

August 16, 2015: The 11th Sunday after Pentecost (The parable of the unforgiving servant)

Epistle: I Cor. 9:2-12:

If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35:



Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

The parable of the unforgiving servant is teaching us about God's justice, mercy and forgiveness, on one hand, and the way we can benefit the most from His gifts and blessings, poured mercifully upon us, on the other hand.

When He began to settle accounts with the servant who owed Him ten thousand talents (an exorbitant amount of money), God showed His attribute as a just God: *But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.* Unable to pay his debt, and just about ready to lose everything, including his entire family and freedom, the servant resorts to the only other option available to him: he appeals to his Master's patience and mercy: *The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'*

Now, the parable is teaching us about God's compassion and mercy: *Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.* It is interesting to note how quickly the Master (God) responded to the servant's humility and prayer (*"the servant therefore fell down before him.... have patience with me"*). Not only did He give the servant more time, but He forgave him the entire debt. This is what a compassionate and merciful God does to His servants.

The only problem is that we, the beneficiaries of God's forgiveness, mercy and compassion, fail to share these divine gifts and blessings with our fellow servants: *"and he laid hands on him" (his fellow servant) "and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'... and he went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt."*

The moral of this parable is that unless we are willing to share with others the many blessings we receive from God, we will never fully enjoy those blessings: *"Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"*

Not only that, but our egotistic way of using God's gifts can result in subjecting ourselves to His anger and the denial of our requests/prayers: *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."*

Fr. George Bazgan

Sunday Fellowship

The following families are scheduled to look after this Sunday's fellowship:

**Chiosa George & Carmen
Chiosa Neculae
Moga Ioan**

Thank you all very much!

Holy Virgin's Dormition Fast

**Between August 1-15, the Orthodox Church
observes the Dormition Fast.**

**During the two-week fast, besides the regular Sunday Liturgy,
the following services will be held in our church:**

- Thursday, August 6: Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM.**
- Friday, August 7: Akathist to the Holy Virgin at 7:00 PM.**
- Saturday, Aug. 8: Vespers at 6:00 PM.**
- Friday, August 14: Vespers at 7:00 PM.**
- Saturday, August 15: Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM.**

**Those who want to have their confession heard,
can do so after any of these services.**

Thanks to the Volunteers!

**The Board of Directors extends heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation
to all those who volunteered at our last casino, held on August 5-6,
which was very successful.**

MEMBERSHIP

**The Board of Directors extends a warm appeal to all supporters of our parish,
asking them to pay their membership as soon as possible.
This way we can ensure that we have the necessary funds to fulfill our financial
obligations for the rest of the year.**

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Archbishop Nicolae's Meditation at the Dormition Fast

Most Reverend Fathers,
Beloved Faithful,

Between August 1st and 14th the Orthodox Church has the Dormition of the Mother of God fasting period. This fast precedes the great Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God and was established by the Church as a special period for remembering the precious virtues of Virgin Mary and the fasting period with which, according to the Tradition, the Mother of our Lord prepared herself for her falling asleep. This fast was strictly kept by the athonite monks honoring both the Transfiguration and the Dormition, because, as we know, the Mother of our Lord is the Protectress of the Holy Mount Athos.

This is the newest fast of our Church. Its origin is founded in the 5th century, when the veneration of the Mother of God was growing and the Christians begun to keep a fasting period before the Dormition Feast. The date and length of this fast (two weeks) were established for the whole Orthodox world in 1166 in Constantinople at a local Synod convened by the Ecumenical Patriarch Loukas Chrysovergis. The St. Savva's Typicon and Teaching about Fasts from the Great Horologion establish a strict fast, with total fasting on Monday, Wednesday and Friday until the IXth Hour (3.00 pm) when we eat dry food. On Tuesday and Thursday we eat boiled vegetables, without oil and Saturday and Sunday we are allowed oil and wine. Fish is allowed only on August 6th on the Transfiguration Feast.

In this fasting period there is a special prayer rule: we read daily the two Paraklesis of the Most Holy Theotokos. In this office we ask the help and protection of the Mother of our Lord in all our sorrows and weaknesses. We call her "protection, treasure of healings, fervent intercessor and firm rampart, defender of Christians". We confess our faith in her supplications towards her Son, supplications that will help all those in distress.

The Dormition Fast is the proper time for us to read the Service of the Small and Great Paraklesis to the Most Holy Theotokos and to ask fervently her help and support. Our world is troubled by war and many Christians are persecuted for their faith. The Syrian conflict has led to the destruction of many churches and monasteries as well as to the killing of many Christians. Two bishops, Metropolitan Paul and Archbishop John of Aleppo have been held hostage for more than one year. In Iraq Christians suffer great persecutions and banishment to the point that in the city of Mosul the whole Christian population has disappeared. The conflict in the Holy Land has restarted and the first victims are the Christian communities. The same state of conflict exists also in the Orthodox world at the border of Ukraine.

My paternal advice is that we use this fasting period for prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God asking for peace in the world, understanding between the different religious communities, and good thoughts for all those responsible, leaders of this world. With her motherly love and her great mercy She will help and protect us.

†**Archbishop NICOLAE**