



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

Office of the Metropolitan, Synod Secretariat, St. Thomas Community, Thiruvalla, Kerala, India.

SHEPHERD'S LETTER

July/August 2023

Blessings and greetings to all the Archbishops and Bishops, Priests and Deacon Fathers, Evangelists, and Order of Sisters, and all the Faithful of Believers Eastern Church world-wide, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen! +

Dearly beloved in Christ,

We are about to enter the season of Transfiguration, when we celebrate and remember that our Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured (St. Math. 17:1–8), revealing His divine glory. This feast reminds us that the goal of our Orthodox Christian life is to be transformed more and more into the divine nature of God (2 Cor. 3:18). This process is commonly known as 'deification' or 'theosis'. But how can we achieve this?

1. Jesus must become our measuring rod.

The early believers were called Christians (Acts 11:26) because of the kind of life they lived. In fact, St. Ignatius, an early church father and bishop of the church, called himself the God-bearer! Today, if people around us observed us carefully, what would they call us? Would they call us gossipers, hot-tempered, lovers of money, rebellious, arrogant, or compassion-less? Or would we truly qualify to be called Christians?

We can make many excuses for our un-Christlike attitude and behaviour, but our example must be Jesus. Our deepest desire must be, "Lord Jesus, I wish to become like You, so I can bring honour to Your name." This means we will no longer use our culture, our family background, our past failures, and other people's poor examples as excuses to stay as we are. And every time we fail, we must pray the Jesus Prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

2. We must decide to obey the Holy Scriptures regardless of what others practise.

Jesus said, If you love me, you will obey my commandments (St. John 14:15). So, we show our love for God by obeying His word. If others gossip, we will not join them. If they do not submit to authority or exhibit a critical spirit, we will not have any part in it. Why? Because we

choose to do the will of God as His Word instructs us. We fast, we pray, and we give alms, just like the Holy Scriptures tell us to.

3. Eliminate bad company.

There is an old proverb that says, "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are." We may think it doesn't really matter who our close friends are or whom we spend time with. But that is one of the most powerful deceptions of the Enemy. The negative behaviour, critical spirit, and rebellious attitude of those with whom we associate will poison us little by little. St. Paul commands, 'Keep away from those who do not walk according to the tradition you have received from us.' (2 Thessalonians 3:6). Let us not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals' " (1 Cor 15:33).

My dear children in Christ, even as we celebrate the Feast of Transfiguration, may we never forget that God wishes us to be transformed into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ, partakers of His Divine Nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Let's continue to pray for the state of Manipur in India—for peace to prevail and for our brothers and sisters there to be bold, courageous, and Christ-like, even as they go through a difficult time.

Also, continue to pray for our young brothers and sisters who have chosen to serve the holy Church by being trained in our Seminaries and as Sisters of Compassion.

In service of the Holy Church,

Your Father in Christ,

Date : 25 July 2023

Place : Holy Synod



Athanasius Yohan I Metropolitan

P.S: Please make sure this is translated into all regional languages and read in all parishes for the encouragement of the faithful.