

Defending the Faith



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October 2018

The Loss of Innocence

I clearly remember a time in my young life losing my innocence, at least, that's what I call it. I always wanted to please people, so I made an effort to always be kind, compassionate, and forgiving. I paid close attention to those who seemed to need a friend, and I tried to become a friend to them. I got along with everyone, especially because I do not like conflict. I avoided confrontation at all costs. I loved helping others. I became a great listener because most people just need someone to listen to them and empathize with them. They do not really want advice. Occasionally, some would ask for advice, and I would do my best with the limited experience I had at that point. Many considered me a sort of psychologist for them. I always tried to be encouraging and to point out valuable qualities in them that I admired.

As I grew into adulthood, I realized that no matter how kind you are to some people, they are not always kind in return. This was a great disappointment to me because I believed that if you were kind to someone, they would naturally wish to be kind in return. The joy of being kind to others disappeared. I remember consciously coming to the conclusion that being kind to someone was, sometimes, not worth it. The experience of betrayal and rejection caused more pain than I was willing to accept at the time. In addition, I began believing that it was because I somehow had less value. I wondered if it was my fault. Consequently, I became more reserved and more introverted.

Now, many, many years later, with more God in my life, I learned something different. I learned about God's kind of love, what the Bible calls "charity" or "agape." This kind of love is completely unselfish and is not affected by what treatment we receive from others. It is given unconditionally, expecting nothing in return. Therefore, if I lend a friend \$5,000, I offer it not expecting to be paid back in return. This is rather unusual, since allowing someone to borrow money generally means that he/she is expected to pay it back. Charity results in greater rewards than ordinary kindness. Rather than being proud of ourselves for performing acts of kindness, charity is offered as a sacrifice. That \$5,000 really hurt my pocketbook. I couldn't really afford it, so I must make due with less for a while. However, I do not mind it because I want to make this sacrifice to help a friend and to glorify God. I am fully aware that it is God who wants me to give the loan and so in loving God, I obey. He will be glorified in this act of charity "*because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*" (Romans 5:5). That means that I will experience God's love in my heart, and the Holy Spirit will work on my friend's heart, as well.

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The Loss of Innocence (cont'd)

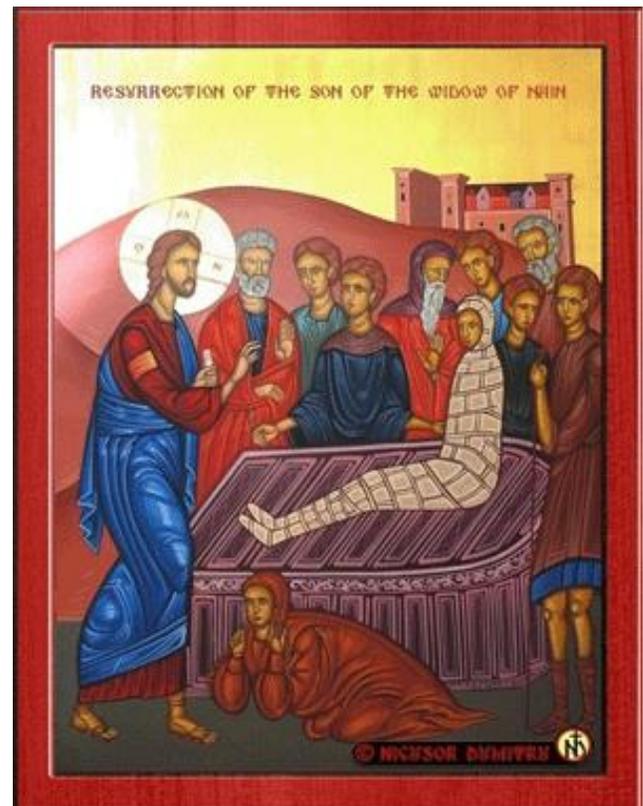
What happens when I offer love that involves a sacrifice? The Holy Spirit awakens in us. He fills with an inexpressible joy. The greater the sacrifice involved in an act of charity, the greater elation we experience. It seems that the Holy Spirit replaces the pain of sacrifice with an equal degree of happiness. When I experienced the greatest sacrifice in giving, I also experienced a supernatural kind of ecstasy, which can only be attributed to the Holy Spirit. I now understand what Christ meant when He said, *"If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that?"* (Matthew 5:46).

Helen Kamenos
Readers' Favorite Author

The Other Lazarus

Lazarus was not the only man Christ had brought back from death. In Luke's account (7:11-16), Jesus raises another man from the dead on his way to be buried:

At that time, Jesus went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"



Christ had greater compassion on this widow because with the death of her only son, she would be alone. There would be no husband or children to take care of her. But, in addition, we cannot overlook that this was her only son, just as Christ is God's only begotten Son. He could relate to her feelings *and* this act of raising the young man from the dead was prophetic of His own resurrection.

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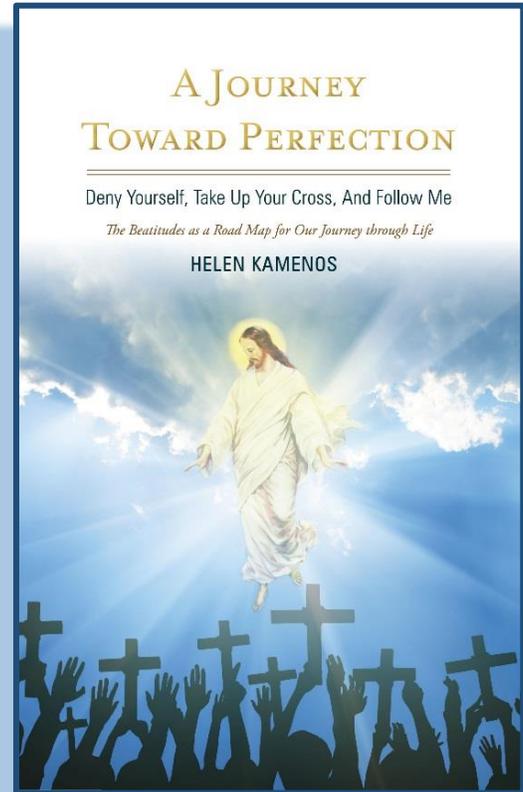
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A Journey Toward Perfection

The Beatitudes from Matthew 5:

- ³ *Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- ⁴ *Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.*
- ⁵ *Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.*
- ⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.*
- ⁷ *Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.*
- ⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.*
- ⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.*
- ¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- ¹¹ *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and
say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*
- ¹² *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward
in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were
before you.*



A *Journey Toward Perfection* reveals a path toward developing an intimate experiential relationship with God. It is an in-depth study of the attributes of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. These are the attributes God bestowed upon us when He created us in His image. God created us to love. These are the traits necessary to love others as God loves us. These characteristics are central to our Christian spiritual growth. Discover how these attributes can sustain you through the many trials and tribulations of your life. Comprehend how love truly conquers all. Experience God's true presence in your life.

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