

HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH

THROUGH THE CROSS JOY HAS COME INTO ALL THE WORLD

Rev. Fr. Christopher Foley
frc@holycrossoca.org

645 Greensboro Rd., High Point, NC
336-688-9820

www.holycrossoca.org

FEBRUARY, 2019

Volume 13, Number 6

FOUR HUNDRED TEXTS ON LOVE - FOURTH CENTURY Saint Maximus the Confessor

1. First the intellect marvels when it reflects on the absolute infinity of God, that boundless sea for which it longs so much. Then it is amazed at how God has brought things into existence out of nothing. But just as 'His magnificence is without limit' (Ps. 145:3. LXX), so 'there is no penetrating His purposes' (Isa. 40:28).

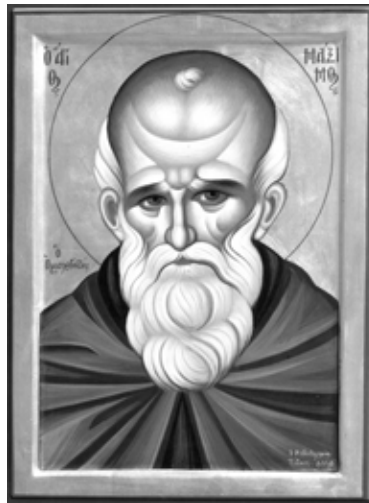
2. How can the intellect not marvel when it contemplates that immense and more than astonishing sea of goodness? Or how is it not astounded when it reflects on how and from what source there have come into being both nature endowed with intelligence and intellect, and the four elements which compose physical bodies, although no matter existed before their generation? What kind of potentiality was it which, once actualized, brought these things into being? But all this is not accepted by those who follow the pagan Greek philosophers, ignorant as they are of that all-powerful goodness and its effective wisdom and knowledge, transcending the human intellect.

3. God is the Creator from all eternity, and He creates when He wills, in His infinite goodness, through His coessential Logos and Spirit. Do not raise the objection: 'Why did He create at a particular moment since He is good from all eternity?' For I reply that the unsearchable wisdom of the infinite essence does not come within the compass of human knowledge.

4. When the Creator willed, He gave being to and manifested that knowledge of created things which already ex-

isted in Him from all eternity. For in the case of almighty God it is ridiculous to doubt that He can give being to anything when He so wills.

5. Try to learn why God created; for that is true knowledge. But do not try to learn how He created or why He did so comparatively recently; for that does not come within the compass of your intellect. Of divine realities some may be apprehended by men and others may not. Unbridled speculation, as one of the saints has said, can drive one headlong over the precipice.



6. Some say that the created order has coexisted with God from eternity; but this is impossible. For how can things which are limited in every way coexist from eternity with Him who is altogether infinite? Or how are they really creations if they are coeternal with the Creator? This notion is drawn from the pagan Greek philosophers, who claim

that God is in no way the creator of being but only of qualities. We, however, who know almighty God, say that He is the creator not only of qualities but also of the being of created things. If this is so, created things have not coexisted with God from eternity.

7. Divinity and divine realities are in some respects knowable and in some respects unknowable. They are knowable in the contemplation of what appertains to God's essence and unknowable as regards that essence itself.

8. Do not look for conditions and properties in the simple and infinite essence of the Holy Trinity; otherwise you will make It composite like created beings - a ridiculous and blasphemous thing to do in the case of God.

9. Only the infinite Being, all-powerful and creative of all things, is simple, unique, unqualified, peaceful and

stable. Every creature, consisting as it does of being and accident, is composite and always in need of divine providence, for it is not free from change.

10. Both intelligible and sensible nature, on being brought into existence by God, received powers to apprehend created beings. Intelligible nature received powers of intellection, and sensible nature powers of sense-perception.

11. God is only participated in. Creation both participates and communicates: it participates in being and in well-being, but communicates only well-being. But corporeal nature communicates this in one way and incorporeal nature in another.

