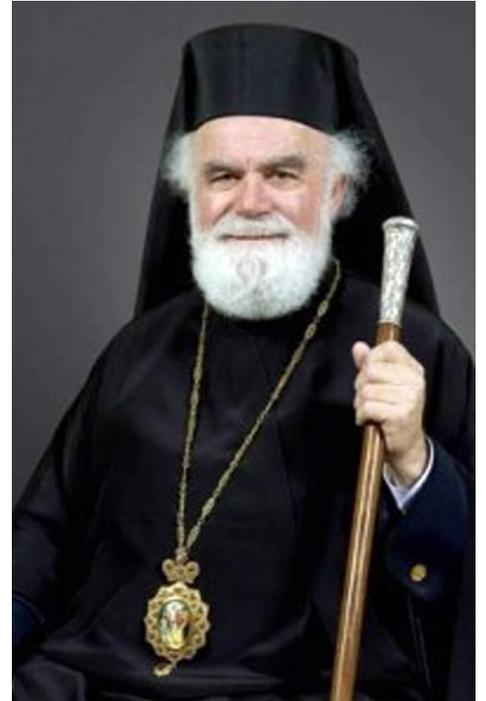


My Beloved Ones,

As we continue through the time of the year that is called the Triodion, I call upon all of us to reflect on the spiritual exercises that we have been given thus far to help us as we prepare for our Lenten journey. Just as an athlete does not compete without first preparing him or herself physically, the Church Fathers have given to us the Triodion as a form of “spiritual stretching”. They understand that with 40 days, Great Lent can often appear to be a marathon—especially for those who are not ready.

And just what are the spiritual exercises we have gained? From the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, we can understand what it means to be truly humble. From the parable of the Prodigal Son, we are meant to recall forgiveness: the eternal forgiveness of our Father; the importance of approaching Him with a contrite heart; as well as forgiving our own brother. And this week, with the Parable of the Last Judgement, we are asked to think about what it truly means to love our neighbor.



Our Lord teaches us in a parable: when He returns in all His glory, He will divide the world into the sheep, on His right, and the goats, on His left. The sheep He will welcome into His Father’s Kingdom—for they gave Him shelter and greeted Him as a stranger; they offered Him food and drink; they clothed Him, visited Him in prison and nursed Him to health. To the goats on His left he will echo these things, which they did not do. And both groups, the sheep and goats alike, will be astonished—for when did they meet the King of All? And the King shall respond, that if they took in the least of their brothers and sisters—or if they saw suffering and passed it by, they have treated Christ in the same manner.

My brothers and sisters, consider that these choices play out in our world every day, and it seems now more than ever. Truly, we will be called to account for that what we did or did not do—and we will receive our reward accordingly. However, far from fear of punishment, or cherishing the possibility of a reward, we should consider what behavior would Christ have exhibited. If we are to truly emulate the Life and Teachings of our Lord, the example has already been given to us.

Repentance, forgiveness and compassion. These three weeks give to us three of the central tenants of Christ’s Gospel, and they are traits that will allow us to be more patient, loving and merciful, both to ourselves and to our fellow man; not only during Great Lent, but through the rest of “the race” that are our lives here on this earth.

+ALEXIOS

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