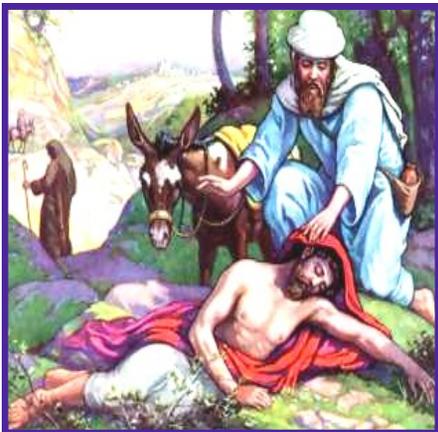


love He declares: *On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets...*



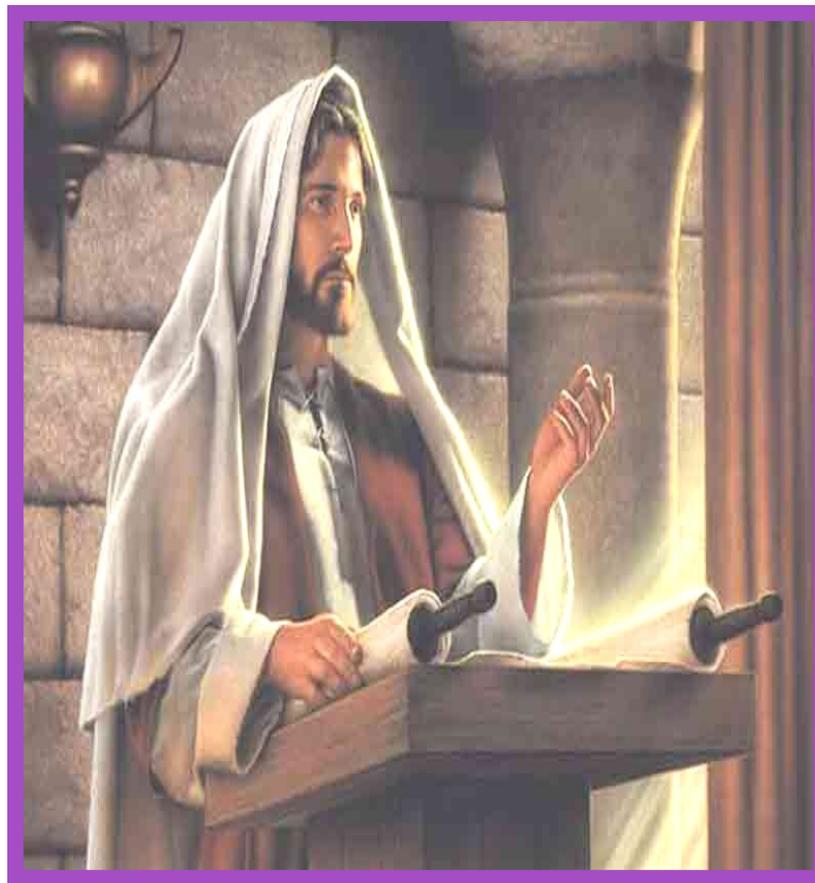
Charity is the fulfillment of the Law; charity is certain salvation. It dwelt in the heart of Abel, ruled Noah, clothed the patriarchs as with a garment, made David a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and sustained Job... Charity has changed men into angels. It has taught us how to enter in by the narrow

way... Do not understand it in an earthly bodily sense... but of love that is blameless and free of every fault, unstained, incomparable. This charity contains within it all things, and is contained in every good works as our Lord taught saying: *that a man lay down his life for his friend*. For the Lord Himself has both taught and done this... *For God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son for us* (Jn. iii. 16)...



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**SERMON ON
CHARITY AND FORGIVENESS
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH
164 - 2**



JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Based on the Divine Office-Douay-Rheims Version

Volume 2 - Page 1572 (1962 edition)

Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 5: 20-24

by: Saint Ephraim, Confessor and Doctor

Well did the Lord say that *My burden is light*. What burden is it, what labor to forgive a brother his offenses against us? It is light indeed, it is nothing, that we should of our own will pardon and forget, and be ourselves immediately held as just... This He commands us to do, saying to us: Let you forgive your brother his faults against you and I shall forgive you yours against Me... I both grant you forgiveness and at the same time give you healing of soul, and a kingdom... Accept your gift, as soon as you become reconciled to your enemy, when you cherish no hatred against anyone, when the sun has not gone down upon your wrath, when there is peace and charity in you towards all men, then your prayer is heard, your offering is pleasing and acceptable to God, your house is blessed and you are blessed.

If you will not be reconciled to your brother, how can you seek forgiveness and pardon from Me? I Who am your Lord, command you and you do not listen to Me; you who are a servant, how can you dare to come and offer prayer to Me, to offer sacrifices and first-fruits, while you are cherishing enmity in your heart against another? Just as you turn away your face from your brother, so shall I turn away My eyes from your prayers and from your offerings.

God is love. Since what is done without love is not pleasing to God, how then shall God receive the prayers, the offerings, the first-fruits, or the good works of a murderer, unless he repents, as he should?

As John the Divine said: *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer* (I Jn. iii. 15). It remains that we are to hold nothing above charity; that nothing whatsoever is to be preferred before the possession of charity; let us forgive everything that has been done against us: it is *charity which covereth a multitude of sins* (I Pet. iv. 8).

What does it profit us to possess all things and to be without this life-giving and saving charity?... How many good things and of what joy are we deprived when we are without charity? Judas scorned it and left the company of the Apostles. Abandoning the True Light, His own Master, hating his brethren, he walked out into the darkness. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, says: *Judas hath by transgression fallen, that he might go to his own place* (Acts i. 25)...

If someone says: Even though I do not love my neighbor, I do love God, John the Divine says: *If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not* (I Jn. iv. 20)? He who loves his neighbor and is at enmity with no one, if he fulfills the words of the Apostle, *Let not the sun go down upon your anger*, he truly loves God and is a disciple of Christ: Who has said: *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another* (Jn. xiii. 35).

It is very clear that in no other way are you seen to be disciples of Christ except by the practice of true charity... For as John tells us: *And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God love also his brother* (I Jn. iv. 21); and to show us the power of this