



ARCPASTORAL MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE METROPOLITAN TIKHON GREAT LENT 2020

To the Venerable Clergy, Monastics, and Pious Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

My beloved children in the Lord,

With an abundance of love, I greet you in the Name of the Lord as we begin the Holy Forty Days. We undertake this Lenten journey, not as some annual routine to look dour or lament the loss of foods or activities, but to renew our faith, refresh our lives, and become reoriented to our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.

The path of our journey is simple enough to discern: Christ encourages us to set aside our cares, place ourselves in service to our neighbor, and come to Him: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:29). When we have done this, with hearts humbled, but enlarged with love for him, our light will break forth like the dawn, as the Prophet says, and when we call out to the Lord, he will say to us, “Here I am (Isaiah 61:8-9).”

As with our whole life in Christ, this Lenten journey will not be without difficulties. Spiritual health is like physical health, requiring a paced effort, with love, patience, and forgiveness – for self and for others – allowing God to work within us, transforming us into the Body of Christ. The Church offers us the Great Fast as a period of sobriety, wherein we focus on an internal change of heart, bearing fruit in our external actions with those around us. Indeed, the promise of the Resurrection enables us to call brothers even those that hate us, forgiving and loving others regardless of what they may have done, or not done.

In order to be strengthened in the course of the fast, I encourage you to pray at least a little more, to open the scriptures daily in order to read from the psalms in particular, making the words of the Psalmist your own: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked;” make a conscious effort to fast, strengthening your physical body to endure the spiritual race set before us all; and help those in need in tangible ways, both anonymously through financial support and face to face through service projects, a kind word, or a meal.

The efforts made during Lent to focus on Christ will make it possible for us to repent like Zacchaeus, flee from the pride of the Pharisee, return to the Father in humility, and serve those in need. This is what it means to be an Orthodox Christian, as is so gloriously manifested to us through the lives of the saints. As the Venerable Herman of Alaska reminds us, may we all persevere in our love for God from this day, from this hour, and from this very minute, seeking to do his will in all things so that on the day of his glorious and saving resurrection, we may hear him call to us, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

As we begin our journey together, one step at a time, I ask for your forgiveness and pray that our merciful and loving Lord may forgive all of us as we make our way towards the glorious day of resurrection.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature consisting of a stylized cross symbol followed by the name "Tikhon" in cursive script.

+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada