFE IN CHRIST

The Gospel reading, on the 2nd Sunday of Luke, sets the presuppositions for our participation in the life of Christ. These are: forgiveness, remission, reconciliation, peace, and love.

True and inexhaustible love is from God and in God. If we love, not only do we not hate, but neither do we judge or criticize. Love is the negation or denial of the temptation of judgment, and especially of criticizing others, our brothers, our neighbors. The work of judging or criticizing others belongs to the Economy of God, our Creator and Savior, a work that is criminal to be limited to the boundaries of human justice, when our relationships with

God are not legal or judicial, but loving or filial, and when, above all, in God's judgment about human matters, it is not justice that weighs, but His goodness.

The sin of criticism

It is Luciferian for people, instead of petitioning their advocate the Most Holy Theotokos for the salvation of all, to seize judgment or condemnation from God. And this seizing is Luciferian because it bears witness to an attitude of arrogance, absence of care and respect for others, and a lack of forgiveness and love. For us to be constantly dealing with others and not with our own selves is pharisaism, hypocrisy, denial or ignorance of perfection, since perfection is "to glorify one's neighbor over himself."

The burden, according to the teaching of the Gospel, falls on seeing our own faults and not criticizing our brothers. The primary thing is the feeling and awareness of our own sins and weaknesses, as a presupposition for the miracle of our transfiguration and resurrection. In a word, self-censuring is primary; it is our invisible but constant advancement, our thirst and our hope of salvation. But for self-censuring to not be limited or degenerate into false humility or superficial piety, it must go hand in hand with the denial of any temptation to judge or criticize others, to leave alone our sins and to be occupied with the sins of others. Because whoever truly and sincerely loves God "thinks good of every person."

We must deny our will and consider it a spiritual necessity to humble ourselves before our brothers. And humility will tell us to not harm and not offend, to not abuse and not criticize, because only in this way can we be saved or overcome the demonic temptations. According to the ascetic experience of St. John of the Ladder, "demons coerce us either to sin, or when we do not sin, to judge our fellow men." Judging and criticizing others is a demonic inspiration and work, which offends and opposes God and is the destruction of the soul.

The loving heart

"What is a loving heart?" asks Saint Isaac the Syrian. "It is," he says, "a heart that burns with love for the whole of creation, for people, for birds, for animals, for all creatures... and this from the great charity that moves in his heart immeasurably in the likeness of God." Thus, the Christian does not condemn anyone, he loves and honors everyone without any discrimination, because "he considers all people as God after God" (Saint Evagrius).

The guarantee to put into practice the words we hear in the gospel passage according to Luke's is not human. Christ is among us. The closer we get to Christ, the shorter the distance between us. One of the Desert Fathers, Abba Dorotheos, gives a beautiful and clear image of salvation in the form of a circle. The center of the circle is God, and all the people are on the periphery. Moving towards God, everyone follows a ray of the circle and the closer they get to the center of the circle, the closer the rays get to each other. Thus, the shortest distance between God and man passes through the neighbor. Only if we live like this can we love our enemies, be sons of the Most High, and be compassionate to all, as our heavenly Father is also.

† F. A.

Look for the new edition [in Greek] of the Apostolic Ministry:
Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ (THE NEW TESTAMENT)
with a modern Greek translation
by Emeritus Professor Christos Sp. Voulgaris

September 29, 2024: 2nd Sunday of Luke
Kyriakos the Anchorite († 556), Petronias the Martyr.
Pl. 1st Tone – Eothinon: 3 – Epist: 2 Cor. 1:21-2:4 – Gosp: Luke 6:31-36
NEXT SUNDAY: October 6th, 3rd Sunday of Luke
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15 – Gospel: Luke 7:11-16

SEMINAR FOR LEARNING GREEK SIGN LANGUAGE

The offering of guileless and sincere love is the motivation for creating and operating the Seminar for Learning Greek Sign Language. Those participating in this educational activity of the Apostolic Ministry, which is offered for free, have the capability to help their fellow man who are deprived of hearing, having however, other outlets for communication and who simultaneously are thirsting to learn about God and the Church.

- Thursday, October 3rd, the start of the seminar will take place.
- For more information, those interested can address:
 - The Office of Catechism and Youth of the Apostolic Ministry tel. 210-727-2347-348 (Mon-Fri 8am-2pm)
 - E-Mail: katixisi@apostoliki-diakonia.gr
 - The Apostoliki Diakonia Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/apostoliki.diakonia>
 - The website www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr, in the section “ΠΟΙΟΙ ΕΙΜΑΣΤΕ” and the subsection “ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΚΑΤΗΧΗΣΕΩΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΥ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑΣ”, in which the educational-catechetical activities of the Office of Catechism are described.

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