

The Fifteen Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 22:35-46

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions. (KJV)

The Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious Cross
John 3:13-17

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (KJV)

Two Gospels readings are prescribed for today's Divine Liturgy. The reading from St. Matthew's Gospel describes the great commandment to love God completely with the heart, mind and soul and to love thy neighbor as thyself.

Jesus Christ wants the believer to whole-heartedly love God and neighbor. The Church reads this lesson of St. Matthew's Gospel every year. The believer's love for God and for neighbor are intended to increase with each reading.

Believers are expected to grow from the time of Holy Baptism until departure from this life. Holy Apostle Paul describes the continuous growth in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians.

St. Paul wrote these words on Christian growth: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor.3:18)

Personal change that results in complete love of God and neighbor requires giving up views and values that inhibit full love of God and full love of neighbor. The parish church is where this change is fostered and is to take place.

The Lord God is alive and present in parish churches. Christian love is learned and practiced in the parish church. Seeing the image, likeness and presence of Christ in each person is a permanent expectation in parish life.

Tears of repentance are often necessary before the tears of joy accompany new birth in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's death on the Cross was in advance of the joy realized in the Resurrection.

Parishes and individuals are expected to go through periods of growth until Christ's glorious Second Coming. World events and changes in life encourage, spur and necessitate parishes and individuals to change and grow.

Any changes in parishes and believers are to be consistent with the beliefs and teachings of God's Holy Church. Parishes are always to remain true to the founding consecration. Believers are to always remain true to their Holy Baptism.

The Gospel is to be preached to all peoples. (Mt. 28:19-20) Apostle Paul underwent a great change in his life when He experienced Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul went from being a persecutor of Christ to being a great apostle. (Acts 9:1-20)

If we are honest with ourselves, we are all persecutors of Christ. We sin in word, deed and thought. The great majority of us live lukewarm lives in Christ. Repentance and change are always timely and beneficial for believers.

Eternal life is possible for each person because Jesus experienced death on the Cross and rose from the Tomb. Believers repenting and completely believing in the Crucified and Resurrected Christ become new in Christ.

Both Gospels readings for today intend change and growth for attentive listeners. Attentive listeners seek to love God completely and to love each person in daily life.

Loving necessitates looking beyond the externals to see Christ in each person. Loving includes the sincere willingness to forgive others holding different views. Practicing love in daily life is the way to build and not destroy relationships.

Healing, repairing and restoring relationships comes through repentance, prayer and change of heart, mind and soul. The parish church is where the heart, mind and soul are nourished and educated in Christian growth and change.

Healing occurs in relationships founded in love and forgiveness. The Church is where to practice love and forgiveness at all times. The Church is known for love and forgiveness. Love and forgiveness are the message of Christ on the Cross.

Jesus went to the Cross out of love. (Jn.3:16) Jesus forgave the persecutors who put Him on the Cross. At the time of His crucifixion Jesus said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Lk/23:34)

Today the Church celebrates the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious Life-giving Cross. Now is the time for growth and change according to Jesus Christ. Today is the day for love and forgiveness to be alive in our personal lives.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Sunday before the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. September 12/25, 2022. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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