

The equal to Apostles **Saint Kosmas the Aetolos**

The teachings of Saint Kosmas (1714-1779) from Aetolia, Greece, who was a Hieromonk on Holy Mount Athos.

1. First teaching.

"In whatever city you enter, say peace to that city."

OUR LORD AND GOD, JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, the sweetest ruler and master, the creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation, was moved by the great goodness which he has for our race and granted us and continues to grant us every day, hour, and moment an infinite number of gifts. In addition to these, he condescended and became perfect man by the Holy Spirit and from the purest blood of our Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, so that we might escape from the hands of the devil and become sons and heirs of his kingdom, to rejoice forever in paradise together with the angels, and not to burn in hell with the impious and the demons.



The Mission of the Apostles

JUST AS A RULER HAS VINEYARDS and fields and hires workers, so the Lord who has the entire world as a vineyard took twelve Apostles and gave them his grace and blessing and sent them to the entire world to teach people how to live well here on earth, in peace, with love, and later to go to paradise to rejoice forever. [He sent them to teach people] to repent, to believe, and to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to have love for God and for their brother. Wherever the Apostles went and were made welcome by people, the Lord instructed them to bless that land, and whatever place they went and were not received, the Lord instructed them to shake off the dust even from their shoes and to depart.

Thus receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, the holy Apostles, as wise and faithful servants of our Christ, ran as lightning throughout the entire world. With that grace they healed the blind, the deaf, the lepers, and those possessed by demons. And the greatest of all, in the name of our Christ they commanded the dead and they did rise.

In whatever land the holy Apostles went and were received by people, they made them Christians, they ordained bishops and priests, they established churches, and they blessed that land so that it became an earthly paradise, filled with joy and gladness, a habitation of angels, a dwelling place of our Christ. But in whatever place they went where they were not received by people, he instructed them to shake off the dust from their shoes, and a curse instead of a blessing remained in that land, a residence of the devil and not of our Christ.

The Life and Mission of Father Kosmas

IT IS MEET AND PROPER FOR A TEACHER, when he wants to teach, to first know who his audience is, and similarly for them to examine what kind of teacher he is.

I, my brethren, who have been found worthy through the compassion of our Christ to stand in this holy and apostolic place, have first inquired about you and I've learned that with the grace of our Lord and God Jesus Christ you are not Greeks [i.e., pagans I ; that you are not impious, heretics, godless; but that you are pious Orthodox Christians who believe and have been baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; that you are sons and daughters of our Christ. And not only am I not worthy to teach you, but not even worthy to kiss your feet, for each of you is worth more than the whole world.

Your nobility should know about me also. And I know that some people have told you other things, but if you wish to learn the truth, I'll tell it to you.

My false, earthly, and fruitless homeland is the province of Arta, in the district of Apokouro. My father, my mother, my family are pious Orthodox Christians. However, I too am, my brethren, a sinful man, worse than anyone. But I'm a servant of our Lord God Jesus Christ who was crucified. Not that I'm worthy to be a servant of Christ, but Christ condescended to have me because of his compassion. Therefore, my brethren, I believe, glorify, and worship our Christ. It is our Christ that I beseech to cleanse me from every spiritual and bodily sin. It is our Christ that I beseech to strengthen me so that I may conquer the three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. I beseech my Christ to find me worthy to spill my blood for his love as he spilled his for my love.

If, my brethren, it were possible for me to climb up into the sky, to be able to shout with a great voice, to preach to the entire world that only our Christ is the Son and Word of God, true God and the life of all, I would have done it. But because I can't do such a big thing, I do this small thing: I walk from place to place and teach my brethren as I can, not as a teacher but as a brother. Only our Christ is a teacher.

How I was moved to do this, my brethren, I'll tell you. Leaving my homeland fifty years ago, I travelled to many places, forts, towns, villages, and especially to Constantinople. I stayed the longest on the Holy Mountain, seventeen years, where I wept over my sins.

