



■ † Fifteenth Sunday of St. Matthew

Love, the “New Man,” and Voluntary Sacrifice*

The Lord gave us the commandment to love God and our neighbor, and immediately added the teaching about His Sonship to God and His Divinity.

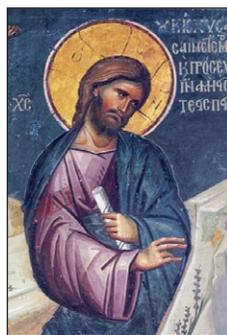
Why so? Because true love for God and our neighbor is accomplished solely by faith in the Divinity of Christ the Savior—that He is the incarnate Son of God.

Such faith arouses love for God; for how can one not love God, Who has loved us so much, Who did not even spare His Only-Begotten Son, but surrendered Him up to death for us?

Faith brings this love to complete fulfillment, or to what it seeks; and that which love seeks is a living union. To attain this union, one must overcome a feeling of God’s righteousness, which punishes sin; otherwise it is terrifying to approach God.

This feeling is overcome through the conviction that God’s righteousness is propitiated by the death on the Cross of the Son of God (cf. I St. John 2:2, 10; Hebrews 2:17). Such a conviction comes through faith.

Consequently, faith opens the path of love toward God. This is the first thing. Second, faith in the Divinity of the Son of God, Who was incarnate, suffered, and was buried for our sake, gives an example of love for one’s neighbor; for love is



when one lays down his soul for his beloved. It is also faith that gives us the strength to show such love.

In order to acquire such love, one must become a “new man,” selfless instead of selfish.

Only in Christ does a person become a new creature; and we can only be in Christ if we unite with Him by faith and Grace-filled regeneration, through the Holy Mysteries received with faith.



(*) St. Theophan the Recluse, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year According to the Daily Church Readings from the Word of God*.