



Synaxis of The Three Hierarchs
Matthew 5:14-19



"You are the light of the world."

When God says so, so it is. He does not say you might or you will be if...He speaks to those who are, now and here, the light of the world. He speaks directly to them.

Who are they?

The light enlightens and nurtures life by warming what is cold. Like the coldest of all, the human heart. It is warmed by the light with the purpose of opening up.

Jesus speaks directly to his disciples, the gospel says. He tells them they are the light of the world after He blesses their poverty and hunger, their thirst and their sorrow, the meekness, the purity of their heart and their persecution, their rejection and their desire to find pasture and peace, when violence is brought upon them. The light is the cloth of joy that we are given to behold for now in heaven, by partaking of what we taste good in our heart.

Those who are named in the Beatitudes (which we heard twice last week and again on Friday) bring about light within our soul. When we come across a person who is hungry and thirsty, we are illuminated with reality in our own soul. When we meet the one who is persecuted and humiliated, we can see how much we care or not to comfort. How much we are moved within the heart by "the distress of the beggar" (psalms), and how much we care to act and move with the movement of the Holy Spirit. Poverty, persecution, hunger, thirst and abuse enlighten our souls in a way, helping us see what we are still made of. Always with the invitation to become alike. They enlighten our hell and warm up our coldness. We see and we are warmed up by them. The created light is burning out of the poverty and distress and suffering of the others, like the fire that needs wood to sustain the heat. The hell of my own heart is cold and dark. It becomes hot and unbearable for the eyes because of the distress of others who are coming my way to touch the imprisonment of the heart. They are the light of the world. Jesus speaks to them not to be discouraged by what they have undertaken. At times, as we all know from those who undertook the burden of being alive, the burden of light can be challenged by the darkness of others, in the sense that they do not know if their light is of any good. Being light you look in the darkness and you don't know how much it is spread around. Jesus speaks to them and becomes a witness to them by blessing their burning heart. He witnesses that every small joy undertaken for His sake will not be in vain. *He will judge the beggars among the people and the poor with judgement (Ps 71)*

Every cross will not be in vain. He will receive their poverty by enriching those who lack. No suffering can be hidden within His judgement because of the amount of mercy that He will be pouring upon all. They are somehow related to each other.

In his Truth, God will allow us to see, at the last judgement, the souls of those who enlighten our cold heart. At the last judgement which has started already, we will see the multitudes of lights coming down the hill to meet one lonely, closest heart. We will recognize their faces and be ashamed to look them in the eyes. What was in this world, one light in darkness, one against the many, will be reversed at the last judgement with one black hole, my own soul, waiting at the bottom of the hill for the coming down of lights. The cold will be covered in shame because of the rejection that turns away the burning light.

When coming very close, the lights will allow me to recognize the only thought left within my cleansed mind, which, for a sinful man, would be the closest thing to prayer:

"What will you Lord do with a heart that cannot love? What does it deserve?"

Only forgiveness.

St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 13:7-16 (today's epistle)

“Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.”

One cold winter story

There are people during these cold days in Toronto who sleep “outside of the camp” and take the abuse of cold. On Tuesday morning, M. came in and told us he had been walking all night again. His face was red and cheerful. He shared the news with a victorious smile. “I came here at 4:30 am, waiting for you to open. I had to walk all night. It is way too cold to sleep on the ground now, no matter how good your sleeping bag is. “Did you ever stay outside during the night as long as I did? You didn’t”, he said smiling, without judgment. He is grateful for having a place that is open early in the morning where he can rest, eat something, get warm and share his life story and his victory from overnight. He sees us as his friends. And there is delight for us in that. As we finished talking, a thought crossed my mind: how long would he be able to do that? He is getting old. All of us need to retire one day and change the way we do things. Coming into the chapel the first thing we could see on Tuesday morning was the icon of St. Xenia, that br. Luke had prepared the day before for her feast day. It was still there. There was a striking resemblance between the color of her coat and the one that M. was wearing. Hers, a military coat, M. 's, a Canadian winter jacket, but the green had the same nuance and the same effect on the eyes, making their wearers unmistakable to the eye.

M. came back for breakfast on Thursday morning. He is asking for a pair of winter boots. We have a pair of brand new boots in the office. One could not find any better for him. I was wondering if they would fit him. He asked for size 9 and those were size 8. With a sense of defeat Joanna takes one boot to him, knowing that it wouldn't fit him and preparing to ask him to wait until we get more donations. Surprise, it does feet. He asked for the second one. “No, we cannot give you that one. You get only one, we keep the other for another person”, Joanna said with a smile. They tease each other every morning. George comes around and M. is asking him for help to defeat Joanna. “Yes”, says George, “give him all three this time.”

