



*“The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.”*

**“Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God”**(Luke 6:20)

Today the gospel gives us a depiction of the poor man. A detailed description of the poverty that brings us to heaven.

There is rejection in the poverty of Lazarus, sickness, and an infinite solitude. A disinterest towards one's life that surpasses understanding. And an abandonment in death. Lazarus died alone.

There is left over food and homelessness. And yes, the dogs are not his pets. But rather a harmful image for the human soul that lacks communion with each other. When we hear Jesus blessing the poor, He precisely blesses all Lazarus's friends. There is a universal need in the history of salvation, in the brokenness of the world, for humankind to partake of this poverty, in order to be carried by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. In the history of the church, at the mission, we see this poverty. We hear and see at times the infinite solitude of the poor who live and die alone. At times maybe not touching on all Lazarus' realities but at other times surpassing it.

However, if the people we know are not sick, they are socially abandoned. If they have a home they live in subsidized houses, where the leftovers are not food but drugs that poison people's souls. If thy body is strong the spirit is weak and when the spirit is indeed strong the body cannot partake of food so there is always a risk of self harming itself. There is always something deep in today's poor in Toronto that attaches them personally and intimately to Lazarus who is carried by the angels to heaven. And there is a name. To be learned, to be remembered and to be prayed for. It is when we remember the name of the poor that the sorrow of our heart changes into joy because the loss in humanity has become personal to us. And we can all cling to Lazarus' feet to be pulled up from our nameless existence into an identity who has a soul and a face to whom a name has been re-given. A heart who can now hear the call of God because we recognize our name. Because we learned to love the poor who partake in God's blessing.

We do not know how it is possible for a human soul that experiences such a deep rejection to open so completely to communion with the angels, with Abraham and with God. To be able to enter in any genuine communion where love is not a lie. We know from our own life, when a little human rejection happens, the soul clings to itself because the harm is deep and impossible to heal. How can a soul for which love, through communion with each other, was rejected, be innocently open to the embrace of Abraham?

One might say that death changes people's souls. That as we passed from life, we passed completely changed. In today's gospel there is compassion in the voice of the rich man for his brothers. Real compassion. And yet, it does not change Abraham's mind. At the last judgement (Mat 25:31), the goats talk back to God with rudeness. A sign that we cannot rely on the change that death brings to our soul.

So, there should be something, in the very human rejection of the soul that makes us open to the love of God. There should be something in the dehumanizing reality of poverty through which God can reach out to us and render back to us the dignity of human life.

The gospel today tells us to search for our poverty. For the time when we really have been connected personally with Lazarus. Either through homelessness, abandonment, rejection, sickness of the soul or of the body. So that we may remember within the heart the embrace of God and the shelter of His angels. Only within this reality death becomes a companion to heaven and not falling into hell. We need to search this poverty of ours to receive with an open heart the blessing of Christ.

This remembrance gives us faith, that God, in today's sorrow and death of many saints, will work His resurrection. And all this mad and violent destruction we see and experience today, that comes from a mind that was lost completely to itself, is nothing less but only the fear of its own end.

A mind that cannot sense the coming of the Other but only its own sin and destruction. A mind that clings to vanities and falsehood cannot sense the reality of forgiveness but only the small dimension of its own sin, that tries to exacerbate until self destruction. The rich who, in their daily feasting, cannot sense the presence of the poor man will never live with a heart open for the encounter.

It is within the poverty that we have known but tried to detach from that we learn to be prepared for the real communion and unity. Even if he never received, Lazarus always desired to be in communion with the rich man, who rejected him. He chose to live by his gate. Maybe in time he learned to love with innocence the one who disconsidered his existence. Maybe that prepared him for the relationship with God where love is eternal, without blemish, and for real.

#### **A word that helps us today with discernment:**

A few days after October 7, while the world was still in the first shock at what had happened in Israel and news was trickling out, a news article included the witness of a Jewish woman who had been present and who had somehow survived, while the massacre of innocents was taking place that day. She had been previously involved with peace initiatives on the Israeli part. At the end of the interview, she said a very striking thing: *"it's hell right now, but even in hell you can choose to love and to forgive or not"*.



