

There are two paths that lead to God: the hard and debilitating path with fierce assaults against evil, and the easy path of love. There are many who chose the hard path and 'shed blood in order to receive Spirit' until they attained great virtue. I find the shorter and safer route is the path of love.

That is, you can make a different kind of effort: to study and pray and have your aim to advance in the love of God and of the Church. Do not fight to expel darkness from the chamber of your soul. Open a tiny aperture for the light to enter, and the darkness will disappear. The same holds true for our passions and desires. Do not fight them, but transform them into strengths by showing disdain for evil.

Do not choose negative methods to correct yourselves. There is no need to fear the devil, hell or anything else. These things provoke a negative reaction... The object is to live, to study, to pray and to advance in love...

Saint Porphyrios



**2 October is the  
Second Sunday of Luke**

**Matins Gospel:** Luke 24:1-12

**Epistle:** 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

**Gospel:** Luke 6:31-36

**Resurrectional Apolytikion:**

Angelic powers were above Thy tomb, and they that guarded Thee became as dead. And Mary stood by the grave seeking Thine immaculate Body. Thou hast despoiled Hades and wast not tried thereby. Thou didst meet the Virgin and didst grant us life. O Thou Who didst arise from the dead, Lord, glory be to Thee.

**Seasonal Kontakion:**

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

***Readings and saints for this week:***

**Monday, 3 October:** Acts 17:16-34; Luke 6:24-30  
Dionysios the Areopagite; John the Chozebite of Caesaria

**Tuesday, 4 October:** Galatians 5:11-21; Luke 6:37-45  
Hierotheus, Bp. of Athens; Domnina the Martyr

**Wednesday, 5 October:** Galatians 6:2-10; Luke 6:46-49, 7:1  
Martyr Charitina; Methodia of Cimolus

**Thursday, 6 October:** 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; John 20:19-31  
Apostle Thomas; Martyr Erotidus

**Friday, 7 October:** Ephesians 1:7-17; Luke 7:31-35  
Martyrs Sergius & Bacchus; Hieromartyr Polychronus

**Saturday, 8 October:** 1 Corinthians 10:23-28; Luke 5:27-32  
Righteous Pelagia; Virgin Pelagia



# Evangelion

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## Love Your Enemies...

Today, on the Second Sunday of Luke, we hear Jesus' challenging words about loving our enemies. He starts by saying that we should treat others as we would wish to be treated. This so-called "Golden Rule" is found in various religions, and is really common sense if we wish to live together with other people in harmony. However, Jesus then goes further and tells us that we should also love our enemies and do good to them.

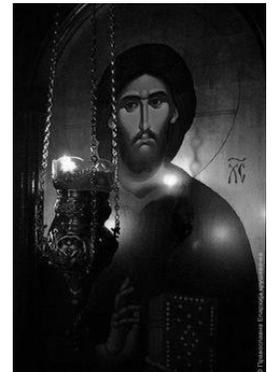
This text comes immediately after what are known as the Beatitudes (which we sing during the Liturgy on most Sundays), in which Jesus Christ really turns the world's values on their head. In contrast to our society that values the rich, the powerful, and the popular, He tells us that it is the poor and those who hunger who are blessed, and that we should consider ourselves fortunate when people hate us and exclude us. And, moreover, He advises us to respond to them with love and forgiveness.

These are harsh words that we can too easily try to rationalise away, for who can live up to them? The key is given when Jesus tells us to "be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate." Indeed, it is by looking at Christ Himself that we find the answer, for He is the ultimate example of the One who was rejected and betrayed, even to death, and yet He did not respond in kind. By loving His enemies and praying for those who persecuted Him, Jesus Christ opened up the possibility for us of a different way of responding. And it was in this way that He ultimately conquered death.

We cannot do this on our own, for it goes against the norms of our fallen world, which also sit deeply within us. But it is the path Jesus Christ calls us to, and by following Him we too can learn – gradually, and sometimes by falling and getting up again – what it means to lay down our lives for those around us. But we will only be able to do so by remaining close to Him and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts.

"What then?" it is said, "ought we not to resist the evil one?" Indeed we ought, but not in this way, but as He has commanded, by giving one's self up to suffer wrongfully; for thus will you prevail over him. For one fire is not quenched by another, but fire by water.

Saint John Chrysostom



# The Church: Witness in Dialogue

## The Message of the Holy and Great Council

The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church was held from 19 to 26 June at the Orthodox Academy of Crete. Having discussed various challenges facing the Church, the Council Fathers conclude by highlighting the importance of dialogue.

The Church manifests sensitivity towards those who have severed themselves from communion with her and is concerned for those who do not understand her voice. Conscious that she constitutes the living presence of Christ in the world, the Church translates the divine economy into concrete actions using all means at her disposal to give a trustworthy witness to the truth, in the precision of the apostolic faith. In this spirit of recognition of the need for witness and offering, *the Orthodox Church has always*



*attached great importance to dialogue*, and especially to that with non-Orthodox Christians. Through this dialogue, the rest of the Christian world is now more familiar with Orthodoxy and the authenticity of its tradition. It also knows that the Orthodox Church has never accepted theological minimalism or permitted its dogmatic tradition and evangelical ethos to be called into question. Inter-Christian dialogues have provided Orthodoxy with the opportunity to display her respect for the teaching of the Fathers and to bear a

trustworthy witness to the genuine tradition of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. The multilateral dialogues undertaken by the Orthodox Church have never signified, and do not signify, nor will they ever signify, any compromise in matters of faith. These dialogues are a witness to Orthodoxy, grounded on the Gospel message “come and see” (John 1.46), see, namely, that “God is love” (1 John 4.8).

In this spirit, the Orthodox Church throughout the world, being the revelation of the Kingdom of God in Christ, experiences the entire mystery of the divine Economy in her sacramental life, with the holy Eucharist at its center, in which she offers to us not nourishment that is perishable and corruptible, but the very life-streaming Body of the Lord, the “heavenly Bread” which “is a medicine of immortality, an antidote for not dying but living in God through Jesus Christ, and a purgative expelling evil” (Ignatius of Antioch). *The holy Eucharist constitutes the innermost core also of the conciliar functioning of the ecclesial body, as well as the authentic confirmation of the Orthodoxy of the faith of the Church*, as Saint Irenaeus of Lyon proclaims: “Our teaching is in accord with the Eucharist and the Eucharist confirms our teaching”.

Proclaiming the Gospel to all the world in accord with the Lord’s command and “preaching in His name repentance and remission of sins to all the nations” (Luke 22.47), we have the obligation to commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God and to love one another, confessing with one mind: “Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Trinity consubstantial and undivided.” Addressing these things in Council to the children throughout the world of our most holy Orthodox Church, as well as to the entire world, following the holy Fathers and the Conciliar decrees so as to preserve the faith received from our fathers and to “uphold good ways” in our daily life in the hope of the common resurrection, we glorify God in three hypostases with divine songs.

On Friday we commemorate the feast of **Saint Sergios and Saint Bacchus** and the name day of His Eminence Archbishop Sergios.

Saints Sergios and Bacchus were nobles at the court of the Emperor Maximian who greatly valued them. When the emperor heard that they did not participate in worshipping the idols, he summoned them into his presence and they confessed their faith in the One God. The emperor was furious, had them stripped, and paraded them around the streets in women’s clothes. When they were urged them to save themselves by denying Christ, they declared: ‘Both honour and dishonour, both life and death — all are one to him who seeks the heavenly Kingdom.’ They were then scourged and Saint Bacchus died as a result of the scourging. After this Saint Sergios was taken to Resapha in Syria, where he was tortured and beheaded by the sword. The date of his repose is given as either 296 or 303. Resapha was later renamed Sergiopolis in honour of Saint Sergios.



Many years to  
His Eminence  
Archbishop Sergios  
on his name day!

You may find yourself hampered by someone who sows tares of despondency. He tries to prevent you from climbing to such heights of holiness by discouraging you with various thoughts. For instance, he will tell you that it is impossible for you to be saved and to keep every single one of God’s commandments while you live in this world.

When this happens you should sit down in a solitary place by yourself, collect yourself, concentrate your thoughts and give good counsel to your soul, saying:

Why, my soul, are you dejected, and why do you trouble me? Put your hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; for my salvation lies not in my actions but in God (cf. Ps. 42:5). Who will be vindicated by actions done according to the law (cf. Gal 2:16)? No living person will be vindicated before God (cf. Ps. 143:2). Yet by virtue of my faith in God I hope that in His ineffable mercy He will give me salvation. Get behind me, Satan (cf. Matt. 16:23). I worship the Lord my God (cf. Matt. 4:10) and serve Him from my youth; for He is able to save me simply through His mercy. Go away from me. The God who created me in His image and likeness will reduce you to impotence.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian