26/03/2020

Thyateira Youth: Thought for the Day

Is it really fair to say that, as we sit at home, during this period of isolation, there is ‘no Church?’

Being a Christian undoubtedly revolves around the Eucharistic Assembly, the Divine Liturgy. Following the initiation of the ‘Mystical Supper,’ (Matt 26:26-28) the first and in fact only eternal Divine Liturgy (which we partake in during each Liturgy in our parish or monastery) Christians would be devoted to…’ the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.’ (Acts 2:42) A direct consequence of our participation in Christ’s sacrament is however, sharing ‘everything in common… they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need…’ (Acts 2:44)

Fr George Florovsky spoke of ‘Liturgy after Liturgy,’ a concept expanded on by several modern theologians. What an opportunity this pandemic really is to prove the missionary, philanthropic nature of the Church, and service to mankind.

‘Christianity is a liturgical religion,’ Florovsky writes, but that Liturgical nature is not confined within the walls of the church building for ‘the Eucharistic Liturgy is not to be seen as a self-centred service and action, but as a service for the building of the one Body of Christ,’ as a recent study of his work summarises. ‘This is the nature of love,’ writes Dorotheus of Gaza, ‘the more we depart from the centre and do not love God, the more we depart from neighbour.’ So, if we have been attending and participating in the Liturgy before this medical crisis, surely it is time to share this truth of eternal sacrifice; to put our faith into practice. (1 Tim 4:12) We may be abstaining from the Eucharist for some time but let us not forget that in personal or family prayer the human being ‘converses with God, he or she enters, through Grace, into communion with Him, and lives in God.’ (Theophan the Recluse)

By not attending Church for a period of time for the greater good of the entire world we do not cut ourselves from the body of Christ and from communion with Him, for the Divine Liturgy is one, and His Body is one, which ‘the gates of hell shall not prevail.’ (Matt 16:18) The Church is in fact an eternal communion of persons. Simultaneously though, our history has proven that hesychasm, isolation, periods of silence and reflection, will certainly not do us any harm…

Today’s technology offers us the opportunity to truly keep in touch with one another. To check up on our friends and family, to communicate with one another, albeit from a distance, in the comforting joy of Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

It will take some trust and patience, but with certainty we will come out of this stronger and united. As St John Chrysostom writes, on today’s feast of the Annunciation, celebrating the announcement of the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace (Is 9:6) and Son of God:

‘The Physician has come to the sick, and the Sun of Righteousness has dawned for those who sat in darkness, the Anchor and Calm Harbor to those storm-tossed, the Intercessor has been born for the despised slaves, and peace has been united, and the Redeemer of captives has come, the strong unspeakable Joy and Love and Protection has come for those who are embattled. He is our peace, as the divine Apostle says, through Whom we have all received grace, Christ our God, to Whom belong glory to the ages of ages. Amen.’
thyateira.org.uk