



73rd Year

July 13, 2025

Pamphlet #28 (3763)

THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Titus 3:8-15)

Apostolic Exhortations

Titus, my son, the saying is sure. I desire you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds; these are excellent and profitable to men. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile. As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned. When I send Artemas or Tychicos to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful. All who are with me send greeting to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

THE COMBINATION OF FAITH AND GOOD WORKS

Today we heard an excerpt from the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Titus. The teacher advises the young pastor of the Church about the model of life he should demonstrate to the faithful. He points out what is good and beneficial for the members of the Church: to avoid foolish and pointless discussions, disputes about

matters of the Law, and to avoid heretics after the first efforts to correct them. He calls on him to teach Christians to be pioneers in good works.

We will focus on this last point of Paul's advice, highlighting a few elements about the great chapter of our spiritual life: the practice of loving good deeds.

Orthodox spirituality

In ecclesiastical circles, there is often a noted overemphasis on the so-called "spirituality" and a one-sided perception of faith. Many believe that the Orthodox faith has lofty content and focuses only on the higher levels of human thought and life. According to this view, spiritual life becomes a subjective and individual matter, limited to the personal level and unaware of anything beyond one's personal relationship with God. Engaging with the material needs and problems of others is considered either worthless or even an obstacle to acquiring salvation.

However, for our Church, such a perception of Orthodox spirituality is incomplete. The practice of faith has a dual character. Certainly, the believer is called to cultivate the inner person to live the life of virtue, to pursue sacramental union with God. At the same time, however, the believer is called to step outside himself and apply his faith to every person. Otherwise, the Christian remains fruitless, like a tree with an impressive outward appearance, yet without any fruit.

The works of love

This understanding of the Church regarding the combination of faith and works of love is wonderfully analyzed by James, the brother of the Lord. He tells us: "What benefit is it, my brothers, if someone has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him on its own? If our brethren are insufficiently clothed and lacking in daily food, and the believer says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith, if it does not have works, is in essence

dead.” And he continues: “Note that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” (James 2:14–24)

However, at this point, another temptation also lurks: to think that the works of love and solidarity on their own, are sufficient can guarantee salvation even if faith is weak, superficial, and shallow. Such acts are often carried out even by atheists or those opposed to the Church, who nevertheless, feel a natural inclination toward the problems and needs of their fellow men. However, the Orthodox understanding calls every Christian to combine faith with works of love, to implement what they believe toward anyone in any type of earthly need, in the name of Jesus Christ and for the glory of God. This is the Lord’s own command: to seek Him and to stand beside Him in the person of every indigent brother. This is the guiding logic behind the Church’s multifaceted social and charitable work.

That’s why we must not fall into the temptation of a lofty, detached view of faith that lacks care for others, nor into the temptation of solidarity without Christ. The proper path is the combination of faith and works of love: one that bears tangible results, and cultivates our souls, and moves us closer toward salvation. Amen.

Archimandrite E. Oik.

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July 13, 2025: 5th Sunday of Matthew

The Holy and God-bearing Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon (451 AD), the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel, Venerable Stephen of the Sabbaite († 794), Martyr Golindouch.

4th Tone – Eothinon: 5 – Epistle: Titus 3:8-15
– Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19

NEXT SUNDAY: July 20, 6th Sunday of Matthew
Epistle: James 5:10-20 – Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8

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ΜΙΚΡΟ ΕΙΣΟΔΙΚΟ ΣΤΑ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΜΑΣ
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In an era in which the Sacred Mysteries become, through attitudes of vainglory and vanity, mere social ceremonies, stripped of their liturgical and sacramental character, it is essential and important for us to know what is happening in the Church at every moment of worship and liturgical life. First we learn, then we love, and then we believe. For this reason, the Apostolic Ministry proceeded with the publication of this catechetical book, in which the sacred Mysteries, their ritual and liturgical symbols are briefly analyzed. The book is addressed to young people and families, more generally to the wide readership, who are so thirsty to learn the things of faith and liturgical life.

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