



Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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The Golden Rule
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Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

[27] "But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, [28] bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. [29] To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. [30] Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. [31] And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. [32] "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. [33] And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. [34] And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. [35] But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. [36] Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6: 27-36)

St. Luke tells us that Jesus preached His great sermon, the summary of His moral teachings, on a "level place" so as to be in the midst of those who heard Him. Absolutely central to what He preached is the summary of behavior for those who would follow Him; the summary known as the Golden Rule.

We grew up with this teaching in my generation. It was taught to us by our parents, reiterated again and again in Sunday School and Church, and even quoted by our teachers in school. How surprising it was to me when I taught university students that so many of them did not know

this basic teaching or even Who taught it originally.

Treat one another as you would be treated. This form of the Golden Rule is positive, not negative. Other philosophers and religious teachers throughout the ages taught something similar, but in its negative form. In other words, they said, "Do Not treat others as you would not like to be treated yourself." This is fine as a start, but our Lord's teaching is not limited to the negative form; it is not enough simply to refrain from actions that might harm others; but God's expectation is that we go beyond that; we actually find ways to help others, to comfort them in their distress; to provide for them in their need; to uphold them in their weakness; to accept them even though they are sinners like us.

And when it comes to dealing with our enemies, our Lord's teaching is specific and clear. I remember one silly woman years ago in another congregation saying to me and my senior priest that she had no enemies. We looked at each other in disbelief! Anyone who mistreats others, is he not your enemy? Anyone who turns a blind eye to those in need, is that person not your enemy? Anyone who condemns and seeks vengeance, is he/she not your enemy? Anyone who inspires others to seek their own good and to be selfish, is that person not your enemy?

Of course, our enemies are not merely those who mistreat us, but those who hurt, mistreat or inspire to mistreat others. How do we deal with those who act that way in politics, in daily life, in the workplace?

We do what we can to prevent them from hurting others. If they mistreat or lash out against those among us, we place ourselves between them and those whom they would hurt. Jesus said that we should love our enemies. In other words, we should be willing to forgive them in our hearts but also limit their ability to hurt others. We must be the buffer between their actions and those who would be hurt by them.

These teachings of our Lord are not simply about being nice. They are about reaching out to those in need and doing whatever we can to limit people, political parties, leaders and individuals from hurting others in any way. We are to be the balm that brings healing, the buffer that protects without violence.

We are to be as loving as Christ Himself!

Fr. Elias

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