

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.

7. Seventh teaching.

OUR LORD AND GOD JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, our sweetest ruler and master, the creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation, moved by his compassion, by his great purity, and by the great love which he had for our race, has given us and continues to give to us each day, hour, and minute many and an infinite number of gifts. In addition, he has made us worthy this day to glorify and honor him and our Lady the Theotokos. And may it come to pass that the Lord will have compassion on us, forgive us our sins and make us worthy to spend our time here well, and to go to paradise to glorify the All-Holy Trinity.

God has also found me worthy, my brothers, me the sinner, to come here yesterday in your blessed land and to enjoy you. We spoke of a few teachings in your holy church, as the Holy Spirit inspired the Prophets, the holy Apostles, the holy Fathers of our Church to write for us. Among the many things we said, we spoke about our God who is one, love, a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Lord, moved by his great compassion, first created ten orders of angels. The first order fell because of its pride and became demons. Then the gracious God commanded and this world was created. And he made one man and one woman like us, the body from mud and the soul angelic and eternal. He named the man Adam and the woman Eve. God created a paradise in a region of the East, filled with joy and gladness. He put Adam and Eve in paradise and they were glad as angels. He instructed them not to eat from one fig tree. But Adam and Eve scorned God's commandment and ate. They did not confess what they did. God expelled them from paradise and they lived in this world for nine hundred-thirty years, shedding black and bitter tears. Adam and Eve died and went to hell where they burned and were on fire for five and a half thousand years because of only one sin, as we mentioned in the story last night and stopped. Now, hoping in our Christ's compassion, as the Holy Spirit inspires us, we shall begin to tell you the rest. In brief, we will not tell everything because that isn't possible, for we would need much time, but some seem to me very necessary.



The Opening of Paradise

FOR A THOUSAND-FIVE HUNDRED years people went to hell when they died because paradise was closed. The most gracious God had compassion on the race of men and finding our Lady the Theotokos a worthy subject, the Son and Logos of God, the true living God and life of everything, the sweetest Jesus Christ and God, condescended and became perfect man by the Holy Spirit from the purest blood of our Lady the Theotokos, Ever-Virgin Mary so that he could remove us from the hands of the devil.

Giving Birth to Children

FOR FIVE THOUSAND-FIVE HUNDRED years the devil tried his worst and decided to destroy the world. He urged some men to worship as God the sun, others the moon, others the earth, others the sea, others birds, and other land animals. The devil planted in the hearts of men to hate women, and women to hate men, so they would not marry and have children and increase the population. In this way men didn't take care to have children, and even more, the devil caused them to fall into homosexuality and other filthy acts which even dogs and donkeys don't commit.

Wishing to end the evil, the most gracious God commanded that whoever doesn't have children will be

cursed. Hearing this, and fearing God's curse, they began to marry, one man taking one woman, and one woman one man. If perchance there is anyone here who can't have children, let him not be sad, for God doesn't mean for you to be cursed, because you can't have children. I too don't have children, and if I'm cursed, so are you. God spoke this curse to stop the evil purpose of the devil. So don't be sad; you have no curse. But again if you want to have a child, it is easy. Take a poor child and make him your spiritual child. You will rejoice and be glad and he will rejoice too. God owes you nothing for the child which your wife presents you because it resulted from the passion of flesh. But for that poor child you have wages a thousand times from God for your soul and honor from people because you so willingly made it your spiritual child.

And you who are a man must be careful not to look upon your wife with anger because she has not conceived any children. Your wife has no fault in this; it is God's will. And don't do as someone crazy and foolish did. Because his wife couldn't have children, he divorced her and married another. And another, because his wife didn't give birth to boys but only to girls, divorced her. It is the devil who wants a husband and wife to separate and not God. As the laws says, nothing can cause them to divorce except if they commit adultery, and whoever leaves his wife and takes another, he will be judged an adulterer.

Women Are Better than Men

AT THAT TIME WAS a man named Joakim who had a wife named Anna. Both the husband and wife were good people, both from a royal race, but the woman was better. There are many women who are better than men. If perhaps you men wish to be better than women, you must do better works than they do. If women do better works they go to paradise and we men who do evil works go to hell. What does it profit us if we are men; it would be better if we were not born.

Joakim and Anna opened their home and treated it like a hotel where the poor, the lame, the blind went and rested. Your nobility should be similarly hospitable, because it is with hospitality that you extend to the poor that you purchase paradise.

Joakim and Anna had no children. As prudent and sensible people they understood that it is God alone who gives and takes children. They beseeched the most gracious God to give them a child, male or female and they would dedicate it to him. Seeing their good mind, God blessed them and they had a child, the Lady Theotokos, and they named her Mary. Just as Joakim and Anna sought a child from God and not from man so should your nobility ask for whatever you wish from God and not from man.

Seeing the Future

THE DEVIL HAS PRODUCED many sons and daughters. Someone comes to you and says: "Give me a dollar or two and I will give you an herb which will give you a male child, and I will give you a talisman to predict the future, to bewitch you so you can see your future, your fate, your destiny, etc."

Those things which the holy Fathers commanded and those of our Church are good and sacred, spiritual, and physical. All that takes place outside of the Church belongs to the devil. And often the devil performs illusionary miracles so that you are putting fire inside of you and are being burned spiritually and bodily. And if you want to see your future or your fate, get up at dawn and go to Church and look at the graves of the dead. Think and ask yourself, weren't they men too like me, and they died? I too am were destined to die tomorrow, and I shall not dare to. do these devilish things because I'm lost, and destroy myself. The law says that whoever does these things or urges others to do them shouldn't receive holy Communion for twenty years.

Give Your Child a Saint's Name

JUST AS JOAKIM AND ANNA didn't prefer a boy over a girl, so should your nobility not prefer male children over female because they are creatures of God. Just as Joakim and Anna gave the Theotokos the name Mary which has meaning, similarly, when your nobilities baptize your children give them names of saints which have meaning. Mary means lady, for the Theotokos was destined to become queen of heaven and earth and of all intelligible and perceptible creation to pray for your sins. Nicholas is the name of one who has been victorious over neople. demons. and nassions. George means cultivated plant. adorned with

fruit, with Christian virtues. Paraskeve is one who has prepared for Christ.

Your Child and Christ

MAKE AN ICON OF CHRIST, of the Panagia, of the Forerunner, and of the saint whose name your child bears. And when your child rises from sleep and asks for bread, don't give him any, but take the bread and place it before the icon of Christ and tell him: "My child, I don't have any bread, Christ has. Get up and make the sign of the Cross and ask your saint to pray to Christ to give you some." In this way the child is moved by his love for bread and immediately upon arising sees his saint. And when the devil sees that the child has placed his hope in Christ and in his saint, he burns and leaves. This is how you should accustom your child and teach him early to get into the habit of taking the good road. And if you want your child to live, I shall tell you what to do. Buy your son a suit and one for that poor child, and for the sake of that poor child God will grant life to your child.

Love the poor child better than your own. But if you concern yourself to give your child food and drink, to have beautiful clothes, and not concern yourself about that poor child, tomorrow you may see your child dead and your heart is on fire. And while you see the poor child, barefoot, naked, hungry, and despised, at the same time, you see it looking well fed like a young pig and your own son becomes sick with consumption.

Your Child and Its Feast Day

ON THE DAY WHEN YOUR child's saint has his feast and you want to hold a feast and honor the saint, I shall tell you what to do. The feast can be sacred and it can be demonic. It is sacred when you, wishing to give three dollars to buy a lamb, give one to the priest to celebrate so many liturgies for your health. With the other buy some wax, incense and oil, and go to church, burn them before the icon of the saint, and distribute the other coin secretly in alms so that no one will know it. This is a sacred feast. And read the life of the saint so that your child may hear it. And tell him: "Did you, hear my child, what your saint did? You should do the same."

The child, hearing of such miracles, becomes jealous and says: "When will I too become like my saint?"

A demonic feast is to take sheep, to cook it, and to invite your friends and your relatives to eat, to drink, to get drunk, and to vomit like dogs. This is a demonic feast. We hope to save ourselves in the name of our Christ and not in that of the sheep, as the impious and unbelievers do now. Which does your nobility prefer, the sacred or divine feast? The sacred then, if you prefer. Do it in that way.

Parents and Children

WHEN YOU CUT A TREE, its branches immediately dry up but when you water its roots the branches remain fresh. Parents are like that tree. When a father and mother, who are the roots of their children, are watered by fasting, prayer, alms, and good works, God guards their children. When parents dry up with sin, God brings death to their children and puts the parents into hell with them.

An apple tree gives forth sour apples. Now what should we do, blame the apples or the tree? The tree. So you parents should do good, you who are the apple tree, so that your apples might be sweet.

