

ARE THE HOLY CANONS ONLY VALID FOR THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD AND NOT FOR OUR TIMES?

In his first letter to Fr. Pedro, Bp. Kirykos writes: *“After this, I request of you the avoidance of disorder and scandal regarding this issue, and to recommend to those who confess to you, that in order to approach Holy Communion, they must prepare by fasting, and to prefer approaching on Saturday and not Sunday. Regarding the Canon, which some people refer to in order to commune without fasting beforehand, it is correct, but it must be interpreted correctly and applied to everybody. Namely, we must return to those early apostolic times, during which all of the Christians were ascetics and temperate and fasters, and only they remained until the end of the Divine Liturgy and communed. They fasted in the fine and broader sense, that is, they were worthy to commune. The rest did not remain until the end and withdrew together with the catechumens. As for those who were in repentance, they remained outside the gates of the church. If we implemented this Canon today, everyone would have to go out of the church and only two or three worthy people would remain inside until the end to commune. And if the Christians of today only knew how unworthy they are, who would remain inside the church?”*

From the above explanation by Bp. Kirykos, one is given the impression that he believes and commands:

- a) that Fr. Pedro is to forbid laymen to commune on Sundays during Great Lent in order to ensure *“the avoidance of disorder and scandal regarding this issue,”* despite the fact that the canons declare that it is those who do not commune on Sundays that are causers of disorder, as the 9th Canon of the Holy Apostles declares: *“All the faithful who come to Church and hear the Scriptures, but do not stay for the prayers and the Holy Communion, are to be excommunicated as causing disorder in the Church;”*
- b) that Fr. Pedro is to advise his flock *“to prefer approaching on Saturday and not Sunday,”* thereby commanding his flock to become Sabbatians;
- c) that the Canon which advises people to receive Holy Communion every day even outside of fasting periods is *“correct”* but must be *“interpreted correctly and applied to everybody,”* which, in the solution that Bp. Kirykos offers, amounts to a complete annulment of the Canon in regards to laymen, while enforcing the Canon liberally upon the clergy;
- d) that *“we must return to those early apostolic times,”* as if the Orthodox Church today is not still the unchanged and unadulterated Apostolic Church as confessed in the Symbol of the Faith, *“In One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,”* with the same Head, the same Body, and the

- same requirement to abide by the Canons, but that we are supposedly some kind of fallen Church in need of “*return*” to a former status;
- e) that supposedly in apostolic times “*all of the Christians were ascetics and temperate and fasters, and only they remained until the end of the Divine Liturgy and communed,*” meaning that Communion is annulled for later generations supposedly due to a lack of celibacy and vegetarianism;
 - f) that supposedly only the celibate and vegetarians communed in the early Church, and that “*the rest did not remain until the end and withdrew together with the catechumens,*” as if marriage and eating meat amounted to a renunciation of one’s baptism and a reversion to the status of catechumen, which is actually the teaching and practice of the Manicheans, Paulicians and Bogomils and not of the Apostolic Church, and the 9th Apostolic Canon declares that if any layman departs with the catechumens and does not remain until the end of Liturgy and does not commune, such a layman is to be excommunicated, yet Bp. Kirykos promotes this practice as something pious, patristic and acceptable;
 - g) that Christians who have confessed their sins and prepared themselves and their spiritual father has deemed them able to receive Holy Communion, are supposedly still in the rank of the penitents either due to being married or due to being meat-eaters, as can be seen from Bp. Kirykos’ words: “*If we implemented this Canon today, everyone would have to go out of the church and only two or three worthy people would remain inside until the end to commune. And if the Christians of today only knew how unworthy they are, who would remain inside the church?*”
 - h) that we are not to interpret and implement the Holy Canons the way they are written and the way the Holy Orthodox Church has always historically interpreted and implemented them, but that these Canons supposedly need to be reinterpreted in Bp. Kirykos’s own way, or as he says, “*interpreted correctly and applied to everybody,*” and that “*if we implemented this Canon today, everyone would have to go out of the church.*”

All of the above notions held by Bp. Kirykos can be summed up by the statement that he believes the Canons only apply for the apostolic era or the time of the early Christians, but that these Canons are now to be reinterpreted or nullified because today’s Christians are not worthy to be treated according to the Holy Canons. He also believes that to follow the advice of the Holy Canons is a cause of “*disorder and scandal,*” despite the fact that the very purpose of the Holy Canons is to prevent disorder and scandal. These notions held by Bp. Kirykos are entirely erroneous, and they are another variant of the same blasphemies preached by the Modernists and Ecumenists who desire to set the Holy Canons aside by claiming that they are not suitable for our times.

Bp. Kirykos' incorrect notions regarding the supposed inapplicability of the Holy Canons in our times are notions that the Rudder itself condemns. For in the Holy Rudder (published in the 17th century), St. Nicodemus of Athos included an excellent introductory note regarding the importance of the Holy Canons, and that they are applicable for all times, and must be adhered to faithfully by all Orthodox Christians. This introductory note by St. Nicodemus, as contained in the Holy Rudder, is provided below.

PROLEGOMENA IN GENERAL TO THE SACRED CANONS

What Is a Canon?

A canon, according to Zonaras (in his interpretation of the 39th letter of Athanasius the Great), properly speaking and in the main sense of the word, is a piece of wood, commonly called a rule, which artisans use to get the wood and stone they are working on straight. For, when they place this rule (or straightedge) against their work, if this be crooked, inwards or outwards, they make it straight and right. From this, by metaphorical extension, votes and decisions are also called canons, whether they be of the Apostles or of the ecumenical and regional Councils or those of the individual Fathers, which are contained in the present Handbook: for they too, like so many straight and right rules, rid men in holy orders, clergymen and laymen, of every disorder and obliquity of manners, and cause them to have every normality and equality of ecclesiastical and Christian condition and virtue.

**That the divine Canons must be kept rigidly by all;
for those who fail to keep them are made liable to horrible penances**

"These instructions regarding Canons have been enjoined upon you by us, O Bishops. If you adhere to them, you shall be saved, and shall have peace; but if you disobey them, you shall be sorely punished, and shall have perpetual war with one another, thus paying the penalty deserved for heedlessness." (The Apostles in their epilogue to the Canons)

"We have decided that it is right and just that the canons promulgated by the holy Fathers at each council hitherto should remain in force." (1st Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council)

"It has seemed best to this holy Council that the 85 Canons accepted and validated by the holy and blissful Fathers before us, and handed down to us, moreover, in the name of the holy and glorious Apostles, should remain henceforth certified and secured for the correction of souls and cure of diseases... [of the four

*ecumenical councils according to name, of the regional councils by name, and of the individual Fathers by name].... And that **no one should be allowed to counterfeit or tamper with the aforementioned Canons or to set them aside.**" (2nd Canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council)*

"If anyone be caught innovating or undertaking to subvert any of the said Canons, he shall be responsible with respect to such Canon and undergo the penance therein specified in order to be corrected thereby of that very thing in which he is at fault." (2nd Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council)

"Rejoicing in them like one who has found a lot of spoils, we gladly embosom the divine Canons, and we uphold their entire tenor and strengthen them all the more, so far as concerns those promulgated by the trumpets of the Spirit of the renowned Apostles, of the holy ecumenical councils, and of those convened regionally... And of our holy Fathers... And as for those whom they consign to anathema, we anathematize them, too; as for those whom they consign to deposition or degradation, we too depose or degrade them; as for those whom they consign to excommunication, we too excommunicate them; and as for those whom they condemn to a penance, we too subject them thereto likewise." (1st Canon of the Seventh Ecumenical Council)

*"We therefore decree that the ecclesiastical Canons which have been promulgated or confirmed by the four holy councils, namely, that held in Nicaea, and that held in Constantinople, and the first one held in Ephesus, and that held in Chalcedon, **shall take the rank of laws.**" (Novel 131 of Emperor Justinian)*

*"We therefore decree that the ecclesiastical Canons which have been promulgated or confirmed by the seven holy councils **shall take the rank of laws.**" (Ed. note—The word "confirmed" alludes to the canons of the regional councils and of the individual Fathers which had been confirmed by the ecumenical councils, according to Balsamon.)*

