The Fifth Friday of the Great Fast

Father Daniel Magulick

"Departing from Your divine commandments as from Jerusalem, and going down to the passions of Jericho, I was led astray by the false glory of the cares of this life. I fell among the thieves of my own thoughts. They stripped me of the robe of sonship that was mine by grace, and now I lie wounded, as though without the breath of life. The priest drew near and saw my body, but he took no heed. The Levite looked at it with loathing and passed by on the other side. But you, O Lord, Who ineffably have taken flesh from the Virgin, have of Your own will poured out blood and water from Your side for my salvation; and as with oil, You have anointed me. O Christ, my God, bind up my wounds with linen, and in Your compassion bring me to Your heavenly Kingdom."

Vespers on the Fifth Greatfast Friday

How often it is that even the most sincere, as well as the most selfish, of our thoughts and intentions lead us into feelings of emptiness instead of fulfillment, discontent instead of happiness, failure instead of accomplishment, anguish instead of peace. The journey through the Great Fast is not so much to make us feel that we are the worst and lowliest of persons, as it is to make us aware of the danger and futility of trusting only in ourselves. It is a call for us to be honest not only with God, but also with ourselves.

The Holy Great Forty-Days Fast is a journey to help us see that reliance on ourselves and how we think or feel about something so often leads to less than desired results, to temporary rather than permanent peace, joy, and contentment. Saint Basil the Great calls this a "false glory" of humanity. The true glory of mankind—the achievement of peace within ourselves—comes from allowing our thought to be led, guided, and united with Christ, the Wisdom of God. It is a "putting on of Christ" in all that we do. It is an acknowledgement of our reliance upon God to help us achieve what everyone most desires: life, salvation, true inner peace.

From today's reading from the *Book of Proverbs,* we read: "Who lives by himself follows his own whim; he is angered by advice of any kind." *(18: 1)* Saint Basil puts it another way: "Among the gifts given to men, the greatest and most enduring seem to be wisdom and prudence.... If they who have them have not also the Wisdom of God, all their gifts amount to nothing." *(Homily No. 20)* In both cases the message is clear. We need Jesus, the Wisdom of God, to heal us and make us complete. To ignore His advice is to amount to nothing, truly a false glory.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 45:11-17
Genesis 22:1-18
Proverbs 17:17 - 18:5