



## **SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS OF THE 4TH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL JULY 17**

### **THE GOSPEL READING**

#### **Matthew 5:14-19**

[Righteousness: The Law Fulfilled]

*The Lord said to his disciples, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."*

### **THE SERMON**

While the Lord Jesus is teaching at the Temple in Jerusalem, He says, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). In the beginning, He said, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), as He gave a visible expression of His nature to all creation, for "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). The Lord told us that *He* is the light of the world. Now He tells us, "*you* are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

We are the light of the world, through His light planted within our hearts, and by



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the power of the Holy Spirit. When this happens, we fulfill the whole of the Law and the Prophets because we become channels of Christ's love to the world. He is the true light, and we, like a bright full moon reflecting the light of the sun, bring this light of Christ to the world. We become like prisms that receive the light of Christ and diffuse it into the whole of creation through acts of love, compassion, and mercy.

The Lord says, "whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). He also says, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the *first* and great commandment. And the second is also about love: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Our Lord did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to *fulfill* them. He refers to the commandment of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbor as ourselves. He is not referring to the Old Testament laws, such as the Sabbath and dietary laws. But to what the Law of Moses ultimately points to, love of God and neighbor.

We cannot truly love our neighbor if we do not love God, for God *is* love, and He is the source of true love. As Saint Maximus the Confessor says, "The one who loves God cannot but love everyone as themselves...."

Through Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit has been given to us, and the Spirit is the One who renews our hearts and enables us to love. In the same way, we cannot truly love God if we do not love our neighbor. The Apostle John says, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:20-21). Our love for our neighbor overflows as love for *all* of creation. Since creation belongs to God, it is His gift to us.

Our neighbor is *everyone* the Lord presents to us. Whoever we encounter is our neighbor, for that person is made in the image and likeness of God. Our neighbor is our relative, friend, teacher, and even a stranger in need.

We see that we can only truly love our neighbor if we love God. If we abide in our Lord Jesus Christ, who loves us and gives us His Holy Spirit, we become the light of the world just as He is the true Light. As He enlightens every person and the entire cosmos, we also participate in this grace. We become channels of His light through concrete actions of love towards our neighbor.

The love of God and the love of neighbor is our calling as Christians. These two inseparable aspects of love are the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. The entire Old Testament, while telling the story of creation and the Prophets, is ultimately about Jesus Christ. Likewise, the Law points to Him and is fulfilled by the Law of Love. The love of God and neighbor overflows to the love of creation manifested in concrete acts of love, ser-

vice, and mercy. Since the light of God enlightens the heart, mind, and soul and enables the hands to serve.

With the light of Christ as the source of our lives, we become light when our life is filled with love, compassion, and grace. Let us continually join ourselves to Christ in love, prayer, the Eucharistic life, and service to one another and all the world. The whole of the Divine Law is fulfilled by love towards God and love towards neighbor. We become the light of the world, for we reflect the light of His love to each other. To serve one another is to love God, and to love God is to shine the light of His love and grace on the world.