



**THE GATEWAY OF REPENTANCE  
GREAT LENT – HAVE MERCY UPON  
ME**

***A JOURNEY TO THE NEW JERUSALEM***

The “Triodion” (book of three odes) is the hymnography begins the Pre-Lenten Sundays and is used through Holy Week. The Pre-Lenten Sundays outline the meaning of Repentance as a life changing experience of God, a *meeting of the Lord* which puts us on the right path

- ❖ The Publican of the Pharisee - Humility
- ❖ The Prodigal Son – the realization that I am outside of God’s presence and need to return
- ❖ Judgment Sunday – Repentance cultivates love put into action for everyone
- ❖ Forgiveness Sunday – Returning Home to God and our brothers and sisters

**Open unto me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life; for my spirit rises early to your holy temple, bringing the temple of my body, all defiled. But make me clean, O Compassionate One, by your tender mercy.**

**Make straight before me the ways of salvation, O Theotokos; for I have polluted my soul with shameful sins, squandering (exhausted, spent) all my life on frivolities (spiritual indifference, slothfulness, laziness). By your intercessions, deliver me from every uncleanness.**

**As I ponder the multitudes of dreadful things that I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble for the fearful day of judgement. But confident in your merciful compassion, like David I cry to you, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, in accordance with your great mercy.**

The “Hymns of Repentance” appear in the Triodion by the 14<sup>th</sup> Century but were in use prior to that.

Even though a set of hymns, they are an importance liturgical prayer, as such, the House of God is the place we ‘cry’ out to the Lord. It is only sung during Matins before the Liturgy begins after the reading of the 50<sup>th</sup> Psalm. It is a poetic prayer based upon psalm 50 as well as a lesson is repentance

**Open unto me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life; for my spirit rises early to your holy temple, bringing the temple of my body, all defiled. But make me clean, O Compassionate One, by your tender mercy.**

**Make straight before me the ways of salvation, O Theotokos; for I have polluted my soul with shameful sins, squandering (exhausted, spent) all my life on frivolities (spiritual indifference, slothfulness, laziness). By your intercessions, deliver me from every uncleanness.**

**As I ponder the multitudes of dreadful things that I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble for the fearful day of judgement. But confident in your merciful compassion, like David I cry to you, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, in accordance with your great mercy.**

**Open unto me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life; for my spirit rises early to your holy temple, bringing the temple of my body, all defiled. But make me clean, O Compassionate One, by your tender mercy.**

- ❖ My desire for repentance
- ❖ My acknowledgement that my sin has depleted God's life in me
- ❖ I approach Christ, who is the Temple with my temple defiled
- ❖ A plea for God's Mercy

**Make straight before me the ways of salvation, O Theotokos; for I have polluted my soul with shameful sins, squandering (exhausted, spent) all my life on frivolities (spiritual indifference, slothfulness, laziness). By your intercessions, deliver me from every uncleanness.**

- ❖ To admit the need for intercessions from the Mother of All Christians, the virgin Mary. She is a symbol of the Church
- ❖ A confession of having lost my life through indulging in life-destroying thoughts and activities
- ❖ Asking to be delivered from everything that defiles us.

**As I ponder the multitudes of dreadful things that I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble for the fearful day of judgement. But confident in your merciful compassion, like David I cry to you, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, in accordance with your great mercy.**

- ❖ A cry for God's mercy and compassion realizing the judgment we are under



## Gates of repentance – Humility – to see oneself in the eyes of God

- ❖ Created *beings* called to be re-created in Christ
- ❖ Considering oneself no better than another - knowing oneself in Christ
- ❖ Pride – we consider ourselves righteous in our own eyes.
- ❖ The Pharisee “praying to himself,” he is alone, sees no sin in himself, no need for help from God, no dialogue, no “meeting” the Other

St. Isaac the Syrian: “No one can feel his weakness unless even a small temptation ...is allowed to assail him – and he is granted deliverance from it. For then he sees clearly the futility of his own efforts...that deliverance came independently of it all (his own efforts). Hence he is shown that by himself he is nothing and is saved by God’s help alone.”

## Gates of repentance – Humility – to see oneself in the eyes of God

- ❖ Created *beings* called to be re-created in Christ
- ❖ Considering oneself no better than another - knowing oneself in Christ
- ❖ Pride – we consider ourselves righteous in our own eyes.
- ❖ The Pharisee “praying to himself,” he is alone, sees no sin in himself, no need for help from God, no dialogue, no “meeting” the Other

St. Isaac the Syrian: “No one can feel his weakness unless even a small temptation ...is allowed to assail him – and he is granted deliverance from it. For then he sees clearly the futility of his own efforts...that deliverance came independently of it all (his own efforts). Hence he is shown that by himself he is nothing and is saved by God’s help alone.”

