01/03/2020

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco: Lenten Reflection 2020



His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco has issued his message regarding Lent 2020. Read the full text below:

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

We begin our Lenten journey in troubling times. Forces of polarization and division seem to lurk everywhere, but especially in our civic life. At times, these same forces attempt to enter the life of our parishes and Church at large. If you don't believe me, spend a little time online looking at topics about the Orthodox Church. There you will find individuals that hurl epithets and anger at almost anything and anyone; and it is usually done anonymously. Whether through a "Twitter war" or "trolling", they seek to sow chaos and doubt, and tear us away from one another, from

the Church, and from God Himself.

Our world is filled with forces that would take us away from one another. Lent is a time for us to wage combat against these divisive forces. It can start by fasting from negative on-line behavior ourselves and striving to behave civilly to one another in all our conversations, and especially in social media. But to be effective, we must combat division with our commitment to unity as a Church and as an Orthodox people. Our Lenten journey begins with this hymn, "***Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast, and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat.***"

Our Lord Himself prayed for unity among His followers. Our Lord links unity and faith. When we are united, others will believe. Disunity and chaos are obstacles to faith. In the Gospel of John, our Lord prayed, " ***for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that You have sent me. The glory which You have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.***" (John 17:20-22).

Great Lent is meant to be an event of the community, strengthening our unity, so that we may proclaim the Good News more effectively, strengthening ourselves, and bringing others to Christ. The hymn calls us to begin Great Lent as one people. While we may be observing Lent on our own, in our homes, etc., we are in this together. We are called to observe the fast together. The Church invites us to the many divine services of this season to pray together. We will study our faith together in the many lectures, retreats, and seminars our parishes offer. We will engage in philanthropic work as a community by supporting many good causes with acts of charity.

Forty days may not seem like a long time, but when we try to observe Great Lent well, when we seek to engage in spiritual combat, we need one another for support and encouragement. Our greatest weapon against the forces of division and polarization is our commitment to strengthening our relationship with Christ and to one another. We can accomplish great things when we choose unity and cooperation over chaos, division, and polarization.

The great task of Lent is to prepare ourselves for Pascha. The hymn that I

quoted above continues: “***Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit may we persevere with love, and so be counted worthy to see the solemn Passion of Christ our God, and with great spiritual gladness to behold His holy Passover.***” Together as one people when we support one another in the pursuit of the life in Christ, we can ready ourselves spiritually to experience the Resurrection.

With Love in Christ,
+ G E R A S I M O S
Metropolitan of San Francisco