

Free Yourself from Hatred

While reflecting on the Epiphany today, which coincides with the celebration of Christmas for the Orthodox Churches, I felt the need to communicate with you, my friends, on some points that are essential to us Christians.

Christmas being the remembrance and the renewing of the Gift, the Gift from Heaven to humanity. Indeed, we welcomed the Emmanuel (God-with-us), the Gift of humanity to the newly born Marvelous Child: The Prince of Peace.

The Shepherds offering their humble gifts the Maggis also. The gift of the Creation to the Creator offering Him the Grotto for shelter, although He shelters all of humanity with his hand. The thing that is so refreshing, is that all those gifts are given and received with joy and simplicity. There seems to be no complicity, even no condescendance, but real mutual appreciation.

This is what means to love someone. It is to appreciate, to give and to take, in order to help growing, but never in order to possess.

It is exactly the deep meaning of the Baptism of the Lord. This time we are reminded of His appearance on the Jordan River after He appeared at the Manger in Bethlehem and in the Temple eight days later. Today it is in the waters of the Jordan river ... This year having year no rain in the Holy Land, if the Lord was to come and be Baptized, He might find no water to that goal. But He did it. He was baptized like all sinners who came to be cleansed from their sins... Our Christian Baptism is meant in addition to the remission of sins, to provide us with Eternal Life. But first we need to be forgiven, which means we need to repent and ask forgiveness. The Lord invites us to His divine banquet but never sorts us out. We have to prepare ourselves to become worthy of being in His company.

These weeks I am reading the New Testament, preparing a series of lectures on Isaiah in Christian traditions and scriptures. I am so impressed with the fact that the Lord never condemns, He lovingly invites to repentance and leaves the rest for us to do: The Samaritan woman, the wealthy young man, the fallen lady, Peter: you follow me. Even Judah: "Friend, is it with a kiss that you betray me"? I am amazed with the attitude of the Lord: He never tried or intended to destroy. He always called to repentance.

You know why? Because He was free, from hatred, from vengeance, from aggression. He wanted to win the other, never to lose him or her. Although He came from God and was returning to God, He never considered himself to be the Judge, but the Savior. Even while He was on the Cross, all he wanted is the conversion, never the condemnation of those who crucified Him.

He was free from hatred and could in no way contemplate or want to destroy his "enemies". He wanted to win them in to his company, to His kingdom. That is why Christmas and the Epiphany are much more than Buying gifts at the store or eating or even feeding the poor with charitable actions and donations, it is first and above every other thing the conversion to the Lord and the repentance from everything that does not go along together with this fellowship.

Our conversion does not always mean only to give up sin but also to forgive and to stop contemplating destruction and revenge. These last two vices cannot be from God. They are from the devil, even whenever humans contemplate doing them in the name or for the sake or in defense of God's interest. God is much more than a vengeful human being. He came to teach us what we did not know: Forgiveness, repentance, and acceptance of God's gifts and of each other's gifts.

It is the initiation to the discipleship to Christ that we are living these days of celebrations of the `Lord being God-With-Us: Emmanuel. I don't know if this fills you with joy, dear friends and brothers . It is deeply meaningful to me.

I hold you all in my prayers with all those who work for justice, love, cooperation between the Semite Blood brothers: Jews, Arab Christians, and Arab Muslims.

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