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Cathedral Bells



Українська
Православна
Катедра
Св. Володимира

St. Volodymyr
Ukrainian
Orthodox
Cathedral

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Катедральні Дзвони

Виходять що два тижні

Cathedral Bells

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Mission Statement

Cathedral Bells is a publication of the parish of Saint Volodymyr Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral in Toronto, Canada (UOCC).

Its mandate is to enunciate the Orthodox Christian faith, to foster the mission of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, to provide a forum for the discussion of issues important to the church and its members, to publish notices and reports of events in our community, and to encourage all of our readers to explore all available sources of Orthodox Christian information.

On the Cover

The cover features an icon of St. Volodymyr, Equal to the Apostles and Baptizer of Ukraine, from the iconostas of St. Volodymyr Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral in Toronto, Canada. It was painted by the well-known iconographer, artist and designer Mychajlo Dmytrenko in the traditional historical or realistic Ukrainian style.

Cover photo of the Cathedral by Larisa Makuch.

Available online: www.stvolodymyr.ca

ПЕРША НЕДІЛЯ ВЕЛИКОГО ПОСТУ

Нині наша Свята Православна Церква, в першу неділю Великого Посту, урочисто відзначає свято перемоги Православія. Це свято встановили отці Сьомого Вселенського Собору на підкреслення, що ми міцно тримаємося православної віри, яку нам передали Святі Отці Церкви, яку проповідували Святі Апостоли. Сам Господь наш Ісус Христос оснував Свою Церкву для спасіння людей. Він сказав: “Побудую Я Церкву Свою, – й сили пекельні не переможуть її.” (Матв. 16:18)

Цими словами Христос говорить, що пекельні сили будуть намагатися знищити Церкву, але не зможуть перемогти її.

І дійсно. Сили пекельні почали наступ на Церкву Христову ще з апостольських часів. Вони діяли і діють різними засобами: і залякуванням, і викривленням Христової Науки.

Залякування виявилось і виявляється в переслідуванні християн: в'язниці, мучення, смерть. Особливо це було в перші віки християнства, але й тепер є в країнах з атеїстичним урядом.

Так само і викривлення Христової Науки почалося ще з апостольських часів. Так, св. ап. Петро пише: “Ми сповістили вам силу та прихід Господа нашого Ісуса Христа, не йдучи за хитро видуманими байками, але будши самовидцями Його величі.” (2 Петр. 1:16) Св. ап. Павло пише: “Ми не такі, як багато-хто, що Боже слово фальшують.” (2 Кор. 2:17) Він же говорить: “А це говорю, щоб ніхто вас не звів фальшивими висновками при суперечці.” (Колос. 2:4) До Тимофія він пише: “Постарайся поставити себе перед Богом досвідченим, робітником бездоганним, що вірно навчає науки правди. Стережися ж базікань марних, бо ще більше провадять вони до безбожності, а їхнє слово, як рак, буде ширитись. Від таких Гіменей і Філіт...” (2 Тим. 2:15-17); й інш.

Ці намагання сил пекельних ми бачимо на протязі всієї історії християнства.

Вселенські Собори засудили викривлення Арія, Македонія, Несторія, Євтихія й ін.

А хіба поділ Церкви та виникнення різних сект не є викривленням Христової Науки?

На початку VIII століття грецький імператор Лев Ісаврянин з політичних міркувань (пов'язаних з арабсько-магометанським світом) хотів знищити пошану образів (ікон) і хреста. Його політику провадили і син його Костянтин Копронім і онук Лев Хазар.

Сьомий Вселенський Собор, який був скликаний при імператриці Ірині в 787 році, засудив іконоборську ересь. Але, не дивлячись на це, іконоборцями були ще грецькі імператори Лев Вірменин, Михайло Бальб та Феофил.

В 843 році при імператриці Феодорі був скликаний Помісний Собор в Костянтинополі, який рішучо засудив іконоборство. На цьому ж Соборі було встановлене Свято Перемоги Православія, яке ухвалено святкувати в першу неділю Великого Посту.

Це свято навчає нас пам'ятати, що сили пекельні не перестали наступати на Христову Церкву. Є й залякування, є й викривлення Христової науки. Ми повинні зберігати чистоту віри, чистоту Православія. А це вимагає від кожного з нас доброго знання своєї віри, бо без цього знання ми можемо не помітити підступства пекельних сил.

Ось сектанти не визнають пошани образам (іконам) і хресту, пошани до освячених речей, називаючи це ідолопоклонством.

