



73rd Year

January 19, 2025

Pamphlet #3 (3738)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Colossians 3:4-11)

Putting off the old self

Brethren, when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

THE MORTIFICATION OF PASSIONS

The communication of the Apostle Paul with the Christians of Colossae includes wise exhortations regarding the mortification of passions and the damage they cause to spiritual life. Paul urges them to mortify whatever connects them to earthly reality and the sinful past, which brings the wrath of God and estranges them from a healthy relationship with Him. He lists the obstacles to spiritual life that make a person a slave to their passions and instincts, such as fornication, anger, wrath, blasphemy, lying, and other spiritual maladies. Let's examine

them in more detail to understand the extent of their destructive energy.

Avoidance of fornication

The passion of fornication constitutes idolatry, as it makes into a god the body and its instincts, leading people into a peculiar captivity. Saint Ephraim the Syrian suggests a way to rid oneself of the demon of fornication: "If carnal desire troubles us, let us lean over our grave and look at the mysteries of our nature, the skeleton, the fleshless skulls, and the remaining bones. Seeing them, let us consider that we see ourselves in them and then think where the beauty of the flower of this present life went, the beautiful color in the face and the remaining beauty. With this thought, the flame of the flesh will be extinguished." (*Evergetinos*)

Separation from anger and blasphemy

Regarding the passions of anger and wrath, Abba Agathon said that "one who easily becomes angry, even if he raises the dead, will not be acceptable before God." However, there is also the blessed anger, which works beneficially in the human heart. Saint Cassian the Roman speaks of this anger, noting that "even anger has been sown within us for our salvation. But when? When we become angry against wickedness and not become beasts against people." (*Philokalia*)

Blasphemy is capable of turning a person from a creature of God into a slave of the devil. It makes one hard-hearted, abominable, and unclean, while also causing repulsion and abhorrence among one's relatives. And if blasphemy towards our fellow humans has such tragic consequences, blasphemy against God constitutes a grave transgression that leads to a break in communion with Him. The sacred Chrysostom explains the difference: "If anyone who insults the king receives harsh punishment because of the dignity of the person, how many sins is one responsible for when insulting God? We may commit the

same sins against God as against humans, but the gravity is not the same. The difference between God and humans is as great as the difference in sins committed against God and against humans."

Avoiding falsehood

The next spiritual malady is falsehood. Abba Dorotheos equates falsehood with the devil and emphasizes: "Great attention and vigilant care are needed so that falsehood does not deceive us. Because no one who lies was united with God. Lies have no connection with God. For it is written that 'lies come from the evil one and that the devil is the father of lies.' The truth is God, for He says, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' Do you understand, then, from whom we are separated and to whom we are bound by lies? It is evident that we are bound to the devil by lies." (*Ascetic Works*)

It is good for the exhortations of the Apostle to become a cause for self-examination so that, by adopting kindness, humble-mindedness, meekness, and longsuffering, we may become "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved." Amen!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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January 19, 2025: 12th Sunday of Luke

Saint Macarius the Egyptian; Arsenius of Corfu; Mark Eugenikos, the Archbishop of Ephesus; Macarius the venerable hierodeacon of Patmos.

Pl. 1st Tone – Eothinon: 8 – Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11
– Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

NEXT SUNDAY: January 26, 15th Sunday of Luke
Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15 – Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

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VOICE OF THE LORD, a weekly pamphlet of Orthodox faith and life of the "Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece". Iasiou 1, 115 21 Athens. Publisher – Director: Metropolitan of Phanariou, Agathangelos. Editorial office, tel. 210.7272.331. Processing, tel. 210.7272.388. Through the holy churches, it is distributed free of charge. From the Printing Office of the Apostolic Ministry.

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