

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.

3. Third teaching.

"Search the Scriptures, for in them is found eternal life."



OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, the sweetest master and creator of angels and of all intelligible and perceptible creation moved by compassion and by his great goodness and love which he has for our race, has granted us and continues to grant us each day the dawn, and we glorify him. We read the service of Holy Unction and we have been anointed for our gain. And may the Lord have compassion on us through the intercession of our Lady, the Theotokos, and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, to forgive our sins and to find us worthy of the kingdom of heaven, to rejoice, and glorify the Holy Trinity.

In olden days, my fellow Christians, people were pure and spoke with God. But later they fell into sin and were not worthy of speaking with God. First, the Holy Spirit inspired Prophets and they wrote for us the sacred Scriptures. Second, he inspired the holy Apostles. Third, he inspired the holy Fathers and they explained to us the books of our that we might know where we walk.

The Two Greatest Gifts

IN THOSE DAYS there was a man who was called Moses. As child he received two gifts in his heart: love of God and love for his brethren. Therefore, we pious Christians also must have these two loves. This is the commandment of the Lord: *This is my commandment, that you love each other just as I have loved you.*

Do you hear, my brethren, what Christ says? "Just as I was cursed, beaten, [as I] hungered, thirsted, and was crucified, and shed my blood for your love, to free you from the hands of the devil, so must you also love God and your brethren. And if the need should arise, [you must] shed your blood for the love of God and your brother."

Perfect love is to sell all your possessions and to give alms, and even to sell yourself as a slave, and whatever you get to give in alms.

In the East there was a bishop from whose province a hundred slaves were taken captive. He sold all of his possessions and ransomed them. Only a child of a widow remained enslaved. What did the bishop do? He shaved off his beard and went and begged the master who held the child to free it and to keep him in its place. And so it happened.

The bishop lived a life of great hardship, but because of his patience God found him worthy of performing miracles. Later his master freed him and he returned to his episcopal duties. It is this kind of love that God wants us also to have. Is there anyone here who has this kind of love? No! Don't sell yourself, sell only your possessions and give alms. You can't do this? Give half, a third, a fourth. You can't even do this? [Then] don't take your brother's bread, don't persecute him, don't slander him.

How do we expect to be saved, my brethren? One thing seems too much for us, the other too bitter. It's true, God is compassionate, but he's also just. He also has an iron rod. So if we want to be saved, we should have love for God and for our brethren.

Fasting and Education

MOSES FASTED for forty days and nights and became like an angel. So let us also fast on Wednesdays because our Christ was sold on that day, and on Friday because he was crucified. And just as Moses became educated, so should we become educated so we'll know God's law. And if you parents haven't received an education, your children should. Can't you see how savage our race has become from ignorance? We've become like animals. This is why I counsel you to build schools so that you may understand the holy Gospel and the other books.

Moses

THE GRACIOUS GOD, seeing Moses' good disposition, found him worthy to become king of the Jews, and he reigned for forty years. He also became a prophet. And what is a prophet? One who knows the past and the future. We too, my brethren, when we do good works, are found worthy by God and he gives us whatever we ask for with faith. But if we do evil and we don't have love but hatred, then we have no place with God but with the devil in hell where we burn forever.

Noah

IN OLDEN TIMES, my brethren, the devil, who hates good, marshalled all of his evil and incited people to be proud, to murder, to fornicate, to commit adultery, to do things that weren't done even by animals lacking reason. And worse, they worshipped the sun as god, some the moon, others the sea.

Wanting to destroy the world, God ordered Noah to build a ship on earth so that people might ask him: "What are you doing?"

And he would answer: "God will destroy the world."

And they would make fun of him, but Noah wasn't to pay them any heed. Noah began to build the ship. People asked him: "Why are you building a ship?"

Noah would say to them: "Because God will destroy the world."

They would tell him: "You're crazy. What's the matter with God to want to destroy the world?"

Noah minded his own business and finished the ship in a hundred years.

In those days eight people were found to be good; Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. Wishing to save these eight, God commanded Noah to tar the ship so that the rain wouldn't enter it, and to place in it all the animals, male, and female, clean and unclean. Then, after he and his wife and his children and their wives got in, he shut the ship well.

[Meanwhile,] the people outside ate, drank, conducted business, and did other devilish acts. Then God opened the cataracts of heaven and rain fell like a river on the earth. The people shouted: "Noah, open up for us so we can get in."

Noah answered them: "Where were you for the last hundred years when I told you that God would destroy the earth? What can I do for you now? In Hades there is no repentance!"

Then the earth was flooded and water covered all the mountains, and all the people drowned except for Noah and his family. But again the earth was filled from them, as Christ says in the holy Gospel: "*As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man,*" that is, just as in Noah's time, the people didn't believe but made fun of him until suddenly God's wrath came the flood and drowned the world. Similarly today, my fellow Christians, people won't believe during the Second Coming of the Lord, they won't believe as they didn't then. The words I speak to you aren't mine, but those of the Holy Spirit, and whoever wants to, let him believe. I've done my duty.

Sin and Youth

BRETHREN, WHEN I was young I believed in a falsehood: "Let me commit sins now, and when I get old I'll do good and I'll be saved."

Now I have grown old, but my sins have sprung roots and I can't do any good. So you be careful not to suffer the same fate, but now that you have the time, do good works to be saved.

The Christian Kingdom and the Turks.

THREE HUNDRED YEARS after the Resurrection of our Christ, God sent St. Constantine who established a Christian kingdom. The Christians held it for one thousand-one hundred-fifty years. Then God took it [the Christian kingdom] away from the Christians and brought the Turks and gave it to them for our own good. They've held it for three hundred and twenty years. Why did God bring the Turks and not another race? For our own good, because the other nations would have harmed our faith, while the Turk will do anything you want if you give him money.

The Lord, wishing to protect us from condemnation, granted us a word which if we keep we'll be saved. What is that word? *Whatever you hate don't do to another.* That is, whatever you don't want someone else to do to you, don't you do it to another. Just as you don't want to be stolen from, to be slandered, to be insulted by others, don't you steal, don't you murder others.

The Jesus Prayer

NOW I ADVISE YOU ALL - young and old - to make a prayer rope and to hold it in your left hand, and with your right make the sign of the Cross and say: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of the living God, through the intercessions of the Theotokos and of all the Saints have mercy upon me, your sinful and unworthy servant."

The Holy Cross

THE MOST GRACIOUS GOD has granted us the holy Cross with which to bless, and the holy Sacraments. With the Cross we open paradise, with the Cross we drive out the demons, but we must keep our hands free from sin. Then the devil is consumed in flames and departs. Therefore, my brethren, keep this word and the Cross with you whenever you are eating, drinking, or working. And it is a good and holy thing to always pray at dawn, in the evening, and at midnight.

The Sign of the Cross

LISTEN, MY BRETHREN, how the sign of the Cross is made and what it means. First, just as the Holy Trinity is glorified in heaven by the angels, so should you join your three fingers of your right hand. And being unable to ascend into heaven to worship, raise your hand to your head (because the head means heaven) and say: "Just as the angels glorify the Holy Trinity in heaven, so do I, as a servant, glorify and worship the Holy Trinity. And as the fingers are three and separate, and are together, so is the Holy Trinity three persons but one God." Lowering your hand to your stomach, say: "I worship you and adore you, my Lord, because you condescended and took on flesh in the womb of the Theotokos for my sins." Place [your hand] on your right shoulder and say: "I beg you, my God, to forgive me and to put me on your right with the just." Placing [your hand] again on your left shoulder, say: "I beg you, my Lord, don't put me on the left with the sinners." Then bending down to the ground [say] : "I glorify you, my God; I worship and adore you, for just as you were put into the grave, may I also be." And when you stand up straight, you reveal the resurrection and say: "I glorify and worship you, my Lord, for you rose from the dead to grant us eternal life." This is what the Cross means. Let us give just one example so you can see the power of the Cross.

The Power of the Cross

THERE WAS A MAN named Julian, the reader who studied with Basil the Great and wanted to be king. So he went and found a Jewish magician and said to him: "Can you make me emperor and I will make you my chief deputy?"

The magician said: "Deny Christ and I will make you emperor."

Julian replied: "I deny him."

The magician then wrote a letter and said to Julian: "Take this paper and go to a pagan grave. Then throw it up high and demons will come. But whatever they do to you, don't be afraid. And don't make the sign of the Cross because they will leave."

Julian went to the grave and when he threw the paper, the demons came. Frightened, he made the sign of the Cross and they left.

He immediately went to the magician and told him what happened.

The magician then said to him: "Go and kill a child and bring me its heart." Then the magician called forth the demons once more, but again Julian, from fear, made the sign of the Cross. However, the demons were not frightened because he had infected himself by the murder.

The magician fulfilled his wish and Julian reigned for two years and went to hell where he burns forever. We too must be free from sin and then the devil departs.

