

## October 11, 2020: The 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (The parable of the sower)

### Epistle: Gal. 2:16-20:

*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

### Gospel: Luke 8:5-15:



*"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?" And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.' "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*

What a beautiful parable! Only Christ, the Good Teacher, could come up with such a great analogy between the seeding of land and the spreading (seeding) the word of God in the minds and souls of people. By working the land (the oldest profession in the history of mankind), man was (is) able to provide for his physical existence: ***"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;"*** (Gen. 3:19). As a spiritual being, man is also required to strengthen his communion with God. In order to do so, he must work just as hard on his spiritual endeavor. First, he must be receptive to the word of God, the spiritual seed: ***The seed is the word of God.*** At the same time, he must exercise a great deal of vigilance in order to prevent the word from being taken away by his spiritual enemies ***"then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved"*** or ***"choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life."***

A constant awareness of the dangers that lurk out there, in combination with a good character, true desire to be a good steward of God's message and patience, constitute the success for man's spiritual progress: ***But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.***

**Fr. George Bazgan**

## **Sunday Service Attendance**

**Due to the continuing State of Emergency, which limits the number of people attending Church services, we are asking our members to make sure that, for time being, only 1 (one) person from each family attend our Sunday Divine Liturgy.**

**We apologize for this inconvenience and hope that the restrictions will continue to be relaxed in the near future.**

**Those who attend, are kindly asked to observe the recommendations of the experts, such as: washing their hands, social distancing, etc.**

**Thank you all and may God keep us safe!**

## 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!

## Prayer at the time of pandemic

O Lord, our God, who are rich in mercy and, with Your wise care, guard our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, stop this pandemic, as You have ceased the punishment of the people in the days of King David. You who are the Physician of our souls and our bodies, give healing to those contaminated with this disease, hastily raising them from their bed of suffering, to glorify You, the Most Merciful Savior, and protect those who are healthy from any disease.

Bless, strengthen and shield, O Lord, with Your grace, all those who, with love of people and sacrifice, care for the sick at their homes or in hospitals. Remove all disease and suffering from the people and teach us to value life and health as gifts coming from You.

Grant us, O God, Your peace, and fill our hearts with unwavering faith in Your protection, with hope in Your help, and with love towards You and our neighbor.

For Yours is to show mercy and to save us, O our God, and to You we give glorify: Father and Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!

## ON THANKSGIVING

*“All thy works shall give thanks to thee, O Lord, and all thy saints shall bless thee! (Ps 144:10).*



One of the most beautiful traditions observed in North America (and not only) is the day of giving thanks, or Thanksgiving. Although it is celebrated at different dates and even months (the second Monday of October in Canada and the third Friday of November in the USA), this **holy day** brings the whole nation together, regardless of our multiple human differences, and, at least for a day (weekend), everyone is invited to offer gratitude and thanks to God Almighty.

The research studies tell us that this tradition originates with the first European settlers. As far as the exact year is concerned, there are different opinions but, in my opinion, this is secondary to the act itself. The Canadian version credits the English explorer, Martin Frobisher who, searching for a Northern passage to the Orient, ended up in Canada in 1578. Having survived such a long and difficult journey, this explorer, together with his remaining companions, had a formal ceremony and a meal, giving thanks to God. In 1879, Thanksgiving was officially recognized as a national Holiday. Throughout the years, the date was changed multiple times but, in 1957, it has been decided that **"A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed... to be observed on the second Monday in October."**

As Orthodox Christians, we believe that Man was created as a **"homo adorans,"** a liturgical being. We read in the book of Genesis that the first two sons born to our forefathers Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, brought sacrifices (thanksgiving) to God (Genesis 4:3-4). The entire Scripture abounds in examples where people brought sacrifices of thanksgiving to God.

In the cleansing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:12-19), the Savior teaches us that gratitude/thanksgiving was due to God after the healing power has been bestowed upon the ten men: Seeing that only one of them returned *"and fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving Him thanks"* (17:16), Jesus asks: *"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"* (17:17). Then, He says to the Samaritan: *"Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well"* (17:19). It is pertinent to assume that all ten men were cleansed (healed), but only one (the Samaritan) was saved (completely restored) because he had not only faith, but gratitude, humility, and respect. Gratitude is part of man's character. True gratitude/thanksgiving is shown, not just said. It is visibly expressed, which means that it requires action.

The reason God wants us to be grateful/thankful is so we can turn our face towards Him and, with humility, offer Him prayer of thanksgiving, which is to our own benefit. In many occasions the Lord taught us to be thankful: before multiplying the bread and the fish, before raising Lazarus from the dead, at the Last Supper, when He instituted the Holy Eucharist (which in translation means thanksgiving), in the Garden of Gethsemane, etc.

The Epistles constitute an unceasing plea to give thanks to God: *"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Eph. 5:20); ... *"but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Phil. 4:6);

Generally speaking, Christians are thanks givers. However, the Orthodox Christians are ontologically thanks givers. On a daily basis, from sunrise to sunset, the Orthodox Church, through the richness of its beautiful and unequal worship, offers praise and thanksgiving to God Almighty. And all this culminates, on Feast days and on the Lord's Day (Sunday), with the Divine Liturgy, the highest form of prayer man can offer to God. This is what the first prayer of the Anaphora says: *"With worthiness and righteousness it is proper to sing to You, to bless You, to praise You, to offer thanks to You and to worship You in every place of Your dominion... For all these we thank you and Your only-begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit, for all known and unknown benefits and for those gifts manifested and unseen, which You bestowed upon us. We thank You also for this Liturgy, which You accepted from our hands..."*

What is more beautiful and more meaningful to an Orthodox Christian than to partake in this uplifting and transforming moment when the priest (Bishop), lifting up his hands, invokes the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Eucharistic gifts (bread and wine), while all those present pray, singing: *"We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, O Lord, and we pray to You, O our God."*

So, on this national day of Thanksgiving, let us remember, with gratitude and thanksgiving, all the blessings the Good and Merciful God has bestowed upon us and upon our country Canada and follow the advice of St. Paul the Apostle, who says: *"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"* (Col. 3:17).

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

**Fr. George Bazgan**