



CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING TO CHRIST, SON OF GOD, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

By ST. TIKHON

“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”

Psalm 116: 12 [115: 3]

SINCE YOU CAME INTO THE WORLD FOR ALL, O SAVIOR, THEREFORE YOU CAME for me, for I am one of all. You “came into the world to save sinners”¹; therefore You came to save me also, for I am one of the sinners. You came “to seek and to save him who was lost”²; therefore You came to seek me too, for I am one of the lost.

O Lord, O my God and Creator! I should have come to You as a transgressor of Your law. I should have fallen at Your feet, cast myself down before You, humbly begging forgiveness, pleading with You and craving Your mercy. But You Yourself have come to me, wretched and good-for-nothing servant that I am; my Lord has come to me, His enemy and apostate; my Master has come and has bestowed His love of mankind upon me.

Listen, my soul: God has come to us; Our Lord has visited us. For my sake He was born of the Virgin Mary, He Who is born of the Father before all time. For my sake He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, He Who “covers heaven with the clouds and vests Himself with robes of light”³. For my sake He was placed in the lowly manger, He Whose “throne is the heavens and Whose feet rest upon earth”⁴ For my sake He was fed with His mother’s milk, He Who feeds all creatures. For my sake He was held in His mother’s arms, He Who is borne by the Cherubim and holds all creatures in His embrace. For my sake He was circumcized according to the law, He Who is maker of the Law. For my sake, He Who is unseen became visible and lived among men, He Who is my God. My God became one like me, like a man; “the Word became flesh”⁵, and my Lord, the Lord of Glory, for my sake “took the form of a servant”⁶ and lived upon earth and walked upon earth, He Who He Who is the King of Heaven. He labored, worked miracles, conversed with men, was like a servant, He Who is the Lord of all. He was hungry and thirsty, He Who provides food and drink for all creatures. He wept, He Who wipes away all tears. He suffered and mourned, He Who is the consoler of all men. He consorted with sinners, He Who alone is just and holy. He Who is omnipotent toiled and “had nowhere to lay His head”, “He Who lives in light inaccessible”⁷. He was poor, He Who gives riches to all men. He

1 1 Timothy 1:15

2 Matthew 18:11

3 Psalm 104: 2 [103: 2]

4 Isaiah 66: 1

5 John 1:14

6 Philippians 2:7

7 Matthew 8:20; 1 Timothy 6: 16

wandered from town to town and from place to place, He Who is omnipresent and fills all space. And thus for thirty-three years and more He lived and labored upon earth for my sake – I who am His servant. O Son of God Who ceased not to dwell in His Father’s bosom! What did You behold in me of merit? Why did You come to seek me in this vale of tears?

Shepherds search for their lost sheep, but for their own profit. Men seek their lost property, but out of self-interest. Travellers visit foreign countries, but for their own benefit. Kings offer the ransoms of prisoners, but they pay it in gold and silver through their ambassadors, and largely for their own gain. But You, what was it that You found in me, my Lord? What use, what interest, what good did You behold in me that You came to seek me? And it was the King of Heaven and Earth Himself who came, not His ambassadors. God himself came to find and to ransom His servant, not with gold and silver but with His precious blood. Nothing indeed did you find but corruption, weakness, misery, disobedience and enmity towards Yourself.

It would have been a deed sufficiently great, had You come to seek me because I had been lost through no will of my own, wrested from You by force and imprisoned by the enemy. But the marvel is that I, of my own will, am an apostate and Your enemy. I am ashamed to admit as much, but it is the truth: I am an apostate; I have followed in the path of Your enemy. I entered this conspiracy desiring to snatch Your divine honor, I, Your creature, not content that You have dignified me above the rest of Your creation by bestowing on me a rational soul and making me in Your own image, have desired to become God! This great dignity has seemed too mean to me, and I have wanted to become God, to dishonor You Who have honored me, my Lord! I have provoked You exceedingly and insulted Your immeasurable greatness, and in this manner have I become Your enemy. Thus I stand before You, I for whose sake You came to earth.

Beholding in me nothing but my need of salvation, You have come to seek me. For You so looked upon me that my misfortune and my perdition became Your loss, my salvation Your gain. That I should be saved and should attain eternal happiness, this You considered to be Your gain. For Your generosity could not bear to see me in perdition; it impelled You, Invisible One, to descend and to seek me. Not a mediator, not an angel, but You Yourself, my Lord, came to me. You came to me, for I could not come to You. The Shepherd had to come and to labor in order to find the sheep lost in the hills.

You showered upon me Your loving-kindness, my Lord. You sought me disinterestedly, my Shepherd. You loved me without profit, O my God! This indeed is true love: to love without profit, to do good without hope of recompense. Thus did You love me, my Lover: You came disinterested for my salvation.

Oh, what kindness and love, Son of God, Son of the Ever-Virgin! Oh, how great is our joy, poor and wretched men for whose sake our Lord and King came to live among us. God likened Himself to men and came to us for our sake.

“Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!”⁸ O Son of God!

Blessed are the swaddling clothes in which You were wrapped! Blessed, the crib in which You were laid! Blessed are the arms which sheltered “the Infant Who was our God before all time!”* Blessed are the robes which clothed God Incarnate, Who was “arrayed in garments of light”!⁹ Blessed are the eyes that beheld You and the ears that heard You and the hands that touched You, Living Word and Giver of Life! Blessed is the time in which You, O Heavenly King, came down to earth! Yet, by far more blessed are those who see You, not walking on earth, but sitting at the right hand of the Father – Jesus, in Whom now, not seeing but believing, Your faithful on earth rejoice with an ineffable and glorious joy! “whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”¹⁰: Grant that I may see You now with the eyes of faith and honor You through love; that I may look upon You then face to face!

But look, a my soul, and see how the King of Heaven was welcomed by His subjects, in what manner they honored their God Incarnate: what offerings, what thanksgivings, what honors they bestowed on their Benefactor, Who had come to save them, Who performed miracles before them - Who cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, made the paralytic walk and the blind man see; Who straightened the lame and the crippled, Who raised the dead and fed the many thousands who were hungry. Oh, shame covers my face, awe grips my heart, and my tongue trembles to speak! His holy Evangelist cries out in grief: “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”¹¹ And they repudiated him, saying: “We do not wish this man to rule over us.”¹² Terrible and piteous are these words! God in flesh came to His people, and they did not receive Him. The King and Lord came to His servants, and they rejected Him. “Listen, heaven, and harken, earth!”¹³ Men did not accept their God; servants did not receive their Lord; subjects rejected their King! O, my God, all this You knew, and yet You came to save me, perishing; to find me, the lost! You were not turned away by the wickedness and the ingratitude of Your enemies; You surrendered Yourself to Your love and kindness; You were persuaded by my wretchedness.

It was not enough that ungrateful men should reject their Lord and Benefactor. They piled wickedness upon wickedness, cruelty upon hardness. They considered Your divine teaching to be inspired by the devil: “He hath a devil, and is mad: why hear you Him?”¹⁴ They attributed Your miracles to Beelzebub: “This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”¹⁵ Because you mingled with sinners, desiring to win their souls by Your compassion and to save them, they called You a “glutton and a drunkard, the friend of publicans and sinners”¹⁶, and they vomited forth all manner of blasphemies against You, their Lord and Benefactor, against You Who are beyond all glory! