

“Serve Me”*

(St. Luke 17:8)

Beloved brethren and Fathers in Christ, radiant children of the Holy Orthodox Church, I wholeheartedly pray that the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of our God and Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always!

On the occasion of the beginning of the New Year of our Lord, we have seen fit to remind you of a great truth of our Holy Church, that it might this year be a subject for exploration in greater depth, meditation, *theoria*, and *praxis*, to the glory of our All-Holy Triune God.

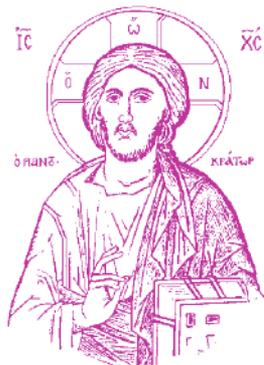
All Orthodox Christians constitute one body: the Body of Christ. We are members of the blessed Body of the God-Man: “*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (I Corinthians 12:27).

We have been vouchsafed to make up one Holy Family, to be the “*chosen generation,*” the “*royal priesthood,*” the “*holy nation,*” the “*peculiar people*” and the “*people of God*” (I St. Peter 2:9), indissolubly united and nourished in a unique manner by the Body and Blood of Christ our Savior, in order to become “*partakers of the Divine nature*” (II St. Peter 1:4).

God is the affectionate Father of this charismatic Body. The God-Man is the center of our unity, the head of the Body, the everlasting root, and our immovable foundation, on which we are “*rooted*” and “*built up*” (Colossians 2:7). The Holy Spirit is the soul, which gives life to, inspires, directs, and organizes this Body, such that we might all make up one harmonic whole, one Holy House, wherein reigns the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit!

We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12:5). But what are the consequences of this profound ecclesiological teaching of our Church?

Just as all of the members of one body do not perform the same function, but rather each member performs the service particular to it, so in like manner, within the blessed Body of Christ, we, the members, ought, with a humble spirit, to coöperate and serve the



entire Body all together.

May each member, in accordance with the spiritual gift and ability given to him by the Holy Spirit, serve the Body of Christ with fear of God and self-denial, being deeply conscious that he is a steward of the Grace of God: *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God”* (I St. Peter 4:10).

Our sanctification, our deification, and our salvation are attained communally, because we are not faceless unit-personalities. Loving our Savior and being united to Him, we simultaneously love our brother and *“grow”* and *“are built up”* all together in the Holy Spirit: *“And if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it”* (I Corinthians 12:26).

Do we, though, experience this great truth of the Church in our lives? Perhaps our personal and family cares absorb us to such an extent that we forget that we are members of Christ and the Church with lofty obligations? Perhaps this egocentric and worldly care impedes us from putting our gifts to use for the edification of the ecclesiastical Body? Perhaps we are bad stewards and do not submit ourselves to our Lord’s commandment: *“serve me”* (Luke 17:8)?

“Serve me”: continuously, unceasingly and permanently. We must not await repose in this life. One year follows another and one service follows another. We are servants of Christ and ought to devote all of our time to serving Him: our prayer, love, and work must have Christ as their center, have in view the edification of His Body, and be accomplished for the glory of His Name.

May the exhortation of the Apostle Paul be our watchword: *“not slothful in industry, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”* (Romans 12:11).

And may the God of peace richly bestow His Grace this year as again on the whole world, and may He ever guide man to the knowledge of God and repentance, through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady the *Theotokos* and of all of the Saints. Amen!

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