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“Let us strive to be like God by sharing in the humility of Christ,” Putna’s Abbot urges

Humility is the first lesson presented to us in the period of the Triodion, leading up to Great Lent and Holy Pascha. Humility must be the foundation of our spiritual life, for virtues can be acquired only if we “strive to be like God by sharing in the humility of Christ,” Archimandrite Melchisedec, the abbot of the great spiritual centre of the Romanian Orthodox Church Putna Monastery, preached on Sunday.

Expounding upon the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee according to the interpretation of the Holy Fathers, Fr. Melchisedec stressed that humility as “the hallmark of Christianity” and “living in the presence of Christ.”

The Pharisee also had good deeds, but by judging his neighbour, he gave in to and fell into vainglory, which the devil uses to deprive us of all our virtues. When vainglory, which is the daughter of pride, takes root, all good deeds are wasted, Fr. Melchisedec explained, referring to the teaching of the great St. John Climacus.

Further, humility is intimately bound up with knowledge of oneself, Fr. Melchisedec continued. “You have often heard the saying that the one who has seen his sins is greater than the one who sees angels,” the abbot said. The Publican stood before God as he truly was, without pretension, and therefore he could only say: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

In presenting us with a lesson in humility, the Church opens to us the mystery of the Triodion, which is none other than the mystery of repentance. “True repentance is standing before God, acknowledging guilt, and deeply experiencing God’s presence,” Fr. Melchisedec exhorted.

To be humble is to be like God and to give God room to work through you, recognizing that He has a message to convey through you, he added.

Christ gives us the ultimate example of humility first in His Incarnation, and then through His humility of ascending the cross for us, Fr. Melchisedec explained.

“If we want, my beloved, to draw near to God and truly live the virtues that lie ahead of us, we must strive to be like God by sharing in the humility of Christ, for without the humility of Christ our lives mean nothing.”

In conclusion, the abbot urged the faithful “to live the Cross and Passion of Christ and to accompany Him in the ascending movement of His Resurrection and to discover then, in the light of Pascha, that humility is an attribute of the Divine nature and a natural movement of love. It’s the most important thing in our lives.”

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