



## Catechetical Homily For Holy and Great Lent

"Behold, now is the favorable time, now is the time of salvation." (2 Cor. 6.2)

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Our Orthodox Church recommends that, during this period of Great Lent, we focus our attention toward sincere repentance, "the melting pot of sin," according to St. John Chrysostom. Repentance is the first topic of our Lord Jesus Christ's preaching and the very essence of the Christian teaching. It is the Church's daily invitation to us all.

Despite this, many of us have not truly experienced repentance. We sometimes feel that it does not concern us personally because we do have not "come to ourselves" in order to comprehend and contemplate how we may have committed any sin. However, as we are taught by the wise teacher of the spiritual life, Abba Isaac the Syrian, and as most of the Church Fathers proclaim through experience, "repentance is necessary even for the perfect." This is because repentance does not merely signify remorse for our sins and the consequent decision no longer to repeat them, but it also implies a change of our attitudes toward what is better so that we acquire constant improvement before God and the world, as well as continuous increase in love and humility, purification and peace.

In this sense, repentance is an unending journey toward divine perfection, to which we must at all times aim and move. Indeed, since God's perfection is boundless, our way toward its likeness must also be boundless and endless. There is always a level of perfection beyond what we have achieved, and so we must constantly seek spiritual progress and transformation, as urged by St. Paul, who ascended to the third heaven and beheld the ineffable mysteries: "*And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*" (2 Cor. 3.18)

The more our internal world is cleansed, the more our spiritual eye is purified, the more clearly we see ourselves and everything around us. Moreover, this change - namely, the improvement in our vision of the reality of this world and the spiritual condition of ourselves - is precisely what repentance is all about. Repentance is a renewed and improved state of spirit, of the condition where we presently find ourselves. Accordingly, then, repentance is the fundamental presupposition of spiritual progress and of acquiring likeness toward God.

In order, of course, for repentance to be genuine, it must also be accompanied by the appropriate fruits, especially forgiveness of and charity toward others. The basic criterion of sincere repentance is that our heart is moved toward acceptance of our fellow human beings and response to their needs as much as can. After all, the way of repentance is recognition and confession of our sins, no longer holding grudges against others, praying with warmth and integrity, as well as mercifulness, humility, love toward all people, victory of good over evil, avoiding vainglory and arrogance, which immediately withers away everything.

This struggle within our soul is revealed in "*the difference between the publican and the Pharisee . . .*" which is an invitation to "*despise the proud voice of the latter, while envying the contrite prayer of the former,*" even as we fervently pray with tears "*that God may take pity on us sinners and have mercy on us.*"

The period of Great Lent that is upon us is an opportunity, in the midst of a widespread and global financial crisis, to demonstrate our material and spiritual assistance toward other people. When we act charitably and manifest our repentance in practice - moving from an individualistic and pharisaic way of life to a collective and altruistic way of life, like the publican - then we shall realize the great benefit of repentance and conversion, while also experiencing repentance as a vital transition from the sin of self-centeredness and vainglory to the virtue of love, "aspiring to the humility and attitude of the publican, who deserved God's mercy."

From the Patriarchal Throne of St. John Chrysostom, who both preached and practiced such repentance, as we enter this salvific period of purification of heart and soul in order to welcome the Passion, Cross, Burial and Resurrection of our Lord, not just in rituals and words but also in practice and experience, we too as his unworthy successor urge, entreat and beseech you: "Acquire repentance by becoming new people, by renouncing the old nature of sinfulness and acquiring newness of life . . . For that is where the fullness of divine grace lies."

Behold, then, beloved brothers and sisters, a favorable time "of mourning" opens up before us, an arena of vigilance and discipline, so that "*before the theater of this life passes, we may care for our salvation*" with sincere and tangible repentance for all "*our sins, wrongdoings, and injustices . . . without adhering to or doing what we have been commanded*" by the Lord, so that Christ our God, "who is present everywhere and fills all things, may care for us" in His great and inscrutable mercy.

