

PELAGIANISM IS NOTHING OTHER THAN THE “CHRISTIAN” VERSION OF PHARISAISM

Although we are speaking of the heresy of Pelagianism and not that of Pharisaism, it is difficult not to mention the Pharisees because their positions were also a kind of Pelagianism. In fact, the Pharisaic view of fasting is very much identical to the view held by Bp. Kirykos, since he thinks that “fasting in the finer and broader sense” makes someone “worthy to commune.” But our Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the Pharisees for this error of theirs. Fine examples of these rebukes are found in the Gospels. The best example is the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, because it shows the difference between a Pharisee who thinks of himself as “worthy” due to his fasts, compared to a Christian who is conscious of his unworthiness and cries to the Lord for mercy. It is a perfect example because it mentions fasting. This well-known parable spoken by the Lord Himself, reads as follows:

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:9-14).”

Behold the word of the Lord! The Publican was more justified than the Pharisee! The Publican was more worthy than the Pharisee! But today’s Christians cannot be justified if they are “extortionists, unjust, adulterers or even... publicans.” For they have the Gospel, the Church, the guidance of the spiritual father, and the washing away of their sins through the once-off Mysteries of Baptism and Chrism, and the repetitive Mysteries of Confession and Communion. They have no excuse to be sinners, and if they are they have the method available to correct themselves. But how much more so are Christians not justified in being Pharisees? For they have this parable spoken by the Lord Himself as clear proof of Christ’s disfavor towards “*the leaven of the Pharisees.*” They have hundreds of Holy Fathers’ epistles, homilies and dialogues, which they must have read in their pursuit of exulting themselves! They have before them the repeated exclamations of the Lord, “*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men! For ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in (Matthew 23:13).*” They have even the very fact that it was an apostle who

betrayed the Lord, and not a mere disciple but one of the twelve! They have the fact that it was not an idolatrous nation that judged its savior and found him guilty, but it was God's own chosen people that condemned the world's Savior to death! They have even the fact that the Scribes, Pharisees and High Priests were the ones who crucified the King of Glory! Yet despite having all of these clear proofs, they continue their Pharisaism, but the "Christian" kind, namely, Pelagianism. But who are we to condemn them? After all, we are but sinners. Therefore let them take heed to the Lord's rebuke: *"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"* (Matthew 23:33).

A Genuine Orthodox Christian (*i.e.*, non-Pelagian, non-Pharisee), approaches the Holy Chalice with nothing but disdain and humiliation for his wretched soul, and feels his utter unworthiness, and truly believes that what is found in that Chalice is God in the Flesh, and mankind's only source of salvation and life. If a man is to ever be called "worthy," the origin of that worth is not in himself, but is in that Holy Chalice from which he is about to commune. For a man who lives of himself will surely die. But a man who lives in Christ, and through Holy Communion allows Christ to live in him, such a man shall never die. As Christ said: *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"* (John 6:51)."

Thus a Genuine Orthodox Christian does not boast that he *"fasts twice a week"* as did the Pharisee, but recognizing only his own imperfections before the face of the perfect Christ, he smites his breast as did the Publican, saying, *"God be merciful to me a sinner."* Like the malefactor that he is in thought, word and deed, he imitates the malefactor that was crucified with the Lord, saying, *"I indeed justly [am condemned]; for I received the due reward for my deeds: but this man, [my Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ,] hath done nothing amiss"* (Luke 23:41). And he says unto Jesus, *"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom"* (Luke 23:42). To such a Genuine Orthodox Christian, free of Pharisaism and Pelagianism, the Lord responds, *"Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43), and *"I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom"* (Luke 22:29)."

How does all of the above compare to Bp. Kirykos' statement that *"fasting according to one's strength"* causes one to *"worthily receive the body and blood of the Lord?"* How can Bp. Kirykos justify his theory that the early Christians supposedly *"fasted in the fine and broader sense, that is, they were worthy to commune?"* Can anyone, no matter how strictly they fast, ever be considered worthy of Holy Communion? Does someone's work of fasting make them worthy? Is Bp. Kirykos justified in believing that fasting for three

days without oil or wine supposedly makes an individual worthy of Holy Communion? If Bp. Kirykos is justified, then why does he not do this himself? Why does he eat oil on every Saturday of Great Lent, and yet communes on Sundays “unworthily” (according to his own theory) without shame? Why does he demand the three day fast from oil upon laymen, but does not apply it to himself and his priests?

