

✝ THE SPIRITUAL WATCH

Η Πνευματική Εγρήγορση



“Stand fast on spiritual watch, because you do not know when the Lord will call you to Himself”
«Παραμείνετε ακλόνητοι εν πνευματική εγρήγορση, γιατί δεν γνωρίζετε πότε ο Κύριος θα σας καλέσει εμπρός Του»

+St. John Maximovitch / +Άγιος Ιωάννης Μαξίμοβιτς

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Inside this issue

Lenten Message.....	p.1
Family & Youth Conference...p.1	
St. Xenia Camp 2020.....	p.2
Μήνυμα Τεσσαρακοστής.....	p.3
How to Request SW.....	p.5
Pious Poetry.....	p.6
One Family's Miracle.....	p.7
Church Unity.....	p.9
Metropolis Pledge Form.....	p.11
Conference Collage... Back Cover	

About The Spiritual Watch

The *Spiritual Watch* is published with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America.

The *Spiritual Watch* is mailed to the homes of faithful by request only. Please see request information on p. 5

Lenten Message: Stand Before Our Creator in Fervent Prayer

As Christians, we always have this understanding of togetherness, of unity, even though our parishes are far apart geographically. We know that we are united in Christ, One Church in North and South America, under the Church of Greece, as well as One Church worldwide, “One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church...” It is necessary for each one of us to stand before God in fervent prayer and beseech Him to cover the Church and protect Her from enemies, both visible and invisible. We need to pray that the Lord will give strength to all the presbyters and clergy of the



Church, who are on the front lines, particularly in the difficult times which are awaiting us. There is a real, full-fledged battle raging against the Church. The prince of this world has always been the devil, but the devil is gaining more and more control on earth as time passes, and we draw closer to the end of the world. As I have always said, it is a demon infested world, but the infestation is now at a very dangerous level. It is very difficult not to get affected. We should always pray that the Christians remain faithful during this

time, for without Christ, it would be impossible for us to make it through, unscathed. *Cont'd on p.3*

Family & Youth Conference 2019 at St. Nicholas, Maryland

Glory to God, the 2019 G.O.C. Family and Youth Conference was a successful, Grace-filled event. With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius of America, the Conference took place on the weekend of October 11-13 at St. Nicholas of Myra Orthodox Church in Upper Marlboro,

Maryland, with the theme of “Unity”—unity in the marriage, unity in the family, unity in the parish, unity in the One, Holy, Catholic,

and Apostolic Church, and unity in the world. St. Nicholas of Myra and St. John of San Francisco were the Patron Saints of the Conference, and their blessings were felt throughout. During the event, the faithful were edified by extraordinary presentations on *Unity*, as well as responses during the Q & A session, given by Their

Eminences, Metropolitan Demetrius of America, Metropolitan Moses of Toronto, Fr. Steven Allen, Fr. Nicodemos Gayle, Fr. Theodore Giannakopoulos, Fr. Christos Patitsas, Fr. John Somers, Fr. Nicholas Chernjavsky, and the host priest, Fr. George Psaromatis.

The parish of St. Nicholas thanks all of our speakers for their soul-

Cont'd on p.6



“Be Careful! Watch out for your soul! Turn your thoughts away from what will soon pass, and turn towards what is eternal. Thus you will find the happiness that your soul seeks”
«Πρόσεχε! Φρούρησε την ψυχή σου! Στρέψε τις σκέψεις σου μακριά από αυτά που σύντομα θα περάσουν, και στρέψου προς τα αιώνια. Έτσι θα βρεις την ευτυχία που λαχταρά η ψυχή σου»

St. Xenia Camp 2020—Now Accepting Applications

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius, St. Xenia Camp will open for its 24th season **August 15th through 22nd, 2020** in Fryeburg, Maine. Through the intercessions of St. Xenia of St. Petersburg, and through the efforts of many who have worked tirelessly to bring the camp to where it is today, St. Xenia Camp continues to grow, providing **Orthodox youth ages 8-16** a unique opportunity for recreation, fellowship, and spiritual growth.



Sponsor a camper- help a parish or family give their youth a unique Orthodox experience, by supporting our camper scholarship fund. **Set the table-** help our kitchen fuel

Quality counselors represent the backbone of the camp. We are recruiting young adults for counselor positions to serve as mentors and role models for our campers. Once accepted, you will be provided valuable online training in preparation for a day of in-person training on the Saturday before camp begins (August 15th). Your participation will create lasting memories for both you and our campers!

The foundation of the camp is the charitable spirit of its **committed volunteer support staff**. We seek certified adults for lifeguard and nursing staff, and qualified and responsible adults for crews in Arts & Crafts, the Kitchen, and on our Activity Support Staff. Through shared service in Christ comes its own opportunity for fellowship and spiritual growth- if you are able, please consider joining us!

Please visit SaintXeniaCamp.org for more information on all of these opportunities- **online registration** for campers will open soon, and **online applications** for counselors and support staff are now being accepted. We hope you can join us for this unique and wonderful experience of spiritual invigoration, growth and fun!

If you cannot offer alms in the form of volunteer service, you can still **help keep the**

cost of camp affordable for all. With roughly \$25,000 in expenses last year, we hope you will consider financially supporting the mission of the camp in one of the following ways:

St. Xenia Camp friendship leads to marriage: Many years to Panagioti and Mia Fotopoulos who were joined in Holy Matrimony on 02/02/2020!



the camp with fasting feasts for all ages. With nearly 200 in camp last year, that's a lot of mouths to feed!

Keep us moving- help us save the backs of our volunteers by leaving the heavy-lifting to the camp pick-up truck. We're looking for help with a rental, loaner, or purchase/donation of an "oldie-but-goodie".

Volunteer transit- with many of our volunteers flying into regional airports, we're looking for help with rental of a passenger van (also driven by volunteers) from Boston to Maine.

Stock the studio- help our arts and crafts staff inspire the creative gifts of our campers. We bring it all with us, but send it all home!

Energize through exercise- help our activities coordinators motivate a spirit of teamwork and adventure, from bussing to excursions in the White Mountains region, to equipment for our Activities on the Green.

Keep us safe and on schedule- help our directors, nurses, and office staff keep the camp well-trained, well-supplied and organized.

Sponsor a counselor- while many of our youth choose to volunteer as counselors, many are college students in need of assistance with transportation costs, and our modest \$100 stipend. Help them serve our youth by supporting our stipend and scholarship fund.

Please contact our camp directors at StXeniacamp@gmail.com for assistance in giving alms to support St. Xenia Camp.

-The St. Xenia Camp Directors

Ancient Paterikon:

A certain monk asked St. Anthony the Great, "What must I do to be saved?" The elder answered him, "Don't trust in your own righteousness, don't worry about what's past, and constrain your tongue and your stomach."