А чи розуміють вони, що таке ідолопоклонство? На жаль, ні. Що значить ідол?

Ідолом називається річ, або ідея, або ще щось, що вважається найвищим, найважливішим. Йому поклоняються, як Богові. Що значить поклонятися Богові? А це значить, віддати всього себе і душею і тілом на служіння Йому, бо Бог – найвищий, найдорожчий.

Ідолопоклонство має різні види і форми: у диких народів – це поклоніння сонцю, зіркам, тваринам і певним

речам. У культурних народів – це поклоніння і служіння аж до віддання свого життя “модерним” богам-ідолам: науці, матеріалізму, людству й ін. Богом-ідолом може бути зажерливість-грошолюбство (Єфес. 5:5; Колос. 3:5), служіння своєму череву (Рим. 16:18) й ін.

Це не значить, що треба відмовитися від людських ідей, грошей й ін. Це значить – не ставити їх найголовнішим, найвищим, а розглядати тільки як засоби.

Пошана і поклоніння образам (іконам) і хресту не має нічого спільного з ідолопоклонством, бо ми поклоняємося тим, хто зображені на них.

Ось мама цілує фото свого сина. Вона цілує не папір, не скло, а таки свого сина. Отак і наша пошана та цілування образів і хреста.

Хіба поклоніння Спасителю ідолопоклонство?

Св. ап. Павло пише: “Славте Бога в тілі своєму та в душі своєму...” (1 Кор. 6:20), тобто повне прославлення Бога буде тільки тоді, коли воно буде не тільки духом, а й тілом.

Тілом ми прославляємо Бога в поклонах, хресному знаменні, в запаленні вогню, в кадінні, в прикрасах храму, в поклонінні образам (Образам [іконам] належить поклоніння, а не служіння).

Сам Бог заповідав це робити. Подивімся в Св. Письмо: про запалювання вогню в храмі ясно написано в книгах: Левіт 6:6; Вихід 40:4; Об’явлення Ів. Богосл. 11:4. Кадіння теж заповіджено Богом: Вихід 30:7-8; 40:5; Лук. 1:9; Об’явл. 8:3-4. Про прикраси храму сказано в книзі Виходу від розділу 25 до 31. Бог поблагословив поставити мідяного змія на хресті. (Числ. 21:8) Бог повелів зробити херувимів з золота (Вихід 25:18-22) й ін. Коли є святиня в домі, то Бог благословляє дім (2 Самуїла 6:11-12).

Коли юдеї мідяного змія зробили самим богом, то цар Єзекія розбив його. (2 Цар. 18:4)

За молитви угодників Його Бог прощає людям. Це ясно сказано в книзі Йова. 42:7-10

Як ми зображаємо Бога і святих на образах (іконах)?

Бога Отця ми зображаємо, як старшу людину, бо в такому вигляді бачив його пророк Даниїл у видінні. (Дан. 7:9-10)

Ісус Христос жив на землі, як людина і коли закінчив Своє земне життя, Йому було 33½ роки.

Св. Духа ми зображаємо або у вигляді голуба, в якому виді Він з'явився при хрещенні Христа, або у вигляді вогненних язиків, в якому виді Він зійшов на апостолів.

Ангелів ми зображаємо в такому вигляді, в якому вони з'являються людям.

Але, без сумніву, Бог і ангели, як Духові істоти, не мають будь-якого матеріального вигляду (форми).

Богоматір та угодники Божі – це люди й їх вигляд зображаємо згідно з церковними переданнями.

Чи може Бог через предмети виявляти чудотворну допомогу людям?

Так, може. Приклади маємо в Св. Письмі. Так, жінка одужала, приторкнувшись до одягу Христа (Марк. 5:27-29); хустки й пояси з тіла св. ап. Павла зціляли (Дії Св. Ап. 19:12); навіть тінь св. ап. Петра мала чудодійну силу (Дії Св. Ап. 5: 15-16).

Самі по собі образи і хрест, хоч би були й освячені, не допоможуть, коли не буде глибокої віри в Бога.

Бог може допомогти і без образу чи хреста, але вони допомагають людині відірватися від клопотів цього життя. Ось на "Херувимській" ми співаємо: "Відкладімо нині всякі життєві піклування".

Таким чином ми бачимо, що пошана образів, хреста і освячених речей не є ніяким ідолопоклонством.

Викривлення віри може виявлятися ще в тому, що виконуються обряди та звичаї, а дух віри – любов, занедбується.