# AN APPEAL TO GOD'S MERCY – GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME THE SINNER

Three Sundays, the Blind man, the Canaanite women, the Publican – God be merciful to me

“This is the prayer that reaches the heart of God because it comes from the heart of man that knows his poverty apart from God.” (Fr. Stephen Muse).”

The prayer is directed to the “Giver of Life” as an appeal for help, dialogue fully aware of his loss of Life, of relationship or communion with God

An appeal to God's mercy is a way of stating – “be the way I know you to be towards me” – it implies a knowing of God's heart. (Fr. Hopko)

I see your “holy Temple” and I know my sinfulness has placed me clearly outside its gates, I am not holy.

“I desire not sacrifice, but a crushed and humbled heart O Lord, you will not despise. (Psalm 50)”

Christ is the Living Temple of God – the Temple is the person Christ

MAKE ME CLEAN – receive my confession and forgive me

**Make straight before me the ways of salvation, O Theotokos; for I have polluted my soul with shameful sins, squandering (exhausted, spent) all my life on frivolities (spiritual indifference, slothfulness, laziness). By your intercessions, deliver me from every uncleanness.**

An appeal to help of another – the Mother of all Christians, the Virgin Mary, the pure one, who prays continually for our salvation

Make Straight (εὐθύνον)– guide straight, direct me

The Way (τροίβους) – implies adopting a new direction after taking a *turn* , making a “U –turn”

Great Lent outlines the Ways of Salvation, it is an annual pilgrimage we must all undertake.



*for I have polluted my soul with shameful sins,*

- ❖ I have polluted (unclean because of my sins) my soul with shameful sins, squandering my life in laziness (spiritual indifference)
- ❖ Squandering all Grace - <sup>14</sup>“But after he spent all, there arose a severe famine throughout that land, and he began to be in want. [Lk. 15:14]
- ❖ Healthy shame leads to an inner awareness that I need to repent, I am on the wrong path and need to change
- ❖
- ❖ “For there is a shame that brings sin; and there is a shame which is glory and grace.” (Sirach 4:21)

# HEALTHY SHAME – HUMILITY

On an emotional level, shame often answers the question, “How do I feel about who I am?” This makes sense, in that our experience of *boundaries* forms one of the contours that describe who we are. However, the boundaries we encounter are often far from natural, and can represent the trauma of injuries and insults. The result is the burden of *toxic* shame, a burden of darkness that continues to whisper echoes of its originating event, driving us ever deeper into a place of self-loathing and relentless anger.

“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5)

“Beauty-first approaches always strengthen healthy shame (which focuses on meeting God, theophany,) rather than on self-analysis or on our moral failings... And therefore the real goal of Orthodox Christian soul development is that the soul become orthodox. The soul only develops through a correct and healthy response to God’s pure Theophany – that is, by feeling the right kind of shame in the face of God’s glory....The great hospital of the soul is liturgy because in liturgy we are invited to fall in love with what is most Beautiful...Save us on Son of God, who did rise from the dead...This hymn...is telling us that only those who doxologize, who react in healthy shame to God ...will be saved.” (Patitsas, *Ethics of Beauty*, pg.201)

**As I ponder the multitudes of dreadful things that I have done, wretch that I am, I tremble for the fearful day of judgement. But confident in your merciful compassion, like David I cry to you, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, in accordance with your great mercy.**

- ❖ Pondering the multitudes of dreadful things done
- ❖ Wretch that I am – means being *beaten-down* from the continuous strain of sin

<sup>20</sup>Now if, what I wish not, this I practice, no longer am I working it out, but the sin dwelling in me. <sup>21</sup>I find then the law in me, that, when I wish to do the good that the evil lies beside me. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. <sup>23</sup>But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and taking me captive in the law of sin which is in my members. <sup>24</sup>**Wretched man that I am!** Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? [Rom. 7:20-24]

Saint Chrysostom: "... do not suppose him to be accusing the flesh. For he did not say 'body of sin,' but 'body of death', that is, the mortal body – that which was overcome by death....Wherefore it is not the body which he himself wishes to be delivered from, but the mortal body, hinting as I have often said, that from its becoming subject to suffering, it also became easy to attack for sin."

*But confident in your merciful compassion, like David I cry to you,  
'Have mercy upon me, O God, in accordance with your great mercy.*

- ❖ The fearful Day of judgement – every meeting of the Lord is a Day of Judgment and Salvation – “Let us lift up our hearts”
- ❖ With David, I Cry, **'Have mercy upon me, O God, in accordance with your great mercy.**