

## Living Lent 2

### Weekly Reflections by Metropolitan Tikhon

*His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon offers a series of reflections on the themes contained in the Triodion hymns sung on Monday of each week during Great Lent.*

As we enter the second week of the Fast, we are reminded that we are striving to keep a “spiritual fast.” The phrase, “spiritual fast,” might be interpreted by some as a dispensation from any bodily labors whatsoever. But such an interpretation is more in keeping with the spirit of this age, which places much emphasis on “spirituality” as a mental or psychic activity, divorced from our bodily activities and even our daily lives.

The spiritual fast that we are engaged in is intended to bring Christ into every activity of our lives and this involves effort on our part, effort that is both spiritual, physical and social. We sing of this in the hymns appointed for this week.

“Let us fast from the rage of the passions, let us delight in unfeigned love, let us feed the poor with bread; and nourished by the grace of God, with weeping let us quench the tears of future punishments.” This is an encouragement for us to face the difficulties of daily life, which often increase during the 40 days, with hope and with strength.

And so, with the hymnographers, we offer a prayer: “As we set out upon the second week of the Fast, direct our steps, O Lord; shine upon us with the sanctifying light of Thy commandments, and make us worthy to offer on bended knees a prayer acceptable to Thee; for Thou art our Father and we are Thy sons...” “Grant ... that in the weeks to come, we may run the race with all our power, that with good courage and with joy we may complete the course”.

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### CONFESSIONS

Opportunities for confession BEFORE April 19 are many. Please do not wait until the last minute for your confession. April 19 is the last day of confessions during this Lenten period and time on that day will be very limited. Please make every effort to confession prior to this time.

## Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 (Epistle)

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

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### PRAYER

We venerate Your holy icon, O loving Lord, and we ask that You forgive our sins, O Christ our God. For of Your own will You ascended the Cross, in the flesh, to deliver them whom You have fashioned from the bondage of the enemy. Therefore, we cry out to You in Thanksgiving: O Savior, You filled all things with joy when You came to save the world.

*Dismissal Hymn, Sunday of Orthodoxy*

## John 1:43-51 (*Gospel*)

The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

### THE MEANING OF ICONS

The icon of Christ, and all the icons of the Virgin Mary and of all the Saints, have two separate meanings. First, they remind us how real our salvation is! The living Christ, our Risen Lord, is the same as Jesus of Nazareth who took on flesh and blood, walked on this planet, and became one of us in order to lead us to heaven. His Mother and all the Saints in Scripture and tradition were also real people, like all of us, families, relatives, friends, jobs, responsibilities, and problems.

Second, the icons of Christ and His Saints—the Virgin Mary, the Prophets, and Fathers—remind us that we all belong to one family of God. Through these historical men and women God worked patiently and lovingly to achieve a resounding triumph over sin and evil in the world and to open up to us the gates of His Kingdom. The story of the Bible and the story of the Church is the story of Almighty God working through His people for grace, forgiveness, truth, love, and salvation. It is a story of faith, a celebration of faith, a song of faith, a triumph of faith amidst trials, and sufferings. And the story continues in every land, every local parish, and every Christian family today! God is working in our midst gathering His people into His Kingdom.

The past examples and heroes of the faith belong to us and we belong to them. God unites us all in Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

### 1st Saturday of Great Lent: The Miracle of the Boiled Wheat

Commemorated on [March 16](#)

Today we remember the miracle of Saint Theodore and the boiled wheat. Fifty years after the death of Saint Theodore, the emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363), wanting to commit an outrage upon the Christians during the first week of Great Lent, commanded the city-commander of Constantinople to sprinkle all the food provisions in the marketplaces with the blood offered to idols. Saint Theodore appeared in a dream to Archbishop Eudoxius, ordering him to inform all the Christians that no one should buy anything at the marketplaces, but rather to eat cooked wheat with honey (kolyva).

In memory of this occurrence, the Orthodox Church annually celebrates the holy Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit on the first Saturday of Great Lent. On Friday evening, at the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts following the prayer at the ambo, the Canon to the holy Great Martyr Theodore, composed by Saint John of Damascus, is sung. After this, kolyva is blessed and distributed to the faithful. The celebration of the Great Martyr Theodore on the first Saturday of Great Lent was set by the Patriarch Nectarius of Constantinople (381-397).

The Troparion to Saint Theodore is quite similar to the Troparion for the Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths (December 17, Sunday Before Nativity). The Kontakion to Saint Theodore, who suffered martyrdom by fire, reminds us that he also had faith as his breastplate (see I Thessalonians 5:8).

Saint Theodore the Recruit is also commemorated on February 17.

## A Book Review

### *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple, and the Early Church*

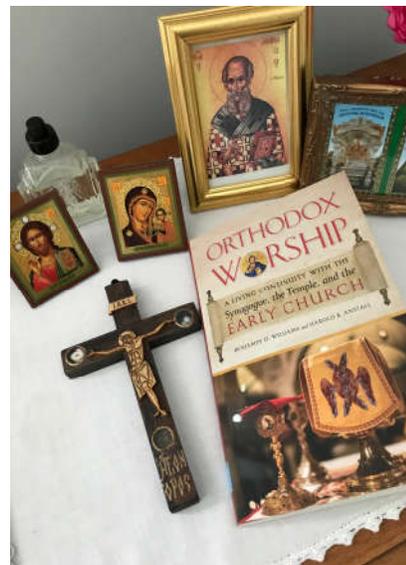
Originally published in 1990, *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity with the Synagogue, the Temple, and the Early Church* by Benjamin D. Williams and Harold B Anstall has been revised, updated and republished by Ancient Faith Publishing in 2018.

