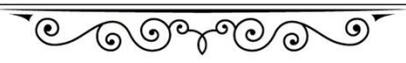




**THE GREAT LENT EPISTLE OF THE PERMANENT CONFERENCE OF
UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX BISHOPS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF UKRAINE**



Beloved in the Lord: clergy, brothers and sisters in the Lord!

Once again, that time has come in our Orthodox Church calendar when we embark on a spiritual journey of Great Lent. Monday, March 2, 2020 marks the beginning of this sacred season, and it is known as Clean Monday. If you reflect on it, we all need cleanliness – need to be cleaned both inwardly and outwardly, and the time of Great Lent provides us an opportunity to clean. Fortunately, scientific technology has given us many ways of achieving cleanliness, of keeping our bodies clean. However, we require spiritual cleanliness as well. Are our bodies truly entirely clean?

There is a great need in our times to understand our existence in “supernatural” or “heavenly” terms. We live in a society run by mechanisms and technologies, and our thinking tends to become earthbound, determined by what we can see and sense, confined to material things.

But human life is so much more. There is a natural world and also a spiritual world that is “above.” The earthly is open to the heavenly, the visible to the invisible.

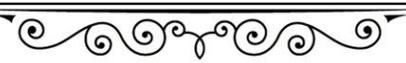
In these 40 days of Lent, as spiritual fathers of the Church we call upon you - ourselves first of all - to deepen our sense of the mystery of our lives in Christ. We call upon you to try to go deeper in your personal conversion, deeper into the heart of the Gospels and the New Testament writings.

We are living in times when many people have lost their “why.” They no longer know the answer to basic questions. Why do we get up in the morning? What purpose are we living for?

There is a crisis of meaning that has been spreading slowly over many years across our society. It expresses itself in many unlikely ways - from rising suicide and abortion rates to epidemics of drug addiction to the growing numbers of people who say they feel alone and isolated.

This is the sad irony that lies at the heart of our secular, technological society. People are thirsting for God even as our worldly leaders - politicians and judges, scientists, entertainers, artists and educators - all insist that we can build a progressive and prosperous society by living as if God does not exist and as if the human soul does not desire things that transcend material entertainments.

For us, Orthodox Christians, the question of “why” comes down to a question of “who.” We cannot answer why we are here or what we are living for unless we know who we are and what we are made for. That is the one answer that our science, technology and politics - all those things in our society that substitute for religion - cannot give. Of course, God is the great “who” and holiness is the great “why.”



We need to recover this awareness that we are created by the holy and living God and that He creates us to be holy as He is holy and to love as He loves.

And this begins with understanding that holiness is the ordinary measure of what it means to follow Christ the Savior.

The point is that holiness, to be a saint, is what God created us for.

This simple, beautiful fact should be at the center of everything in the Church - our parochial liturgical activities and preaching, our schools and religious education for the youth and adults, our work for justice, our sharing of the living Gospel with our neighbors.

This is the good news that we are called to proclaim in our times - that we are made to be saints. That is the same thing as saying we were made for love.

This is a discovery all of us need to renew, as we continue to follow our Savior, making our ordinary lives "our place of holiness."

We cannot change the world or change our lives in the simple period of 40 days, but we can make a good beginning! So, let us make this time of Great Lent a time of growing deeper in our friendship with Jesus Christ, by cleansing ourselves, by reforming and conforming our lives more closely to His.

In conclusion, remember that holiness is not only our work but God's work in us. So, this Great and Holy Lent, let us allow Him to do His work, by opening our hearts to Him through our prayer, fasting and almsgiving - asking the Lord to create in us a new heart, and a new desire to want to love and to live out the sacred calling of holiness.

May the Birth-Giver of God through her Protection help us to follow the living God with living faith and to know that we are called to be saints.

May our All-Merciful and Almighty Lord assist us on our travel through this Great Fast with humility and reverence so that we may be worthy to greet the glorious Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

With Archpastoral blessings,

+ YURIJ – Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ ANTONY – Metropolitan

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, South America and Diaspora

+ JEREMIAH – Archbishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Eparchy of South America

+ DANIEL – Archbishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA and Diaspora

+ ILARION – Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

+ ANDRIY – Bishop

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada