



## ***Sunday before Nativity***

*“And he took a child and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.” Mark 9:33-41 Friday this week*

After the fall, the heart of man has been judging itself justifying its sins by sacrificing the innocence. God becomes man and the new heart of flesh is learning forgiveness so the innocence can prevail even when or specially when the innocence is hurt. Through incarnation, Christ is in our midst. Those who approach in trust his forgiveness become the church. The world that hates itself has a renewed heart: the church (Jeremiah 32:39) who knows that the Father is good. The church teaches the world the goodness of the Father because the church knows His tender mercy. The community of the saints is made of those who experienced within their heart the Father’s forgiveness as the path to the new life.

*“The Lord preserves the infants; I was brought low and He saved me.” (Ps 115: )*

The innocence that we sacrificed in ourselves when we justify our sins is found in the other as well. We would think that every child is received with love. If anything breaks your heart, that would be the innocence of the child. If man could love anything, that would be the purity of the infants. At times, Jesus tells us we must become like them to enter the kingdom. It makes sense, as we approach the cave, to encounter Christ in the manger. Children would know their language and play with each other. However, we see in the psalms that the innocence needs protection from the Father. They need it because they are at risk. We see that with Herod, he killed the children easily justifying his own sins. But it is not only Herod who does that, today it is terrifying to look humanity in its own eyes. How could religious and secular “fathers” send their sons to war, to kill each other and die? They justify their sins through their sacrifices. It is a sacrifice that is repugnant to the Father and it angers Him. It is the same in the “civilized” modern society, where the most innocent ones, the ones in the womb, are left with no protection. We know the pain of the parents from whom the world hides the forgiveness of the Father who is reaching out to them. At times the knowledge of comforting them is given to the church.

**“You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”** Genesis 3:4-5

The lie that the Father is not good and lies to us sneaked within the soul of man before the fall. It is precisely why he became disobedient to the Father. The falsehood of the serpent saying that God lied to us made us believe that the Father is not good. Jesus says that “only God alone is good” (Mark 10:18). The lie of the serpent changes the only Truth revealed to us through

creation from the very beginning: that God is good, and everything he created is good because it came out of His goodness. We sinned because we doubted the goodness of the Father. After the fall, every person in authority has been following this lie. In the psalms, the kings are those who live the lie and so they oppose the goodness they do not trust. They become the enemies because they rule out of a lie that made them commit the sin that leads to death. As it was throughout the history, so it is today.

Any position of authority that justifies its own sins puts the innocents at risk. The crisis of the fatherhood throughout the history comes out of the untruth of the serpent. The more this lie is believed, the more the heart of the “father” becomes hardened. We all have the experience of being children and we bear in us the imperfect love of the parents. We bring along more the imperfection that hurts our soul, than the honesty of the care, or the desire to love, as imperfect as it might be, as a crack that brings to us the truth that the Father is good.

Prokeimenon. Mode 4.

***Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers.***

***For you are just in all you have done.*** Daniel 3.26,27

This crisis of fatherhood has been hurting and still does the innocence of the infants who become adults believing the lie that the Father is not good. Today the church celebrates the fathers who knew and confessed that God is good. Their confession came out of an internal battle where they came close to sacrificing their own sons to demons. They heard the voice of the angel who spoke to Abraham, they heard it and took it to heart and believed.

***“Do not kill your son or hurt him in any way” (Genesis 22)***

It is through their radical choice of Truth and their faith in Him who created us all, that their children learned obedience to the goodness of God.

It is the obedience of His Son until the very end, though the cross, that brings us from corruption to incorruption. The obedience of his Son comes out of this knowledge that the Father is good and that He loves His Son and He loves the world.

Today we feel at times defeated by the lie of the serpent, that is repeated over and over through every media channel we listen to. It is the way that the world justifies its own sins and hate for itself. We see it on media, and we hear it at times at the mission too, like on Friday when a preacher from Dundas Square came to us to send everybody to hell based on this lie that there is no forgiveness with the Father. But as there is a crisis of fatherhood today who is lacking on the fundamental ontological truth, there are also witnesses of the fathers today that know the goodness of God. At times their tears and their pain are shown to us, their sorrowful heart that is pierced by the lie that hurts the sons and daughters that they love. The reality of this truth destroys the multitudes of lies and makes the hell created marginal in time. The community of the saints is called to partake in this sorrow in order to be comforted by the goodness of the Father because He is good and His mercy endures forever.

Community life – What is love? – fragments of interviews with people from the mission.

Question: Can we love and how do we love?

Answer: We do love each other; it takes a little longer. Some people don't see it. It doesn't matter if you are loved by anyone else. What counts is how much love you give to everyone. That's what matters. One person calls you a bad word or calls you a name – it's okay. They have struggles we don't know. But what makes you human and a good person is to stand up and be a good person. Don't only be good because someone's good to you, be good to a person who's not good to you. They say pray for him, but sometimes I have a hard time praying for someone I don't like. I practice it, but it's me as a person that makes a difference for other people to see. For ex, there's a person in my building that is in a wheelchair and everyday I would get a meal for me and a meal for him. We didn't like each other, we didn't want to talk, he was angry, he called me names. But still to this day, I got up and got him a meal from the Good Sheppard. Sometimes I would give him a cigarette. But it's up me to show him the right way. Bring him a meal, you don't need something from him. That's what makes you different, and if he can see that, he will see some good. That's how we change this world. We change it one person at a time.

Question: What is love?

To me it means a lot of things. The love of God to people, the way He created them, loves them because He created them. But then we also have other love outside of that kind of love. I may have love for my wife, and I also have love for other things for living. But that is not God's love. God's love is very specific. His love for human beings, whether they are small, big, poor, I live the way to please him. That's the "agape love".

How do we participate in that kind of love? How do we know it's real?



It's faith. Without faith, without belief it's very difficult. To please Him, or even to follow His disciples Thomas was one of His disciples and he said that it was impossible. So, it's all about faith. So now we feel it when we comply to the way feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit.

So, when you feel the presence of the Holy Spirit when you feel the love. This love from God. But you may not understand it. Some don't believe in that kind of love, that the Holy Spirit can exist. You are letting someone to love you...At some point I wanted to say I want to fast today. But when I can accomplish that, sometimes I feel that kind of Agape love.

Love is only one. The goodness that comes and that we experience among human beings is love. That is God's name, the love is the most appropriate.

## December 19 - 25

<b>Tuesday</b>	8:30 am 7:30pm	Morning Prayer Psalms Study – via Zoom	<b>Wednesday</b>	8:30 am 12:30 pm 4:00 pm 6:30 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Vespers/Dinner Bridges 8pm Compline
<b>Thursday</b>	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	<b>Friday</b> <b>Strict Fast</b>	7:00 am 12:30 pm 2pm	Royal Hours for Nativity Noon Hours Jesus Prayer
<b>Saturday</b>	9:00 am 8:30pm 9:30pm	Morning Prayer Orthros Divine Liturgy of St Basil	<b>Sunday</b>	7:00 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast for the Homeless ✠ Nativity of Christ

	<p><b>St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission</b> 155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9 T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmmission.org W: stjohnsmmission.org</p> <p><b>St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission</b> 193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3 T: 647-358-4105</p> <p>We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa</p>	
--	---	---

St. Silouan Chapel, December 18, 2022

4 of 4

©2022 St. John the Compassionate Mission

[www.stjohnsmmission.org](http://www.stjohnsmmission.org)