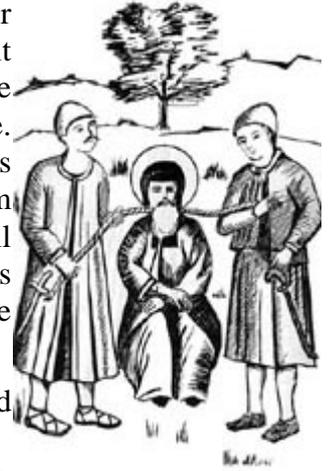


# *The equal to Apostles* **Saint Kosmas the Aetolos**

**PARABLES AND STORIES from the teaching of Saint Kosmas (1714-1779) from Aetolia, Greece, who was a Hieromonk on Holy Mount Athos.**

## **The Priceless Diamond**

A merchant named Irrational had been in business for forty-fifty years. He never had any success. Then he found a purse. He opened it and found some counterfeit coins, some false pearls, and in the middle of the purse a diamond. He took the purse with the money and went to a money changer to see if it was genuine. Examining it, the money changer told the merchant that the money was counterfeit and that only the diamond was real. The merchant didn't believe him but took them and left and went to another money changer. He too said that all was counterfeit except for the diamond, which was valuable. The merchant was sad and took the diamond in his hand and with it the purse with the coins and he left.



On the way he met a blind man and said: "I want to see what power the diamond has."

And, O wonder of wonders! When he touched the eyes of the blind man with it, they immediately opened and the blind man saw. The merchant was then happy.

He continued on and met a man who was deaf and dumb, and as soon as he touched him [with the diamond] he began to speak and hear. He met a man who was retarded, and when he touched him he was healed. He touched a poor man with it and he became rich. He touched an old man with it and he became young and robust. He touched a dead man with it and he immediately came to life.

Seeing such miracles, the merchant's heart was ablaze with joy, and so he took the purse with the coins and went and threw them into the sea. He kept only the diamond and went home.

It came time for the merchant to die. So he called his family together and told them: "My children, I have been in business in the world for forty-fifty years. I never had any success. Later, I found a purse in which there were some counterfeit gold coins, pearls, and in the middle of the purse I found a diamond with so much power that it raised the dead, made the poor rich, the blind to open their eyes, the deaf to hear, and healed all manner of illness. But soon I'll be leaving you and I shall die. I have no other inheritance to leave you except this diamond. But your nobility should find a place to put it-somewhere as it deserves-for it will not stay just anywhere.

The time came and the merchant died. The diamond remained for his family. They tried to find a place to keep it as the merchant had instructed them. So they found a marble triangle with equal sides and they put the diamond on top of the marble, but it wouldn't stay. They were sad because they couldn't find a place to put it. They placed a white cloth on the marble to serve as a cushion, but the diamond wouldn't stay. Again they were sad. Later, they spread another cloth on top of the first and put the diamond on top of that. The diamond stayed. Then they were happy and glorified God.

Now we should see who is the merchant; second, what is the purse; third, the dollars; fourth, the gold coins; fifth, the pearls; sixth, the diamond; seventh, the money changers; eighth, who are the merchant's relatives; ninth, what is the marble; tenth, what the first cloth signifies; and eleventh, what the second cloth signifies. These are the eleven subjects that we'll explain.

First, I am the merchant Irrational, drunkard, idler, and lazy. I have been in business for forty-fifty years, and God found me worthy to find a purse. What is the purse? It is the sacred and holy Gospel. I open it and inside I find counterfeit gold coins. What are the gold coins? They are the Jews who say they believe

but their faith is counterfeit, of the devil.

In the purse I find counterfeit dollars. What do the dollars signify? They are the irreverent who say that they believe, but their faith is counterfeit, of the devil. I find in it false pearls. What do the pearls signify? They are the heretics who say they believe in the Holy Trinity but [their faith] also is false, and it too is of the devil. What is the diamond? It is our Lord Jesus Christ and God. Who are the money changers? They are the prophets who had proclaimed the Son and Logos of the preexistent and omnipotent Father. Who are the relatives of the merchant? They are the reverent and Orthodox Christians, the sons and daughters of our Christ. What is the triangular and equal-sided marble? It is the person who says he believes in the Holy Trinity but his faith is insufficient for him to be saved; the diamond does not stay put. What else is needed? The first cloth is needed, but the diamond, that is, Christ, doesn't stay. A person who says he believes in the Holy Trinity has the first cloth, love for God which each person has, but this is insufficient, for the second cloth is needed. Then the diamond stays. What does the second cloth signify? It is the person who believes in the Holy Trinity and loves God and his brethren; that is [they are] the second cloth. Then the diamond, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ and God, stays.