What strikes me in the story of those boots is that we had received them only the day before. There were none left in the basement. I must say that most of the time when people ask us for shoes, we somehow manage to find something stored downstairs. And every time it makes us remember all those who are kind to us and show gratitude for it. This particular pair of boots was even more special. Joanna received them at the door from a person who had come for dinner the day before. “I traded lunch for a pair of boots”,

Joanna said coming inside. "But he told me to make sure we give them to somebody who really needs them." The boots spent maybe only 10 hours at the mission. And I could not think of anyone needing and deserving them more than M. Hector would be another good candidate. They both walk the streets covered in snow, only that Hector prefers running shoes. Go figure that one out.

Another cold winter story

We tried to convince him, especially since Hector started spending more time with us. A couple of years ago I was thinking how could we make people like him spend more time inside, not only for breakfast but for the day as well. He used to come mostly to eat breakfast and then run out. The pandemic helped us to make some good changes in the way we welcome people, especially in the morning. It is more peaceful overall. I think, looking for peace, Hector spends more time inside now. He comes during the day several times. He even answers the question of the day that we ask before the meal, with seriousness and a desire to speak. He used to keep silent most of the time. On Friday I asked him about the cold week. How did he spend the nights? "Walking," he replied. He was happy to share his experience. He explained that one has to be attentive to how one walks. Depending on how cold it is. You walk faster at times. "I like to walk at night because it is quiet. Not much noise outside. It helps clear my mind. It is the time when I am the most relaxed." (I remembered reading in Nicolae Steinhard's "Diary of happiness" that, when in prison, the most "wakeful" time was between 2:00 and 3:00 am). "It is peaceful to walk and watch the stars. I like the stars", Hector continued. "You cannot see many in the city," I said. "Still, you can", he replied. "There are places, like on a hill or open space, where you can see a bigger part of the sky. I like the stars."

I tried to show him some pictures with the galaxies that you can see online. They are beautiful. I thought he would like that. "Yes," he replied. "Did you watch the movie *Men in Black*? I want to show you something." "I don't think we can watch it now Hector. Maybe only the trailer. Why do you ask?" "There is a cat in the movie that has a pearl around its neck and in the end there was a whole galaxy within that pearl."

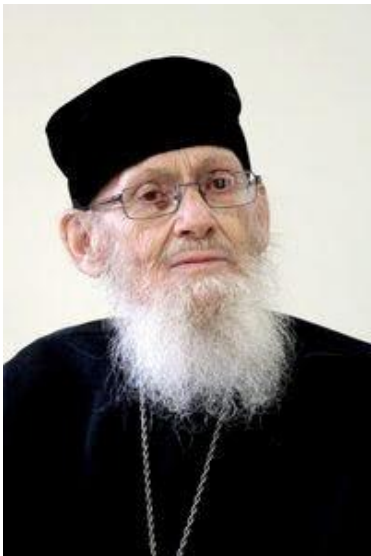
Yes, and we still wonder how the smallest thing can have within it the infinity and complexity of life. Like a small, tiny human heart. How much light could it bear? On Friday, Hector's comparison helped us ponder more on how the kingdom of God can be within the heart. How the light can shine upon all. So it can become the light of the world.

“YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”



MEMORY ETERNAL

In the last 30 days we have heard of the falling asleep of three people who at different times were very important in the life of St. John The Compassionate Mission and shaped its development.



On Sunday, December 26, 2021, **Hieromonk Nicholas** (in the world, Murray Bogdasavich) of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist Hermitage, Combermere, ON, fell asleep in the Lord.

Hieromonk Nicholas accompanied in prayer the Mission's move toward the diocese, which took place around the same time as his.

Many people will miss this humble, quiet spiritual father.



Fr. Jaroslaw Shudrak
(right)



Jim Forest "When others have needs, try to help. When there is war, refuse to be part of it. Where there is deceit, tell the truth. For we know – Jesus made it clear – that what we do to the least person we do to Him. For Christ is with us. He is and always shall be." (Fragment from a sermon written for our community in 2016)

Also, **Elizabeth, of the Orthodox Pain de Vie community in France, died this week in Lourdes.**

Please pray for the sick:

Marco; Kim (knee surgery); Tihomir; Pani Eleanor; Kate; Payton Clark (back surgery); Kim; Sana, and her family in Egypt. Isaiah; Pani Alexandra; Mary Mcgee's daughter, Sydney; Peter Christine; Stephanie; Iulia; Jason; Sophia; Alexander; Charles; Tom; Paul; Phillip Hadler and his wife Juliet; Cristeena; Ann brown's daughter; Constanta; Jeni; Florea, Robert; Constantin, Silvia, Claudia Alex; Jincy; Shiron Crisreen; Allain; Levalin and the family; Seena Colin and her husband; Waheeda and children; Faizah (depression); Shirin and her family; Sana and her husband; Eva; Frank, Cristina; Daniela, Jerry; Delia ; Ragaie; Victoria; Prayers for Mike. Farida need prayers for her hand to heal ; Prayers for Roselyne and family ; Ana, Cornelia; Prayer for Leon to Jerry; Nikitha, Ocean; Prayer for Gloria, Anne, Marina, Marie, Edemene; Joanna and family GN; Rejoice; Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly; Tom; Marina; Sandra and her son Chris; Kumari; Susan; child James; Aaron; Sylvia; Fr Jonathan; Tharshini and her two children; Ann Tyron and her family; Sandra Gomaz's children; Sameen; Sophia; Amy; Swetha and children ; Charitha; Jitesh's parents ; Demene; Carol; Gloria; Hawa Bibi; Vimaladevi; Tharsini and her child; Sana's Sister; Ann T.'s husband; Lynn; Michelle; Emanuel (Mani); Stefanie; Geoff; Joey; Evangelia; Sophia; Melanie; Césare; Tanya; Piper; Darius; Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral ; Brenda; Anna Avairo's daughter Vol Gomaz; Levlin's two children Sri' ; Helen; Paul; Wafaa and Sana's sister

Please pray for health and salvation:

Community In Goma and the children in their care: Neema; Rosine; Justine; Miriam; Chance; Jemya; Patricia; Alliance; Nice; Dorcas; Justine; Agnes; Muhindo Dorcas. Rejoice; Claudio of Sant'Egidio for health and salvation; George, Connie, Nick, Fennie, Theodore, Chris, Nick, Toulou, Steven, Nicole, Tony, Sam, Sophia.; Prayer for Mary Mcgee. She lost her grandmother.; Fr. Michael and Pani Karen; Anthony and the family. He lost his brother in Trinidad. He is hoping to make a visit to Trinidad; Ramanand and his families in Guyana, USA and here in Canada (Ramanand lost three of his family members including one of his brothers, suddenly within two months); Paola; Elizabeth; Matthei; Dave and his family; Jai's family; Anne Tyran; Joseph to find housing; Lito; Mauro, Prayers for Ted's family (incarcerated son to be free)

Dameal asking prayers for his future wife Fathima to be free from addictions

Liz Gibicar asking prayers for her mother; Mom waiting for baby Tejasree; Prashastha; Maria and Dingo; Crisent; Helen; Greta; Elizabeth; Dean; John; Liz; Crisent; Ann Brown; Elizabeth; Sifie; Allen; Leon; Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting; Aaron, Anastas, Olivia, Gelly, Frank, Eva, George, Rebecca, Andreas, Cathyann, Reigan, Stephanie, Peter, Christine; Christian family from Bangladesh, Sandra, Peter, Angel, Bless, Grace, Swetha family; Atlaw single mom at shelter, Vernevil family; the family of Kenide; Saathiya; Sena; Vinothiny Yvienne; Abdul; Sakanthalathevy; Jumke; Naimi; Anish; Joshua Daniel; Maria Lolita Soliman Torres, Jonathan, Richard, Richard, Mary, Elizabeth, Michael, Bill, Robert, Alan, Joanne

Please pray for the deceased:

Rejoice's mother; Sana's father in Egypt

Pani Eleanor; Fr John; Alexandru; Constantin; Robert; fr Aurel; Georgi; Rada; Petre; Stela; William; Samuel; Debie; John; Amy, Willie; Dave's wife; Ana; Shirin's cousin in Jordan; Father Lawrence; Dave; Anne Tyran's father; Edith, Sr. Mary Magdalene, Joice, BettyAnn, James, Pauanasuy Kamthasang, Maria (Covid), Andrei, Agostina, Carminda, Vimaladevi's sister; Sri's mother, Carol's Mother and 23 year old nephew passed away in Haiti. Demene's mother; Dalalzaki.