

Catechetical Homily of His All-Holiness for Holy and Great Lent

To the Plenitude of the Church:

Grace and Peace from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ And Prayers,
Blessings and Forgiveness from Us

“O faithful, let us joyfully welcome the divinely-inspired announcement of fasting”

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

In recent times, we observe an elevated level of concern. Many challenges arise. The world is suffering and yearns for help. Indeed, we are going through a general test. Some people call it a financial decline; others refer to it as a political crisis. So far as we are concerned, it is a matter of spiritual perversion. And a solution exists. Many resolutions are proposed and numerous viewpoints are heard. Yet, the problems persist. People feel deserted and alone. Their deeper nature is ignored. They remain in the gloom of confusion and depression.

Irrespective of the direction or solution proposed, the various answers that are offered cannot redeem humanity. For, from the outset, they render it captive to corruption and death. The Church is the divine-human Lord, who alone can liberate our soul. Upon entering the space of the Church, we enter the atmosphere of divine consolation, of reconciliation between heaven and earth. We are at home. Our spirit is calm. We discover a heavenly beauty and a spiritual maturity, “a holy fragrance capable of reaching the ends of the world.” The Church knows all that we suffer. It speaks the whole truth. And it urges us to face reality as it is; to recognize that we are earth and dust.

The Great Canon of St. Andrew makes mention of repentant tears of and sorrowful mourning, namely the pain of our wounds. Nonetheless, what follows is the rest of the soul, the health of the spirit. We have our Creator and Savior. Through the abundance of His mercy, he has placed us at the intersection of incorruption and mortality. He has not forsaken us. He came to save us. Through His cross, He abolished death. He granted us incorruption of the flesh.

Since, therefore, we are planted with Christ, why are we troubled in vain? Why do we not run toward Him? The Church neither dwells on nor abandons us to corruption. It knows our deeper inclinations and comes to our support and salvation. We need nourishment. Yet, "man does not live by bread alone." (Matt. 4.4) We also need spiritual understanding; however, we are not bodiless. In the Church, we discover the fullness of life and understanding as a divine-human balance. Away from God, we are perverted and corrupted. Wherever material goods are plentiful and waste is glorified, scandalous temptation and dark confusion prevail.

Wherever human beings live with reverence and receive all things with gratitude and thanksgiving, all things are sanctified. The little is considered blessing; the corrupt is dressed with the glory of incorruption. Human beings enjoy what is ephemeral as a gift from God, while at the same time being nourished from here and now by the pledge of the future life. Not only are problems solved, but even the suffering of trials are transformed into the power of life and a reason for giving glory. When this occurs with our soul, when we find peace and salvation by committing all things to Christ our God, then our mind is illumined. We come to know ourselves and the whole world. We have faith in the One who alone is powerful. This in itself strengthens the faithful. Then, by means of an invisible radiance, it is transmitted as support to all those who hunger and thirst for the truth.

The entire world needs salvation by its Creator and Maker. The entire world

needs the presence of the faith and communion of the Saints. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God for all His benefits, as well as for the present period of Holy Lent.

Behold, this is a welcome time; behold, this is a time for repentance.

May we journey through this time of the great fast with contrition and confession so that we may reach the infinite joy of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom is due all glory, honor and worship to the ages of ages. Amen.

Holy and Great Lent 2012

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople

Fervent supplicant for all before God