*"For we accept the dogmas of the aforesaid holy councils precisely as we do the divine Scriptures, and we **keep their Canons as laws.**" (Basilica, Book 5, Title 3, Chapter 2)*

*"The third provision of Title 2 of the Novels commands **the Canons of the seven councils and their dogmas to remain in force, in the same way as the divine Scriptures.**" (In Photius, Title 1, Chapter 2)*

*"I accept **the seven councils and their dogmas to remain in force, in the same way as the divine Scriptures.**" (Emperor Leo the Wise in Basilica, Book 5, Title 3, Chapter 1)*

“It has been prescribed by the holy Fathers that even after death those men must be anathematized who have sinned against the faith or against the Canons.” (Fifth Ecumenical Council in the epistle of Justinian, page 392 of Volume 2 of the Conciliaris)

“Anathema on those who hold in scorn the sacred and divine Canons of our sacred Fathers, who prop up the holy Church and adorn all the Christian polity, and guide men to divine reverence.” (Council held in Constantinople after Constantine Porphyrogenitus, page 977 of Volume 2 of the Conciliaris)

That the divine Canons override the imperial laws

“It pleased the most divine Despot of the inhabited earth (i.e. Emperor Marcian) not to proceed in accordance with the divine letters or pragmatic forms of the most devout bishops, but in accordance with the Canons laid down as laws by the holy Fathers. The council said: As against the Canons, no pragmatic sanction is effective. Let the Canons of the Fathers remain in force. And again: We pray that the pragmatic sanctions enacted for some in every province to the detriment of the Canons may be held in abeyance incontrovertibly; and that the Canons may come into force through all... all of us say the same things. All the pragmatic sanctions shall be held in abeyance. Let the Canons come into force... In accordance with the vote of the holy council, let the injunctions of Canons come into force also in all the other provinces.” (In Act 5 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council)

“It has seemed best to all the holy ecumenical council that if anyone offers any form conflicting with those now prescribed, let that form be void.” (8th Canon of the Third Ecumenical Council)

“Pragmatic forms opposed to the Canons are void.” (Book 1, Title 2, Ordinances 12, Photius, Title 1, Chapter 2)

“For those Canons which have been promulgated, and supported, that is to say, by emperors and holy Fathers, are accepted like the divine Scriptures. But the laws have been accepted or composed only by the emperors; and for this reason they do not prevail over and against the divine Scriptures nor the Canons.” (Balsamon, comment on the above chapter 2 of Photius)

“Do not talk to me of external laws. For even the publican fulfills the outer law, yet nevertheless he is sorely punished.” (Chrysostom, Sermon 57 on the Gospel of Matthew)

“For emperors often fail to adapt all the laws to advantage.” (Sermon 6 on the Statues)

“Laws that tend to favor piety lend a great impulse (i.e., aid or help) to the divine Canons, on the one hand, by concurring with them and affording them support, and on the other hand, by supplying things that they may be lacking in some place or other.” (Blastaris, Chapter 5 of Canto 20)

That the divine Canons override even the Rituals, when the latter happen to be at variance with them, especially if individual or regional

*“From the Novel 131 of Justinian you can tell **that rituals made by the Founders in the Monasteries are to be tolerated or welcomed unless they are opposed to the Canons somewhere.**” (Blastaris, Chapter 16 of Canto 30)*

Individual holy Fathers regarding the holy Canons

“As many as conform to this Canon, peace be upon them, and mercy.” (St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, Chapter 6, Verse 16)

“How absurd is it not that one is not permitted to be ignorant of any law of the Romans, not even if he be exceedingly boorish and unlearned, nor that there is any law to help one who does anything because of his ignorance: whereas, on the other hand, mystagogues may be ignorant of salvation, of the principles of salvation, notwithstanding that in other respects they are among the more simple and possess no deep intellect?” (St. Gregory the Theologian, Discourse addressed to Athanasius the Great)

“I heard and failed to observe... You failed to observe? Why, then, you have condemned yourself! Though you observe not, yet if you but say, ‘I failed to observe,’ you have kept a half part. For anyone who has condemned himself for not observing, is earnestly trying to observe.” (St. John Chrysostom, Sermon 4 on Repentance, page 785 of Volume 6 of the Etonian Editions)

“Therefore let all of us listen who neglect to read the Scriptures, and learn what great injury we are suffering, what great poverty; for we can never have any actual experience in matters of statecraft unless we know at least the laws in accordance with which we ought to conduct ourselves both publicly and privately.” (St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 13, Verse 52, interpreting the words “Therefore every scribe...”)

“There are many of us who say, but few who do. Yet no one ought to garble the word of God because of his own negligence; on the contrary, he

ought to confess his own weakness, and not try to hide the truth from God—lest we be brought to trial on charges of misinterpreting the word of God besides transgressing His commandments.” (St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapter 85 of Volume 4, of things concerning Love, page 329 of the Philocalia)

The above compilation by St. Nicodemus of Athos is quite successful in its endeavor to point out the importance of the Holy Canons, and the fact that they are not to be set aside at any time, but must be adhered to precisely. In addition to the above, however, the following excerpts from the Synodicon of the Holy Spirit are worthy of note.

FROM THE SYNODICON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

To those who scorn the venerable and holy ecumenical Synods, and who despise even more their dogmatic and canonical traditions; and to those who say that all things were not perfectly defined and delivered by the Synods, but that they left the greater part mysterious, unclear, and untaught, Anathema!

To those who hold in contempt the sacred and divine canons of our blessed fathers, which, by sustaining the holy Church of God and adorning the whole Christian Church, guide to divine reverence, Anathema!

To all things innovated and enacted contrary to the Church tradition, teaching, and institution of the holy and ever-memorable fathers, or to anything henceforth so enacted, Anathema!

Bp. Kirykos has corrupted, redefined, reinterpreted and even nullified the Holy Canons, for the sake of preserving his own unorthodox “local custom,” which he hypocritically claims to be that of his forefathers, whereas in reality it was he himself and his coworker, Mr. Gkoutzidis, who enforced this uncanonical practice upon all the Matthewites during a clergy seminar at Kouvara Monastery in 1979, at which, while still laymen and self-appointed “theologians,” decided to “enlightening” their hierarchs and clergy.

Is it not clear that Bp. Kirykos by his recent dogmatization of these errors, even to the point of reprimanding clergy and laity over this issue, is a complete defiance of the Holy Canons, and constitutes a grave and serious error, worthy even of anathema? Yet Bp. Kirykos hypocritically claims to be an ardent keeper of the Holy Canons. In reality, he has despised every Holy Canon in regards to Holy Communion, and he even defies countless other canons in his ecclesiastical and personal life, as has been witnessed by various priests and several laymen, who were once under his spiritual guidance, but

quickly departed from him upon detecting that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. These clergy and laymen affirm that Bp. Kirykos not only disregards the Holy Canons "occasionally," but rather the complete defiance of the Holy Canons is the "daily typicon" both in his ecclesiastical and personal life.

Despite this, Bp. Kirykos claims to be the only "canonical" bishop left in Greece, and that only his followers belong to the only real "Church" left on earth. In reality, neither is he a canonical bishop, nor are his followers being guided towards salvation. On the contrary, their souls shall be devoured by the abyss of spiritual poverty originating from their bishop's lack of sacramental, dogmatic, canonical and ethical piety. If his followers have chosen him to be their shepherd for reason of faith, for reasons of canonicity, and for reasons of sacramental validity, for reasons of ethical piety, or for all of the above, then they have certainly made a mistake and should rethink their choice. Unfortunately, such a decision is easier said than done. For all these poor clergy and laymen under his sorrowful leadership will need to cast off from themselves the severe cult-like brainwashing and false indoctrination that Bp. Kirykos and his coworkers have instilled in them through their thirty-year-long "systematization of the ecclesiology," which they achieved by deliberately hiding documents and re-writing ecclesiastical history, for the sake of winning proselytes, in order to use Christ as a means of establishing a "personal career" for themselves, to the detriment of countless innocent souls.