***"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, fear him!"***

One would wonder what type of evil has the power to cast the soul into hell. Today's parable gives us a lead. We do not know the character of the rich man. Was he moral or not? It seems to be irrelevant. The only thing we know is that he was rich and that was everything he needed to end up in hell. He did not need to help himself with other sins. And if he did, it did not make a difference.

One would also wonder where a rich nation ends up. What type of evil does it generate? We don't want to know. What we see now is that they generate a hell for others.

**Community updates:**

**\*The confession of a homeless man who sleeps outside all year round:**

"Everything goes up. All the prices. It's crazy. I work all day. Yesterday I made 20 dollars." (He gathers cans and bottles all day, always pushing a grocery buggy.) "The other day I made 17 dollars. I went to buy a bag of chips, a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter. It cost me 19 dollars. It's crazy. Everything goes up an up. That's why you end up paying everything for food. You end up losing your house. We have to endure until we get out of here."

"What do you mean by out of here?"

"Heaven...I mean heaven. Until we go to heaven. You know ...here it becomes like hell...You know why they do that right? To make more money. They take everything. To pay for all these wars."

**\* Volunteer appreciation night on Friday** brought together many who labour during the year. We thank Br Luke for putting everything together. The joy of all people present is his reward.

\* Do not forget!!! Psalm session with father on Tuesday evening at 7:30 pm. Please come and listen to the hope of the scripture.

\*Church collections of 1 Sunday: Oct 29 2023, Church Donations \$105, Candle/wine \$10, Candel box \$29.70

***"It's hell right now, but even in hell you can choose to love and forgive or not."***

## ***This coming week***

***For Bridges, On Wednesday Nov 8***

### ***Three Sermons***

English translations exist for some of the key Cappadocian texts on poverty; these are cited in the bibliography. Three hitherto untranslated sermons that relate directly to the body of the poor as it is explored in this study are given here.

A. Basil, "In Time of Famine and Drought"

B. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Love of the Poor" 1: "On Good Works"

C. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Love of the Poor" 2: "On the Saying, 'Whoever Has Done It to One of These Has Done It to Me'"

Basil's sermon "In Time of Famine and Drought" (*Homilia dicta tempore famis et siccitatis = Horn. 8; CPG 2852*) is translated from PG 31.303-328; a critical edition is wanting and this text must be regarded as provisional. My rendering of Gregory of Nyssa's two sermons, *de Pauperibus amandis 1* (PG 46.453-70) and 2 (PG 46.471-90) (CPG 3196), is based on van Heck's critical edition (GNO 9.1:93-127), which includes the subtitles given here. The chapter divisions in Basil's text follow the manuscripts; Gregory's sermons contain no chapter divisions. Paragraph breaks unassociated with numbers are my own. Because of the flexible nuances of terms used to designate "poverty" and the "poor," discussed in the text, and because these translations are intended for a broad audience of general readers, I have translated both *penes* and *ptochos* as "poor" without distinguishing which word is used in which instance. As a general rule, the English word *poor* is used only for these two Greek terms.

### **A. Basil of Caesarea**

#### ***In Time of Famine and Drought***

[Tempore famis et siccitatis]

[304D] 1. "The lion roared, and who will not fear? The Lord God spoke, and who will not prophesy?" (Amos 3:8). Let us have an oracular prooemium for the oration, and let us take up the divinely inspired Amos as a coworker in the task set before us; it was he who applied remedies to the same evil disturbances that are happening to us [305A], and who gave both counsel and judgment on those things that are profitable. For the prophet himself became a herald of repentance in former times when the people were abandoning their ancestral piety and trampling on scrupulous conformity with the laws, training themselves in the service of

idols, by advising them to reverse their course and by confronting them with the threat of punishment.

