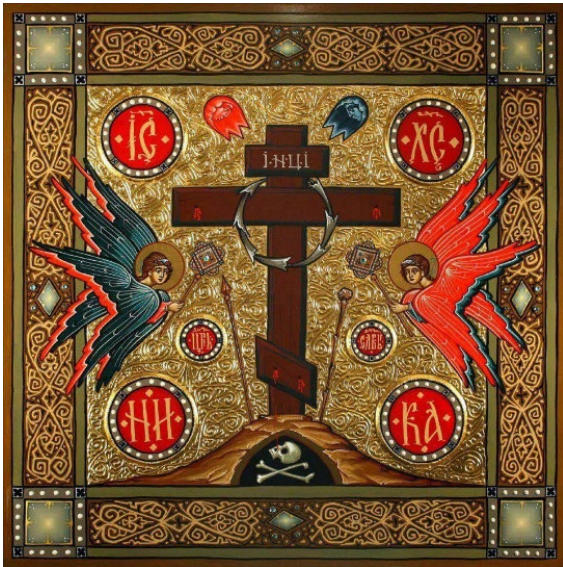


Archpastoral Letter for the Beginning of Great Lent 2022

March 7/February 22, 2022



To the beloved clergy, religious, and faithful of the Russian True Orthodox Church, Archdiocese of North America & the Diaspora--mercy, peace, and love be yours in ever-greater measure.

As we begin our preparation for Great Lent each year, a unique occurrence is found in the Matins Service for the Sundays of the Prodigal Son, Meatfare, and Cheesefare. Psalm 137 is added to the service, which begins, “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.” It is a song of exile and return. It mourns all that the Israelites had lost in the Babylonian captivity and shows their longing to return home. It is no wonder that it begins on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, itself a story of loss and exile, with the beautiful image of the return home as its conclusion.

Today, this psalm is sung as a reminder to us of all that is lost throughout the year due to our own actions or inactions. It serves as a reminder that even in our darkest times there is always a way home. The road home, however, begins with us.

Every year, the Church gives us this period of pause, remembrance, and renewal to remind us of the need for self-awareness, for repentance, and for forgiveness. There is no one among us, try as we might, who is able to make it through the year without sin. Whether our sin takes the form of something great or small it remains a way in which we have hurt ourselves, have hurt others, and have damaged our relationship with God. These transgressions, however, do not have to define us. We have a choice. We can choose to remain on the shores of the Babylon, lamenting our loss and resigning ourselves to this present state of life or we can get up and begin the journey that leads us home.

Lent is all about that journey, and the brave souls who choose to embark upon it. Today, as we begin the time of the Fast, let us all rise up and choose to make the journey home. For some, it might be a particularly long and arduous one, for others, not so much. But wherever we fall in that spectrum, we must always remember that we’re not alone. We are united with one another on this road and we always have a strong hand to grasp for those times when we think we might fall.

May the road upon which we embark today be our first steps that lead us to that heavenly Zion, for which we long.

With the bestowal of our blessings and prayers for all of you, we remain

Sincerely in Christ,

+ALEXY

Metropolitan and First Hierarch of the Russian True Orthodox Church-MM
Archbishop of Minneapolis and Chicago

+HARALAMPOS

Archbishop of Dallas and Texas

+NICHOLAS

Bishop of Edenborn

Vicar for the Archdiocese of North America & the Diaspora