



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

November
2009

Chancellor's Update

The Gift of Reconciliation Part II

"In October's Update, we discussed why bishops must stress *The Gift of Reconciliation*. This month we quote from Metropolitan Simeon, beloved arch-pastor of the Holy Bulgarian Orthodox Church, a Prelate of our Order, and friend of His Holiness Pope Paul John II ([photo archives of our Order and pictures in the book show the two working together on ecumenical issues](#)). In his book, *GOD'S GRACE in the Spiritual Life of the Church Shepherd*, Metropolitan Simeon gives a profound insight on the importance of the Sacrament of Penance ([Pages 175-177](#)).

"St Tikhon of Zadonezh appeals to the sinful soul to repent with the following wonderful words: "Look up you, sinful soul, at the image of your Savior and Redeemer and listen to Him, calling you to Himself, without paying any attention to your having forgotten Him: 'Hey you man, My creation! I am your God, I am your king! I have come down from heaven in order to raise you to heaven: "Follow Me!" I have lived on the earth in order to make you an inhabitant of the heaven! I had no place where to lay My head in order to bring you into the home of My heavenly Father."

"Follow Me!" I have been laboring to lead you to eternal peace. I became poor in order to make you rich. I have been weeping, I have been ill, I have been grieving and mourning in order to offer you true comfort, joy and mirth. "Follow Me!" I have been bound in order to release you from the bonds of the sins. I have been defamed, profaned and dishonored in order to be able to bring respect and fame to you; "Follow Me!" I, the Judge of the living and the dead, have been on trial and have been convicted, in order to save you from the eternal court: "Follow Me!" I have been convicted along with the illegal ones, in order to prove your innocence. I have experienced death, the death on the cross, in order to bring back to life you, My creation: "Follow Me!" I have risen from the dead, that you may rise from the dead in soul and body. I have ascended to the heaven, that you too may ascend to it. I have seated Myself on the right hand side of God the Father, that you too may become famous: "Follow Me!" I have in everything likened Myself with you, except in the sin, that you too may be like Me: "Follow Me!" I have come to you in order to draw you to Myself, My dear fallen creature: "Follow Me!" Do you see, man alive, what love I have shown you! Do you also see My providence for you! That is why I do want nothing from you, except that you be noble and follow Me and thus receive salvation with eternal glory. Follow Me, Who is hungering and yearning for your salvation and I shall give you My salvation. Come to love My poverty and you shall be really rich. Come to love My humility and you shall be really glorious and great. Come to love My gentleness and patience and you shall be in real peace and rest. Renounce yourself - and you shall become a true master of yourself. Forsake the comforts of the flesh and of the world - you shall then have real comfort. Forsake

transient wealth - and you shall have the imperishable one. Forsake earthly honor and glory - and you shall have the heavenly one: "Follow Me!" And I shall bring you into My eternal kingdom, to My eternal heavenly Father: "No one comes to the Father, except through Me" (John 14:6).

“"So then, you sinful soul, listen and show attention to the voice of Him, Who loves you - the Redeemer Jesus, and follow Him!.... You lecher, adulterer and admirer of filth! Hear the voice of the Lord: "Repent and follow Me!" You wicked avenger and murderer! Hear the voice of the Lord: "Repent and follow Me!" You scoundrel, spoiler, robber and ill-wisher! Listen to the voice of the Lord: 'Repent and follow Me!' You dishonest swindler, hypocrite and sinner, living in impenitence! Listen to the voice of the Lord: "Repent and follow Me!"”

“In this moving appeal for repentance of the sinful soul, St Tikhon reveals the great mercy of God in the sacrament of penitence, in which the Savior has shown the inexhaustible depth of His kindness and love of man.

“How great and unfathomable is the wonder of God's love! A man comes to his spiritual father, burdened with sins, and when he reveals them to him, he goes home freed from them! Thus Jesus Christ, through the shepherd in the Church, appeals to all the sinners to repent and mend their ways. He who opens the ears of the soul and follows the divine appeal, he who becomes aware of his sins and turns with penitence to the Lord, he takes in the power of Christ's Spirit Who manifests His beneficial power in the sacrament of penitence.

“Those who are broken-hearted because of their sins and who proceed to confession as spiritually infirm, guilty and defendants are being persuaded by the shepherd in the Church with preliminary prayers to believe in the intercession of the Son of God in a hope for the Lord's compassion, because it is not owing to the confession of the sins, but to the infinite merits of the Savior that the sins are forgiven of those believers who repent.

“In the sacrament of the confession the holy Church, in accordance with the ancient rules, offers an instruction - both to the spiritual doctor and to the spiritually sick one. "He who receives the human thoughts," it instructs the spiritual father (the shepherd in the Church), "must be a model of the good deeds, restrained, gentle, virtuous, should always pray to God to grant him a gift of words and sound reason in order to be able to correct those who have resorted to his help. He should keep the fast as is demanded by God's rules in order that he himself, by keeping the fast, may be able to give orders to the others. If he is himself an ignoramus, unrestrained and voluptuous, then how would he be able to teach them to be virtuous? And who would listen to him when he sees him being dishonest? The eyes are stronger than the ears. So then, watch out for your own person, spiritual father! If a sheep dies owing to your negligence, it shall be disgusted of your hands, because cursed is everyone, says the Holy Writ, who is lax in doing the Lord's work. Saint Basil the Great says: "The spiritual father must be a model of piety and virtue for his spiritual sheep and should forget, during a confession, the external privileges of the repenting ones; he should, for all, be a severe and impartial judge."”

Copyright 2009 by the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Inc. All rights reserved. The O.S.J. Messenger and the Chancellor's Update are among the authorized publications of the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Inc. and the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem-Knights of Malta. World Headquarters and Convent of the Order are located in Reading, Pennsylvania in the United States of America.



Jerusalem 1048-1291, Cyprus 1291-1310, Rhodes 1311-1523, Malta 1530-1798, Russia 1798-1907, U.S.A. 1908-

<http://sovereignorderofsaintjohnofjerusalemknightsformalta.org/>