

**Holy Pascha - 28 April 2019**

**Priest Musing**

Are we worthy enough to share a dwelling with the just? The thief was on the cross not for good reasons. Still, Jesus tells him that today he will be with Him in Paradise. People who can read Greek well say that in this context the phrase “to be with” expresses a relation of participation, a sharing of common experience. Just as when a friend desires to live with another. Isn’t this the great longing of both God and man? I remember when one of my children who was in kindergarten made a friend and they were making plans to go together on a vacation and to live together when they grew up. They were so happy and so convinced that nobody would stop them. The plans were, of course, so childish, but still coming from the same place as our deep longing. Or, more recently, on Great Thursday, my homeless friend (I dare to call him that), crying on the stairs of the church, early in the morning, from all his heart, because he had again experienced rejection from people who are well paid to find him a room where he can lay his head. How come that this deep desire of our being, the meaning of our existence, at its best, makes us act like Peter, watching Jesus from afar when he is going to his voluntary Passion, and lying about having ever met Him? To depersonalise the encounter, when our imaginative needs and expectations are not met, we then become strangers to each other. I feel this so often when I meet at the mission people who pass through the church door. I really struggle to break away from it, but fail more often than not. We all know this from the familiarity of our lives. But to satisfy each other’s needs means to betray the deep longing.

We live with the original longing of our being broken during our earthly life. The worst of this is manifested through abuse, violence, and death. Abandonment, betrayal, cynicism, rejection, buying, selling and controlling, and so on, are other distortions of the Truth.

Christ “assumed the worst so he can give us the better”. There is nothing we can give out of our own, we know that from the failings we shared with each other, but we can witness what He gives us as gifts for the eyes and for the heart. We don’t need to feel worthy in order not to lie about the Truth, but just like the thief we need to dare to have hope even on the cross, disregarding the reasons for which we got there. To abandon our death tomb where we meet with each other in the complicity of our cynicism about the Resurrection, but to share with each other, in Christ, the new life He is calling us to. A life that is not stolen by the lie that we are not loved, but a life where the love of Christ shines in our lives every time when we, in freedom, dare to say “Christ is Risen” with all our being. So there is no more lie that the death can come up with to keep us captive, because today God is sharing The Life with us. Abundantly, so that the world can never perish.

PN

**St Gregory of Nazianzos - First Easter Sermon (fragment)**

It is the Day of the Resurrection, and my beginning has good auspices. Let us then keep the festival with splendour, and let us embrace one another. Let us say brethren, even to those who hate us; much more to those who have done or suffered aught out of love for us. Let us forgive all offenses for the Resurrection’s sake; let us give one another pardon, I for the noble tyranny, which I have suffered (for I now can call it noble); and you who exercise it, if you had cause to blame my tardiness; for perhaps this tardiness may be more precious in God’s sight than the haste of others. For it is a good thing even to hold back from God for a little while, as did the great Moses of old, and Jeremiah later on. ...

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God’s for his sake, since he for ours became man. He assumed the worse that he might give us the better...

Let us give all, offer all, to him who gave himself a ransom and a reconciliation for us. But one can give nothing like oneself, understanding the mystery, becoming for his sake all that he became for us.

**Holy Week - 21 April 2019**

**Priest Musing**

This is not a sermon. It is an invitation to start thinking and praying, to ask yourself, your children, what is it that I seek when I come to church at the Mission?

Sunday is a very important day in the life of the Church. It is the day of the Lord. It is also a day when we see each other, when we meet together. I want you to know that we at the Mission are of one heart and soul with Fr Nicolaie. The Sobor of the Mission does not seek to build an institutional or a spiritual legacy. With Fr Nicolaie, all we desire is to be faithful to what the Lord asks us to live in this way, in this time and in this place. We are not trying to live an ideal but rather to take care of a body. We are not afraid to make mistakes, the Mission is not about being successful, but again I repeat about being faithful.

Every community lives seasons. Certain things, even beautiful things, have been taken away from us. In Scripture, we hear that God does this to His people every time He wants to bring something new to birth. He strips down to help us receive Hope. This is the season of Lent and we live a real desert, a real stripped-down to rediscover what is essential, what is the original call. But it is also a time of Hope. Hope is not hoping things will turn out as we want, but rather Hope is first of all living in Hopeful ways and doing Hope-filled deeds. We *act* hope. When God strips things away, he asks us to live here and now a future life that we can't even imagine. Hope is about God's gift, God's dream for us. A new reality that is not of our doing, not of our making. Scripture and our experience here confirms the truth of these words, "All things work for the good of those..." The call now is not to work to get back to where we were, but to live something new. It begins with each of us, with Fr Nicolaie as the shepherd.