The Treasures of the Gospel

AMONG THE COUNTLESS GIFTS which my Lord has granted me, he made me worthy to acquire a little Greek learning and I became ' a monk. Studying the holy and sacred Gospel, I found in it many and different teachings which are all pearls, diamonds, treasures, riches, joy, gladness eternal life. Among the other things I also found this teaching in which Christ says to us: no Christian, man or woman, should be concerned only with himself, how he can be saved, but must be concerned also with his brethren so that they may not fall into sin.

Hearing this sweetest teaching spoken by our Christ, my brethren, to concern ourselves with our fellows, that teaching gnawed at me inside my heart for many years, just as a worm eats away at wood. Considering my ignorance, what could I do?

I sought the advice of my spiritual fathers, bishops and patriarchs, and I revealed to them my thinking, and I asked if such work was pleasing to God to do it. Everyone urged me to go ahead and they told me that such work is good and sacred.

In fact, urged on by his Holiness Patriarch Sophronios may his blessing be upon us-and receiving his sacred blessing, I abandoned my own, advancement, my own good, and went out to walk from place to place to teach my brethren.

Grace is Free

MAKING A START TO TEACH, a thought occurred to me to ask for money (*aspers*) as I travelled about because I was avaricious and I loved dollars (*grosia*). Yes, and gold coins (*florins*) even more, not like your nobility who scorn money, or don't you?

But studying the holy and sacred Gospel, I found another teaching where our Christ says: "I give you my grace free of charge, you too must give it the same way to your brethren; teach without charge, counsel without charge, hear confessions without charge, and if you ask and receive any payment for teaching, great or small, or even a penny (*asper*), I shall put you to death and place you in hell."

Hearing, my brethren, this sweetest teaching which our Christ spoke, that we should labor among our brethren without charge, it seemed to me in the beginning to be very hard. Later, however, it seemed very sweet, like a honeycomb, and I glorified and glorify my Christ a thousand times because he guarded me from the passion for money. So with the grace of our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the Crucified One, I have neither purse, nor house, nor chest, nor another cassock than the one I am wearing.

And I still beseech my Lord to never allow me to acquire until the end of my life a purse, for if I ever begin to take money, I have immediately lost my brethren. I cannot serve both; it is either God or the

devil.

It is meet and proper, my fellow Christians, as we learn from the holy Gospel and the sacred Scriptures, to begin our teaching with God. And when we finish [it is proper] to thank God, not because I am worthy to utter the name of my God, but because he has permitted it out of his compassion.

So we leave aside, my brethren, the prattlings of the impious heretics, the atheists, and we speak only of what pious, the Holy Spirit has inspired the holy Prophets, Apostles, and Fathers of our Church to write for us. On the other hand, we shall not speak of all the teachings because it is not possible, we would need years and years, but a few, however, do seem more necessary. And whoever is a lover of learning, let him seek to learn the rest.

Understanding the Holy Trinity

THE MOST GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD, my brethren, is one and anyone who says that there are many gods is a devil. He is also a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one nature, one glory, one kingdom, one God. He is incomprehensible, an inscrutable Lord, omnipotent, all light, all joy, all compassion, all love. We have no example to compare with the Holy Trinity because there is none in the world. But so that our minds can get some small help, the theologians of the Church give us a few examples. Among others, they use the sun. We all know that the sun is one as God is one also. And just as the sun illuminates this perceptible world, so does the Holy Trinity, God, illuminate the intelligible world.

We have said, my brethren, that the sun is one but it is three at the same time. It has rays which come to our eyes like lines, like threads. It also has light which spreads throughout the entire world. We liken the eternal Father with the sun, the co-eternal Son with the rays, and the consubstantial Spirit with the light.

There is still another way in which you can understand the Holy Trinity. How? Confess candidly, receive the holy Sacraments with fear and reverence, and then the grace of the Holy Spirit will enlighten you so that you will understand better. It is this Holy Trinity that we pious and Orthodox Christians glorify and worship. He is the true God, and all others except for the Holy Trinity who are called god, are demons. And it is not only we who believe, glorify, and worship the Holy Trinity, but prophets, apostles, martyrs, ascetics, as numerous as the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky, who have shed their blood for the love of the Holy Trinity and have attained paradise and rejoice forever.

