

My Beloved Ones,

*“Once you were no people but now you are God’s people;
once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.”
(1 Peter 2:10)*

We have started the special period of the year that we call the Triodion, which naturally consists of three parts. The first part makes up the three weeks from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, to the Sunday before Great Lent. The second part of the Triodion takes us from the beginning of Great Lent with Clean Monday, to the Saturday of Lazarus. The third and final part of Triodion takes us from Palm Sunday, through Holy Week, ending with the service of the Lord’s Resurrection on Holy Saturday.

This special season has been handed down from the Church, in order for us to become closer to our God and Creator. First, we must begin to think more about ourselves in our relationship to God, to examine ourselves: what are we doing, and why are we doing that? If we are doing something bad, we have to stop that behavior. If we are doing something good, we have to see how we can increase that.

There is nothing we can do without the mercy of God. We must constantly, feel, think and act, in order to find ourselves on the path that leads to God, and then God’s mercy will be given to us. God is our Father who loves us, and out of love wants his children to constantly think of him, and be with him.

One of the tools in order to protect ourselves, to watch ourselves, and to grow closer to God, is prayer. It is not enough to stand in front of the icons in the morning and the evening and say a prayer—prayer is constantly thinking about God.

That is why the Church has created a wonderful and very small prayer that we can mention all the hours and the minutes of the day. This prayer is not something that we simply do once, but something that we can do all the time throughout the course of the year. For this reason, the Fathers tell us of the wonder of the Jesus Prayer: **Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

With this prayer we are not asking God for anything. We are not simply stating what we need, thinking, “He has to help us.” Rather, the Jesus Prayer keeps us closer to God, and when we are closer to God, he knows what we need, and he will provide.

So let’s try, this time of year that we call the Triodion, to live, prayerfully, in such a way that we constantly thinking of how to get closer to Almighty God.

Amen.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

