



73<sup>rd</sup> Year

August 17, 2025

Pamphlet #33 (3768)

## THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (1 Corinthians 4:9-16)

### The apostolic work

*Brethren, God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become, and are now, as the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of all things. I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me.*

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### THE SPIRITUAL FATHER

The image that the world had formed of the Apostles and preachers of the Gospel is described by the Apostle Paul in today's Epistle reading, addressed to the Corinthians. For the world, they appeared as dying men and fools, worthy of mockery and humiliation, weak and insignificant, persecuted and despised. These were the badges of honor acquired by those

who, disregarding their personal image, comfort, and self-interest, devoted themselves entirely to the work of evangelizing souls, fully conscious that they were destined to be sacrificed for the love of Christ. This image characterizes the honorable and devoted laborers of the Gospel in every age, those who pour themselves out in the work of missionary service and spiritual guidance of people, often becoming targets of worldly powers.

Paul, bearing the marks of worldly contempt, then turns to his spiritual children, urging them to avoid those who self-identify as spiritual fathers and educators. He himself was their spiritual father, for he had begotten them through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **The gifts of the spiritual father**

We will now speak of the sacred and pivotal figure of the spiritual father in our spiritual life, after presenting the characteristics that make one genuine and authentic in undertaking the profound work of spiritual fatherhood within the Church. Basil the Great teaches that the spiritual father must be “tested and proven in guiding those who journey toward God, full of virtues, with his love for God testified by his own deeds. He must know the Holy Scriptures, be undistracted in his spiritual work, free from greed, without unnecessary concerns, peaceful, beloved by God, compassionate toward the poor, slow to anger, free from resentment, capable of building up his spiritual children, not vain, not proud, and not fickle. He must not delight in flattery, nor prefer anything above God.”

The work of the spiritual father is that of a safe and experienced guide in the spiritual life, for the pathways of this life are many and complex. We cannot walk the spiritual path alone, as we lack both the experience and the knowledge of life in Christ – making the danger of falling and being lost a visible threat. The spiritual father is the living presence of Christ, the unwavering spiritual guide who labors for our rebirth, the seasoned introspector who can see within us and contribute to

the cleansing and whitening of our soul. For this reason, it is vitally important that we have a spiritual father and guide, so that we may safely live the life of Christ within the Church. We must cultivate with him a relationship of healthy contact and communication, avoiding the harmful and destructive trap of idolizing his person.

## **The role of the spiritual father**

The role of the spiritual father is not to keep us bound to himself, but to Christ, who is the central and foundational element of our spiritual relationship. As the late Metropolitan pointed out, "In reality, the (spiritual) relationship is not two-sided, but triangular, because beyond the Elder and his disciple, there is a third member: God." The Lord tells us that we should not call anyone "father," for we have only one Father, "the One in heaven." The Elder is not an infallible judge or a court of final appeal, but a fellow servant of the living God. He is not a dictator, but a guide and companion on the journey. The only infallible "spiritual guide," in the full sense of the word, is the Holy Spirit."

An ecclesiastical life and a safe path toward salvation cannot exist without the presence of a spiritual father in our lives. Let us seek him out, and place our trust in him. He is the only one who can keep our relationship and communion with God alive. Amen!

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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August 17, 2025: 10th Sunday of Matthew

Martyr Myron, Paul and his sister Juliania (†257), the venerable martyr Demetrios of Samarina (†1808), and the feast of the Theotokos of Goumenissa

1st Tone – Eothinon: 10 – Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16  
– Gospel: Matthew 17:14-23

NEXT SUNDAY: August 24, 11th Sunday of Matthew  
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:2-12 – Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35

**Deluxe publication of the Apostolic Ministry:**

***ΕΙΚΟΝΕΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΙΕΡΑ ΛΕΙΨΑΝΑ ΑΓΙΩΝ  
ΤΗΣ ΚΑΘ' ΗΜΑΣ ΑΝΑΤΟΛΗΣ ΣΤΗ ΒΕΝΕΤΙΑ  
(ICONS OF THE THEOTOKOS AND HOLY RELICS OF SAINTS  
FROM OUR EASTERN TRADITION IN VENICE)***

1st Edition, in Greek, Size 20x27 cm, 416 pages

By Metropolitan Agathangelos of Phanarion, General Director of the  
Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece

This deluxe edition first presents Venice as a “Little Byzantium,” outlining the historical relationship between Byzantium and Venice up to the Fourth Crusade, and the presence of holy relics of “unknown” saints in the Christian West. Part II focuses on icons of the Theotokos, each with its own history—such as the icon of Our Lady Nikopoios, Our Lady of the Crypt, Our Lady Mesopandissa, and the icon of the Theotokos from the Flanginian Greek Museum. Part III includes a study of the relics of saints housed in the Church of Saint George in Venice – under the titles *Nazione Greca* and *Cose Sacre* – followed by the Synaxaria and “historical adventures” of the sacred relics of 36 Saints, Martyrs, and Monastic Saints of our Church.

The purpose of this edition is to highlight the icons of the Theotokos and the lives of the Saints as models for the human relationship and stance toward God, and to acquaint us with the history and culture, offering a scholarly and historical perspective on the “translation” of holy relics of saints from our Eastern tradition to Venice, Italy, during the Byzantine era, especially after the fall of Constantinople to the Franks in the year 1204 AD.

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