12. Incorporeal nature communicates well-being by speaking, by acting, and by being contemplated; corporeal nature only by being contemplated.

13. Whether or not a nature endowed with intelligence and intellect is to exist eternally depends on the will of the Creator whose every creation is good; but whether such a nature is good or bad depends on its own will.

14. Evil is not to be imputed to the essence of created beings, but to their erroneous and mindless motivation.

15. A soul's motivation is rightly ordered when its desiring power is subordinated to self-control, when its incensive power rejects hatred and cleaves to love, and when its power of intelligence, through prayer and spiritual contemplation, advances towards God.

16. If in time of trial a man does not patiently endure his afflictions, but cuts himself off from the love of his spiritual brethren, he does not yet possess perfect love or a deep knowledge of divine providence.

17. The aim of divine providence is to unite by means of true faith and spiritual love those separated in various ways by vice. Indeed, the Savior endured His sufferings so that 'He should gather together into one the scattered children of God' (John 11: 52). Thus, he who does not resolutely bear trouble, endure affliction, and patiently sustain hardship, has strayed from the path of divine love and from the purpose of providence.

18. If 'love is long-suffering and kind' (1 Cor. 13:4), a man who is fainthearted in the face of his afflictions and who therefore behaves wickedly towards those who have offended him, and stops loving them, surely lapses from

the purpose of divine providence.

19. Watch yourself, lest the vice which separates you from your brother lies not in him but in yourself. Be reconciled with him without delay, so that you do not lapse from the commandment of love.

20. Do not hold the commandment of love in contempt, for through it you will become a son of God. But if you transgress it, you will become a son of Gehenna.

21. What separates us from the love of friends is envying or being envied, causing or receiving harm, insulting or being insulted, and suspicious thoughts. Would that you had never done or experienced anything of this sort and in this way separated yourself from the love of a friend.

22. Has a brother been the occasion of some trial for you and has your resentment led you to hatred? Do not let yourself be overcome by this hatred, but conquer it with love. You will succeed in this by praying to God sincerely for your brother and by accepting his apology; or else by conciliating him with an apology yourself, by regarding yourself as responsible for the trial and by patiently waiting until the cloud has passed.

23. A long-suffering man is one who waits patiently for his trial to end and hopes that his perseverance will be rewarded.

24. 'The long-suffering man abounds in understanding' (Prov. 14:29), because he endures everything to the end and, while awaiting that end, patiently bears his distress. The end, as St Paul says, is everlasting life (cf. Rom. 6:22). 'And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent' (John 17:3).

25. Do not lightly discard spiritual love: for men there is no other road to salvation.

26. Because today an assault of the devil has aroused some hatred in you, do not judge as base and wicked a brother whom yesterday you regarded as spiritual and virtuous; but with long-suffering love dwell on the goodness you perceived yesterday and expel today's hatred from your soul.

27. Do not condemn today as base and wicked the man whom yesterday you praised as good and commended as virtuous, changing from love to hatred, because he has criticized you; but even though you are still full of resent-

ment, commend him as before, and you will soon recover the same saving love.

28. When talking with other brethren, do not adulterate your usual praise of a brother by surreptitiously introducing censure into the conversation because you still harbor some hidden resentment against him. On the contrary, in the company of others give unmixed praise and pray for him sincerely as if you were praying for yourself; then you will soon be delivered from this destructive hatred.

29. Do not say, 'I do not hate my brother', when you simply efface the thought of him from your mind. Listen to Moses, who said, 'Do not hate your brother in your mind; but reprove him and you will not incur sin through him' (Lev. 19:17. LXX).

30. If a brother happens to be tempted and persists in insulting you, do not be driven out of your state of love, even though the same evil demon troubles your mind. You will not be driven out of that state if, when abused, you bless; when slandered, you praise; and when tricked, you maintain your affection. This is the way of Christ's philosophy: if you do not follow it you do not share His company.

31. Do not think that those who bring you reports which fill you with resentment and make you hate your brother are affectionately disposed towards you, even if they seem to speak the truth. On the contrary, turn away from them as if they were poisonous snakes, so that you may both prevent them from uttering slanders and deliver your own soul from wickedness.

32. Do not irritate your brother by speaking to him equivocally; otherwise you may receive the same treatment from him and so drive out both your love and his. Rather, rebuke him frankly and affectionately, thus removing the grounds for resentment and freeing both him and yourself from your irritation and distress.

33. Examine your conscience scrupulously, in case it is your fault that your brother is still hostile. Do not cheat your conscience, for it knows your secrets, and at the hour of your death it will accuse you and in time of prayer it will be a stumbling-block to you.

34. In times of peaceful relationships do not recall what was said by a brother when there was bad feeling between you, even if offensive things were said to your face, or to another person about you and you subsequently heard of them. Otherwise you will harbor thoughts of rancor and

revert to your destructive hatred of your brother.

35. The deiform soul cannot nurse hatred against a man and yet be at peace with God, the giver of the commandments. 'For', He says, 'if you do not forgive men their faults, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your faults' (cf. Matt. 6:14-15). If your brother does not wish to live peaceably with you, nevertheless guard yourself against hatred, praying for him sincerely and not abusing him to anybody.

36. The perfect peace of the holy angels lies in their love for God and their love for one another. This is also the case with all the saints from the beginning of time. Most truly therefore is it said that 'on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets' (Matt. 22:40).

37. Stop pleasing yourself and you will not hate your brother; stop loving yourself and you will love God.

38. Once you have decided to share your life with spiritual brethren, renounce your own wishes from the start. Unless you do this you will not be able to live peaceably either with God or with your brethren.

39. He who has attained perfect love, and has ordered his whole life in accordance with it, is the person who says 'Lord Jesus' in the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3).

40. Love for God always aspires to give wings to the intellect in its communion with God; love for one's neighbor makes one always think good thoughts about him.

41. The man who still loves empty fame, or is attached to some material object, is naturally vexed with people on account of transitory things, or harbors rancor or hatred against

them, or is a slave to shameful thoughts. Such things are quite foreign to the soul that loves God,

42. If you have no thought of any shameful word or action in your mind, harbor no rancor against someone who has injured or slandered you, and, while praying, always keep your intellect free from matter and form, you may be sure that you have attained the full measure of dispassion and perfect love.

43. It is no small struggle to be freed from self-esteem. Such freedom is to be attained by the inner practice of the virtues and by more frequent prayer; and the sign that you have attained it is that you no longer harbor rancor against anybody who abuses or has abused you.

44. If you want to be a just person, assign to each aspect of yourself - to your soul and your body - what accords with it. To the intelligent aspect of the soul assign spiritual reading, contemplation and prayer; to the incensive aspect, spiritual love, the opposite of hatred; to the desiring aspect, moderation and self-control; to the fleshly part, food and clothing, for these alone are necessary (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8).

45. The intellect functions in accordance with nature when it keeps the passions under control, contemplates the inner essences of created beings, and abides with God.

46. As health and disease are to the body of a living thing, and light and darkness to the eye, so virtue and vice are to the soul, and knowledge and ignorance to the intellect.

47. The commandments, the doctrines, the faith: these are the three objects of the Christian's philosophy. The commandments separate the intellect from the passions; the doctrines lead it to the spiritual knowledge of created beings; and faith to the contemplation of the Holy Trinity.

48. Some of those pursuing the spiritual way only repel impassioned thoughts; others cut off the passions themselves. Such thoughts are repelled by psalmody, or by prayer, or by raising one's mind to God, or by occupying one's attention in some similar way. The passions are cut off through appropriate detachment from those things by which they are roused.

49. The passions are roused in us by, for example, women, wealth, fame and so on. We can achieve detachment with regard to women when, after withdrawing from the world, we wither the body, as we should, through self-control. We can achieve detachment where wealth is concerned when we make up our mind to be frugal in all things. We can become indifferent to fame by practicing the virtues inwardly, in a way visible only to God. And we can act in a similar fashion with respect to other things. A person who has achieved such detachment as this will never hate anybody.

50. He who has renounced such things as marriage, possessions and other worldly pursuits is outwardly a monk, but may not yet be a monk inwardly. Only he who has renounced

the impassioned conceptual images of these things has made a monk of the inner self, the intellect. It is easy to be a monk in one's outer self if one wants to be; but no small

struggle is required to be a monk in one's inner self.

51. Who in this generation is completely freed from impassioned conceptual images, and has been granted uninterrupted, pure and spiritual prayer? Yet this is the mark of the inner monk.

52. Many passions are hidden in our souls; they can be brought to light only when the objects that rouse them are present.

53. A man can enjoy partial dispassion and not be disturbed by passions when the objects which rouse them are absent. But once those objects are present, the passions quickly distract his intellect.

54. Do not imagine that you enjoy perfect dispassion when the object arousing your passion is not present. If when it is present you remain unmoved by both the object and the subsequent thought of it, you may be sure that you have entered the realm of dispassion. But even so do not be over-confident; for virtue when habitual kills the passions, but when it is neglected they come to life again.

55. He who loves Christ is bound to imitate Him to the best of his ability. Christ, for example, was always conferring blessings on people; He was long-suffering when they were ungrateful and blasphemed Him; and when they beat Him and put Him to death, He endured it, imputing no evil at all to anyone. These are the three acts which manifest love for one's neighbor. If he is incapable of them, the person who says that he loves Christ or has attained the kingdom deceives himself. For 'not everyone who says to Me: "Lord, Lord" shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father' (Matt. 7:21); and again, 'He who loves Me will keep My commandments' (cf. John 14:15, 23).

56. The whole purpose of the Savior's commandments is to free the intellect from dissipation and hatred, and to lead it to the love of Him and one's neighbor. From this love springs the light of active holy knowledge.

57. When God has granted you a degree of spiritual knowledge, do not neglect love and self-control; for it is these which, once they have purified the soul's passible aspect, always keep open for you the way to such knowledge.

58. Dispassion and humility lead to spiritual knowledge. Without them no one will see the Lord.

59. Since 'knowledge puffs up, but love edifies' (1 Cor. 8:1), unite love with knowledge and you will free yourself from arrogance and be a spiritual builder, edifying both yourself and all who draw near you.

60. Love edifies because it does not envy, or feel any bitterness towards those who are envious, or ostentatiously display what provokes envy; it does not reckon that its purpose has yet been attained (cf. Phil. 3:13), and it unhesitatingly confesses its ignorance of what it does not know. Hence it frees the intellect from arrogance and always equips it to advance in knowledge.

61. It is natural for spiritual knowledge to produce conceit and envy, especially in the early stages. Conceit comes only from within, but envy comes both from within and from without - from within when we feel envious of those who have knowledge, from without when those who love knowledge feel envious of us. Love destroys all three of these failings: conceit, because love is not puffed up; envy from within, because love is not jealous; and envy from without, because love is 'long-suffering and kind' (1 Cor. 13:4). A person with spiritual knowledge must, then, also acquire love, so that he may always keep his intellect in a healthy state.

62. He who has been granted the grace of spiritual knowledge and yet harbors resentment, rancor or hatred for anybody, is like someone who lacerates his eyes with thorns and thistles. Hence knowledge must be accompanied by love.

63. Do not devote all your time to your body but apply to it a measure of asceticism appropriate to its strength, and then turn all your intellect to what is within. 'Bodily asceticism has only a limited use, but true devotion is useful in all things' (1 Tim. 4:8).

64. He who always concentrates on the inner life becomes restrained, long-suffering, kind and humble. He will also be able to contemplate, theologize and pray. That is what St Paul meant when he said: 'Walk in the Spirit' (Gal. 5:16).

