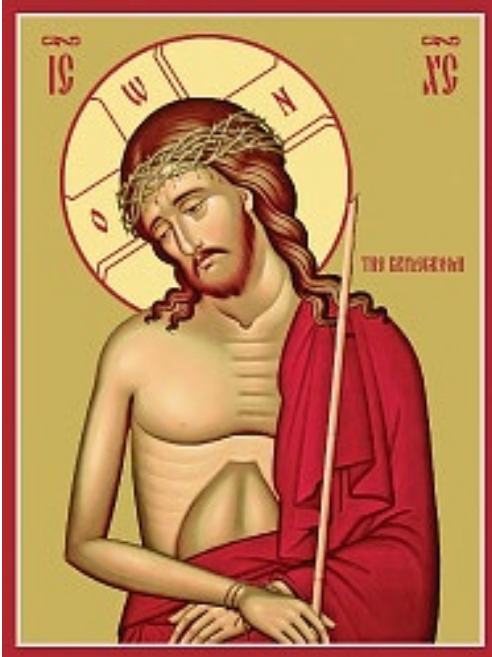


Archpastoral Letter for the Beginning of Great Lent 2023

February 27/14, 2023



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

“Behold, now is the favorable time, the season of conversion. Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us robe ourselves with the armor of light, so that having crossed the ocean of the Fast, we may reach the harbor of the Resurrection on the third day with our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.”

-Aposticha from Vespers on Cheesefare Sunday Evening

As the above verse so beautifully reminds us, we do indeed embark upon a journey today. It is one that can truly be frightening and filled with unexpected twists and turns as the waves of our past sins and failures on the road to eternity come crashing down upon us. It is indeed a struggle between the forces of darkness and light that are within us. The challenge is to see just how much we can let that light shine within us this season. For those of us who put our heart and soul into this period of preparation and renewal the

weight can be heavy as we look at ourselves with eyes wide open and see that perhaps we have not lived up to our great calling as Christians, as we realize that we are not the person we want to be.

The good news, however, is that we don't have to let fear, or sorrow, or shame overtake us. While the storms of regret or embarrassment may rage all around us as we open ourselves to the truth, we're comforted in the knowledge that the ship is strong and will lead us safely to harbor, because Christ himself is that ship, and there is nothing that can destroy Him. In a world where we're constantly encouraged to take charge, it's difficult to surrender ourselves to someone else. But, when we give ourselves to Him, in all our weakness, in our humanity he can take the person that we are right now and make of us more than we ever imagined.

There is no one among us who is perfect. We all stumble and fall along the way to salvation. Some of us in very noticeable ways and others, perhaps, only in small ways. Regardless of where we fall on that spectrum, however, each of us is challenged to grow and change every day of our lives, but most especially during these forty days of the Fast. Today, let us board the ship and make that journey of discovery, of change, of growth in Christ, so that at the end of these days we may confidently drop anchor and step out into the celebration of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord.

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

Sincerely in Christ,

+ALEXY

Metropolitan and First Hierarch of the True Orthodox Church of the Diaspora
Archbishop of Minneapolis

+HARALAMPOS

Archbishop of Dallas and Texas

+NICHOLAS

Bishop of Edenborn

Vicar for the Archdiocese of North America & the Diaspora