The person who has God in his heart has everything good and can never sin. And when he doesn't have the diamond in his heart, love, that is, Christ, he has the devil. And whoever has the devil has all that is evil and commits all the sins. So, my brethren, I am about to leave you health, and then I shall depart, and I don't know if God will enable me to enjoy you again in person or not. I have nothing else to leave you as consolation, as a shelter, as a guardian, except the diamond. But you must have someplace to put it. This diamond contains all the Christian virtues, spiritual and physical, and he who has been found worthy to have it in his heart will be of good fortune, for he has a valuable treasure.

### **The Lesson of the Ascetic**

An ascetic prayed to God to reveal to him many mysteries. Leaving his cell to go to another village, he met an angel on the way, but he didn't recognize him. He thought the angel was a human being. On the way they came upon a dead horse. The ascetic held his nose, the angel did not. They went on further and they passed a dead cow which stunk. Again the ascetic held his nose, the angel did not. They went on and came upon a dead dog; the ascetic held his nose, the angel did nothing.

When they were about to come to the village, they met a beautiful girl dressed in beautiful clothes and jewelry. Then the angel held his nose. Seeing this, the ascetic said: "What are you - angel, human, or devil? We met a dead horse which stunk and you didn't hold your nose. The same was true with the cow and the dog. I didn't see you hold your nose. Now that we've met such a beautiful girl, you hold your nose?"

The angel then revealed himself and said: "Nothing stinks to God more than pride." And saying this, he disappeared.

The ascetic immediately turned back to his cell and cried for his sins, praying to God to guard him from the snares of the devil and not to allow him to fall victim to pride and be lost.

### **The Wise Confessor**

There was a man who went to confession to one confessor for fifteen years. Going once again to confess, he discovered the confessor fornicating with a woman. He said to himself: "O! Woe to me. I have been confessing to him for so many years and now I'll be damned. No matter how many sins he has forgiven me, they're all unforgiven."

Saying this, he immediately left. On the way he became thirsty. Proceeding farther, he found some running water so clean that he remarked: "If the water here is so clean, how much cleaner must it be at the fountain where it originates?"

He bent down and drank. Going on, he came to the fountain and he saw that the water was coming out of the mouth of a dog. He sighed and said: "Woe to me! I have been polluted."

Then an angel of the Lord said to him: "Why were you not polluted when you first drank the water, and now that you have seen it coming from the mouth of a dog, you abhor it? I wonder, isn't the dog from God who created the sky, the earth, and everything? If the dog is unclean, don't be sad; the water isn't his. It is the same with the confessor who heard your confessions. Was the forgiveness perhaps his? It belongs to the Holy Spirit. Because he possessed the office of the priesthood, he was superior to kings and angels. What does it matter to you if he committed fornication? He is the mouth of the dog, so don't be sad. Whatever he forgave you is forgiven. Only go and prostrate yourself before him and ask for his forgiveness. He'll be judged by God."

Then the angel disappeared. The man went back to the confessor and told him everything the angel had advised him. Hearing the whole narrative, the confessor wept, repented, and was saved.

We must find fault with ourselves, and then we'll be saved.

### **The Spiritual Doctor**

A rich ruler collected much treasure. He never wanted to go to confession, nor did he ever give alms. He had a son about ten years old. There came a time when the ruler became ill. His family told him to confess His sins, to do something for his soul. He answered them: "As long as my son is well, he'll do something for my soul." He was completely on the side of the devil and wouldn't change his mind.

In the same place there was a very virtuous confessor who shaved off his beard, put on secular clothes, and went to the house of the ruler. He knocked on the door. Someone came out and asked him what he wanted. He answered: "I'm a stranger and happen to be in your village. I learned that the ruler is ill and I came to see him because I'm a doctor."

They let him in immediately. All of his relatives were around the ruler and were assisting him. The doctor said: "How is the patient?"

The patient answered: "I'm very bad, master."

The doctor asked: "What do the doctors of your village say?"

The patient replied: "They say I'm very bad and on the verge of death."

The spiritual doctor took his hand and said: "I too say that you are dying. But if a medicine that I know were to be found, you wouldn't die."

