

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Luke 2006: Pro-Active Stewardship

A sermon by Rev. Fr. David G. Subu  
delivered on October 1, 2006

GOSPEL: Luke 6:31-36

The Lord said, <sup>31</sup>“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. <sup>32</sup>“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup>“And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup>“And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. <sup>35</sup>“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. <sup>36</sup>“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Christ is among us!

Joyous Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary!

How many of us would like to know that we fulfill the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ without fail? How many of us would like that but our conscience convicts us that we do not love our Lord as we should, because we do not love our neighbor as we have been called to. How many of us hear the words of today’s Gospel and convicted, “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup>“And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.” How often do we find that our love and generosity comes with invisible strings attached, with some expectation of return or mutual benefit? Today we are called to consider what it truly means to be a loving, giving person from the standard of Christ the Lord.

Indeed it is very easy to believe that we are generous loving people if we are accustomed to giving and helping those we already know and care for. Yet how do we react to the stranger? Do we screen our phone calls, and avoid those that might ask us for a charitable element? Do we pass by the panhandler so we don’t get hit up for what is basically “chump change?” Do we avoid whole neighborhoods in order to avoid seeing the effects of poverty, crime, misfortune?

Do we wait only until publicly cornered into an inescapable opportunity to begrudgingly do good for someone we don't know, don't even care for, and don't even trust? The Lord says in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:1), <sup>1</sup>“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.” Sometimes we may feel like the only charitable deeds we do are the ones seen by others because those are the times our shame before our peers moves us to finally react.

Yet a reactive Christian is not Christian at all. The Golden rule so simply laid out before us in the Gospel today is “just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” It is very easy to know and implement because we all know how we would like to be treated ourselves. If we don't think we know all we have to do is consider what irritates us and disappoints us in other people—and then ask ourselves what we'd rather have them do differently. When it comes to love and generosity we probably share a lot of the same standards. What we would like is to love and to be loved. That means not having to ask for kindness—not being the only one in a relationship to pick up the phone, to write a letter, to send a gift. That means not waiting until someone is publicly shamed into doing us a small favor, or having to use guilt to get what we want. That means receiving unexpected blessings from strangers. We all know what kinds of things make us feel special and loved, and how often those longings go unfulfilled.

A Christian must be pro-active. A Christian must not wait until asked to do good and show love but must make it their lifestyle to reach out and love their neighbor. It is not enough to stay sheltered in our own little worlds and castles, oblivious to the sufferings of those around us and those far off, those we think we love and those we think we hate until forced to face them. We must not hoard our love in any form, nor express it only when we have something to gain in

return. Our calling is much higher, for it is the calling of Christ. In the goodness of time He did not withhold His love from us but gave us all, even to the shedding of His own blood, even when we did not ask, even when we did not deserve. He opened unto the riches of everything He has, the limitless light of the Kingdom of Heaven itself. In a world that could no longer believe in love, He became Love Incarnate. Now we have been given the same gift and grace to incarnate love among each other and to the world.

Recently our country was saddened by yet another tragic attack on a high school in which a 16 year old girl named Emily Keyes was killed in this random act of violence. Yesterday was her funeral. The message that was given by her friends, teachers, and even her twin brother was to respond to this event with nothing but love. Those present were given ribbons bearing the words "Commit Random Acts of Kindness." If we want the world to be a better place, and to make sure that such tragedies do not become the defining events of our civilization, we must start with ourselves and live as Christ lives, being even "kind to the unthankful and evil." For this is not a suggestion but truly His command to us: "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."