May His saving grace be with you all.

*Holy and Great Lent 2014  
† Bartholomew of Constantinople  
Fervent supplicant for all before God*

## PASTORAL VISIT IN LIEGE (BELGIUM)

IN THE 13TH AND 14TH OF FEBRUARY 2014, ARCHBISHOP JOB MADE A PASTORAL VISIT TO BELGIUM, TO THE PARISH OF SAINT ALEXANDER NEVSKY IN LIÈGE, WHERE HE PRESIDED THE VIGIL AND DIVINE LITURGY FOR THE FEAST OF THE MEETING OF OUR LORD GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST (OLD CALENDAR), ALONG WITH PRIESTS OF THE DEANERY OF BELGIUM INCLUDING DEAN FATHER GUY (FONTAINE); FATHER THEODORE (VAN DER VOORT), DEAN OF THE NETHERLANDS, AND THE PRIESTS OF THE METROPOLIS OF BELGIUM AND OF THE CHURCH OF ROMANIA.

Eleven priests and two deacons concelebrated the Divine Liturgy presided by Bishop Job, among them the Greek and Romanian priests, as well as representatives of other Christian churches (Anglican, Catholic, Protestant, Syriac). This pastoral visit in Liège, the new Archbishop's first in Belgium, was an event that exceeded the limits of the parish.

A parishioner, Serge Maraites testifies :

Our little Church in Liège Became a Cathedral

Over the past two years, His Eminence Gabriel of eternal memory, would come to pray with us, as a pastor and neighbour (he received his medical care in Maastricht) more frequently than before. As former rector of the parish, some of us knew him very well.

This Saturday morning, the day of the feast of the Presentation of Christ at the Temple, many black cassocks could be seen moving about the Church in preparation for the feast: all the



clergy of the Deanery as well as our neighbouring Orthodox priests (Greek and Romanian) came to celebrate.

And then Vladyka arrived. For many of us, this was the very first time meeting him. I suddenly realized how time has gone by. I'm older than he is!

The service was pontifical and solemn. The delegation from Paris and the many concelebrants was new to us, but everything went smoothly. It was a beautiful service, and the words expressed by His Eminence called us, like the old Symeon, to be Christophores, to carry Christ in our lives and in the world.

Perhaps my only regret is that His Eminence's stay was so full of meetings and visits that the parishioners really didn't have the time to get to know him themselves.

But there will be other occasions!

Ispola eti Despota!

## SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY IN PARIS

AS TRADITIONALLY THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY WAS CELEBRATED AT THE GREEK CATHEDRAL IN PARIS. IN THE ABSENCE OF THE BISHOPS WHO WERE IN CONSTANTINOPLE FOR THE SYNAXIS OF THE ORTHODOX PRIMATES. IS THE HIGUMEN ELISHA OF OUR EXARCHATE WHO PRESIDED AT THE DIVINE LITURGY SURROUNDED BY ARCHIMANDRITE AMPHILOKIOS (OF THE SAINT STEPHEN CATHEDRAL, GREEK METROPOLIS OF FRANCE), THE ARCHIMANDRITE ANTOINE (PARISH SAINTE TAMARA IN VILLENEUVE-ST-GEORGES;) PATRIARCHATE OF GEORGIA) AND THE HIEROMONK EULOGIUS (GREEK METROPOLIS OF FRANCE).

The choir of the Cathedral Saint Stephen sang and the choir of the Russian seminar in France (who sang in Church Slavonic and french) and the Georgian Ste Tamara parish choir.

Reverend Fathers, dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

« Follow me. » These words said by Jesus Christ that we heard in today's Gospel, are addressed as much to Philip as to us..., provided that we are capable, like Nathanael, of making a deed of faith and of answering to the Lord directly, without hesitation, : « You are the Son of God! » But what does it mean, to follow Jesus Christ? How can we follow Him today, in our present world, as we are?

