



My Beloved Ones,

While the subject of my weekly message usually concerns one of the Evangelists, I write to you today to emphasize the message of this Sunday's Epistle.

In the Apostle Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, he instructs them in the ways of Christian giving, beginning with his famous exhortation, "*...he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully*" (2 Corinthians 9:6). If, in the Parable, the Lord is the sower, and His Word the seed, then we are expected to do our part as His followers, so we can be certain of a fruitful harvest. Christ, the chief sower, in making us all His sowers has given to us the means to fulfill the Will of His Father, through His Holy Church.

However, this does not mean we are to give solely out of fear of punishment, or in hope of a reward. Our Lord instructed His disciples to give without accepting payment, so we too must give in a free and open imitation of Christ, for as St. Paul emphasizes, "*...God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Just as Christ and His Father provided for the disciples, so too will our needs be provided for, if we truly seek to love and give to our brothers and sisters in need.

As if to emphasize the correctness of this view, the great Apostle and missionary quotes from the Psalms when he writes, "*He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever*". St. Paul also assures us then that our concern for living out the truth of Christ's Gospel will not go unnoticed by our Creator, since "*He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness*" (2 Corinthians 9:10). This righteousness, it should be said, is not for our glory or boasting, but instead, to the Glory of Him who sent us.

What a blessing it is, to be able to live out these words daily; to find a path that emphasizes love and not hate; selflessness, and not greed; mercy, not hardheadedness. I hope that we take these words to heart, not simply this Sunday, but all the days of our lives.

I am also blessed to be able to remind you today of an invitation to a special celebration very few Orthodox Christians are able to witness. Next Thursday, October 12th we will be fortunate to have the Thyranoxia—that is, the "Opening of the Doors" for the Panagia Chapel Conference Center. Except for accidents of nature, or the blessings of community growth, few parishioners will ever see the service of this kind. For this very reason, I hope to see as many of you as are able to join your respective clergy and communities for this unique opportunity. Please call the Metropolis Office to RSVP, so that the Diakonia Retreat Center staff will be able to properly prepare for the beautiful gathering.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta