

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.

5. Fifth teaching.

The Importance of Education

IN THE BEGINNING GOD created heaven and earth and everything in it, says the prophet Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit in the holy Scriptures. In olden times, my fellow Christians, people were made good. Among the many there was a man named Moses. As a young child, my brethren, Moses received two things in his heart, love of God and love of his brethren. Have these two loves, [which produce] joy, glory, exultation, riches, treasures. Let us rejoice with these two loves always.



The Prophet Moses studied for forty years to learn his letters in order to understand where he walked. You too should study, my brethren; learn as much as you can. And if you fathers haven't, educate your children to learn Greek because our Church uses Greek. And if you don't learn Greek, my brethren, you can't understand what our Church confesses. It is better, my brother, for you to have a Greek school in your village rather than fountains and rivers, for when your child becomes educated, he is then a human being. The school opens churches; the school opens monasteries.

Moses

FOR FORTY YEARS MOSES prayed to God to free his brethren, the Jews, from Egypt. You too, my brother, should pray to God as much as you can for the good of your brother and not, my brother, to steal from him, to murder him, and to wish him evil.

For forty days and nights the Prophet Moses fasted until he was cleansed spiritually and bodily from every sin. Hear, my brethren, what good things the Prophet Moses did and see what a great good the most gracious God granted him. He ordained him king and he reigned for forty years. He also made him a prophet throughout the world; to know all future and past things. God made him like Himself.

Moses lived for a hundred and twenty-eight years; he lived well here and he went to paradise to rejoice forever. This is the way we too should labor, my brethren. Let us believe as much as possible; let us cleanse ourselves from every spiritual and bodily sin, and become angels. And if we don't labor, my brethren, and instead we eat and drink and enjoy ourselves, and dance, we cannot be called human beings but dumb animals.

Creation of Man and Woman

GOD, MY BRETHREN, inspired the Prophet Moses and he wrote for us many and different truths. What we said yesterday was from the Prophet Moses. Yesterday we said, my brethren, that God is one, incomprehensible, omnipotent, that he is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that he first created ten orders of angels; that one order became devils because of their pride. Then God made us human beings to put us into paradise to replace the first order of angels. And God created one man and one woman. Just as we mix flour and water and make a loaf of bread, so did God take earth and mixed it and made a man. He breathed upon him and gave him an angelic, immortal soul. There was no woman in the world. And God took from man a rib which he owed and created woman.

Later there were thousands upon thousands of women on earth. But none could be found to repay the rib taken from Adam except the Lady Theotokos, who was found worthy to give birth to Jesus Christ and

God due to her purity. She was a virgin and she remained a virgin, and she became queen of heaven and of the angels and of all creation both intelligible and perceptible.

The most gracious God created paradise in the East filled with joy and gladness. He put man and woman in this paradise and gave them all the good things that were in paradise. And so that they might know the most gracious Lord, so that they might know God, so that they might know the creator, he gave them a small order, saying to them: "Don't eat figs from one particular fig tree. But if you don't keep my commandment and you do eat the figs, I shall put you to death."

The Loss of Paradise

MAN AND WOMAN treated God's command with contempt and ate. You should abstain therefore, my brethren, and not do as Adam and Eve did, to have contempt for God's word, because, brethren, the most gracious God is compassionate, but he is also just. He also has an iron rod in his hands. You women especially should watch out and not suffer the fate of Eve: to do the will of the devil and disregard the commands of God. You women should abstain and not urge your husbands to do evil as Eve did.

Man and woman treated God's command with contempt and ate. God exiled them from paradise and they came to this accursed place. It is said that they had thirty-three male children and twenty-seven daughters and that they lived nine hundred and thirty years. They went to hell and were in flames and burned for five and one-half thousand years. This is the place we reached in our discussion yesterday.

Evil in the World

ALL MEN AND WOMEN were born from one man and one woman, and we are all brothers and sisters. But the devil, my brethren, our enemy who hates good, seeing that the world was multiplying, became envious and designed in his heart to destroy the world. He put hatred in the heart of men so that they would hate one another and not marry and give birth to children to increase the earth. He caused men to become homosexuals, and to perform bestialities and other obscene acts which even the dumb animals never did. The most gracious God, seeing that the devil planned in his heart to end the world, commanded that whoever didn't have children, would be cursed. From then on men began to marry. Listen, my brother, you who don't have children, are you cursed? You do wrong to be sad. The most gracious God did this to put an end to that evil. You, my brother, who are sad because you can't have children, do you complain that you are cursed? [You shouldn't], for you have no curse.

Spiritual Children

THOUSANDS AND TENS of thousands of men and women have preserved their virginity and didn't have children. So if you are cursed, so are they, as I am who am a monk. And what prevents you from giving birth to all of these people spiritually? My brother, take two poor children into your home and make them your spiritual children and acquire wages from God and honor among men. Give birth to humility, fasting, prayer, charity, love for God and for your brethren, then you will be saved. On the other hand, you, my brother, who have children, should cry and be sad, for all the sins that your children commit are credited to your soul, too. Are you unmarried? You have one responsibility. Are you married? You have the responsibility of saving your wife and your two, three, five or ten children. The more children you have the greater the responsibility. Don't you hear what people say about your children? 'Cursed be the father who begot them?' I hear many who say this. That's why, my brother, you who have children, train them, teach them their letters, and especially Greek, because our Church uses the Greek language. I won't tell you more because you are wise and understand.

Joakim and Anna

IN OLDEN DAYS there was a man named Joakim who had a wife named Anna. He was a good husband and she a good wife. They were both of royal lineage but the wife was superior. There are many women in the world who are better than men. What does it profit you to boast that you are a man and be inferior to a woman, and go to hell and bum forever while your wife goes to paradise and rejoices forever?

Joakim and Anna were my brethren pious prudent virtuous and humble. Their home was like a hotel

but they had no children. Knowing that the most gracious God was the author of all good, they beseeched him to grant them a child, male or female, and they would dedicate it to the temple. Seeing their good intention, the most gracious God [willed] and immediately Joakim's wife became pregnant, and she gave birth to the Lady Theotokos, the queen of heaven and of earth. He named her Mary, which means queen.

Do you hear, my brethren, now Joakim and Anna had their hope in God and he granted them the gift which they asked for?

The martyrs purchased paradise with their blood, the ascetics with their ascetic life, and we, brethren, who have children with what are we to purchase paradise? With hospitality. We must entertain our poor, our blind, our lame brethren, as Joakim did, and not the rich, for they have the means on earth, so the most gracious God does it in paradise a hundredfold. You, my brethren, who can't have children, have your hope in God as Joakim and Anna did and not in sorcery and magic and other devilish acts. Neither look for your fortune or fate in magic. I believe that some children are born from the devil and they walk about on earth, and say: "Give me a dollar and I will give you a talisman so that you can have a male child." But don't believe them because they perform devilish acts and harm people.

The Theotokos

WHEN THE LADY THEOTOKOS reached the age of three, Joakim and Anna remembered their debt, that is, that they had dedicated her to the temple. So they took the Lady Theotokos and went to church where the Prophet Zacharias was, the archpriest and father of the Holy Forerunner [John the Baptist] Immediately the archpriest perceived that she was to give birth to the Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ, by the Holy spirit and without man. She would conceive as a virgin and after giving birth would remain a virgin. Zacharias received her and kissed her and placed her in the sanctuary because he knew that the Lady was to become the throne of our Lord. The Theotokos spent twelve years in the sanctuary where no one entered except the high priest who went to see her once a year. She was fed with heavenly bread and became superior to the angels. So, my brethren, the holy sanctuary reveals the throne of God, the nave [of the church] paradise, and the narthex reveals the door of paradise.

Priests and Laymen

YOU SHOULD REJOICE and be glad, reverend and holy priest, because God has granted you the holy sanctuary where the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ is located. You laymen should refrain from entering the holy sanctuary. No one should enter except the priest who is celebrating the liturgy and the deacon.

Rejoice, my brothers, and you laymen, too, because God has given you the nave which reveals paradise. Rejoice, too, you ladies, my sisters, for God has granted you the narthex which reveals the door of paradise. Enter, my brethren, men and women into the church with fear and awe and don't converse. Men shouldn't go to church to look at the women, nor should women go to look at the men, but enter to make the sign of the Cross with fear and awe and to listen to the Divine Liturgy and to be enlightened and cleansed from your sins.

My brethren, you laymen should be careful not to accuse your priests, not to swear at them, and not to neglect them because you put fire [in your breast] and you will be burned, because priests are even higher than angels and kings. This is how my mind tells me, my brethren, to act. If I were to meet a priest and a king, I would put the priest to sit higher than the king. If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I would first greet the priest and then the angel. Because, my brethren, [the priest] is higher even than the holy altar, higher even than the holy chalice, because the holy chalice is without a soul, but the priest receives the holy Sacraments daily, the holy Body and Blood of our Lord and God Jesus Christ. I, my brethren, have no charges to make against the priest, because they are priests, and they have Christ who punishes them, and whatever mistake they make, our Christ has an iron rod to apply to them.

Those Who Would Be Priests

NOW I WOULD LIKE to talk to those who would become priests. You, my brother, who wish to become a priest, you should at the age of eighteen become a reader, at twenty a subdeacon, at twenty-five a deacon, and at thirty a priest. And you should learn Greek well enough to be able to explain the holy

Gospel, to close it [after reading it] and then to explain it to the Christians. Then, my brother, you can become a priest. If you wish to become a priest so you can take it easy, or for the glory, or through illegal means, God will cut your life short and your soul will go to hell to burn forever. When the laymen ask you, my brother, to become a priest without payment of money, then you are blessed and thrice-blessed, then you are superior to the angels.

The Annunciation

AFTER TWELVE YEARS, God inspired the father and mother of the Theotokos and they affianced her in accord with divine dispensation. Later the most gracious God sent the angel who said to the Theotokos: "Mary, you should rejoice more than anyone in the world. you will give birth to the Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, without man, as a virgin. And you will remain a virgin so that Jesus Christ can save Adam and Eve and the entire human race."

The Lady Theotokos replied and said: "My Lord, I wonder, and glorify you, I honor and worship you because you have condescended to be born of me, your servant. I am ready, therefore, and let your will be done." And immediately the Theotokos became pregnant and she gave birth to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son and Word of God, without man, a virgin, who remained a virgin.

Virginit

OUR LORD WAS BORN of a woman so that women would be blessed, because women first received the curse and we were expelled from paradise. And so woman had to receive the blessing so that she would put us back into paradise. Our Lord was born of a virgin so that virginity would be preferred. You, my brother, who want to preserve your virginity, hate the world. Then you are good enough to become thrice blessed; then you will safeguard your virginity; then you will become like an angel. Our Lord was born of one affianced to bless marriage.

Marriage

REJOICE, MY BRETHREN, and be glad that our Lord has given us a blessed marriage. And God commanded that a man should marry one woman and likewise a woman should marry one man. And after they have become affianced, they should go to confession with pure faith, with fear and awe, and with reverence partake of the holy Sacraments. After they have received Communion, they should be crowned in church and after three days then they should come together with awe and reverence.

And if you want to celebrate a wedding, my brethren, bring the chanters to sing [hymns] all day to glorify our Lord. Then, my brethren, is the wedding blessed; then even if thousands and tens of thousands of magical acts are performed to harm you, nothing will stick. Then, my brethren, that couple will have blessed children, and will be blessed by God. And He will allow them to live in this vain life well and in peace and they will go to paradise. But if You men marry two or three women, and similarly you women two or three husbands, the wedding is not blessed, but that marriage is called fornication and adultery. The Most gracious God made man to marry one woman to have children. Have You married, my brother? Did you have children? You didn't have children? Did your wife die? No matter, don't marry again but become a monk. Work for your soul so that you can go to paradise rather than marry many times and gain the whole world and go to hell. If You go to hell what do you gain? You will gain nothing else, my brother, except that you will burn forever in hell. Don't You see in the *menologion*, on the ninth of October, which contains the lives of St. Andronikos and St. Athanasia, what a struggle they had? What fortunate people they were!

There was a couple who had two children. The most gracious God wanted to test them, so one day he took their two children from them. What did the blessed couple do, my brethren? Immediately they divided their Possessions and both entered monasteries. They lived well and in peace here, and went to Paradise to rejoice forever with their fortunate children. But if You celebrate Your weddings with songs and play violins and drums and do all those things that the devil loves, the most gracious God curses that couple and they will not prosper. Either the husband dies, or the wife prematurely, and the children will be all girls, blind, lame, mad, misshapen - I won't say anymore.

God's Creation

THE MOST GRACIOUS GOD made us, my brethren, human beings, and not animals. He made us more honorable than the whole world. The most gracious God gave us, my brethren, eyes to look at the sky, the sun, the moon, and the stars so we can say: "O my God, if the sun which is your creation is so bright, how much brighter are you, Oh Holy Name, you who are the creator of heaven and earth, the author and fashioner? Oh my God, find me worthy to enjoy you."

God, my brethren, put the mind in our heads. Our mind is like a dish in which we should put all the teachings of the Gospel and not myths and idle talk, which are the art of the devil. He gave us ears to hear the Divine Liturgy which is celebrated by the priest in the church. He gave us a mouth to glorify our Lord, for us to say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of the living God, through the Theotokos and all the angels, have mercy on us and forgive us who are sinners and your unworthy servants." We should confess with pure faith and receive the holy Sacraments with pure faith and fear and awe. That is how God wants us, brethren, and not to swear, not for one to betray another, not to take oaths and lie, not to steal from one another, not to take something belonging to another, not to take the name of God in vain for the smallest reason. Do you want to say, my brother: "By God"? Why don't you say: 'By the truth'? Instead of swearing so your brother will believe you, tell him the straight truth, and if he doesn't believe you, go on your way. We should refrain, my brother, from swearing in the name of God or from taking oaths, and citing our saints. Some insignificant people even swear by the name of the Holy Trinity. Woe to them; a flaming tire will burn them and enflame them. Do you know, brother, how God wants you to be? Just as you don't want your wife to have anything to do with another man, so God doesn't want you to have anything to do with the devil. Do you enjoy having your wife fornicate with another? Of course not. For someone else to kiss her? Neither do you want this. That is what God wants of you too, not to have anything to do with the devil.

Swearing

AND HOW IS IT that You dare, Oh foolish and evil man, to blaspheme and take God's name in vain? The same with that of the saints. Aren't you afraid, You most wretched one, that the earth might open up and swallow You? The devil doesn't dare to curse the name of God because he is afraid that lightning might fall and bum him, and You, insignificant man, open your damned mouth and take God's name in vain? Woe to those who curse the name of God, because a river of flaming fire will burn them forever.

God gave us hands to make the sign of the Cross with a pure faith, with fear, awe, and reverence and not to take up a rifle and kill our brother. Neither are we to steal from him or to persecute him or to murder him or to shame him. He gave us feet to take the good road and not to take the path that leads us to doing evil to our brother.

Baptism

OUR LORD AND GOD Jesus Christ was baptized in the river Jordan by the honorable John the Forerunner to show us holy Baptism. You, holy priests, should baptize the children of your parish according to the teaching and purpose of our holy Eastern and Apostolic Church. Immerse them in the holy font. Have plenty of water and immerse them and lift them up thrice, saying the names of [the persons of] the Holy Trinity.

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