Thus I pray, may it be permitted to me to demand the same zeal as that of the ancient accounts. Let their fate not be ours as well. For the people gave in easily to temptations, not drawn to that which is profitable but instead acting like some stubborn and ungovernable foal with its bridle in its teeth. Turning away from the straight road and running lawlessly, it snorted at the one who held the reins until, by falling into pits and trenches, it [305B] justly suffered the utter destruction of those who are self-willed.

Oh, let that not be true now with you, children, you who were born to me through the gospel, who were swaddled with the blessing of my hands. But listen prudently, as an obedient soul, receiving advice gently, yielding to what is said as wax receives a seal, so that by our shared zeal I might myself receive delightful fruit by means of this labor, and that you might applaud this address in the day of deliverance from the present suffering.

What, then, is this oration about, this proclamation you are hoping to hear?<sup>1</sup>

2. We see the sky, brothers, shut up, naked, and cloudless, this clarity so pure it causes gloom and grief [305C], although in the past we desired it, when clouds overshadowed us in sunless gloom. Now the fields are little more than withered clods, unpleasant, sterile, and unfruitful, cracked and pierced to the depths by the hot sun.

The rich and flowing streams have fled away and the torrential paths of the great rivers are exhausted. Little children walk in them, and women cross them, laden with bundles. Many of our wells have dried up and we lack the basic necessities of life; we are new Israelites seeking a new Moses and his marvelous, effective rod in order that stones, [308A] being struck, might supply the needs of a thirsting people and clouds might drop down manna, that strange food. So beware. Let us not become a new narrative of famine and judgment to those who follow after us.

I was looking at the fields, and at the many people weeping over their fruitlessness, and I too poured out lamentation because no showers were pouring out upon us. The sown seed was parched in the ploughed furrows. What was peeping out and sprouting was miserably withered by the heat. In fact, some people are circumstantially inverting the gospel passage, saying, "The laborers are many and there is little harvest." The farmers, kneeling heavily in the fields and gripping their knees with their hands (this indeed is the [308B] outward appearance of those who lament), weep over their vain toil, looking toward their young children and crying, gazing at their lamenting wives and wailing, stroking and, like a blind man, groping for their parched produce, wailing greatly like fathers losing their sons in the flower of manhood.

Let the prophet — remember the introduction a few moments ago — now speak to us: "And I," he said, "held back the showers for your three months before the harvest, and I shall rain upon

one city and I shall not rain upon another city, and one part will be drenched and one part, upon which I shall not rain, will dry up; and two or three cities will be gathered in one to drink water, and they will not be filled because you did not turn [308C] unto me, says the Lord" (Amos 4:7-8). We have learned that God sent us these calamities as a consequence of our turning away and indifference, not to trip us up but eager to make us upright in the same way that good fathers treat children who are careless; although angry at them and distancing themselves from them, they do not intend any harm but rather are eager to draw them out of childish negligence and youthful sins into diligence.

Look, now, at how the multitude of our sins has caused unnatural seasons, and traded the proper forms for strange combinations indeed. The winter was dry with no moisture; everything froze and dried out, since there were neither snowflakes nor showers. The spring gave us the other extreme, [308D] — the heat, I mean —but again without rain. Feverish heat and icy cold, unforeseen, exceeded the boundaries of creation and conspired with evil to do us damage, to drive people from life [309A] and livelihood.

Indeed, what now is the cause of the disorder and the strange conjunctions?<sup>2</sup> Why this strange new manifestation of the seasons? We have a mind; let us inquire; we are rational beings; let us reason. Is there not a captain of all things? Did God, the sovereign craftsman, forget the created order? Was He robbed of power and authority? Or perhaps He holds fast His power but does not discharge His authority; or was He persuaded to hardness, altering His excessive goodness and concern as our guardian, to turn it into misanthropy?

No wise person would say such things. However, our uncontrolled and culpable behavior is manifestly obvious: seizing on behalf of others, we do not share; we commend good works<sup>3</sup> yet withhold them from those who are without. We are freed slaves, yet we do not have pity on our fellow slaves. [309B] We are nourished when hungry, yet we rush by the one in need. In want of nothing, having God as our treasurer and the one who defrays the costs, we become skinflints and asocial<sup>4</sup> in relation to the poor. Our sheep multiply, yet the naked outnumber them. The storehouses are crowded with narrow corridors with abundant reserves, yet we have no mercy on those who mourn.<sup>5</sup> For this cause the righteous tribunal threatens us. For this cause also, God will not open his hand, because we ourselves shut out brotherly love. For this cause, the farmlands are dry: because love has fled.

