



■ **“They forgot to instill faith in Christ in their hearts”**

## **The Consequences of Heartlessness Towards One's Parents\***

**A man and wife** had four children: two girls and two boys. They raised them “for better or for worse,” in great poverty; they took care of their material needs and married them off.

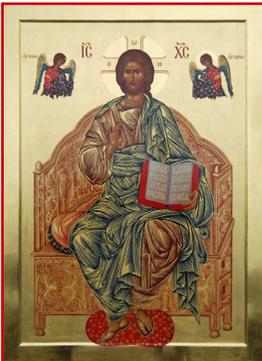
These unfortunate parents, however, forgot one thing in the upbringing of their children: **They forgot to instill faith in Christ in their hearts.**

He was absent from their house and from the education and breeding they gave their children; and thenceforth, to be sure, He would be absent from the four new families descended from them.

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**The years** went by and the parents grew old. Since they lived separately from their children, they invited their two sons (who lived closer) one day and told them that their wives would have to stop by every now and then to give them a helping hand.

The parents had not wanted to disturb them by their presence, which is why they had decided to live separately from their children in the first place.



**How** do you think their sons answered them? “Tell that to your daughters. Let them help you, not our wives!”

The parents did in fact tell their daughters, but their sons-in-law accepted the arrangement with a good deal of surliness.

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**Things** were rather uncomfortable for the elderly parents for a while.

Then, one day, their house caught on fire and

was reduced to ashes. It was only with great difficulty that the fire-fighters were able to save them. Now what? At whose house would the elderly couple live? At nobody's house! None of their children wanted to take them in.

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**They** stayed for two or three days at a neighbor's house so as to recover somewhat, which their daughters and daughters-in-law, sons and sons-in-law, and grandchildren took as an opportunity to vanish from the scene.

Then the old couple had to leave—since they were, after all, just guests there—and to go to their elder son.

“I will go,” said the elderly father to his wife, “while you wait in our Church courtyard, and then we will take things from there.”

It was noon, and the eldest son's family was eating when the father arrived. He pleaded with them. The son would not listen to a word of it. He had been influenced by his wife, and he called out to her:

“Go and get him out of here, before I break his ribs!”

The daughter-in-law put him out of the house, and the old man turned around to her and said:

“**May God punish you for that!**”

He cursed them, in other words. “May God punish you” may sound like a “polite” sort of curse, but a curse it is, nonetheless.



Well, there he went and said it, the blessed man! His daughter-in-law gave him a kick and a shove, and he went tumbling down the sixteen steps.

When they had lifted him up and brought him to the doctor, they discovered that he had broken his pelvis, with the result that he was paralyzed and had to stay six months in the hospital.

The mother, now alone, then went to her daughters to ask for their help. They swore at her and wanted nothing to do with her, because the poor woman had begun to suffer from urinary incontinence and could not help herself. They sent her away so that she would not *soil* their houses!

Finally, their younger son put her in the “laundry room.” (At that time, there were laundry rooms on the roofs of houses instead of washing machines.) Six months later, the paralyzed father was released from the hospital, and he was also crammed into the laundry room.

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**One** night, during a terrific thunderstorm, lightning hit this laundry room, and not only burned it down, but also killed the paralyzed father.

**N**ot long thereafter, the unfortunate mother went through a great deal of suffering. Her daughter-in-law drove her out of the burned laundry room. What was she to do now? She went and sought refuge under a bridge.

Eleven days later, she was found dead, and clutched in her frozen hands was a piece of paper with the words:

**It is my fault that my children turned out the way they did. If I had brought them up in Christ's embrace, then surely even their wives and husbands would have become better people.**

**I confessed to a very wise Priest that passed by here, and that is what he told me. He brought me Holy Communion here, under the bridge, and I communed. He also told me that he would come back to take me and find me a place to live, and that he would do everything he could to help me. But I know that it will be too late.**

**My children, I leave you with my blessing. May you also become grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, bearing Christ inside you. May you never meet with anything that we ourselves experienced. May God always keep you well. Your mother.**

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**A year** after her death, the daughter-in-law who had given the shove to her father-in-law fell down the same stairs and wounded her arm. It quickly became infected, and in the end had to be amputated. The other daughter-in-law developed a lump in her head, which led her two years later to a mental hospital. At the third house, within seven months, the four small children died. And in the fourth house, there was squabbling and divorce.



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**Ten** years after the tragic death of the mother, not one person remained of any of these families. Person by person, the families were wiped out in a way decreed by Divine Justice, since none of them showed any inclination towards repentance or any sense of shame regarding their heartless behavior towards their elderly and infirm parents!

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(\*) Protosybyter Stephen K. Anagnosopoulos, *Steps in the Christian Journey* [in Greek] (Piraeus: 2011), p. 290.