



My Beloved Ones,

As we continue through the Triodion, I call upon all of us to reflect on the spiritual exercises that we have been given so far to help us as prepare for our Lenten journey.

As an athlete does not compete without first preparing him or herself physically, the Church Fathers have given us the Triodion as a form of “spiritual exercise” for the 40 days of Great Lent, which can feel like a marathon—especially for those who are not ready.

Just what are these spiritual exercises? In the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, we understand what it means to be truly humble before God. From the Parable of the Prodigal Son, we are meant to recall repentance and forgiveness: both the eternal forgiveness of our Father, as well as the need

to forgive our own brother. And this week, with the Parable of the Last Judgement, we are asked to think about what it truly means to love our neighbor.

Our Lord teaches us that when He returns in all His glory, He will divide the world into the sheep, on His right, and the goats on His left. The sheep He will welcome into His Father’s Kingdom—for they gave Him shelter and greeted Him as a stranger; they offered Him food and drink; they clothed Him, visited Him in prison, and nursed Him to health. To the goats on His left he will echo these things, which they did not do. And both the sheep and goats alike, will be astonished—for when did they meet the King of All? And the King shall respond, that if they took in the least of their brothers and sisters—or if they saw suffering and passed it by—they have treated Christ the same.

Consider that these choices play out in our world every day. Therefore, will we also be called to account for that which we did or did not do—and we will receive our reward. However, far from fear of punishment, or cherishing the possibility of a reward, we should consider what behavior would Christ have shown. If we are to truly emulate the Life and Teachings of our Lord, the example has already been given to us over the last three weeks: repentance, seeking our Father, and forgiveness. *“You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)*

Truly, these Christian principles are valuable, not only during Great Lent, but through the rest of “the race” that is our life here on this earth.

+ALEXIOS
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