



ENCYCLICAL

At the Outset of the New Ecclesiastical Year 2013

Our Repentant Love: *Our Greatest Gift to the World*

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Let us give glory and thanksgiving to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, our all-compassionate Triune God, for the gift of yet another year, during which we ought to continue our “ascent” towards “perfection.”

May the prayers of our ever-memorable Elder and Father, Metropolitan Cyprian († May 17, 2013 [Old Style]), through the intercessions of the All-Immaculate *Theotokos*, strengthen, guide, and protect us in this struggle.

Our “ascent” continues in the midst of a society that is becoming ever more uncivilized, ready to “explode” from the pressure of increasing and intensifying apostasy.

Those of us who, despite our sins, have been vouchsafed to behold the True Light of the Holy Trinity—especially, of course, within the Resurrectional Mysteriological life of the Orthodox Church—have practical experience of the following two truths:

a. Our “perfection” is to be equated with love and is that which renders us like unto our Heavenly Father: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father Which is in Heaven is perfect” (St. Matthew 5:48).

• God is “Perfect” because He is “Love.” Man is “perfect” when he is “love,” because a man perfect in love is perfect in fulfilling all of the Divine Commandments: “If there be any other commandment, all are briefly comprehended in this saying, namely: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself’” (Romans 13:9-10).

b. Repentance as a way of life is that which helps us to ascend the three rungs of the ladder leading to “perfection,” with conscientious cultivation of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (cf. St. Matthew 6:1-18). The foundation is the first step (almsgiving), which strengthens the second (prayer), and gives meaning to the third (fasting).

• **If, then,** repentance leads us to love and opens up our being to a universal embrace of all of our brethren, then “the greatest gift we can give to the world is our repentance,” as the Saints assure us.

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These reflections seek to awaken us, as Christians, to our responsibility to the world: that we might resist the “feel-good” culture, reverse the globalization of the spirit of indifference, and cultivate the feeling of empathy and of responsibility to our brothers and sisters.

In our Orthodox Tradition, repentance is never a merely personal matter, since through it “I repent (weep and groan) for the entire history of mankind, from Adam to me, the sinner, since all of history is in my blood; for I am in Adam and Adam is in me” (St. Nicholas [Velimirović]).

Let us give the world its due: this Divine gift of our repentant love, that the world might be pacified, that the world might become one flock, and that the world might be saved.

† *Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi,
Locum Tenens*