

2024 NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS BIENNIAL CONVENTION

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REFLECTION

July 3

Psalm 133

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious oil upon the head,

Running down on the beard,

The beard of Aaron,

Running down on the edge of his garments.

3 It is like the dew of Hermon,

Descending upon the mountains of Zion;

For there the Lord commanded the blessing—

Life forevermore.

ON UNITY

Psalm 133 beautifully captures the essence of unity and communal harmony, portraying it as both a blessing and a source of divine grace. The imagery used in this psalm is rich and evocative, comparing unity to the anointing oil that flows down Aaron's beard and

to the refreshing dew on Mount Hermon. These metaphors highlight the sanctity and life-giving nature of unity among believers.

In the Orthodox tradition, unity is not merely a social or moral virtue but a reflection of the divine order. The anointing oil signifies consecration and the Holy Spirit, indicating that true unity is a gift from God, an anointing that brings sanctification and blessing. Similarly, the dew of Hermon represents the life-giving grace of God that nurtures and sustains the community of believers.

Saint Basil the Great, speaks to the importance of unity within the Christian community:

"For the Spirit of peace is the spirit of Christ, and as many as are at peace with one another, the same are in possession of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, which they that are not at peace cannot have."

A contemporary reflection from **Mother Maria of Paris** (Saint Maria Skobtsova), a 20th century Orthodox Saint known for her writings and actions during the Nazi occupation of France, further illuminates this concept:

"There is no new and old, no antiquated and modern. There is a unique path of love and will always be, both in eternity and here on earth. Our love should be made manifest in our unity with each other, reflecting the divine unity in the Holy Trinity."

This psalm invites us to recognize the divine command for unity and the blessings that flow from living in love with one another. The Orthodox understanding of unity goes beyond mere agreement or absence of conflict; it is about living in communion, reflecting the unity and the love of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is in this unity that we experience the fullness of God's blessings, symbolized by life forevermore. As we strive to live in love and peace, we participate in the divine nature

and reflect the unity and divine love of the Holy Trinity, thereby receiving the fullness of God's blessings in our lives.