

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III AT A PASTORAL TELE- COMMUNICATION WITH THE FLOCK OF JORDAN

On Tuesday, 24 February /9 March 2021, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos had a pastoral telecommunication through zoom with His Eminence Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis and the Clergy of Jordan.

The opening of the teleconference was done by His Beatitude with the following address:

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12); Saint Paul advises his disciple Timothy and through him, every single one of the Pastors of Christ’s Church.

Beloved Brethren in Christ and Reverend Fathers,

By the grace of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, we have entered the preliminary period of the Great Lent, leading to the Holy Pascha. This is linked to the Book ‘Triodion’ of the Church, where, in a form of advising hymns, we hear the redeeming and divine words of the Holy Scriptures, along with the words of the Holy Fathers, the great and God-inspired teachers and theologians of the Church.

The Book of “Triodion” and the preliminary stage of Lent begins with the known Gospel parables of the Lord about “The Publican and the Pharisee” and of “The Prodigal Son”. Denoted in these parables are the basic virtues of the Christian

faith, 'humility' and 'repentance', which guide man to the light of Christ's truth.

To the reasonable question, 'what is humility?' the holy writers of the New Testament answer referring to the Prophet Isaiah who says: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he, not his mouth... In his humiliation, his judgment was taken away" (Acts 8:32-33, Isaiah 53:7-8). In other words, the righteousness of Christ was elevated through His humility, as Saint Paul preaches: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim. 3:16).

And according to Saint John of the Ladder, humility, which is revealed in a mystic way and abolishes the passions, is "the anonymous grace of the soul, which can be named only by those who have experienced it. It is an unspeakable wealth, the name of God, a gift of God, since He says: 'Learn not by an Angel, nor by any man, but by me', meaning, by my habitation in you, and my illumination and energy within you, "for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29).

As for the question; "what is repentance?", the Holy writers answer again through the Lord's words: "And Jesus answering said unto them [the Pharisees], They that are whole need, not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32). Interpreting these words, Saint Theophylactos says: "I have not come to call the righteous, namely, us who justify ourselves on our own, but I have come to call the sinners, so that they will not remain in sin, but are led to repentance".

According to Saint Chrysostom, repentance is the medicine to our salvation. Repentance is not only preached by words but confirmed by actions, washing away the filth of irreverence". Let us also hear the words of Saint John of the Ladder: "Repentance is the renewal of baptism. Repentance is an

agreement with God for a new life. Repentance is the buyer of humility. Repentance is the thought of self-condemnation; carelessness for all things and care for the salvation of ourselves. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. To be repentant means to be a convict free from shame".

From the above, it is shown that through repentance, the Prodigal Son became the buyer of the Publican's humility, while through his humility, the Publican became the buyer of the Prodigal Son's repentance.

Beloved Fathers and Brethren, your Priestly Assembly under our Bishop and Patriarchal Representative in Amman, and through him, under Our Mediocrity, is not a simple gathering, but "a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12), of the unity in Christ of our Holy Church and of our good works, as the Bible says: "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2: 12-17).

Precisely because God's will is our freedom, which we gained through our baptism, the God-inspired Church Fathers established the period of the Holy Lent, in order to prevent us from despair and indolence. "Despair leads us to worse things than indolence," Saint Chrysostom says. And despair makes man a slave of his sin and discourages him from following the path of freedom, namely the Pascha of his co-

resurrection with Christ. "For even Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7), Saint Paul preaches. Again, Saint Paul urges us: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col.3:1-3).

Dear holy Fathers and Brethren, the infinite mercy of God and the Grace of the Holy Spirit have made us workers in the vineyard and ministers of the ark of salvation, which is His Church, in order to "rule well, and be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. 5:17-18). This is also our Priesthood's mission, as shepherds of logical sheep, so that we may "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15), applying the words of the Gospel and fighting the good fight of our Orthodox faith, and confessing Christ, Crucified and Resurrected from the dead, especially at the current crucial time of the Covid-19 pandemic plague.

Let us entreat the physician of our souls and bodies, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, that through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, we may be deemed worthy to go through the period of the Blessed Great Lent, in fasting, repentance and humility, and be granted the vision of the glory of the Unweaning Light of the luminous Resurrection of our Saviour Christ; the might of His Kingdom be blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen!"

Further to this communication, Archbishop Christophoros and the Clergy informed His Beatitude on the matters of the flock of Jordan, under the shadow of the covid-19 pandemic, and received His instructions on overcoming the difficulties and achieving spiritual progress and social improvement of the services helping the flock. Instructions both spiritual and

material, for the benefit of the souls of the faithful, especially now, at the beginning of the beneficial fast of the Great Lent.

From Secretariat-General