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Αριθμ. Πρωτ. 284

**ΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΤΗΧΗΤΗΡΙΟΣ
ΕΠΙ ΤΗ ΕΝΑΡΞΕΙ
ΤΗΣ ΑΓΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΤΕΣΣΑΡΑΚΟΣΤΗΣ
+ Β Α Ρ Θ Ο Λ Ο Μ Α Ι Ο Σ**

**ΕΛΕΩ ΘΕΟΥ
ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΩΣ - ΝΕΑΣ ΡΩΜΗΣ
ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ
ΠΑΝΤΙ ΤΩ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΙ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ,
ΧΑΡΙΣ ΕΙΗ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΝΗ
ΠΑΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΗΜΩΝ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,
ΠΑΡ' ΗΜΩΝ ΔΕ ΕΥΧΗ, ΕΥΛΟΓΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΓΧΩΡΗΣΙΣ**

* * *

Αδελφοί και τέκνα ἐν Κυρίῳ προσφιλή και εὐλογημένα,

Διὰ τῆς θεοπνεύστου ρήσεως τῆς ἐλεημοσύνης τοῦ Κυρίου και τῶν κριμάτων αὐτῆς, εἰσάγει και ἐφέτος πάντας τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους πιστοὺς εἰς τὸ «μυστήριον» τῆς Ἁγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρκοστῆς ὁ ἱερός Ψαλμῶδός ἀναφωνῶν: «Ποιῶν ἐλεημοσύνας ὁ Κύριος και κρῖμα πᾶσι τοῖς ἀδικουμένοις» (Ψαλμ. 102, 6). Διότι ὁ Κύριος «ἐμπιπλᾷ ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν μας και ἀνακαινίζει ὡς ἀετοῦ τὴν νεότητά μας» (πρβλ. ὁ. π. 5).

Ὡς γνωστόν, ἀδελφοί και τέκνα ἐν Κυρίῳ, ἕκαστος ἄνθρωπος, πλασθεὶς κατ' εἰκόνα και καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ, ἀποτελεῖ ναὸν Κυρίου. Πολὺ δὲ περισσότερον ὅσοι εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθημεν και ἐχρίσθημεν διὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Μύρου και ἐνεκεντρίσθημεν εἰς τὴν καλλιέλαιον τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, εἴμεθα ναοὶ τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν οἰκοῦντος Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, ἀκόμη και ἐὰν διὰ ποικίλων ἀμαρτιῶν, ἐκουσίῳ ἢ ἀκουσίῳ, ἀπομακρυνώμεθα ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου: «εἰ ἀπιστοῦμεν, ἐκεῖνος πιστὸς μένει» (Β' Τιμ. β', 13).

Διὰ τοῦ ρύπου ὅμως τῆς ἀμαρτίας κωλύεται ἡ Χάρις τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος νὰ ἐνεργῇ ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐφ' ᾧ και ἡ Ἁγία ἡμῶν Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ὥρισε τὴν ἀρχομένην περίοδον τῶν νηστειῶν τῆς Ἁγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρκοστῆς, ἵνα κατ' αὐτὴν καθάρωμεν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τῆς μετανοίας και γενώμεθα ἄξιοι νὰ ὑποδεχθῶμεν τὰ ζωοποιὰ Πάθη και τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν λαμπροφόρον Ἐγερσιν τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. «Δεῦρο τάλαινα ψυχῆ, σὺν τῇ σαρκί σου τῷ πάντων Κτίστῃ, ἐξομολογοῦ· και ἀπόσχου λοιπόν, τῆς πρὶν ἀλογίας, και προσάγαγε Θεῷ, ἐν μετανοίᾳ δάκρυα», καλεῖ πάντας τοὺς πιστοὺς ὁ ποιητὴς τοῦ Μεγάλου Κανόνος Ἅγιος Ἀνδρέας Κρήτης (τροπᾶριον α' ᾠδῆς).

Ἡ Ἐκκλησία, μεριμνῶσα διὰ τὴν σωτηρίαν καὶ πνευματικὴν τελειώσιν μας, ἀνοίγει εἰς πάντα τὰ μέλη αὐτῆς τὸν παρόντα καιρὸν τῆς μετανοίας, προτρέπουσα συγχρόνως αὐτὰ νὰ πολεμήσουν τὸν φιλόῦλον καὶ φιλοκτήμονα βίον, ὁ ὁποῖος ὡς «βαρὺς κλοιός» κρατεῖ τὴν ψυχὴν χοϊκὴν καὶ συρομένην ἐπὶ γῆς, μὴ δυναμένην νὰ ἀνοίξη τὰς πτέρυγας αὐτῆς πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Τοιοῦτοτρόπως, διὰ τῆς μετανοίας καὶ τῶν καθαρτικῶν δακρῶν, ἐνδυόμεθα καὶ πάλιν τὸ πρωτόκτιστον κάλλος καὶ τὴν θεοῦφαντον στολήν, τὴν ὁποίαν ἀπωλέσαμεν μετὰ τὴν πτώσιν, περιβληθέντες «τὸν στολισμὸν τῆς αἰσχύνης, καθάπερ φύλλα συκῆς».