65. One ignorant of the spiritual path is not on his guard against impassioned conceptual images, but devotes himself entirely to the flesh. He is either a glutton, or licentious, or full of resentment, anger and rancor. As a result he darkens his intellect, or he practices excessive asceticism and so confuses his mind.

66. Scripture does not forbid anything which God has given us for our use; but it condemns immoderation and thoughtless behavior. For instance, it does not forbid us to eat, or to beget children, or to possess material things and to administer them properly. But it does forbid us to be gluttonous, to fornicate and so on. It does not forbid us to think of these things — they were made to be thought of - but it forbids us to think of them with passion.

67. Some of the things which we do for the sake of God are done in obedience to the commandments; others are done not in obedience to the commandments but, so to speak, as a voluntary offering. For example, we are required by the commandments to love God and our neighbor, to love our enemies, not to commit adultery or murder and so on. And when we transgress these commandments, we are condemned. But we are not commanded to live as virgins, to abstain from marriage, to renounce possessions, to withdraw into solitude and so forth. These are of the nature of gifts, so that if through

weakness we are unable to fulfill some of the commandments, we may by these free gifts propitiate our blessed Master.

68. He who honors celibacy and virginity must keep his loins girded and his lamp burning (cf. Luke 12:35). He keeps his loins girded through self-control, and his lamp burning through prayer, contemplation and spiritual love.

69. Some of the brethren think that they are excluded from the Holy Spirit's gifts of grace. Because they neglect to practice the commandments they do not know that he who has an unadulterated faith in Christ has within him the sum total of all the divine gifts. Since through our laziness we are far from having an active love for Him - a love which shows us the divine treasures within us - we naturally think that we are excluded from these gifts.

70. If, as St Paul says, Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (cf. Eph. 3:17), and all the treasures of wisdom and spiritual knowledge are hidden in Him (cf. Col. 2:3), then all the treasures of wisdom and spiritual knowledge are hidden in our hearts. They are revealed to the heart in proportion to our purification by means of the commandments.

71. This is the treasure hidden in the field of your heart (cf. Matt. 13:44), which you have not yet found because of your laziness. Had you found it, you would have sold everything and bought that field. But now you have aban-

done that field and give all your attention to the land nearby, where there is nothing but thorns and thistles.

72. It is for this reason that the Savior says, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matt. 5:8) for He is hidden in the hearts of those who believe in Him. They shall see Him and the riches that are in Him when they have purified themselves through love and self-control; and the greater their purity, the more they will see.

73. And that is why He also says, 'Sell what you possess and give alms' (Luke 12:33), 'and you will find that all things are clean for you' (Luke 11:41). This applies to those who no longer spend their time on things to do with the body, but strive to cleanse the intellect (which the Lord calls 'heart') from hatred and dissipation. For these defile the intellect and do not allow it to see Christ, who dwells in it by the grace of holy baptism.

74. In Scripture the virtues are called 'ways'. The greatest of all the virtues is love. That is why St Paul said, 'Now I will show you the best way of all' (1 Cor. 12:31), one that persuades us to scorn material things and value nothing transitory more than what is eternal.

75. Love of God is opposed to desire, for it persuades the intellect to control itself with regard to sensual pleasures. Love for our neighbor is opposed to anger, for it makes us scorn fame and riches. These are the two pence which our Savior gave to the innkeeper (cf. Luke 10:31), so that he should take care of you. But do not be thoughtless and associate with robbers; otherwise you will be beaten again and left not merely unconscious but dead.

76. Cleanse your intellect from anger, rancor and shameful thoughts, and you will be able to perceive the indwelling of Christ.

