



ENCYCLICAL

At the Outset of the New Ecclesiastical Year 2008

Purification and Sanctification: A Lifelong, Dynamic Journey

Beloved Children in the Lord:

I wholeheartedly pray that you may continue, yet again this new year, your blessed journey to more profound spiritual action, with the help of our All-Pure Mother, the *Theotokos*, for the glory of God.

On this God-pleasing journey of yours, always bear in mind the exhortation of the God-bearing Apostle Paul:

“Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1).

We are in need of constant, lifelong watchfulness and effort, so that neither our bodies might be defiled by unclean works, by means of the five senses, nor our spirits by impassioned thoughts, fantasies, and feelings.

Our body and soul, our whole person, belong to our Lord and God, Who desires that we glorify His Name “in our body and in our spirit” (I Corinthians 6:20).

This glorifying sacrifice of ours has both its *negative* and *positive* aspects: an effort towards *purification* (“cleanse ourselves”), and a simultaneous effort towards *sanctification* (“perfecting holiness”); an uprooting and elimination of passion and sin, and a simultaneous sowing and implanting of virtue and sanctity.

And this purifying and *sanctifying* effort of ours will be pleasing to God and will be consummated when it is accomplished “in the fear of God”; that is, when it is cultivated within an atmosphere of piety and when it has godly fear as its firm foundation and support.

Purifying and sanctifying *fear* is a great gift of God’s love for mankind, inculcated little by little into the hearts of well-disposed believers.

When the Christian ever bears in mind the promises of God, examining them in greater depth with prayer, watchfulness, and humility, he is thereby brought to contrition, fears the Lord, is ruled by godly zeal, and endeavors to reciprocate the love of our Savior.

And what are these promises?

That God will dwell in us, that He will walk in our midst, and that He will be our Father. In this way, we will be His temple, will become His people, and will be made His sons and daughters (cf. II Corinthians 6:16-18).

What glorious promises! Is there anything greater?

Hence, let us unceasingly renew our *awareness* of these glorious promises; let us continually cultivate a *remembrance* of these marvels; let us constantly rekindle our *zeal* for the marvels of God, shaking off *ignorance*, *forgetfulness*, and *slothfulness*, that we might see the Light of Christ and receive the deifying Grace of the Comforter. Amen!

† Cyprian of Oropos and Fili,

Metropolitan and Abbot

First Hierarchy of the Holy Synod in Resistance