We are not speaking of laymen with penances and excommunications. We are speaking of laymen who have confessed their sins and are permitted by their spiritual father to receive Holy Communion. When such laymen receive Holy Communion they are not meant to kiss the hand of the priest after this, because the Orthodox Church believes in their equality with the priest through the Mysteries. There is no difference between priests and laymen when it comes to the ability to commune, except only for the fact that the clergy receive the Immaculate Mysteries within the Holy Bema, whereas the laity receives them from the Royal Doors. Aside from this, there is no difference in the preparation for Holy Communion either. The laymen cannot be compelled to fast extra fasts simply for being laymen, whereas priests are not required to do these extra fasts at all on account of being priests.

The equality of the clergy and laity with regards to Holy Communion is clearly expressed by Blessed Chrysostom: *“There are cases when a priest does not differ from a layman, notably when one approaches the Holy Mysteries. We are all equally given them, not as in the Old Testament, when one food was for the priests and another for the people and when it was not permitted to the people to partake of that which was for the priest. Now it is not so: but to all is offered the same Body and the same Chalice...”* (John Chrysostom, *Homily 18, on 2 Corinthians 8:24*)

This is why the Orthodox Church preserves this tradition whereby the priest forbids the laymen who have communed from kissing his hand. These are the pious laymen we refer to: those who are deemed acceptable to approach the Chalice. Aren't the bishops and priests obliged to fast more strictly than the laymen, especially since the bishops and priests are the ones invoking the Holy Spirit to descend on the gifts, while the laymen only stand in the crowd of the people? So then why does Bp. Kirykos demand the three-day strict fast (forbidding even oil and wine) upon laymen, while he himself and his priests not only partake of oil and wine, but outside of fasting periods they even partake of fish, eggs, dairy products (and for married clergy, even meat) as late as 11:30pm on the night before they are to serve Divine Liturgy and commune of the Holy Mysteries “worthily” yet without fasting?

Are such hypocrisies Christian or are they Pharisaic? What does Christ have to say regarding the Pharisees who ordered laymen to fast more heavily while the Pharisee hierarchy did not do this themselves? Christ rebuked and

condemned them harshly. Thus we read in the Gospel according to St. Luke: *“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying: “The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Luke 23:1-4).*

So much for the Pharisees and their successors, the Pelagians! So much for Bp. Kirykos and those who agree with his blasphemous positions, for these men are the Pharisees and Pelagians of our time! May God have mercy on them and enlighten them to depart from the darkness of their hypocrisy. May God also enlighten us to shun all forms of Pharisaism and Pelagianism, including this most dangerous form adopted by Bp. Kirykos. May we shun this heresy by ceasing to rely on our own human perfections that are but abominations in the eyes of our perfect God. Let us take heed to the admonition of one who himself was a Pharisee named Saul, but later became a Christian named Paul. For, he was truly blinded by the darkness of his Pharisaic self-righteousness, but Christ blinded him with the eternal light of sanctifying and soul-saving Divine Grace. This Apostle to the Nations writes:

“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:17-31).”

Yea, Lord, help us to submit entirely to Thy will, and to learn to glorify only in Thee, and not in our own works. For in truth, even the greatest works of ours, even the work of fasting, whether for one day, three days, a week, forty days, or even a lifetime, is worthless before Thy sight. As the prophet declares, our works are an abomination, and our righteousness is but a menstruous rag. Therefore, O Lord, judge us according to Thy mercy and not according to our sins. For Thou alone can make us worthy of Communion.

Note that in the above short prayer by the present author, the word “us” is used and not “them.” This is because, in order to preserve oneself from becoming a Pharisee, one must always include himself among those who are lacking in conduct, and must ask God for guidance as well as for others. In this manner, one does not fall into the danger of the Pharisee who said “*God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are...*” but rather acknowledges his own misconduct, and thereby includes himself in the prayer, imitating the publican who said “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*” For there is no point preaching against Pharisaism unless one first admonishes and reproves his own soul, and asks God to cleans himself from this hypocrisy of the Pharisees. For we are not to hate the sinners, but rather the sin itself; and we are not to hate the heretics, but rather the heresy itself. In so doing, our Confession against the sins and heresies themselves constitute a “work of love.”