Lenten Message: *Stand in Fervent Prayer* Cont'd from front cover

This holy and blessed time of year, Great Lent, is the perfect time to stand before our Creator in fervent prayer. Great Lent is a period when we may have a little more boldness before God, because we are trying to concentrate a little. Let us take this seriously, beloved faithful. We should come before the Lord and beseech Him for our families, for our children, and for all Orthodox children. The children of the Church are going to be faced with many challenges; likely, worse challenges

than the ones with which we were faced. The need for prayer is immediate, as prayer calls down God's mercy on His people. It is also the duty of all the children of our Sacred Metropolis to make special prayers during this holy season that our Lord will cover our Metropolis, that He will guide us in all things, according to His holy will, and that He would send forth worthy ministers to His holy Church.

As we said, we should increase our effort at prayer during Great Lent. Great Lent has a two-fold role in the life of every Orthodox Christian. Firstly, it is a preparation period for the Feast of feasts, Holy Pascha. In the Church, there has always been the very important practice of preparation for that which is holy. Moses fasted for forty days before



receiving the Tablets of the Law. Our Lord fasted for forty days after His holy baptism, as an example for us. Prophet Elias fasted; all the Holy Prophets fasted in order to receive the grace of God. They prepared themselves. Preparation is key. Preparation for Holy Pascha is so important, that there is actually a preparatory period before the preparation of Great Lent: we call this the "Triodion," the three weeks before Clean Monday, beginning with the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee—and this is no coincidence. In Her wisdom, the Church shows us, in the actions of the Publican, the first thing that is needed as we begin this time of preparation: to humble

ourselves and fall prostrate before God in repentance, begging His mercy for our sins.

This brings us to the second part of the role of Great Lent in the life of the Christian, which is closely linked to the first: Repentance. During the Triodion, we chant, "Do Thou Open unto me the portals of repentance, O Life Giver..." In order to repent properly we certainly need God's grace because repentance does not just come on spontaneously. We need to move all the filth and darkness away from our soul, so that we can see clearly enough to see ourselves, and this is not possible without God. The filth and darkness are our sins and passions.

Cont'd on page 5

Μήνυμα Τεσσαρακοστής: *Ας Σταθούμε Εμπρός Του Δημιουργού μας εν Θερμή Προσευχή*



Ὡς Χριστιανοί, έχουμε πάντα την κατανόηση μίας σύμπτωσης, μίας ένωσης, παρόλο που οι ενορίες μας μπορεί να είναι γεωγραφικά απομακρυσμένες ή μία από την άλλη. Γνωρίζουμε πως είμαστε ενωμένοι εν Χριστώ, Μία Εκκλησία στην Βόρεια και Νότια Αμερική, υπό την Εκκλησία της Ελλάδος, καθώς και Μία Εκκλησία σε όλον τον κόσμο, «Μία Αγία, Καθολική και Αποστολική Εκκλησία...» Είναι ανάγκη να σταθεί ο καθένας μας ενώπιον Του Θεού εν θερμή προσευχή για να Τον παρακαλέσουμε να σκεπάσει την Εκκλησία και να Την προστατεύσει από τους εχθρούς Της, ορατούς και άορατους. Πρέπει να προσευχηθούμε να δώσει δύναμη ο Κύριος σε όλους τους ιερείς και κληρικούς της Εκκλησίας, που βρίσκονται

στην πρώτη γραμμή του μετώπου, ειδικά κατά τους δύσκολους καιρούς που μας περιμένουν. Πολιορκείται η Εκκλησία σε μία πραγματική, άγρια μάχη εναντίον Της. Ο άρχων του κόσμου τούτου ήταν πάντα ο διάβολος, μα η εξουσία του διαβόλου όλο και αυξάνεται στη γη με το πέρασμα του χρόνου, καθώς πλησιάζουμε το τέλος του κόσμου. Όπως πάντα έλεγα, ο κόσμος

τούτος υπόκειται σε προσβολή δαιμόνων, αλλά η προσβολή έχει φτάσει τώρα σε πολύ επικίνδυνες διαστάσεις. Είναι πολύ δύσκολο να μην επηρεαστούμε. Πρέπει να προσευχομαστε πάντα πως οι Χριστιανοί θα παραμείνουν πιστοί τον καιρό αυτό, γιατί χωρίς τον Χριστό, θα ήταν αδύνατον να τα καταφέρουμε χωρίς πληγές.

Τούτη η αγία και ευλογημένη εποχή του χρόνου, η Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή, είναι ο ιδανικότερος καιρός να σταθούμε ενώπιον Του Δημιουργού μας εν θερμή προσευχή. Μπορούμε να έχουμε λίγο περισσότερο θάρρος ενώπιον Του Θεού κατά την Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή, γιατί κάνουμε κάποια προσπάθεια να αφοσιωθούμε λίγο. Ας το πάρουμε σοβαρά αυτό, αγαπητοί μου Χριστιανοί. Θα έπρεπε να έρθουμε ενώπιον Του Κυρίου και να Τον ικετεύσουμε για τις οικογένειες μας, για τα παιδιά μας, και για όλα τα Ορθόδοξα παιδιά. Τα παιδιά της Εκκλησίας θα αντιμετωπίσουν πολλές δυσκολίες—πιθανότατα χειρότερες προκλήσεις από αυτές που αντιμετωπίσαμε εμείς. Η ανάγκη προσευχής είναι άμεση, γιατί η προσευχή προσελκύει το έλεος Του Θεού στον λαό Του. Επίσης, είναι καθήκον όλων των τέκνων της Ιεράς Μητρόπολης μας να προσευχηθούν ιδιαίτερος και για την

Μήνυμα Τεσσαρακοστής: Ας Σταθούμε εν Θερμή Προσευχή

Συνεχίζεται από την σελ. 3

Μητρόπολη μας κατά την περίοδο αυτή της αγίας Τεσσαρακοστής, πως ο Κύριος θα μας καθοδηγή σε όλα, αναλόγως με το θείο Θέλημα Του, και πως θα στείλει άξιους ποιμένες στην Αγία Εκκλησία Του.

Όπως είπαμε, πρέπει να αυξήσουμε την προσπάθεια μας στην προσευχή κατά τη Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή. Η Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή έχει διπλό ρόλο στη ζωή κάθε Ορθοδόξου Χριστιανού. Πρώτων, είναι περίοδος προετοιμασίας για την Εορτή των εορτών, το Άγιο Πάσχα. Στην Εκκλησία πάντα υπήρχε η πολύ σημαντική δραστηριότητα της προετοιμασίας για τα Θεία. Ο Μωυσής νήστεψε για σαράντα ημέρες πριν λάβει τις πέτρινες ταμπλέτες του Νόμου. Ο Κύριος νήστεψε για σαράντα μέρες μετά από την θεία βάπτισή Του, σαν παράδειγμα για εμάς. Ο Προφήτης Ηλίας νήστεψε—καθώς και όλοι οι Άγιοι Προφύτες νήστεψαν για να λάβουν την Χάρη Του Θεού. Προετοίμασαν τους εαυτούς τους. Η προετοιμασία είναι κλειδί. Η προετοιμασία για το Άγιο Πάσχα είναι τόσο σημαντική που υπάρχει περίοδος προ-προετοιμασίας πριν από την προετοιμασία της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής: αποκαλείται «Τριώδιο» και είναι οι τρεις εβδομάδες πριν από την Καθαρή Δευτέρα, ξεκινώντας με την Κυριακή του Τελώνη και του Φαρισαίου—και δεν είναι σύμπτωση αυτό. Εν σοφία, η Εκκλησία μας δείχνει, μέσω της συμπεριφοράς του Τελώνη, το πρώτο πράγμα που χρειάζεται καθώς ξεκινάμε την περίοδο αυτή της προετοιμασίας: να ταπεινώσουμε τους εαυτούς μας και να πέσουμε στα γόνατα ενώπιον Του Θεού εις μετάνοια, ικετεύοντας το έλεος Του για τις αμαρτίες μας.

