

We are all sinners,
And without this humble recognition,
We will never be healed by Christ.

Yet at the same time,
Our sense of unworthiness must not become the barrier between us
And Christ, the giver of life.

These two truths--our unworthiness, and our loving God--must always be kept in our mind, if we are to fulfill the purpose of the Christian life. And what is that purpose?

To become sons of God--to become gods by grace. Holy.
become filled with Christ--to become temples of God.
We have seen this throughout the feasts of the incarnation--that God came to fill our humanity with his divinity,
So that we can trade our earthly life for heavenly life.
We can become holy, through the spirit of God,
Becoming the bearers of God.

This is clear in the life of Today's saint, parthenius,
Who from a young age took the gospel commandments seriously,
Meditated on them, and strove to do them.
He worked many miracles,
Driving out sickness and demons.

Once, the saint prepared to cast out a devil from a certain man, who had been possessed by it since childhood. The demon began to implore the saint not to do so. Saint Parthenius promised to give the evil spirit another man in whom he could dwell. The demon asked, "Who is that man?" The saint replied, "You may dwell in me, if you wish."

The demon fled as if stung by fire, crying out, "If the mere sight of you is a torment to me, how can I dare to enter into you? How can I enter into the house of God?"

This is what it means to become a Christian. We are to become Christ's temple, so that evil cannot dwell in us.

In order to do this, we need an awareness of our sin. St. Paul in today's epistle says the words we say at every Divine Liturgy: "Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

My sin affects the universe. When we sin, it affects the cosmos, it breaks our communion with God and with our fellow man, with the Church, and with creation.

To be restored to a right relationship with all these things we need to have the humility to truly pray and believe that we are sinners.

And we need to receive Christ in the Eucharist.

On the one hand, we should be very careful when we receive the Eucharist, recognizing our sinfulness and trying sincerely to repent.

We all fall into sin, every day, in a myriad of ways, both voluntary and involuntary.

And we must always confess these things as soon as we can, and sincerely repent of them.

This is different from actively living in sin, and not repenting.

If we have a little too much to drink, that is a fall into sin.

If we live to go out drinking many nights a week, that is living in sin.

If we break the fast due to negligence or circumstance,

That is a momentary error--if we choose to forget fasting altogether as unimportant,

That is living in sin.

If we fall into the sin of pornography or lust, or sleeping with someone we're dating--

This is a fall, and we must get back up, confess it, and repent of it,

earnestly seeking not to do it again--

but if we choose to make a habit of such things,

or even to live in the same house with someone who is not our spouse--

then we are actively living in sin.

Living in sin means making no effort to correct or remove the sin, no sincere effort to change.

If we are living in such a way,

we should not approach the holy Chalice until we have repented,

moved away from our sin and confessed it;

otherwise through communing, we actually do spiritual damage to ourselves.

We have to have the humility to acknowledge that we are living in sin, and then make the move to change it, if we want to become temples of God.

At the exact same time however--we cannot and should not let our recognition of our sinfulness and our unworthiness keep us from moving towards Christ!

In the history of the Church, it became common in many places, out of a sense of reverence, to only commune once or twice a year.

While well intentioned, this is not the ideal of Christian life.

We NEED Christ's body and blood, his very life. He said: "Unless you eat and drink of the flesh and the blood of the Son of Man, you have no life in you" and "Whoever eats of my flesh and drinks of my bloods abides in me, and I in him."

Without the habit of regularly receiving communion,

We are cut off from grace, and from the Church. We are not truly in Christ.

Sometimes we approach communion infrequently, citing our unworthiness.

But this is not a good excuse: we are NEVER worthy of the gift of Christ, and every time it is an act of pure love and grace on God's part.

Our unworthiness must not be made an excuse.

The canaanite woman in the gospel is the perfect example. She knows she, as a non-Jew, is unworthy to approach Christ, who was then understood only as the Jewish messiah and not fully as the the Son of God. She knew she was Unworthy, and was even called such.

Yet she doesn't deny, doesn't get defensive. But she Also doesn't give up.

She only wanted the breadcrumbs of Christ's presence.

We are offered the whole feast, in the life of the liturgy, and of the festal cycle of the Church. We are offered Christ's whole life.

What do we do with it?

Two questions we must continually ask ourselves.

Am I living in sin?

Am I setting up aspects of my life for sin to grow and flourish?

Sin is to “miss the mark, “so this happens in all of us--we have to have the humility to see our unworthiness, and make the change.

Am I allowing my sense of unworthiness to keep me from the chalice? From Church? From a house blessing? From prayer?

Follow the example of the canaanite woman,
who impressed the lord with her faith.

Her desire for Christ was greater than her shame.

Her love was greater than her pride.

Her humility was greater than the apostles.

We must draw near, and confess,

“I am the first of sinners,”

And then received the medicine, the body of Christ,

For this is why he came, to save sinners, of whom I am chief.