But when it comes to people judging Christians for food, or Sabbaths, such as what Bp. Kirykos has done by his two blasphemous letters to Fr. Pedro, this is definitely not a “work of love” but is in fact the leaven of the Pharisees in its fullness. It is a work of demonic self-righteousness and satanic hatred towards mankind. For rather than being a true spiritual father towards his spiritual children, he proves to be a negligent and self-serving, and a user of his flock for his own personal gain. He allows himself to commune very frequently without the slightest fast, while demanding strict fasting on his flock while also forbidding them to ever commune on Sundays. Thus it is well that Mr. Christos Noukas, the advisor to Fr. Pedro, asked Bp. Kirykos: “Are you a father or a stepfather?” By this he meant, “Do you truly love your spiritual children as a true spiritual father should, or do you consider them to be another man’s children and nothing but a burden to you?”

Our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, in the sermon in which he taught us to pray to “Our Father,” explained the love of a true father towards his children. The account, as contained in the Gospel of Luke, is as follows: “*And [Jesus] said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with*

me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:5-13)."

Thus if the faithful Orthodox Christians, who have confessed their sins and do not have anything in the canons that prevent them from receiving Holy Communion, and are therefore asking to receive this Source of Life on a Sunday, as their forefathers have always done, and as the Church has always prescribed, what kind of "father" is Bp. Kirykos to forbid Holy Communion to laymen on a Sunday, and even during Great Lent, simply because they consumed oil on the previous day, Saturday, as the holy canons advise? Is Bp. Kirykos imitating our Heavenly Father, who loves his children and calls them towards salvation? Or is Bp. Kirykos rather imitating the "father of lies," who has an ancient and prolonged enmity towards mankind and seeks to destroy and devour their souls, forbidding them any way of communing with God? To such a Pharisee who prevents the salvation of the people, our Lord Jesus Christ declares: *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in (Matthew 23:13)."*

How are we to react to the commands of a Pharisee like Bp. Kirykos? Should we accept his false judgments? The answer is given by the Holy Apostle Paul, a true father and teacher of the nations. It was he who enlightened our forefathers in the Roman provinces of Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece. It was he who brought Christianity to the Greco-Roman people, from which we descend; and it is his Faith, the Apostolic Faith, that we hold to, and not the judgments of the Pharisees who are responsible for the judgment and crucifixion of the King of Glory. We have not seen the face of the Holy Apostle Paul, but he comforts us through his Epistle to the Colossians, who too, along with the Laodicians, had not yet seen his face. In this Epistle, he warns the Colossians not to let any Pharisaic or Judaizing so-called Christian to judge them with matters of foods or Sabbaths, calling all of these Pharisaic rules "commandments of men," differing from the law of God. He writes:

“For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the Body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will, worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh (Colossians 2:1-23).”

The above passage by the Holy Apostle Paul contains several signs that refer to Holy Communion. The greatest sign is “*acknowledgement of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,*” which is the Trinitarian Mystery of the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son, respectively. But the Mystery of Holy Trinity, the bond of love and grace of the Triadic God, can only be acknowledged if the faithful receive the Mystery of the Body and Blood of

Christ, *“that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love.”* For only by partaking of the same Body and Blood of Christ are all the faithful joined together with one mind, one word, and one spirit, making them able to truly acknowledge the Oneness of the Eternal Mind, Word and Spirit. This is the reason for the following hymn contained in all the early Christian Anaphorae of the Divine Liturgy (in which Holy Communion is the objective): *“Let us love one another that with one mouth and with one heart, we may confess: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Trinity consubstantial and inseparable.”*

This is also what the Holy Apostle John the Theologian had in mind when he wrote: *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:7-10).”*

This “propitiation of our sins” mentioned by the Apostle John was also mentioned by the Apostle Paul in the passage cited further above. It is God’s love and mercy towards us that cleanses us from our sins and makes us worthy to receive Holy Communion. It is through our Baptism in His name, and our constant repentance through Confession and Absolution, that purifies us for the Holy Mystery of His immaculate Body and precious Blood. But the Mystery of Holy Communion is what grants us life, after the Christ, who rose from the dead and granted eternal life to the world. Thus in the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, cited further above, he wrote: *“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”* Since Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the day that we are “complete in him” and are “risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead,” then it is clear that the most important and essential day of receiving Holy Communion is Sunday.

