

## God's Mercy (Matth. 25, 31-46) (Metropolitan Ioïl (Frangkakos) of Edessa, Pella, and Almopia.)

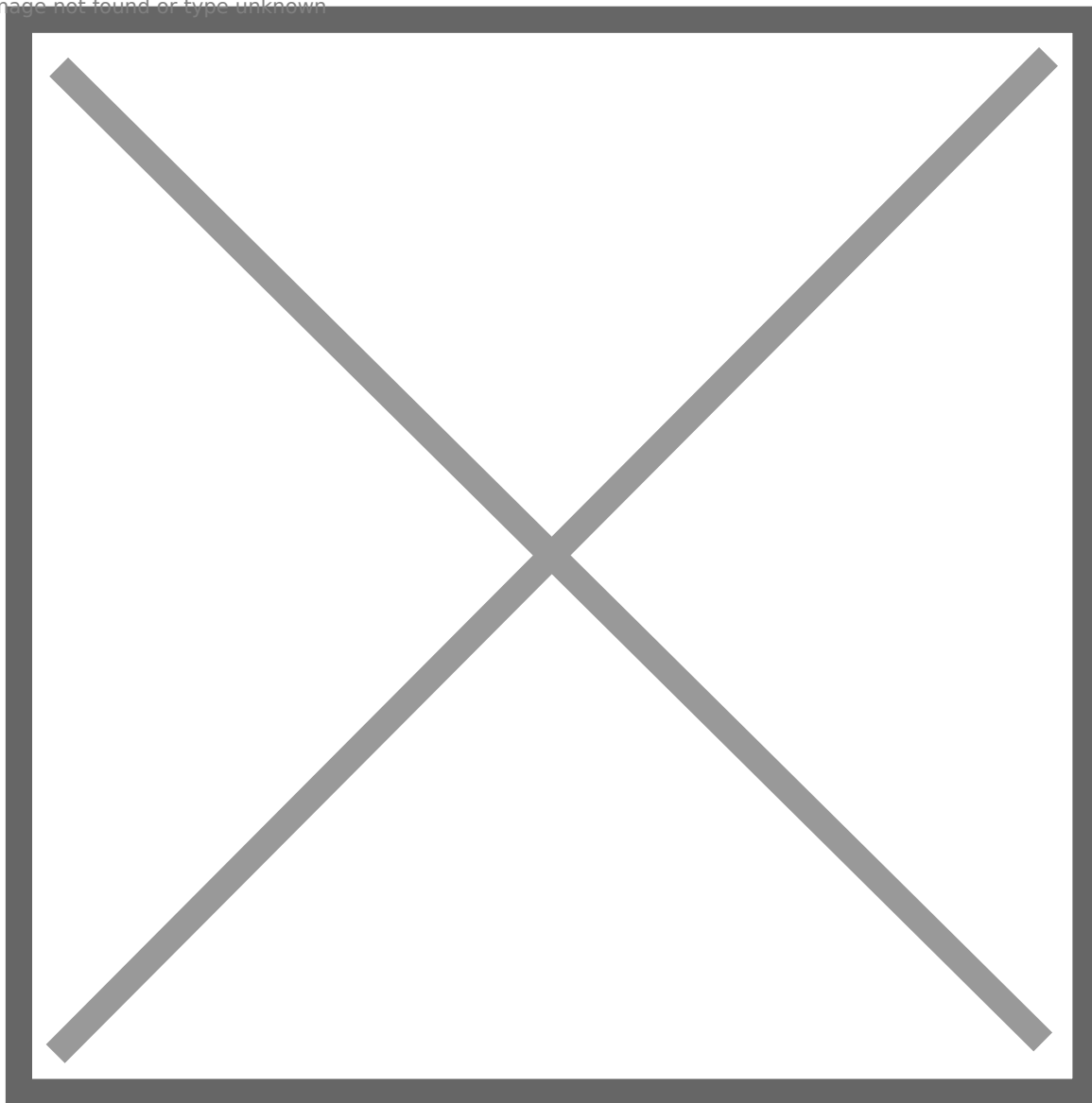
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***‘Since you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me’***

In the parables which the Lord used, He said the phrase ‘the kingdom of heaven is like this’, that is, He compared the kingdom of heaven to ten virgins, to a precious pearl, to a field, to a lost coin and so on. In today’s Gospel, however, He didn’t speak in a parable, but revealed a real state and also His true Self, when He said ‘when the Son of Man comes in His glory’, which means that the reading fully expresses the truth concerning our final judgement.

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### ***God's mercy and our charity***

One of God's properties is His mercy. His mercy pursues us all the time. And we people, who are made in His image, have many features in common with the Creator, particularly that of charity and doing good works for our neighbour, since this brings us closer to the Lord. Christ spent the whole of His life doing good to others and 'He healed them all' (Luke, 6, 19). He even gave Himself 'as a ransom for many' (Mark, 10, 45), as proof and fruit of His great love for us. Our impoverished kin, be they hungry, sick or destitute, are His brothers and sisters, since they've 'donned' Him, 'as regards the inner person', according to Saint Gregory the Theologian. They have the same baptism as us, they partake of the same joy, they're subject to the same laws of God, they take part in the same Eucharist and have the same hopes as we do. Saint John Chrysostom expresses this beautifully: 'for baptism makes them our brethren, as does sharing in the communion of the divine sacraments'. A charitable heart is what makes a person

an inheritor of the kingdom of God, much more than great gifts such as miracle-working, foresight, great wisdom of the mind and so on.

A great ascetic of the desert, Saint Isaac the Syrian, described what a charitable heart should be like, in other words, how we become generous. Such a heart should burn with love for the whole of creation. It should be concerned about people, about birds, about animals, even about the demons, if that's possible. If people have such a heart, their tears never stop flowing. They can't hear about any misfortune, or see any harm being done without being moved, without weeping. They pray with tears on behalf of their enemies and even on behalf of nature. All people and all things will be shown mercy by God. So we see how a single tear can give us the chance to make the kingdom of God our own.

### ***How is our love for God expressed?***

The late Bishop Dionysios of Kozani writes that ordinary events in our everyday lives are what will judge us. Not wisdom, not political authority and power, not material riches and money, not bodily vigour and beauty. These aren't the things that will be of any worth on the Day of Judgement. What will count will be ordinary events, as we see them in our daily lives. A plate of food, a financial boost to somebody, a show of sympathy for somebody who's going through a hard time, or just a simple visit to someone in pain. All of this happens on the quiet, without fanfares and publicity. Christians who believe and act on their faith avoid ostentation and those pompous events to which we've become accustomed these days. The only thing we'll take with us into the next life is charity, which will be our defence lawyer before God.

Today's Gospel reading is addressed to all of us who honour the icon of Jesus Christ but forget to honour His living image, which is other people. Saint Gregory the Theologian urges us to 'become rich not only in material goods, but also in godliness'. Let us become to every poor person we encounter what God is to all of us, so that we may find mercy.