Ετσι ερχόμαστε στο δεύτερο μέρος του ρόλου της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής στη ζωή του Χριστιανού, το οποίο είναι στενά συνδεδεμένο με το πρώτο: την Μετάνοια. Κατά το Τριώδιο, ψάλλουμε: «Της μετανόιας άνοιξον μοι πύλας ζωοδότα...» Για να βιώσουμε σωστή μετάνοια χρειαζόμαστε σίγουρα την χάρη Του Θεού γιατί η μετάνοια δεν έρχεται μόνη της, αυθόρμητα. Χρειάζεται να απομακρύνουμε όλη την βρωμιά και το σκοτάδι από την ψυχή, για να μπορέσουμε να δούμε πραγματικά τους εαυτούς μας—και αυτό δεν είναι δυνατόν χωρίς Τον Θεό. Η βρωμιά και το σκοτάδι είναι οι αμαρτίες και τα πάθη μας. Όταν ο άνθρωπος αρχίζει να βλέπει πραγματικά τον εαυτό του, τότε βλέπει περισσότερες λεπτομέρειες της ψυχής του. Πρέπει να δούμε τους εαυτούς μας με αρκετή σαφήνεια ώστε να αισθανθούμε πόνο για την πνευματική μας κατάσταση. Όποιος δεν αισθανθεί πόνο για την πνευματική του ή της κατάστασης, δεν έχει αληθινή ή ουσιαστική μετάνοια. Ψάλλουμε τον ύμνο: «Τον νυμφώνα Σου βλέπω, Σωτήρ μου... και ένδυμα ουκ έχω...

Λάμπρυνόν μου την στολήν της ψυχής, Φωτοδότα...» Εμείς έχουμε ένδυμα—το ένδυμα της βαπτίσεως—αλλά όπως όλα τα ένδυμα, χρειάζεται να το πλένουμε. Αν δεν πλύνεις το ρούχο, οι λεκέδες μεγαλώνουν και πολλαπλασιάζονται, ώσπου το ρούχο γίνεται καταλερωμένο. Επομένως, είναι απαραίτητη η συνεχόμενη πλύση, αν θέλετε, και αυτό

το πλύσιμο είναι η μετάνοια. Ορθώς λέει ο Άγιος Συμεών ο Νέος Θεολόγος ότι η μετάνοια είναι «δεύτερο βάπτισμα» από το οποίο βγαίνουμε εκ νέου καθαρισμένοι. Με το δώρο της μετανόιας, οι αμαρτωλοί μπορεί να γίνουν πιο αγνοί από τους «αγνούς».

Επομένως, η Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή είναι περίοδος μετάνοιας, και μέσα από την μετάνοια αυτή, έρχεται ο εξαγνισμός. Με τον εξαγνισμό έρχεται η ικανότητα να δούμε την Ανάσταση με τρόπο που αρμόζει στους Ορθοδόξους



God commanded His people to "tithe" in the Old Testament—that is, to give away one-tenth of their wealth or income to alms. This one-tenth was called a "tithe." Many Orthodox Christians choose to continue this God-pleasing practice, which always brings great blessings upon the giver, as the Lord promised. St. Dorotheos of Gaza teaches of another kind of "tithe"—one of 10% of each Christian's year. St. Dorotheos calls Great Lent itself a "tithe," and teaches that the duration of Great Lent is exactly one-tenth of the calendar year...

Ο Θεός διέταξε τον λαό Του να πράττει την Αρχή του Δεκαπισμού στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη—δηλαδή να δίνει ο κάθε πιστός το ένα-δέκατο του πλούτου του ή των εισοδημάτων του για ελεημοσύνη. Αποκαλούσαν τη δωρεά αυτή «το δέκατο». Πολλοί Ορθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί επέλεγαν να συνεχίζουν την θεάρεστη αυτή συνήθεια, που πάντα φέρνει μεγάλες ευλογίες σε όποιον την εξασκεί, αναλόγως με την υπόσχεση Του Κυρίου. Ο Άγιος Δωροθέος της Γάζας μας διδάσκει για ένα άλλο είδος «δέκατον»—10% του χρόνου του κάθε Χριστιανού. Ο Άγιος Δωροθέος θεωρεί την ίδια την Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή ως έναν «δεκατισμό» και διδάσκει ότι η διάρκεια της Σαρακοστής είναι ακριβώς το ένα δέκατο του ημερολογιακού έτους...

Χριστιανούς. Γι' αυτό ψάλλουμε, στον πρώτο ακριβώς ύμνο του Πασχαλινού Κανόνα: «Καθαρθώμεντας αισθήσεις και σφόμεθα τω απροσίτω φωτί της Αναστάσεως Χριστόν...» Ο εξαγνισμός έρχεται από την μετάνοια—από το να πενθούμε τις αμαρτίες μας. Όσο περισσότερο εξαγνιζόμαστε, τόσο περισσότερο Τον βλέπουμε, και η Πασχαλινή χαρά αφθονεί στις ψυχές μας. Επομένως βλέπουμε πως ο πόνος αυτός που αισθανόμαστε για τις αμαρτίες μας οδηγεί σε αμειλικτη χαρά: το πένθος οδηγεί σε μετάνοια, η μετάνοια οδηγεί στον εξαγνισμό, και ο εξαγνισμός οδηγεί στην ικανότητα να δούμε Τον Αναστάντα Ιησού! Και να η Εκκλησία, βοηθώντας τα παιδιά Της στην πορεία της Σαρακοστής με την διδακτική Ύμνολογία Της, γραμμένη από τους Αγίους ανά τους αιώνες. Οι ύμνοι της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής, ειδικά Δευτέρα με Παρασκευή, είναι ύμνοι μεταμέλειας που επιχειρούν πάντα να φέρουν τον νου σε κάποια ταπεινότητα και την καρδιά σε κάποιον πόνο για τις αμαρτίες μας. Θα ήταν ευλογία εάν οι περισσότερες ενορίες μπορούσαν να κάνουν καθημερινές Ακολουθίες κατά την Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή, για να μπορούσαν οι πιστοί να ακούσουν τους ύμνους αυτούς. Έχουμε την ευλογία στο Μοναστήρι να ακούμε όλους τούτους τους ύμνους. Είναι ένθερμη επιθυμία μου να γίνονται όσες δύνανται ακολουθίες στις ενορίες κατά την περίοδο αυτή.