## PASTORAL ASSEMBLY

Thursday, may 1

Please remember from now the pastoral meeting Thursday, may 1 Paris.

1st May meeting of wives of priests  
« Matouchky »

Diocesan pilgrimage

Friday, may 2

programs in the next newsletter



First of all, to follow Jesus Christ means to be able to confess our faith, as did those who, further to the iconoclastic crisis, proclaimed that it is rightful to worship holy images; an event commemorated today by the Church.

During more than a century, the iconoclast crisis sparked off successive waves of violence and persecutions within the Church; it opposed two different concepts of worship of images. On one side, there were those who – mistakenly – pretended that worship of images is a heresy, because icons are matter: they create a separation or confusion between both divine and human natures of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the Church proclaimed another concept, supported by Saint John of Damascus who advocated this noble cause: that icons are the visible signs of matter's sanctification rendered possible by Jesus Christ's incarnation.

Iconoclasm was condemned as a heresy in 787 during the Nicaea Council; however, this did not prevent Leon V the Armenian from launching new attacks against worship of holy images; it is Empress Theodora who put a final end to them. It so happened that the final victory of icon worship, named the "the Triumph of Orthodoxy" was ratified in 843 on the first Sunday of Great Lent: worship of icons was restored and their spiritual value was reaffirmed, however not to be confused with the adoration due to God only.

In his book "Encountering the Mystery", his Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew teaches us that icons must be considered "by definition as the expression of a relational theology"; indeed, icons are sacred because they are a meeting place between God and man. Whoever they represent, be it Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, a saint or a biblical event, any icon becomes a ray of divine light: God Himself is the ultimate origin and goal to which any icon refers.

It would be an understatement to say that icons play a primordial role when we pray, be it by ourselves or in the Church community.

Icon worship stimulates our sense of touch, thus enabling all our body to participate fully in our prayer, to become its tool. Icon worship means really to venerate Jesus Christ Himself, in the same way that some women did it in the Gospel with a holy and healthy audacity: the Myrrh bearers who grasped the feet of Jesus-Christ resurrected; the repentant sinner who poured perfumed oil on the Saviour; or the woman afflicted with a haemorrhage, who simply touched – actually just grazed – Jesus Christ, drawing his attention and gaining recovery by her daring.

To worship an icon means touching Jesus Christ and allowing Him to touch us, to make Him prevail in and throughout our life.

Indeed, what is the ultimate meaning of the "Triumph of Orthodoxy" if not to fight the right fight of faith, following the example of the Church Fathers who fought for faith; to fight our own spiritual fight, by our prayer and our personal asceticism?

This is the reason why all conciliary dogma, including the worship of holy images, all our fights in the name of Jesus Christ, in love, truth and perseverance, are the "triumph of Orthodoxy" and create it: they prove that the power of Jesus Christ's Resurrection can transfigure our nature already in this world.

To be a Christian does not simply mean to wait for the Glory to come at the end of time; but also to know that our flesh can be sanctified, glorified and deified even now, by the power of the divine energies, given and offered to us by Jesus-Christ resurrected, provided that our heart is ready to receive them.

Dear brothers and sisters, I'd like to go back to what has been read in today's Epistle. If we want to follow Jesus-Christ, if we want to live as Christians in the modern world (which is often very hostile against everything connected with faith), we must be ready to be like Moses and David who suffered, like those who endured all sorts of persecutions; but whose faith defeated the world.

Let us never despair in our spiritual struggle when we fall; let us be humble enough to allow Jesus Christ to pick us up; then, in spirit and in truth, we shall become living icons of His Resurrection, "for the life of the world".

The Great Lent that just started will help us; may it bring us spiritual fertility, and may we make this prayer our own: "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and I shall be healed!"

Amen

*Father Elisha, Cathedral saint Stephen-Paris, 5 march*

## WEEK-END for YOUNG ADULTS

in GERMANY (78597 Irndorf)

25-27 April 2014

« You are the salt of the earth »

Mat 5, 13

How do I live as an Orthodox Christian in a largely secular influenced society?

More : [info@orthodoxekirche-albstadt.de](mailto:info@orthodoxekirche-albstadt.de)



## SYNAXIS OF THE PRIMATES OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES (PHANAR, MARCH 6-9, 2014)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Through the grace of God, the Primates of the Most Holy Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, to the Orthodox faithful throughout the world, all of our Christian brothers and sisters as well as every person of goodwill: we extend God's blessing and our greeting of love and peace.

*"We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 1.2-3)*

1. Having convened by the grace of our compassionate God, at the invitation of the Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, at the Phanar, from March 6-9, 2014; having deliberated in fraternal love on matters concerning our Holy Church today; and concelebrating in the Patriarchal Church of St. George on the glorious occasion of the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we address you with these words of love, peace and consolation.

Inasmuch as our One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Orthodox Church dwells in the world, it also experiences the challenges of every age. Faithful to Holy Tradition, the Church of Christ is in constant dialogue with every period of time, suffering with human beings and sharing their anguish. For "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and to the ages" (Heb. 13.8).

The trials and challenges of history are especially acute in our days, and Orthodox Christians cannot remain uninvolved or indifferent to them. This is why we have assembled "together in one place" (Acts 2.1) in order to reflect on the problems and temptations facing humanity today. "There is fighting without and fear within." (2 Cor. 7.5) These Apostolic words are also valid for the Church today.

2. In reflecting upon people's suffering throughout the world, we express our support for the martyrdom and our admiration for the witness of Christians in the Middle East, Africa, and other parts of the world. We call to mind their dual martyrdom: for their faith as well as for the safeguarding of their historical relationship with people of other religious conviction. We denounce the lack of peace and stability, which is prompting

Christians to abandon the land where our Lord Jesus Christ was born and whence the Good News spread to the entire world.

Our sympathy extends to all victims of the tragedy in Syria. We condemn every form of terrorism and defamation of religion. The kidnapping of Metropolitans Paul and Youhanna, other clergymen as well as the nuns of St. Thecla Convent in Maaloula remains an open wound, and we demand their immediate liberation.

We appeal to all involved for the immediate cessation of military action, liberation of captives, and establishment of peace in the region through dialogue. Christians in the Middle East are a leaven of peace. Peace for all people also means peace for Christians. We support the Patriarchate of Antioch in its spiritual and humanitarian ministry, as well as its efforts for reconstruction and the resettlement of all refugees.

3. We fervently pray for peaceful negotiation and prayerful reconciliation in the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. We denounce the threats of violent occupation of sacred monasteries and churches, and pray for the return of our brothers presently outside of ecclesiastical communion into the Holy Church.

4. A fundamental threat to justice and peace – both locally and globally – is the global economic crisis. The ramifications of this are evident on all layers in society, where such values as personal integrity, fraternal solidarity and justice are often wanting. The origins of this crisis are not merely financial. They are moral and spiritual in character. Instead of conforming to the worldly idols of power, greed and hedonism, we emphasize our

# FREEDOM IN CHRIST

WORKSHOPS

- Introduction to icon painting
- Singing in parishes
- Drama : Playreading
- Statutes in the parish
- Putting services together

ALSO

- Childcare and rest
- Discussion groups
- Liturgy with Archbishop Job
- Social time and networking

KEY SPEAKERS

- Karin Greenhead
- Fr. David Gill
- Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff
- Fr. Christopher Knight
- Irina von Schlippe
- Dr. Peter Scorer



Deanery of Great Britain & Ireland  
Annual Conference & Festival 2014

Fri 23- Mon 26<sup>th</sup> May 2014  
High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts  
[www.easarchdiocese.org.uk/conference2014](http://www.easarchdiocese.org.uk/conference2014)

vocation to transform the world by embracing the principles of justice, peace, and love.

As a result of self-centeredness and abuse of power, many people undermine the sacredness of the human person, neglecting to see the face of God in the least of our brothers and sisters (cf. Matt. 25.40,45). Many remain indifferent to the poverty, suffering and violence that plague humanity.

