

«ONE THING IS NEEDFUL» (protopresbyter Konstantinos Stratigopoulos)

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Recorded speech of protopresbyter Konstantinos Stratigopoulos, on the verse of Luke's Evangel, Chapter 10, 38-42 and Chapter 11, 27-28, in context of the interpretation of the evangelical text during of Sunday's Divine Liturgy on November 21st 2004.

Celebrating today the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, somebody could ask what is the meaning of this event to us, beyond its historical record, especially if it is considered that this fact is not described in the Holy Bible, but it comes from the tradition of our Ecclesiastical calendars (Synaxarion), as it happens with the event of the Birth or the Dormition of the Theotokos.

These great events, that are true, our Church comes and presents them. And I ask «Is it just a historical repetition of facts? Is it a remembrance?»

To find the answer via the liturgical and interpretative ethos of our Church, we can examine at Evangelist Luke's Gospel. As you know, it is always read during each feast of Theotokos. Either during Paraklesis or during feast days of the Theotokos, the same passage is read, which is irrelevant to the Birth, the Entrance into the temple, the Dormition or even the Paraklesis of the Theotokos.

This passage though is meaningful and I will stand to a central point of it. There are many points that can be analysed, but I will insist on its central and axial point, which can help us to this quest as we get benefited deeply and literally healed living in the Church.

I will reference this central phrase, which while is understood it is also really challenging and because it is challenging, it becomes incomprehensible. It is the phrase Jesus saying to Martha «One thing is needful». There can be many approaches to explain this phrase and someone can be provoked by the text and ask what does this «one» mean?

Man is a being that engages in many activities. This is how God created him. He walks, runs, sleeps, multitasks, sees, hears, thinks, simultaneously.

What does «one thing is needful» mean? Are humans able to quit everything and do just one thing? Can someone choose only one task out of these? Can anybody put all the weight on one wheel of a car or concentrate on only one mechanism of an engine?

What does «one thing is needful» mean? Many have interpreted it and said «You quit everything and you do only this», but whoever enters in the hermeneutic beauty of the text, will discover something amazing that answers our question.

Pay attention by looking into the microcosm, us, who are creatures having a lot of structures and functions and our society, which is manifold too. The phrase «one thing is needful» doesn't mean «one» as a number. **It means the event that will unite everything into «one»**[1]. «One» does not always mean a number. It is unique, but there is something second and third... -I would say- If the second and the third didn't exist, what would be the meaning of the «one»?

The hermeneutical approaches say that the phrase «one thing is needful» this is a challenge of unity. Can I now apply this element of unity of the «one» to myself or to social data?

I shall begin with the social data. You see, we all live with any way we want, this is

the freedom that defines and qualifies us, and since we are all free and could end up living demonically detached. If these various expressions of our lives -which aren't evil- someone does not link them to a common target, our whole life will be a demonic, divided social life. What unites us together? Jesus Christ and the Church. Turning to Him, we acquire a common, uniform, unification target without quitting the individual structures of our existence -as we live in our neighborhood, our city, our state- because we have a common unification reference, we become «One» without being one as a number and we are One.

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If I perform this to myself -which self is multipartite with mind, heart, soul, thought, affect- many words the Holy Fathers use for the human existence. -I will perform the same thing and say . All these multivarious elements, even the multivarious thoughts that I do every day - millions of thoughts come across my mind, millions of moves, my whole body moves- all of these function may in their own way, but they acquire that unification element of «One». All are gathered and concentrated on the element of «One». To God and to Jesus Christ. Beyond this, it isn't a theoretical looking to Christ, but a practical transformation in Christ and as Christ of man, while living a life according to Christ, which unifies everything, you unite yourself and everything. A Saint's presence, who is a christinised, a transformed in Christ and as Christ human presence on earth, unites the world around him even when he becomes a martyr. Jesus Christ's presence in our lives unites everything and goes beyond any of our divisions.

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Because our Holy Mother turned in that direction and united everything to Him, this evangelical passage is always read during her feasts and is deeply challenging. In two levels -you could find more- of our microcosm and the general social macrocosm, this could be performed . It isn't only a suggestion, but a deep eruptive solution to our daily divisions in our society and furthermore of our personal ones, where everyone does various things, which are divided, segmental and they can't be united to «One», to the unity of «One».

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I dare to say, finishing this brief reference to this deeply healing and eloquent passage, precisely to receive this unitive loving dimension that the Gospel presents in front of our eyes and applying it, not only to overcome morally some differences that we have with others. Christinised as transformed as Christ means uniting everything in our life, to unite everything around us through Jesus Christ, under the intercession of our Holy Mother.

Reference

[1]. «ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν», «that they may be one», John 17, 11.

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