

Sermon on Holy Friday *by Archimandrite Luke*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

Dear brothers and sisters!

On this day, St. Theodore the Studite calls our attention to the fact that “while the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ when they are recalled are always able to pierce the soul, they do so especially in these present days, on which each of them reached its end. What then are they? The murderous council against Him, the Jewish arrest, His being led away to death, His arraignment before Pilate's tribunal, the interrogation, the scourging, the blows, the spittings, the insults, the mockeries, the ascent of the Cross, the nailing of His hands and feet, the tasting of gall, the piercing of His side and all the other things which blazed forth with them, which the world cannot contain, nor can anyone worthily proclaim, not human tongue, nor even all the tongues of angels together.”

Each year we approach the Lord's sufferings and are brought to contrition over the Lord's coming to the world. Often do we hear that “the Lord was crucified because of our sins.” But how did this happen?

In Gethsemane, the Lord told His disciples: “be vigilant, lest ye fall into temptation.” More often than not, it is precisely in this that lies the essence of our problems.

With carelessness and without thorough reflection do we receive every thought that instantly comes to mind, not thinking about the consequences of our decisions. This carelessness tells us that everything will pass, or that we will somehow be able to make amends for our sins before God, even though our conscience may tell us loud and clear that this is not so.

All of us have a choice, we have a great gift, the gift of free will. We have the freedom to make our decisions; and yet, we are oblivious to the voice of our conscience.

For example: Pilate knew that before him stood a righteous man, even his wife warned him to not cause any harm to Christ. However, out of the desire to please the crowd, out of his love for power, or even out of cowardice, he gave up the Savior to be tortured. Or the Sanhedrin... They knew Who stood before them, they knew how many people the Lord had healed and resurrected, but

out of envy they thought they could destroy the Savior. The same happened with the crowd, who instead of asking for Christ to be released, asked instead for Barrabas, and afterwards cried out: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Even Judas, a friend and disciple of the Savior, found in his mind a justification in order to betray him for a miserable sum: 30 pieces of silver.

And we, brothers and sisters, are exactly the same!

Each of us has power, authority. Parents have authority over their children; priest, over their flock; employers have authority over those who are under them. In every circumstance, man has a choice.

It's true, it's not easy to make decisions, but we have always to make an effort for our decisions to correspond to the Gospel's principles.

Throughout this week, the Holy Church glorifies God's patience.

But let's be honest, is there any reason for the Lord to be patient with us any longer?

The Lord could call legions of angels in order to destroy all of us, and it would be a just decision. And yet, he suffers us!

And we, on the other hand, are not patient with our neighbors!
Are parents patient with the mistakes of their children?
Are priests patient with the sins of their flock?
Do any of us have any patience with our neighbors around us?
Are we patient with ourselves?

So, how does God's judgment differ from our own «just» judgment?

It differs in the fact that God always judges with Mercy. And do any of us have the same mercy? Do we have patience?

If during those times people thought, just for a minute, about mercy, if their minds were vigilant, then the course of history would have been much, much different. But they didn't do so.

Let us then, brothers and sisters, today not only lament before the Winding Sheet, but also have the decisive intention to overcome our thoughts; to first think, and only then, to speak, and to show mercy and patience in all our actions, in order not to fall into eternal damnation. Amem.