The Holy Apostle Paul then warns us: *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the Body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility...”* Thus we are not to allow anyone to rob us of our reward, namely, the Holy Communion, by judging us because of food or drink, or by compelling us to fast on the Sabbath day, like what Bp. Kirykos is using as a means to judge all laymen as banned from

Communion on Sundays, while he himself eats dairy, eggs, fish, etc, even as late as midnight on Saturdays and communes on Sundays without fail.

The Holy Apostle Paul refers to such Pharisaic rules as those enforced by Bp. Kirykos onto the layman, while he himself does not follow these rules at all, as a system belonging to *“the commandments and doctrines of men.”* Let us therefore shun these false commandments and doctrines of Pelagianism and Pharisaism, and instead remain on the Royal Path of Orthodoxy, which trusts in the commandments of Christ, the Faith of the Apostles, and the canons and ordinances of the Holy Apostles, Holy Councils and Holy Fathers. But we shall know of the law of God also by receiving Holy Communion. For by receiving God in the flesh, He shall dwell inside us, and we shall live in Him.

Thereby the law shall be written in our hearts and in our inward parts. God promised this through the Prophet Jeremiah: *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Testament with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31-34).”*

This New Testament is the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, for He too called it by this name when he said: *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26-28).”* Thus the New Testament is the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ, which, when consumed by faithful Orthodox Christians, allows the law of God to be written in their hearts and in their inward parts, allowing God to dwell inside them and guide them towards all truth (Orthodoxia) and all aright conduct (Orthopraxia).

The Holy Apostle Paul also speaks of this correlation of the Old Testament (that of Moses) and the New Testament (that of Christ). He writes: *“Then verily the first Testament had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary... But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle,*

not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance... Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:1-29)."

Thus, Christ is "the mediator of the New Testament" by the sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. He offers His Body and Blood as this sacrifice and Holy Mystery for the remission of our sins. This sacrifice is also the "New Testament" prophesied by Jeremiah, in which, by partaking of the Holy Mysteries, we shall have the law of God and his grace written in our hearts and in our inward parts. Thus, rather than counting on our own human works as the means to make ourselves "worthy" of Holy Communion, it is actually the Holy Communion itself that perfects us and causes the law to be written in our hearts and inward parts, thereby guiding us towards Christian conduct such as faith, hope, love, wisdom, mercy, temperance and all virtues.

But if anyone thinks that their own work of "fasting" shall make them "worthy," such as in the manner of the Pharisee who said "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are... I fast twice in the week..." then such a person is not a Genuine Orthodox Christian but rather a Pharisee and a Pelagian heretic. For no precision of the letter of the law, and no human works, not even the work of fasting can make one "worthy" to have the law written in his heart and inward parts. So much more is such an achievement impossible if one commends himself for his own works, such as do the Pharisees who think of themselves as "Christians." But as for the real Orthodox Christians, they purify themselves through a washing away of their sins through tears of repentance and the Mystery of Holy Confession, and, trusting entirely in the Lord's mercy, they approach the Holy Mysteries, asking that the Body and Blood of Christ sanctify them towards an increase in faith and virtue, a remission of sins, and the reward of everlasting life. The real Orthodox Christians receive the Holy Mysteries as their means of purification and their means of having the law of God written in their hearts and inward parts.

Thus the Holy Apostle Paul wrote: *“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. **And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life** (2 Corinthians 3:1-6).”*

Let us therefore take heed to the words of Christ, his Apostles and all the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, that we shun Pharisaism and Pelagianism, the belief that we can trust in our own works. Let us shun the meticulous observance of the letter of the law, lest we fail to observe the spirit of the law. Let us shun the Pharisaic “commandments of men,” which revert and abolish the Law of God. Instead let us trust entirely in the grace of Christ, being clothed with Him by Holy Baptism, being washed by true tears of repentance, and receiving His Body and Blood in the Holy Communion, which sanctifies us towards good faith and all virtues.