

Saint Tikhon's of Zadonsk

Journey to Heaven

Part I and II

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Born in 1724 in the village of Korotsk, in the Novgorod region, into a simple, peasant family, he received the monastic habit at the age of thirty-four and very soon, because of his ascesis and spiritual wisdom, was given higher and higher service until he was consecrated Bishop of Voronezh. He served as bishop for a little under seven years and then, because of ill-health, retired to the monastery of Zadonsk and entered into rest there in 1783. His wonderworking relics are kept there to this day. A great ascetic of the Russian Church, he was a rare shepherd, a man of prayer and the writer of beautiful spiritual works. In his wisdom, his holiness and asceticism, he could be counted an equal of the great Fathers of the Orthodox Church of former times. Because of the many witnessed miracles that were performed over his relics, he was first proclaimed a saint by the people, and then officially by the Church in 1861. He is commemorated on August 26 (August 13 old calendar).

Troparion, Tone 8

From thy youth thou didst love Christ, O blessed one/ and wast a model in word, life, love, spirit, faith and humility./ Now thou art dwelling in the heavenly mansions where thou dost stand before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity./ Holy Father Tikhon, pray that our souls may be saved.

Kontakion, Tone 8

O successor of the Apostles, adornment of Hierarchs and teacher of the Orthodox Church:/ pray to the Lord of all that He grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

Part I.

On Loving God

Beloved Christians, all Christians say, “How can we not love God?” Or, “Whom shall we love, if not God?” This is a true saying, “How can we not love God?” And likewise, “Whom shall we love, if not God?” God is the supreme good, uncreated, without beginning, without end, existent, and without change. As the sun always shines, as fire always warms, so God is by nature good; He is and always does good, since *“there is none good, but One, that is God”* (Mt. 19:17). God even does good when He chastises us, for He chastises us so that He may correct us. He strikes us so that He may have mercy on us, He gives us sorrows so that He may truly console us. *“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth”* (Heb.12:6). How then can one not love so great a good as God? God is our Creator. He created us out of nothing. We were not, and behold, we live, move, and have being. His almighty hands formed and created us. He created us, O men, not like other creatures, senseless and irrational. He created us by His own special divine counsel, *“Let Us make man”* (Gen. 1:26). Of other creatures it is said, *“He spake, and they came to be, He commanded, and they were created”* (Ps. 148:5), but not so with man. What then? Let Us, it says, create man.

O most holy, O most beloved counsel! The Tri-hypostatic God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, said of man, *“Let Us create man.”* What sort of man? *“In Our image,”* it says, *“and likeness.”* O the marvelous goodness of God toward man! O the most exalted honor of man! Man was created by God in the image and likeness of God. On what creature has God bestowed such honor? We know none like it. It was bestowed on man and he was honored with the image of God. O the most beloved and beautiful of God's creation, man, the image of God! He bears it in himself as a royal seal. As the king is honored, so is his portrait. As to God the Heavenly King is due all honor, so to His image, man. God poured forth this goodness on us in our creation, O Christian. How then can we not love God?

We fell and we perished. We cannot mourn sufficiently over this: *“And man being in honour did not understand, he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them”* (LXX-Ps. 48:13 [KJV-Ps. 49:12]). But even so, God Who loves mankind did not forsake us, but He found a wonderful means for our salvation. He sent us His only-begotten Son to save us and to gather us to Himself. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved”* (Jn. 3:16-17). How then shall we not love God, Who loves us so? As we all call Him, God is the Lover of Mankind; then man must be a lover of God. For nothing can be given in return for love but love and gratitude.

God is our provider. He takes thought for us and cares for us. He gives us our food, clothing, and home. His sun, moon, and stars give us light. His fire warms us and we cook our food with it. His water washes us and refreshes us. His beasts serve us. His air enlivens us and keeps us alive. In a word, we are surrounded with His blessings and love, and without them we are not able to live for a moment. Then how can we not love God Who loves us so? We love a man who does good; all the more should we love God Who does good, Whose we are and everything we may possess. All creation, and man himself is God's possession. *“The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof”* (LXX-Ps. 23:1 [KJV-Ps. 24:1]).

God is our Father. We pray to Him and say, “Our Father, Who art in heaven” and so on. How then can we not love God the Father? Good children necessarily love their father. If then we wish to be true children of God, and unhypocritically call Him Father, then we must also love Him as Father.

Truly is it said by all, “How can we not love God?” Love, like every other virtue, must also reside in our heart. For if love does not reside in the heart, then it does not exist. God does not say, “Love, be humble, be compassionate, pray, beseech, call unto Me,” and so on, to our lips, but to our heart. Then love, humility, compassion, prayer, and the rest, must reside in the heart. And if it abides in the heart, then it will inevitably appear outwardly like a belch from stomach. A hidden fire gives itself away by its heat, and a fragrant balm by its smell. Thus David showed the holy love which he had for God by his most sweet hymns to God, “*I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength; the Lord is my foundation, and my refuge, and my deliverer. My God is my helper, and I will hope in Him, my defender, and the horn of my salvation, and my helper*” (LXX-Ps. 17:2-3 [KJV-Ps. 18:2-3]), and in many other places. Though love may hide in the heart, nevertheless it cannot be concealed, but it gives itself away by outward signs.

The Signs of Love for God

But let us see what the signs of love for God are, so that we may not have a false dream of love instead of love itself. In nothing does a man deceive himself so much as in love. The signs of this love are:

1. God Himself indicates this, saying, “*He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me*” (Jn. 14:21). For the true lover of God will preserve himself from everything that is repugnant to God, and hastens to fulfil everything that is pleasing to God. Wherefore he keeps His holy commandments. From this it follows that those Christians that neglect the commandments have no love for God. Such are the malicious and those that harm others in any way. Such are the profligate, adulterers and all defilers. Such are robbers, bandits, thieves, and all those that unjustly appropriate the goods of others. Such are slanderers and those that curse others. Such are the sly, the crooked, the guileful, deceivers and hypocrites. Such are sorcerers and those that call on them. Such are all evildoers. All such love neither the Law of God nor God himself. They love themselves and their own appetites, but not God or His holy Law.

2. A manifest sign of love for God is a heartfelt gladness in God, for we rejoice in what we love. Likewise love of God cannot exist without joy, and whenever a man feels the sweetness of the love of God within his heart, he rejoices in God. For so sweet a virtue as love cannot be felt without joy. As honey sweetens our throat when we taste of it, so the love of God makes our heart glad when we taste and see that the Lord is good (LXX-Ps. 33:9 [KJV-Ps. 34:8]). Such joy in God is found in many places in Holy Scriptures, and is portrayed most of all in the holy Psalms. This joy is spiritual and heavenly, and is a foretaste of the sweetness of eternal life.

3. The true lover of God disdains the world and all that is in the world, and strives toward God, his most beloved. He counts honor, glory, riches, and all the comforts of this world which the sons of this age seek, as nothing. For him only God, the uncreated and most beloved good, suffices. In Him alone he finds perfect honor, glory, riches and comfort. For him God alone is the pearl without price, for the sake of which he holds everything else as little. Such a one desires nothing in heaven or on earth besides God. Such love is portrayed in the very words of the Psalter, “*For what have I in heaven? And besides Thee what have I desired upon earth? My heart and my flesh have failed, O God of my heart, and God is my portion forever*” (LXX-Ps. 72:25)

[KJV-Ps. 73:25]). He uses food, drink, clothing, and everything else only as needful, and not for sensual pleasure.

From this it follows that whoever loves the world does not love God. According to the witness of the Apostle, *“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 Jn. 2:15). Such are those that find pleasure only in the pride and pomp of this world, in rich homes, in rich carriages, in rich tables, in dressing in rich clothing, to be glorified and admired by all, and so on. Such people love the *“lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”* (1 Jn. 2:16) which are all repugnant to God, but they do not love God.

4. The true lover of God keeps God ever in mind, and His love toward us and His benefactions. We see this even in human love, for we often remember the one we love. So whoever loves God remembers Him, thinks of Him, and finds consolation in Him, and is enrapt in Him. For wherever his treasure is, there his heart is also (Mt. 6:21). To him the priceless and most beloved treasure is God. Therefore his heart also holds itself inseparably before Him. Whence it is that he also remembers His holy name often and with love. For the heart filled with the love of God reveals outward signs of love. From this we see that those who forget God do not love Him, for forgetfulness is a manifest sign of no love for God. The lover can never forget his beloved.

5. One who loves, desires never to be separated from the one he loves. Many Christians desire to be with Christ the Lord when He is glorified, but they do not wish to be with Him in dishonor and reproach, nor to carry their cross. They entreat Him that they may come into His Kingdom, but they do not wish to suffer in the world, and thereby they show that their heart is not right and that they do not truly love Christ. And to tell the truth, they love themselves more than Christ. For this reason the Lord says, *“He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me”* (Mt. 10:38). A true friend is known in misfortune. He is our true friend and one who loves us who does not forsake us in misfortune. Likewise the true lover of Christ is he who abides with Christ in this world, and cleaves to Him in his heart, and uncomplainingly endures the cross with Him, and desires to be with Him inseparably in the age to come. Such a one says unto Christ, *“It is good for me to cleave unto God”* (LXX-Ps. 72:28 [KJV-Ps. 73:28]).

6. A sign of the love of God is love for neighbor. He who truly loves God also loves his neighbor. He who loves the lover loves what is loved by him. The source of love for neighbor is love for God, but the love of God is known from love for neighbor. Hence it is apparent that he who does not love his neighbor does not love God either. As the Apostle teaches, *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”* (1 Jn. 4:20-21). These are the signs of love for God hidden in the heart of a man.

Dear Christians, let us repent and turn away from the vanity of the world, and cleanse our hearts with repentance and contrition, that the love of God may abide in us. *“God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him”* (1 Jn. 4:16).

Why Should we Love God?

God is the supreme good from Whom every good thing flows, and all blessing that is and ever shall be.

Without God all blessedness is cursedness and woe, life is death, joy and sweetness are bitterness. To live with God is happiness in misfortune, riches in poverty, glory in dishonor, and consolation in sorrow. Without God there cannot be true repose, peace and consolation.

Therefore love Him as your supreme good and blessedness, love Him above every creature, above father and mother, above wife and children, and above your own self. Cleave to Him alone in your heart, and above all, desire Him alone because He is your eternal good and blessedness without Whom there is neither life or blessedness in this age or the next.

Every creature of God is good, but their Creator is incomparably better. Love, then, and desire that good as it is existent, without beginning, without end, everexistent, and without change, from Whom all creatures are created good.

Remember the Love of God

Everywhere and in every endeavor remember the Lord your God and His holy love for us. Everything that you may see in heaven and on earth and in your house awakens you to the remembrance of the Lord your God and His holy love. We are enveloped in God's love. Every creature of God bears witness to His love for us. When you see God's creation and make use of it, say to yourself thus: This is the work of the hands of the Lord my God, and it was created for my sake. These luminaries of the heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars, are the creations of the Lord my God, and they illumine all the world and me. This earth on which I live, which bears fruit for me and my cattle, and all that may be upon it, is the creation of the Lord my God. This water which waters me and my cattle is a blessing of my Lord. This cattle which serves me is the, creation of my Lord and was given by Him to serve me. This house in which I live is God's blessing and was given me by Him for my repose. This food which I taste is God's gift to me given for the strengthening and consolation of my weak flesh. This garment with which I am clothed the Lord my God gave me for the sake of covering my naked body. And so on.

This icon is the image of Christ; the image of my Saviour, Who for my sake came to this unfortunate world to save me who have perished, and He suffered and died for me, and so He redeemed me from sin, the devil, death and hell. I worship His unspeakable love for man.

This icon is the image of the Theotokos, the image of that Most-Holy Virgin, who gave birth in the flesh without seed to Jesus Christ my Lord and God. Blessed among women is the Mother that bore God incarnate, and blessed is the fruit of her womb (Lk. 1:42)! Blessed is the womb that bore my Lord, and the paps which He has sucked (Lk. 11:27)!

This is the icon of the Forerunner; it is the image of that great prophet who was sent from God before the face of my Saviour Jesus Christ, and to the people he preached Him already come into the world, and pointed Him out, saying, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!*" (Jn. 1:29), and he was found worthy to baptize Him in the streams of the Jordan.

This is the icon of the apostle; it is the image of the disciple of my Saviour, who saw Him in person, who went with Him, and saw Him work miracles, and heard Him preach, saw Him suffer for the salvation of the world, and rise from the dead and ascend into heaven. This is the icon of the martyr; it is the image of that struggler who withstood even to blood for the honor of my Saviour Jesus Christ, and did not spare even his own holy life for His name, and he established our pious faith as true by pouring forth his own blood; and so on.

This word, the Sacred Scripture which I hear, is the word of God, it is the word of His mouth. The mouth of my Lord spoke this, and through it my God speaks to me, "*The law of Thy*

mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver” (LXX-Ps. 118:72 [KJV-Ps. 119:72]). O Lord, grant me ears to hear Thy holy word.

This holy house, the church in which I stand, is the temple of God in which prayer and glorification are offered up to my God in common from the faithful, my brethren. These voices, this glorification and common prayer are those voices by which hymns, thanksgiving, praise and glorification are sent up to the holy name of my God.

This consecrated man, the bishop or priest, is the closest servant of my God, who offers prayers to Him for me a sinner and for all the world. This man, the preacher of the word of God, is the messenger of my God, who makes known the way of salvation to me and to the rest of the people my brethren.

This brother of mine, every man, is the beloved creature of my God, and like myself is a creature created after the image and likeness of God. And having fallen he was redeemed, like myself, by the Blood of the Son of God my Saviour, and is called to everlasting life by the Word of God. I must love him as the beloved creature of my God, love him as I love myself. And I must not do to him anything that I myself do not love, and I must do to him what I desire for myself, for that is what my God commanded me. In a word, every occasion and every thing can and must inspire you to a loving remembrance of the Lord your God, and must show you His love toward you, since even His chastisement comes from His love toward us. According to the Scripture, *“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth”* (Heb. 12:6). Remember, then, everywhere and on every occasion and in all things, the name of the Lord your God. Take care not to forget your Benefactor when you enjoy His benefactions, lest you appear ungrateful to Him; for forgetfulness of a benefactor is a clear sign of ingratitude.

God is your creator, deliverer, supreme benefactor, and good provider. He created you just as He gives you every good thing, since without His goodness you could not live even for a minute. You do not see your Benefactor with these eyes, but you see the benefits He has given you. You see the sun, the moon and His stars which illumine you. You see the fire that warms you and cooks your food. You see the food which satisfies you, you see the clothing by which your naked body is covered. You see all other countless blessings which He gave you for your needs and comfort.