Візьмімо в наш час. Як багато є сварок! Часом дехто до дрібниць виконує обряди та звичаї і разом з цим тримає в собі небратолюбне ставлення до інших. Сварки розділяють, роз'єднують людей, а Церква – це Тіло Христа, де не може бути роз'єднання. Де сварки – там нема любові, там нема Бога.

Викривлення віри може бути, коли люди бачать в Св. Письмі тільки літери, а не сприймають духа Св. Письма. Св. ап. Павло пише: “І Він (Христос) нас зробив бути здатними слугами Нового Завіту, не літери, а духа, – бо буква вбиває, а дух оживляє.” (2 Кор. 3:6)

А дух – це любов.

Подивімся на сектантів. Вони живуть буквою, а не духом. Вони знають дуже багато текстів Св. Письма, але не мають головного – любові. Зате у них багато гордості, хоч Христос засуджує гордість. (Не треба плутати гордість з гідністю, бо кожна людина повинна переборювати гордість і високо тримати гідність.)

Викривлення віри виявляється ще і в тому, що Церкву Христову розглядають нарівні з організаціями.

Всі людські організації тимчасові, а Церква – вічна. Церква повинна служити народові тільки так, як навчає Христос.

Церква Христова – це Тіло Христа, і тому вона не може бути частиною нації. А нація, щоб бути міцною, повинна будувати своє життя на християнських основах, щоб була справедливість, пошана одного до одного й ін.

З цього бачимо, що викривлення віри може бути різного характеру.

Треба розрізнити Науку Христа від людських правил. Науку Христа не можна ні міняти, ні відкидати, бо ж це Божа наука. А щодо людських правил, то вони, як творення людей, можуть мінятися залежно від змін умов життя.

Сили пекельні хочуть через викривлення віри знищити Христову Церкву. Наше завдання, наш обов'язок, як членів Тіла Христового, не допускати ніяких викривлень.

Свято “Перемоги Православія” – це час перевірки себе: чи дійсно ми правдиві християни? Чи нема у нас викривлення Православія?

Тримаймося ж віри батьків наших.

Амінь.

Митр. протоієрей Микола Овчаренко

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Sunday of Orthodoxy

(Hebrews 11:24:40 and John 1:43-51)

The first Sunday of the great Fast is called the Sunday of Orthodoxy in our Church. It is a day when we take a long and deep look at our Christian Faith, the ancient Faith of our fathers.

It is obvious to all that we live in a day of tremendous change. Life today is vastly different from what it was fifty years ago. Today there are millions of autos on the road, millions of TV sets showing events around the world, we have sputniks circling the globe, yes, and we have massive bombs that can destroy all life in a flash. But in all this world of change, there is one thing that has not changed. The beliefs of the Christian Church have not changed. The Orthodox Catholic Faith is one and the same today as it was a hundred and a thousand years ago. On this day, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, we are proud to raise our heads and proclaim to the world of change that we hold the unchanged Christian Faith, that we belong to the Mother of all Christian Churches.

We have a three-fold obligation on this first Sunday of Lent:

1. First, we must remind ourselves of the religious heritage that is ours. In the ninth century the Church proclaimed that this Sunday is to be observed in commemoration of the triumph of Orthodoxy over all heresies. We live in a land of many religions. Among them is our own, the Faith of ancient Christianity, the Faith of the Apostles, the Faith of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, the Faith of the undivided Christian Church. We can trace our religious heritage back through the ages, back to the first Church, back to the Lord Himself.
2. Next we should give honour today to those through the centuries past who have lived, sacrificed, and died for God's Church. You know, it isn't an accident that we are

members of Christ's Church. To make us inheritors of this rich spiritual heritage, a great deal of love and labor was expended. We can say that the history of the Church is written in "red" to signify the sacrifices and sufferings of Christ and the saints. There are the thousands of martyrs, confessors and Christian believers of ages gone who have passed on this Faith of ours until it has reached our hearts.

Today's Epistle lesson gives us some idea of the sacrifices involved in this process. St. Paul starts by saying that "by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Moses is said to have esteemed Christ "greater riches than the treasure in Egypt." Then St. Paul mentions men like Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, and the prophets. He mentions the people who were stoned and imprisoned and killed... all because of their faith in God. Yes, there is a debt we owe people like that.

3. Thirdly, on this day of Orthodoxy, we must re dedicate ourselves to Christ and to the Christian Faith. It is not enough for us to glory in the past; we have the present to consider, and the future to be concerned about.

The finest way to do this is to heed the invitation of Christ which we hear today: "Come and follow Me." It means, "Come and live like Me." Our Lord extended this call to Philip in the Gospel lesson, but in truth it is extended to every Christian of every age. Christianity involves a way of living; in fact in ancient times it was simply called "The Way." Today, as we proudly proclaim that we belong to the Orthodox Catholic Church, the Church that "rightly glorifies" God, let us not forget that there is also an Orthodox way of life, one that glorifies Christ, and it is our task to live that life.

After accepting Christ's call to follow Him, Philip went and found Nathaniel and told him about the Lord. His first act was to tell someone else about Christ. "Come and see," he told Nathaniel. His friend did come, and soon he, too,

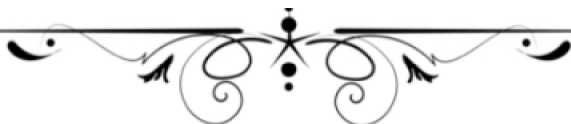
became a follower of “The Way.” What a strange matter it is that we so seldom talk about Christ to others, even our closest friends! We say we love Him with all our hearts, we claim He is our Lord and Master and Saviour, yet we will not speak of Him to others. We will speak of the great heroes of sports and science and politics, but our lips are sealed when it comes to mention the precious Name of Names. Surely today’s commemoration places on us the task of witnessing to others of our faith in Christ.

Beloved: from an historical standpoint, the institution of this Sunday of Orthodoxy evolved from a dispute about the use of icons in the Church. The glory of an Eastern Church today is the presence of beautiful icons and an imposing iconostas screen. These sacred pictures not only provide a religious and mystical feeling to a church, but they are a wonderful visual-aid and Scripture-commentary that is of great educational value.

In the early eighth century, however, an attempt was made to remove icons from churches and destroy them. Finally an Ecumenical Council of Bishops was called in Nicea in 787 and a final definition was made approving their use. The honour given to icons is relative, that is, it is not given to the wood and paint, and the like, but it reverts to the Person, usually Christ, depicted in the icon. On the first Sunday of Lent in 843 a great celebration of this practice was held in Constantinople, and has been held ever since as the triumph of Orthodoxy.

May we then, today, be fully aware of our religious treasure of Faith, may we honor the memory of those who have handed down this heritage to us, and may we solemnly rededicate ourselves to believe in Christ and serve Him, as we promised the day we were baptized into God’s family, the Church.

Amen.





РІЧНІ ЗБОРИ

Катедри св. Володимира в Торонто

Неділя, 24-го березня 2013 р.

Після Служби Божої в аудиторії Катедри відбудеться Панахида за всіх спадкодавців на Катедру. Обід та збори.

Отці пароху та Катедральна Управа



МІСЯЧНІ ЗБОРИ

Союзу Українок Канади, відділу св. кн. Ольги при Катедрі св. Володимира в Торонто відбудуться **7-го квітня 2013 р.** після Служби Божої в аудиторії Катедри.

Запрошуємо всіх членів та прихожан громади на перекуску і каву, а Союзанок на збори.

Просимо нових осіб ставати членкинями нашого відділу.

За Управу відділу,

*Віра Мельник
голова*

*добр. Катерина Сенцьо
секретарка*

SUNDAY SERVICE • ЛІТУРГІЯ

10:00 А.М.

**ALL SAINTS OF UKRAINE CHAPEL
1280 Dundas St. West, Oakville, L6M 4H9**

Chairs for the Chapel

In the near future, we will be ordering new chairs for the All Saints of Ukraine Chapel. We would like to offer you the opportunity of designating a chair with an engraved plaque in your name, the name of your family, organization or in the memory of a loved one. Donations of \$100 per chair are being accepted at this time.

Please submit your donation (funds and name to be engraved) at our church office or mail the cheque and information to the address below.

*St. Volodymyr Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral
406 Bathurst Street
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LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES ÉGLISES

REAL QUESTIONS FOR REAL LIFE

This section of our Church Bulletin is dedicated for the many questions from our parishioners that will be answered in writing by Fr. Jaroslaw. If you have any question on the subject of Church life, please contact Fr. Jaroslaw at: buciora@stvolodymyr.ca

It is our hope that this section of our Bulletin will provide a lively written discussion on the important questions of our parish and Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada. There are no questions that are invalid, as every question requires thinking process. Waiting for your questions.

QUESTION 2

Hello Father Jaroslaw,

My name is —. I'm not sure if this e-mail is only for professional inquiries, but I was hoping to ask you some theological questions, if that's alright. If you have an e-mail you'd prefer me to use, I'd be more than happy to use that one.