Κατά τη διάρκεια της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής, οι ακολουθίες είναι εκτενέστερες—και πραγματικά,

πρέπει να υπάρχει περισσότερη προσευχή, καθώς και αυστηρότερη νηστεία. Η νηστεία ενισχύει την μετάνοια. Καλούμαστε να παρουσιάσουμε «καπούς άξιους της μετανόιας» (Ματθ. 3,8) Η νηστεία είναι ένας τέτοιος καρπός μετανόιας. Η ελεημοσύνη είναι άλλος ένας τέτοιος καρπός. Ο

Συνεχίζεται στη σελ. 10

Lenten Message: Stand in Fervent Prayer Cont'd from p.3

When a person starts to truly see himself, then he sees more of the details of his soul. We need to see ourselves clearly enough to feel pain over our spiritual state. Anyone who does not feel pain over his or her spiritual state, will not have true or meaningful repentance. We chant the hymn, "Thy Bridal Chamber, O my Savior, do I behold... and a garment I have not... Illumine the garment of my soul, O Light Bestower..." We have a garment—the garment of baptism—and just like any garment, it needs to be washed. If you do not wash it, the stains will keep growing and multiplying until it becomes filthy.

Therefore, we need a continuous wash, so to speak, and that wash is repentance. Rightly does St. Symeon the New Theologian say that repentance is "the second baptism," out of which we emerge cleansed once again. With the gift of repentance, sinners can become more pure than the "pure." Therefore, Great Lent is a period when we repent, and from that repentance, comes purification. With purification, we can then see the Resurrection in a manner worthy of Orthodox Christians. This is why, in the very first hymn of the Canon of Pascha, we chant, "Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ..." Purification comes from repentance—from mourning over one's sins. The more we are purified, the more we see Him, and Paschal joy abounds in our souls. Therefore we see that this pain over our sins leads to unutterable joy: mourning leads to repentance, which leads to purification, which leads to beholding the Resurrected Christ! And there is the Church, helping Her children along the path of Lent with Her instructive hymnology, written by the Saints, over the centuries. The hymns during Great Lent, especially on Monday through Friday, are penitential hymns, that are always trying to bring the mind to some sort of contrition, and the heart to some sort of pain over our sins. It would be a blessing if most of the parishes could actually have daily services during Great Lent, so that the faithful could hear these hymns. We have the blessing, in the Monastery, to hear all these hymns. It is my fervent desire that the parishes also have as many



"The need for prayer is immediate..."
«Η ανάγκη προσευχής είναι άμεση...»

services as possible during this period.

During Great Lent, the services are longer; indeed, there should be more prayer, and there should be stricter fasting. Fasting is an aid in repentance. We are asked to "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance." (Matt 3:8) Fasting is one of the fruits of repentance. Almsgiving is another one of these fruits; the Lord calls upon the faithful to give alms and to support His churches, His monasteries, and the poor. Other fruits of repentance are prayer, vigils, patience, longsuffering, and all good things which help us to attain God's grace. God commanded His people to "tithe" in the Old Testament—that is, to give away one-tenth of their wealth or income to alms. This one-tenth was called a "tithe." Many Orthodox Christians choose to continue this God-pleasing practice, which always brings great blessings upon the giver, as the Lord has promised. St. Dorotheos of Gaza teaches of another kind of "tithe"—one

of 10% of each Christian's year. St. Dorotheos calls Great Lent itself a "tithe," and teaches that the duration of Great Lent is exactly one-tenth of the calendar year. In his writings, he explains that the number of days in Great Lent, from Clean Monday to the Friday before the Saturday of Lazarus (the end of Lent, since Holy Week is technically a separate fast) mathematically works out to be 1/10 of the entire year, and thus should be given as a tithe to God. Beloved faithful, this is a healthy way to think of Great Lent: it is God's. Let us give to God what is His: this season of Lent, to the extent possible.

Let us be conscientious. Let us struggle more during Great Lent. This is a great opportunity, and a wondrous time of spiritual rejuvenation and focus on the eternal, rather than on the earthly concerns all around us, which are ultimately meaningless—they are temporary and will quickly pass away. Let us try to draw closer to Him, Who created us and loves us beyond comprehension. Let

Cont'd on p. 11

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Editors Note: The following poem was written by Fr. Christos Patitsas to his wife, Presbyteria Katina, of blessed memory.

Fr. Christos first read this poem to Presbyteria Katina when he wrote it for her, in the year 2000. He reread the same verses to her while she lay ill before her repose. Before her one-year memorial, Fr. Christos added the last stanza to the poem, below, and read it again at her grave, after the service in her memory.

We thank Fr. Christos for sharing this poem, which provides an edifying glimpse into the love shared within an Orthodox marriage and family. The verses speak to the beauty and power of love between man and woman when it is founded in Christ. In its lines we see the value of virtue, as well as the love and sacrifices that wives and mothers share, and the admiration they inspire in their Orthodox families.

An Ode To A Grecian Beauty, My Wife



I will not give rest unto mine eyes,
Nor sleep unto mine eyelids,
until I sing her praises.
The praises of her who kept herself for me
from her youth,
Who gave herself to no other man,
The praises of her who married me when
I was young, unhandsome and poor,
And loved me nonetheless.

When I met her,
she was still a youth of twenty,
With dark brown eyes and a joyous smile.
Her voice put to shame the nightingale
And children flocked to her side like chicks,

All wanting her love and affection.
Her guitar she strummed and my heart she tenderly caressed.
Her ears received my words with sympathy
Her speech poured forth wisdom
And her mouth was a bouquet of sweetness.

She had no ambition for wealth or glory
And bore our poverty and simplicity with joy.
She possessed a deep faith in Christ,
And surrendered her will to His.
Together we sought and found
true Fathers and Mothers in Christ,
And embraced Holy Orthodoxy.

With faithfulness and affection she stood by me
Through years of medical education.
Far from her family and old friends,
She patiently endured my absence too.
Our family grew by ones and twos
Till five healthy sons gathered round our table.
And what a table she did always prepare for the hungry boys,
Whether during fast or feast.
A stay at home mom she was and many a cookie she did bake.
But meanwhile, music she composed, melodies,
and lyrics to the Lord!
And at home between loads of laundry and diapers,
The sweetest music she did record!
Space would fail me to list all her virtues
So here I will end with these words,
"I love you with all my heart and pray that we shall never part.
May God bless you dear and may you be ever near".....

Alas, in body we are parted.
But our hearts and souls shall never be.
I ask of you forgiveness.
I pray for you and you for me.
I will always love you.
My wife you will ever be.
Now you behold the Lord of glory.
I struggle on to join you there.
Pray that I endure to the end, that in His arms together
we shall once more be.

Love, Your Husband,
Father Christos

Family & Youth Conference 2019: Another Great Success!

Cont'd from front cover

saving messages, and all the faithful who attended from around America, Canada, and beyond.