Seeing, then, and receiving these benefits, remember your unseen Benefactor everywhere and always with love, and thank Him for all His benefits with a pure heart. The greatest and highest of all His blessings is that by His good will Christ, His Only-Begotten Son, came to us and redeemed us by His precious Blood and suffering from the devil, hell, and death. In this work He showed us His unspeakable goodness to us. We must, then, always gaze with faith upon this great work of God so incomprehensible to the mind, and remember God Who so loved us unworthy ones. We must thank Him from our whole heart, worship Him, praise, hymn, and glorify Him with our heart and lips. *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David”* (Lk. 1:68-69).

You, too, should always remember this great work of God and marvel at it, and thank God from your heart, and live as it pleases God, Who came into the world to save sinners, lest you offend Him with your ingratitude. He desires to save you, since He came into the world for your sake, and suffered and died in His holy flesh. You should fulfil His holy will, then, and take care for the salvation of your soul with all diligence. Be thankful to Him, and live in the world humbly, with love, meekly and patiently, as He Himself lived. He also desires the same of you.

Endeavor to please God with faith and obedience, that is, do what He desires and what is pleasing to Him, and do not do what He does not desire and what is not pleasing to Him. Without obedience, whatever a man may do is not pleasing to God.

Reverence Toward God

Do not worship God with material things and superficially, but with a good conscience, fear, love, obedience, thanksgiving, prayer and faith. For God is Spirit, nonmaterial, and is therefore worshipped in nothing else but in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24).

Mention the name of God with all reverence, fear and devotion, and that only when and where we ought to mention it, because the name of God is holy and awful, and those that mention it without reverence sin grievously. Render, then, all reverence to the name of God as to God Himself. You mention the name of an earthly king with respect; that is as it should be. How much more should we mention the name of God the Heavenly King, which is revered, beloved and sweet to angels and to the souls of the saints, with extreme reverence.

The name of God is rightly mentioned in prayer, in glorification, in thanksgiving, in praise, and spiritual songs and in conversations and discourse befitting of Christians. That is when the conversation is about the Holy Word of God, about the Law and the Gospel, about the advent of Christ into the world, about His life on earth, His suffering and death which He endured for our sake, about death, about the Judgement of Christ, about eternal torment and everlasting life, and so on.

Do not mention it in other conversations without extreme need, and if there is need to mention it, mention it with all caution and due reverence.

Guard against mentioning the name of God in lies and jests, lest God's judgement come upon you at that moment. "*For our God is a consuming fire*" (Heb. 12:29).

Without living faith and the fear of God it is impossible to live in a godly way. Living faith is inspired in the human heart by contemplation of the word of God and by the Holy Spirit. For this reason we should read and heed the word of God and pray that God Himself ignite the lamp of faith in our heart. The fear of God arises most often from contemplation of the omnipresence of God and His omniscience. God is in essence everywhere present; and wherever we may be, He is with us; and whatever we may do, say, think, and undertake, we do, say, think, and undertake all before His holy eyes. And He knows our deeds far better than we do ourselves. Think about this, O Christian, and heed it, and with God's help the fear of God will be born in you. The fear of God will guard you and correct you everywhere and in all things, and will turn you away from every evil deed, and confirm you in every good deed. Thus day by day you will become better.

Keep God, then, before your spiritual eyes and you will have the fear of God, imitating the Psalmist, "*I beheld the Lord ever before me*" (Ps. 15:8). But what you ought to do will be made clear to you in subsequent points. Take heed, then, and endeavor to comply with it.

While standing in church attend diligently to the reading and singing. This gives birth to compunction, true prayer, heartfelt singing and thanksgiving. Avoid, then, standing bodily in church while wandering outside the church in mind, and standing bodily before God while wandering

about in spirit in worldly affairs, lest that saying be applied to you, *“his people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me”* (Mt. 15:8). While standing bodily in church, then, stand with heart and spirit as you stand before God. When you look upon the icons of the saints, call to mind that One is the Creator that created them and you, and that His purpose was the same for them as it is for you, that is, to save both them and you. They are glorified, and before you lies the same glory, only imitate their lives and you shall be saved.

Prayer consists not only in standing and bowing before God in body, and in reading written prayers, but even without that it is possible to pray in mind and spirit at all times and in everyplace. You can do it while walking, sitting, reclining, among people, and in solitude. Raise up your mind and heart to God, and so beg mercy and help from Him. For God is everywhere and in every place, and the doors to Him are always open, and it is easy to approach Him, not as with man. And we can approach Him with faith and with our prayer everywhere and at all times, and in every need and circumstance. We can say to Him mentally at any time, “Lord, have mercy, Lord help!” and so on.

The Law of God

Love the Word of God, that is the Scriptures, handed down to us by the prophets and apostles, as God Himself. For the word of God is the word of God's mouth. If you love God, then without fail you will love the word of God also. For the word of God is God's epistle or letter to us unworthy ones, and is His supreme gift to us for the sake of our salvation. If you love the Sender, then also love the letter which is sent from Him to you. For the word of God is given by God to me, to you, and to everyone, so that everyone who desires to be saved may receive salvation through it.

You love it when an earthly king writes you a letter, and you read it with love and joy. How much more must we read the letter of the Heavenly King with love and joy.

The word of God was not given to you so that it should lay written only on paper, but so that we may use it spiritually, that we may be enlightened and guided in the true way and salvation, that our morals may be corrected, and that we may live according to its rule in this world, and that we may please God. If you wish, therefore, to be a true Christian, then without fail you must take care to live by its rule. For the word of God is a heavenly seed. It must, then, yield fruit in us after its kind, that is a holy and heavenly life, otherwise it will accuse us on the day of the fearful Judgement of Christ. Live, therefore, as the word of God teaches, and then correct yourself. Do not pry idly into the mysteries.

Of the mystery of the All-Holy Trinity, the Most-Holy Eucharist, and other such things that are not revealed to us in the holy word of God, do not inquire idly, lest you fall into the snare of the devil and be tangled in it, and not be able to escape from thence, and so perish. For that which requires faith alone transcends our reasoning, and it is very dangerous to pry into these things. Keep yourself, then, from prying into things which are above you. Believe in all things as the Holy Scriptures teach, and as the Holy Church believes and establishes in accordance with it.

On Conscience

When God created man He set a conscience within his soul so that he may be governed by it as by a rule, and so that he may be guided in what to do and what to avoid. Conscience is nothing other than natural or innate law, which is why it also agrees with the written Law of God. For whatever the Law of God teaches, conscience teaches also.

The Law of God commands us to know the one God; conscience teaches the same. Wherefore even pagans, convinced by conscience, acknowledged one God.

The Law of God commands us to reverence God above all creatures and to render supreme honor to God alone; conscience teaches the same. The Law of God teaches us not to hold anything equal to God; conscience teaches the same. The Law of God commands us to show submissiveness, subordination and obedience to God as the supreme authority; conscience teaches the same. The Law of God commands us to fear God as the most righteous Judge; we hear the same from conscience. The Law of God commands us to punish those that blaspheme the name of God; our conscience cannot endure it either. The Law of God teaches us to listen to God more than to man; conscience teaches the same. The Law of God demands that we love God above all things; conscience demands the same. For God is the most exalted and supreme good and the source of all good, therefore we must love Him above all created good things.

The Law of God teaches us to thank God for all things; conscience teaches us the same, for conscience itself convinces us to be thankful to our Benefactor.

The Law of God commands us to put all our hope in God; conscience commands the same. For God alone is able to do all things as Almighty. Every created thing is powerless without God and apart from God, therefore hope in them is inconstant and infirm. The Law of God commands us to submit and give honor to parents and all authorities sent by God; we hear the same thing from our conscience.

The Law of God forbids us to harm a man and to deprive him of life; conscience forbids the same thing. The Law of God commands us to help a man in misfortune and need; conscience commands the same. The Law of God forbids adultery and fornication; a man hears the same from his conscience, and it thunders within him not to defile himself with uncleanness.

The Law of God forbids us to lay hold of the goods of others without the consent of the proprietor; conscience cries out the same. The Law of God forbids lying, flattery, and deceit; conscience forbids it too. The Law of God commands us not to desire anything that belongs to another; conscience commands it too. Thus the Law of God and conscience mutually agree and are appointed for the same end, that is our blessedness, whence even the pagans, enlightened by philosophical teaching wrote many useful precepts. This comes from nothing other than conscience or natural law illumined by much labor and instruction.

Therefore everyone who sins against conscience also sins against the Law of God and against the Lawgiver Himself, God. Whoever does not listen to his conscience listens neither to the Law of God nor to God Himself. Whoever does not obey his conscience obeys neither the Law of God nor God Himself. Whoever offends his own conscience also offends God Himself.

Those Christians who sin against their conscience do not truly worship God, but are hypocrites, for it is impossible to worship God without a clean conscience. A true Christian does not wish to, and keeps himself from sinning against his conscience, and so break the Law of God. He would rather suffer than sin. Faith rests in such a conscience and makes a man joyful; for where there is a clean conscience, there is faith and joy. Just as the Law of God accuses a man of sin, so

likewise conscience accuses him also. So it is that when a word of reproof is spoken in general, then sinners are wounded in conscience and troubled.

Thus the profligate are troubled when profligacy is spoken of; thieves and robbers are troubled when thievery and robbery are spoken of; flatterers and liars are troubled when deceit and lies are spoken of; they are troubled and even show some outward signs. This is the accusation of conscience working in them.

Just as the Law of God puts the fear of God's judgement into a sinner, so likewise conscience puts fear into him and cries within the sinner, "Man, it shall go miserably for you." Just as the effect of the Law of God and of conscience are the same, so shall they be the same at the Judgement of Christ. There the Law of God which he violated will accuse the sinner; the conscience offended by his sins will also accuse him.

There, these two, conscience and the Law of God, will be the witnesses and the accusers against every sinner. It happens that an evil conscience is as though asleep; but when it awakens and begins to accuse the sinner, then cruel torment will come upon him through his conscience, whence it is that many kill themselves, not enduring the pangs of conscience.

For just as there is no better repose than from a pure conscience, so likewise there is no greater disquiet and torment than from a wicked conscience. If conscience torments so much here, how shall it torment a sinner in the age to come when all his sins shall stand before him and it accuses him of them and torments him?

O sinners, why do we sleep? Let us awaken and repent and cleanse our sins by repentance and contrition of heart, and let us correct ourselves and cease from sinning and offending our conscience, lest we appear before the Judgement of Christ with an evil conscience blackened with sins, when the books of the conscience shall be opened and each shall receive according to his works.

Do not do what conscience forbids you to do, for an unerring conscience forbids what the Law of God also forbids. For a good conscience is in agreement with the Law of God. The Law of God says, "*Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal*" (Ex. 20:13,15), and so on. You also hear the same within your conscience, and it tells you the same thing. Avoid, then, doing what conscience forbids, lest having wounded your conscience you wound your soul.

Part II

The Way of Salvation

The Gospel of Salvation

Beloved Christians! Nothing is more pleasant, lovelier, and sweeter to us sinners than the Gospel. More welcome than bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, freedom to captives and those in prison, is the Gospel to sinners who understand their misfortune.

"*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost*" (Lk. 19:10). This is the exceedingly sweet voice of the Gospel. Who is this Son of Man? He is the Son of God, the King of Heaven, sent from His Heavenly Father, the One Who willed for our sake to be called the Son of Man. For what cause did He come? To seek out and to save us who are lost and to bring us into

His eternal Kingdom. What could be more welcome and desirable to us who are lost? But let us see what the Gospel is, and what it requires of us, and to whom it is rightly preached.

1. From its very name the Gospel is the gladdest of tidings. To all the world it preaches Christ the Saviour of the world Who came to seek out and to save the lost. Listen all you lost sinners, listen to that exceedingly sweet voice of the Gospel! It cries out to us all, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."

It is a fearful thing for us to be found in sin before God. The Gospel preaches that our sins are forgiven for Christ's name's sake and that Christ is our justification before God. In Thee, my Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, am I justified. Thou art my truth and enlightenment.

It is a fearful thing for us to be found at enmity with God. The Gospel preaches that Christ has reconciled us to God, and having come He preached peace to all near and far. A fearful thing for us is the curse of the Law, for we are all sinners; it subjects the sinner to both temporal and eternal punishment. The Gospel preaches that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become the curse for us. A fearful thing for us is death. The Gospel preaches that Christ is our resurrection and life.

A fearful thing for us are Gehenna and hell. The Gospel preaches that Christ delivered us from hell and all its calamities. It is a fearful thing for us to be separated from God. The Gospel preaches that we shall be with the Lord always in His eternal Kingdom.

This, blessed Christians, is the most sweet voice of the Gospel, "*Taste,*" then, "*and see that the Lord is good*" (LXX-Ps. 33:9 [KJV-Ps. 34:8]). "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned*" (Jn. 3:16-18). "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David*" (Lk. 1:68-69).

2. It is demanded of us, Christians, that we receive these heavenly and most sweet tidings gratefully as they are sent from Heaven, and that from a pure heart we always give thanks to God our Benefactor, Who so freely had mercy on us, and that we show holy obedience and compliance in all thankfulness. For conscience itself instructs and convinces us to be thankful to our Benefactor. He loved us who are unworthy Let us also love Him Who is worthy of all love. Love requires that we never offend the beloved. God is offended by every sin. Let us keep away from every sin and let us do His holy will that we may not offend Him as our compassionate Father and Benefactor. "*Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,*" and so on (Mt. 6:9-10).

3. To whom is the Gospel preached? Christ answers us, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for Whose sake He hath anointed Me to preach to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the broken hearted*" (Lk.4:18). In other words, to those people who, acknowledging their sins, see their poverty, misfortune, and wretchedness, and have a contrite heart with fear of God's judgement and sorrow, to them the Gospel is rightly preached as a healing plaster is applied to a wounded body. Hear, you sorrowful and contrite souls, hear the most sweet voice of the Gospel! "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost!*" This healing plaster of the Gospel most sweet is applied to your wounded souls. By this saving medicine heal your broken hearts. "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost,*" He seeks you and saves you, because you are one of those that He came to seek. Accept and confess yourselves to be sinners before God. Your sins are also forgiven for Christ's name's sake. Repent of your sins and lament for God, for salvation is prepared for you, too, by God.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief”* (1 Tim. 1:15). The Holy Spirit speaks to you through His servant, *“The sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit, a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise”* (LXX-Ps. 50:19 [KJV-Ps. 51:17]). This sacrifice is offered to God from a repentant and contrite heart and is more acceptable to Him than any other offering. God looks mercifully upon such a sacrifice and sends His grace down upon it.

And so you see, O Christian, that the Gospel is not intended for those Christians who live recklessly and in iniquity, and do not recognize their sins, poverty and misfortune, and do not have a contrite heart. For of what use is oil to a rock? A plaster is applied to a wound, and healing is given to him who recognizes and admits his weakness. To such people is it said, *“Repent, be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy into heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up”* (Jas. 4:9-10). And again: *“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees, therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire”* (Mt. 3:10).

Sinners! Let us fear the judgement of God and endeavor to have a contrite and humble heart, that we also may draw from the Gospel as from a saving font of living water of refreshment and consolation, and that we may water our souls and so receive everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, unto the ages of ages.

Holy Baptism

“He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16). Our Lord and Saviour gave us this saying for our confirmation and consolation. For what is more comforting to a faithful and baptized soul than this saying that promises it eternal salvation?

Beloved Christians, glory be to God that we both believe in the Gospel and are enlightened with holy Baptism. But let us look at the power of holy Baptism and we shall see what we were before Baptism and what we became after Baptism, that we may receive lively consolation from this.

Through holy Baptism we were delivered from every calamity and we received all true blessedness by the grace of God. Before Baptism we were far from God, but through Baptism we became close to God. Before Baptism we were enemies of God, but through Baptism we became reconciled to God, and God was reconciled to us. Before Baptism we were children of God's wrath, but through Baptism we were made vessels of God's mercy. Before Baptism we were children of darkness and children of the devil, but through Baptism we were made children of light and children of God. Before Baptism we were defiled in sins, but through Baptism we were washed, sanctified and justified.

Before Baptism we were lost, but through Baptism we were saved. Before Baptism the doors to everlasting life and the Kingdom of Heaven were closed to us, but through Baptism they were opened and those that preserve the grace of holy Baptism enter in unhindered. We receive these and other benefits of God through holy Baptism. We receive them freely without any merit on our part, solely from His love for man, for what can he deserve who is lost? Glory to the goodness of God! Glory to His love for mankind! Glory to His compassion! Glory to His generosity! *“Blessed be the name of the Lord from henceforth and for ever more!”* (LXX-Ps. 112:2 [KJV-Ps. 113:2]).

The Only-Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ our Saviour, earned this supreme mercy from God for all of us. He earned it through His most precious Blood and His death. Beloved Christians, let us remember holy Baptism, and let us consider whether we live worthily of holy Baptism, lest that holy Baptism be to our greater condemnation on the day of Christ's Dread Judgement, where every iniquitous word, deed, and thought will be judged.

Holy Baptism is like a door by which those that are baptized enter into the holy Church and become "*fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*" (Eph. 2:19). But not just so, but before Baptism there are renunciations and vows:

1. We then renounced Satan and all his evil works. Satan is a wicked and evil spirit. He was created good by God, but he and those of like mind with him apostatized from Him, and so from light they became dark, and from good they became evil and wicked. His works are idolatry, pride, deceit, falsehood, flattery, guile, envy, malice, plunder, adultery, prodigality, all uncleanness, slander, blasphemy and every sin; for he is the inventor of sin, and he beguiled our ancestors in paradise and led them into sin and apostasy from God. We renounce this wicked spirit and all his evil works before Baptism.

2. We renounce every vanity, pride and pomp of this world, as ones called to and renewed for everlasting life.

3. We promise to serve Christ the Son of God in faith and in truth together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to follow in His footsteps.

4. Thus we establish a covenant between God and us. We, who have renounced Satan, promise to serve God and be faithful to Him. God accepts us in His supreme mercy and promises us an inheritance in everlasting life and the Kingdom, and washes us who are defiled by sin in the laver of Baptism. He sanctifies and justifies us, as the priest says over everyone who is baptized, "*Thou art washed, thou art sanctified, thou art justified*" (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11).

Beloved Christians, let us remember these renunciations and vows, and consider whether we keep them; for it is a grave thing to lie to God, and it is very dangerous to be found false before Him. Let us consider, then, whether any of us have not gone back to Satan, whether we have not renounced Christ and abandoned Him? Let us consider on whose side we find ourselves, on Satan's or on Christ's. One serves and belongs to him whose will he performs. He renounces Christ not only he who renounces His holy name and does not confess Him to be the Son of God and his Saviour, but also he who sins against conscience and recklessly breaks His holy commandments. This is the teaching of the Apostles. For the Apostle says, "*They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, and the rest*" (Tit. 1:16).

Do you see that people reject God in works too, and not just with their lips? Is anyone a prodigal, and does he commit adultery? He rejects Christ. Does anyone hate his neighbor and seek him out to harm him? He has apostatized from Christ. Does anyone steal; does he rob and take away his neighbor's goods? He has departed from Christ. Does anyone deceive and flatter his neighbor? He is no longer with Christ, but in all these things he submits to the enemy of salvation, and so he does not stand in the promises which he made to God, and so he has lied to God. Let us examine then, beloved, our conscience and our life. To which side do we belong, to Christ's or to His enemy's? To the good, or to the evil? To the lot of the saved or to that of the lost? He that is not with Christ is the enemy of Christ. For Christ Himself said, "*He that is not with Me is against Me*" (Mt. 12:30).

Beloved, let us watch ourselves and let us be with Christ here in this world, as we have vowed at Baptism: let us be with Christ here that we may be with Christ in the age to come, ac-

according to His promise that cannot lie, *"Where I am, there shall also My servant be"* (Jn. 12:26). Let us serve Him here as our King and God, that on the Day of Judgement He will acknowledge us as His laborers and number us with His faithful servants and open unto us the doors of everlasting joy. Remember the vows made at Baptism.

So that you may act on the aforementioned points, you must remember the vows you made at holy Baptism. For though not you yourself but your sponsor made those vows before God on your behalf, you promised then, spitting on Satan, and on his pride, and on his service, and on his evil works - you promised, I say - and vowed to serve Jesus Christ your Lord and Redeemer in faith and in truth, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Consider, Christian, what vows you made and to Whom. It is a grievous thing to lie to a man, how incomparably more grievous it is to lie to God. *"God is not mocked"* (Gal. 6:7). When a Christian does not stand on his promises and does not keep them, what mercy, then, should he expect from God, to Whom he lied? He that keeps his promises shall find himself in God's mercy and in His Kingdom. He remains faithful to God, and God will hold him in mercy and in His protection as His own. And this is what the prophet sings to God, *"With the holy man wilt Thou be holy, and with the innocent man wilt Thou be innocent. And with the elect man wilt Thou be elect, and with the perverse wilt Thou be perverse"* (LXX-Ps. 17:26-27 [KJV-Ps. 18:25-26]).

Christians! All they that commit iniquity and act against their conscience do not keep their vows. These include fornicators, adulterers, and all defilers, robbers, thieves, brigands, the sly, the crafty, deceivers and the guileful, revilers and men of evil speech, drunkards, fault finders, the hateful, and the malicious, they that live in the pride and pomp of this world, and all that do not fear God. They have all lied to God and have not kept their vows, and are outside of the holy Church, though they may even go to churches and pray and receive the Mysteries and build churches and adorn them and display other signs of a Christian. Since they shall be powerfully put to the test at the Judgement of Christ and tormented more there than Turks and idolaters, avoid these deeds, Christian, and do not imitate the aforementioned doers of iniquity, lest you be condemned with them to eternal fire by the just judgement of God, *"where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"* (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48), but by all means endeavor so to live and act as the word of God teaches, as was said above. Keep in mind those vows of yours, and this will guide you toward the Christian life and restrain you from every evil and do you good. If you notice that you yourself do not keep those vows, then repent and begin the Christian life anew, lest you appear before God in a lie, and perish with liars. *"The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"* (Apoc. 21:8).

It is impossible to adequately describe and weep over the unfortunate condition of that Christian who has given himself over to lawless acts after holy Baptism, and commits iniquity. He is deprived of all that blessedness of which he had been found worthy in Baptism by the grace of God, and of his own will he casts himself into that calamity from which he had been delivered. But rather, he falls into a greater calamity, for he had known the truth but he did not wish to live in it. He knew God, but he did not wish to worship Him.

He knew the way that leads to eternal blessedness, but he did not wish to walk in it. He vowed to work for God, but he lied to Him. He was washed, he was sanctified, he was justified, but he was deprived of it all. He became a child of God, but he lost that most glorious nobility. He became an heir of everlasting life and the Kingdom, but he wasted that inheritance. And this

is what the Apostle says about such ones, *“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them”* (2 Pet. 2:21).

See, O Christian, how great is the calamity of a Christian who has committed iniquity! It is not apparent now, since it is not seen with bodily eyes, but with spiritual: but it will become evident then, when all our secret and manifest deeds are revealed before the whole world, that is at the second coming of Christ.

Then that poor Christian will know and will behold his great calamity and destruction. We must truly bewail the condition of such a Christian with much tears and weeping. For just as one washed in a bath is again sullied with dirt and mud, so likewise a Christian washed in the laver of Baptism is defiled again with iniquity.

Just as one who out of filthy rags was clothed in purple and fine linen again takes off those beautiful garments and puts that foul rag on again, so everyone who commits iniquity after holy Baptism does likewise. For out of the rags of sin he was also clothed in Christ's robe of justification, but having spurned that beautiful garment he again puts on the rag of sin.

Just as one who comes from the darkness into the light and again returns to the darkness, so it is likewise with him who came from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ, the true Light, and returned again to that same darkness. Just as one who was freed from slavery and captivity comes to freedom and again returns to that same bitter bondage, so likewise a Christian who commits iniquity was delivered by the grace of Christ from the bitter slavery and captivity of the devil, but he returns to that misfortune.

Just as a man delivered from a deep pit falls again into that pit, so likewise a Christian that commits iniquity has been delivered from the pit of eternal perdition, but of his own will he casts himself again into that pit. *“But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire”* (2 Pet. 2:22). To this calamitous condition belong

- Prodigals, fornicators, and all that defile themselves in any way.
- Thieves, brigands, robbers, and all that in any way unjustly acquire another's goods.
- Malicious people, and those that harm the lives of their neighbor.
- The sly, the cunning, hypocrites, and those that deal deceitfully with their neighbor.
- Blasphemers, revilers, and slanderers.
- Judges that give judgement according to bribes and gifts, and not according to their oath and to justice.
- Cruel masters.
- Merchants that sell inferior material for better, cheap for expensive, rotten for good, and take higher prices for their wares than they are worth.
- Those that work sorcery and those that summon them to their homes.
- All those that act against conscience and recklessly break the Law of God. *“To all such has happened - according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”*

Beloved Christians, washed in the laver of holy Baptism, let us examine ourselves, whether any of us have not turned away from Christ and fallen into the calamitous condition mentioned above. Whoever opposes the law works for the devil and is already far removed from Christ.

Woe to Christians that commit iniquity after holy Baptism! *“It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the Day of Judgement than for such Christians”* (Mt. 10:15)!

Poor Christian, examine yourself and beware lest you become the eternal captive of the devil and destruction. *“Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”* (Mk. 9:44). O God, spare Thy rational creature, made in Thine own image!

On Repentance

To those that have sinned after holy Baptism the only remaining hope is true repentance. Glory to God for that! Glory to God, that we have not yet perished, O sinners! A hope yet remains. God's compassions have not yet come to an end. Repentance is still preached to sinners. The poor are still given glad tidings. The Heavenly King still proclaims His mercy everywhere. The doors of compassion are not yet shut. The grace of God is still open to all. The Gospel and the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world are still preached. The Kingdom of God is still proclaimed.

Sinners that repent are still saved; both publicans and fornicators cleansed by repentance enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The compassionate God still calls to Himself all that have turned away, and He awaits them and promises them mercy. The loving Father still receives His prodigal sons come back from a far country and He opens the doors of His house and clothes them in the best robe, and gives them each a ring on their hand and shoes on their feet and commands all the saints to rejoice in them.

“Rejoice, ye angels, and all My elect! Sinners return to Me, men, My creatures, made in My image and likeness, they that have perished are now saved, they that were dead are alive again, they that were lost are found.” Glory to His goodness! Glory to His love for man! Glory to His compassion! Glory to His bounties! Poor sinners, why do we yet tarry in a distant country and not go toward our Father? Why do we perish from hunger? Why do we fill ourselves with iniquities as with husks? In the house of our Father is everything in abundance. There, even the hired servants have enough and to spare.

Our Father awaits us with great zeal and desire, and with love He will see us returning from afar, and He will look upon us with compassionate eyes, and we shall be dear to Him, and He will fall on our neck running and embrace us and kiss us with His holy love. He will not reproach us, and He will no longer remember our sins and iniquities, and all the holy Angels and all His elect will begin to rejoice over us.

Let us come to ourselves, and arise, and go and hasten to our Father, and let every one say to Him with humility and sorrow, *“Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, And am no more worthy to be called Thy son; make me as one of Thy hired servants”* (Lk. 15:18-19). Let us hasten, hasten, O sinners, while the time has not yet passed, while the Father awaits, while the doors of His holy house are not shut. Let us repent while the mercy of God still operates, lest we experience the operation of God's righteousness, eternal judgement.

Do not despair of whatever sins you may have committed since Baptism and find yourself in true repentance, but await God's mercy. However many and however great and burdensome your sins may be, with God there is greater mercy. Just as His majesty is, so likewise is His mer-

cy. Only guard yourself from sinning henceforth, and walk according to the aforementioned points.

If you have transgressed in this as a man, and have sinned, do not despair. But at that very moment, confess your sin and fall down with humility before the compassionate eyes of God and ask mercy with the voice of the publican, *“God be merciful to me a sinner!”* (Lk. 18:13), and your sins will be forgiven you.

True repentance demands that a man turn away from sins and from the vanity of this world and turn toward God with all his heart, that he be changed within, and that he become different from what he was before, and so work out his salvation with fear and trembling (cf. Phil. 2:12), and so endeavor to do nothing else but only to please God and so be saved. For if you wish to be in true repentance and so be saved, change yourself and be renewed, and become different from what you were before, and take care for nothing else but only to please God and be saved, and so shall you be a new creature in Christ. For every Christian that wishes to be a true Christian, and not false, ought to be a new or renewed man or a new creature. Do not, then, indulge your flesh, and do not do everything it may desire. It must be crucified *“with its affections and lusts”* (Gal. 5:24) when you wish to be a Christian, that is, Christ's. Much effort and labor is needed, for a man to be changed and to be the good tree that brings forth good fruit. Strive, then, for nothing else but to change, renew, and correct yourself. And pray for this, and sigh often and with all zeal to Christ the Lord, that He Himself might renew you and make you good, for without Him our renewal and correction cannot take place. And when you are renewed inwardly and good, then your outward life and works shall also be good.

The Deliverer

The very incarnation of the Son of God and His coming into the world strongly encourages sinners to repentance. For whose sake did Christ come into the world? For the sake of sinners. To what end? For the sake of their salvation. O how dear to God was our salvation! He Himself came into the world, O sinners, for the sake of our salvation.

Listen, sinners, and understand! God Himself came into the world for the sake of our salvation, and He came in our image. O truly great is the mystery of piety! God appeared in the flesh. *“Lord, what is man, that Thou art made known unto him? Or the son of man, that Thou takest account of him?”* (LXX-Ps. 143:3 [KJV-Ps. 144:3]).

Truly wonderful is the grace of God toward man, wonderful also is this work of His. Foreseeing this the prophet cried out to Him with fear and terror, *“Lord, I have heard Thy report, and I was afraid; O Lord, I considered Thy works, and I was amazed”* (Abbac. 3:1-2). Sinners, let us call to mind this great work of God, which He wrought for our sake, and let us repent. Let us remember how for our sake He was born of a Virgin and became a child, and was nourished on His mother's milk. The Invisible became manifest, and He that was without beginning had a beginning, and He that was intangible became tangible and was wrapped as an infant in swaddling bands: *“And the Word was made flesh”* (Jn. 1:14).

Let us recall how while yet a child He fled from the murderers of Herod the King. Let us recall how He lived on earth and was a stranger, how He went from place to place, and labored for the sake of our salvation. Let us recall how He Who is unapproachable to the Cherubim and Seraphim kept company with sinners; How He who has Heaven as His throne and the earth as

the footstool of His feet and Who abides in light unapproachable, had nowhere to lay His head; How He who was rich became poor, that by His poverty we may become rich.

Let us recall how He who clothes Himself with light as with a garment, put on the garment of corruption. How He Who gives food to all flesh ate earthly bread. How the Almighty became weak, and He that gives strength to all did labor.

Let us recall how He Who is above all honor and glory, was blasphemed, cursed, and mocked by the lips of transgressors.

Let us recall how He ailed, suffered, sorrowed, wept, and was filled with horror. Let us recall how He was sold and betrayed by an ungrateful disciple and was forsaken by the rest of the disciples; how He was bound and brought to trial; how He was judged by transgressors. He was reviled. He was scourged. He was clad in the robe of mockery, He was mockingly hailed as King, "*Hail, King of the Jews!*" (Jn. 19:3). He was crowned with a crown of thorns, beaten on the head with a reed, He heard from His lawless people, "*Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him*" (Jn. 19:15). He was led to crucifixion between two evildoers and died on the Cross.

All these things the Son of God did for the sake of our salvation. O sinners, in Adam we lost our salvation and all our blessedness, but Christ, the Son of God, by the good will of His Heavenly Father, has brought it all back to us. Let us, then, consider, O sinners, whether the very Blood of Christ, shed for the sake of our salvation, and all His Suffering do not cry out to us. Let us repent and so let us not be deprived of eternal salvation, for without repentance there is no salvation for anyone, but nevertheless the wretched sinner still does not understand.

God loves man so much that He revealed His wonderful providence for him that he should repent and so be saved, but the sinner still does not understand.

Christ the Son of God shows him His coming into the world for his sake, in the Gospel. He presents to him His willing self-emptying, His willing poverty, His willing and deep humility, His labors, pains, tribulations, sorrows, sufferings and death, and even a death on the Cross. And He says to him, "Man, I took all this on Myself and endured it for your sake and for your salvation. But you neglect your salvation, and take no thought that you should repent and cease from your sins, to make use of My Blood and live."

But the sinner, even though he hears this so plaintive and sweet voice of Christ in the Gospel, nevertheless still does not understand. Christ promises not to remember his sins and transgressions when he turns to Him, but the sinner still does not understand. Christ calls him to Himself and promises him rest, but the sinner does not understand. He remains uncorrected as he was and transgresses as he transgressed before. He commits evil deeds, as he did before; he loves darkness as he loved it before; he hates the light as he hated it before; and for this reason he does not come to the Light, but remains with the devil, the prince of darkness.

O poor sinner, awaken and come to your senses. If you do not, the very Blood of Christ shed for your sake will cry out against you for retribution. Listen to what the prophet of God sings to you in the person of God, "*I will reprove thee, and bring thy sins before thy face*" (LXX-Ps. 49:21 [KJV-Ps. 50:21]); that is, all your evil deeds, words, thoughts, intentions and undertakings will follow you into the next world and will appear at the universal Judgement of Christ, and you shall receive your just reward for them. You do not wish now to repent to your benefit, and so be saved by the grace of Christ; then you shall repent, but too late and in vain. "*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*" (Eph. 5:14). Blessed be God above all forever.

Set your salvation on nothing else but on Christ Jesus alone, the Saviour of the world. If you truly believe that He suffered and died for you and is your Saviour, then love him with all your heart, obey Him and please Him, as your Saviour, and lay and confirm all your hope of salvation on Him alone. We must unfailingly do good works as Christians, but we must ask and await salvation from Christ alone.

Ye Are a Chosen Race

“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 Jn. 3:1), and so we are. O blessedness! O God's love for man! O how much God's love has accomplished! O how profusely has God's grace abounded! Poor and rejected sinners are made the children of God! The Apostle of Christ wonders at this and says, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*, and so we are. For what is more astonishing than that a sinner should become a child of God? God's love toward man has wrought this. What is more glorious than to be called and to really be a child of God? God's grace has bestowed this on man. It is glorious to be the child of an earthly king; it is incomparably more glorious to be the child of God the Heavenly King. This honor, glory, merit, nobility, and name is more excellent than all titles of this world. For this, glory to God Who loves mankind!

If Christians are children of God, they are also heirs, *heirs*, then, *“of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”* (Rom. 8:17). If they are children of God, what then, and whom should they fear? Why fear traitors, enemies, the devil, demons, death and hell? God shall stand up for them. *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom. 8:31). We receive this most exalted gift of God in Baptism, for then we men are born of God and receive this most glorious title.

Beloved Christians! Let us remember our holy Baptism and this most exalted mercy which God then showed us: we then became children of God. Glory to God for this! But it is required of children that they should be like their parents, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (Jn. 3:6). Therefore Christians must be like God as they are born of God. Let us therefore show in deed that we are children of God. God is holy, let us also be holy. God is righteous, let us also be righteous. God is good, *“for He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”* (Mt. 5:45); let us also be good and do good both to our friends and to our enemies, to those that love us and to those that hate us. God is compassionate, let us also be compassionate and show mercy to our unfortunate brethren. God hates sin, let us also hate every sin and turn away from it. God loves us, let us also love one another. God forgives us our transgressions when we repent, let us also forgive men their transgressions.

The Apostle of Christ admonishes us to do this: *“Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children”* (Eph. 5:1). When we show such character in ourselves, then we shall be true children of God and we shall receive both the inheritance and all good things promised to the children of God in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Honoring our fellow Christians

Beloved Christians, I cannot wonder enough at the goodness of God and His compassionate love for us men; and contemplating this, I cannot but exclaim with the Prophet, “*O Lord, what is man, that Thou art made known unto him? Or the son of man, that Thou takest account of him?*” (LXX-Ps. 143:3 [KJV-Ps. 144:3]), when I consider what honor the Lord has granted man! The honor and nobility which God bestows on men who are true Christians is so great and so high that it is impossible not only to describe it or to explain it in words, but even to comprehend it with the mind. “*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*” (1 Pet. 2:9), says the true Apostle of Christ.

From what can we see the incomprehensible goodness and compassionate love of God toward man? Let us but look and set the honor and nobility of a Christian before our inward eyes, that we may be zealous for it and seek it out with eagerness. Open then, the hearing of your souls, and you shall hear a word told about true Christians.

1. They are called and truly are the children of God. What is more glorious to man than this name? The Apostle of Christ rightly wonders at this and with wonder he says to Christians, “*Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?*” (1 Jn. 3:1-2), and so we are. Whence Christians also pray to God as to their Father and raise up to the one voice to Him, “*Our Father, Who art in the heavens*” (Mt. 6:9) and the rest.

O the wonder! Sinners say to the All-Holy God, “Our Father!” O our great nobility and honor and consolation. O beloved Christians! The Father of the Only Begotten Son of God is our Father, His God is our God, as He Himself says to our great consolation, “*I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God*” (Jn. 20:17).

2. True Christians have a close union and fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The Apostle of Christ assures us of this saying, “*our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ*” (1 Jn. 1:3). How great this is you can see for yourself.

People account it a great thing to have friendship and fellowship with an earthly king; how incomparably greater is the privilege of having fellowship and friendship with God, Who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and abides in light unapproachable! O how much have God's goodness and love toward man wrought! Look, O Christian, and you shall see the nobility and merit of Christians. They have communion with the great and incomprehensible God.

God, Thy goodness is multiplied and wonderful, and Thy love for us fallen and poor men is beyond any words and conceiving!

3. In true Christians as in spiritual temples, God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, abides with love. The Lord says of this, “*If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode in him*” (Jn. 14:23). What can be more honorable and noble than that soul in which the Tri-hypostatic God abides with grace and love? It is a glorious thing for people to receive an earthly king into their house; it is incomparably more glorious to receive the Heavenly King into the house of their soul, and to have Him living therein. What also could be more blessed than that soul in which God lives as in a temple? The paradise of sweetness and joy, the Kingdom of God is in it. O blessedness! O the worthiness! O the nobility of the Christian soul! God, a Being that is without beginning, without

end, supremely good, and uncreated, wills to live in the holy Christian soul rather than in heaven or in any other temple.

O most good and lovely God, our Maker and Creator, come and visit our weary souls, the souls created by Thee after Thine image and likeness!

4. True Christians are spiritual members of the most heavenly Head, Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Apostle says concerning this, *“We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph. 5:30).

Holy Christian souls! raise up your eyes and see where your Head is seated at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. By whom is He venerated and worshipped? By angels and archangels and by all the hosts of heaven and by every creature. *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth”* (Philip. 2:9-10). You are members of this most exalted Head. As the Head is glorified, so also do His members partake of His glory. This is the glory of true Christians, this is their nobility and merit! They are the spiritual members of the most exalted Head, Jesus Christ.

5. The souls of true Christians are betrothed to the immortal Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. The Apostle bears witness of this: *“I have espoused you,”* O Christians, *“to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (2 Cor. 11:2). *“This is a great mystery”* (Eph. 5:32). As the Bridegroom is glorious, so also does His bride partake of His glory. What is more honorable and noble than Jesus the Son of God? What is more noble and honorable than a Christian soul betrothed to Him?

6. True Christians are *“heirs of God,”* and *“joint-heirs with Christ”* (Rom. 8:17). Theirs are the eternal and heavenly Kingdom and all good things. *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him”* (1 Cor. 2:9). These and others are the names and titles that the Holy Spirit attributes to true Christians. Behold, then, O listeners, the glory and nobility of the Christian. All the glory of this world is nothing compared to it. Confess, therefore, that there is nothing more noble and glorious than a true Christian. Jesus Christ the Son of God, has earned this nobility and glory for us by His suffering and death, His Heavenly Father bestows it on us. The Holy Spirit perfects it, and true repentance combined with faith receives it. This nobility and glory are acquired or is lost here in this world. They are acquired by true repentance and faith; they are lost by unrepentance and unbelief.

O you who seek the vain glory of this world and are praised and exalted in your nobility, names, and titles! Turn your inward eyes to the glory and honor of a Christian and seek those, that you may truly be noble and glorious. The glory of true Christians is not now manifest, but can only be attained and known by faith. It shall be opened in the revelation of the children of God. Beloved, says the Apostle, *“now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him”* (1 Jn. 3:2). *“Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”* (Mt. 13:43).

Saint Tikhon's of Zadonsk

Journey to Heaven

Part III

Spiritual Struggles

Content:

On our renewal at holy Baptism. Self examination. Inward search. Sin. Pride. Sins of the tongue. Flee luxury. Against drunkenness. Hate. Love. God's help. Remembrance of the Divine Passion. Imitation of Christ. Remember Your Baptismal Vows.

The Struggle Between Flesh and Spirit

Every Christian has two births, the old and fleshly, and the spiritual and new, and each is opposed to the other. The fleshly birth is flesh and the spiritual birth is spirit. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"* (Jn. 3:6).

Because each of these births is opposed to the other then from this arises a conflict and a struggle between a Christian's flesh and spirit. *"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh"* (Gal. 5:17). The flesh desires to kill the spirit, and the spirit the flesh. The flesh desires to bring the spirit into submission, and the spirit the flesh. The flesh desires to rule the spirit, and the spirit the flesh. The flesh desires to be proud, to be magnified and to be conceited, but the spirit does not wish this, but it desires to be humble-minded. The flesh desires to be wrathful, to be malicious, to quarrel and to be avenged in deed or in word, but the spirit does not desire this, but desires to forgive everything in meekness.

The flesh desires to fornicate and to commit adultery, but the spirit is repelled by it and desires to be chaste. The flesh desires to seize that which is another's, to steal and to plunder in every manner, but the spirit is repelled by this and desires to give of its own. The flesh desires to be malicious, to flatter, to lie, to be crafty, to deceive, and to be hypocritical, but the spirit hates this and desires to be truthful and to be straightforward in all dealings. The flesh desires to hate a man, but the spirit desires to love him. The flesh desires to live in idleness, to be slothful, but the spirit turns away from it and desires to be exercised in blessed labors. The flesh desires to wander, to be drunk, and to arrange banquets and feasts, but the spirit turns away from this and desires to live either moderately or to fast.

The flesh desires to seek glory, honor and riches in this world, but the spirit scorns all this, and strives only for eternal blessings, and so on. Thus the *“flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.”* As one renewed, a Christian should live not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, and should subjugate the flesh to the spirit, according to the Apostolic injunction, *“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh”* (Gal. 5:16). And this is to *“crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Gal. 5:24). *“Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”* (Rom. 13:14). *“Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”* (1 Pet. 2:11). *“Walk in the newness of life”* (Rom. 6:4). Let us not allow sin to reign in us, but let us live for Christ *“Who died for us, and arose again”* (2 Cor. 5:15).

Beloved Christians, let us see whether we have this warfare, whether we take part in this saving struggle, whether we walk in the newness of life, whether we oppose the inclinations and desires of the flesh, and whether we do not allow sin to reign over us and to rule us. For only those who have *“crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* are Christians. What use is it to be called Christians, yet not truly be Christians? It is not the name of Christian that shows the true Christian, but the struggle against the flesh and against every sin. We must not permit the flesh everything it demands. It demands food, it demands drink, it demands clothing, it demands rest, and more: let us give what is needful, but when it desires what is contrary to the will of God and to His Law let us not permit it, that we may be Christians not only in name but also in fact.

On our renewal at holy Baptism

In holy Baptism, O Christians, we are renewed for the holy Christian new life, and taking off the old man we put on the new spiritual man. Setting aside the evil character of the old Adam we receive the good character of the new, Jesus Christ, and so we are made a new creature, according to the teaching of the Apostle, *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature”* (2 Cor. 5:17).

Hence holy Baptism is called the *“washing of regeneration”* (Tit. 3:5), for before Baptism we were dead, killed by sin, and not capable of any good deed (for what can a dead man do?) and so before God it was as if we had no being, for only he who is dead to sin lives to God. But in holy Baptism we are made alive, and having renounced sin, we are renewed to a holy and pious life. Every Christian has two births, the old which is fleshly, and the new which is spiritual. He has the old birth from his parents, *“For I was conceived in iniquities, and in sin did my mother bear me”* (LXX-Ps. 50:7 [KJV-Ps. 51:5]). The second birth he has is spiritual, and thereby he is born anew to the spiritual, holy, and heavenly life, and he receives it from Christ. For this reason a Christian is named after Christ, for one is called by the name of him from whom he is born.

To the fleshly birth belong pride, high-mindedness, haughtiness, conceit, self-importance, and disdain for neighbor. To the spiritual birth belong humility, deprecation and negation of one's own self. To the fleshly birth belongs unbelief, to the spiritual faith.

To the fleshly birth belongs recklessness, to the spiritual — fear of God. To the fleshly birth belong recalcitrance, insubordination, disobedience and opposition to God, to the spiritual — submission, subordination, and obedience. To the fleshly belongs ingratitude, to the spiritual — thankfulness to God.

To the fleshly belongs indifference to the honor and glory of God, to the spiritual — the desire and care for the glory of God. To the fleshly belongs hope in one's own self, in one's honor,

riches, in one's own strength, in man and in every creature, to the spiritual belongs hope in God alone. To the fleshly belong anger, wrath, malice and the desire to be avenged in word and deed, to the spiritual — meekness, innocence and long-suffering. To the fleshly belongs immoderate self-love, to the spiritual — love of God and man.

To the fleshly belong miserliness, avarice, mercilessness and care only for one's own self, to the spiritual — mercy, love of generosity and compassion, and helping one's neighbor. To the fleshly belong envy and all its consequent evil, to the spiritual — love and compassion for a neighbor's misfortunes and joy over his happiness.

To the fleshly belong guile, slyness, falsehood, cunning and hypocrisy, to the spiritual — simple-heartedness and truth. To the fleshly belong theft, robbery and every injustice, to the spiritual — justice. To the fleshly belong impurity, drunkenness, incontinence or lustful desire, to the spiritual — purity, chastity, sobriety and continence.

To the fleshly belong the love of this world, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and worldly wisdom, to the spiritual — disdain of the world and all its vanity, and the wisdom of heavenly and eternal good things. In a word, to the fleshly birth belongs evil habit, and to the spiritual — virtue.

So we see what are the fruits of the fleshly birth, and those of the spiritual. Holy Scripture, when it commands us to keep away from sin, commands us to keep away from the fruits of the old and fleshly birth. But when it teaches us to do good, it teaches us to show the fruits of the new birth: *“Turn away from evil, and do good”* (LXX-Ps. 33:15 [KJV-Ps. 34:14]). *“Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”* (2 Tim. 2:19).

Beloved Christians! Glory be to God. We are born again and renewed in holy Baptism as we said above. Let us consider whether we show the fruits of the new birth, and whether we live as the new birth requires. For birth is not something dead, but living; it must therefore show fruits in conformity with itself. Let us also therefore show the fruits of our new birth, lest we appear barren before our Lord and hear His terrible words, *“Verily I say unto you, I know you not”* (Mt. 25:12).

Self examination

Glory be to God, we are all called Christians. We all confess the one Tri-hypostatic God, the living and immortal God. We were all baptized in the name of the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We all believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, crucified and risen from the dead, and showing His sign, we sign ourselves with the cross. We all go to the holy church and we pray, beseech, hymn, and glorify the holy name of God. We listen to the holy word of God. We all partake of the holy and life-creating Mysteries of Christ. We are all called to eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven, and we say in the holy Symbol of Faith, “I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come” (Nicene Creed, articles 11 and 12).

Glory to God for all that and more! Truly most glorious and magnificent are the mysteries of Christianity, O listeners! It is a great and glorious thing to be a Christian!

But let us examine ourselves and test whether we are truly Christians. According to the apostolic injunction, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith”* (2 Cor. 13:5), for without faith it is not possible to be a Christian. We show the outward signs of Christianity, as we said above, but do we have true Christianity within us? For everything outward is nothing without the inward, and outward signs apart from very truth are a lie and hypocrisy.

We pride ourselves in our faith, but do we do works in conformity with this faith? As the Apostle says to all, *“Shew me thy faith without thy works”* (Jas. 2:18). We are called Christians after Christ, but do we crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts as befits Christians that believe in Christ crucified? As the Apostle says, *“They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Gal. 5:24).

And do we feel within us the anointing of gladness of the oil of the Spirit? We believe in the Gospel, but do we live worthily of the Gospel? We confess and call upon the true God, but do we please Him with the faith and the clean conscience that He demands of us? We hear the holy word of God, but do we heed it and correct ourselves according to its rule? We partake of the holy and life-creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ, but are we renewed by Holy Communion and do we progress in the new, spiritual man?

Let us consider these and other things, and examine ourselves as to how we live, how we behave, how we think, how we speak, how we act, with what heart we address others before God, Who sees all things, and how we treat each other. And having so considered, let us correct ourselves that we may be Christians not only in name but also in truth.

We became Christians by the grace of God; let us take care to have true Christianity within ourselves. We were baptized in the one Tri-hypostatic God and have received the gift of holiness and justification; let us take care to guard this heavenly treasure to the end. We believe in Jesus Christ crucified; let us take care to follow Him with faith, and having each one taken up his cross let us go after Him. We confess and call upon the heavenly God; let us take care to please Him with a heavenly character. We hear the word of God; let us take care and live just as it teaches us. *“We await the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come;”* let us take care to conduct ourselves in this world worthily of the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come; and having turned away from the vanities of this world, let us strive only for everlasting blessedness. We approach the holy and heavenly table of the Mysteries of Christ; let us take care that this heavenly and life-creating Bread brings life, sanctification, illumination, renewal, joy and spiritual consolation.

Thus shall we show our faith from our works. Thus shall we be Christians not only in name but in very fact. *“God be gracious unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us and have mercy on us, that we may know upon the earth Thy way, among all the nations Thy salvation”* (LXX-Ps. 66:2-3 [KJV-Ps. 67:1-2]).

Inward search

Take no greater care than to correct your will and inward disposition. In this consists all the power of Christian piety.

All outwardness without inwardness is nothing. Whatever is not inside the heart does not exist in actual fact. Virtue is not true virtue when it is not within the heart. Therefore correct your heart and your will, and you shall be good and your outward deeds will be good, for the inward is the beginning of the outward. When evil is not in the heart, then it will not appear outwardly. The hands will not do evil, the feet will not walk toward evil, the tongue and lips will not speak evil, the eyes will not look upon evil and so on, when the will and the heart do not desire it.

And thus pure streams flow from a spring when the source itself is pure. Likewise good works come forth from the heart when the heart is good, but there cannot be good works without a good heart, just as from a putrid and noisome spring nothing else can flow but putrid and noisome water.

Therefore correct your heart and will and you shall be good, you shall be a true Christian, you shall be a new creature. For all good or evil is from the will and from the heart. When the heart and the will are good, then the whole man is good.

A heart which is obedient and in conformity with the will of God is good. A heart which opposes and is contrary to the will of God is evil. Faith makes a well-intentioned heart. "Faith is the mother of a good will," says St. Ambrose, therefore where there is no well-intentioned heart, there is also no faith.

Take care, Christian, to correct yourself within and to be good, and you shall be truly good, otherwise whatever you may do, you will be, as always, evil. Hence, you see that faith renews a man and is the root of good works.

It is not possible to correct yourself rightly if you do not recognize the evil hidden in your heart and the calamities that proceed from it. An unrecognized disease remains untreated. The beginning of health is to know your disease, and the beginning of blessedness is to know your misfortune and wretchedness. For who having recognized his illness does not seek healing, and who knowing his misfortune does not seek deliverance from it?

Therefore, recognize the evil that hides itself within you as a deadly poison, and you will hasten to be delivered from it. And the more you recognize it, the more zealously you will seek deliverance. The evil hidden in the human heart is conceit, self-will, envy, wrath, avarice, impurity, and every abominable thing. From these things proceed all iniquity as a foul stream flows from a noisome spring. Look often into your heart and little by little you will come to understand this.

An untreated disease threatens death, likewise this evil, when it remains uncorrected, threatens eternal death. From the recognition of this evil proceeds the recognition of your misfortune and wretchedness. From the recognition of misfortune and wretchedness proceed the fear of eternity, humility, sighing, and the desire and zeal for deliverance from misfortune. God "*giveth grace unto the humble*" (Jas. 4:6), which corrects and renews a man. So the man who knows himself begins to correct himself and gets progressively better. Know yourself, then, and you shall correct yourself.

Temptations and trials show what hides in the heart of a man. Temptation is similar to the medicine called an emetic. An emetic reveals what is hidden in the stomach. So temptations and trials make manifest what is inside a man. The holy word of God and other Christian books point out the corruption of our nature, but we recognize it by actual experience or deed in temptations and trials.

Thus vainglory becomes apparent through the deprivation of glory, avarice through the deprivation of riches, envy through the success of one's neighbor, and anger through disappointment. If, then, you fall into various temptations, O Christian, this all happens by God's permission for your great benefit, that you may thereby know what is hidden in your heart, and so knowing it you may correct yourself. Many flatter themselves and consider themselves to be good, humble, and meek, but they will discover the contrary under temptation. Do not become despondent in temptations, then, but give all the more thanks to God that He thus brings you to knowledge of yourself and wishes you to be corrected and be saved.

Sin

It is impossible to weep enough at the corruption and wretchedness in human nature that followed after the fall. There is nothing more harmful to man than sin, but man is not so inclined to anything else as much as to sin — man, I say, God's rational creation by God's special counsel. “*Let us make man,*” (Gen. 1:26) created in the image of God and made in His likeness.

O how mightily, O men, has our adversary stricken us! How has that ancient serpent damaged our pure and undefiled nature by his deadly poison! Man strives unrestrainedly toward every sin. The Prophet weeps over this calamity and wretchedness, “*And man being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them*” (LXX-Ps. 48:13 [KJV-Ps. 49:12]). Man is genuinely compared to the dumb beasts, and is become like them. Those same passions which are in beasts are seen in man.

A beast is proud and haughty; we see the same in man. A beast becomes angry; man too becomes angry and embittered. A beast envies; man also envies. Beast fights with beast; man also fights with man. A beast steals; man steals too. A beast is ravenous; man is also ravenous. A beast is ruled by passions; man too is ruled by passions. And what is all the more bitter than this is that all these passions found individually in every beast, are found together in the individual man. He is proud and conceited. He is wrathful and malicious. He is envious. He is passionate and capricious. He is ravenous. He is desirous of others' goods, and so on.

O beloved creature of God! Where is your beautiful goodness, the image and likeness of God? Where is your holiness and innocence and truth? And man being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like them.

The holy Apostle frightfully describes the man not renewed by divine grace, and presents him before our inward eyes,

“There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:10-18).

But let us see how great an evil sin is, although man loves it, so that we may turn away from sin.

1. The great and incomprehensible God is offended and angered by sin, He Who created us from nothing and made us in His own image and likeness, He Who for our sake who are fallen, sent into the world His Only-Begotten Son; He that every day and hour does us good, He that feeds us, waters us, clothes us, gives us rest, and abounds in other innumerable blessings for us, He that will finally judge the sinner for sin before the whole world.

O how truly incomprehensible an evil is sin, for thereby the incomprehensible majesty of God is offended!

2. No one is able to take sin away from man but the Son of God. He came into the world for the sake of taking away sin, and He suffered and died so as to wipe out sin. “*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*” (1 Jn. 3:8). “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (Jn. 1:29). Glory to His love for man!

3. Sin works death, *“for the wages of sin are death”* (Rom. 6:23). Thus our ancestors sinned in paradise and died the death, and would be dead forever had not Christ the Son of God revived them with His Blood. *“For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever”* (Heb. 13:8). For His holy Blood, poured out for the entire world, is as effective now as it was since the beginning of the world to revive every sinner that believes in Him.

4. Conscience so heavily and cruelly torments a man for the sin that he committed, that a man often kills himself, not being able to bear the pangs of conscience.

5. There are temporal punishments for sin such as famine, fires, battles, plagues, diseases, earthquakes, and others. *“Death, and bloodshed, strife, and the sword, calamities, famine, tribulation, and the scourge; these things are created for the wicked”* (Sirach 40:9-10). *“Sins are the cause of all evils”* says St. Chrysostom. You see how great an evil sin is, an evil more evil than any other evil. O it is truly better to go about naked than to sin. It is better to be captive and imprisoned than to sin. It is better to be wounded and have every disease than to sin. It is better never to see the light and to sit in darkness than to sin. It is better to endure curses, mockery, reproach, abuse, beatings and wounds than to sin. Finally, it is better to endure every evil that can possibly be in this world than to sin, because all this evil afflicts the body only, and afflicts temporarily, for death puts an end to all suffering. Here every misfortune comes to an end, but sin afflicts both the body and soul, and it will torment them forever without end.

For sin is the cause of each and every misfortune that occurs in this world. If it were not for sin there would be no misfortune. Sin came into being in the world and upon it followed every calamity. Sin is sweet to men, but its fruits are bitter to them. A bitter seed also bears bitter fruit. Beloved Christians! Let us know sin, that we may turn away from it, for everyone avoids a known evil. People know that poison harms, and they avoid it. They know that a serpent kills with its sting, and they keep away from it. They know that thieves strip and kill, and they avoid them.

Let us also know sin, O beloved, and the evil that proceeds from sin, and we will unfailingly avoid it. For sin harms more than any poison. Sin is more venomous than any serpent. Sin strips us bare more than any robber, and deprives us of temporal and eternal blessings, and kills the body and the soul. These are the fruits of the bitter seed of sin!

Sin is anger, wrath, and malice. Sin is pride, highmindedness, haughtiness, conceit, and scorn of neighbor. Sin is slander and judgement. Sin is shameful speech, impure talk, rough speech, blasphemy, and every corrupt word. Sin is falsehood, flattery, cunning and hypocrisy. Sin is drunkenness, gluttony, and all intemperance. Sin is theft, stealing, robbery, violence, and all unrighteous acquisition of another's goods. Sin is adultery, fornication, and all impurity. In a word, every transgression of the Law is sin and is more harmful an evil than any other evil that harms our body in any way. For these only harm our body, but sin harms and kills both the body and the soul. Sin is more evil than the very devil since sin made the devil, who was once a good and luminous angel, but he was poisoned and darkened by sin. Whoever does not know sin as a great evil and does not avoid it shall know and understand how cruel an evil sin is in very experience and by its effects, in the age to come, but it will be too late and useless. For this reason we must recognize this evil in the present age and guard ourselves from it.

Christ the True Light, that enlightens the blind, enlighten also the eyes of our heart that we should know sin and avoid sin! It is the beginning of salvation to know one's own misfortune.

Shun every sin as a mortal poison, because every sin offends and angers God, Who is great. It both separates the one who sinned from God and sets an obstacle to eternal salvation. Therefore shun sin, lest it put you to death eternally.

The struggle against every sin is an unfailling necessity for all Christians who wish to be true Christians and to receive eternal salvation in Jesus Christ, lest they allow it to take hold of them. *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof”* (Rom. 6:12), says the Apostle of Christ. Their faith requires this of Christians, according to the words of the Apostle, *“Shew me thy faith by thy works”* (Jas. 2:18).

They must listen to God in Whom they believe, and not sin; they must live unto God, and not unto sin. This is demanded by that holy Baptism through which they were renewed to the holy Christian life. This is demanded by the vows made at Baptism, in which they vowed to labor for the Lord in faith and in truth. This is required by the work of salvation, since holy Baptism avails nothing to those who transgress and do not keep their vows made at Baptism, as they are false and have lied to God. Consider these things, O Christian! A Christian is not known by saying, *“Lord, Lord”* (Mt. 7:21), but by struggling against all sin. That soldier is a true soldier who stands and struggles against visible foes. Likewise, a true Christian is he who wages incessant war against sin. But let us see for what cause a man sins, that we may more easily stand against sin. We note five causes of sin:

1. The corruption of human nature. Man is conceived in iniquity and born in sins, as the Psalmist says, *“For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me”* (LXX-Ps. 50:7 [KJV-Ps. 51:5]). The sinful passions with which he is born incline and draw him to sin. *“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* (Rom. 7:24). Corruption and accursedness have entered into man from the fall of Adam. This inclines a man to every sin. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”* (Jn. 3:6). But Christians must stand against inclinations and passions and struggle according to the power of holy Baptism and the vows made then, and not allow them to progress into deed.

2. The devil leads man to sin. Of this the Apostle says, exhorting Christians to be on guard against him, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Oppose him firm with faith”* (1 Pet. 5:8-9). The Apostle says the same in another place, *“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Eph. 6:10-12).

These unseen enemies are always eager for our destruction, O Christian! Be vigilant and make haste to guard against every sin. We must not, therefore, slumber.

3. The seductions of the world also lead toward sin. We see that evil grows; one does such and such a thing. Another either sees it or hears of it, and recklessly imitates it. Temptation is like a pestilence that begins in one man and infects many living near him. *“Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”* (Mt. 18:7).

4. A cause of sin is often the bad upbringing of children. Such children, when they come of age hasten toward every manner of evil. This comes about from the carelessness of parents. Give heed to this, fathers and mothers!

5. Habit strongly attracts a man toward sin. We see this evil; we see that drunkards are always drawn toward drunkenness, thieves toward theft, fornicators and adulterers toward impurity, slanderers toward slander, and so on. For their habit draws them like a leash toward sin, and they are drawn toward the sin to which they have become accustomed just as a hungry man is drawn toward bread and a thirsty man toward water.

Incited by these things, men sin. A Christian man wishing to be saved and to show his faith from deeds must unfailingly struggle against these things. All these adversaries to our salvation are cruel to us. Cruel is the flesh with its passions and lusts, which lusts against the spirit. Cruel is our adversary the devil, who unceasingly deceives us and wars against us. Cruel to us also are the temptations by which the lusts of the flesh are fanned and kindled as a fire by the wind. But cruellest of all is the very habit to him who has become accustomed to evil. For that man it becomes his second nature.

The struggle against the aforementioned adversary is difficult for all, I admit, but it is necessary and most glorious. Many wage war and are victorious over people, but are captives of their own passions and become slaves. There is no victory more glorious than to be victorious over one's self and sin. There is no crown or triumph without victory, and no victory without struggle against enemies.

Beloved Christians! Let us go into this struggle, that with the help of Christ we may attain victory and receive from Him the crown of goodness, and we shall be eternally triumphant in His Kingdom. As help in the struggle against sin we note the following:

1. Listen and heed the word of God. It portrays sin and virtue, and leads us from sin and encourages us toward virtue. *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Word of God is *"a sword of the Spirit"* (Eph. 6:17) by which the enemy of souls is cut down.

2. God is present in every place, and He is with us wherever we may be. And we, anything we may do, we do before Him and before His holy eyes. How, then, shall we transgress before God and violate His holy Law before His eyes? We are ashamed and stand in fear before an earthly king; how much more ought we to be ashamed and fear to give offense before God, for every sin is an offense before God.

3. Remember the last things: death, the Judgement of Christ, hell, and the Kingdom of Heaven. These things deter sin. *"Remember the end,"* says Sirach, *"and thou shalt never do amiss"* (Sirach 7:36).

4. Avoid occasions that lead to sin, such as banquets and feasting, and evil and useless conversations. *"For evil communications corrupt good manners"* (1 Cor. 15:33).

5. Keep in mind and remembrance that a man could die and perish in the very act of sin. Thus Pharaoh, king of Egypt, pursued after Israel and wished to oppress him again, but he perished in the very act of iniquity (cf. Ex. ch. 14). Thus Abessalom [Absalom] the son of David sought to kill his holy father, and perished in that pursuit (cf. LXX-2 Kings [KJV-2 Sam.] ch. 18). We see the same thing even now, we see that fornicators and adulterers are stricken in the very act of impurity, blasphemers in blasphemy, thieves and robbers in theft, and other transgressors receive according to their deeds. Thus the righteous judgement of God strikes transgressors, that we should fear to sin and transgress.

5. Consider that Christ the Son of God suffered and died for sins. *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities”* (Is. 53:5). Should you, a Christian, do that for which Christ the Son of God drank the bitter cup of suffering, and thus *“crucify”* in yourself *“the Son of God afresh”* (Heb. 6:6)?

7. Do not look at what other people are doing, but heed what the word of God teaches. Thus we shall avoid the temptations of the world. *“Much peace have they that love Thy law, O Lord, and for them there is no stumbling-block”* (LXX-Ps. 118:165 [KJV-Ps. 119:165]). O Christian, love the Law of God and the temptations of the world shall not harm you.

8. Our effort and struggle against sin is powerless without the help of God. For this reason we must make an effort and pray, that the Lord help us in this so important an endeavor. The Lord helps those that take care and labor. He strengthens those that struggle and crowns the victorious.

Beloved Christians, we see the enemies of our soul that wish to destroy us not temporally, but eternally. We also see help in the struggle against them. Let us stand, then, let us stand aright and be strengthened with the power of Jesus our almighty Saviour, and let us not allow them to overpower us, that we may be crowned with the wreath of victory by the Master of the contest.

O Lord Jesus, the Victor over death and hell, help us! We can do nothing without Thee. With Thee we can do all things.

Pride

Pride is a most abominable sin, but hardly anyone recognizes it since it is hidden deep in the heart. Not knowing one's self is the beginning of pride. This ignorance blinds a man, and thus he becomes full of pride. O that man would know himself! He would know his own misfortune, poverty, and wretchedness; he would never become full of pride. But man is so wretched that he does not see and know his misfortune and wretchedness.

Pride is known by its deeds as a tree is known by its fruits. But let us see what are the fruits of the bitter seed of pride:

1. A proud man seeks honor, glory, and praise by every means. He always desires to appear as something, and to direct, command, and rule others. But he is powerfully angered and embittered at whoever may prevent his desire.

2. He complains, he is displeased, and he curses when deprived of honor and leadership. *“What have I done wrong? Why am I at fault? Is this what my labors and service merit?”* It often drives a man to kill himself.

3. He begins labors that are beyond his strength which he is not able to manage. O man! Why do you take up burdens which you cannot bear?

4. Out of his self-will he interferes in the affairs of others. He desires to direct everyone and everywhere, though he himself does not know what he is doing, so greatly is he blinded by pride.

5. He boasts of himself shamelessly and exalts himself. *“I did thus and so. I rendered such and such service to society.”* O man! You enumerate your services, but why do you not mention your shortcomings? While it is shameful for you to proclaim those, you should also be ashamed to praise yourself.

6. He looks down on and humiliates other people. *“He is a base man, he is useless,”* and so on. O man! He is a man just as you are, for we are all men. He is a sinner, yes, but I think that you cannot deny that name either. He transgressed in something, or is a sinner, but you, too, in

another way, or perhaps in the same way. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:23).

7. He does not submit, he does not obey his authorities and his parents. The proud have a stiff and unbending neck. They always wish to establish and execute the will of their desires.

8. The goods that they have they ascribe to themselves, to their own efforts and labors, and not to God. O man! What can you have of your own self, who came naked out of your mother's womb? What can you have should God, the source of all good, not give it to you? What can our effort and labor accomplish without His help, Who alone is able do all things, and without Whom everyone is as nothing, as a shadow without a body?

9. He greatly dislikes reproach and admonition. He thinks himself pure, though he be all sullied.

10. He is impatient, is displeased, complains, and often even curses when in destruction, in contempt, in misfortunes and calamities.

11. He displays haughtiness and is somewhat pompous, etc. in word and deed. These are the fruits of pride, hateful to God and man. The fruits which it engenders are bitter. *“For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”* (Lk. 16:15). Wherefore it is also written, *“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased”* (Lk. 14:11).

The virtue opposed to pride is humility. But as far as pride is loathsome and abominable, so welcome and lovely is humility to God and men. God Who is great and exalted looks on nothing so lovely as on a humble and compunctionate heart. Whence even the Most Holy Theotokos says of herself, *“For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden”* (Lk. 1:48).

When pride retreats from a man, humility begins to dwell in him, and the more pride is diminished, so much more does humility grow. The one gives way to the other as to its opposite. Darkness departs and light appears. Pride is darkness, but humility is light.

As we consider our own selves and come to know our misfortune and wretchedness, we shall have reason enough to be humble. We are born naked and with a cry. We live in calamity, misfortune, and sins. We die with fear, disease, and sighing. We are buried in the earth and return to the earth. There it is not evident where the rich man lies, where the poor, where the noble and where the lowly, where the master and where the servant, where the wise and where the foolish. There they are all made equal, for they all return to the earth. Why, then, should earth and corruption be conceited?

Beloved Christians! Let us know our misfortune and wretchedness, and *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time”* (1 Pet. 5:6). Let us know, beloved, that we Christians are Christ's, Who is meek and humble of heart. It is a shameful thing, and very unbecoming of Christians, to be full of pride when Christ, God great and exalted, humbled Himself. It is a shameful thing for servants to be proud when their Master is humble. There is nothing as unbecoming and indecent of Christians as pride, and nothing shows a Christian as much as humility.

From humility it is known that a man is a true disciple of Jesus, meek and humble of heart. If we wish to show evidence that we are true Christians, let us learn from Christ to be humble as He Himself enjoins us, *“Learn of Me; for I am meek, and lowly in heart”* (Mt. 11:29). Let us engrave and deepen in our memory the saying of the Apostle now explained, *“For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble”* (1 Pet. 5:6).

Sins of the tongue

Treat every man not with flattery, but simply, just as you do yourself. As you appear to him outwardly, be so inwardly as well; and what you say to him and what you have on your lips must be in your heart also. For flattery and treachery are the works of pestilent people, and the devil lives in their heart teaching them flattery and treachery so as to deceive us.

Keep, then, from treating your neighbor craftily and treacherously, lest you give place to the devil in your heart, and lest he overcome you and take you captive.

Be extremely careful not to offend anyone in word or deed, for it is a grave sin. When someone is offended, God, Who loves the man, is also offended, for there can be no offending man without offending God. Whoever sins against man, also sins against God. This is a serious matter, as you can see for yourself. And when you offend your neighbor, straightway humble yourself before him and beg forgiveness of him with humility, lest you fall under God's just condemnation.

Keep from prying into other people's affairs, for such prying gives occasion for slander, judgment and other grievous sins. Why do you need to be concerned about others? Know and examine your own self.

Recall your own past sins and purge them with repentance and contrition of heart, and you will not look at what other people do. Look often into your own heart and examine that most ruinous evil hidden there, and you will have sufficient material for investigation. For we can never examine our heart without knowing precisely that every evil is contained in it.

This investigation is profitable to you, for it gives birth to humility and to fear and watching over one's own self, and to sighing and prayer to God. But examination of the sins of others is the beginning of every iniquity and it is a curiosity hateful to God and man. Then guard yourself against it.

If you see or hear someone sin, keep from slandering him and judging him. You tell someone else about him, he tells it to another, the other to the third, the third to the fourth, and so everyone will come to know it and be tempted. And they will judge the one who sinned, which is a very serious thing. And you will be the cause of all this, by publishing your brother's sin. Slanderers are like lepers that harm others by their foul odor, or like those stricken by the plague who carry their disease from place to place and destroy others. Keep yourself, then, from slandering your neighbor, lest you sin gravely and give someone else cause for sin.

Likewise keep from judging him, because he stands or falls before his Lord (cf. Rom. 14:4), and because you yourself are a sinner. A righteous man has no need to judge and condemn another, how much less should a sinner judge a sinner.

And to judge people is a matter for Christ alone. To Him judgement is given by His Heavenly Father, and He shall judge the living and the dead, before Whose judgement you yourself will stand.

Keep, then, from usurping to yourself the authority of Christ, which is a very serious thing, and from judging people like unto yourself, lest you appear at that Judgement with this most abominable sin, and lest you be rightly condemned to everlasting punishment. Turn your eyes and mind, then, on your own self and examine yourself, and reproach and accuse yourself before

God for your sins, which requires the labor of repentance. Reproach and accuse yourself before God and beg mercy of Him, as the publican did, so that you may be justified by Him.