Worthy and Unworthy Priests

I WISH, MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS, that we could be together always, so that I could tell various things. But what can I do since there are thousands of villages where they have never heard the word of God, and they are awaiting for me. So I beg you, holy priests, and I counsel you to concern yourselves with the laymen, how they - and you - are going to be saved. Similarly, you laymen should honor your priests. And if you chance to come upon a priest and a king, you should give preference to the priest. If you chance upon a priest and an angel, prefer the priest, because the priest is higher than even the angels.

The priest who wishes his own good should read the law so he'll understand his obligations. Concerning holy priests I have nothing to say to you. It is my duty when I meet a priest to bow and kiss his hand and to ask him to beseech God for my sins. The entire world can beseech God, but cannot perform the holy Sacraments. But a priest, even a sinner, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, can perform the holy Sacraments.

I only say this: whoever wishes to become a priest should be as pure as an angel. He should be educated so he can explain the holy Gospel and the sacred Scriptures. And when he becomes thirty years of age, and the laymen and the bishop ask him, then he should become a priest without paying any money. He should live near the church so that whatever hour he is wanted by the laymen they will find him. He should observe who is angry with his wife, which brother with his brother, which neighbor with his neighbor, and reconcile them. He should sacrifice himself for his flock.

And when he celebrates [the Divine Liturgy] and completes the reading of the Gospel, he should explain to the Christians what Christ commands them to do. He should recall that the tassels which are on his stole represent the souls of the Christians. And if one soul is lost he'll have to account for it on the day of judgment. He should recall that the chasuble he wears has no sleeves. This means that the priest should keep his hand clear of worldly affairs and should always have his mind on heaven. And when he folds the chasuble and it becomes like two wings, this shows that if he does good works he will fly to heaven like an angel.

If, on the other hand, he is unworthy, uneducated, infected with sins, pays money and uses intermediaries to become a priest, he buys hell. Woe to the priest who reads the Gospel and then tells lies.

In olden times, when people wanted to punish someone, they swore and said, "May God place him among the priests of the eighteenth century." This is why, my brethren, it is difficult today for patriarchs, bishops, priests, etc., to be saved.

This is why I advise you, holy priests, now that you have time, repent so you may be saved.

Human Relationships

YOU ELDERS who are heads of the villages, if you wish to be saved, should love all the Christians as your children and should apportion taxes according to each person's ability to pay and not play favorites.

Similarly, you who are subordinates should honor your betters. Husbands should love your wives. If your wife is bad, you should be patient with her and advise her. You will have wages from God. You women too should love your husbands and be subject to them because patience and obedience to a good husband earn a good wage for your soul. And if he has some fault, you should overlook it because a husband has more responsibilities than a wife. So, both should love one another. Similarly, you children should honor and respect your parents because whoever doesn't honor and obey his parents in what is good, sins.

The Example of Abraham

AGAIN, IF YOUR PARENTS happen to deny Christ and they urge you, too, to deny him, then don't obey. You will have wages from God just as Abraham did when his father, Thara, the pagan, sent him to bring a sheep to be sacrificed to the idols. On the way, Abraham thought to himself: "Doesn't this world which remains new always have a master? So why should my father worship idols which are deaf and dumb and not worship the true God who created heaven, earth, etc?"

And immediately, he heard a voice from heaven: "Your thinking is good. Go to the promised land and remain there until I tell you what to do, for if you return to your father and tell him what you have been thinking, he will put you to death. So leave."

Thus Abraham left and God made him as rich as a king. And God blessed his seed and his descendants became as numerous as the stars in the sky. He also had three hundred and eighteen servants whom he treated as his brothers.

Monks and Saints

YOU SEE, MY BRETHREN, whoever has his mind on God, God finds worthy to live well here and to go to paradise. And when your sons wish to become monks, don't prevent them from doing so, but rejoice because they are following the good road. But when you see them on a bad road, then prevent them from taking it.

Have reverence for all the saints of the Church, and especially for the Lady Mary, because all the saints are servants of Christ, while the Theotokos is queen of heaven and of earth. She prays to the compassionate Christ for our sins. This is why we too should honor our Lady by fasting and alms.

A Thief Named John

A MAN NAMED JOHN was defeated and he became a thief. He became the captain of a band of one hundred thieves, but he had great reverence for the Theotokos. Each morning and evening he read the service of Supplication to the Theotokos.

Wishing to save him because of the great reverence he had for the Theotokos, the gracious God sent a holy monk who was immediately captured by the thieves.

