



73rd Year

January 12, 2025

Pamphlet #2 (3737)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Ephesians 4:7-13)

For the building up of the body of Christ

BRETHREN, grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF HOLINESS

In the passage that constitutes today's epistle reading, my brothers, the foremost Apostle Paul refers to the gifts with which Christ endowed the shepherds of His Church, who undertook the work of shepherding the faithful. He made some apostles, others prophets, others evangelists, others pastors, and teachers. Despite the variety of gifts, however, they all aim at the same goal: the equipping of the Saints.

Struggle for the acquisition of holiness

It is clear that the Apostle Paul calls Christians (the members of the Church of Christ) "saints." This is not the first time he uses

this term in his epistles. This designation is not formal or flattering. It clearly indicates the perspective that opens up in the life of every Christian, every person who becomes a member of the Church of Christ. This perspective is the acquisition of holiness. In the eyes of 21st-century Christians, this truth may seem utopian. Perhaps because our place in the Church has become more formal and less substantial. In the end, however, it is absolutely realistic. We are Christians so that we become saints. Within the Church, we have the potential to become saints. Saints not in the eyes of men, to be accorded hymns and ecclesiastical honors, but saints in the eyes of God, that is, members of the kingdom of heaven.

With faith and a blameless and irreproachable life

Of course, the Christian identity alone does not guarantee holiness, as it is a dynamic state, which is attained through a continuous spiritual struggle and fight against the powers of the world and the devil. The sacred Chrysostom explains how we can make the potential for holiness within us bear fruit, with which God has endowed us: "God has made us holy, but we must remain holy. Holy is he who has faith and lives a blameless and irreproachable life. But God does not ask for just any kind of holiness, but the holiness before Him. For there are holy and blameless ones in the eyes of men who, in reality, resemble tombs, which externally are well-kept, or people who outwardly wear the guise of sheep."

Avoiding hypocrisy

The Great Father of the Church analyzes the way in which Christians can cultivate within themselves the potential for holiness, and most importantly, how to remain steadfast in it. The way is faith and a blameless life. He hastens to distinguish between the external and superficial approach to these two spiritual attainments from the internal, which ultimately leads to holiness. He does this knowing that many Christians, in his time and throughout history, prominently display the external forms of faith and 'moral' life to gain the praise of men, while, at the same time, living lives diametrically opposed to appearances. The holy Chrysostom denounces the plague of religious hypocrisy, which often characterizes extreme pious circles and church figures, and leads

with mathematical precision to perdition. Conversely, he points out that holiness is the fruit of deep and sincere faith, adaptation to the will of God, intense sacramental and spiritual life, fervent prayer, and pure life. With these characteristics, holiness becomes steadfast and continually attracts the grace of God, Who blesses and sanctifies the person of true faith and repentance.

My brethren, we all have within us, in seed form, the seed of holiness, which the love of God implanted in our lives at the moment of our baptism. It is a gift of immeasurable value, which we often overlook or ignore. It is in our hands to make holiness a reality in our lives, provided we struggle consistently in the arena of faith and the authentic spiritual life in Christ!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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January 12, 2025: Sunday After Theophany

Tatiana the Martyr (†226); Martyrs Euthasia and Mertios (†305).

4th Tone – Eothinon: 7 – Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13
– Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

NEXT SUNDAY: January 19, 12th Sunday of Luke
Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11 – Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

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