The Conference began with the optional Friday—DC Field trip day, when about 60 participants boarded a charter bus and spent a delightful day touring various Smithsonian museums and landmarks on the National Mall in Washington, DC. Following the field trip, the faithful attended a Paraclysis to our Most Holy Theotokos at St. Nicholas, followed by dinner and fellowship at the bonfires on the beautiful grounds of St. Nicholas. Two bonfire gatherings were available to the faithful, one near the lit tent, for adults, families and children, and one down the path towards the woods, for young adults. Fr. Nicholas graciously presented an edifying talk at the young adult bonfire, and there were many informal sessions of Q&A, fellowship, and spiritual discussions with His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses and various clergy.

On Saturday morning, October 12, the main Conference day, the faithful met at the venue for a day filled with profound Orthodox learning, joy and laughter, and the stirring in the human soul that can

only be brought about by the Holy Spirit. Any Orthodox Christian who has attended one of these blessed conferences in the past, where hundreds of faithful gather in His Name, knows this feeling. Our Metropolitan Demetrius of America, who had undergone dental surgery the preceding day, and who has been struggling with serious health challenges, was not able to attend in person, but glory to God, was still able to deliver the Keynote address via Skype. The Conference venue boasted a state-of-the-art auditorium with two large screens over the stage, which facilitated His Eminence's presentation effectively.

The Metropolitan related how he was very happy about the theme of unity, when he discussed it with Fr. George, calling it a "dogma" for the Orthodox, and how powerful it is for the faithful to be gathered together *in the same place*, as we were at that moment, at the Family and Youth Conference: *"In today's Epistle reading, and oftentimes in the Acts of the Apostles, we* *Cont'd on next page*
come across a phrase,



One Family's Miracle: *Baby A and Baby B*

In 2014, my husband and I were blessed to expect our first child. It was a very normal and uneventful pregnancy. However, on Friday, September 26, 2014, we ran into a complication that landed us in the hospital. It was then that my husband and I learned that I was pregnant with twin girls, which the doctors referred to as "Baby A" and "Baby B." That night we also learned the devastating news that our Baby B had broken her water, and since our babies were only 18 weeks old, they would not survive.

The doctors told us that both babies were presently healthy, but I would naturally go into labor because of the broken water, and the babies were too young to survive. We were given a less than 1% chance that our daughters would survive through the weekend, and we were strongly encouraged to terminate the pregnancy due to the high risk of infection for myself and the girls.

We began to pray for our babies. I stayed at the hospital for the weekend and nothing happened. I was sent home on strict bed rest with the warning that I would be back and in labor that week, but nothing happened. Through the generosity of so many in our parish and beyond, I was given many blessings to help us prolong our pregnancy. I was given a relic of the Mother of God which I wore around my waist every day. I was given holy oil from Saint John of San Francisco which I used every day to bless myself and the babies. I had a container of holy water that I drank from every day. Lastly, I was given blessed apple slices from St. Irene Chrysovalantou which I ate a piece of every day. I was encouraged to say more prayers and said an Akathist to the

Theotokos and a Cannon to Saint John of San Francisco every day.

I continued with strict bedrest for 6 weeks at home. The doctors instructed us to come back once a week for a scan of the girls, to measure the amount of fluid around each baby. Baby B

"We were given a less than 1% chance that our daughters would survive through the weekend, and we were strongly encouraged to terminate the pregnancy..."

needed a 2x3 cm pocket to survive and she always had just that amount. When my pregnancy reached 24 weeks, the medical team offered steroid shots to encourage lung development for both babies and moved me into the hospital for continued bed rest and daily monitoring.

Move-in day was Nov. 4, 2014. Every additional day that the pregnancy lasted was a blessing, but the goal was to make it last as close to 34 weeks as possible. I had scans of the babies twice a week and daily heart rate monitoring for them. Each week baby A and baby B were healthy, and baby B had just enough water around her to keep the doctors from delivering the girls early.

A week or so later, Metropolitan Demetrius visited our parish for the feast day of Saint Philaret. I was unable to attend church as I was still in the hospital. However, the Metropolitan visited me in the hospital and there he said prayers over me and my daughters and bestowed many blessings on us.

The next day, I was very tired, and I mistakenly drank holy oil from

Saint John instead of the holy water I usually drank in the morning. It was a very shocking moment and I laughed at my mistake! At my regular scan the next morning, the doctors were shocked to see that baby B had twice as much fluid than her sister! The doctors had no explanation for this. They sent me home early the next week since I had been stable for so long and baby B's condition had improved.

We continued our pregnancy in and out of the hospital for the next 5 weeks. On January 12, 2015, we were blessed with two beautiful daughters born at nearly 34 weeks! Baby A, Alexandra, and Baby B, Grace, spent 27 days in the NICU, and they have not stopped growing since then. Through the Metropolitan's blessing, we went on to have another baby two years later. With many prayers, the pregnancy went well. We were blessed with a son, and we named him John (well, Metropolitan Demetrius named him John!).

Submitted by Elizabeth and Alexander Fagnand, Saint Philaret the New Confessor Mission Parish, Chicopee, MA



L-R: Grace ("Baby B"), John, and Alexandra ("Baby A") Fagnand

Editor's Note: Elizabeth Fagnand is the daughter of Fr. Jacob Wojcik, Presbyter

Family & Youth Conference 2019

Cont'd from previous page

where the Holy Apostles came, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ which means they gathered together **in the same place** (Πράξεις 3:1). This is a very important phrase because, when the faithful Christians are together, there is a special force, a special power, a special Grace, because they are showing their **unity**. The Grace is prevalent, in particular, when the faithful are together in the same place but in **concord**, "...so that there may be no divisions among you," as the Holy Apostle tells us (1 Corinthians 1:10). Naturally, any parent would love to see his or her family united: the children united with the parents, the children united with each other, and so on and so forth. And so it is with God, except much more so, because God is perfect, God is love. When we talk about **unity** we are not talking about some kind of abstract idea or ideology, but for the Orthodox Christian, it is a dogmatic truth—it's a dogma; so much so, that the very

first petition that is made in the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, right after the consecration of the Holy Gifts, is "And unite us all to one another..." because this concept of unity with Christ is very closely related to unity with one another. We hear the explanation of the Disciples of our Lord: For example, St. Ignatius the Godbearer expresses to us how the Church is the Body of Christ, and expounds to us concerning those things which St. Paul says, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 6:15) and "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another" (Romans 12:5). So, the first Christians, from the beginning, had this very profound understanding of **unity as a dogma**—that they themselves had to be totally united, not only with God, but with one another. By being united with God, they were united with one another, and by being united with one another, they had this close connection with our Lord. God,

being One in Essence, undivided, wishes, of course, that the Church be united with God, and this is why the Church has a very special and prominent place in the Holy Trinity—It is called 'the Body of Christ.' This means that we ourselves not only have a great blessing and honor, but a great responsibility to not abandon the Holy Spirit—St. Paul says that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, so we are part of the Body, but also God is in us, in our body, in our hearts, in our souls..."

His Eminence went on to describe unity with God and each other through the visual example of Abba Dorotheos of Gaza: "Imagine all the faithful around the circumference of a circle, with our destination, our προορισμός—where we want to end up—is the Center of the circle, God.

Cont'd on next page



Family & Youth Conference 2019: Another Great Success! *Cont'd from previous page*



The closer each person moves toward the Center of the circle, the closer they get to God, and naturally the closer they come to one another.” The Metropolitan also warned against the tricks of the devil, who is “a professional at what he does” and “camouflages himself” inspiring his victims to create a “really good script as to why they are not united with the Church.” Abba Dorotheos teaches that the person who is in such discord is also “distorted in his thinking.” His Eminence said, “The fact of the matter is that all of us are trying to conform to the Mind of Christ...to get out of the distortion which came into the race of mankind from the time of Adam’s fall...”

His Eminence also warned that there can be a “good disunity” and a “bad unity” in terms of heresy and schism, as St. John Chrysostom teaches. “We have to separate ourselves from the separated,” the Metropolitan said, “and unite with the united.” He then went on to quote the Kontakion of Pentecost which includes both examples of unity and of division: “When the most High came down and confused the tongues, / He **divided** the nations; / But when He distributed the tongues of fire / He called all to **unity**. / Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-holy Spirit.” His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses of Toronto then chanted this Kontakion, followed by its chanting in Greek by Fr. Theodore Giannakopoulos of the Cathedral of St. Markella.

Metropolitan Demetrius taught that we should not rejoice over the confusion of others, nor become self-righteous because we are the “chosen of the Lord.” He pointed out that “self-righteous zealotry caused many of the unfortunate divisions” in the first place. It is a cause for sadness, he said, that the historical Patriarchates do not belong to the Church anymore, “This is something that has hurt the Body of Christ” after so many centuries of Church history. “Our Lord wishes that all men be saved” he reminded us.

His Eminence concluded his edifying presentation by telling the faithful that “we need to treasure the fact that the Lord has called us to unity, and also treasure the fact that you are now *ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ*, as I said in the beginning, gathered together in the same place.” Metropolitan

Demetrius then thanked Metropolitan Moses and gave his blessings and best wishes for the continued success of the event.

Following the Keynote address, the faithful broke into groups according to age and

language. His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses, presented multiple, soul-profiting and age-appropriate talks on “Unity in the World”—please see article on next page for His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses’s message. Fr. Steven Allen presented eye-opening talks on “Unity in the Marriage;” Fr. Nicodemos Gayle shared very powerful talks on “Unity in the Family;” Fr. Christos Patitsas spiritually energized his listeners with his talks on “Unity in the Parish;” and Fr. John Somers shared his popular and interactive talks on “Unity in the Church.” For the talks in the Greek language, Fr. Theodore Giannakopoulos touched on all these topics for over two hours; the faithful greatly benefited by his wise message on the topic of unity, followed by an extended Greek language Q & A. Finally, all of the Fathers participated in the engaging Q&A session, which was audience-driven, and targeted all of the above areas of unity, especially Orthodox family & marriage. Glory to God, the venue was ideal, and included learning spaces for children ages 7-10, children ages 11-13, the older teen group of ages 14-17, the young adult group over age 18, the adult group, and the Greek language group. The conference enjoyed the use of four beautiful, large classrooms, the auditorium, the cafeteria, and outdoor spaces at the venue.

The amphitheater-style young adult classroom held the presentations to the 18-and-over young adult group, as well as the peer-activity session. This young adult session included an “Orthodox Shark Tank” activity, judged by Fr. Nicholas Chernjavsky, Deacon Fr. Alexander Buterbaugh, and Subdeacon Paul Daniels, boasted many humorous “useful” Orthodox tech “inventions.” For an exceptional video summary of the conference, including this session, go to YouTube.com and search *California Pilgrim Conference* (thank you, California Pilgrim!). There were also team-building activities such as the construction of a marshmallow-spaghetti tower and the human knot.

At the conclusion of Saturday’s talks, Deacon Fr. John Psaromatis, who is the younger brother of Fr. George, presented “Fun Awards”: The “*On the Ball Award*” #1 & #2 were awarded to Eleni Giannakopoulos and Matushka Tatiana, Galina, and Sophia Gilstrap, respectively, for being the

first to register for the 2019 Family & Youth Conference/Friday Fieldtrip Day; the “Orthodox Odyssey Awards #1 & #2” were awarded to Juliana Ashling and her children, the Cooper siblings, and to Rachel, Esther, and Ruth Schenone, who traveled from Oregon, Washington, and California respectively. Next, the “Are We There Yet?” Award was given to the parents who brought the most children to the conference (sorry, Fr. George, Fr. Theodoros, and Fr. John Somers—speaker kids not eligible!); and the winner was: Lambros and Elizabeth Alexopoulos; and finally, the “Sore Throat Award” was given to Fr. John Somers for “Most Abused Speaker: Gave the Most Talks Without a Break!” Congratulations to all of the winners!

After the awards, the faithful gathered in the cafeteria for a scrumptious dinner, and then headed back to St. Nicholas. The Conference thanks all those who helped to prepare and serve the wonderful breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the conference, especially Lisa Psaromatis and Lambros Alexopoulos and their families. The faithful then attended a Grace-filled Vespers at St. Nicholas, followed by bonfires, snacks, and Orthodox fellowship.

Over 275 faithful attended the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy the next morning, which included a moving sermon by His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses, calling all of the faithful to love and unity within our families and parishes, in order to “bask in the Grace of God and experience the peace that only our Savior can give us, the foretaste of the Resurrection.” Serving clergy included Fr. Steven Allen, Fr. Nicodemos Gayle, Fr. Theodore Giannakopoulos, Fr. Christos Patitsas, Fr. John Somers, Fr. Nicholas Chernjavsky, and host Fr. George Psaromatis; also serving were Deacon Fr. Yakov Tseitlin, Deacon Fr. Alexander Buterbaugh, Deacon Fr. Joseph Clatterbuck, and Deacon Fr. John Psaromatis. Following the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, the faithful enjoyed a banquet at Blue Dolphin Banquet Hall, where His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses, shared closing remarks and Fr. George thanked His Eminence, all the Fathers, and all the faithful for being part of the 2019 Family and Youth Conference at St. Nicholas. Parish children sang folk songs in English and Greek, including selections written by Presbytera Katina Patitsas, of blessed memory.

Conference organizers had been worried about the possibility of rainy weather, which is common in Maryland in the fall, because rain would have not only hampered the Friday field trip and the bonfires, but it would have complicated the parking setup, as a very large number of cars were parked on the grassy field adjacent to the Holy Church. The Theotokos heard everyone’s prayers, and to our delight, not only was the weather perfect, but we were blessed with an unusually bright moon and clear sky during the bonfires. As though it was a sign, it only began to rain lightly after the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Sunday, at the conclusion of the Conference, literally as everyone was departing to go to the banquet hall! Glory to God for all things!

Family & Youth Conference 2019: Church Unity in the World

A Summary of the Presentation by His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses of Toronto



To be united to the Church, one must be united to Christ in one's mind and heart and daily life. To be united with Christ, one cannot be "of the world." The Holy Gospel of the Apostle John, chapters 15-17, gives us the teachings of our Savior concerning Church Unity in the World:

These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. (John 15:17-20)

We see from the words of our Savior in the Holy Gospel that unity with Christ does not include unity with everyone in the world: *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep in Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are. (John 17:9-11)*

Thus, we are separate from the world. We are of the tribe of God. We must first foremost teach our children that their identity is rooted in unity with the Holy Trinity. All things will pass from this life, we have no homeland here, we are merely sojourners and travelers through earthly life and our true homeland is unity with the Holy Trinity.

In that context, all other forms of unity with schools, sports teams and clubs are like faint wisps of smoke in a breeze. Here one moment and gone the next. A child should be taught that the most vital part of his or her life is union and communion with Christ, and then as they become adults, if they marry, they should seek a spouse who will be united to them in Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is Truth incarnate and in order to be unified with Him and the Father and the Holy Spirit, we must be sanctified in truth, as our Lord said in the Gospel of Saint John:

"Sanctify them in Thy truth: Thy word is truth."

The Holy Apostle John explained what is meant by the term "love of the world" in his First Epistle:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the

eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

In the context of the spiritual life, the term "world" has a different definition from what one would find in a standard dictionary. When our Lord says that we are not of this world, it is because we have been chosen to be unified with our God the Holy Trinity. When the Apostle John tell us to not love the world or the things of this world, he is not telling us that God's creation is corrupt, he is telling us concerning the passions that deceive men into forgetting the things of heaven and eternal life in communion with God.

The Holy Apostle James wrote in his Epistle: *"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4)*

When our Lord says that we are not of this world, it is because we have been chosen to be unified with our God the Holy Trinity, members of the household of God, citizens of heaven. Once again, when the Apostles tell us to not love the world or that friendship with the world makes one an enemy of God, in this context the word "world" means the collection of the many passions that tempt men

because of our fallen state.

Saint Paul teaches us how are we to be set free from the passions: *"But as for me, far be it that I should boast, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal 6:14)*

Unity with Christ in the world is only found in the Mystery of the Cross whereby the Christian takes up his cross and follows Christ and the world is crucified unto him in imitation of Saint Paul and all of the other saints. There is no other way. In order for us to have Church unity in the world, we must all take up our cross and follow of the Narrow way that leads unto the Kingdom. *"Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because narrow is the gate, and afflicted is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13-14)*

With the miraculous vision of the Cross at Mount Hymettus on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in 1925, our Lord Jesus Christ gave us His Divine confirmation that we should keep the traditions of the Church. The vision of the Cross appeared on the day of the feast according to the traditional Church Calendar. Our Lord chose the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross for this vision to also call us to take up our own cross and follow Him.

Especially during our era of falsehood, confusion and

compromise mixed with the general dissipation of our hedonistic culture, we must return to the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and embrace the Mystery of the Cross in order to about the renewal of our lives and Church Unity in the World.

This, in the words of Saint Justin Popovich, is a "God-human endeavor." According to Saint Justin, we become co-workers with God in that change only by God-human means, which is radically different from anything human or of this earth. In his work,

"The Inward Mission of our Church," Saint Justin describes these means as the Five Ascetical Virtues of the Church: (1) FAITH, (2) PRAYER & FASTING, (3) LOVE, (4) MEEKNESS & HUMILITY, and (5) PATIENCE & HUMILITY.

(Editor's Note: This is a short summary of His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses's powerful presentation at the 2019 Conference. For more detailed information on this talk or the Five Ascetical Virtues, please contact The Spiritual Watch, or His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses.)



Μήνυμα Τεσσαρακοστής: Ας Σταθούμε εν Θερμή Προσευχή

Συνεχίζεται από την σελ. 4

Κύριος μας καλεί να δώσουμε στους φτωχούς και να συντηρήσουμε τις Εκκλησίες Του και τα Μοναστήρια Του. Άλλοι καρποί της μετάνοιας είναι η προσευχή, οι ολονυχτίες, η υπομονή, η μακροθυμία, και κάθε τι καλό που μας βοηθάει να ελκύσουμε την χάρη Του Θεού.

Ο Θεός διέταξε τον λαό Του να πράττει την Αρχή του Δεκατισμού στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη—δηλαδή να δίνει ο κάθε πιστός το ένα-δέκατο του πλούτου του ή των εισοδημάτων του για ελεημοσύνη. Αποκαλούσαν τη δωρεά αυτή «το δέκατο». Πολλοί Ορθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί επιλέγουν να συνεχίζουν την Θεάρεστη αυτή συνήθεια, που πάντα φέρνει μεγάλες ευλογίες σε όποιον την εξασκεί, αναλόγως με την υπόσχεση Του Κυρίου. Ο Άγιος Δωροθέος της Γάζα μας διδάσκει για ένα άλλο είδος «δέκατου»—10% του χρόνου του κάθε Χριστιανού. Ο Άγιος Δωροθέος θεωρεί την ίδια την Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή ως έναν «δεκατισμό» και διδάσκει ότι η διάρκεια της Σαρακοστής είναι ακριβώς το ένα δέκατο του ημερολογιακού έτους. Στα γραφόμενα του εξηγεί ότι το νούμερο ημερών της Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής, από την Καθαρά Δευτέρα έως την Παρασκευή πριν από το Σάββατο του Λαζάρου (εφόσον τότε λήγει η Σαρακοστή, μια και η Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα είναι κανονικά χωριστή νηστεία) υπολογίζεται μαθηματικά να είναι το ένα-δέκατο όλου του έτους, και έτσι πρέπει να αφιερώνεται στον Θεό ως δέκατο. Αγαπητοί Χριστιανοί, αυτός είναι ένας πνευματικά υγιής τρόπος να σκεφτόμαστε την Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή:

«Η Σαρακοστή είναι μία μεγάλη ευκαιρία για τον άνθρωπο, ένας θαυμαστός καιρός ανανέωσης και συγκέντρωσης στα αιώνια, αντί για τα πρόσκαιρα γύρω μας που τελικά δεν έχουν νόημα—είναι προσωρινά και γρήγορα θα περάσουν. Ας προσπαθήσουμε να πλησιάσουμε Αυτόν, ο Οποίος μας έπλασε και μας αγαπά πέρα από ό,τι μπορούμε να κατανοήσουμε. Ας κάνουμε προσπάθεια να αγωνιστούμε περισσότερο, να στερηθούμε περισσότερο...»

Είναι Του Θεού. Ας δώσουμε Στον Θεό αυτό που Του ανήκει, τις μέρες της Σαρακοστής, όσο ολοκληρωτικά γίνεται.

