

“Yet Again, A Commemoration of Gratitude in Gladsome Voice”

The Feast Day of St. Parthenios

The Thirty-First Anniversary of the Elevation
of our Metropolitan to the Episcopacy

Saturday of the first week of Great Lent, 7/20 February, 2010, the day on which we commemorate the miracle of the *kollyva* wrought by the Holy Great Martyr Theodore the Recruit, coincided this year with the commemoration of the Holy Hierarch Parthenios the Wonderworker, Bishop of Lampsakos.



On this day, on which we also celebrate the anniversary of the Elevation to the Episcopacy (February 7, 1979) of Metropolitan Cyprian, who is ailing, a Hierarchical celebration of the Divine Liturgy took place at the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Phyle,

Attica. His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod, was the principal celebrant, with the participation of Their Graces, Bishops Chrysostomos of Christianoupolis, Ambrose of Methone, and Klemes of Gardikion, and numerous members of our clergy. Monks and nuns were in prayerful attendance, along with many laypeople—spiritual children of our ecclesiastical jurisdiction—a large number of whom communed of the Immaculate Mysteries.

Before Holy Communion, Bishop Cyprian delivered a homily (published below) entitled “Ministry, Responsibility, and Sacrifice,” which dealt with the legacy of our Most Reverend Metropolitan.

Following the Divine Liturgy, the faithful were treated to sweets in our monastery’s large reception hall, where they shared edifying memories and stories regarding the honored person of our venerable Father and Archpastor, who has remained bedridden since late 2007.

Yet Again, A Commemoration of Gratitude in Gladsome Voice

Ministry, Responsibility, and Sacrifice

*My Christ-loving brothers and sisters;
Right Reverend Holy Hierarchs and concelebrants;
Reverend Fathers and Venerable Mothers;
Light-wrought children of Orthodoxy;
God-pleasing company of the faithful:*

TODAY, yet again, for the thirty-first time, the Grace of the Holy Spirit has assembled us in the Eucharistic “Upper Chamber” of this Holy Monastery.

This gathering of ours is again one of gratitude.

Our commemoration of the years of our Much-Revered Elder and Guide, Metropolitan Cyprian, in the Episcopacy is a commemoration of gratitude.

Our commemoration, in gladsome voice, is one of gratitude each and every year!

He continues, though bedridden for nearly twenty-seven months now, to feed the lambs of our Savior; he continues to shepherd His rational sheep; he remains, like a practiced helmsman, in his position, securely guiding the sacred ship entrusted to him since 1979 by the Great Shepherd of the Sheep.

All of the devout faithful participating today in this gathering of gratitude are his spiritual children. Some of us have been nourished with spiritual milk, others with solid food. Some of us are infants, while others are mature in Christ.

For this reason, the whole choir of those keeping festival is composed of divers voices, which unite in a harmonious combination; and “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,” of the small and the great, of adolescents and adults, of youths and elders, of laypeople and monastics, and of Priests and Hierarchs are “perfected” praises of thanksgiving and odes of love and eternal gratitude.

Why gratitude, one might ask?

In 2008, on the occasion of the twenty-ninth anniversary of the Elevation of our God-yearning Elder to the Episcopacy, we spoke from this very spot about his legacy, in which he exhorted us: “Receive ye wings of compassion and come to me, that I may lead you into the place of unwaning Light, wherein is the pure sound of those celebrating and glorifying the Lamb Who was slain.”

Compassion and empathy are essential characteristics of the spiritual identity of Christians—not only of the Shepherds of the Church, but also of every member of the Body of Christ.

The charismatic Body of the Church is communal in nature: Christians are distinguished by interdependence, solidarity, and shared responsibility and ministry. In the family of Christ, each person exists, thinks, and cares for the others, both nearby and far away, thereby experiencing a mutual circumincession of persons on a worldwide scale, according to the model of the circumincession of the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The terms “minister-ministry” and “servant-service,” (*servus-servitus*) were, in early Christianity, indicative of fraternal responsibility and unbounded Christian affection for one another.

We are all “ministers and stewards of the charisms [gifts] of God,” as the Holy Apostle Peter teaches us: “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold Grace of God” (I St. Peter 4:10).

“Ministry” and “charism” denote a responsible and collective process; they signify participation, sharing, and offering, in a climate of compassion and empathy.

God is faithful and responsible towards us, since He abides by the ordinances of His Covenant. Hence, those who, by God’s mercy, are Christians, in the likeness of God, ought to possess a feeling of responsibility towards others, regarding each person without exception as their brother or sister.

St. Basil the Great, in order to initiate us into a compassionate universality of relationships, into the “Mystery of our Brother,” into a universal climate of shared responsibility and solidarity—which goes beyond the bounds of kinship, race, and nationality—reminds us that we are “of one nature; all kindred, all brethren, all offspring of One Fa-

ther” (“Homily Delivered in Lakizoi,” §2, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXXI, col. 1441A).

All together and each person individually, we share a common responsibility: to minister in various ways unto the “ministry of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:18); unto the “gathering together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (*cf.* St. John 11:52); and unto universal fraternity and love, in order for the world to know Christ our Savior, “that the world may believe” (St. John 17:21) and become a Church.

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My Christ-yearning brothers and sisters, sealed by God:

The legacy of our Christ-yearning Elder and Metropolitan regarding compassion has led us to ministry, which in turn has awakened us to a God-given sense of responsibility.

Responsibility, however, means sacrifice; responsibility can be equated with sacrifice. For a responsible ministry to be carried out, sacrifice is needed equally on the part of the Shepherds and all of the members of the Church. I repeat: We are all responsible for one another; we have all been called to the “ministry of reconciliation.”

The laypeople, participants of Christ the King and High Priest, constitute an ensemble of Priests of royal parentage; they are Priests and Kings, a “Royal Priesthood” (I St. Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6, 5:10). Through Baptism and Chrismation, they have undertaken responsibilities and obligations, that they also might minister to the Royal, Priestly, and Prophetic work (*cf.* St. John 6:29; 17:4) of Christ; that is, to the spreading of the Kingdom of God, to the accomplishment of God’s plan on earth, and to the de-secularization of the world.

It is not possible, it is not permissible, for a Christian who receives the preternatural wealth of the gifts of God through union with our Savior, by means of prayer and the Mysteries, to lead a sterile, static, and wretched life, devoid of a sense of responsibility.

God’s good will, the treasures of His Grace, increase our responsibilities; they bind us with a set of responsibilities. They demand activation, offering, a sacrificial exodus from our own selves, and “decentralization”—that is, a continual “dislodgement” of our selves from the center of our attention, in order to make room in our hearts

for God and our neighbor.

Every Christian is called upon to become a “Minister of God unto good” (*cf.* Romans 13:4). For this reason, on the Day of Judgment (St. Matthew 25:35-36), our Lord enumerates such manifestations of our ministry unto good; that is, of our *active interest regarding all those in need and affliction*: hospitality and affection for the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the ailing, and the imprisoned.

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Unfortunately, things are not so in our days....

Though practiced by various persons today, the ideal of ministry in conformance with the Gospel unfortunately does not *distinctively and essentially* characterize the Body of Christians from top to bottom. We appear or want to be called disciples of the first and preëminent Minister—that is, Christ our Savior—but in practice we are not eager to embrace our multifaceted and multidimensional ministry with a sense of responsibility and sacrifice, having Christ as our model.

Our blissful quietism, our preference for our own comfort, our disinclination to share our neighbor’s problems, pain, and tears—and even to sacrifice our very life on his behalf—not to mention our simultaneous infighting and coldness towards one another, all call to mind the fearsome words of the Divine Chrysostomos, who, with regard to the similar ecclesiastical sickness of his age, said:

Indeed, I behold the multitude of the Church prostrate now, as though it were a corpse.... The Faith is not efficacious; for we have quenched its ardor and made the body of Christ a corpse. Now if this sounds dreadful when said, it is much more dreadful when evinced in actions. (“Homily XXVII on II Corinthians,” §4, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXI, col. 588).

Today, on the occasion of the thirty-first anniversary of the Elevation to the Episcopacy of our Elder, Father, and Metropolitan, we are given the opportunity to explore in greater depth the message of his legacy: compassion, ministry, responsibility, and sacrifice. This is the answer to my initial question as to why our voices today *perfect praises of thanksgiving and odes of eternal gratitude*.

Let us resolve, with the aid of the *Theotokos* and all of the Saints, and by the power of the Precious Cross, to adopt and put into practice this ethos of ministry, with a sense of responsibility and a sacrificial

disposition.

Then it is that we will become ministers of our Savior; *then* we will follow Him with self-denial to the Cross and Resurrection; *then* we will be living and active Christians—that is, Christ-bearing, God-bearing, and Light-bearing; for, as our Lord said: “Where I am, there shall also my servant be” (St. John 12:26).

May the greatly-esteemed blessing of our much-revered Metropolitan strengthen, guide, and protect us in this God-pleasing resolution and course of ours: a course which we follow with gratitude and tender affection for his thrice-blessed person.

February 7, 2010 (Old Style)
St. Parthenios of Lampsakos
First Saturday of the Fast

Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi
Acting President of the Holy Synod



Unto God,
the Giver of all good things,
be glory, thanksgiving, and worship!