

Virtues of the Priest and Bishop

In today's Epistle (1 Timothy 4: 9–15) Paul addresses his disciple Timothy after making him a bishop or overseer in Asia Minor. After telling him that God is the savior of all people, he asks him to teach that to the faithful. The first job of the priest or bishop is to teach. Therefore, he must know the dogma which is the substance of the Holy Book and its interpretation; he must also know what our fathers said about the bible while interpreting it knowing that they based their interpretation on the statements of the Councils.

It is required from the priest then to go deep down our tradition, at least in the main issues if he wasn't able to know everything. We add to these main issues the history of the Church, the Divine services and knowing the most famous Saints. How could a person teach if he doesn't know anything or if he knows just a little? Therefore I will not respond to the request of those that want me to let a person with little knowledge into priesthood just because he is pious. We all invited to piety.

However, education is not enough. The apostle assures that the clergyman must be a model in speaking, in pure speaking that carries no anger, tension, prejudice, bias or gossip. Then he continues: in behavior, and here comes an endless list of virtues containing chastity in the love for money which is something the priest is exposed to while performing the divine sacraments. Here, the believer differentiates between a clergyman that desires money in a sick way and a clergyman that is satisfied with what he is given and that doesn't object on any amount and if he wasn't given anything, he doesn't nag and ask. And if the priest felt any deficiency, he complains to his bishop so that he wouldn't owe favors to anyone.

After that, Saint Paul the apostle highlights three qualities that seem the most important for him: Love, faith and purity. Love is the peak because "God is love" as the Evangelical John says in his first catholic epistle. He must love all the sons of his parish. He must love those that love him and those that have a reticence or complaints towards him. He must go to those and confront them to understand what they have towards him; he must accept their remarks if they were right and be patient towards them if they remained on their enmity and distance from him, and must strengthen his service to them in order to gain them for Christ.

And finally, he mentions purity. This virtue means purity in money and also in behavior with the women of the parish through staying away from joking with men and women and in general avoiding being funny.

After that, the apostle asks his disciple to devote himself to reading. In the times of Paul, they read the Old Testament because the New Testament wasn't written yet. But today, the commandment to read means reading all the Holy Book

and different spiritual books including, of course, the available old and new theological books for the priest and bishop in the languages he knows. He can also read what he can from different cultural books, and for me, he must also read newspapers in order to know the conditions of the country and the world to know the pains of people and their worries in this world.

Then, Paul urges his disciple to preach and teach. As for preaching, the Holy Canons makes it obligatory in every service especially in the Divine Liturgy. And in case the priest couldn't master the methods of giving speeches, and didn't have enough knowledge of our teachings, and hears the faithful complaining about his preaching and was convinced with their arguments, he must then not preach or just say a few simple instructive words without taking much time because our Liturgy has no place for a long sermon.

And what Paul calls "teaching" is a different thing than preaching. It is the organized teaching for children and adults, and we must not neglect the adults. This happens through Bible study evenings or in Christian education classes in schools or in lectures. And not every clergyman is qualified to do this.

Finally, Paul asks Timothy not to neglect the gift that he got in ordination but to develop all his powers because we learn everyday and we try to gain virtues also everyday so that our development becomes obvious to the faithful and they glorify God in us.

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