I must confess that I laughed out loud at the first sentence in the Introduction, "...the first experience of the Divine Liturgy will be a stunning surprise." What an understatement that was for me at my first Divine Liturgy in 2004! Due to my religious upbringing some aspects of it were familiar; the vestments, the celebration of the Eucharist, the altar and servers but that's where it ended. Fourteen years later what was surprising then is not quite so much now. However, there are times when I am caught by a word or phrase that stops me in my tracks, requiring a bit of thought before continuing. This was true as I read *Orthodox Worship*.

Written in two parts, and in a wholly accessible style for average laity, *Orthodox Worship* is a wonderful book for anyone who is curious about how the Liturgy developed. Part 1 covers the history and development of the Liturgy from the Early Christian Church throughout the ages. Part 2 walks us through the Liturgy, one step at a time, explaining why things are done as they are. While there is much that I have learned since being received into the One True Church, I found the book quite fascinating and full of "Ah Ha!" Moments.

Understanding that Orthodox worship "...continued and preserved the traditional structure of synagogue worship." (p 19) was one of those moments. Being reminded that the Last Supper was not a seder meal was another. I sincerely appreciated the authors tying all the current worship practices of the Church to the historical writings of the Early Church Fathers, thereby confirming the historicity and practice of the Church as true to the original. I liked that some of the authors' statements had footnotes, providing the opportunity for further reading.

*Part 2: A Journey through the Liturgy* was, for me, the best part of the book. As I walked through each step of the Liturgy to the culmination of the Holy Eucharist brought me back to the September 2004 day of my reception into the One True Church. The authors



describe the Holy Mystery of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord as taking "place in the eternal, eschatological dimension of the Kingdom of God." And that change can only take place

"...within the context of the Kingdom, not in a fallen world...the two worlds touch – and we are for a brief time spiritually elevated (not symbolically but actually) to the very throne of God, where the transformation of the gifts can truly take place" (p 165).

When I was received into the Orthodox Church by Chrismation, at the very moment of being blessed with the Chrism I recall feeling wrapped in a bubble of warmth and silence. Now I understand why.

I recommend this book to anyone from high school to adult age. It would make an excellent source and foundation for a high school Church School program or adult Bible study. Reading it during this Lenten season would only enhance one's spiritual journey to Pascha. Those of a more scholarly nature may find this book disappointing because it does not go into great theological depth and explanation of the facets of Orthodox worship – frankly, something I find as a great asset to the book. It is highly accessible for everyone.

By: Trudy Ellmore

## THE GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST

A contemporary Coptic monk has said: “My doctor is Jesus Christ, my food is Jesus Christ, and my fuel is Jesus Christ.” The main theme of the spiritual diary of St. John Kronstadt, a nineteenth century Russian saint, is expressed through these words of his: *The Lord is everything to me. He is the strength of my heart and the light of my mind. He inclines my heart to everything good; he strengthens it; He also gives me good thoughts; He is my rest and my joy; He is my faith, hope, and love; He is my food and drink, my raiment, my dwelling place.*

The icons, hymns, prayers, worship, and liturgy of the Orthodox Church unceasingly focus our attention on Christ, His person, saving work, and present lordship. One could say that the heart of Eastern Christianity, the inner mystery of its radiant beauty, the source of its true worship and true teaching, is the glorification of the living Christ through whom we know the Father and from whom we receive the Holy Spirit.

To live morally, to have peace within oneself, to help others in need—these are all important reasons for being a Christian. But the most important reason for being a Christian is to bring honor to Christ—to glorify Christ—in all that we are and do. In the same way the most important reason for going to Church is not to support our local parishes, not to keep up friendships with other Orthodox Christians, not even to have spiritual feelings in our hearts. The most important reason for going to Church is to bring honor to Christ—to glorify Christ—through common worship and common witness to Him.

The first Sunday of Lent, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, is an impressive reminder of the centrality of Christ in the Orthodox Church. This Sunday is a spiritual feast during which Orthodox Christians reaffirm their confession of faith in Christ and His saving work. It is a day when we lift up Christ in praise and glorification. The hymns and prayers of this Sunday echo three related themes:

*\*The Fervent expectation of the Old Testament prophets and righteous people for the coming of Christ.*

*\*The incarnation of Christ, that is, the real presence of Christ in history, in the Church and in our personal lives.*

*\*The corporate joy of the Church in confessing, proclaiming, and glorifying Christ and His lordship over all.*

Some of the hymns for this Sunday express the joyous glorification of Christ as follows:

*Rejoice, O honored prophets, firm and unshaken pillars of faith, who proclaimed aright the Law of the Lord. You served as messengers of the New Covenant of Christ. Now, dwelling in heaven, pray to Him for peace in the world and for the salvation of our souls.*

*Vespers Hymn, Sunday of Orthodoxy*

*Leaping with joy, let us and all the faithful cry out today: How marvelous are Your works, O Christ! How great is Your power! You have brought about our harmony and have made us of one mind. O Lord, Who loves all people, the Church rejoices in You, her Bridegroom and her Founder, for by Your divine will You have delivered her from error and by Your precious Blood you have betrothed her to Yourself.*

*Matin Hymns, Sunday of Orthodoxy*

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## THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH

The Sunday of Orthodoxy marks a historic event in the life of the Orthodox Church: the restoration of icons (843 AD) as an important way of living and expressing the Christian faith. This celebration was first held in Constantinople in 878 AD and has been commemorated ever since for over a thousand years as a crowning feast of the Orthodox people: “the triumph of Orthodoxy.” A special observance on the Sunday of Orthodoxy is the procession of icons, headed by the icon of Christ, while the hymn of this feast is chanted.

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“The saints were people like all of us. Many of them came out of great sins, but by repentance they attained the Kingdom of Heaven. And everyone who comes there comes through repentance, which the merciful Lord has given us through His sufferings.”

— St. Silouan the Athonite