



■ Self-sacrificial Almsgiving

The Divine Blessing* “God Alone Works Miracles”

Our story takes place in Drama, Greece, during the dark years of the Nazi occupation. The winter of 1941 was extremely harsh.

One of my neighbors, Thanases (Athanasios) the cobbler, set off one bitterly cold morning to go to his little shop. It was after 8:30 a.m., when it was permitted to circulate.



He had a good habit: Before going to work, he would stop by the Church of St. Nicholas in the town square, light a candle, and venerate the Icons.

Arriving at the Church this particular morning, he saw a half-naked man sitting on the steps, shivering from the fierce cold.

“Help me,” he said. “I am freezing to death.”

Without a second thought, Thanases took off the old sheepskin he was wearing and wrapped it around the stranger.

“Thank you very much,” he said. May God’s blessing be on your larder!”

Thanases went into the Church and looked for a candle to light, but could not find any. After venerating the Icons, he exited the Church, making the sign of the Cross.

Before heading off to his shop, he looked around for the unfortunate man, but did not see him anywhere. What is more, the sheepskin was lying on the steps!

Bewildered, he looked right and left, and not seeing anyone, bent down, picked it up, and put





it back on his shoulders, since he was also trembling from the cold. **T**he sheepskin was now as warm as a steam bath, as he would later say.

* * *

No one entered his shop that day on account of the bitter cold. **A**t three o'clock, he pulled down the shutters and pensively set off for home.

“My God, what will we have to eat today? There are my three children, my wife, a sick granny, my mother-in-law, and so many others. And what about this sheepskin, which is keeping me so warm? And what became of the old man? Why did he get up and leave so suddenly?”

With these thoughts in mind, he returned home. **T**he house was warm and the table laid with dishes of fried dough.

“Where did that come from?” he asked in astonishment.

“Come and see!” his wife replied. **“Look in our little larder! When I went into it this morning, I found this large pot filled with cornmeal, and this bottle filled with oil. And not only that, but under the staircase there were two armloads of firewood—just enough to get us through this cold winter day. I wonder, how did all these things get here? Who brought them here, Thanases?”**



And this good Christian man replied:

“God alone works miracles, my wife. But don't say a word about it, or else we will lose the Divine blessing....”

* * *

And so there was no lack of flour, oil, salt, and firewood during those frightful days of the Occupation.

But not for long. **O**nly fourteen months. **B**ecause that was how long Thanases' hapless wife kept silent about the blessing from God. **A**s soon as she boasted to her neighbors that she was helping them from the goods that God sent to their larder, the Divine gift came to an end.

□

(*) Protospresbyter Stefanos K. Anagnostopoulos, *Spiritual Reflections on the Beatitudes [in Greek]* (Piraeus: 2009) pp. 246-248.