

Feb. 23, 2020

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Reflection on LOH readings Ecclesiastes 1: 1-18 and From the Chapters On Charity by St. Maximus the Confessor, abbot

Both readings investigate what is of true value by learned men. Qoheleth, David's son and king in Jerusalem, had all earthly things at his command and an intelligent mind to process what he studied. He concluded that all in the world is vanity, winds change, nature keeps repeating cycles, good and evil wax and wane, men live and die. A great man is replaced by another, then another, and both are basically forgotten. Nothing is new under the sun. Worldly wisdom amounts to no lasting impact. It makes no eternal impact. Only knowledge and love of God has meaningful value. Qoheleth had all the worldly trappings and concluded those things, ultimately, are empty.

St. Maximus observes that charity (love) is a right attitude which prefers nothing to the knowledge of God. Our greatest energies and longing should be to the true and lasting Good—God. For God is superior to all His creation. Worship of creation rather than the Creator is mindless.

One who truly loves God, loves his neighbor and is generous to all according to their need. Charity is not just money. It is giving in personal service and sharing God's word and love. One who truly loves God is unselfish. As James chapter two tells us, faith is expressed and demonstrated in good works. Our love and regard needs to be for all—those who agree with us and are virtuous as well as those who oppose us and endorse evil. This often entails long suffering, but without bitterness or ill will.

The view toward eternity gives meaning to life, recognizing that this life is not all there is. It also clarifies our responsibility to use "things" rightly, act justly and love God and man generously.