



BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

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

SHEPHERD'S LETTER

September/October 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,

During the season of Transfiguration, we are reminded 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), and in order for this to happen, repentance is essential. This month, let us look a little more carefully at certain aspects of repentance.

1. Repentance is continuous.

As a well-known saint of the church said, "There are only two ways to live: we must either not sin or, if we sin, we must repent. This is the only way to Salvation."

And since none of us is capable of not sinning, every one of us must repent continually. Repentance requires our willingness to leave our old ways and adopt Christ's ways, even as the Holy Spirit shows us, where we need to change. That is why the early church fathers repeated the Jesus prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy upon me, a sinner". And when we do so, God responds by cleansing us. St. John explains how this works: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

2. Stop insincere repentance.

In St. John the Baptist's time, the religious Jews relied on being descendants of Abraham for their salvation and eternal security. Therefore, their repentance was often insincere, and nothing changed in their lives as a result. St. John the Baptist had a message for those Israelites: "Do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham for our father, for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (St. Luke 3:8). Sometimes we also use the excuse of a past spiritual experience, ignore the importance of continuous repentance, and

become blind to the un-Christlike behaviour present in us.

As a result, we fail to grow spiritually in many areas of our lives; God's plans for us are not fulfilled; we miss out on many rewards God wants to give us; and we fail to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in this world in the way we should.

3. True Repentance: "Old ways" replaced with Christ's Life

Is it gossip, envy, laziness, complaining, criticising others, dishonesty, disobedience, immorality, unforgiveness, selfishness, a lack of submission, rebellion, greed, backbiting, or pretence? Perhaps your "old ways" are not on this list, but you know what they are.

Make a decision to truly repent and remove these un-Christlike ways and put on the life that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, as St. Paul wrote: Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self and put on the new self, which, in the likeness of God, has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Romans 13:12, 14; Ephesians 4:22, 24).

My dear children in Christ, let us never forget that salvation is a daily process, and let us make every effort to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling.' (Phil 2:12)

Let's continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Manipur, India - for safety and peace to return.

May the peace and grace of the Almighty God be with you forever

In service of the Holy Church,

Your Father in Christ,



Athanasius Yohan I Metropolitan

Date : 18 August 2023

Place : Holy Synod

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