



ENCYCLICAL

At The Outset of the New Ecclesiastical Year (September 1, 2008 [Old Style])

“Let Us Commend Ourselves to Christ..”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I convey to you the heartfelt blessing of our ailing and much-revered Elder and spiritual Father, Metropolitan Cyprian, for this new period, that, with the guidance and the protection of the Spotless *Theotokos*, it might be peaceful and filled with the fruits of the peace of the Holy Spirit.

You will note that the crowning liturgical act of our Church, the Divine Liturgy, begins with the Deacon’s entreaty: “In peace, let us entreat the Lord!” and that the Litany of Peace closes with yet another profound and exuberant exhortation: “Calling to remembrance our All-Holy, Immaculate, Most Blessed and Glorious Lady *Theotokos* and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints let us commend ourselves and one another and our whole life unto Christ our God.”

Since our entire life, the whole of the cycle from birth to death, is in essence a “*liturgy*” (a work of worship), a Eucharistic Path (a path of thanksgiving), in which man, created in the image of God, aims at acquiring the likeness of God, at acquiring deification [*théosis*], it is a blessed work that we should not forget such “peace” and our “commitment unto Christ.”

Perhaps a long habit of inattention during the time of worship has prevented us from probing this vital axis, around which our entire life in Christ moves. Let us examine it briefly.

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As it is widely acknowledged, anxiety, in various forms, constitutes the epidemic of our age, reaching across nearly every age group.

Most distressing, however, is the fact that even pious Christians are beset in the same way by an anxiety spawned by disbelief (a paucity of belief). This temptation of the anxiety of disbelief rocks the foundations of one's spiritual life, showing how anemic and superficial it is.

The genuine life in Christ can be essentially reduced to “commending our whole life unto Christ our God”: to the total commitment of our existence, in absolute faith, to Christ our Savior, through the intercessions of the *Theotokos* and all the Saints, our Older Brothers and Sisters in the Heavens.

This placement, confiding, and commitment of our being to Divine Providence presupposes an interpersonal relationship, on our part, with God, a relationship of love which becomes ever more profound, ever more fervent, and ever more steadfast.

Such a genuine love signifies freedom, fidelity, and peace: a Christian is never anxious about any problem whatever that he may face; neither does he put forth logic as his criterion of action; nor does he struggle with any paucity of belief, since he has relinquished all to Christ, through the *Theotokos*. Indeed, not even on account of his falls is he distressed, or when his weakness and internal afflictions come to light.

A genuine relationship of love with Christ, a relationship nourished by humility and sweet peace, does not allow anxiety to poison our souls in any circumstance. The commendation of our life to the Divine Will is not an anguished submission to some “ontological imperative”; it does not come about because *this or that is forbidden*. Rather, it is a loving act of gratitude, in which one submits himself to Divine Compassion, into the embrace of the Beloved One.

The anxiety of disbelief has rightly been described as “a demon,” in that it is “a form of practical atheism” and since through it we become “atheists in action” and “idolaters,” who entrust their lives to cold, created, “*sound*” reason, and not, with His Saints, to the Enhypostatic and Incarnate Compassionate Word, Christ our Savior.

Let us work with greater assiduity the Divine work of the Mystery of our Lives.... “In peace and with pure love, let us entreat the Spotless *Theotokos*, that we might commend our whole life unto Christ our God.”

† *Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi*
Acting President of the
Holy Synod in Resistance