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Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos on Monastic and Married Way of Life

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We divide people into monks and married people, and life into monastic and married, with the result that we praise the monastic life, which we regard as better and more suited to keeping God's commandments, while we disparage married life as not suitable for the practice of God's will.

Indeed we know very well that the Church praises both ways of life, both the monastic life and the married life. But this does not mean that one is praised at the expense of the other. And at this point we must say that the interpretation of the Parable of the Talents applies, which we mentioned before.

It can be maintained that in the Church the people are not divided simply into unmarried and married, but into people who live in Christ and people who do not live in Christ. Thus on the one hand we have people who have the Holy Spirit and on the other hand people who do not have the Holy Spirit. Moreover, in the early Church, as it seems in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, all the Christians, unmarried and married, lived like monks, because even marriage has its asceticism.

Therefore, if some monk criticizes marriage in Christ, he shows that he has a problem with the monastic life, and if a married person criticizes and looks askance at the monastic life, it means that he has a problem with the way in which he is living his life. A good monk never criticizes what God praises and a good married person never criticizes anything that God praises, such as the monastic life. It is characteristic that the best homily about Virginity is said to have been composed by St. Gregory of Nyssa, who was married: and a man who was unmarried, St. Amphilochios of Ikonium, wrote excellent things about the married life. Moreover let us not forget that St. Paphnoutios defended marriage for the Clergy in the First Ecumenical Council.

In his homily St. Amphilochios of Ikonium shows that the Christian is a catholic man, in other words, whole. He praises virginity and marriage. In speaking about virginity he says of marriage: "The worthy marriage towers above every earthly gift, such as a tree in fruit. . . as a root of virginity, as a cultivator of the rational and living branches". Then he says: "Remove the worthy marriage and you do not find the flower of virginity". Moreover, the comparison is between two worthy things, because St. Amphilochios says: "Saying these things, we are not introducing a fight between virginity and marriage; we admire both as mutually indebted". To conclude, he says characteristically: "For without devout knowledge of divine things neither is virginity modest nor marriage worthy".

And the holy Chrysostom teaches many things about this subject. He says: "For our

married people have everything in common with the monks except marriage". All people should adapt themselves to Christ's commandments. Therefore the holy Father says characteristically: "If we are temperate neither marriage nor nourishment nor anything else will prevent us from being able to be well-pleasing to God". If marriage and raising children was going to hinder us on the path of virtue, the creator of all things would not have brought marriage into our life".

What Basil the Great says is also characteristic: "We people, monks and married, are all required to obey the Gospel."

Therefore we cannot justify our indolence by the particular way of life which we have chosen, nor can we criticize and dismiss another way of life which is not like our own. To be sure, there are degrees and spiritual ages.

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<http://easternorthodoxspirituality.blogspot.gr/2014/10/metropolitan-hierotheos-of-nafpaktos-on.html>