77. Who enlightened you with faith in the holy, co-essential and adorable Trinity? Or who made known to you the incarnate dispensation of one of the Holy Trinity? Who taught you about the inner essences of incorporeal beings, or about the origin and consummation of the visible world, or about the resurrection from the dead and eternal life, or about the glory of the kingdom of heaven and the dreadful judgment? Was it not the grace of Christ dwelling in you, which is the pledge of the Holy Spirit? What is greater than this grace? What is more noble than this wisdom and knowledge? What is more lofty than these promises? But if we are lazy and negligent, and if we do not cleanse ourselves from the passions which defile us,

blinding our intellect and so preventing us from seeing the inner nature of these realities more clearly than the sun, let us blame ourselves and not deny the indwelling of grace.

78. God, who has promised you eternal blessings (cf. Tit. 1:2) and has given you the pledge of the Spirit in your hearts (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22), has commanded you to pay attention to how you live, so that the inner man may be freed from the passions and begin here and now to enjoy these blessings.

79. When you have been granted the higher forms of the contemplation of divine realities, give your utmost attention to love and self-control, so that you may keep your soul's passible aspect undisturbed and preserve the light of your soul in undiminished splendor.

80. Bridle your soul's incensive power with love, quench its desire with self-control, give wings to its intelligence with prayer, and the light of your intellect will never be darkened.

81. Disgrace, injury, slander either against one's faith or one's manner of life, beatings, blows and so on - these are the things which dissolve love, whether they happen to oneself or to any of one's relatives or friends. He who loses his love because of these things has not yet understood the purpose of Christ's commandments.

82. Strive as hard as you can to love every man. If you cannot yet do this, at least do not hate anybody. But even this is beyond your power unless you scorn worldly things.

83. Has someone vilified you? Do not hate him; hate the vilification and the demon which induced him to utter it. If you hate the vilifier, you have hated a man and so broken the commandment. What he has done in word you do in action. To keep the commandment, show the qualities of love and help him in any way you can, so that you may deliver him from evil.

84. Christ does not want you to feel the least hatred, resentment, anger or rancor towards anyone in any way or on account of any transitory thing whatsoever. This is proclaimed throughout the four Gospels.

85. Many of us are talkers, few are doers. But no one should distort the word of God through his own negligence. He must confess his weakness and not hide God's truth. Otherwise he will be guilty not only of breaking the commandments but also of falsifying the word of God.

86. Love and self-control free the soul from passions; spiritual reading and contemplation deliver the intellect from ignorance; and the state of prayer brings it into the presence of God Himself.

87. When the demons see that we scorn the things of this world in order not to hate men on account of such things, and so to fall away from love, then they incite slanders against us. In this way they hope that, unable to contain our resentment, we will be provoked into hating those who slander us.

88. Nothing pains the soul more than slander, whether directed against one's faith or one's manner of life. No one can be indifferent to it except those who like Susanna have their eyes firmly fixed on God (cf. Sus. verse 35). For only God has the power to rescue from peril, as He rescued her, to convince men of the truth, as He did in her case, and to encourage the soul with hope.

89. To the extent that you pray with all your soul for the person who slanders you, God will make the truth known to those who have been scandalized by the slander.

90. Only God is good by nature (cf. Matt. 19:17), and only he who imitates God is good in will and purpose. For it is the intention of such a person to unite the wicked to Him who is good by nature, so that they too may become good. That is why, though reviled by them, he blesses; persecuted, he endures; vilified, he supplicates (cf. 1 Cor. 4:12-13); put to death, he prays for them. He does everything so as not to lapse from the purpose of love, which is God Himself.

91. The Lord's commandments teach us to use neutral things intelligently. Such use purifies the soul's state. A state of purity begets discrimination; discrimination begets dispassion; and it is from dispassion that perfect love is born.

92. If when some trial occurs you cannot overlook a friend's fault, whether real or apparent, you have not yet attained dispassion. For when the passions which lie deep in the soul are disturbed, they blind the mind, preventing it from perceiving the light of truth and from discriminating between good and evil. If you are in such a state you have likewise not yet attained perfect love, the love which expels the fear of judgment (cf. 1 John 4:18).