Ἀποτελεῖ, ταυτοχρόνως, ἡ νηστεία καὶ ἡ ἀποχὴ ἀπὸ βρωμάτων καὶ ἀπὸ «διαλογισμῶν ματαίων καὶ ἐνθυμήσεων πονηρῶν» ἀφετηρίαν διὰ τὴν ὀρθὴν, μεμετροημένην καὶ σώφρονα διαχείρισιν τῶν ὑλικῶν ἀγαθῶν, μὲ προοπτικὴν τὴν κοινὴν ὠφέλειαν, οὕτως ὥστε νὰ ἐκμηδενίζονται αἱ ἀρνητικαὶ καὶ διὰ τὸ κοινωνικὸν καὶ φυσικὸν περιβάλλον ἐπιπτώσεις ἐκ τῆς ἀλόγου χρήσεως των καὶ νὰ παραμένῃ μόνον ἡ «νηστεία τῆς ἐλεημοσύνης», ἡ ὁποία νὰ μὴ «γίνηται κρῖμα πᾶσι τοῖς ἀδικουμένοις», ἀλλὰ ἔλεος καὶ χάρις καὶ ἀνακούφισις εἰς αὐτοὺς καὶ διὰ τὴν πορείαν μας πρὸς τὸ «καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ» (Μέγας Βασίλειος).

Τοιοῦτοτρόπως, διὰ τῆς ἐγκρατοῦς χρήσεως, ἀγιάζεται καὶ ἡ ὕλη καὶ ἡ ζωὴ μας, καθότι ἡ φθαρτὴ ὕλη ἀποτελεῖ οὐχὶ τὸν αὐτοσκοπὸν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μέσον τοῦ ἀγιασμοῦ. Συνεπῶς, καὶ διὰ τοὺς ἔχοντας καὶ κατέχοντας πλουσίους τῆς εὐαγγελικῆς περικοπῆς, ἡ νηστεία πρέπει νὰ ἀποτελῇ ἀφορμὴν ἐγκρατείας, μὲ τελικὸν σκοπὸν «περισσεύειν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἐλπίδι ἐν δυνάμει Πνεύματος Ἁγίου», κατὰ τὴν ρῆσιν τοῦ μεγαλορρήμονος Ἀποστόλου τῶν Ἑθνῶν Παύλου (πρὸβλ. Ρωμ. ιε', 13) καὶ ἀποβλέπειν καὶ εἰς τοὺς σημερινοὺς πτωχοὺς «Λαζάρους» τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος καὶ τῆς προσφυγῆς.

Πέραν ὅμως τούτων, δὲν πρέπει νὰ λησμονῆται, ἀδελφοὶ καὶ τέκνα, τὸ ἀληθὲς πνεῦμα τῆς νηστείας καὶ τῆς ἐγκρατείας, τὸ ὁποῖον καθιστᾷ ταύτας εὐαρέστους τῷ Κυρίῳ, καθὼς διδάσκει ὁ ἀδελφόθεος Ἀπόστολος Ἰάκωβος, λέγων: «θρησκεία καθαρὰ καὶ ἀμίαντος παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὕτη ἐστίν, ἐπισκέπτεσθαι ὀρφανούς καὶ χήρας ἐν τῇ θλίψει αὐτῶν, ἄσπιλον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου» (Ἰακ. α', 27). Διότι δὲν θὰ ἐπιτύχωμεν τὴν χάριν, τὴν ὁποίαν ἀφθόνως παρέχει ἡ νηστεία καὶ ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἀπλῶς καὶ μόνον διὰ τῆς αἰτιίας καὶ τῆς ἀποχῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ὑλικῶν τροφῶν: «Εἰ εἰς κρίσεις καὶ μάχας νηστεύετε καὶ τύπτετε πυγμαῖς ταπεινόν, ἵνατί μοι νηστεύετε;», ἀναρωτᾶται ὁ Προφήτης Ἡσαΐας (58, 4). «Οὐ ταύτην τὴν νηστείαν ἐξελεξάμην [...], ἀλλὰ [...] διάθρουπτε πεινῶντι τὸν ἄρτον σου καὶ πτωχοὺς ἀστέγους εἴσαγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου· ἐὰν ἴδης γυμνόν, περιβάλε...», λέγει καὶ παραγγέλλει ὁ Κύριός μας διὰ τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ Προφήτου Αὐτοῦ (Ἠσ. 58, 5-7).

Ἰδιαιτέρως σήμερον ἡ οικονομικὴ κρίσις, ἡ προσφυγὰ καὶ αἱ ποικιλότητες δυσχέρειαι, αἱ ὁποῖαι παγκοσμίως ἐμφανίζονται, μάλιστα δὲ εἰς ὠρισμένους λαοὺς καὶ

χώρας, παρέχουν εις ἡμᾶς τοὺς Ὁρθοδόξους τὴν δυνατότητα νὰ καλλιιεργήσωμεν τὸ γνήσιον τοῦτο πνεῦμα τῆς νηστείας, συνδυάζοντες τὴν ἀποχὴν τῶν βρωμάτων με ἔργα φιλανθρωπίας καὶ ἀλληλεγγύης πρὸς τοὺς ἔχοντας ἄμεσον ἀνάγκην ἀδελφούς μας, τοὺς πάσχοντας, τοὺς ἐνδεεῖς καὶ πένητας, τοὺς ἀστέγους καὶ πρόσφυγας, τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας «ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνῃ» (Ματθ. η', 20), αὐτοὺς τοὺς ὁποίους αἱ σκληραὶ περιστάσεις τοῦ πολέμου καὶ τῶν πειρασμῶν καὶ τῶν θλίψεων ἀναγκάζουν νὰ ἐγκαταλείπουν τὰς πατρογονικὰς ἐστίας των καὶ νὰ ταξιδεύουν ἐν μέσῳ πολλῶν κινδύνων καὶ θλίψεων καὶ κόπων.

Ὅταν ἡ νηστεία μας συνοδεύεται ἀπὸ τοιαύτην αὐξησιν τῆς φιλανθρωπίας καὶ ἀγάπης μας πρὸς τὸν ἐλάχιστον ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Κυρίου, ἀνεξαρτήτως φυλῆς, θρησκείας, γλώσσης καὶ καταγωγῆς, τότε αὕτη θὰ ἀναβαίνει ἀπ' εὐθείας εἰς τὸν θρόνον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὡς θυμίαμα εὖοσμον καὶ ἄγγελοι θὰ συμπαρίστανται εἰς ἡμᾶς νηστεύοντας, ὅπως διηκόνουν τὸν Κύριον εἰς τὴν ἔρημον.

Ἀπὸ καρδίας εὐχόμεθα ἀδελφικῶς καὶ πατρικῶς εἰς ἅπαντας τὸ ἀρχόμενον στάδιον τῶν Ἁγίων Νηστειῶν νὰ εἶναι καρποφόρον καὶ ἁγιαστικόν, πλήρες χάριτος καὶ ἁγιασμοῦ, καὶ ὅπως ἀξιῶση ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεὸς νὰ προσέλθωμεν ἀπροσκόπτως εἰς τὸν αἰώνιον ζωοποιὸν Κρατῆρα, τὴν ζωηφόρον Πλευρὰν τοῦ Κυρίου, «ἐξ ἧς ὁ διπλοῦς ἡμῖν ἐξέβλυσε, κρουνὸς τῆς ἀφέσεως καὶ γνώσεως» (Μέγας Κανὼν, τροπᾶριον τῆς δ' ὥδης).

Αὐτοῦ ἡ Θεία Χάρις καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον Ἔλεος εἶψαν μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοὶ καὶ τέκνα, ὥστε ἐν τοιούτῳ εὐαγγελικῷ φρονήματι χαρισθῆ ἡμῖν ἡ ἐορτὴ τῶν ἐορτῶν καὶ ἡ πανήγυρις τῶν πανηγύρεων, ἡ Ἀνάστασις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Ὡι ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ ἡ εὐχαριστία νῦν καὶ εἰς τοὺς ἀπεράντους αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν.

Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλῃ Τεσσαρακοστῇ 2016

† Ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως

διάπυρος πρὸς Θεὸν εὐχέτης πάντων ὑμῶν

Ἀναγνωσθήτω ἐπ' ἐκκλησίας κατὰ τὴν Κυριακὴν τῆς Τυρινῆς, 19' Μαρτίου, ἀμέσως μετὰ τὸ Ἱερὸν Εὐαγγέλιον.

March 10, 2016

Prot. No. 284

**CATECHETICAL HOMILY
ON THE OCCASION
OF HOLY AND GREAT LENT**

† B A R T H O L O M E W

**BY THE MERCY OF GOD ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE,
NEW-ROME, AND ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH,
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH,
GRACE AND PEACE
FROM OUR SAVIOR CHRIST,
TOGETHER WITH OUR PRAYER, BLESSING AND FORGIVENESS**

Beloved and blessed brethren and children in the Lord,
Yet again this year, through the God-inspired words, the holy Psalmist ushers the Orthodox faithful into the “mystery” of Holy and Great Lent, pointing out the benevolence of the Lord and the workings thereof as he cries out, *the Lord works mercy and righteousness for all the oppressed* (Psalm 102,6). For the Lord *satisfies our desire with good things so that our youth is renewed like that of the eagle* (c.f. .5).

As we all know, each person, created in the image and the likeness of God, constitutes a temple of the Lord. All the more, those of us who have been baptized in Christ, anointed with Holy Chrism, and grafted onto the olive tree of the Orthodox Church, are temples of the Holy Spirit Who resides in us. This is the case even as we distance ourselves from the Lord by committing sin—voluntary or involuntary—for *if we are faithless, He remains faithful* (2 Tim 2:13).

Unfortunately, the stain of sin hinders the Grace of the Holy Spirit to work in us. For this reason, our Holy Orthodox Church established the forthcoming period of fasting during Holy and Great Lent to allow us to cleanse ourselves through repentance, and thereby becoming worthy to receive the life-giving Passion and the glorious Resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ. The poet of the Great Canon, Saint Andreas of Crete, urges: *Come, my wretched soul, and confess your sins in the flesh to the Creator of all. From this moment forsake your former foolishness and offer to God tears of repentance* (Great Canon, Monday Ode 1).

The Church, always concerned about our salvation and spiritual perfection, initiates her members into this period of repentance, urging them all to struggle against the materialistic and covetous way of life, which, as a “heavy yoke,” grounds the soul and drags it upon the earth, hindering its ability to spread its wings toward heaven and the kingdom of God.

In this way, through repentance and purifying tears, we are clothed again with our original beauty and our God-spun shroud that we lost after the fall, covering ourselves, instead, with the coat of shame similar to the fig leaves worn by Adam.

The fast and abstinence from food, *idle talk, and deceitful thought* represent the start of the correct, restrained, and temperate use of material goods, with the common good as its goal. In this way, we

eliminate the negative impact that irrational use of goods may have upon society and the natural environment. This, therefore, allows for the prevailing of the *philanthropic fast*, which should not render *judgment over the oppressed*, but offer mercy, grace and comfort for them and for us on our journey toward the *likeness of God* (St. Basil Great).

In this way, a temperate use of goods sanctifies both matter and our lives since perishable matter is not the goal per se of sanctification, but rather, its means. Therefore, according to the evangelical periscope, the fast should constitute a motive for restraint, with a final goal to *abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit* (Rom. 15:13), according to the word of the Great Apostle of the Nations Paul. This holds true even for today's poor "Lazarus" and for those seeking refuge.

Furthermore, the true spirit of the fast and of abstinence should not be forgotten, since this is what renders them acceptable to the Lord, as James the Apostles teaches: *religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world* (James 1, 27). For we shall not obtain grace—offered to us in abundance through the fast and through abstinence—simply by refusing and abstaining from food. The Prophet Isaiah wonders: *Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists; is this the kind of fast I have chosen?* (Isaiah 58: 4). The Lord declares, through the Prophet, *I have not chosen such a fast, but one that asks you to share your food with the hungry, that encourages you to invite the homeless into your home, and to clothe the naked when you see them* (Isaiah 58, 5-7).

Especially in our times, the financial and refugee crises, as well as the multitude of hardships that plague the world today offer to us Orthodox Christians the possibility to cultivate the authentic spirit of the fast, linking abstinence from food with acts of charity and solidarity toward our brethren most in need—those who suffer, the poor, the homeless, the refugees, those who have no *place to rest their head* (Math. 8: 20), and those who are forced by the harsh conditions of war, challenges, and grief to abandon their paternal homes and to travel amid countless risks, dangers, and sorrows.

When our fast is accompanied by an increase in philanthropy and love toward the least of our brethren in the Lord, regardless of their race, religion, language and origin, then the fast shall ascend to the throne of God as a fragrant incense, and angels shall stand by us while we fast, in the same way they ministered to the Lord in the desert.

We offer our heartfelt fraternal and paternal prayers to all, that the imminent phase the Holy Fast will prove fruitful and sanctifying, replete of grace and holiness, and that God will render us worthy and without tribulation to enter into the eternal and life-giving Chalice—the life-bearing Side of the Lord—*from which sprang as the fountain of deliverance and wisdom* (Great Canon, Wednesday, Ode 4)

May the Divine Grace and the abundant Mercy of the Lord be with you all, bretheren and children, so that you may receive, through the evangelical ethos, the Gift of the Feast of feasts and the Celebration of celebrations—the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom all glory, dominion, honor, and thanksgiving now and to the endless ages. Amen.

Holy and Great Lent, 2016

+ **Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople**

Your fervent supplicant to God

To be read from the pulpit on Cheesefare Sunday, March 13, immediately following the Holy Gospel.