3. The voice of those making supplication cries out vainly, the sound scattering to the winds; for we have not listened to those who ask our help. And where is our prayer and entreaty? [309C] O men, except for a few, you devote yourselves to market profit; you women collude with them in their materialism. Few remain at prayer with me, and these are distracted, yawning, constantly looking around and waiting for the cantor to finish the psalms, so they will be dismissed, as if from prison, from the church, and the required prayer. Even these smallest children, dismissed from their writing tablets at school and crying out along with us, share in

our occupation as if it is a fun game; they make our grief into a holiday, since they are freed from the burden of their teacher and from the cares of their school subjects for a while. Most of the adult men, a pleasure-seeking crowd, course through the city, easy, free and loud; [309D] they carry the cause of our troubles in their souls and have contrived and worked for our disaster.

Newborn infants without understanding or fault are being brought here in numbers for confession, even though they have no grounds for grieving, [312A] nor the knowledge nor ability to pray in the normal way. Come forth publically yourselves, I say, you who are defiled with sin; come forth falling on your knees, weeping, and groaning. Let the infant do what is proper to its own age! Why are you, the accused, hiding yourself as you push forward one who is not even under suspicion, to make amends? Surely the judge will not be kidded by<sup>6</sup> the fact that you are introducing some substitute person to him? It would be right, in fact, for [the infant] to appear along with you — but not alone, by itself!

The Ninevites, weeping unto God with regret and lamenting those sins that Jonah — after the sea and the whale — decried, did not present newborns alone for repentance, while the adults went on with their licentious lives, making merry; rather, you see how fasting subdued the sinful fathers first and punishment was meted out on the fathers. [312B] Most likely the (Ninevite) infant lamented as well, so that sadness might rule through every age, both sensible and insensible, according to choice and according to necessity. And God, seeing them thus humbled, as though condemning themselves to every kind of overwhelming pain, healed their passion and remitted their punishment, restoring to wholeness those who mourned properly with perception.

O melodious repentance! O wise and prudent affliction! Not only did God allow irrational things to suffer that were exempt from punishment, but even those things constructed to cry out by necessity. For the sprout was withdrawn from the ox (Jonah 3:7-8), the young ram was driven away from the maternal breast, the nursing child was not in its mother's arms, but the mothers were in their own places and the children in theirs, [312C] while mournful voices from all cried in response and reechoed to one another. Starving children sought milk; mothers, torn apart with natural emotion, called to their offspring with sympathetic voices. Those being born, likewise starving, burst into the world and thrashed with the most vehement wailing, their mothers pierced to the marrow with natural grief. And by their repentance, as all were instructed together, the divine Word counted them saved. The old person lamented, tore out and scattered his grey hair. The youth and [313A] the one in his prime, being more impetuous, bitterly lamented even more vehemently. The poor moaned; the wealthy, forgetting luxury, balanced distress with self-control. The king transformed his splendor and glory into shame. He put aside the crown and covered his head with ashes; his purple robes discarded, he changed into sackcloth. The elevated throne was put aside and the wretch crawled to the earth.

Forsaking the privilege of royal pleasures, he lamented together with the people; he became one with the many, because he saw the common lord of all enraged.

4. This is the right response for those who serve. This is repentance for those alienated by sin. Yet we sin much and repent carelessly and slothfully. Who in his [313B] prayer is pouring out tears to grasp a thunderstorm and seasonable rain? Who, to wipe out sin, imitates the blessed David, who waters his bed with lamentations? Who washes guests' feet, washing off the dust of the journey, so that in time he might importune God, seeking deliverance from drought? Who nourishes the fatherless child so that God might nurture for us the orphaned grain that is oppressed by the impotence of the winds? Who provides for a widow who is distressed by life's difficulties, so that the necessary food might be distributed?

Destroy the unjust account books, that sin might be dissolved. Wipe out the oppressive contract of usury that earth might bear appropriately. For when copper, gold, and inert substances multiply contrary to nature, then that which is naturally fecund becomes barren, condemned to fruitlessness, as vengeance on the established practices. [313C]

God is right to be angry, though he is delaying punishment for the fullness of time, since those who practice greed and who gather excessive wealth are now making the most of this power in what they have stored away. Those stockpiling gold quickly become pale like it, pale as the bread that they held in disdain until yesterday or the day before, since until then it had been easy to obtain.

Give, therefore; don't market it or keep the grain in the storehouses. Tell me, what good are heavy purses? Will you not be buried with those? Is not gold a thing of the earth? Will not useless clay rest alongside corporeal clay? You gathered it and still you lack one thing: the power to feed yourself. You and all your wealth will share one death; contrive a way of transporting<sup>7</sup> a few grains; [313D] persuade the earth to bear fruit; effect liberation from the calamity by using the arrogance and swagger of wealth.

Perhaps you will ask help from some of the pious, the prayers of someone like Elijah the Tishbite, who might generously grant you remission from your fears: some man without property, pale,<sup>8</sup> barefoot, homeless, without hearth, impoverished, covered with a single cloak, as Elijah [316A] was with the sheepskin, like him a man of prayer and self-control. And if you should attain the needed support of such a one, would you not permanently deride the burden of possessions? Spit on the gold? Fling out the silver as refuse, that which you once considered your most beloved treasure but discovered to be a feeble aid in time of need? Because of you God sentenced this calamity: having, you did not give; rushing past the hungry, you did not turn to those who were wailing; to those lying prostrate, you had no mercy.



Evil afflicts a whole land<sup>9</sup> on account of only a few; a land is destroyed by the wickedness of some. Achar committed sacrilege and the whole battle array was whipped (Josh. 7:19-25) Zambri fornicated with the Midianites, and Israel fell into judgment (Num. 25:6-15).

[316B] 5. Let us examine our lives, therefore, both as individuals and as a community; let us attend to the drought as we would to a teacher, each recalling his own sins. Let us submit to the voice of the noble Job: "It is the hand of the Lord that touched me" (Job 19:21). And we especially consider it reasonable when calamity visits those who sin. Yet, one must add, such misfortunes of life by trial also produce spiritual maturity,<sup>10</sup> that both poor and rich may be tried by difficulties, and each is rigorously tested by patient endurance. Such trials prove, especially in times like this, whether the afflicted one is philanthropic, aware of community identity, thankful, [316C] not blaspheming the reversal by letting life's turbulence turn their thinking upside-down.

I myself have seen many (not by hearsay but actually knowing the men) who, on the one hand, while life proceeds for them from prosperity to wealth, as the saying goes, and circumstances go along moderately, if not perfectly, confess thanks to the benefactor. But then they become ingrates as soon as circumstances turn for the worse, and the rich man becomes poor, and the strong body ill, the glory and the splendor become shame and dishonor. They blaspheme aloud, hesitate to pray, inveigh God bitterly as if He is an intransigent debtor rather than the irritated master. Let such thoughts be abolished!

When you see that God is not freely bestowing on you your usual benefits, you say to yourself, [316D] "Is God powerless to supply food?" How is this? For He is Lord of heaven and of all that is set in order, a wise steward of times [317A] and seasons, governor over all, appointing certain seasons and solstices to withdraw from one another like a well-ordered dance, to supply our necessities by this very diversity. According to the season He brings moisture, then He appoints heat, then cold, and that we should not entirely lack a period when it is dry. Thus God is able, offering and administering his power. Is He then without goodness? But this argument also does not hold up. For what purpose, if not for good, persuaded Him to create humankind in the beginning? What impelled the Creator, if He was unwilling, to take up earth and to form such a thing of beauty out of mud? What necessity persuaded the Logos to show favor to humankind according to His own image, so that having thus begun, He might demonstrate the arts [317B] and that He might teach humankind to philosophically consider the highest things, especially those not perceived by the senses?