He asked for a cup of water and some flour. He mixed them and pretended to add something else to it and said: "The medicine is ready; all that's needed is for your son to come here and for me to prick his small finger with a needle so that three drops of blood will drip out. Then I'll give it to you to drink and you'll get well."

The boy was playing with some other children. They immediately sent for him and said to him: "Come, son, a doctor has come to make your father well." The boy wanted to continue playing, but they brought him in. As the doctor saw him, he said: "Come, my son, I want to prick your finger with a needle to take three drops of blood to place in this medicine so your father can drink it and become well immediately."

The boy said: "Am I stupid or crazy to hurt my finger?"

The doctor replied: "It's up to you, my son, whether your father lives or dies. Don't you realize how much he has accumulated to give to you?"

The boy answered: "Whether he lives or not, I won't hurt my finger." Then he left.

The confessor said to the patient: "I'm the confessor of the area, and I did this to show you that you shouldn't expect anything to be done for your soul by your son."

The patient then arose. "I," he said, "have damned my soul for my son to leave him a great deal. And he didn't have it in his heart to give me three drops of blood to save my life? You're quite right, confessor."

He immediately asked for his account books, his promissory notes, and he tore them up. He divided all of his Possessions and left nothing. He thus made his son a pauper but won paradise and rejoiced forever.

Now all of you who have sons, don't hope and say: "My son is good and he'll concern himself with my soul." it's whatever a person does by himself that he'll be repaid for in the next life.

### **The Choice**

Once there was a Greek who said: "I want to become a Jew." Now there are three rules of life: the natural law of the Jews, the carnal law of the Turks, and the spiritual law of the Christians.

The Greek said: "Let me look at the natural law."

He read it: "Whoever takes your cloak, take his also. Whoever defrauds you of ten dollars, defraud him of twenty. Whoever murders your brother, murder him also."

The Greek said: "I walk along a road. Someone comes up to me to take my cloak. 1, according to that [natural] law, want to take his. He won't let me, so I should either murder him or he should murder me."

The Greek said: "The law of the Jews is no good. Now I want to become a Turk (Moslem)." He took up the carnal law, read it, and found that it permits the seduction of women and other indecent things.

The Greek said: "I don't like this law either; it's for pigs."

Again he changed his mind: "Instead of a Turk, I'll become a Christian." He took up the spiritual law, read it, and found that it teaches: "Whoever takes your cloak, give him your other one as well, and whoever takes ten dollars from you, give him another ten, and whoever hits you on your right cheek, turn your left cheek so he can hit you again."

The Greek then said: "I'll try it. I'll walk along the road, and when someone comes to take my cloak I, according to this law, should say to him: 'Wait, brother, I give you my other one too.'

"He comes to take my ten dollars. I'll tell him: 'Wait, brother, I'll give you another ten.' He comes to give me a blow; I'll turn so he can hit me on the other side as well.

"It seems to me that no matter how evil or wild a man is, if I talk with him in a peaceful manner [and use] humble and sweet words, he'll be moved and he'll either return my possessions to me or at least he'll not murder me. But if I resist him, he'll either kill me or I'll kill him. So this law, the spiritual law, is good, and I'll become a Christian."

### **On the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation**

Without a stone, a flint, and kindling wood, you can't have fire. Just as the three must be present, so it is with the Holy Trinity; it is three and one. Or just as water is [liquid], hail, and snow, yet all three are of one nature. The soul is one; one person gives birth to the logos. Then there is breath; it belongs to the soul and not to the body. The soul is an icon of Father, the logos of the soul is an icon of Son who is Logos of God, while the breath of the soul is an icon of the Holy Spirit.

The soul gives birth to the logos through the mind and, second, he is given birth by the lips. Just as the logos is born of the soul first and does not reveal himself, and then is revealed through the lips, so was the Son and Logos of God born before all ages from God the Father. But he would not reveal himself to people, but remained in the bosom of the Father.

In the same way, he was born again from the lips of the Prophets and from the all-holy Mary, the Ever-Virgin, and then became manifest to the entire world. The birth from the flesh, when he revealed himself and when his human nature suffered on the Cross-the matter of his body-while his divine nature remained impassive is called the second birth. And as when the sun illuminates a tree while the tree-cutter is cutting it with an ax, the tree suffers being cut but the rays of the sun which are on the tree remain uncut and unharmed, so is our Christ's divinity. Even though at the time of his passion his divinity was united with the body and was not separated from it, as the sun wasn't separated from the tree and didn't suffer, so his humanity suffered as did the tree, while his divinity remained unharmed like the sun.

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