What We Owe God

FROM THE TIME THAT GOD created the world, three thousand five hundred years had gone by and no child died before his father. At that time there was a man named Tharras. He put the devil in his heart and set up idols for men to worship instead of God. And from that time on children began to die before their parents.

When the Lady Theotokos became three years of age, her parents remembered the debt which they owed God. What was that debt? They had promised the Theotokos to the temple. They took her and dedicated her. And as Joakim and Anna remembered their debt and paid it, similarly we too, as faithful Christians, should always remember our debt which we owe God. We should pay it, and then we can ask for paradise as payment. And what is our debt? We want paradise but don't know what we owe! I shall tell you a little

bit of it and if your nobilities ask you will find out more.

The gracious God has given us eyes so that we can look at the sky, see the stars, the sun, the moon, everything; to glorify God and to say: "My God, if this sun which is your creation is so bright, how much brighter are you who created it? Oh my God, make me worthy to enjoy you. This is our debt, my brothers. God didn't give us eyes for men to look at women and women to look at men, or for us to look at our brother's possessions and to steal them, or to murder our brothers or to play cards, games of the devil, or to live by blood and injustices against our brothers.

God has given us feet. It is our duty to go to church, to stand with reverence, and to walk the good road. He didn't give us feet to wander about the mountains like dogs, and like beasts to take away the clothes of others, oppress them and deprive them of their possessions.

God has given us wealth. We have a duty to eat and drink sufficiently, to have enough clothes, and to spend the remainder on the poor for our soul's sake. God didn't give us riches to overeat or to buy expensive clothes, or tall palaces in which mice will dance about tomorrow, and to have the poor die of hunger. This is our duty, my brothers, and you know it. Do it from today onward if you wish to be saved.

Do you wish to know, my brothers, our debt to God? You, my brother, have a wife? Are you happy to have someone else kiss her in a month's time. No. In a year? No. In ten years? No. In a hundred? No! To have someone fornicate with your wife is not pleasing to you, nor do you wish for someone to lay his finger on her. Just as you will not allow someone else any share in your wife, so God doesn't want you to have any part of the devil. God didn't create us for the devil and for hell, but for himself and for paradise. This is our obligation, my fellow Christians.

Our Place in Church

IN THE CHURCH WHERE Joakim and Anna took Theotokos, the high priest at that time was Zacharias, the father of the honorable Forerunner. And as he saw her, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit and he understood that she was the one who would give birth to eternal life, to Christ. And he immediately embraced her and kissed her, and he took her and placed her in the holy Sanctuary because the holy Sanctuary also signified the holy tomb of our Christ. Do you sometimes go to the holy tomb of Christ to worship? You go to other worldly and demonic places, but where Christ was put for our sins you don't go? Is that how much love you have for Christ?

Once a year the high priest would enter the holy Sanctuary and see the Theotokos. You should rejoice and be glad, reverend priests. Together with so much that the precious God has granted you, he gave you the holy Sanctuary which means the throne of God. And you lay people should take care not to enter the holy Sanctuary because you put fire in yourself and are burned. You men should rejoice and be glad also, because among all the good things that the gracious God has granted you, he gave you the nave of the Church which means paradise. Similarly, you women should rejoice and be glad a thousand times, for among the many good things which the gracious God has granted you, he gave you the narthex of the Church, which means the door of paradise.

We faithful Christians should also stand with reverence, with fear and awe when we go to church to receive forgiveness for our sins. And as when we enter a grave we forget all worldly things, we should forget in the same way everything evil when we stand in our pew. What is a pew? An upright grave which God has given us, as a teacher, to enter it and to reflect on our sins, on death, on hell, and on paradise. If you do this, you do very well, but if you go to church all dressed and you scrutinize each other, and talk in church, you put fire in yourself and are burned.

The Responsibility of the Clergy

"HERE, MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS, what do you do? Do you talk in Church?"

"We do, Oh holy one of God."

"But your holiness, reverend priests, what do you tell them?" "We tell them not to talk in church but they don't listen. "And what is the reason why they don't listen? It seems to me that you are the reason, your holiness. Let one of the priests stand among your holiness so that I can ask him a question."

"Do you have children, my priest?"

"I do."

"When you set up the table so that your children can eat, where do you set it up? In the center of all your children so that all can reach or on one side so that half will be able to eat and the other half will not?"

"In the middle so they all can reach."

But if you happen to put it on one side and half eat and the other half don't, shouldn't your children blame you?"