I would like to ask you a question about the Holy Eucharist. I haven't Communed for some time. The last time I did so, it would suffice to say that I did not feel anything along the lines of strengthening, of both mind and spirit. I concluded that, in ignorance, I partook of the Eucharist in unworthiness. However, I cannot exactly point to what I did wrong. I think it may have been my lack of fasting on Wednesday and Friday, however, I tend to think of these things legalistically, as if they were a formula, so this may not even be something that is all too relevant. But I suppose my question would be: how does one prepare for the Holy Eucharist? Is there a time during which we must fast? Is it only the Wednesday and Friday fasts or do we add a period of fasting? Must confession be taken a day prior at least, or can it have taken place a week prior? A second question is: how exactly does the Holy Eucharist benefit us in a visible

manner? Personally, I think I've only partaken of the Eucharist – times. I failed to notice any sort of difference, and the last time I partook, I failed miserably in my fight against temptation, leading me to doubt the very authenticity of the Holy Mystery. Prayers felt empty, and the only thing keeping me in Christ was my rationality. And a secondary question is: if the participating in the Holy Mystery requires a period of fasting prior, whether this be Wednesday and Friday fast or fasting in general, how would I go about fasting this week, as it is fast-free? Is the fast-free rule authoritative in the sense that we cannot fast during this week? And must I take confession a day prior even though I have done so this Sunday? Forgive me, Father, for my bombardment of questions. I hope reading this hasn't taken up too much of your time.

In Christ,

A member of St. Volodymyr Cathedral

Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory to Him Forever!

Dear —,

I want to express my sincere thanks for your honest and down-to-earth questions. I would love to have more individuals, such as you, who would be able to ask similar questions in a similar manner. God bless.

At this point I will share with you but a few observations as your question is extremely difficult to answer in a couple of sentences or even chapters. In your questions, you have touched on so many subjects and so many issues that could all be treated separately. Because of the complexity of the questions, I will deal only with some of them. In the meantime, please continue coming for Holy Confession and the Holy Eucharist as you have been coming up to this moment.

Based on your questions and your email, I can see that you are experiencing a real spiritual battle inside of you. It is a battle not only on the spiritual level, but this battle affects your daily life. The fact that you can discern the dichotomy of life is a blessing in itself. It seems to me that you have the ability to go beyond the question of faith into a practical application of faith in daily life. Never stop challenging yourself with those questions but also have the ability and strength to leave some of answers for God. The Holy Eucharist is not a subject of explanation but a reality of faith itself. If everything would be explained, there wouldn't be a need for the existence of faith and belief. In your rational approach, there is, at the same time, a sense of disbelief and a magnet that keeps your faith. From this perspective, it is remarkable to see the same rational element that keeps you out of faith and at the same time it does not allow you to leave. This might be a classical way of an inner conflict inside of you that only time and trust in God will be able to answer. In this context I would strongly suggest to be patient with yourself and the growth of your faith. The ability to grow spiritually is not a question of measurement, but it is a question of lifelong efforts that goes deep down into our daily struggle of any kind. In our Church we never separate today from tomorrow, daily life from Church life, spiritual life from time at work or school. It was a contemporary theologian and scholar, Christos Yannaras, who strongly emphasized the fact that to be a Christian is a full-time job and complete dedication. In your situation, try your hardest to be as God created you in any kind of daily situation: whether it is in a store or a Church, while with friends or during a walk in a park. Only at the moment of continuous spiritual stability and inner peace, you can experience the real "sweetness of Eucharist." Do not expect the Eucharist on Sunday to change you instantly if you are not able to live the Eucharist during the week. The Eucharist is not "magic" in and of itself – a sort of "opium" of religion. It requires a sincere and stable relationship with God and continual ef-

