



My Beloved Ones,

As we prepare to observe Καθαρά Δευτέρα it is important that we begin this Lenten season in the right spirit; one of humility and repentance. As we read in the in the Gospel of Forgiveness Sunday, “...if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14-15) Just as the Father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son called upon His eldest son to rejoice, and to forgive his prodigal brother, so too must we forgive our fellow man, if we are to begin Lent with a pure heart and mind. For it is only then that we will be in the proper state of preparedness to undergo the events of our Lord’s Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection.

This is also reminder that this preparation is not, as Jesus tells us, a time to “...look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men... But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:16-18). The purpose of fasting is not meant even to be a sacrifice; but rather, it is intended as a means to help us grow closer to God.

All this is done to follow to take up our Cross and follow our Lord. Meat and dairy will eventually spoil; all our material possessions will eventually pass away. Those things that cannot pass away—the things which we should search for—do not belong to this world. As our Lord tells us in this solemn, but beautiful warning, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

Armed with these lessons on the proper Lenten spirits of forgiveness and fasting, I wish you all, Καλή δύναμη και Καλή Σαρακοστή! Good strength and a blessed Lenten Fast!

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta