



ENCYCLICAL

for the outset of the new ecclesiastical year

Towards a More Profound Spiritual Activity

Repentance, Humility, and Love

“Launch out into the deep”

(St. Luke 5:4)

Beloved Children in the Lord:

I wholeheartedly pray that, in the new Year of Salvation 2007, Divine Grace, through the intercessions of the Most Blessed *Theotokos*, will increase our godly zeal towards a more profound spiritual activity, through our transfiguration and transmutation in Christ.

Spiritual activity in the life in Christ means that activity which is fruitful in the Holy Spirit and which steadily leads us from a state *contrary to nature* of sin and passion, to a state *according to nature* of our healed *hearts*, and then raises us to a state *above nature* of sanctity and deification.

Holding a central position in this deifying journey is *repentance*, first and foremost as a constant spiritual activity into which, as the Saints instruct us, “**is engrafted the entire heavenly state; for it is a participant in Divinity.**”¹

In other words, the entire heavenly reality is *engrafted* into blessed repentance, because this repentance brings us into communion with Divinity; by means of repentance, the penitent partakes of Divine Grace, is *engrafted* into the heavenly life, and acquires a heavenly character, “**of like character with God.**”²

Continual repentance, as a profound inner experience, is bound together with humility and unceasing *self-reproach*, which brings the *heart* to contrition, collects the *nous* in the heart, and leads one to *prayer of the heart*.

The experience of the Saints assures us that “**wherever humility springs up, there does the glory of God gush forth**”; for “**the mystery [of the Kingdom] is revealed to the humble-minded.**”³

The humbled person repents, and the repentant person loves. Then, he approaches the most profound practice of the very blessed Staretz Paul, about whom Nikolai Leshkov (+ 1895), a great Russian writer and contemporary of the Staretz, wrote :

If I insult him, he blesses me, and if I hit him, he bows down to the ground before me. A man of such humility is invincible. What does he have to fear, since he would prefer himself to be damned rather than me?! He, with his humility, would drive out all of the demons from hell and make them return to God. They would be tormenting him, and he would beseech them: “Torment me more harshly, because I deserve it”! The Devil would not be able to endure so much humility. He would grow weary of beating him. And, in the end, he would recognize his weakness before God, Who created such love and humility. And he would redden from shame before him....⁴

Hence, let us banish insensibility and dryness and the sluggishness of our *hearts*, by working more profoundly and consistently. By repentance, humility, and love, we completely submit ourselves to God and are crucified with Christ; and, in this way, our hearts gush forth the wondrous fruits of the Spirit, to the glory of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Metropolitan and Abbot
†Cyprian of Oropos and Fili,
President of the Holy Synod in Resistance

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1. **St. Ephraim the Syrian**, *Works*, Vol. V (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis “To Perivoli tes Panagias,” 1994), p. 9.
 2. **St. Ignatios the God-Bearer**, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 668B/ *To the Magnesians*, VI
 3. **Abba Isaac the Syrian**, *Discourses 5 and 11* (Leipzig 1770), pp. 29, 46.
 4. See **Ninikas Solon**, *Russian Gerondikon* (Athens: 1996), p. 70.