

Sunday Sermon – 5th Matthew – 2015-07-05

By Fr. Demetri Tsigas, St. Katherine, Melbourne, FL

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

How do we know if someone is actually a Christian? They can tell us they believe in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that even the demons believe that. They can tell us they are “Born Again” or that they “Have the Holy Spirit”. I remember having schoolmates in high school who went to church every Sunday, “spoke in tongues” and/or “got slain in Spirit”, then drank like crazy and slept around during the week. Were they really Christians?

Today’s Epistle reading extends for us the idea that a tree is known by its fruits. If we are Christians who have received the Holy Spirit and have that Holy Spirit alive and present within us then we will manifest those fruits and other believers will know that indeed we are spirit-filled Christians. St. Paul tells us today:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Are you loving, joyful and at peace with God and others? Are you longsuffering or are you always complaining? Are you kind, full of goodness, faithfulness and gentleness or are you always angry and frustrated with others? Are you self-controlled or are you controlled by your passions?

St. Paul goes on to tell us how to help one another if we are lacking these fruits of Spirit. He tells us that if we find someone is overtaken in any trespass, then if we indeed are spiritual and have these gifts of the Spirit, then in a spirit of gentleness, we should help restore that person. We should certainly do that in the church, in our families and in our society. Our society is sick right now. It has a spiritual ailment and is in need of spiritual healing. Only those of us who are spirit-filled Christians can truly help restore our society. St. Paul does caution us however to “consider ourselves” meaning to examine ourselves so see if indeed we have fruits of Spirit evidencing that we are indeed Spirit-filled Christians. Finally St. Paul tells us to “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*”

We are and are called to be our brother’s keeper. We share in one another’s suffering, supporting and encouraging one another. Yesterday this nation celebrated its 259th birthday, the 4th of July, Independence Day. As Orthodox Christians living in America,

it is imperative that we educate ourselves in our own spiritual history and tradition as well as in the Christian History and tradition of these United States. The Orthodox Church has always sought to make the world a better place by engaging with kings and civil leaders. This nation was founded as a Christian nation on Christian principles for the promulgation of the Christian faith with choosing one denomination over another. When we stray from that reality, we suffer the consequences.

(Read Hobby Lobby ad for July 4, 2015. Click here

[http://www.hobbylobby.com/holiday_messages/current_message.cfm?fullsite=yes&utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=HL_IndependenceDay2015%20\(1\)&utm_content=&spMailingID=22902703&spUserID=NjU0OTkyNDI5NDkS1&spJobID=600323148&spReportId=NjAwMzIzMTQ0S0](http://www.hobbylobby.com/holiday_messages/current_message.cfm?fullsite=yes&utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=HL_IndependenceDay2015%20(1)&utm_content=&spMailingID=22902703&spUserID=NjU0OTkyNDI5NDkS1&spJobID=600323148&spReportId=NjAwMzIzMTQ0S0) to see the rest of the quotes which were in Saturday's USA Today/Florida Today paper. Every year, Hobby Lobby takes out a full page ad every Independence Day, Christmas Day and Easter Day pointing to the Christian aspects of these days.)

To God be the Glory, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

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IN GOD WE TRUST

BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD - PSALM 33:12

<p style="text-align: center;">FOUNDING FATHERS</p> <p>"An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left of... So, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. ... Besides, Sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. ... In life or death, or peace or sword, we are to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" Patrick Henry</p> <p>"To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom, and political and social happiness, which marked our progress. ... Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overturned, our present republican forms of government - and all blessings which flow from them - must fall with them." Jedediah Morse</p> <p>"We lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convinced I grow of the truth: That God governs in the affairs of men. If a superior cannot lead to the good without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We've been assured in the sacred writings that unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build it. Firmly believe this, and I also believe that without His concuring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel." Benjamin Franklin</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EDUCATION</p> <p>"Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. And seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, let every one seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it of Him (Proverbs 2, 3). Every one shall so exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein." Harvard: 1636 Student Guidelines</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CONGRESS</p> <p>"We are a Christian people...not because the law demands it, not to gain exclusive benefits or to avoid legal disabilities, but from choice and education, and in a land thus universally Christian, what is to be expected, what desired, but that we shall give due regard to Christianity?" Senate Judiciary Committee Report, January 18, 1853</p> <p>"At the time of the adoption of the Constitution and the amendments, the universal sentiment was that Christianity should be encouraged. ... In this age there can be no substitute for Christianity. ... That was the religion of the founders of the republic and they expected it to remain the religion of their descendants." House Judiciary Committee Report, March 27, 1874</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRESIDENTS</p> <p>"It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to recognize His protection and favor." George Washington</p> <p>"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." John Adams</p> <p>"before any man can be considered as a member of civil society, he must be considered as a subject of the Government of the Deities." James Madison</p> <p>"And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever." Thomas Jefferson</p> <p>"It is not that in the chain of human events, the birthday of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birthday of the Savior - that it forms a leading event in the progress of the Gospel dispensation? ... It is not that the Declaration of Independence first repudiated the social contract on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth? ... That it laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precept of Christianity?" John Quincy Adams</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SUPREME COURT JUSTICES</p> <p>"The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts." Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and to the day, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." John Jay: First Chief Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court</p> <p>"Human law must rest its authority ultimately upon the authority of that law which is Divine. ... For being being in our enemies, religion and law are twin sisters, friends, and mutual assistants. Indeed, these two stations run into each other." James Wilson: Original Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SUPREME COURT RULING</p> <p>"There is no discourse in these [legal] declarations. God and not individual opinions, declarations of private persons, they are organic [legal, governmental] utterances, they speak the voice of the entire people. ... These, and many other matters which might be named, add a volume of useful declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation." Church of the Holy Trinity v. U.S., 1892 (Dissenting Decision Declaring America a Christian Nation) Significantly, the U.S. Supreme Court chief decries of court rulings and legal documents as precedents to arrive at this ruling, but in 1862, when the Supreme Court struck down voluntary prayer in schools, it did so without using any such precedent.</p>
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