Ας είμαστε ευσυνείδητοι. Ας αγωνιστούμε περισσότερο κατά τη Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή. Η Σαρακοστή είναι μία μεγάλη ευκαιρία για τον άνθρωπο, ένας θαυμαστός καιρός

ανανέωσης και συγκέντρωσης στα αιώνια, αντί για τα πρόσκαιρα γύρω μας που τελικά δεν έχουν νόημα—είναι προσωρινά και γρήγορα θα περάσουν. Ας προσπαθήσουμε να πλησιάσουμε



Αυτόν, ο Οποίος μας έπλασε και μας αγαπά πέρα από ό,τι μπορούμε να κατανοήσουμε. Ας κάνουμε προσπάθεια να αγωνιστούμε περισσότερο, να στερηθούμε περισσότερο. Οι πιστοί πρέπει να περιορίζουν τα ηλεκτρονικά, το διαδίκτυο, ή την τηλεόραση, και να χρησιμοποιούν την τεχνολογία μόνο για πολύ αναγκαίες ενασχολήσεις κατά την Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή. Όσο περισσότερο υστερηθείτε, τόσο περισσότερα θα κερδίσετε. Όσες περισσότερες θυσίες κάνετε, τόσο περισσότερο θα λάβετε την χάρη Του Θεού. Πως εκφράζουμε την αγάπη εμείς οι Χριστιανοί; Την εκφράζουμε με θυσίες. Ας δείξουμε στον Κύριο πως Τον αγαπούμε, Τον Θεάνθρωπο, που τέντωσε τα χέρια Του και καρφώθηκε επάνω στο Ξύλο Του Σταυρού για μας.

Το Ευαγγέλιο που διαβάζεται κατά τον Εσπερινό της Αγάπης, το Πάσχα, αναφέρεται στην «όγδοη ημέρα», που εννοεί την Κυριακή του Θωμά, δηλαδή το Πάσχα συν επτά μέρες. Αλλά υπάρχει και μια άλλη σημασία της

όγδοης. Οι Άγιοι Πατέρες αναφέρονται στην «όγδοη εποχή»—η δημιουργία πραγματοποιήθηκε σε επτά μέρες, και η «όγδοη» θεωρείται ο «μέλλοντας αιώνας».

Ο χωρισμός της ψυχής από το σώμα που συμβαίνει στην κοίμηση του ανθρώπου δεν είναι φυσικός—είναι συνιστώσα της πεσούσας φύσης μας, αποτέλεσμα της αμαρτίας. Στην Δευτέρα Παρουσία Του Κυρίου, δηλαδή όταν έρθει η όγδοη εποχή, τότε οι ψυχές και τα σώματα μας θα ξαναενωθούν στην Ανάσταση. Το Πάσχα, οι πύλες του Παραδείσου είναι ανοιχτές, και εν μέρει, μπορεί να χαρεί η ψυχή μια γεύση των μελλόντων αγαθών. Με άλλα λόγια, δια της Αναστάσεως Του Σωτήρος μας και της χαράς του Πάσχα, η ψυχή μας μπορεί να ρίξει μια ματιά στην μακάρια όγδοη εποχή από τώρα.

Πρέπει να ξεκινούμε την Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή πάντα με την συγχώρεση. Ως Μητροπολίτης σας, με την ευκαιρία αυτή, ζητώ συγχώρεση από όλους, και προσεύχομαι ο Κύριος να χαρίσει την συγχώρεση Του σε όλους. Όλα τα καλά που έχουν συμβεί στην Μητρόπολη μας είναι έργα Του Ελεήμονος Κυρίου μας, και ότι λάθη είναι εξαιτίας της δικής μας αδυναμίας. Είθε να έχετε όλοι μία πνευματικώς καρποφόρα Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή. Και σας παρακαλώ να θυμάστε, αγαπητά τέκνα, αφιέτε αυτά που πρέπει να αφιέτε: μην κρατάτε κακίες ή θυμό γιατί πρέπει να προφέρουμε με καθαρή συνείδηση το «... άφες ημίν τα οφειλήματα ημών, ως και ημείς αφήμεν τοις οφειλέταις ημών...» Είμαστε όλοι οφειλέταις ενώπιον Του Θεού. Ως εκ

«Πως εκφράζουμε την αγάπη εμείς οι Χριστιανοί; Την εκφράζουμε με θυσίες. Ας δείξουμε στον Κύριο πως Τον αγαπούμε, Τον Θεάνθρωπο, που τέντωσε τα χέρια Του και καρφώθηκε επάνω στο Ξύλο Του Σταυρού για μας...»

τούτου, ας κάνουμε μια καινούργια αρχή και να ξεκινήσουμε την αποπληρωμή του «χρέους» μας στον Θεό με αυτήν την εποχή, «το δέκατο» του Θεού που είναι η Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή.

Διάπυρος προς Χριστόν ευχέτης,
+ ο Αμερικής Δημήτριος

Lenten Message: *Stand in Fervent Prayer* Cont'd from p.5

us try to struggle more, to give up more. The faithful should limit access to television or the internet, and use technology only for important necessities during Great Lent. The more you give up, the more you gain. The more sacrifices we make, the more we will receive God's grace. How do we Christians express love? Through sacrifice. Let us show our Lord that we love Him, the Godman, Who stretched out His arms on the Tree for us.

The Gospel that we read during Agapi Vespers, on Pascha, refers to the "eighth day," meaning Pascha plus seven days, which is

"How do we Christians express love? Through sacrifice. Let us show our Lord that we love Him, the Godman, Who stretched out His arms on the Tree for us..."

Thomas Sunday. There is another significance to this. The Holy Fathers refer to the "eighth age"—the world's creation was accomplished in seven days, and the eighth age is the "age to come." The separation between body and soul that occurs at our repose is not natural; it is a component of our fallen nature, a result of sin. At the Second Coming of the Lord, that is,

when the eighth age comes, then our souls and bodies will be reunited at the Resurrection. On Pascha, the doors of Paradise are opened, and in part, we can have a "preview of coming attractions" so to speak. In other words, through our Savior's Resurrection and the joy of Pascha, we can glimpse, in part, that blessed eighth age.



"This is a great opportunity, and a wondrous time of spiritual rejuvenation and focus on the eternal, rather than on the earthly concerns all around us, which are ultimately meaningless—they are temporary and will quickly pass away. Let us try to draw closer to Him, Who created us and loves us beyond comprehension. Let us try to struggle more, to give up more..."

Every Orthodox Christian begins Great Lent with forgiveness. As your Metropolitan, I want to take this opportunity to ask forgiveness from everyone, and I pray that our Lord bestow forgiveness on everyone. Whatever good has been done in our Metropolis is the work of our merciful Lord; whatever mistakes have been made are because of our frailty. I pray that you all have a soul-profiting Great Lent. And please remember, dear faithful, to let go of the things that you need to let go of: do not hold on to grudges or anger because we must utter with a clear conscience "...Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We are all debtors to the Lord. Therefore, let us make a new beginning in paying off our "debt" with this season, our "tithe" of Great Lent.

Your fervent intercessor before Christ,
+ Demetrius of America

Editor's Note: The Ask His Eminence column was not published in this issue, since multiple reader questions concerned Great Lent /fasting, and were answered by the Metropolitan's Message. Questions for His Eminence? Please mail to: The Spiritual Watch, c/o St. John's Monastery, 151 Heron Road, Cobleskill, NY 12043, or email: KeepSpiritualWatch@gmail.com

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