

“Be Patient Just as Your Father in Heaven is Patient”

Fr. Hector Firoglanis – Sunday, September 6, 2020

The title for today’s sermon is “*Be Patient, Just as Your Father in Heaven is Patient.*”

We learn about the astonishing patience of God in today’s Gospel reading. This is the patience we see in the life of Christ, the lives of our Saints, and it is the same patience we are all called to cultivate in our own lives. For it is this great patience which we all need to persevere through the challenges of life, to resolve our many problems, and to save our souls.

* * *

In today’s Gospel reading, God the Father is the landowner who planted a vineyard. The hired vinedressers or farmers are the religious leaders entrusted with the care of God’s people. The landowner’s servants are the prophets and messengers, sent by God to proclaim His word. For instead of tending the vineyard, the farmers had devoured it and murdered God’s messengers.

With astonishing patience, the landowner (God) continued to send servants to reason with the hostile farmers (religious leaders), to no avail. Finally, the landowner sent His son to the farmers, thinking they would respect His Son, but they seized Him and killed Him as well.

The patience displayed by God the Father towards the wicked farmers, is the patience we are called to have towards others and in the midst of our daily struggles in life. This is the same patience we see in our Lord Jesus Christ and the many Saints we love and honor.

Yesterday our Church celebrated the feast day of Saints Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of St. John the Baptist. And on Wednesday, September 9 (the day after the feast day of the Nativity of the Theotokos), we celebrate the feast day of Saints Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Virgin Mary.

These are four incredible saints who were distinguished by their God-like patience. Joachim and Anna lived together in marriage for 50 years, and yet they remained childless.

Although they lived devoutly and quietly in faithfulness to God, they were considered by others to be cursed by God because of their childlessness.

In like manner, St. Elizabeth, who was the daughter of Anna's sister, Sophia, married the priest Zacharias, and they also endured decades of ridicule in their childlessness, despite their faithful and model way of life.

* * *

Of course, patience is a virtue we could all use more of during these challenging and unique time in our lives.

- We have had to exercise patience with all the restrictions and mandates being imposed on our churches, schools, and places of work during the coronavirus pandemic.
- We have had to exercise patience during an election year that is shaping up to be the most polarizing we have experienced during our lifetime.
- We all have to exercise more patience than usual as we adapt to a life that is more isolated, more economically challenging, and more stressful than normal.

We all have trials and tribulations, without exception. On our part, we must pray that God will provide us with patience so that we will endure everything that comes our way – not with grumbling, but with praise and gratitude... just as the Saints did in their life.

* * *

Joachim and Anna were ridiculed and berated for being childless, but God heard their prayer after 50 years of marriage. They were given only one child – but what a child she was! And they were given only one grandchild – but what a grandchild He was!

God also heard the prayer of Zacharias and Elizabeth, who gave birth to John while they were both old. Now even after birth, Elizabeth was forced to flee into the wilderness to save her precious son from the soldiers of Herod who were sent out to kill every male child two years of age and under.

When the mother and child escaped, Herod ordered that Zacharias be killed before the altar where he served as high priest.

Elizabeth died in the wilderness, and John from a young age lived in a cave and was cared for by the providence of God.

All the Saints grew in virtue as they persevered through unimaginable hardships with faith in God, and patience.

Christ has not revealed to us another way to salvation other than patience. He taught us so with His life and His teachings:

- ***“He who endures to the end will be saved”*** (Matt. 10:22).
- ***“By your patience you will possess [and save] your souls”*** (Luke 21:19).

* * *

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we must embrace patience – just as our Father in Heaven is patient – to make sure we are on the sure path of virtue, holiness, and salvation. Don’t be alarmed when we go through trials. God is pleased when we go through our trials of life with patience – and without grumbling and complaining.

St. Paisios teaches that we must go through the spiritual winter to experience the spiritual spring, so that the spiritual parasites of our soul might be killed off.

When a spiritual child confessed to Elder Paisios that she was not making spiritual progress in her life and that she was worried, the Elder shared the following story:

Once upon a time a man had planted a grapevine and, even though the roots had not fully matured, he was expecting it to produce grapes so that he could make plenty of wine, so that he could drink it, celebrate, and make merry....

However, you cannot plant the grapevine today and expect to drink wine tomorrow. In a year’s time, you’ll be able to eat a few clusters of grapes. In two years, you may eat a basketful of grapes, and in five years, you will also drink wine.

Likewise, if you want to enjoy spiritual fruit, you must struggle and be patient.

* * *

Therefore, let us be patient, like our Father in Heaven is patient.

Like Saints Joachim and Anna and like Saints Zacharias and Elizabeth, let us be patient when the circumstances of life go against our wishes, so that we can overcome our trials, purify our souls, and allow God to bless our faithfulness.

Let us be patient with our fellow man, as God is patient with us. The person we may feel is the biggest troublemaker in our lives was most likely sent to us by God to teach us the divine virtue of patience.

As St. Paisios says: **“The Good God has arranged everything very wisely for our salvation and He helps us like a Good Father; all it takes from us is a little bit of patience.”** Amen.