Similarly, men and women have denied the world, have gone off into the deserts and practiced asceticism all their lives and have gone to paradise. In addition, men and women lived in the world with prudence and virginity, with fasting, prayers, alms, and good works, and lived well here on earth and went to paradise to rejoice forever.

There is no place from where God is absent. We pious Christians should consider that God is in our hearts when we wish to commit some sin, that he is present everywhere, and that he sees us. We should be ashamed before the angels, the saints, and especially before the angel who guards our soul and observes us. We are embarrassed before a young child when we commit a sin, so how can we not be embarrassed before so many saints and angels?

The Names of God

THE MOST GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD, my brethren, has many and various names. He is called light, life, and resurrection. But God's chief name is, and he is called, love. If we wish to live well here also and to go to paradise, and to call our God love and father, we should have two loves: love for our God and for our brethren. It is natural for us to have these two loves and unnatural not to have them. And just as a swallow needs two wings to fly in the air so do we need these two loves, because without them it is impossible for us to be saved.

Our Two Loves

FIRST, IT IS OUR DUTY TO LOVE our God because he has given us such a large earth here to live on temporarily: so many thousands of plants, springs, rivers, seas, air, day, night, sky, sun, etc. For whom did he create all of these if not for us? What did he owe us? Nothing. They are all gifts. He made us human beings; he didn't make us animals. He made us pious Orthodox Christians and not impious

heretics. Although we sin thousands of times an hour he has compassion for us like a father, and he doesn't put us to death and place us in hell. But he waits for our repentance with open arms, for the time when we shall repent, when we shall stop committing evil and do good, to go to confession, to be restored so that he will embrace us to put us in paradise to rejoice forever. Now, shouldn't we too love this sweetest God and master? And if there is need, [shouldn't we] shed our blood a thousand times for his love as he shed his for our love?

A man invites you to his home and wants to treat you to a glass of wine. For the rest of your life you will respect him and honor him. Shouldn't you honor and respect God who gave you so many good things and who was crucified for your love? What father was ever crucified for his children? But our sweetest Jesus Christ shed his blood and ransomed us from the hands of the devil. Now shouldn't we too love our Christ? But we not only don't love him, we insult him every day with the sins that we commit.

But whom do you want us to love, my brethren? Should we love the devil who put us out of paradise and brought us to this accursed world where we suffer so much evil? Moreover, the devil is so disposed that if he could this very minute cause our death and put us into hell, he would do it. Now I ask you, my brethren, to tell me what we should do: to love the devil, our enemy, or to love God, our author and creator?

"[God] of course, Oh saint of God; you speak well."

May your blessings be upon me. I agree too, but God also needs a couch to rest upon. What is that couch? Love. Let us, therefore, also have love for God and plant in our hearts and then God will come and gladden us, and plant in our hearts eternal life. We then shall live well here on earth and we will go to paradise to rejoice forever.

But we not only don't have love but have hatred and malice in our hearts and we hate our brethren. The cunning and plants death in our soul, devil comes and makes us bitter and plants death in our soul, and we live badly here on earth and go to hell and burn forever.

Love is Natural

IT IS NATURAL FOR US TO LOVE our brethren because we are of one nature, we have one baptism, one faith, we receive the same holy sacraments, and we hope to enjoy paradise. He who has been found worthy and has received these two loves in his heart, love of God and love for his brethren, is fortunate indeed. Because whoever has God in his heart possesses all that is good and can't bear to commit sin. And whoever doesn't have God in his heart has the devil and always commits evil and every kind of sin.

Love and Works

EVEN IF WE PERFORM THOUSANDS upon thousands of good works, my brethren: fasts, prayers, almsgiving; even if we shed our blood for our Christ and we don't have these two loves, but on the contrary have hatred and malice toward our brethren, all the good we have done is of the devil and we go to hell.

But, you say, we go to hell despite all the good we do because of that little hatred? Yes, my brethren, because that hatred is the devil's poison, and just as when we put a little yeast in a hundred pounds of flour it has such power that it causes all the dough to rise, so it is with hatred. It transforms all the good we have done into the devil's poison.

Love in Action

HOW ARE YOU GETTING ALONG HERE, my brethren? Is there love among you? If by chance you want to be saved, don't ask for anything else in this world except for love. If there is anyone here among your nobility who has this love for his brethren, let him stand up and tell me so that I may pray for him also and ask all the Christians to forgive him. He'll receive such forgiveness that he couldn't buy it for thousands gold coins.

"I Oh saint of God, love God and my brethren."

"Good, my child, you have my blessing. What is your name? "

"Kostas."

"What is your trade?"

"I tend sheep."

"Do you weigh the cheese you sell?"

"Yes, I do."

"You, my child, have learned to weigh cheese, and I to weigh love. Is the scale ashamed of its master?"

"No."

"Now I'll weigh your love and if it is true and not false, then I'll pray for you too and I'll ask all the Christians [here] to forgive you. How can I determine, my son, whether or not you love your brethren?"

Now I who walk about and teach in the world can say that I love Mr. Kostas as dearly as I love my own eyes. But you don't believe it. You want to test me first and then you'll believe.

I have bread to eat and you don't. Now if I were to give YOU some since you have none, this shows that I love you. But if I were to eat all of the bread and you went about hungry, what does that show? It shows that this love I have for you is false.

I have two glasses of wine to drink; you have none. If I were to give you some to drink, then I show that I love you. But if I don't give you any, then the love is false.

You are sad. Your mother and father have died. If I were to come to console you, then my love is true. But if while you cried and mourned I ate, drank, and danced, my love would be false.

"Do you love that poor boy?"

"I do."

"If you loved him, you would buy him a shirt because he is naked so that he too will pray for your soul. Then your love will be true, but now it is false."

"Isn't that right, my Christians? We can't go to paradise with false love. Now if you want to make your love true as gold, take and clothe the poor children and then I'll ask that you be forgiven. Will you do it?"

"Yes."

"Fellow Christians, Kostas has learned that the love he had up to now was false and he wants to make it true as gold. He will clothe the poor children. And because we have taught him, I beg you to say for Mr. Kostas three times: 'May God forgive him and have mercy upon him.'"

The 'Our Father'

THE MOST GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL GOD is and is named love; he is and is named Trinity. Moved by compassion, the Lord first created ten orders of angels. The angels are fiery spirits, immaterial as is our soul. Each order is as numerous as the stars in heaven. What moved God to create them? His compassion. We too, my brethren, if we wish to call our God father must be compassionate, and cause our brethren to rejoice, and then we can call God father [and say] : "Our father who is in heaven - - ." If, however, we are merciless hard-hearted, and we cause our brethren to be poisoned and we put death in their hearts, we shouldn't call God our father but the devil, for the devil and not God wants us to cause our brethren to be poisoned.

The Devil

AND SO, MY BRETHREN, the first order of angels of which we spoke earlier fell because of pride and sought to be glorified equally with God. From a luminous and most brilliant being, the angel became the darkest devil and the enemy of people. He is in hell where he burns forever. When we hear the word devil, it is he who was once the first among angels; it is he who moves people to pride, to murder, to theft; it is he who enters into a dead person, causing him to appear living, and we call him a ghost. [Finally,] it

is he who enters a living person who takes on the image of Christ, of the Panagia, or some Saint, and running up and down like a person possessed, says he performs miracles. It is the devil who enters into a person and causes him to become an epileptic and demoniac. But may God be glorified, for he's given us three weapons with which to fight him.

If there are some here who are possessed and wish to learn the cure, it is easy: confession, fasting, and prayer. The more a person goes to confession, fasts, and prays, the more the devil burns and flees.

Pride and Humility

WHEN THE FIRST ORDER OF ANGELIC GLORY fell away and became demons, the other nine orders humbled themselves and fell prostrate, and worshipped the All-Holy Trinity, and stood in their place to rejoice forever. We too, my brethren, should reflect on what a great evil pride is; it brought down the devil from angelic glory and caused him to be in hell where he bums forever. Humility kept the angels in heaven to rejoice forever in the glory of the Holy Trinity.

We should reflect further that the most gracious God hates the proud and loves the humble, and not only God, but we too. When we see a humble person, we see him as an angel. He makes us want to open our heart and put him inside, but when we see someone proud, we look upon him as a devil, and we turn our face away so as not to look at him.

Let us then avoid pride, my brethren, because it is the eldest daughter of the devil; it is the road which leads us to hell. Let us have humility because it is angelic and the road which takes us to paradise.

"How are things here? Do you love pride or humility? Whoever loves humility let him stand up and tell me so that I can pray for him."

"I love humility, Oh holy one of God."

"Take off your clothes, put on some poor clothes and walk through the market place. You won't do it, you're ashamed? Do something else. Cut off half of your mustache and go to the bazaar. You won't do this either? I'm not saying this to you only, but in order that the others will hear as well, so that you won't say that you are humble."

Do you see me with this beard? It is filled with pride, and may God uproot it from our hearts. A Christian needs two wings to fly and to go to paradise: humility and love.

The Eggs of Easter

WHEN THE FIRST ORDER of angels fell and became demons, the most gracious God commanded and this world came into being. And it is 7,288 years from the time that the world was created. This world is like an egg. And just as the yolk is in the center of the egg, so is the earth made by God to stand without touching any other place. And just as the egg white surrounds the yolk, so does the air the earth. And just as the shell encloses everything, so does the sky the earth, The sun, the moon, and the stars are attached to the sky. The earth is round and wherever the sun goes it becomes day; night is the shadow of the earth.

Here it is night, somewhere else dawn - And just as there are people here on earth, there are some under the earth. This is why the holy Fathers have ruled that we should color our eggs red for Easter: because the egg symbolizes the world, while the red color symbolizes the blood of our Christ which he spilled on the Cross to sanctify the whole world. We too should rejoice and be glad a thousand times, because Christ has spilled his blood and purchased us from the hands of the devil. But we should also weep and mourn because our sins crucified the Son of God, our Christ.

The Sabbath

GOD COMMANDED and seven days were created. The first was the Lord's Day, which he kept for himself. The other six he gave us to work for our false and earthly [needs]. On Sunday we are to rest and to go to church, to glorify God, to stand with reverence, and hear the Holy Gospel and the other books of our Church.

What does our Christ instruct us to do? Meditate on our sins, on death, on hell, on paradise, and on our

soul, which is more precious than the entire world. We are to eat and drink moderately, similarly, to clothe ourselves moderately, and to use the remaining time for our soul-to make it a bride for our Christ. And then we can call ourselves human beings and earthly angels. But if we concern ourselves with what we shall eat and what we shall drink, how we shall commit sin, how to dress up this stinking body which tomorrow will be eaten by worms, and do not concern ourselves about our soul which is eternal, then we can't be called human beings, but animals. So make your body a servant of the soul, and then you can call yourselves human beings.

Creation

ON THE FIRST DAY GOD COMMANDED and light was made. On Monday, the sky, the earth, the wind, etc. On Tuesday, the grasses and plants. On Wednesday, the sun, moon, and the stars. On Thursday, the sea, fish, and birds. On Friday, he commanded the earth to bring forth all the animals.

There was no man or woman on earth. God took dirt from the earth and formed a man like us and breathed into him, and gave him an eternal soul. And just as we human beings take flour and water, and knead dough, and make a loaf of bread, so did God. We too must reflect on what is the body and what the soul. The body is dirt and tomorrow will be eaten by worms. It is necessary for the soul to rejoice forever in paradise if it does good, but to burn in hell if it does bad. This body which you see, my brethren, is the garment of the soul. The soul is man. It is the soul which sees, hears, talks, walks, learns sciences, gives life to the body and doesn't allow it to stink. But when the soul comes out, then the body stinks and becomes wormy.

The body has eyes but doesn't see, it has ears but doesn't hear; it is the same with the other senses of the body. They are all activated by the soul.

Mourning the Dead

"Do you mourn the dead?"

"We do."

"It seems you feel pain for them. How many days do you keep the dead?"

"Two, three hours."

"Is that how much love you have for the unfortunate man?"

From today on, don't bury him, but keep him for twenty-four hours. Gather yourselves together, young and old, and reflect upon him well because there is no better teacher than death. And don't mourn for the dead because you do injury to yourself and to them. And you ladies who have on dirty kerchiefs [because of mourning], throw them away.

God Created Women Equal to Men

WHEN GOD MADE MAN, he took a rib from him and made woman and he gave her to him as a companion. God created her equal with man and not inferior.

"How do you regard your women here?"

"Inferior."

"My brethren, if you want to be better than women, you must do better works than they, otherwise what does it profit us if women do better works and go to paradise while we go to hell?"

We are men and we act worse. I see that wherever I travel and teach and speak a word about women, they immediately listen to me and discard their earrings and rings as superfluous. I see them rush to confession.

Men and Beards

I ALSO SAY A WORD FOR MEN. It is natural for a man who is going on fifty years to wear a beard. But here I see old men who are sixty and eighty years old and still shave. Aren't you ashamed to shave?

Doesn't God who gave us beards know better? Just as it is unseemly for an old woman to deck herself out and put on cosmetics, so it is for an old man to shave.

"When wheat grows and becomes white what does it signify?"

"Harvest.

"The same with man. When he grows up and becomes White, what does this signify?"

"Death."

"Is there anyone here who wishes to let his beard grow? Let him stand up and tell me so we can become brothers, and I shall pray for him and ask all the Christians to forgive

"I, Teacher."

"Good, you have my blessing. Pray to God for me, a sinner, so that I will pray for you too for as long as I live. Will you do it?"

"I will, Oh saint of God."

"I beg you, my fellow Christians, say three times for all those who let their beards grow: 'May God forgive and have mercy upon them.'"

Let Your nobility also ask for forgiveness. And may God enlighten you to let go of your sins as you let your beard grow - You, young men, honor those with beards. And if there is a man of thirty with a beard and one of fifty, or sixty, or a hundred who shaves, place the one with the beard above the one who shaves, in church as well as at the table.

On the other hand, I don't say that a beard will get you to heaven, but good works will. And _your dress should be modest, as well as your food and your drink. Your whole conduct should be Christian so that you will be a good example for others.

Eve's Debt Paid by the Theotokos

MAN, MY BRETHREN, gave birth to woman from his side without the aid of a woman and remained whole afterwards. Woman borrowed that side from man and owed for it. Many women were born, as many as the stars in the heaven, but none was found worthy to give birth to a man to pay back that side which she owed except for the Lady Theotokos. She was found worthy because of her purity to give birth to our sweetest Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, without man; a virgin who remained a virgin and who paid for that side.

The Treatment of Wives

LISTEN, MY BRETHREN, what joyful mysteries our holy Church has. But she has them covered and they need uncovering. That is why you must all get some education, so you will understand where you walk. And you, man, don't treat your wife like a slave, because she is God's creature as you are. God was crucified for you as he was for her. You call God father; she calls him father too. You have one faith, one. Baptism. God does not consider tier inferior. This is why he made her from man's middle, so man would be like the head and woman the body. But he didn't make her from the head, so she wouldn't have contempt for man. Similarly, he didn't make her from the feet, so that man wouldn't have contempt for woman.

Adam, Eve, and the Devil

GOD NAMED MAN ADAM and woman Eve. He created a paradise in the area of the East full of joy and gladness. There was neither hunger, nor thirst, nor illness, nor anything sad. He adorned them with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and placed them in paradise to rejoice as angels.

God said to Adam and Eve: "I, who have created you human beings brighter than the sun, have placed you in paradise to enjoy all the good things of paradise. But so that you I ill know that God is your author and creator, I give you one commandment. From this fig tree alone don't eat. But know this too, if you transgress my commandment and you do eat, you will die." And so God left them in Paradise and they

rejoiced like angels. For this reason God adorned them with shame which would protect them from every sin, and especially the woman. This is why, my fellow Christians and daughters of Christ, be covered with shame as much as possible and you will look like gold.

And so, my brethren, the devil who hates all beautiful things, seeing the great glory which Adam and Eve received from God, envied them. What does he do, this evil spirit who is the devil? Knowing that it would be easier to deceive Woman than man, he thought to himself: "If I deceive the woman, then through her I'll easily deceive the man." So he entered a serpent and went to Eve and told her: "What did God tell you to do here in paradise?"

Eve replied: "God told us to eat from all the good things in paradise, but not to eat from one fig tree, because the day we transgress his commandment, we'll die."

The devil answered her and said: "You won't die, but if *You* eat You'll become like God. This is why he has prohibited you. So take, you eat first, and urge your husband to eat so You'll become gods."

The woman took and ate. She induced her husband to eat also. And as they ate, they immediately were stripped of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and they acquired foolishness and fear.

A person who keeps God's commandments, my brethren, becomes wise and isn't afraid of anything in the world. But he who doesn't keep the commandments of God becomes foolish, and is afraid of his shadow even if he's a king and rules over the entire world. Take care, my dear Christian women, keep God's commandments as much as possible and don't do the will of the devil.

And if you as human beings happen to commit some evil, don't induce your husbands to do as Eve did. Similarly, men too shouldn't listen to the advice of women as Adam did.

Wishing to forgive them and to allow them to remain in paradise, God pretended he didn't know what happened, and said to Adam: "Adam, where are you? Why are you hidden? Where is the glory that you had before, when you were like an angel? Now you have become like a foolish child."

Adam answered and said: "Here I am Lord. I heard you coming and became afraid and hid."

God said to him, "Why were you afraid and hidden? Am I, perhaps, fear? Perhaps you ate from the figs which I told you not to eat?"

Adam answered with pride: "Yes, Lord, I ate, but it isn't my fault. The woman you gave me, she deceived me and I ate."

God said to Adam: "I gave her to you as a companion and not for her to deceive you. I told you not to eat because you would die. You should have obeyed my word and not your wife's. Well, all right, you ate. You were deceived. [But] why is it difficult to say, 'I did wrong, my God, I have sinned, my Creator?' I would have forgiven you and allowed you into paradise again, but by blaming woman, you blamed me because I made woman."

Do you hear, my brethren, what an evil thing it is to blame someone else? So if we want to be saved, we should always blame ourselves and not throw the blame on someone else.

Then the gracious God said to Eve: "Why did you eat the figs which I told you not to?"

She replied with pride and said: "Yes, Lord, I ate them, but it isn't my fault. The serpent deceived me."

Seeing their pride, God expelled them from paradise and cursed Adam to work the earth, to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow, and to weep without consolation so that God might have compassion upon him and put him back into paradise. This is why, my brethren, you should rejoice, all of you who earn your bread with your labor, because that bread is blessed. And if you want, give a little of that bread to a poor man so that thereby, you gain paradise. Again, in the Same way, weep and mourn with heavy tears, all of you who live by stealing and injustice. God will put you to death and Will place you into hell.

How are you getting along here, my fellow Christians? Do you all live by your labor or by injustices? If you are Christians, you should live by your labor. God blesses that, but curses that which is gained through injustice.

Woman was also cursed to be subject to her husband and to give birth to her children with labor, pain,

and tears, and to weep without consolation so that God would have compassion on her and restore her to paradise. You can see plainly how when animals give birth, they don't suffer the pains which a woman does when she gives birth, for they don't have the woman's curse.

The Loss of Paradise

GOD CURSED ADAM AND EVE and exiled them from paradise. They lived nine hundred and thirty years with dark and bitter tears, and gave birth to children, and their children to other children. And the whole earth was filled. All human beings are from one father and from one mother. This is why all human beings are brethren. It is only our faith which separates us.

Adam and Eve died and they went to hell and burned for five and a half-thousand years because of one sin. But what about us who commit so many, and especially me? What is to happen to us? God is compassionate but also just. He also has an iron rod, and as he punished Adam and Eve, he will punish us too if we don't do good.

Adam and Eve transgressed God's commandment and were exiled from paradise. Now what are we doing, my fellow Christians? Know that in those five and a half-thousand years all who died went to hell. But the Lord had compassion upon the race of humans and came and became perfect man from the Holy Spirit and the purest blood of our Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and took us out of the hands of the devil.