Listen to what Christ the Lord says to the condemned, *“And why dost thou behold the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and shalt then thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of brother's eye”* (Mt. 7:3-5).

You see that those that judge and condemn others are hypocrites or false Christians. These do not know themselves and their own sins, although outwardly they may appear as saints.

Flee luxury

Guard yourself against luxury as against a plague. It greatly weakens a Christian's soul. It teaches you to steal what is another's; to offend people, and to hold your hand back from giving alms as is required of a Christian.

Luxury is like a belly that knows no satiety, and like an abyss that devours what is good. It needs everything and wishes to change everything. “My house is not good enough, I must build a new one.” “My skirt is no good, I must sew a new one.” “It is a disgrace for me to go out in a simple carriage, I must buy an English coach.” “I can't stand this food, I must cook better.” “I just cannot drink simple wine, I must buy champagne.” “My servants should not wait on me in such clothes, I must deck them out in better.” And so on.

Thus luxury devours everything and weakens the mind. Guard yourself, then, against luxury. Nature is satisfied with little things, but caprice and luxury demand much.

Do not adorn your body with stylish clothes, as some are accustomed to do, but let your clothing be appropriate to your station. A Christian's clothing is clothing of the spirit. It should adorn the soul and not the body. The beauty of the soul is the image of God in which we were created. Seek this beauty and it shall suffice you.

Do not live in idleness, but exercise yourself in blessed labors. Since idleness is the cause of every evil, whoever lives in idleness inevitably also sins. Infirm and aged people that are unable to labor are excused from this.

If you have riches, avoid applying your heart to them, lest you thus depart in your heart from God. *“Ye cannot serve God and Mammon”* (Mt. 6:24). Likewise avoid squandering God's blessings on whims and luxury; they are given you from God not for your sake alone, but also for the sake of other poor people. Remember that you are the steward, and not the master of these goods. *“The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof”* (LXX-Ps. 23:1 [KJV-Ps. 24:1]). Be a faithful steward of your Lord, then, and not a squanderer of the Lord's property; and contenting yourself with moderation, thank the Creator of all good things and provide for poor people. Both those that guard their property like watchmen and those that squander it on whims and luxuries will be without excuse and shall be put to shame at the Judgement of Christ. Avoid this lest you be condemned with the wicked servants (Mt. 25:41).

If you have gathered property through injustice, bestow it on the poor, lest it reprove you at the second coming of Christ. In this matter imitate Zacchaeus the publican, whom Christ set as an example for all (Lk. 19:8). It is better to live in poverty than in unrighteous wealth. Choose,

then, what is better and distribute what was ill gotten. If you do this, believe the Lord, that He will not forsake you, and that He Who does not forsake even birds and feeds them and provides for all creatures will give you what is needful for your life.

When you wish to eat or drink, call on the name of the Lord, and ask a blessing of Him for your food and drink, saying, "Lord, bless." And think here that you will taste and enjoy the good things of your Lord. For everything that is God's is good, as was said above, "*The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*" (LXX-Ps. 23:1 [KJV-Ps. 24:1]). Whoever has possessions for himself from theft and injustice has a curse, and not the blessing of God. For this reason he should not call upon the name of God here. Likewise, also, they that wish to become drunk ought not call on the name of God, for drunkenness is forbidden by God.

Avoid attending feasts and banquets. It is very difficult to attend them without wounding your conscience. You will no longer return home the same person that left your home. Guard yourself, then; there is nothing better and more peaceful than to remain at your own home. What the eye does not see and the ear does not hear will not strike in your heart. Thoughts that are good and pleasing to God come nowhere else but in solitude and silence. Whatever good thing you may gather at home and in solitude you lose in the midst of people.

If you have need to leave your house and to go out to people, attend to yourself and guard your heart with all caution. Set the Lord your God before you everywhere and let the holy fear of Him go before you as a candle. Wherever you may go and wherever you may be, God is with you and knows and sees all your doings, and hears your words. Then watch yourself everywhere.

Against drunkenness

Drunkness is sin in and of itself... "*nor drunkards... shall not inherit the Kingdom of God,*" according to the teaching of the Apostle (1 Cor. 6:10). And Christ says, And "*take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness*" (Lk. 21:34). This is the cause of so many and serious sins. It brings about the quarrels, fights, and bloodshed, and murders that follow upon it. It is rough talk, blasphemy, and cursing. It causes disappointment and offence to neighbor. It teaches lying, flattery, seizure of the things of others so as to somehow satisfy the passion. It ignites anger and wrath. It makes people cast themselves into impurity as swine into the mire.

In a word, it makes a man a beast, and the rational irrational, so that not only the inward condition but also the outward appearance of a man often changes. Wherefore St. John Chrysostom says, "The devil loves nothing like luxury and drunkenness" (Homily 58 on St. Matthew), because nothing fulfils his evil will as does a drunkard.

Drunkenness is the cause not only of ills of the soul but also of bodily and temporal ills:

1. It weakens the body and brings it to infirmity, whence it written, "*Shew not thy valiantness in wine; for wine hath destroyed many*" (Sirach 31:25).

2. It leads to wretchedness and poverty. "*A labouring man that is given to drunkenness shall not be rich*" (Sirach 19:1).

3. It takes away one's glory and good name. On the contrary it leads to ignominy, contempt and loathing. For people loathe nothing so much as they do a drunkard.

4. It brings grief and sorrow to the household, relatives, and friends, and merriment to enemies.

5. It makes its devotees useless for any calling, and in whatever calling a drunkard may be, it brings about calamity and misfortune rather than benefit to society. St. John Chrysostom, describing the misfortune and destruction of drunkenness, says, “Drunkenness is self-imposed possession, the emptying of thought, a calamity of derision, a disease worthy of ridicule, a voluntary demon” (Homily on the Resurrection), and much more. In order to guard oneself against drunkenness it is useful to apply the following:

1. Do not allow young people to drink alcoholic beverages since young people easily become accustomed to it, and whatever they learn in youth they hold to throughout their entire life.

2. Do not allow them to keep company with drunkards and the depraved.

3. Adults and those who have come to manhood should not drink wine without need.

4. Keep away from evil company and festivities.

5. Remind them that it is extremely difficult to hold back from this passion, and many perish in soul and body in and through that very passion.

6. Those that have become accustomed to this passion should powerfully arm themselves against its torments; stand, and not give in, and pray and call upon the all-powerful help of God.

7. Remember the misfortunes caused by drunkenness, and compare the condition of a sober life with the condition of a drunken life. These people should think about the fact that many drunkards die in their sleep and go from this life to the next without any consciousness, and therefore without repentance.

Hate

Hate is obdurate and long-standing anger. Anger, when it is not soon assuaged, becomes malice, wherefore the Apostle exhorts and teaches us to set aside anger at the very beginning and quickly: *“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil”* (Eph. 4:26-27). And hence we see that whoever nurses anger and malice for his neighbor gives place to the devil. The devil already possesses him like a spirit of malice and leads him about as a captive. Hate arises either from envy, as with Cain who nursed a hatred for his brother, Abel, whose happiness he envied, and he killed him (Gen. 4); or from an offense done to someone. Thus, people become angered and embittered at those who have offended them, and they desire to render them evil for evil, and so avenge their offense. Hatred is a most abominable sin and worthy of derision. Every other sin brings either some gain or some pleasure to the sinner. The thief steals to satisfy his soul. A fornicator fornicates to please his flesh. A bitter man is embittered without any of that. He sins and he suffers; he transgresses and he is eaten, he avenges and he endures vengeance. Thus, hatred is itself the punishment and scourge of the malicious.

If it were possible to look into the heart of a malicious man, nothing else would appear but only the torment of hell. So it is that malicious people are darkened and withered, for malice eats up their flesh like a poison. O cruel passion, cruel and destructive both to the malicious and to those against whom it arises and takes up arms! When it is not cut off in the beginning it works great calamities, much the same as a fire having gained strength eats up many houses.

Malice is the sort of thing that if it is not cut off at the very beginning multiplies without limit, in the same way as a flame blazes up on finding dry materials, says Chrysostom. Malice is perpetrated in various ways:

1. By deprivation of health, as those people who harbor malice against their neighbor give him poison, and so damage his health. Hence that man lives and dies enduring almost constant torment. This is the action of malice and its destructive fruit.

2. By taking of life, as did Cain who killed Abel his brother.

3. By evil talk and slander. A malicious man who wishes to get revenge on his neighbor and has nothing with which to harm him, fabricates some vice in him and so carries about a false and evil rumor of him, or makes something big out of something small, and knowing a twig calls it a log. So it is that many people endure false slander and abuse. The cause of all this is malice.

4. The hateful often boast about having perpetrated malice: "I gave him to know," or, "let him remember me!" To such people the saying from the Psalms applies, "*Why dost thou boast in evil, O mighty man?*" (Ps. 51:3 [KJV-Ps. 52:1]). This rejoicing and boasting in the harm and destruction of others is the loathsome and abominable stench of malice. O the cruel and destructive action of malice! A man that sinned against God and his neighbor ought to be sorry and repent, but the hateful man boasts of it and is proud, he sins and boasts of his sin, he commits iniquity and is proud of his lawlessness. In him operates abominable and pestilent malice. O man! You boast and rejoice now in your iniquitous deed, but if you do not correct yourself you will someday sigh, shed tears, and weep when all your lawless acts are set before you and they become manifest to all the world, as will the rest of your iniquities too. Then will you see your destruction.

5. Hate operates and multiplies so powerfully in some people that they are not afraid to say, "Let me perish, yet I will get even with him!" Poor creature! Perhaps you do not know what destruction is? Put your hand to the fire and you will taste its bitterness in part. You cannot stand it. Will you be able to stand the bitterness of the fire of Gehenna in which your entire person will be immersed and submerged and will burn forever and not be consumed? But if you look at yourself you will see for yourself that the devil, the spirit of malice, works and speaks such words in you.

You see, beloved Christian, how cruel and serious an evil malice is? The fruits of malice are evil and bitter, and evil and bitter is malice itself which gives birth to such fruit.

Woe to the world for malice! It harms everything and in every way, as we have said above. No one can hide from it anywhere. When it cannot harm a man any other way, then it injects its poison into a man through his tongue. However many misfortunes, calamities, and evils there may be in the world, malice is the cause of all. Woe, then, to the world for malice, but rather greater woe to those that are malicious! They harm the bodies of others, but also their own souls. They put the bodies of others to death, but also their own souls.

They take the temporary life of others, and also their own eternal life. They destroy others temporarily, and themselves also eternally. Malice leads to this terrible evil.

If they do not wish to perish eternally the hateful ought to correct themselves and change their own hateful heart. The following considerations should help in this:

1. It is a fearful thing for Christians to be hateful, who are commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ to love not only friends, but also their enemies.

It is a fearful thing for Christians to do evil who are commanded to do good to those that hate them. It is a fearful thing for Christians to get revenge, who are commanded to forgive the transgressions of others. The avenger will fall into the hands of the avenging God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). Let the malicious soul heed this, and let them put the poison of their malice to death by repentance and contrition of heart, otherwise they shall appear at the fearful Judgement of Christ with their sins and receive a reward according to their deeds.

2. It often happens that though they harm others, the malicious first harm themselves. The same poison which they prepare for others they eat themselves. The same sword by which they strip others bare they kill themselves with, and their sword goes into their own heart. And the same pit which they dig for others they fall into themselves. This is what the Psalmist sings, *“He opened a pit and dug it, and he shall fall into the hole which he made. His toil shall return upon his own head, and upon his own pate shall his unrighteousness come down”* (LXX-Ps. 7:16-17 [KJV-Ps. 7:15-16]). And the Lord says, *“With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again”* (Mt. 7:5).

Beloved Christians, let us hear the exhortation of the Apostle, *“Let not the sun go down upon your wrath”* (Eph. 4:26), and let us assuage and calm our wrath at the very beginning, and while this infant of iniquity is still small let us kill it, lest it grow and overcome us. *“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Pet. 2:1-2) unto salvation. *“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God”* (3 Jn. 1:11).

Love

We have spoken about hate; now let us speak of love. Love is the virtue opposite to hate. As bitter as hate is, so sweet is love, and as harmful and pestilent as hate is, so useful is love. And as evil and bitter the fruits of hate are, so good and sweet are the fruits of love.

Hate is bitter both to the hateful and to others. Love is sweet to both the lover and the beloved. Hate devours and binds the heart. Love looses and broadens the heart. Hate kills; love gives life. He that lives in hate is dead, he that abides in love is alive. Hate makes sorrowful. Love consoles, makes glad and joyful. Hate is hard and cruel. Love is soft and tender. Hate is proud and haughty. Love is humble. Hate is merciless. Love is merciful. Hate is impatient. Love is long-suffering.

Hate works evil. Love does not do evil but does good. Hate is hateful and loathsome. Love is welcome and beloved by all. Hate is condemned by all. Love is praised and extolled by all.

He that lives in hate is poor and wretched. He that lives in love is blessed and happy. He that lives in hate is loathed by God and man. God and man rejoice in him that lives in love. Hate is the seed of the devil. Love is the seed of God. Wretched, then, and exceedingly poor is the condition of hateful people, though they may be regarded as gods in the world. Most blessed and comforting is the condition of hearts filled with love, though they may be trampled down as dirt and scum. The former are outwardly beautiful, but inwardly contemptible. The latter are outwardly contemptible but inwardly sweet. The former glitter outwardly, but are dark and black within. The latter are not outwardly comely, but inwardly they have everything. The former are outwardly healthy, but rotten within. The latter are outwardly unpleasing, they do not know how to speak prettily and smoothly, but inwardly they are healthy, beautiful and pleasant. The former are like apples that are outwardly beautiful, but within are bitter and wormy. The latter are like apples that are not outwardly pleasing, but within are sweet and pleasant.

The former are an evil tree; the latter are a good tree. A tree is known of its fruits (Mt. 12:33), the fruits are of the same sort as the tree. But let us examine the fruits of love, that we may know love by its works, as we know a tree by its fruits. For love is known by its works and not by words.

Beloved Christians! If we had true love, then it would take every unhappiness away from us, and it would bring us happiness. Our cities, towns, villages, and homes would be a place of paradise, full of joy and sweetness, for there is no love without this. If there were love among people, we would not fear robbery, murder, violence and plunder, for love does not do evil to its neighbor.

If there were love, there would be no theft, robbery or other evils: love does not do evil to its neighbor. If there were love, people would not touch the bed of their neighbor [commit adultery]: love does not do evil to its neighbor. If there were love, people would not be subject to slander, reproach, abuse, railing, dishonor, and other evils: love does not do evil to its neighbor.