forts that help us to become the “walking icons of Jesus Christ” (P. Evdokimov). As such, the Eucharist is a new identity that changes us as long as we change ourselves. Only in this kind of approach, you can move into a deeper experience of the reality of God. In order to use a rational approach, as you seem to emphasize, I will bring to your attention a very simple example. From daily life, the example of a deeply committed marriage might be the best example. Marriage is not only love at first sight, as important as it is. Marriage requires a life-long commitment and a continual dedication to each other in the daily life. Only after the trial and tribulations of a particular marriage, there is a sort of “deeper sweetness” that is only tasted experientially. In our marriages, we may fall and rise, we might be hurt and be healed, but we never lose the sight of our commitment. The fruit of this kind of dedication I see quite often at the nursing homes, where married spouses, after long life trials and health tribulations, are still able to contemplate each other on their journey “home.” In the aspect of Eucharist, our loving God will never abandon us or leave us alone. Our faith is a life-long journey that carries us beyond the daily struggles. The Holy Eucharist is a life in God that never fails to act even though we are not ready to react. Do not expect instant satisfaction or superficial glorification. This is one of the reasons why the Orthodox Church is so different from other Christian churches where instant happiness is emphasized in order to make people “instantly happy.” We also avoid searching for the benefits of our faith. Everything that we get in our life is a gift from God. Even the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to us not because we deserve them but because they are given to us freely. The closer we come to God the more gifts we may appreciate in our life. Those things we leave to God who knows what is beneficial for our spiritual development as He is closer to me than I am to myself (Blessed Augustine).

The question of worthiness and unworthiness is a closely connected question to the aforementioned. From

the perspective of man, because of our failures, like the ones you mentioned in your email, we are always unworthy to accept the Holy Eucharist. Even for the most dedicated and saintly monks, there is constantly in their eyes a perception of their unworthy state. But for those same monks, there is constantly an aspect of hope that God will complete what is lacking in their life. The Sacrament does not depend on the worthiness of the believer, but is given by God to a member of the Church in order to achieve holiness. God completes and sanctifies what is unrecognizable and imperfect in our daily commitment to God. From this perspective, God is on our side as He continuously pours His Divine love towards the created world. Don't despair over your shortcomings, as God is constantly waiting for our return to His Home. The example of the Prodigal Son is the most expressive of God's forgiveness towards humanity. This is one of the reasons why the Orthodox Church emphasizes in her liturgical life the Sacrament of the Holy Confession. Although we fail, God, through the sacrament of Holy Confession, brings us back to the original state of life. This is one of the reasons why confession is a continual effort, a constant act on the part of a believer who uses this venue in order to come back. It is not an annual event, as we are used to believe, but a daily occurrence that rejuvenates our life. Let the confession be your "daily bread" of spiritual development. We have to develop a habit in our life to confess regularly. In the situation when we confess on the regular basis, we should never rush through our confession or look for a priest who asks fewer questions. At this time, when you develop your spiritual life and do not confess regularly, according to your words, there is a requirement of confession prior the Holy Eucharist. Never give up, as it is God, who knowing and loving His chosen nation, gave His only begotten Son that we might be with Him in a place destined for all of us. If God believes in all of us and loves all of us, do we have enough strength to answer His call and to say "Lord have mercy." It is a challenge that pulls us all through

the stages of empty prayers, disbelief, daily failures, suffering, struggles, loneliness, pain, and spiritual confusion. I love the line from one of the contemporary books that says: "...victory belongs to those who believe the most and who believe the longest." After years of challenges we come home, where God created for us a new reality that we call the bosom of Abraham – a place of sweetness, a place of eternal joy. This is exactly our hope that never gives up, but continually carries us into new dimensions of life. Hope is sometimes the only thing we have in our life...

In your email you have spent considerable time on the aspect of fasting. It is admirable on your part that you have implanted in yourself the continual commitment for fasting. Glory be to God for your parents who implanted in your life such a positive approach. I don't want to dwell too long on this subject as there is so much to say. But even fasting has to be taken in the context of the aforesaid. Fasting is the ability of an individual to increase the level of hunger for God. The most advanced method of fasting is a complete abstinence from food. This method is a gift that is achieved only by the chosen ones: spiritually advanced monks or hermits. It is never advised for the ordinary members of the Church. For us who live in the world, there are some basic rules of fasting that allow us to prepare physically and spiritually to receive the Holy Eucharist. The most basic of fasting before the Holy Eucharist is the abstinence from food from midnight. We approach the Holy Eucharist with the Holy Confession and hunger of the body. There are also fasting days during the week or prescribed fasting periods in the year. But as you see, fasting is a method to achieve something higher: "unity with God." We should never absolutise fasting as a centre of our life. Fasting is an effort that brings us closer to myself and ultimately to God. Fasting is a right approach on behalf of us to understand my attitude towards God, myself and the others. One thing we can do is try our best to follow the rules of fasting. With a sincere heart, God will complete the void in our life.

I'm aware that I did not answer all your questions and I never intended to answer them all. It is my hope that some of my thoughts will stimulate your thinking further in order to create inside you a foundation for continuous dialogue. As long as faith is an experiential event and a continual process, may God bless you in your spiritual journey.

With prayers,

Fr. Jaroslaw

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