

Date: November 26, 2022

Subject: 24th Sunday after the Pentecost

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

A gentle reminder that on Monday, we start the Nativity Fast. May God strengthen us to devote the days of this fast to a spiritually profitable preparation for the holiday of the Nativity of our Savior.

LUKE 10: 25-37

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

This parable describes a person who is traveling, who unexpectedly runs into a perplexing situation. He comes across a man lying in the street who had been attacked by bandits *who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead*. He now has to decide what, if anything, he should do for him.

There were perfectly rational and understandable reasons for him to do nothing at all.

1. He did not personally know the injured man. Did he really need to help a total stranger? Was this really his problem?
2. The injured man belonged to a religion and nationality that hated the people of his race and nationality, and ostracized them, considering them to be sub-human.
3. He only had enough money to finish his journey; therefore, he didn't have the funds to help the victim.
4. He had a most important appointment at the place that he was traveling to. He really didn't have any time to stop.

So often, we read reports where people ignore a person in need and do nothing to help. Just recently, I read about a situation where a passenger was being assaulted on a moving train and received no help from

any of his fellow passengers, who simply looked away and ignored what was going on. We even see this happening in this parable, where a priest and a Levite, upon seeing the victim, *looked on him, and passed by on the other side.*

The Samaritan, however, did not do this. He not only stopped to help, but went out of his way to treat the man's wounds, personally brought him to a safe place, and did not hesitate to pay for the care that the victim needed. What was it that motivated him to act in such a way?

It was his heart, which was filled with true love for his neighbor. Such a heart makes it impossible *not* to react to the suffering of another person.

Divine love is unlike any love professed or practiced by the world. This is because true and divine love must be self-sacrificial, as God Himself demonstrated to us: *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

In the pre-eternal council of the Most-holy Trinity, which preceded the creation of Adam and Eve, the Son of God agreed to take on Himself the mission to save mankind. To accomplish His mission, He chose to become a human being, for He intended to redeem mankind by becoming the New Adam. This meant that as a man, He had to suffer, die and resurrect on behalf of humanity.

For a person to be able to benefit from the Savior's sacrifice, he must possess the same kind of love in his heart that the Savior had for all mankind. Christ made this clear in His conversation with the apostles when he instructed them: *This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.*

Do we possess this kind of love, essential for salvation? If not, what must we do to elevate our life to the level required for salvation? St. Theophan the Recluse gives us a step by step path to achieving divine love. *One achieves love battling against one's passions. One begins to battle against passions through repentance. Repentance is realized through the fear of God. The fear of God is the child of sincere faith. This is the sole path that leads to love.*

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what better time than now for us to embark on this salvific path when we are about to begin fasting. May God strengthen us to successfully begin and complete our journey to the Nativity. Then we will be able to greet the newborn Savior joyously with pure hearts.

With Love in Christ,
Archpriest Serge Kotar