

SAINT KOSMAS AITOLOS

—Commemorated August 24th—

We must love God with all our heart

Do you know my dear brother how God wants you to be? Just as you do not want your spouse to have any relationship with another person, similarly, God does not want you to have anything to do with the devil. Would you be happy if your husband or wife committed adultery with another person? No! How about if your spouse were to just kiss someone else? What if they were only to think about another person? No! You do not even want this to happen. This is how God also wants you to be, my brother: He does not want you to have even the slightest contact with the devil.

We must forgive if we want to be saved

Two people once came to me to confess their sins. Their names were Peter and Paul. I want you to listen and let me know if I judged them correctly or inappropriately.

Peter came and told me, “My spiritual father, from a young age until now I have always fasted and prayed, I have given money to the poor, I built monasteries and churches, and I have done many other good things as well. However, I do not forgive my enemies.” When I heard this, I concluded that he was headed straight for Hell.

Next, Paul came and told me, “From the day I was born until now, I have never done even one good deed. On the contrary, I have murdered others, I have fornicated, I have stolen, I have set monasteries and churches on fire. I have done every possible evil; however, I forgive my enemies.” Now pay attention to what I did. I immediately embraced him, kissed him, and gave him permission to receive Holy Communion. Did I judge them correctly or inappropriately?

Certainly you will blame me and ask, “Peter had done so many good things, and just because he did not forgive his enemy, for such a trivial thing, you concluded that he would be condemned to Hell? Whereas Paul had committed

so many crimes, and just because he forgave his enemies you pardoned him and also permitted him to receive Holy Communion?" Yes, my children, this is how I acted.

Do you want to understand why? Just as a small amount of yeast that is placed in one hundred pounds of dough has the power to ferment all the dough and make it rise, the same thing holds for all those good things that Peter did. The small amount of enmity he had, with which he did not forgive his enemy, fermented and turned everything he had done into poison of the devil. This is why I ruled that he was going to Hell. Paul's sins, on the other hand, resembled a large pile of sticks and twigs that were set on fire with a small flame. The forgiveness he gave to his enemy served as a lit candle that completely burned and consumed the entire pile of kindling, that is, his sins. This is why I concluded that he would go to Heaven.

Whoever loves God must also love his fellow man

Now, my children, I want to ask you the following, and tell me the truth: Who do you love? God or the devil? Undoubtedly, you will say that you love God...

Let us see if this love for God is correct and perfect, or if it is deficient and in need of anything else? How can we determine this? Let us suppose that you have a child. I love you, respect you, and say good things about you to others; however, I beat up your child, I brush him aside, I speak badly about him to others, I take his food and eat it, I take his clothes and wear them. It seems to me that this is not real love. If we love the father, we must also love his child. Similarly, whoever loves God must also love his brother, his fellow Christian. Because we all have one father: God. We have one faith and one baptism. We commune from the same Holy Mysteries. We have one head: our Christ. We have one faith, one law, one worship, and we are all brothers.

Furthermore, my children, you should realize that love has two attributes. One strengthens man to do good; the other restrains him from doing evil. Assume, my children, that I have a loaf of bread to eat and water to drink, but you have nothing. Love tells me, "Do not eat your bread alone, but give some of

it to your brothers and then eat the rest of it." I have clothes to wear. Love tells me, "Give one of your garments to your brother and keep the other one to wear." I am about to open my mouth to criticize you, to lie to you, to trick you. As soon as I think of love, it paralyzes my lips and does not allow me to mislead you. I am about to stretch out my hands to steal your possessions, your money, everything you own. Love, however, does not allow me to take anything.

Do you see, my brothers, what kind of gifts love contains?

Parents resemble a tree

When you cut down a tree, all its branches immediately wither. Conversely, when a tree is watered at the roots, its branches stand strong and healthy. Parents resemble a tree. The father and mother comprise the roots of the children. When a father and mother are watered with fasting, prayers, almsgiving, and other virtuous deeds, then God protects the children...

When an apple tree produces sour apples, what is to blame? Will we lay blame on the apple tree or the apples? Obviously, the problem lies in the tree. Therefore, you the parents, who constitute the apple tree, must live correctly and virtuously so that the apples that are produced also become sweet.

Nothing reeks like pride

There was a virtuous hermit who frequently prayed to God, and who received revelations of many divine mysteries. One day he set out from his hermitage to travel to a distant region. Along the way, he met another man who was journeying in the same direction. This individual was actually an angel, but the hermit did not realize this and assumed he was a regular human being. As they journeyed together, along the path they encountered a dead horse. The hermit covered his nose and held his breath; the angel did not. A short while later, they came across a dead calf. The hermit again covered his nose and held his breath; the angel did not. Not long after, they found a dead dog on their path. The hermit covered his nose and held his breath; the angel did nothing.

Eventually they approached a certain village where they crossed paths with a beautiful young lady, who was wearing extravagant clothing and ornate jewelry, and taking great pride in her appearance. The angel then immediately covered his nose. When the hermit witnessed this, he stopped and asked, “Who are you? Are you an angel, a human being, or a demon?... We passed by a dead horse that stunk, but you did not cover your nose. We also passed by the dead calf and dog, and I did not see you cover your nose. Now that we passed by such a beautiful young lady you decided to cover your nose and hold your breath?” Then the angel made himself visible to the hermit and replied, “Nothing smells as bad as pride does to God.” Having said this, the angel disappeared.

The hermit then returned back to his hut and began weeping for his sins, beseeching God to protect him henceforth from the devil’s traps, and not allow him to fall into the sin of pride and thus lose his soul.