If there were love, people would not deceive us, they would not entice, they would not lie to us: love does not do evil to its neighbor. If there were love, we would have no need for places of judgement, for there would be nothing for which to judge and to condemn, inasmuch as there would be no evildoers or transgressors of the law. Trials were established for the sake of transgression. The man who truly loves is free of judgement as well as of sin.

If there were love we would not have any use for guards, locks and safes for the purpose of safeguarding our possessions, for they would not be in danger of robbers and thieves.

If there were love, people would not languish in prison for debts, foreclosure, and default, love would not allow them to come to this, *“for love is... kind”* (1 Cor. 13:4). If there were love, people would not go about in rags and half-naked, love would clothe them, for love is kind. If there were love, people would not wander about without homes, for love would not let them come to this, but would have given them a place of repose, *“for love is kind.”* If there were love there would be no poor or wretched. The love of the rich would have supplied their wants.

If there were love, authorities would have no complaint against their subjects or the subjects against their authorities because authorities would have built up society and their subjects would be obedient to them. For this reason pastors would have no complaint against the people or the people against their pastors, masters against servants and peasants or servants and peasants against their masters, parents against children or children against parents, and so on.

If there were love among us, then it would stand for us instead of a strong wall, against Turks and the rest of our adversaries, and against all of our visible and invisible enemies. For where love is, there is God Himself, the helper and defender of love.

O love, lovely and sweet love! Without love everything is poor and miserable. With love everything is good and prosperous.

Now Christians love to live in rich homes, sit at a rich table, dress in rich clothing, ride in rich carriages and horses, though they may see the want and poverty of their neighbors. Hence it is evident that they only love themselves, and not God or their neighbors. From this comes every unhappiness, misfortune, and misery among people. Self-love is the cause of all this. For this reason, God, Who loves man, provided for our happiness and gave us this commandment, *“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”* (Mt. 22:39). That was at a time when Christians *“were of one heart and of one soul”* (Acts 4:32). Now we see the opposite. Now among Christians it is heart against heart and soul against soul; now all have their lips full of love, or rather flattery, but very rarely is love in anyone's heart. For already *“because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”* (Mt. 24:12).

Christians, woe unto us without love! Where there is no love there is no faith, for faith does not exist without love. Where there is no faith, there is neither Christ nor salvation. Christians, we confess God, Who is love. “Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (deacon's exclamation during the Liturgy).

God's help

Our every endeavor is powerless without the grace and help of God. A man can easily become debauched and so destroy himself, but he cannot correct himself and be saved without God. He can easily live according to the flesh as a boat floats down a river, but of himself he cannot stand against the flesh and live spiritually, as a vessel cannot of itself sail against the rush of the current. It must move either with rowers or with sails in the wind.

So a man must be helped in the spiritual life and in the work of salvation by a supernatural and all-powerful force. He must be victorious over his own self; but how can this be without the power of God present, which is able to do all things? So great is the corruption of our nature.

Up to now, the devil incessantly fights against man, and endeavors to lead him into sin, and to trap him in his snares. The temptations of the world surround him and entice him, and evil custom or habit draws him likewise. Hence we see that many begin to repent and live well, but are drawn off the good path and corrupted again.

And we cannot begin a good and Christian life, then, and live as Christians even to the end, without the almighty help of God. Those who test themselves know all this. For this reason the Lord says, *"Without Me ye can do nothing"* (Jn. 15:5). At every hour and minute, then, we need the help of God. For this reason, O Christian, when you wish to live piously and be a true

Christian and so be saved, pray to God incessantly and beg help of Him with fervor. Just as according to His love for man God commanded us to pray and ask of Him every good thing, He also promised to give us what we ask for, and most of all what is needful for our salvation.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Mt. 7:7-8). Know, beloved, that a Christian without prayer is as a bird without wings and as a warrior without weapons.

Pray fervently, then, to Christ the Lord and give yourself to Him for direction, and He will correct and guide you to eternal life and blessedness according to His love for man. Only be careful and watch yourself, and seeing your care He will help you in everything. Read the Beatitudes, and the rest, often and with fervor.

The grace of God is the life of our souls. Our soul cannot be alive without the grace of God. For as our body lives by the soul, so our soul lives by the grace of God. Pray, then, always and sigh unto God that He give you His grace, and that He preserve you in it. We need the grace of God every minute. For this reason, sigh often from the depths of your heart, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thine Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and with Thy governing Spirit establish me"* (LXX-Ps. 50:12-14 [KJV-Ps. 51:10-12]).

Whatever task you may begin, consider whether it is in agreement with conscience and with the Law of God, and whether it is truly profitable to you. When it is in accordance with the Law of God, begin and labor. When it is opposed to it, turn away from it lest you fall into the snare of the enemy who always seeks to catch a man in his snare. Not everything that seems useful to you is useful, but only that which is in agreement with healthy reason and the word of God.

At the beginning of every task call on the name of the Lord your God, and begin it with prayer, that the Lord may prosper you to begin it and complete it. And from this it is evident that a Christian ought not to begin anything that is contrary to the Law of God, but only that which is in agreement with it.

Remembrance of the Divine Passion

A real and powerful encouragement in the struggle against sin, and in the holy and Christian life, is the contemplation of the sufferings of Christ. Of this the Apostle says, *“and if ye call on the Father, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's works, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish or spot”* (1 Pet. 1:17-19).

Look, O Christian, at that by which you were delivered from sin, the devil, hell, and eternal death. Not by any perishable substance, but by what? By the most precious and priceless Blood of Christ, the Son of God. Then, of your own will, do you will not wish to sin and to offend Christ your great Benefactor with sin, and so cast yourself again into that very misfortune from which Christ delivered you by His most bitter suffering? This is as though someone who loved and pitied you delivered you from fire, or drowning, or captivity, or death, or prison, or some other such misfortune, and of your own will you gave yourself up again to that same misfortune.

That is what you do when you sin, and through sin you give yourself over to the devil again and cast yourself into eternal destruction. Sin is sweet to man, but its fruits are bitter and heavy — eternal death, *“For the wages of sin is death”* (Rom. 6:23).

In the same way the treasure of eternal salvation was bought for us by nothing else but by the very Blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is far more precious than the whole world, more than heaven and earth and the fullness thereof, because it is eternal and full of every good thing, eternal and incomprehensible, and it was purchased at an immeasurable price: Christ, the Lord of Glory and God, obtained it for us by His own Blood. Then do you wish to lose so great and incomprehensible a treasure by your own will? Christ snatched you out of destruction as He is almighty and gave you eternal blessedness as a precious pearl. *“For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 1:11).

Keep the faith, then, and guard it against your enemy the devil, who desires and attempts to seize it away from you and make you his captive. Struggle against this enemy; consider, then, the suffering of Christ and it will teach you every virtue.

Imitation of Christ

In order to correct yourself and become a true Christian, that is Christ's, set the holy life of Christ before your eyes and imitate its example. And even though your heart, corrupt as it is, does not wish it, force and convince yourself to imitate the beautiful virtues of Christ.

You look into a mirror so that you may know what is in your face, whether there are any blemishes in it, and having seen blemishes, you cleanse them. Let the immaculate life of Christ be a mirror to your soul, look into it often and know what is in your soul. Does it desire the same things that Christ desires? And does it do what Christ did when He lived on earth? And in it you will see what is contrary to the life of Christ, and you will cleanse it all like blemishes with repentance and contrition of heart. Christ the Lord despised honor, glory, and riches in this world, though He was able to have everything as the Master of all. Do you not seek honor, riches, and glory in this world?

Christ lived on earth in humility. Do you not live in pride and pomp? Christ was loving and compassionate. Do you not hate and harbor malice against men like yourselves? Christ being reproached no one. Do you not reproach anyone that in any way reproaches you; and worse than that, do you not reproach him, who in no way reproaches you? “You are a so and so,” “You are a swindler,” “You are a spendthrift,” “You are a thief,” and so on.

Christ was meek to all His revilers. Do you not revile those that revile you? Christ got revenge against no one, though He was able to destroy all His enemies in the wink of an eye. Do you not get revenge for any offense against you? Christ endured all things. Do you not complain and curse in any misfortune and suffering that comes your way?

So compare your soul with the life of Christ; and as you set your face before a mirror, set your soul before the mirror of the immaculate life of Christ, and take every care to correct and go after whatever you may see that is opposed to it. If you do so, then I assure you, that day by day you will become better, for it is impossible for him who looks often into that immaculate mirror not to correct himself.

Whoever truly wishes to be with Christ must follow after Him. Whoever wishes to be like Christ in glory must be like Christ in the present life. Not in vain did Christ say, “*I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*” (Jn. 13:15). “*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me*” (Mt. 10:38).

Consider these words carefully, and you will know and acknowledge to yourself that whoever wishes to be saved and enter into Christ's Heavenly Kingdom must follow Him. Whoever wishes to follow Christ into eternal life must follow Him with faith and love, in this life, and whoever wishes to come into Christ's eternal Kingdom must go by way of Christ — there is no other way there. Note what Christ says, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life*” (Jn. 10:27-28).

The sheep here signify true Christians that obey His holy teaching and live as He taught and that follow Him with faith, humility, love and patience, and so He shall lead them that follow Him into eternal life.

Consequently, they that do not hear His voice or His holy teaching and do not follow Him are not the sheep of Christ. And consequently, they shall not follow after Him into eternal life. This is a fearful thing, O Christian, but true. Consider these words of Christ for yourself and you will admit that it is so.

Beloved Christian! You must go by the safe way if you wish to enter surely into eternal life. What is the safe way? Live in this world according the example of the life of Christ. Then live thus, and you shall be saved.

Remember Your Baptismal Vows

Holy Baptism is like a door by which those that are baptized enter into the holy Church and become fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. 2:19). And not just so, but before Baptism there are renunciations and vows:

1. We then renounced Satan and all his evil works. Satan is a wicked and evil spirit. He was created good by God, but he and those of like mind with him apostasized from Him, and so from light they became dark, and from good they became evil and wicked. His works are idolatry, pride, adultery, prodigality, all uncleanness, slander, blasphemy and every sin; for he is the inventor of sin, and he beguiled our ancestors in paradise and led them into sin and apostasy from God. We renounce this wicked spirit and all his evil works before Baptism.

2. We renounce every vanity, pride and pomp of this world, as ones called to and renewed for everlasting life.

3. We promise to serve Christ the Son of God in faith and in truth together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and to follow in His footsteps.

4. Thus we establish a covenant between God and us. We, who have renounced Satan, promise to serve God and be faithful to him. God accepts us in His supreme mercy and promises us an inheritance in everlasting life and the Kingdom, and washes us who are defiled by sin in the laver of Baptism. He sanctifies and justifies us, as the priest says over everyone who is baptized, Thou art washed, thou art sanctified, thou art justified (cf. I Cor. 6:11).

Beloved Christians, let us remember these renunciations and vows, and consider whether we keep them, for it is a grave thing to lie to God, and it is very dangerous to be found false before Him. Let us consider, then, whether any of us have not gone back to Satan, whether we have not renounced Christ and abandoned Him? Let us consider on whose side we find ourselves, on Satan's or on Christ's. One serves and belongs to him whose will he performs. He renounces Christ not only he who renounces His holy name and does not confess Him to be the Son of God and his Saviour, but also he who sins against conscience and recklessly breaks His holy commandments. This is the teaching of the Apostles. For the Apostle says, They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, and the rest (Tit. 1:16).

Do you see that people reject God in works too, and not just with their lips? Is anyone a prodigal, and does he commit adultery? He rejects Christ. Does anyone hate his neighbor and seek him out to harm him? He has apostasized from Christ. Does anyone steal; does he rob and take away his neighbor's goods? He has departed from Christ. Does anyone deceive and flatter his neighbor? He is no longer with Christ, but in all these things he submits to the enemy of salvation, and so he does not stand in the promises which he made to God, and so he has lied to God. Let us examine then, beloved, our conscience and our life. To which side do we belong, to Christ's or to His enemy's? To the good, or to the evil? To the lot of the saved or to that of the lost? He that is not with Christ is the enemy of Christ. For Christ Himself said, He that is not with Me is against Me (Matt. 12:30).

Beloved, let us watch ourselves and let us be with Christ here in this world, as we have vowed at Baptism: let us be with Christ here that we may be with Christ in the age to come, according to His promise that cannot lie, Where I am, there shall also My servant be (John 12:26). Let us serve Him here as our King and God, that on the Day of Judgment He will acknowledge us as His laborers and number us with His faithful servants and open unto us the doors of everlasting joy. Remember the vows made at Baptism.

So that you may act on the aforementioned points, you must remember the vows you made at holy Baptism. For though not you yourself but your sponsor made those vows before God on your behalf, you promised then, spitting on Satan, and on his pride, and on his service, and on his evil works-you promised, I say-and vowed to serve Jesus Christ your Lord and Redeemer in faith and in truth, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Consider, Christian, what vows you made and to Whom. It is a grievous thing to lie to a man; how incomparably more grievous it is to lie to God. God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7). When a Christian does not stand on his promises and does not keep them, what mercy, then, should he expect from God, to Whom he lied? He that keeps his promises shall find himself in God's mercy and in His Kingdom. He remains faithful to God, and God will hold him in mercy and in His protection as His own. And this is what the prophet sings to God, With the holy man wilt Thou be holy, and with the innocent man wilt Thou be innocent. And with the elect man wilt Thou be elect, and with the perverse wilt Thou be perverse (Ps. 17:26-27).

Christians! All they that commit iniquity and act against their conscience do not keep their vows. These include fornicators, adulterers, and all defilers, robbers, thieves, brigands, the sly, and crafty, deceivers and the guileful, revilers and men of evil speech, drunkards, fault finders, the hateful, and the malicious; they that live in the pride and pomp of this world, and all that do not fear God. They have all lied to God and have not kept their vows, and are outside of the holy Church, though they may even go to churches and pray and receive the Mysteries and build churches and adorn them and display other signs of a Christian. Since they shall be powerfully put to the test at the Judgment of Christ and tormented more there than Turks and idolaters, avoid these deeds, Christian and do not imitate the aforementioned doers of iniquity, lest you be condemned with them to eternal fire by the just judgment of God, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:44-8), but by all means endeavor so to live and act as the word of God teaches, as was said above.

Keep in mind those vows of yours, and this will guide you toward the Christian life and restrain you from every evil and do you good. If you notice that you do not keep those vows, then repent and begin the Christian life anew, lest you appear before God in a lie, and perish with liars. *The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death* (Apoc. 21:8).

(A chapter from *The Journey to Heaven*, translated by Fr. George Lardas)