



Prayerful Reflection
National Council of Churches
A.C.T. Rally
Metropolitan Tikhon
Washington, DC
March 4, 2018

O Lord Jesus Christ
True God and True Man;

I am a man –
a fallen and broken man;

I am a man –
Who only ten days ago, with all Christians commemorated a great mystery -
the greatest mystery of all – the mystery of Your Incarnation, when through
the announcement of the Archangel Gabriel, You took on our human flesh
of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

I am a man –
Who with all Orthodox Christians, walks this week with You, the God-man,
in Your extreme humility, as You voluntarily walk the path of suffering,
abandonment, mockery, and solitary death and burial.

I am a man –
Who denies You with Peter, saying: “I know not the man!”
Who sees You with crown of thorns and purple robe and says with Pilate:
“Behold the man!”

I am a man –
Who from the moment of Your Passion and Crucifixion
is no longer told what is right, but is shown it.

is no longer guided on the way, but watches the Way.
no longer describes life,
but sees my own life hang before my very eyes.

I am a man –
Who because of that moment recognizes that, because of Your becoming
man, completely human, leaving nothing of humanity untaken into Your
own divine life save for sin, there is only one proper and true way to look at
another human being.

I am a man –
Who gives thanks for the witness and life of the man we are gathered here
to honor, Dr. Martin Luther King,
A man who, in 1954, reminded us that the greatest battle we have is for the
human heart.

“The problem is with man himself and man’s soul,” he said
“We haven’t learned how to be just and honest and kind and true and
loving. And that is the basis of our problem. The real problem is that
through our scientific genius we’ve made of the world a neighborhood, but
through our moral and spiritual genius we’ve failed to make of it a
brotherhood.”

And further –
“The great danger facing us today is not so much the atomic bomb that was
created by physical science.
Not so much that atomic bomb that you can put in an aeroplane and drop
on the heads of hundreds and thousands of people-as dangerous as that is.
But the real danger confronting civilization today is that atomic bomb
which lies in the hearts and souls of men, capable of exploding into the
vilest of hate and into the most damaging selfishness.
That’s the atomic bomb that we’ve got to fear today.
The problem is with the men. Within the heart and the souls of men.
That is the real basis of our problem.”¹

I am a man –
Who recognizes that it is this darkness in the heart of man that You have
been after to heal;

¹ “Rediscovering Lost Values,” sermon offered at Detroit’s Second Baptist Church, 28 Feb 1954.

Who understands that You want me to see Christ in my neighbors by first seeing Christ in myself;
Who sometimes forgets that the scandal of the Cross, the mystery of the Incarnation can have no other meaning but the eternal presence of Christ in me, in my life, and in the life of all.

I am a man –

Who – 50 years after Dr. Martin Luther King’s untimely and violent assassination – is now left to continue staring directly at the evil of the human heart and mind, at human selfishness.

The same ancient evil, deep evil and ultimate evil, the root of all evil behavior, which is expressed now as has always been in one human being’s hatred of another human being because of the color of their skin or for any other reason.

I am a man –

Who knows that, in spite of all this evil, in Dr. Martin Luther King’s death hides the mystery of Christ, the same great mystery of time that awaits us all:

we will all try to overcome evil and we will succeed at times,
 but we also have to foresee the degree to which we will also fail;
we will stand up, but we will also fall down,
we will dream and we will fight nightmares,
we will bleed for our fellow human beings,
 and often they will make us bleed,
we will prepare to die for them
 and they may not care,

But each effort and sacrifice will fertilize this land of humanity which we were given,
our bones will become the foundations of more building to come,
and in all this Christ will work His own suffering and life-creating death from generation to generation,
until He will have gained us all in the mystery of the age to come.

Finally, I am a man –

Who prays that the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King may be eternal,
That the memory of Echol Cole and Robert Walker² may be eternal,

² The two sanitation workers who lost their lives in the 1968 Sanitation Strike in Memphis.

That the memories of Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carol Robertson and Carol Denise McNair may be eternal,³

And that they, and all who have lost or given their lives for the cause of human dignity will partake in that mystery of the age to come that we behold on the Day of resurrection, when Christ in Victory *trampled on death by His own voluntary death*; and may all sing with St. Gregory the Theologian:

Yesterday I was crucified with Christ,

Today I am glorified with Him;

Yesterday I died with Him,

Today I am made alive with Him;

Yesterday I was buried with Him,

Today I rise with Him.

Let us make an offering to the one who died and rose again for us....

Let us offer our own selves,

the possession most precious to God and closest to him.

Let us give back to the Image

that which is according to the image—recognizing our value,

honoring the Archetype,

knowing the power of the mystery

and for whom Christ died.

Amen.

³ The four young girls who were killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.