"They should."

"Let us see now, my master, who is the father, the table, the food, and the children."

You, your holiness, are the spiritual father and trustee, made by God, and the mother is the Church. The table is the reader's pulpit, and the food is the books of the Church and the Gospel, while the spiritual children are the Christians. Now, doesn't it seem that your holiness should do the same (I don't say it to you alone, but so that others will hear as well), that is, place the pulpit in the center of the church, and read clearly and in a loud voice so that all the Christians can hear? And when they can hear they don't talk. But when you read in front of Christ's icon, so softly that only you can hear, Christ knows what you are saying, but the faithful, men and women, having no spiritual food to eat because they cannot hear, begin talking in church. One woman talks to another about who has a better dress and jewelry. They then leave and don't feel like coming again. And you become the reason for them to sin and for you to sin also. But what must you do, my priest, so that you don't sin? Have you ever sung a song? Once I saw a fornicator who was passing below a tall house with a young girl in the window. The fornicator saw her, but not well. So he climbed up a higher place and saw better. He began to sing and said: "*O what black eyes, what black eyebrows, (let me go on) in the window of the priest's house.*" What was his purpose? To drive Christ out of the girl's heart and to bring in the devil, to drive out virginity and bring in fornication. Now shouldn't your holiness do the same? Climb up high and say with contrition and in a loud voice: "Have mercy upon me, Oh God, according to your great compassion and according to the multitude of your mercies wipe out my transgression."

And if you can, cry so that you can drive out the devil from the heart of your Christians and bring in Christ; to drive out fornication and to bring in virginity; to drive out pride and bring in humility. If you want to be saved, priest, and want your Christians to be saved, do this.

Christian Marriage

THE LADY THEOTOKOS REMAINED in the sanctuary for twelve years. An angel of the Lord fed her with heavenly food, and she conversed with angels, and she became even better than angels. At the completion of twelve years, the merciful God inspired her father and mother and they betrothed her in accord with divine dispensation.

And the angel of God came and said to her: "Mary, you should rejoice more than the whole world and more than us angels, for you are to give birth to the Son and Word of God, and truly God, the Christ, by the Holy Spirit without man, as a virgin. And you will remain a virgin so that Christ may free man from the hands of the devil as the prophets proclaimed."

Then, the Lady Theotokos arose, glorified God, and said: "I glorify you, Lord; I worship and adore you, for you have condescended to become man from me, your servant. I, your servant, am ready; let your holy will be done."

She immediately conceived our sweetest Jesus Christ and God. The Lord was born, my brothers, from a woman to bless women, because it was woman who first received the curse in paradise. Woman tore down the world and took it to hell, and woman gave birth to Christ and again received the blessing.

Christ was born from a betrothed maiden in order to bless marriage. And because the betrothal is which a man first gives to a woman should be gold, and to place it on her finger a woman should be as pure as that

gold. Then you may accept it, and put it on your finger, and you should prefer to lose your life and your head rather than destroy your husband's honor. Similarly, you too, woman, send to the man a silver ring so that you can teach him: "If you as a man are as steadfast as silver, then accept it and put it on your finger, and be ready to offer your life and your head for you wife." This is the significance of the betrothal.

You, honorably married woman, should rejoice and be glad a thousand times for the many good things which the gracious God has granted. He also gave you an honorable marriage. You should weep for the impious and unbelievers who, among the many evil things they have, also have a despicable marriage. How is it that marriage of Christians is blessed and the other is despicable, that is, accursed, is not for me to know and to teach. I need to master my monastic life to be saved.

It is not proper for a monk to teach about marriage. But from what is improper we sometimes benefit. That which I wanted to tell you, my child, should have been told you by your father and mother, But because they don't know to tell you, I should tell you a few things, and you should inquire yourself to learn more.

The Marriage Service

LISTEN, MY CHILD, WHEN you wish to marry, make certain that the woman is not related to you, which is prohibited by the law of the Church. Second, let her have fear of God in her soul, and third, let her be graced with modesty. If you have married a poor woman, you have married a slave. If you have married a rich woman, you have become a slave, if you have taken a rod to your head. First, you should go to confession and then get married in church. How should you get married? The priest should take the best man, the groom, the bride, and one or two people, a loaf of bread, two crowns, two rings, and two candles. They should go to church, where he places the man on the right and the woman on the left. The priest then enters the sanctuary where he lights the two candles and he hangs the crowns in front of the holy altar; he places the two rings on top, the one facing in and the other out. This signifies that when he turns and looks at the bride, she will look the other way; he should do the same.

When the Divine Liturgy has ended, the priest will take a table and place it in the middle of the church and place upon it the holy Gospel, the rings, the crowns, and then place the groom and bride together. Then he takes the censer and the two lighted candles and he censes the groom three times in the form of a cross.

The censer signifies the Lady Theotokos; the coal is inside the censer but it does not burn; in the same way the Lady Theotokos accepted Christ and was not burned, but on the contrary was illuminated. The incense is a sign of the Holy Spirit; the cover of the censer, the protection of the Holy Spirit; the three chains, the Holy Trinity; the bells, the teaching of the holy Apostles. In this way the priest censes the groom and teaches by saying: "I worship this and if you wish, too, and you are an Orthodox Christian, worship this." And so he and the priest bow and worship. This is what the incense means, and the priest asks the groom. "Do you want Mary for your wife?"

If he says he does, he gives him the candle. In the same way he asks the bride: "Do you Mary, want John for your husband?"

If she wants him, she doesn't answer, but only bows her head. If she doesn't, and it is against her will, she shouts: "I don't want him." And when she says: "I don't want him," the priest may not marry them, for they sin. But if it is the will of both, then he may marry them. After the marriage he should give them holy Communion. But if they are inhibited from receiving, let them drink from the common cup. Then, accompanied by the singing of hymns, he takes them home where he prays and blesses the table and leaves. When three days have gone by, well then they can come together. But they must abstain on Sunday, holy days and with nobility as befits Christians.

Sex in Marriage

GOD DIDN'T CREATE WOMAN for prostitution, but for her to bear children. Don't sleep in the same bed on Sunday and especially on feast days, for the devil will pull you down.

You men must avoid other women just as you avoid a snake. And not only other women, but there is a time when you should avoid your own as well. If it happens that your wife is menstruating or pregnant, you should abstain, or if she has given birth and has not been church'd yet, she is not clean.

And if you wish to come together with your wife, take an example from the farmer; ask him how many times a year he sows his field. Once, and he lets it alone until it grows, then he harvests it, then when he wishes, he sows again. You should do the same, my brother. Have you come together with your wife? Has she become pregnant? Then, stay apart from her until she gives birth. When she is church'd and is clean, then you can sow another. Have forty, fifty children!

I want to tell you something but it is a bit obscene and you will condemn me. Don't you see the animals that come together until the female becomes pregnant? And when she gives birth, then they come together again. But we humans aren't ashamed to be worse than the animal. But if you can't do this, if it's too much for you, do something else. Humble yourself and say that you are unworthy, a sinner, worse than an animal; and condemn yourself and in this way God may have compassion on you and save you. On the contrary, if you sin and brag about it, and say that you are a saint, can this be so?

As my spiritual children, I counsel you, I've told you that for me it isn't proper to speak of these things, but again what can I do? Seeing what condition in which our race finds itself I forced myself and I have said them to you to benefit you somewhat.

Man should be like a king and woman, like a vizier, that is, man as the head and woman as the body. Then God blesses the man, the woman, and the children, and doesn't lay upon you any evil thing, neither magic knots nor any spell. In this way you will live well here on earth and you'll go to paradise and rejoice forever.

Divorce and Adultery

YOU HAVE NO AUTHORITY to divorce; only death and adultery can separate you. And if it happens that a wife falls with some other man, or if the husband with some other woman, they are under obligation to go to the bishop to be divorced. But, again, he who has been injured by his wife and doesn't divorce her acquires a spiritual reward. But is there a way to forgive her? There is. How?

You, my child, travel to a foreign country or go out to your field and your wife falls with another person. You return home. What should the wife do? She should take an ax and a piece of wood, and bow before you, kiss your hand and tell you: "Master, I beg you to do me a favor. Take this ax and piece of wood, put me on it, and cut me to pieces. Throw me to be eaten by dogs because I'm not worthy to look upon you in the face, because I've trampled upon your honor, and from a daughter of Christ I've become a daughter of the devil."

What do you say, my son, do you have it in your heart to kill her or to forgive her? It seems to me that you'll say: "May you be forgiven, but never do it again."

But when should you divorce her? When upon returning from abroad you learn of it from your neighbor. Then you are forced to divorce her. In the same way the Lord, during his second coming, will be forced to put us in hell if he finds us unconfessed, unrepentant, and incorrigible. But if he finds us repentant, he has compassion on us and puts us in paradise to rejoice forever.

