



73rd Year

July 20, 2025

Pamphlet #29 (3764)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (James 5:10-20)

The Prophets are our example

Brethren, take as an example of suffering and patience the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, that you may not fall under condemnation. Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit. My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

THE MATTER OF THE OATH

Regarding the question of the oath, two tendencies are observed in the Holy Scriptures. In the Old Testament, that is, in the era when the world had not been blessed with the grace of

the Holy Spirit, the oath was accepted because of people's lack of trust. This truth is also used by the Apostle Paul, when, in order to dispel the distrust of the Jews against Jesus Christ, he invokes the oath that God gave to the patriarch Abraham. On the contrary, in the New Testament, where the spirit of the Lord's grace prevails, the avoidance of swearing is expressly and unequivocally recommended. Christ himself is clear on his subject: "I tell you not to swear at all and that your word be a clear 'yes' or a clear 'no'" (Matthew 5:34,37). In the Epistle reading which we heard today, the brother of God, James, imperatively exhorts the Christians: "Above all, my brothers, do not swear by heaven, nor by earth, nor by anything else" (James 5:12).

In our time, there is often a great discussion about the oath, regarding its expediency and the possibility of its abolition from judicial practice, as well as from public events and ceremonies. If the reasoning for its abolition is based on pure thoughts and sincere intentions, with the aim of purifying public life from the danger of oath breaking and the erosion of human dignity, that's fine. If, however, the whole discussion is taking place in order to further open debate for the systematic attempt to remove sacredness and to de-Christianize society, then it has a sinister background.

The positions of the Fathers

We present the following position of the Church, through the holy Fathers, on the issue of the oath, in an attempt to shed light on a subject that tends to become taboo and which takes on dimensions that it does not possess, at least in the post-Christ era.

The sacred Chrysostom characterizes the oath as a "mental disease" and a "very terrible sin," while at another point, he becomes harsher in his expressions and more revealing: "The oath is a terrible thing and harmful, a destructive medicine, a terrible poison, a satanic arrow, a strong trap, a noose around

the neck... Both when we keep it and when we violate it, we sin the same." Basil the Great suggests that another way be found to make the testimony of witnesses in the courts believable, because the oath "brings death to human souls, because he who swears many times proceeds to oath breaking. Because of this, the cessation of the oath is imposed...". For his part, Saint Gregory the Theologian decries the bad habit of swearing by saying: "It is a very great evil to give and to take oaths, because with both, you can become guilty of punishment."

Fidelity and justice

From the above, it is easy to conclude that the oath is not adopted by the Church and its teaching, but it is the fruit of mistrust and suspicion that characterize human relationships in all ages. In our era, above all, this phenomenon has taken on acute dimensions, as trust, truthfulness, and love are types of luxury in interpersonal relationships. This image is anything but honorable for the human person, who is created in the image of God, the image that Jesus Christ, the personification of truth and justice, assumed.

Therefore, let's avoid the temptation of oaths in relationships with our fellow human beings, striving to build them on solid foundations of honesty and truth, which should establish our personal lives. And when we end up needing to swear, obeying the letter of the law, we should strive – with boldness, but also with discretion towards the State Authorities – to avoid it, assuring our personal honor and dignity, until the State abolishes this ultimately ineffective measure, which forces honest people to violate the commandment of God and encourages those who lack moral integrity to use it to achieve their hidden and unlawful schemes. Amen!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

July 20, 2025: 6th Sunday of Matthew

Prophet Elijah the Tishbite (940 BC).

Pl. 1st Tone – Eothinon: 6 – Epistle: James 5:10-20
– Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8

NEXT SUNDAY: July 27, 7th Sunday of Matthew
Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10 – Gospel: Matthew 9:27-35

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