Even by this reasoning God's supreme goodness is not lacking in our present circumstance. After all, has He not prevented the drought we see from turning into the final conflagration? And is not the sun, running a little off course as it approaches the earthly bodies, nonetheless restrained from burning up everything visible in a moment? Or does fire rain down from heaven as on chastised sinners?

O man, get a grip on yourself and your reasoning: Do not behave like irrational children, who break the writing tablets when the teacher finds fault with them, pull to pieces the garments of the father who nourishes them, [317C] or tear at their mother's face with their fingernails. For the storm tries and torturously tests the captain, the stadium the athlete, the battle array the general, calamity the one who is large in soul, temptation the Christian. Distresses reveal the soul as fire does gold.

Are you poor? Do not despair. For dejection may cause sin, either as outrage washes over the mind and hardship causes vertigo, or, on the other hand, as wandering reasoning may develop into ingratitude. Rather, hope in God. For does He not see your lamentations? He holds food in his hands and delays giving it, so that He might test your steadfastness, that He might discern whether your judgment is like that of the unbridled and senseless, those who praise, flatter, and immodestly admire God when there is bread in their bellies; when [317D] supplies are low, this sort of person, who a little earlier worshiped God on account of pleasure, throws blasphemies at Him like stones.

Consider the Old and New Testaments. In each you will find many nourished in a variety of ways. There was Elijah on Carmel, the lofty and uninhabited mountain. He was the solitary hermit whose soul [320A] hoped in God for both justice and provisions for survival. Living thus he did not die of starvation; in fact the most rapacious and voracious of the birds delivered bread to him, becoming ministers of food to the righteous. By the Lord's commandment, the birds' nature was changed, they who greedily snatch up other foods now faithfully carrying loaves and necessary supplies. We learned in the scripture of these ravens who carried food to the man.

The Babylonian pit held the young Israelite in calamitous captivity but free in soul and mind: what then of him? In this story, the lions fasted contrary to nature, while he who nourished (lit., the *tropheias*), Habakkuk, was carried through the air, the angel carrying the man along with the stew (Dan. 14:33-39). The prophet was transported all the way across earth and sea in an instant, from Judaea to Babylonia, so that the righteous might not be distressed by hunger.

6. Again, then, what of the desert people whom Moses governed? How did they survive for forty years? No one was sowing. No oxen dragged the plough; there was no threshing floor, no trough, no storehouse; yet they had food without sowing or tilling, and a stone provided fountains of water that had not formerly existed, bursting forth to meet the need.

I will refrain from recounting each example of God's foreknowledge, which He often manifests in a fatherly way to humankind. But you, be strong a little in the catastrophe, following the noble Job's example, and do not change direction on account of the waves, neither cast off those readily portable virtues that you carry with you. As costly capital, preserve thanksgiving in your soul. I say to you: cling twice as tenaciously to thanksgiving as you do to luxury. Remember the apostolic saying, "In everything give thanks."

Are you poor? There is someone much poorer than you. You have enough bread for ten days; another has enough for one. As a good and kindhearted person, make your surplus equal by distributing it to the needy. Do not shrink from giving of the little you have; do not treat your own calamity as if it is worse than the common suffering.<sup>11</sup> Even if you possess only one loaf of bread, and the beggar stands at the door, bring the one loaf out of the storeroom and, presenting it to the hands lifted up toward heaven, offer this merciful and considerate prayer:

One loaf which you see, O Lord, and the problem is evident, but as for me, I prefer your commandment to myself [320D] and I give of the little I have to the starving brother; for You also give to Your servant in trouble. I know Your great goodness and I also confidently believe in Your power, for You do not defer Your grace for another time, but disperse Your gifts when You wish.