The monk said to them: "I beg you to take me to your captain because I have something to tell you for your own good."

They took him to the captain and he said: "Ask all the men to come so that I can tell you something."

The captain called them and they came. The monk said: "Aren't there any more?"

"I have a cook," the captain replied.

"Ask him to come." But when he came, the cook was unable to look at the monk and turned his face aside.

The monk then said to the cook: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I command you to tell me who you are, who sent you, and what you are doing here."

The cook replied and said: "I'm a liar and I always speak falsely. But since you have bound me with the name of Christ, I can't but tell you the truth. I'm the devil and I was sent by my superior to work for the captain and to wait for the day when he wouldn't read the service of Supplication to the Theotokos to put him into hell. I have been watching him now for fourteen years and I have never found a day when he

hasn't read the service."

The monk said: "I command you in the name of the Holy Trinity to disappear and no longer tempt Christians." And immediately the devil disappeared like smoke.

The monk then taught the thieves. Some became monks, others married and did good works and were saved. This is why I advise you all, men and women, to learn the service of Supplication and to use it in your prayers. And if you wish, take the book, *The Salvation of Sinners*, which contains the seventy miracles of the Theotokos, of which I told you one so that you might understand.

A Maiden Named Mary

THERE WAS A MAIDEN named Mary whose father was a Christian and sought to have her married. But she didn't want to, wishing to preserve her virginity. He placed her in a nunnery and handed her over to the abbess to keep her as her child. After her father had died, a new ruler took over that land. One day he went to the monastery where Mary was, and as soon as he saw her, he immediately was overcome by a satanic love for her. Returning to his home, he sent a letter to the abbess who said: "Send Mary to me immediately, because I have seen her and she has seen me. She has fallen in love with me and I with her."

The abbess read the letter and called Mary and said to her: "My child, what good did you see in the Pasha which made you look upon him with love? Look what he writes to me here."

Mary answered: "I don't know anything about it. I looked at him with a different purpose in mind. I said to myself: 'My God, will the Pasha have the same glory in the next world which he has in this one?' But he looked at me with a diabolical purpose. If I wanted marriage, my father would have given me [in marriage], and I would have married a Christian."

The abbess then wrote to the Pasha: "I would prefer to send you my head rather than send you Mary."

The Pasha sent another letter which said: "Either you send me Mary or I will come and take her myself and I will burn down the monastery."

Mary heard this and said to the abbess: "When the Pasha's men come, send them to my cell and I shall answer them."

When they came to Mary's cell she asked them what they wanted. They replied: "The Pasha sent us to take you because he saw your eyes and he desires them."

She asked them to wait for her to go to the church. She then took a knife and a dish and, standing before the icon of Christ, she said: "My Lord, you gave me earthly eyes so that I might walk along the good road, and for me to go voluntarily along the bad road is not right; and because these earthly eyes will take out my spiritual eyes, see how I take them out for your love, so that I can escape from the mire of sin."

And she immediately put the knife to her eye and plucked it out and placed it in the dish. She then went before the icon of the Theotokos and took out the other eye and put them together. She then sent them to the Pasha. When he saw them his satanic love was transformed into contrition and reverence. He immediately got up and went to the monastery and begged the nuns to pray to God to heal Mary.

All the nuns accompanied the Pasha. They fell on their knees, and begged Christ and the Theotokos to return Mary's sight.

The Theotokos then appeared as lightning to Mary and said to her: "Hail, Mary. Because you preferred to put out your eyes for the love of my Son and for me, behold take back your eyes and no longer will you be tempted."

Seeing the miracle, those who were present rejoiced greatly and glorified God and the Panagia. Then the Pasha gave the monastery a lot of gold and he was forgiven by the nuns. He left and did good things and was saved.

Did you hear, my brethren, what Mary did with the power of the Panagia? This is why we too must honor the All-Holy Theotokos by doing good works.

Causing Scandal

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, among all the good things he teaches us in the holy Gospel, tells us this word also: "Woe to the person who scandalizes his brother and doesn't ask for forgiveness before the sun sets, because he has fallen into sin."

Now, is it possible that I who have come here have not scandalized some of you? So I have no other way but the following. I beg your nobility to say three times: "Forgive us and God will forgive you." Now if you want Christ to rejoice, our Panagia, the Theotokos to rejoice, and all the saints, and for the devil, our enemy, to be grieved, now that you are all gathered here together, say among yourselves three times: "Forgive us, brethren, and God will forgive you.'

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