May the Lord forgive Bp. Kirykos and guide him towards repentance. However, repentance requires humility, and humility is not easily attained by someone who has worked his way up to the highest rank, and denounced even the very Archbishop who consecrated him, and who even declared himself "President of the Pan-Orthodox Council," and even styles himself as a "Confessor" and "Struggler" for the truth, when his struggle is only one of empty words, hypocrisy and soul-destroying pride. His own clergy and some of his own advisers tried several times to prevent him from falling into this trap that he laid for himself. But his pride and self-righteousness prevented him from taking heed to that advice. Now the only method by which his eyes may be opened is if he finally understands that what he has preached in his two letters to Fr. Pedro are actually severe heresies and canonical infractions of universal proportion, in need of a public and universal repentance. This is the result of a man of simple mind and very little theological education, who has not even managed to found a single real monastery, has not managed to produce a single spiritual offspring from childhood to the priesthood, and yet who took upon himself the task of "saving the Church," declaring himself the "last true bishop," and some kind of religious "super hero," complete with his own set of "hero-worshippers," mainly a throng of laywomen in Greece, and all walks of life in Romania, Cyprus, Kenya, Ukraine, Canada and Australia.

Certainly, we cannot coerce Bp. Kirykos, his clergy and his laymen to repent of their delusion. This is something they will need to achieve by their own choice. Thus the Blessed Chrysostom writes: *“For Christians above all men are forbidden to correct the stumblings of sinners by force... it is necessary to make a man better not by force but by persuasion. We neither have authority granted us by law to restrain sinners, nor, if it were, should we know how to use it, since God gives the crown to those who are kept from evil, not by force, but by choice.”* (Six Books on the Priesthood)

Unfortunately, Bp. Kirykos and his so-called “Genuine Orthodox Christian” followers, among them a so-called hieromonk, a so-called priest, and various so-called laymen, have chosen the road of slander and ridiculous lies spread against Fr. Pedro and various among the good-willed laymen who chose to defend the Holy Fathers and Holy Canons from being disregarded and defiled by Bp. Kirykos and his followers. In choosing this path of slander and lies, these men have ceased to be icons of Christ, but have become imitators of satan, also known as the devil, “slanderer,” and “father of lies.”

Thus instead of addressing the very questions at hand; the very issue of “worthiness” for Holy Communion; the method with which Bp. Kirykos handled the events in regards to Fr. Pedro’s uncanonical suspension; the content of the two heretical letters sent by Bp. Kirykos to Fr. Pedro; the issue of the countless crucial documents that Bp. Kirykos has kept in the dark for over three decades for the sake of deluding his flock; and the issue of his ecclesiastical and personal scandals which are numerous and documented; instead of addressing all of these issues, Bp. Kirykos and his followers have resorted to hurling vicious slanders against those who oppose them for matters of Faith, accusations of immorality quite absurd and easily disproven. Yet these slanderers shall rejoice in these unchristian acts of slander and think that by these diabolical acts they too are “saving the Church,” just like their “hero,” Bp. Kirykos claims to do. They will also rejoice in their hypocritical pre-communion fast, and think that they will be communing “worthily” on account of it, whereas they have sinned mortally against the souls of real Christians—souls which are fashioned in the image of the Holy Trinity.

May the foul mouths of these so-called clergy and laity be confounded by the words that spring forth from the golden-mouth of Blessed Chrysostom:

“As it is not to be imagined that the fornicator and the blasphemer can partake of the sacred Table, so it is impossible that he who has an enemy, and bears malice, can enjoy the Holy Communion... I forewarn, and testify, and proclaim this with a voice that all may hear! Let no one who has an enemy draw near the sacred Table or receive the Lord’s Body! Let no one who draws near have an enemy! Do you

have an enemy? Do not draw near! Do you wish to draw near? Be reconciled, and then draw near, and touch the Holy Gifts!" (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 20)

*"We are commanded to have only one enemy, the devil. With him never be reconciled! **But with a brother, never be at enmity in thy heart.**" (Homily 20)*

*"**Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works.** If you see a poor man, take pity on him. If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him. **Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye, and the feet, and the hands and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast, by being free of avarice. Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin. Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful. Let the ears fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip. Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism. For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brothers?"** (Homily 3:8, On the Statutes)*

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.