Prohibited Marriages

MARRIAGE AGAIN BECOMES A curse when you marry someone related to you in a way prohibited by law. And when at your wedding you use drums, violins, dances, songs, (shoot) rifles, wear ornaments, and do other devilish acts, then the marriage is cursed, the children are born blind, dumb, deaf, lame, wretched, epileptic, and you parents see them, and your heart is broken. And God causes your death prematurely and puts you in hell.

And don't get married on Sunday, but on any other day of the week. Not because it is against the law, but because of the disorders which take place, and because you absent yourself from the Liturgy. Moreover, the Liturgy should be celebrated separately for the bride and groom.

Virginity, Monks, and Women

OUR LORD WAS BORN, my brethren, on that day, Sunday, to give preference to virginity. Just as we prefer gold to silver, so does the Lord love marriage. Yes, but he prefers virginity more in order to give you an example, so that if you can keep your virginity and you wish to become a monk or a nun, you are of good fortune and thrice-blessed. You are free from these worldly affairs; you are like an angel. But if you want to preserve your virginity, the first foundation which you must lay is that of poverty; you must have no purse, you must have no chest, and must fry your body as you fry fish, with fasting, prayers, vigils, hardships - to put it to death. You must humble the flesh which is a wolf, a pig, a beast, a lion, and flee from the world, but especially from woman. But you must not hate woman, because she is a creature of God; but note the passions which people follow.

If by chance you are walking down a street and on one side there is a woman and on the other the devil, don't walk where the woman is, but where the devil is because you can make the sign of the Cross and he leaves, but the woman doesn't. And just as it is difficult for sheep to keep company with a wolf and not be eaten, or kindling wood with coal and not be burned, so it is difficult for a monk to keep company with women, and a nun with men, and not be defiled and tempted. A monk can't be saved in any other way except to escape far from the world. Is anyone a monk here? Leave, monk, go to the wilderness if you wish to be saved. But you may say, you too are a monk. Why are you involved in the world? I too, my brethren, do wrong. But because our race has fallen into ignorance, I said to myself, let Christ lose me, one sheep, and let him win the others. Perhaps God's compassion and your prayers will save me too.

Holy Baptism

WISHING TO SHOW US the way to remove that curse which our father Adam and our mother Eve received in paradise, the Lord was baptized in the river Jordan by the honorable Forerunner John the Baptist. We too, my fellow Christians and brothers, should rejoice and be glad a thousand times for the many good things given to us by the Lord, and especially for holy Baptism. We too should keep our baptism as pure and immaculate as possible. If by chance we err, as human beings, may the gracious God be glorified, he who has granted us a second Baptism, holy Confession, because it is impossible for a person to be saved who hasn't been baptized and one who is unconfessed. It is better, my brother, to kill a hundred baptized persons than to allow one child to die unbaptized. And if by chance a child is about to die and the priest hasn't baptized it yet, let anyone baptize it, father, mother, brother, neighbor, and especially the midwife. Take a lot of water and oil, make the sign of the Cross over the child, and baptize it, saying: "The servant of God is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." If the child lives, the priest will complete the service.

If it happens that you have no water, take three handfuls of sand and spill it over the child's head and repeat as I have said. If again you happen to have no sand, baptize it in the air and repeat the same. Don't do what one crazy and foolish man did. He said that he would become the godfather but allowed the child to die unbaptized so that he wouldn't leave his wife's bed. If necessary, they shouldn't become godparents, and when he wishes he can join with his wife; there are no obstacles. Similarly, if it happens that someone is dying and the priest hasn't reached him in time to hear his confession, let him confess to anyone and die having confessed. There is hope that he'll be saved. If, however, he receives communion without having confessed, it profits him naught.

Holy priests, you must have large baptismal fonts in your churches so that the entire child can be immersed. The child should be able to swim in it so that not even an area as large as a tick's eye remains dry. Because it is from there (the dry area) that the devil advances, and this is why your children become epileptics, are possessed by demons, have fear, become unlucky; they haven't been baptized properly.

