

August 24: 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:

**Ionescu Costel & Vasilica
Ciocan Viorel & Veronica
Lăcătușu Petrică & Gina**

Thank you all very much!

THE NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR

On September 14, 2014, the New Sunday School year begins.

Following the Divine Liturgy, a special service of invocation will take place for the students and their teachers.

We are very blessed and thankful to have highly qualified teachers who are dedicated to provide the best religious education for our children.

The parents are warmly advised to bring their children on a regular basis to the Sunday School Program.

The Harvest Festival

This year's Harvest Festival will be held on October 4, 2014, at the Romanian Center. This is a fundraising for the kitchen renovation.

We extend our invitation to all of our members and supporters to participate in this event!

Tickets are \$50.00/adults and \$15.00/children (7-14 years)

Please call Liviu Sasu at 780-489-5381 for tickets!

Thank you for your support!