

We Will Glorify God for Eternity.

A sermon by Fr. Andrey Lemeshonok at St Elisabeth Convent

Clean Wednesday, March 13, 2019 (ns)



A sermon by Fr. Andrey Lemeshonok after the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at St Elisabeth Convent in Minsk, Belaus. Filmed on the 13th of March 2019, Wednesday of the first week of the Great Lent. This short sermon speaks of the privilege we have to worship God and the purpose of Lenten services and fasting, and includes the story that everyone should read about a negligent monk who, beyond all expectation, was saved.

Video <https://youtu.be/4U3JEkiO4IA> (In Russian, with English Subtitles)

English Transcript: by Priest Seraphim Holland.
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I want to cheer you up. Because, of course, it was not easy for us to stand at the service for almost 7 hours, on an empty stomach. But, as one of our priests said: “Even if your heart is foggy you still stand before God, and it is already very, very good”.

It is good to be with God. But it is also hard. Because, of course, lying on the couch is easier than standing and bowing to God. We bow to God, Was of course, gives us everything so that we can learn to live responsibly, so that we can be sane, not insane. So, we need to “anoint our heads and wash our faces” as the scripture says, so that we do not look gloomy.

Still, the Orthodox in a way are sick people. We look at any of us and see a sick person. But now, after participating in today’s liturgy and receiving holy Communion, look at yourselves - you are healthy, normal people! Because there is God in you, and you are beautiful. Without God we are absolutely terrible.

Now during Great Lent the services are getting longer and longer. They are difficult, for course. But this is the only thing we can do - to at least stand at the long services, because we are not ascetics.

Yesterday I have read some good words by Father Nikon Vorobiov. He said you can dream about anything, but there is still real-life. And in this life, what are we? It turns out that some people believe they are ascetics, even though they can’t stand their neighbors. They think they are ascetics even though they envy. They think they are ascetics but they pity themselves. Yes, sometimes we think we are ascetics, it happens but where are we going?

We need to understand where to go. Higher and higher? No, my dear, is it is not that simple. Let us be grateful to God for these holy Lenten days, for God’s love for us, for giving us strength to attend the service. And I hope we will continue to attend all the services until next Sunday.

This morning we only stood for seven hours. But in heaven it will be necessary for us to glorify God for all eternity. Are we able to do it now? Of course not. And so, we rely on the love of God, which we have received today in Holy Communion, and which gives us the opportunity to look forward to the next day. And all these days, all these events, whatever they may be, lead us to the point where we will be left alone before God.

I imagine myself in a coffin in this church. Where will I go after I die? That is the question. Nothing else matters. People lose their jobs. Some lose money. None of this really matters from the prospect of eternity! But when I'm already in the grave, will my soul be able to fly free? Will I be able to remember about resurrection and the life of the age to come when I am dying? Will I be able to remember? That is the question. Everything else is rubbish. Do not dwell on other things, as they say. Do not focus on them. Think about what is really important: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)

Fasting is our preparation for resurrection. So, our path to resurrection continues. Try to hear at least a few words of the prayers in church services during this journey. Not all of them. Maybe someone is able to hear everything. But most of us are spiritually deaf, deaf because of sin. So, it's hard to hear anything and to keep these words in our hearts. But we have that beauty that we have in Orthodoxy, in the Orthodox Church, the fullness of life, which indeed, raises up Abraham from stone.

Having all of this, we are obliged to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We are simply obliged to. Even if you do not want to, we still pray: "O Lord, whether I will or not, save me". I don't know if there is anybody who the Lord does not want to save. He wants to save everyone.

Do you know him who will be saved first? The one, who thinks he is the weakest. Whoever thinks he is the most sinful will be the very first to enter the kingdom. That's what is interesting, you see. Very interesting. I'll tell you a little story, sorry for holding you up, but I was really struck by it. Should I tell you? It will not take long, just one little story. It is amazing. The story was told to me by the sisters of the Pskov-caves monastery.

Once, there was a monk, but he was negligent. He got kicked out because he was drinking. In general, he was not a good monk. He got kicked out, and lived like a homeless man until he died. He was buried somewhere in the city cemetery, on the outskirts. Three or four years have passed. And Archimandrite John Krestiankin said: "This. Is not good. He was a monk, he was our brother he must be buried in caves like the other monks". Can you imagine what happened next? They dug up this negligent homeless monk's casket, opened it, and found that his relics were incorrupt and fragrant.

You see what happened? This is the way God is. This is why I told you this story. God's ways are different than man's ways. This is why the Scripture says: "What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God". (Luke 16:15) I'm not saying that you have to become homeless or start drinking. I am just saying that God's ways differ from our ways.