Whoever among your nobility wishes to donate a baptismal font for your soul's sake, let him stand up and I'll tell him how he is to have it made. And I'll ask all his fellow Christians to forgive him. He'll receive such forgiveness that he couldn't find even if he paid one thousand purses. You, my son, listen, you who want to give a font. Tell the craftsman to construct it two spans deep in the inside, one span wide at the base and two spans wide at the top. It should have a base of two fingers deep to rest upon. Have two handles put on it so that it can be carried, and make a covering so that it can be covered. It should be

entirely of copper and galvanized. And tell the craftsman to inscribe your name on it so that you will be commemorated.

You, my children, look forward to baptizing children, but isn't it better to donate baptismal fonts so that thousands of children can be baptized, so that you will have greater reward for your souls? You should ask to find out what churches don't have one and donate one. Even if it is for a city church or anywhere else, you receive the same reward.

I beg you to say three times for Mr. John, who wishes to donate a font: "May God forgive and have mercy upon him."

The Lord Performs Miracles

WHEN THE LORD, MY BRETHREN, was baptized in the river Jordan by the honorable Forerunner, he began to teach the world to repent, to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Wishing to uproot every disbelief and every evil from the hearts of men, the Lord didn't take up the practice of giving money as the heretics and especially the Antichrist did. On the contrary, he began to perform miracles as it became him as God. He cured the blind, the deaf, the lepers, those possessed by demons, and the greatest of all, he began to command the dead to rise. He raised Lazarus, who had been in the grave for four days and lived thirty years after the resurrection and became a bishop. People, seeing our Christ performing miracles openly, understood that he was God because only God has the power to command the dead to rise.

Thousands of people gathered there, believed, and were baptized. Even a few Jews believed, but the leaders, the Scribes and the Pharisees, not only didn't believe, but put the devil in their hearts as they have him still to this day. And they planned to crucify our Christ.

On Holy Thursday night, the Lord, who as God knows the hearts of men and the future, and, indeed the evil of the priests and of Judas, washed the feet of the Holy Apostles to show you also an example. Even if you were a king, you should always humble yourself and pay honor to the man who is poor and treat him better than yourself. You shouldn't feel contempt for him, for tomorrow you may see that poor man who is naked, hungry, and despised in paradise enjoying himself, and you'll go to hell and bum.

The Lord sat and taught the Holy Apostles many and various teachings. Among the many which he taught, he also said this: "You should know, my disciples, that one of you, Judas, wants to sell me to the Jews for thirty silver coins, and they will mock me, they will curse me, they will beat me, they will crucify me. But don't be sad, my disciples, because I want to be crucified willingly so that I may crucify sin and the devil. And on the third day I shall rise to give life to people. My resurrection will bring joy in heaven, joy to the entire world, poison and a two-edged sword in the hearts of the Jews and especially to the devil."

The Last Supper

WISHING TO GIVE US eternal life, heavenly food, the Lord took bread and wine, blessed them and made the holy Sacraments, his holy body and blood; and the twelve disciples received communion.

As soon as the eleven disciples received communion with a good mind and a good heart, they were illuminated and became wise teachers of the world. With this joy they spoke all the languages of the world, and they lived well here and then went to paradise to rejoice forever.

Judas, who took communion with a bad mind and a bad heart, became dizzy, and the devil entered his heart and he swelled up so much that he was unable to pass through an alley which was wide enough for two wagons. He died a bad death and went to hell, and he is burning together with the devil forever.

The Story of Judas

THERE WAS A TOWN named Iskaria near Jerusalem. A Jew lived there with his wife. She saw in a dream that she would give birth to a devil who would burn the entire world. She revealed what she had seen to her husband. Finally she gave birth to Judas. They kept him for two months, and then put him in a

trunk and threw him into the sea and said: "If God wills, let him be saved; if not, let him be lost."

Near the harbor there were some passersby who, seeing the chest in the deep, went and pulled it out. They opened it and found the child and took him to their town, Iskaria. But they didn't tell anyone they found him in the sea, but that he was an orphan. His [real] parents said: "Why, don't we take him and make him our own?"

So they took him and he grew up. In the same year his mother gave birth to another child. When the children became twelve years of age, they quarreled and Judas beat the true son. The parents said to Judas: "Why did you beat our child? We have adopted you. We, my child, plan to make you both our heirs, to divide everything equally."

Hearing that he would receive an equal share with the other boy, what do you think Judas was moved by the devil to do because of his avarice? One day he took a stone and killed his brother. What did the father do? Kill him? No. He felt sorry for him. When Judas killed the boy, he became frightened and left and went to Jerusalem, where he took service with a king who gave him charge of the treasury, that is, to receive and pay monies. Why did he take service with the king? Because of his avarice he believed he had much to gain. Where ten pennies were needed to buy fish, he would give only five.