93. 'A faithful friend is beyond price' (Ecclus. 6:15), since he regards his friend's misfortunes as his own and suffers with him, sharing his trials until death.

94. Friends are many, but in times of prosperity (cf. Prov. 19:4). In times of adversity you will have difficulty in finding even one.

95. One should love every man from the soul, but one should place one's hope only in God and serve Him with all one's strength. For so long as He protects us against harm, all our friends treat us with respect and all our enemies are powerless to injure us. But once He abandons us, all our friends turn away from us while all our enemies prevail against us.

96. There are four principal ways in which God abandons us. The first is the way of the divine dispensation, so that through our apparent abandonment others who are abandoned may be saved. Our Lord is an example of this (cf. Matt. 27:46). The second is the way of trial and testing, as in the case of Job and Joseph; for it made Job a pillar of courage and Joseph a pillar of self-restraint (cf. Gen. 39:8). The third is the way of fatherly correction, as in the case of St Paul, so that by being humble he might preserve the superabundance of grace (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7). The fourth is the way of rejection, as in the case of the Jews, so that by being punished they might be brought to repentance. These are all ways of salvation, full of divine blessing and wisdom.

97. Only those who scrupulously keep the commandments, and are true initiates into divine judgments, do not abandon their friends when God permits these friends to be put to the test. Those who scorn the commandments and who are ignorant about divine judgments rejoice with their friend in the times of his prosperity; but when in times of trial he suffers hardships, they abandon him and sometimes even side with those who attack him.

98. The friends of Christ love all truly but are not themselves loved by all; the friends of the world neither love all nor are loved by all. The friends of Christ persevere in love to the end; the friends of the world persevere only until they fall out with each other over some worldly thing.

99. 'A faithful friend is a strong defense' (Ecclus. 6:14); for when things are going well with you, he is a good counselor and a sympathetic collaborator, while when things are going badly, he is the truest of helpers and a most compassionate supporter.

100. Many have said much about love, but you will find love itself only if you seek it among the disciples of Christ. For only they have true Love as love's teacher.

‘Though I have the gift of prophecy’, says St Paul, ‘and know all mysteries and all knowledge . . . and have no love, it profits me nothing’ (1 Cor. 13:2-3). He who possesses love possesses God Himself, for ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8). To Him be glory throughout the ages. Amen.



LOOKING TOWARD LENT

The Sunday of Zacchaeus points toward Lent, and the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee begins the services of the *Lenten Triodion*, the great book of Lent. Like most parishes, we are unable to offer all of the services of the *Triodion*, which are some of the great treasures of the Orthodox Church. It is very well worth purchasing and praying the *Triodion* throughout Lent. A different translation is also available online: <http://www.ocf.org/Orthodox-Page/prayers/triodion/triodion.html>

THE SUNDAY OF ZACCHAEUS

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware

One week before the Triodion enters into use, there is a Sunday Gospel reading which looks forward directly to the coming fast—Luke 19:1–10, describing how Zacchaeus climbed a tree beside the road where Christ was to pass. In this reading we note Zacchaeus’ sense of eager expectation, the intensity of his desire to see our Lord, and we apply this to ourselves. If, as we prepare for Lent, there is real eagerness in our hearts, if we have an intense desire for a clearer vision of Christ, then our hopes will be fulfilled during the fast; indeed, we shall, like Zacchaeus, receive far more than we expect. But if there is within us no eager expectation and no sincere desire, we shall see

and receive nothing. And so we ask ourselves: What is my state of mind and will as I prepare to embark on the Lenten journey?

From “The Meaning of the Great Fast,” from the Lenten Triodion. This wonderful essay by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware is also available online: <http://www.pravmir.com/the-meaning-of-the-great-fast-the-true-nature-of-fasting/>

THE SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE: HUMILITY

Vassilios Papavassiliou

Brethren, let us not pray like the Pharisee, for those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Let us be humbled before God through fasting like the tax collector, as we cry aloud, “God forgive us sinners.” (First troparion of Vespers, Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee)

It is no coincidence that the season of the Lenten Triodion begins on the Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee. Not only the hymns of the Triodion, but also the appointed Gospel and epistle readings for the season, play an important part in preparing Orthodox Christians for Lent. The lessons of the entire liturgical life of the Church from this point warn Christians to avoid hypocritical fasting, to fast spiritually as well as physically, and to abstain from wrongdoing, from pride, from judging one another.

The first lesson is the Gospel reading for the Sunday that begins the season of the Triodion:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9–14)

The main hymn for the day echoes the Gospel lesson:

Let us flee the proud speech of the Pharisee; and let us learn the humility of the tax collector, as with groans we cry to the Savior: Be merciful to us, for You alone are ready to forgive. (Kontakion for the Sunday of the Tax

Collector and the Pharisee)

The warning to flee pride is given to us not only in words, but also in practical terms. On most Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the year, Orthodox Christians fast—that is, they abstain from meat and dairy, and usually fish also—but during the week following the Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee, these fast days are abolished.

Many Orthodox Christians make the mistake of thinking we are absolved from fasting during that week in order to gorge on meat and dairy before Lent begins, but this is not the reason at all. Indeed, if this were the reason, the Church would have appointed the following week—the week before Cheesefare week, when limited fasting begins—to suspend these fast days.

The reason the Church suspends fasting for this week is to warn us not to imitate the Pharisee, who boasts before God, “I fast twice a week.” Thus the Church reminds us—not only through the lessons of the Gospel and of the Triodion, but also through its injunction not to fast during that week—that it is better not to fast and to be humble than it is to fast and be proud.

Thus the Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee gives us the first lesson of Lent: Physical fasting is a means to an end, not the end in itself. If our fasting makes us prideful, we are better off not fasting at all.

Lent is thus announced as a quest for humility, which is the beginning of true repentance and the root and strength of the Lenten effort.

Papavassiliou, V. (2012). Meditations for Great Lent: Reflections on the Triodion (pp. 13–19). Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing.

Kernersville.

Sisterhood of the Holy Myrrhbearers: The Sisterhood will meet at 6:30PM on Tuesday, February 19.

Order Gift Cards Through Holy Cross! Scrip cards are available from hundreds of retailers and don't cost any more than the face value of the gift card. It's a “free” fundraiser to benefit the Holy Cross building fund! Contact Karen Brudnak-Slate.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

January	Actual	Budgeted
Income	\$12,545.97	\$12,962.00
Expense	\$10,649.35	\$11,055.77



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Moleben on our property: We will continue serving a weekly short prayer service on our property in Kernersville. This is a service of supplication (Molieben) that Archbishop Dimitri of blessed memory blessed for the use of parishes in the diocese. Fr. Christopher will be serving it on Friday mornings at 10 AM except where noted in the calendar. Our property is located at 1320 Masten Drive in



HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 10 AM Prayers at the Property 6:30PM Great Vespers	2 MEETING of the Lord 9 AM Divine Liturgy 6 PM Great Vespers
3 9:00AM Church School 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy 5:30 PM OCAT home meeting	4	5	6 7:30PM Choir Rehearsal	7	8 10AM Prayers at the Property	9 6 PM Great Vespers
10 Zacchaeus Sunday 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy	11	12 6:30PM Small Compline & Catechism Class	13	14	15 10AM Prayers at the Property	16 6 PM Great Vespers
17 Publican & Pharisee Fast-Free Week 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy	18 Fast-Free Week	19 Fast-Free Week 6:30PM Sisterhood	20 Fast-Free Week 7:30PM Choir Rehearsal	21 Fast-Free Week	22 Fast-Free Week 10AM Prayers at the Property 5PM Open Door	23 Fast-Free Week 6 PM Great Vespers
24 Prodigal Son 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy	25	26 6:30PM Small Compline & Catechism Class	27	28 7PM Men's Group		