5. The Church is called to articulate its prophetic word. We express our genuine concern about local and global trends that undermine and erode the principles of faith, the dignity of the human person, the institution of marriage, and the gift of creation.

We stress the undisputed sanctity of human life from inception until natural death. We recognize marriage as the union of man and woman that reflects the union between Christ and His Church. Our vocation is to preserve the natural environment as stewards and not proprietors of creation. In this period of Great Lent, we exhort our clergy and laity to observe a spirit of repentance, to experience purity of heart, humility and forgiveness, bearing witness to the timeless teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ in society.

6. This Synaxis of Primates is a blessed occasion for us to reinforce our unity through communion and cooperation. We affirm our commitment to the paramount importance of synodality for the unity of the Church. We affirm the words of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, that "the name of the Church signifies unity and concord, not division." Our heart is set on the long-awaited Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church in order to witness to its unity as well as to its responsibility and care for the contemporary world.

The Synaxis agreed that the preparatory work to the Synod should be intensified. A special Inter-Orthodox Committee will work from September 2014 until Holy Easter of 2015, followed by a Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Conference to be convened in the first half of 2015. All decisions at the Synod and in the preparatory stages are made by consensus. The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church will be convened by the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople in 2016, unless something unexpected occurs. The Synod will be presided by the Ecumenical Patriarch. His brother Primates of the other Orthodox Autocephalous Churches will be seated at his right and at his left.

**Pilgrimage to the Holy Land**  
**20 to 30 October 2014**  
*with the participation of Archbishop Job*  
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7. Inseparably interconnected with unity is mission. The Church does not live for itself but is obliged to witness to and share God's gifts with those near and afar. Participating in the Divine Eucharist and praying for the oikoumene, we are called to continue this liturgy after the liturgy, sharing the gifts of truth and love with all humankind, in accordance with the Lord's last commandment and assurance: "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations . . . And lo, I shall be with you until the end of the ages" (Matt. 28.19-20).

8. We live in a world where multiculturalism and pluralism are inevitable realities, which are constantly changing. We are conscious of the fact that no issue in our time can be considered or resolved without reference to the global, that any polarization between the local and the ecumenical only leads to distortion of the Orthodox way of thinking.

Therefore, even in the face of voices of dissension, segregation, and division, we are determined to proclaim the message of Orthodoxy. We acknowledge that dialogue is always better than conflict. Withdrawal and isolationism are never options. We reaffirm our obligation at all times to be open in our contact with "the other": with other people and other cultures, as well as with other Christians and people of other faiths.

9. Above and beyond all challenges, we proclaim the good news of a God, who "so loved the world" that He "dwelt among us." Thus, we Orthodox remain full of hope. Despite all tensions, we nevertheless dare to hope in the "almighty God, who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1.8) For we remember that the last word – the word of joy, love, and life – belongs to Him, to whom is due all glory, honor and worship to the ages of ages. Amen.

*At the Phanar, the 9th of March, 2014  
+ Bartholomew of Constantinople  
+ Theodoros of Alexandria, + Theophilos of Jerusalem, + Kirill of  
Moscow, + Irinej of Serbia, + Daniel of Romania, + Neophyte of  
Bulgaria, + Ilia of Georgia, + Chrysostomos of Cyprus, + Ieronymos of  
Athens, + Sawa of Warsaw + Anastasios of Tirana*

Session de la Dormition 2014  
à Fenouillet



La session de la Dormition 2014 aura lieu à Fenouillet  
du 9 au 16 août 2014  
Programme :  
tous les jours : matines à 8h30  
Conférences les 11, 12 et 13 août  
avec Père Jean Guet et Michel Stavrou  
Pannikhida sur la tombe d'Olivier Clément le 14 août

Liturgie de la Dormition le 15 août  
Voir le programme complet sur le site  
<http://sites.google.com/site/amisdefenouillet>

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