Since his parents had no children, what could they do? They went to Jerusalem to worship Zion, which was built by Solomon.- And when they went there, they liked the place and bought a farm and lived from it. Judas used to go there and buy vegetables. Time passed and one day the farmer said; "Why do you deprive me of my just due? The greens which you bought cost ten dollars and you gave me five. I will tell the king that you are unjust."

Hearing that he would be reported to the king, Judas drew a knife and killed him. The wife shouted: "What am I to do, Oh King? Your servant killed my husband!"

The king replied: "What can I do?"

The woman answered: "What do I have to live on? Who is going to support me since I am so helpless?"

The king said: "Marry Judas and he'll support you."

What could the unfortunate woman do? She married him. One day they were talking about where each of them had come from. And, asking and inquiring, they discovered that they were mother and son. Then they said: "Woe to us."

At that time our Christ was traveling about teaching. Judas and his mother, that is, his wife, heard that he performed miracles and refused money. So Judas said: "Now is my chance to go with him and prosper." They went to Christ and confessed and he forgave them. He told them to go back, but Judas remained and became a disciple.

Our Christ immediately perceived that he was avaricious, and he gave him the money bag to control. Because of his avarice he sold our Christ for thirty pieces of silver to the Jews, and went to hell, and is burning together with the devil forever.

Do you see, my brethren, what an evil thing avarice is? The same thing was done by some priest in a village. He sold Christ because of his avarice - for money. And God cut his life short with a bad death like Judas' and he went to hell and is burning with the devil. Did you understand, my brethren, the message of what happens to whoever is afflicted with the passion of avarice? He suffers the same fate as Judas.

Be Glad and Rejoice that You are Orthodox Christians

I'VE TOLD YOU ENOUGH, my fellow Christians. I have two thoughts, as I did yesterday. One tells me to bless you, and for you to bless me, and for me to be on my way to another place so that other Christians may hear me, those who never hear the word of God. My other thought says, since you are already here, don't go; stay and tell them more this evening and then leave. Now what seems right to you, my brethren, for me to do? Go or stay?

"Stay, Oh saint of God."

Fine, my children, so be it. I shall stay for the love of Christ and for your love. But gather together at eight o'clock so we can do vespers and a supplication service to our intercessor, the Lady Theotokos, who intercedes with Christ for us, because her son is enraged with us because of our many sins and wants to drown us. What do we expect, my brethren? Today, tomorrow, the end of the world is approaching. So take care to correct yourselves.

In conclusion, I tell you this. Be glad and rejoice because You have been found worthy to be pious Orthodox Christians. Similarly, cry and mourn for the impious, the unbelievers, the heretics who walk in darkness and in the arms of the devil. Take care, my brethren, don't be vain, don't murder, don't steal, don't swear, don't lie, don't cheat one another, don't slander, don't adorn this filthy body which tomorrow will be eaten by worms, but adorn your soul which is more precious than the entire world.

Fast as much as you can, pray as much as you can, give as many alms as you can, and always keep death before your eyes. There is no better teacher than death.

I'm not worthy, my brethren, to teach you and to counsel you, except that I dare to beseech my sweet Jesus Christ and God to send from heaven his grace and blessing, to bless this village too, and all the Christian villages, to bless your homes and possessions and the work of your hands. And first, my brethren, I pray that the Lord has compassion and forgives you your sins and finds you worthy to live well here, peacefully, and with love in this false life, and afterwards that you go to paradise, to our true homeland. Rejoice and be glad, glorify and worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, an undivided and consubstantial Trinity.

If there is anyone among you who'll let his beard grow, let him stand up and tell so that I may give him a comb, and I'll also ask all the Christians to forgive him and we'll be brothers.

Whichever woman is willing to make a veil so that she can cover herself when she goes to church, let her tell me and I'll ask all the Christians to forgive her. And I'll pray to God for her soul as long as she lives and for her children. Whichever Christian man (or woman) promises not to speak Albanian in his home, let him stand up and tell me, and I'll take upon myself all of his sins from the time of his birth. And I'll ask all the Christians to forgive him and he'll receive a forgiveness which he couldn't find even if he were to pay thousands of purses. I beg you, my fellow Christians, to say for me, a sinner, three times: "May God forgive him and have mercy upon him." Forgive me, too, the sinner, and God may forgive you.

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