



73rd Year

April 13, 2025

Pamphlet #15 (3750)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Philippians 4:4-9)

The peace of God

Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

THE JOY AND PEACE OF GOD

Today's Epistle reading comes from the epilogue of the Epistle to the Philippians. Paul bids farewell to the Christians of Philippi with prayers and exhortations, where the dominant themes are the experience of joy and the acquisition of the peace of God. These are great spiritual treasures that constitute life in Christ. They are, however, highly sought after in our era. For this reason, our Church prays for their attainment at every opportunity for worship.

The pursuit of joy

One might expect that, in an era of prosperity, civilization, significant scientific achievements, and technological advances, joy would dominate human life. Instead, we see faces troubled, marked by anxiety, dissatisfaction, and insatiable desire. Let's not rush to say that this is solely due to the acute problems of our time – perhaps it is partly so. This happens because modern man "seeks joy in murky sources, in paths where it does not exist. He seeks it in sin, in unstable wealth, in fleeting pleasure, in deceptive glory, in temporary enjoyments, in the satisfaction of his primitive self. He chases it through means and ways that create a false joy – one which is fake, artificial, foolish, ridiculous, deceptive, momentary, and transient. He seeks it through sinful means that kill true joy and make it disappear."

True joy, however, is the joy in the Lord, that which is experienced by the person of faith and hope in God; the person who does not base their dreams and life on the vanity of the world but draws courage and strength from the empty tomb; the person who, even behind life's challenges and trials, sees Christ humbled and crucified, yet gloriously resurrected. Joy is an inner matter, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, working within people of faith and piety.

Peace in our era

One might also expect that peace would be a given in our age. However, despite humanity not experiencing the tragedy of a widespread war, hotspots of warfare and civil strife disturb the superficial calm of the modern world. At the same time, various societies experience fear and terror due to increasing incidents of violence and a surge in criminality. This occurs because we have removed God from our lives, and we believe we can establish a regime of peace around us before building it within ourselves; because peace is also an inner matter – a fruit of communion with the Holy Spirit.

Saint Gurias aptly points out: "No political wisdom, no human experience, no preventive measure can succeed without God's help in securing and stabilizing peace among people. God's blessing is the only stable and secure path to the temporary and eternal peace that is so desired by all of us."

The peace of the heart

A great Chinese philosopher once identified the inner nature of peace, reflecting, we might say, through divine illumination, the wisdom of the Gospel: "For peace to occur between nations," he taught, "nations must live peacefully. For peace to prevail among nations, cities must not rise against one another. For peace in cities, neighbors must understand each other. For peace among neighbors, there must be harmony within their homes. And for peace in the home, one must find it in their own heart."

Neither joy nor peace are achieved through wishful thinking, good intentions, political decisions, or peace movements. All these have human motivations, often selfish and suspicious. They are built only through the grace of God and communion with the Holy Spirit, within the hearts of individuals, and flow into the world as fruits of the living experience of God Himself.

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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April 13, 2025: Palm Sunday

The entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. Pope Martin I of Rome, the Confessor († 655). Anniversary of the fateful day of the conquest of Constantinople by the Frankish Latins (April 13, 1204).

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 – Gospel: John 12:1-18

NEXT SUNDAY: April 20, Holy Pascha

Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 – Gospel: John 1:1-17

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