

RESPECT, FORGIVENESS AND HUMILITY: PATHS TO UNITY

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“Chaos” is defined as “a state of extreme confusion and disorder”¹ As we look at the world around us we see just such a state. Around the globe we see political, social and, very unfortunately, religious conflict. C.S. Lewis¹ tells us how the Evil One, the separator, the divider accomplishes his work simply by using our own human foibles. For example, to take pride in our own ‘correct’ view of the world around us; to take pride in our being a Christian or to take pride in our own Church Rite (e.g. Eastern, Western) or ethnic tradition (e.g. Latin, Greek, Russian) is actually inimical to the true Christian humility we should be cultivating in our mind and hearts. Such pride separates us from others and Christ, thus working toward accomplishing the work of the ‘evil one.’

The spiritual ethos of the Society of St. John Chrysostom is to lessen the barriers to fellowship between our Apostolic Churches by promoting understanding and appreciation of our various histories and traditions. We pray this would extend to the socio-cultural-political world around us as well. It is critical that we value and respect equally each and every individual in the world, as sons and daughters of God. We know that Christ is the only sinless one. As St. Paul tells the Hebrews (4: 14-15) “Jesus the Son of God: ... For we have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.” This is underscored so beautifully in the prayer of the Orthodox *Trisagion for the Dead*: “for there is no man who liveth and sinneth not and Thou [Christ] art only without sin” Thus we can apply the scripturally inspired popular adage: ‘hate the sin, but love the sinner.’ A true lesson in the humility so needed in the world today.

What better time, then, than during this Paschal Season to help heal world of political, social and religious division by praying Christ’s own words that He uttered from the Cross: “And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Lk 23: 34) As Christ conquered sin and death by His death and Resurrection, we can help in conquering the sins of chaos and division by our unity with and in the forgiving Christ. As the Psalmist (132: 1) notes “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity.”

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¹ Lewis, C. S. (2001). *The Screwtape Letters*. New York: HarperCollins