Know that the Annunciation of the Theotokos took place on the Lord's Day. Christ was born on the Lord's Day and revealed to us the holy Faith, the holy Baptism, and the holy Sacraments. He was cursed, beaten, crucified in his human nature. He arose on the third day and went to hell and brought out Adam and Eve and their race. There was joy in heaven, in Hades, and in the entire world. For the Jews and for the devil it was poison and a double-edged sword. He ascended into heaven and sat on the right hand of the Father to rule with him forever and be worshipped by the we expect the end of angels. Know that today, tomorrow, the world. You are prudent and wise; you understand by yourselves what is good for you and do it.

Father Kosmas' Compensation

NOW WHAT SEEMS REASONABLE to you for us to do? I have two thoughts. One tells me: "You've said enough to the Christians here, and tomorrow morning get up and go to another place to teach." The other tells me: "Don't go. Stay and tell them the rest and you can leave on the next day. What do you say? Shall I leave or stay?"

"Stay, Oh saint of God."

Good, my children, I shall stay. But is it good for a man to work in a vineyard or to tend sheep and not to eat from the products? Now is it right for you not to give me, who have come here and have labored for you, some consolation, some payment? And what kind of payment do I want? Money? What would I do with it? Through the grace of God I have neither a purse, nor a house, nor another cassock, and the bench that I have to stand on and teach is yours. It represents my grave. This grave has the authority to teach kings, patriarchs, bishops, priests, men, and women, young and old, and the entire world.

If I were to travel about for money, I would be crazy and foolish. But what is my payment? It is for you to sit in groups of five or ten and discuss the divine teachings, to put them inside your heart so that they may bring you eternal life. The words I spoke to you, my brethren, are not my own, but those of the Holy Spirit from the Holy Scriptures. What I have told you is the same as if God himself came down and told them to you. Now if you were to do these things and put them in your mind, my labor would seem to me to be nothing. But if you don't do them, I shall leave saddened with tears in my eyes.

The Importance of Schooling

DO YOU HAVE A SCHOOL HERE, here in your village to teach your children?"

"We don't, O saint of God.

You must all get together and establish a good school. Appoint a committee to govern it, to appoint a teacher to teach all the children, rich and poor. Because it is in school that we learn who God is; who is

the Holy Trinity; who are the angels, demons; and what is paradise, hell, virtue, evil; what is the soul, body, etc. Without a school we walk in darkness. The school leads to the monastery. If there were no school, how would I have learned to teach you?

I studied about priests and about unbelievers, heretics, and atheists. I searched the depths of wisdom, but all the faiths are false. I learned this to be true, that only the faith of the Orthodox Christians is good and is sacred: to believe and to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, I tell you this. Rejoice that you are Orthodox Christians and weep for the impious and heretics who walk in darkness.

The Time for Repentance is Now

WHAT ARE WE, my fellow Christians, just or sinners? If we're just, we're of good fortune and thrice-blessed; if we're sinners, now is the time to repent, to cease from doing evil and do what is good, because hell waits for us.

When will we repent? Not tomorrow or the day after, but today, because we don't know what will happen to us by tomorrow. Take care, my brethren, don't be infected with pride, don't commit murder, don't fornicate, don't swear, don't lie, don't slander, don't betray another, don't deck out your body because it will be eaten by worms. But adorn the soul which is worth more than the whole world. Pray, fast, give alms, keep death before you. And hope for the time when you'll leave this false world and go to that eternal one.

Listen, my brethren, just as a rich man has ten servants and when one makes a mistake, he dismisses and replaces him, so with our Lord. When the first order of angels fell, God commanded and the world was made and he made vis human beings to put us in the place of the angels.

Our True Home

WE, MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS, have no home here on earth. This is why God made us with an upright head and put our brain on the upper part of our body, so that we can always reflect the heavenly kingdom, our true home. So, my brethren, I'll teach and counsel you, and I'll dare again to beg the sweetest Jesus Christ to send his grace and blessing from on high to this village and to all the Christians, men, women, young and old, and to bless the work of your hands.

First of all, my brethren, may God have compassion on you and forgive you your sins, and may he find you worthy to live well here and in peace in this fruitless life, and after death in paradise which is our true homeland, to rejoice forever, to glorify and worship the Holy Trinity to the ages of ages, Amen.

I beg you, my brethren, to say for me too, the sinner, three times: "Forgive me and may God forgive you." Forgive one another too.

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