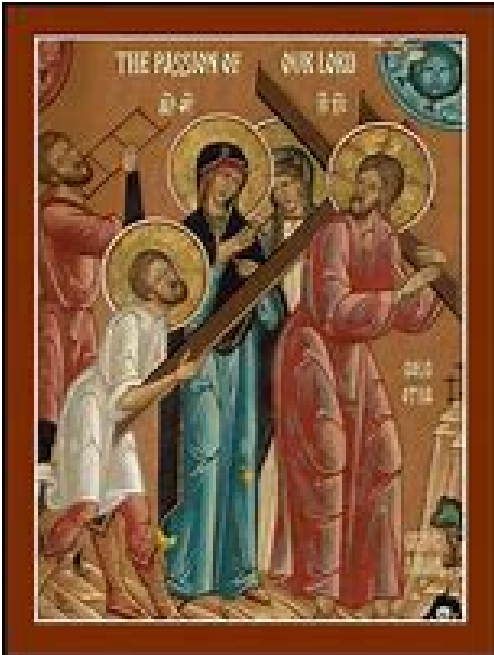


Archpastoral Letter for the Beginning of Great Lent 2024

March 18/5, 2024



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

“Behold, the season of virtue has come, and the judge is at the door. Let us not put on a gloomy face, but let us keep the Fast, offering tears, contrition, and almsgiving; and let us cry: Our sins are more numerous than the sands of the sea; but, Deliverer of All, forgive each one of us, that we may receive an incorruptible crown.”

-Matins for Cheesefare Sunday

Once again, we find ourselves standing at the threshold of the door to repentance and forgiveness. The door is wide open, but we have a choice to make. Do we, with joy, cross the threshold or do we remain outside, too frightened, too prideful, or too ashamed to enter? This is a decision that no one else can make for us because true repentance can only come from within. It can never be forced upon us.

For those of us brave enough to enter this season willingly, and put in the work, we know that it will not be an easy time, but it will be one of great reward when we finally reach the Day that we long to see in all its radiance.

The Fast is not an ode to some archaic rule, nor is it some sort of experiment in food deprivation. It is a time when we're called to look honestly at ourselves, to take the things that have hindered us from progressing on our journey and remove them from our lives. Abstaining from certain foods is prescribed only to provide us with a sense of discipline so that if we can conquer the small temptations, we can avoid larger ones when they come our way. As St. Paul and the Fathers remind us, it is not what goes into our mouths that is sinful, but rather what comes out of them. This holy time allows us to refocus our energies. We're called upon to not look around us at the sins or faults of others, but to see them in ourselves. More important than abstaining from foods is abstaining from gossip, jealousy, evil speech, anger, pride, and all those things that keep us from being the image of God that we are all created to be. It is only by recapturing that original beauty, and allowing it to shine from within us that we can joyfully greet the Lord and each other on the great day of the Resurrection.

Today, let us walk through that door with courage and with the resolve that when we exit, we will no longer be the same as we were when we entered. Restored and renewed, may we have Christ living in our hearts and radiating from us until our last breath.

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

Archbishop of Edenborn
Vicar for the Archdiocese of North America
& the Diaspora

+HERMOGEN

Archbishop of Odessa and Tavrychesk

+ALEXIOS

Bishop of Hazleton and Weatherly

+PHILIP

Retired Archbishop of Philadelphia