

My Beloved Ones,

Today, I would like to move the focus of my weekly message from the Gospel, to this Sunday's Epistle. In this letter, St. Paul instructs the members of the young Roman church in just why it is so important to support their fellow members of the Body of Christ.

He begins by demonstrating that, since each human being is made unique in God's Image and Likeness, then each also has a unique set of skills and abilities. *"[L]et us use them: ...if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness"* (Romans 12:6-8). We know from the Gospel that is not enough for a person to ask why God did not bless him or her with this talent, or with that skill; but instead we must sincerely make use of that which we have. In using these skills to the best of our ability, we are not only giving proper glory to God, but also honoring His Will.



How do we make use of these skills? We are meant to, as St. Paul continues, *"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor."* (Romans 12:9-10) Supposing that some are helpful cooks or builders, while others are skilled designers or passionate speakers; we are all meant to lift up and honor one another in what St. Paul refers to as brotherly affection. When one member of the Body of Christ succeeds, all succeed, and Christ's Church succeeds.

We know all too well though, as our Lord tells us, that *"[H]e makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust"* (Matthew 5:45). The value of any human relationship, especially one within the Body of Christ, is that just as we lift up our sister's talents and abilities in a moment of triumph or joy, we are also a means of support during her time of struggle. It is for this reason that St. Paul reminds us that we are to *"Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them."* (Romans 12:12-14). Though pain and struggle are an unfortunate part of living within this fallen world, we are blessed to have received from Christ, St. Paul, and all the Saints a model for living as if heaven were on earth. In this way, we support our sister, not simply because it is the "right" thing to do, but rather, because it is the heavenly thing to do.

By living in such a way, we will find it that much more possible to live as St. Paul exhorts us earlier in the Epistle, *"Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord."* (Romans 12:11) It is in these moments of tiredness, of sadness, or anger that we must look to our brothers and sisters for support, just as we supported them. On an individual level however, only we alone can reorient ourselves to keep our minds on that one person who is the sole focus of our goals in life. In this, we can rely not on anyone else besides our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I leave you with my prayers and best wishes for a blessed and happy summer season!

+ALEXIOS
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