

The following, a transcribed “sight translation” by Archbishop Chrysostomos of a dated encyclical by the Acting President of the Holy Synod Resistance, is offered here to the English-speaking faithful of our Synod as a wonderful source of encouragement as we approach the end of the Great Fast and anticipate the Feast of Feasts, the Glorious Pascha of the Eighth Day of Creation. (Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, Etna, California.)

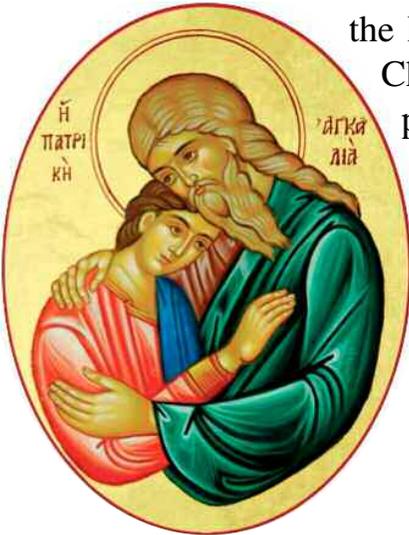
## “...Let Us Commend Ourselves to Christ”

### The Anguish of Disbelief

An Encyclical at the Outset of the  
Ecclesiastical Year, September 1, 2008

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I extend to you the heartfelt blessing of our ailing and much-revered Elder and spiritual Father, Metropolitan Cyprian, during this new period, that it may be, by the guidance and protection of the Immaculate *Theotokos*, peaceful and replete with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. As you are aware, the paramount devotional act of our Church, the Divine Liturgy, begins with the Deacon’s exhortation, “In peace, let us entreat the Lord,” and the Litany of Peace ends with yet another exhortation, an extremely profound and encompassing one: “Calling to remembrance our All-Holy, Pure, Most-Blessed, and Glorious Lady, *Theotokos* and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God.”



THE PATERNAL EMBRACE

Since all of our life, the whole cycle from birth to death, is in essence a Liturgy (a holy work)—the Eucharistic path of man, as the image and likeness of God, to *theosis* (deification)—it is beneficial for us not to be remiss in remembering “peace” and “commending ourselves to Christ.”

Perhaps long years of habit and negligence during worship have prevented us from examining this vital axis, around which the entirety of our life in Christ revolves. Let us scrutinize it briefly.

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As it is widely acknowledged, anguish [or psychological anxiety] is the epidemic of our time, occurring in individuals of all ages in a variety of forms. Most disquieting, however, is the fact that it also afflicts pious Christians in the form of anguish related to disbelief or an insufficiency in belief. The temptation of anguish or anxiety rising out of disbelief shakes the founda-

tion of our spiritual life and indicates how anemic and slapdash it is.

The true life in Christ can be essentially condensed down to: “commending our whole life unto Christ our God” by the complete surrender to Him of our being, in absolute trust in Christ our Savior, through the intercession of the *Theotokos* and all of the Saints, our Great Brothers in the Heavens.

This consignment, this total entrusting of our being to Divine Providence presupposes an interpersonal relationship of love with God, a relationship that becomes ever deeper, ever warmer, and ever more stable. Such true love entails freedom and trust and peace. The Christian has no anguish or anxiety about any problem that he confronts, nor does he put forth his own logic as a rationale; nor does he struggle with disbelief, since he has abandoned all to the Lord, by the intercessions of the *Theotokos*. Furthermore, neither is he upset by his own falls, even if his weaknesses and inner illnesses come to light.

A genuine relationship of love with Christ, a relationship of tender humility and sweet peace, does not in any circumstance whatever permit anguish to poison our soul. The relinquishment of our life to the Divine Will is not an anguished submission to some list of requirements and does not come about because this or that is forbidden; rather, it is a eucharistic and loving surrender of the self to Divine Compassion, to the embrace of the Beloved One.

The anguish of disbelief has been rightly characterized as “demonic,” since it is “a form of atheism in practice,” in that through it we become “atheists in action” and “idolaters” who entrust our loves to fabricated and cold rationality, and not to the enhypostatic [incarnate], compassionate Word, Christ our Savior, through His Saints.

Let us undertake our holy work from henceforth with greater responsibility before the mystery of our life. In peace and blameless love, let us entreat the Blameless *Theotokos* that we might commend our whole lives to Christ our God!

Phyle (Athens), Greece

His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi

Acting President of the Holy Synod

1 September 2008 (Old Style)