

ST. NEKTARIOS ORTHODOX CHURCH April 2013

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THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM

One of the most profound Lenten prayers in the Orthodox Church is quite likely the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian:

O Lord and Master of my life, give me not the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk.

Give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to your servant.

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen.

The first line, according to Fr. Thomas Hopko, is often mistranslated as “take from me the spirit of...” rather than, as we have here included it, “give me not the spirit of...” This is an important point because it speaks to our theology that everything is from God, good and bad. There is nothing that does not find its origin in the will of God. God is the “God of everything.” Fr. Hopko writes, “In the Holy Scriptures there are many instances when the point is made that everything that comes to a person is from God, even tempting things and trouble, wicked things and evil, sinful things and death itself.” This of course does not mean that God tempts people or forces evil upon them or makes them wicked. But God certainly allows it and in some sense causes it. But for what reason?

We find this in the Book of Ezekiel: “Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life; and I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them; I did it that they might know that I am the LORD” (Ezekiel 20:25-26). And again in Romans, “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts

of their hearts to impurity...And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct” (Romans 1:24, 28). God will give us the desires of our hearts. If we want evil, God will give it. If we want to be tempted by our passions, God will allow us to be given over to our lusts. And so, we pray that God gives us life, Truth, humility, and patience. Life and death are in His hands. All is grace. *Give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to your servant.*

Fr. David

HOLY WEEK

As we fast approach the Passion Week, or what is commonly called the “Holy Week” of Christ, we have to begin to prepare ourselves for the efforts we will make. This week is intense, to say the least. It is nothing less than the cessation of earthly life for the faithful as we “go up with the Lord to Jerusalem” (*Matins of Great and Holy Monday*).

Each day of Holy Week has its own particular theme. The theme of Monday is that of the sterile fig tree which yields no fruit and is condemned. Tuesday the accent is on the vigilance of the wise virgins who, unlike their foolish sisters, were ready when the Lord came to them. Wednesday the focus is on the fallen woman who repents.

We then turn to our Lord’s “Mystical Supper”, the betrayal, crucifixion, and burial. Holy Saturday is given over to His descent into Hades and finally, we reach the night that is “brighter than the day.”

Do not waste this time. Make yourselves ready now. Prepare your hearts to journey with Christ as he gives Himself up for the Life of the World. Glory to Jesus Christ!

WORDS FROM THE FATHERS ON THE GREAT FAST

Catechesis 68: That We Must Be Renewed For
What Is Ahead Through Endurance of the
Trials That Fall Upon Us, Both Visible and
Invisible.

by St. Theodore the Studite
Given On the 5th Sunday of Great Lent.

“Brethren and fathers, because winter has passed and spring has arrived, we see creation flourishing again; the plants are flowering, the earth is growing green, the birds are singing and everything else is being renewed; and we take pleasure in all this and we glorify God the master craftsman who transforms and changes creation year by year, and it is reasonable to do so. “Ever since the creation of the world His eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things He has made” [Rom. 1:20].

It is our duty not just to stay where we are, but to advance further and to examine carefully for ourselves the logic of creation. How? Because this renewal has winter as its cause. It would not have reached its prime had it not first undergone snows and rains and winds. And so it is with the soul; unless it is first snowed on by afflictions, troubles and difficulties, it will not flower, it will not fruit; but by enduring, it bears fruit and partakes in a blessing from God, as it is written: “Ground that drinks up the rain falling on it repeatedly, and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is cultivated, partakes in a blessing from God” [Heb. 6:7].

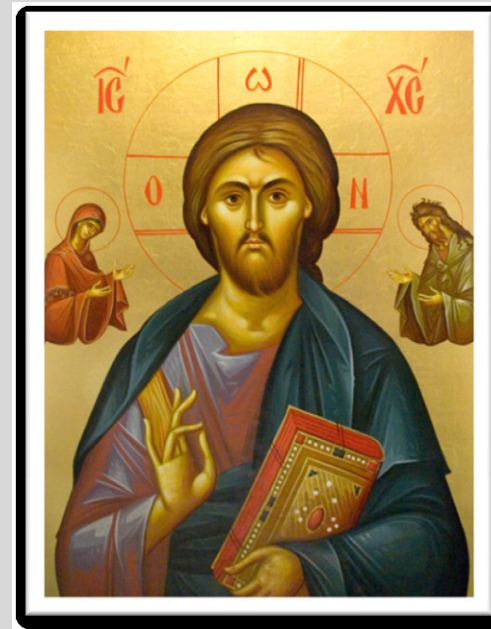
Therefore, brethren, let us also endure every affliction, every trouble, every trial which assails us both visibly and invisibly. The fast we are drawing out as we hunger and thirst and are otherwise made wretched, so that we may bear fruit and partake of God’s blessing; and not only that, but that we may nourish and welcome Jesus as our guest. For just as we enjoy the sight of creation, so He too enjoys the ripe beauty of our souls. What are the fruits? “Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-mastery” [Gal. 5:22]. By these He is nourished, by these He is entertained. And blest the one who nourishes Him, because he will be nourished by Him with eternal good things; and blest the one who receives Him as his guest, because he will be received by Him as his guest in the kingdom of heaven! Indeed!

So if someone is to receive a king as his house guest, he rejoices and is extremely glad; how much more then someone who receives the King of kings and Lord of lords as his house guest. That he is received is clear from what He himself has said: “I and my Father will come and make our abode with him” [John 14:23]. And again: “One who has My commandments and keeps them, is the one who loves Me; the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and manifest Myself to him” [John 14:21].

Therefore, since such are the promises, let us not only bear, but let us endure with joy all things, both those that are present, those that are whispered about, and those that are expected, as we listen to the Apostle when he says: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of His body, that is the Church” [Col. 1:24]. And again Saint James who says: “My brethren, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you

know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” [James 1:2-4]. Do you see then that in trials there is joy, and in tribulations gladness? For these are the things that are exchanged where God is concerned; and this is how the saints led their lives; this too how we, by doing violence to ourselves and yet greater violence, and by living our life in their footsteps, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and might, with the

Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

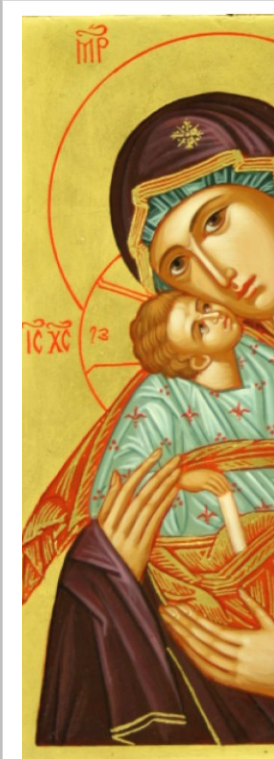


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creation, so He too enjoys the ripe
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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	1	2	3 Presanctified Liturgy 6:30 w/Lenten Meal	4 <i>Choir Practice</i> 7:00	5	6 Catechism 4:30 Confession 5:30 Great Vespers 6:30
7 Divine Liturgy 9:30 <i>Sunday of the Cross</i>	8	9	10 Presanctified Liturgy 6:30 w/Lenten Meal	11 <i>Choir Practice</i> 7:00	12	13 Catechism 4:30 Confession 5:30 Great Vespers 6:30
14 Divine Liturgy 9:30 <i>St. John Climacus</i>	15	16	17 Presanctified Liturgy 6:30 w/Lenten Meal	18 <i>Choir Practice</i> 7:00	19	20 Catechism 4:30 Confession 5:30 Great Vespers 6:30
21 Divine Liturgy 9:30 <i>St. Mary of Egypt</i>	22	23	24 Presanctified Liturgy 6:30 w/Lenten Meal	25 <i>Choir Practice</i> 7:00	26	27 Church Cleaning Day 10:00 Great Vespers w/ Blessing of Palms 6:30 <i>Lazarus Saturday</i>
28 Divine Liturgy 9:30 Bridegroom Matins 6:30 P.M. <i>Entrance into Jerusalem</i>	29 Bridegroom Matins 6:30 P.M.	30 Bridegroom Matins 6:30 P.M.	1 Matins for Holy Thursday 6:30 P.M.	2 Matins: Passion Gospels 6:30 PM	3 Vespers for Holy Friday 3:00 Matins: Lamentations 6:30 PM	4 Vesperal Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM Nocturns / Matins / Divine Liturgy for Great & Holy PASCHA 11:30 PM



“My soul, my soul, arise! Why are you sleeping? The end is drawing near, and you will be confounded. Awake, then, and be watchful, that Christ our God may spare you, Who is everywhere present and fills all things.”

Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete ~Kontakion Tone 6