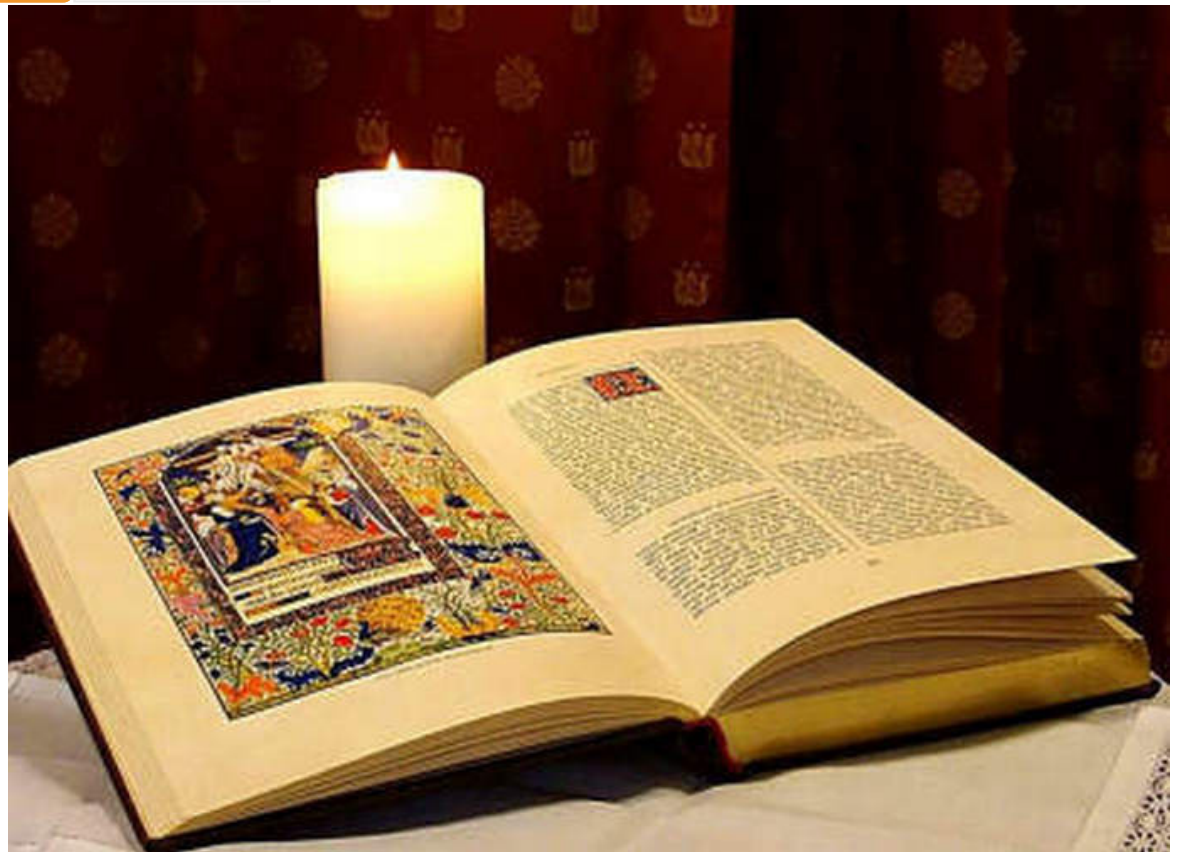


GOSPEL PEARLS

The certainty of God's gift

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Jesus said to his disciples: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15: 9-11)

The disciple who faithfully and lovingly tries to put into practice what he has learned

from Jesus knows that this is already a foretaste of the joy that will be even greater in heaven. If sickness, pain, weariness, or unforeseen events seem to lessen our joy, we can be sure that it was not the true joy given by Christ. In fact, true joy cannot disappear due to causes external to us. Only sin, which arises from within us and by our consent, can take away the joy that is God's gift to those who are faithful to him. This is why the Cross not only does not distance us from Christ, but rather brings us even closer to him if we accept it with faith.