

**HOMILY AND REMARKS OF METROPOLITAN TIKHON**  
**Funeral Services for Archbishop Nikon**  
*St George Orthodox Cathedral*  
*Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral*  
*Boston, Massachusetts*  
*September 6, 2019*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Christ is in our midst!

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In the Gospel reading appointed for the burial service of a priest, we hear the Lord say these words:

*I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.*

The newly-departed servant of God, Archbishop Nikon was above all a priest of God who faithfully lived, preached, and served with the heart of one who longed to make real these words of the Lord, who longed to taste of the bread of life himself, who had a zeal to share that life with the world so that it might not die. He was a priest of the holy altar who was faithful in standing before that holy altar, in offering the hands and the prayers that would call down the Holy Spirit upon the bread and the wine, and in holding the chalice from which he would distribute that sacred food, the bread of life, so that those who partook of it should never hunger nor thirst but live forever.

He was a priest at his core, as a brother and concelebrant to the members of the Holy Synod, as Father and Archpastor to the Diocese of New England, to the Albanian Archdiocese, and the Diocese of the South, as a pastor to his flocks in Southbridge and Farmington Hills, and as a husband to his wife, Sarah, and brother to his family. He was truly a brother to all of us precisely because we all knew that from his heart and from his mouth we could always expect honesty, integrity, and true Christ-like love.

It is often only when we encounter the reality of death that we reflect more deeply on what the Lord is trying so say to us. Archbishop Nikon encountered the reality of death on September 1<sup>st</sup>, the day which marks the beginning of the Ecclesiastical New Year. Perhaps it is fitting that the Lord should have taken him from us on that day of renewal, the day on which we bless the crown of the year. It is as if Archbishop Nikon is giving us a word of wisdom and guidance, even through his death, reminding us that, though he is departing from our midst, we ought to pay attention to the new beginning that is offered to all of us, the new beginning that is revealed, not only in the Church New Year but in the light of the resurrection of Christ and in the hope of our own resurrection.

When we behold the death of our brother, in some mysterious way, we all understand more clearly in the depths of our heart what our Lord means when He says that He is the bread of life. The image of bread is not merely an image, but rather the means by which we enter fully into communion with God Himself. Bread is the small gift which we offer as human beings in the

Divine Liturgy so that we may receive in return the great gift of eternal life from Christ, whose body and blood we partake of.

The Lord spoke of Himself as the bread of life not just to create a clever image, but rather to introduce us into an experience: *Verily, verily, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.*<sup>1</sup> It is through our participation in the Holy Eucharist, by literally having Christ within us, His blood coursing through our veins and His body sanctifying our bodies, that we enter this experience. This is what Archbishop Nikon was always reminding us of throughout his life.

But he reminded us of this in a very practical way, in a manner that would help us live our life in Christ in a better way. He was, in fact, a practical theologian, as Fr. Robert reminded us of in his words last evening, and a practical theologian is really nothing more than a real theologian. Archbishop Nikon was a real theologian in the Spirit of the Apostle James, whose feast we celebrate on October 9, the day of Archbishop Nikon's birth.

The Apostle James writes:

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

Archbishop Nikon was a doer of the word and we can all easily hear these other words of the Apostle James coming from his lips:

---

<sup>1</sup> John 6:53.

*Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

Or even more directly:

*Who are you to judge another?*

His very being was an expression of wisdom, the wisdom from above that is:

*...first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

He would guide us with his words:

*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

Finally, he was a priest who fulfilled the exhortation of the Apostle James:

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one*

*another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

Archbishop Nikon gave us, at all times and all places, in all circumstances, the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man. Whether he was preaching, speaking, hearing confessions, guiding or exhorting, he always offered these with the fervent prayer of a righteous man.

In the second Gospel reading for funeral service, the Lord says: “My Father is working still and I am working.” Archbishop Nikon was a worker. Although no human being can claim to accomplish the divine work of the Father and the Son, nevertheless, all of us, ordained and non-ordained, are called to offer our talents back to God, back to the Holy Trinity, to whom we owe our life, our existence, and our worth as human beings. The divine work of the Holy Trinity is invisible to us, but it is nevertheless made manifest through the lives and ministries of servants of God such as Archbishop Nikon.

In all these ways, Archbishop Nikon himself lived as a true man of faith who shared the bread of life with all those whom he encountered throughout his life. Outwardly, he was a simple and forthright man, but that simplicity and forthrightness flowed from an inner dignity and sense of honor in his heart.

On behalf of the entire Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, her clergy and faithful, and every community that may have been touched by his life, I offer my prayerful condolences to the entire extended family of Archbishop Nikon, confident that the Lord, who is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, has received him into paradise and

the eternal rejoicing of the heavenly hosts. It is fitting that these words were offered on his behalf at the burial service last evening:

“In faith and hope and love,  
In meekness and purity and priestly worth,  
Uprightly you discharged your sacred functions, O memorable one.  
Therefore the eternal God whom you served  
Shall Himself establish your spirit  
In a place of brightness and beauty, where the righteous rest,  
And you will receive pardon and great mercy at the judgment seat of  
Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

May his memory be eternal.

---

<sup>2</sup> Troparion, tone 2, page 22.