After Pascha, we will ask you to share your needs, longings, in being part of the church here and in your daily lives. For today, we will act in Hope after lunch to discern Holy Week and Pascha flower arrangements

How well we decorate God's house reflecting the poverty and His Hope that today we are asked to be faithful to?

PR

## **Great Lent - 14 April 2019**

### **Priest Musing**

Deeper into the desert.

The desert might look the same, at the edges or at its heart, like an ocean of emptiness where life was stripped off of creativity. And this dries out your soul and brings harm to your body. So, the heart becomes the place where we are welcome to toil, to struggle with our vulnerability and to look for the sweetness that comes from God. All of this is done through prayer. Saying all this though, Fr. Zosima entered into the desert almost running, going deeper and deeper, looking for its heart. And there he found Mary. A human heart, to whom the desert brought about not only healing but holiness too, being harmed in the first place by a world that does not know how to nourish a fragile life but distorts its beauty and scratches the soul in order to mutilate it. Finding ourselves at the margins of a comfortable world, we should try not to get comfortable with the abandonment, but not to be shy to enter deeper into the desert. This might bring about healing for our souls. And prepare us for those we are going to meet and who came close to attaining the purity of heart. As empty as it might be, the desert does not prepare you for being alone, but for the encounter. The encounter with those whose bodies were not scorched by the heat of the sun, but obtained instead healing of the scars inherited from the abundant world, making them beautiful. A sign of holiness about to come. It is within this encounter that we learn to be gentle with our soul, to receive each other with humility and care, and not to run away from those who reject us. To learn to wait in hope for the encounter with Christ.

PN

Through God's mercy we are living at the Mission's St Silouan Chapel a new beginning. Sunday is a very important day for the life of the Mission. It is the Day of the Lord and a time when some of us can participate in an important dimension of the work of the Mission.

You who read this are part of this new beginning. I would like to see how together we can grow into a community that is new and welcoming of all. **I invite you today after lunch to meet for 20 minutes.** I love to hear your ideas and any practical suggestions you may have on how we can help each other be more present on

Sunday. How we can help the children really be part of the community as well as any new people from the Mission.

PN

**from Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh:**

*“One can be a heretic even while proclaiming every article of the Creed if we give to lie to one or all of them by the way in which we live. One can be a heretic by denying the truth, by not living according to the truth.” lent is a good time to ask ourselves as a community how can we be more faithful to living the truth that we celebrate in the liturgy.”*

**Great Lent - 07 April 2019**

**Priest Musing**

The Alleluia Cake

When lent starts we hear the first alleluia sung at week day Orthros. Unlike in the west Alleluia is not the song of Easter but of the fast, of the desert, of lent. Two weeks before the great fast on Sunday we sing the psalm "by the rivers of Babylon" at each verse we respond with an alleluia.

Monk Thomas Merton in his book on contemplative prayer says that "Alleluia is the song of those who are in the desert."

This year we started what i hope is a tradition at the mission. The alleluia cake. It is good when we start or a living something difficult to also be reminded that God is Good and the purpose of the hard things is to know how Good He is.

It is a good thing to remind our children not to be afraid of tears and the desert and to learn to taste in it how Good the Lord is. As we sat down by our own rivers of Babylon this year we wept, but we also sang alleluia and tasted together that the Lord is Good.

PR

**Troparion of St John Climacus Tone 4**

With the rivers of your tears, you have made the barren desert fertile. Through sighs of sorrow from deep within you, your labours have borne fruit a hundred-fold. By your miracles you have become a light, shining upon the world. O John, our Holy Father, pray to Christ our God, to save our souls.

**Fourth Week of Lent – Tone 5**

If we look for a spiritual for a spiritual reward, let us perform our good deeds in secret; let us not proclaim them in the streets but keep them hidden in our hearts....

**from Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh:**

*“Obedience comes from listening and hearing. And obedience on every level is a school of hearing, not a school of doing what one is told. It is a way of learning from someone who has more experience something that will allow us to outgrow our own experience and by learning to renounce our own self-will, our own prejudices, our own narrow-mindedness, to expand to the measure of the one who teaches us. We must learn gradually to become capable of listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit within us.”*