



73rd Year

February 23, 2025

Pamphlet #8 (3743)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2)
The stumbling block of authority

Brethren, food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall. Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

THE SACRIFICE OF OUR RIGHTS

The scandalization of people with weak faith, which can be caused by careless actions and choices of Christians, was frequently denounced by our Lord. Indeed, Christ rebuked those who cause scandal and warned them of their severe punishment

on the day of judgment, saying, "woe to the one who causes scandal" (Matthew 18:7). In today's scriptural reading for Meatfare Sunday, the Apostle Paul takes it a step further. He calls on Christians to relinquish even their self-evident rights, which do not conflict with God's will, in order to protect the weak faith of some people and to avoid causing, even unjustly, a scandal.

The danger of scandal

The reason for this remark was the habit of some Christians in Corinth to eat meat that idolaters offered at the altars of idols. This practice in itself was not forbidden, since Christ freed people from the bondage of idols and disassociated common human actions and habits from them. However, some new Christians with weak faith still considered the consumption of these foods to be connected with the idolatrous background of the newly formed Church in Corinth, which caused scandal within them. Paul calls on Christians to not eat those meats again, not because faith in Christ forbade it, but because the danger of scandal was lurking.

The need for empathy

The Apostle is asking for something that, in our logic, sounds outrageous: to give up some of our rights so that the conscience of other people may not possibly be harmed. "In an era where everyone is chasing exclusively after their own satisfaction, their own pleasure, their own happiness, their own glory; in an era where everyone is harshly and inhumanely indifferent to their neighbor, whether they are dying, living, starving, suffering, hurting, are being tormented, crying, freezing, or struggling; in an era dominated by cruelty, absolute attachment to self, narrow individual interest, or our terrible indifference to everyone else; in such an era, the words of Apostle Paul, that 'I will never eat anything that I understand

could possibly scandalize my brother,' sound somewhat strange and peculiar" (the blessed Metropolitan of Drama Dionysios).

The new ethos of the Church

This is the new ethos promised by Christ and evangelized by the Church. The criterion of our attitude in society should not be our needs, our rights, and claims, but what our fellow man wants, what we can do to protect our brothers; how we can subject to their desires what the Saints call "personal will"; how we should live so that our life becomes a means of salvation for us and for our fellow human beings. The answer to all these is none other than the way of humble love. As it is written, "Only those who have renounced their ego truly love. When a person loves, they empty themselves, endure, and are patient and longsuffering. However, love for one's neighbor, to be genuine, must imitate God's love for mankind, which surpassed announcements, promises, and well-wishes, and reached the point of sacrifice.

These small sacrifices of personal will for the love of our brothers, avoiding the scandal of their weak faith, and ensuring balance in our coexistence with others, are what Paul calls us to prioritize today. Of course, this is not an easy process, as it requires the limitation of our ego. Certainly, however, it is a God-pleasing act and effort that adorns a person with the heavenly ethos of the Church, the only thing capable of transforming and saving the world.

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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February 23, 2025: Meatfare Sunday

Commemoration of the Second and Glorious Coming of our
Lord Jesus Christ;
Polycarp, Hieromartyr and Bishop of Smyrna (+ 166).

2nd Tone – Eothinon: 2 – Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2
– Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

NEXT SUNDAY: March 2, Cheesefare Sunday
Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 – Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21

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ΜΙΚΡΟ ΕΙΣΟΔΙΚΟ ΣΤΑ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΜΑΣ
(SMALL ENTRANCE INTO THE MYSTERIES OF OUR CHURCH)

1st Edition, in Greek, Size 21x22 cm, 128 pages
by Metropolitan Agathangelos of Phanariou, General Director of the
Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece

In an era in which the Sacred Mysteries become, through attitudes of vainglory and vanity, mere social ceremonies, stripped of their liturgical and sacramental character, it is essential and important for us to know what is happening in the Church at every moment of worship and liturgical life. First we learn, then we love, and then we believe. For this reason, the Apostolic Ministry proceeded with the publication of this catechetical book, in which the sacred Mysteries, their ritual, and liturgical symbols are briefly analyzed. The book is addressed to young people and families, more generally to the wide readership, who are so thirsty to learn the things of faith and of liturgical life.

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