And if you were to speak and act in this way, the bread that you should give out of your scarcity would become seed for planting; it would bear rich fruit, a pledge<sup>12</sup> of sustenance, a patron of mercy. Say [321A] to yourself what the widow of Sidon said in a similar situation —remember the story—"As the Lord lives, I have only this in my house to feed my children and myself" (1 Kings 17:12). And if you should give out of your own deprivation, you too would have the vessel of oil abounding with grace, the never-emptying pot of flour. For God's lavish grace on the faithful is exactly like that of the ever-emptying, ever-full, twice-giving vessels of oil.

O poor one, lend to the rich God. Believe in the one who is at all times taking up the cause of the afflicted in his own person and supplying grace from his own stores. Trustworthy guarantor, he has vast treasuries all over the earth and sea. In fact, even if you were to demand back the loan in the middle of the ocean, you would be guaranteed to receive the capital with interest. For in his generosity, he loves honor.

[321B] 7. Starvation, the distress of the famished, is the supreme human calamity, a more miserable end than all other deaths. For when one considers other lifethreatening calamities, the sword brings a quick end; fire too extinguishes life quickly; and even wild beasts, tearing the limbs apart with their teeth, inflict fatal wounds which assure that the distress will not be prolonged. But famine is a slow evil, always approaching, always holding off like a beast in its den. The heat of the body cools. The form shrivels. Little by little strength diminishes. Flesh stretches across the bones like a spider web. The skin loses its bloom, as the rosy appearance fades [321C] and blood melts away. Nor is the skin white, but rather it withers into black while the livid body, suffering pitifully, manifests a dark and pale mottling. The knees no longer support the body but drag themselves by force, the voice is powerless, the eyes are sunken as if in a casket, like dried-up nuts in their shells; the empty belly collapses, conforming itself to the shape of the backbone without any natural elasticity of the bowels. The person who rushes by such a body, how greatly worthy is he of chastisement? What excess of cruelty will he allow? Should he not be reckoned with the savagery of the beasts, accursed and a homicide? Whoever

has it in his power to alleviate this evil [321D] but deliberately opts instead for profit, should be condemned as a murderer.

The agony of hunger has constrained many even to [324A] violate the limits of nature, in one case a man feeding on the bodies of his very race, in another a mother on her child, who came forth from her stomach only to be dreadfully conceived again by the stomach. This drama is recorded in the Jewish history, the tragedy diligently chronicled in Josephus,<sup>13</sup> when such an event seized the Jerusalemites who paid the righteous penalty for impiety toward the Lord.

You see him, even our very God, often disregarding many other misfortunes but sympathetically having pity on those who hunger. For "I have pity," he said, "on the rabble" (Matt. 15:32). Even in the last judgment, to which the Lord will call the just, those who give freely will hold the first rank; the one who nourishes will stand first in honor,<sup>14</sup> the supplier of bread will be called before everyone else; the kind and [324B] bountiful will be escorted to life before all the other righteous. The one who distances himself from the community and is asocial<sup>15</sup> and stingy will be handed over to the fire before all [other] sinners.

The present season thus summons you to the mother of all commandments: take great care that the age of festival and covenant should not pass you by. For time flows on and does not wait for those who loiter; the days hasten on; they pass by the one who hesitates. As the current of a river does not stand still even if no one ever comes to it, tests it, and puts the water to use, so also time cannot stop its compulsory circuits as it goes forward, nor is it able to reverse its course if someone does not seize an opportunity. Seize, therefore, and fulfill the commandment as you would take hold of a fugitive, securing it from all sides with grasping hands and encircling arms. [324C] Give a little and gain much; destroy the original sin by freely distributing food. For as sin came through Adam's evil act of eating, so we ourselves blot out his treacherous consumption if we remedy the need and hunger of a brother.

8. People: listen! Christians: hearken! Thus says the Lord, not haranguing the people with his own voice [325A] but resonating through the mouths of His servants as through a musical instrument: Let us who are rational not seem more savage than those without reason, for they share the natural products of the earth. Flocks of sheep pasture on the same mountain and multitudes of horses graze on the same plain, each permitting the others all the natural enjoyment of the necessities. But we lock up what is common; we keep for ourselves the things that belong to everyone. That which the Hellenes call philanthropy puts us to shame! Among some of them the law of philanthropy<sup>16</sup> is fulfilled by a large community sharing one table, common bread, and one hearth.

Let us not have the example of outsiders, but look at the example of the three thousand (Acts 2:44-45). Emulate the first constitution of the Christians, [325B] how they had all things in common: life, soul, concord, common table, undivided brotherhood, love without dissimulation, many working to one end, many souls agreeing in harmony.

You have many examples of brotherly love in the Old and New Testaments. Should you see an old man hungering, distribute freely and feed him, as Joseph fed Jacob. Should you find an enemy in narrow straits, do not avenge yourself with hidden wrath, but feed him, as Joseph fed his betraying brothers. Should you meet with a suffering youth, lament as he lamented Benjamin, the son of the old man. Perhaps avarice tempts you, as the mistress tempted Joseph; it grabs you by the garments so that you scorn the commandment and [325C] prefer the love of gold and love of the world to the edict of the Master. When a thought should come warring with that commandment, urging the sound mind to love money, constraining you to neglect philanthropy and restraint, throw off your garments as well: being enraged, flee. Keep faith with the Lord, as Joseph kept faith with Potiphar; manage for one year as he did for seven.

Do not give everything you have to your pleasure, but give also something to the soul. Recognize that you have two daughters: present prosperity and life in heaven. If you do not wish to give everything to the greater one, at least divide it equally between the unbridled and the self-controlled child. [325D] Do not show off the former by a luxurious way of life and display the other as naked and clothed with rags; for when it should be necessary for you to stand before Christ and to come before the judge's eyes, it is the life of virtue that receives the wedding garment and the invitation. Do not, therefore, present the bride deformed and unadorned to the bridegroom [328A] lest, after beholding her, he should turn his face away, that seeing her he should hate her and deny the union. Rather, dress her appropriately. Keep her beautiful for the appointed wedding so that she might also light her lamp with the wise virgins, having the inextinguishable fire of knowledge, not lacking the oil of right action, so that the inspired prophecy might be confirmed by works, and your own soul will manifest the saying, "At thy right hand stood the queen, arrayed in a vesture of woven gold, adorned with varied colors. Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear: and the king will desire your beauty" (Ps. 45:10-11). For the Psalmist pointed to those things having to do with reproduction, publically proclaiming the youthful prime of the generative body, [328B] but it is also an image of each soul, that is, if indeed the Church community supports each soul.

9. Think reasonably about that which is and that which shall come, and what you might lose through shameful profit. Your body, the thing by which you recognize life, will desert you. Although you will have arrived in the revealed presence of the expected judge, you will have shut yourself off from the gift of the honors and the heavenly glory; instead of a long and happy life, you will be opening the everburning fire, Gehenna, punishments, and bitter things in eternal agony.

Do not dismiss me as if I am like a mother or nurse, frightening you with some imaginative monster as they often do to very young children: when they weep endlessly and without control, they silence them with false stories. These are no fables but an oration proclaimed with the voice of truth. Know too, truly, according to the public proclamation of the Gospel, that no jot or tittle will pass away. Even the body hidden in the coffin will rise, and the soul cut off by

death will again dwell in the body, and sharp scrutiny of life's events will come into one's head, [no one else] testifying. The soul herself will testify from the conscience. May it be measured out to each according to his worth by the Righteous Judge to whom is due glory, strength, and worship unto the ages of ages. Amen.

**November 6 - 12**

<b>Tuesday</b>	8:30 am 7:30 pm	Morning Prayer Psalms Study – via zoom	<b>Wednesday</b>	4:00 pm 6:30 pm 8pm	Vespers Bridges Compline
<b>Thursday</b>	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	<b>Friday</b>	7:00 am 12:30pm 2:00pm	Orthros Noon Hours Jesus Prayer
<b>Saturday</b>	9:00am 6:30pm	Morning Prayer Vespers with Litya	<b>Sunday</b>	7:00 am 8:30 am	Orthros Divine Liturgy



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa