

GODLIKE LOVE

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth....And this is His commandment; that we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us His commandment” (I John 3:18,23)

It's said that the writer of this letter, the youngest of Christ's apostles and the only one to survive premature death, would be borne by loving hands to the place of worship. More than a hundred years of age, he would keep repeating: *“Little children, love one another.”* This recalls the last years of both metropolitans Leonty and Ireney. Both had memory lapses, physical impairments and the effects of old age; nevertheless, we adored them. It was another era, one in which we were nurtured on respect for all elders, especially our beloved clergy. It was considered good breeding, a second nature that was assumed without discussion. We stood when a priest entered the room, cupped palms, and we asked for a blessing. It was a time when parents admonished rude behavior or lack of proper manners.

Today we are ever more fascinated by the wonders of modern technology. The advantages are too many to number, and of course we must be grateful for the conveniences they have brought to our lives; however, those advantages come at a great expense. Personal relationships are minimized. There is less reason for face-to-face conversations. We talk more than ever, but on cell phones. We communicate by text messages. We have time galore for television and pleasure. It is a new era, a time when the child has become the parent, and the elders can at best hope to catch up. This is the definition of progress, and nothing should stand in its way. May the youth of America continue to take the lead in advancing technology. But there is collateral damage to consider.

The divine apostle John reminds us that mutual love is not a suggestion or a good idea but a commandment from Christ Himself. Here is the reason for His incarnation that led to the cross. *“We should believe in the Name”* of Jesus Christ, and *“love one another.”* The two move in tandem, invading our hearts at baptism; and it is by compassion that we shall be ultimately judged. Yet we have instead a culture of supposedly Orthodox Christians bereft of that tradition of love and respect not only for elders, but for our clergy. Exploiting the anonymity of the computer, they hide from exposure. Called “bloggers,” they play a cynical game of vilification, a perverse chess [*shakhmati*] “kill the shah,” or in our case, the bishops and priests. Our constant Enemy finds the hollow spots in those hearts and exploits them in order to carry on his unending warfare with our Lord Jesus Christ by bringing down His leaders.

Our only weapon given us is Christ's cross. We must pray all the harder for bloggers, that they may realize there is no safe hiding place from the Holy Spirit, and that when our Lord tells us to *“go into your closet”* [Matthew 6:6], it is not to do damage to your soul by taking delight in the weaknesses of your brethren, but to *“pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”* And while you are in your computer room, shut it off and reflect on the state of your own soul. What is it that gives you such pleasure in the humiliation of another? Were you always like that, even in early years? Was there ever a time when you celebrated good things that happened to a friend or sibling? What would it take to restore you to self-respect and an attitude of accomplishment and achievement? Is it not time to reevaluate your values and discover the answers to these questions: *“Who am I? How did I get here? Is this where I want to be?”* [And if it's elsewhere] *“How do I find my way?”*

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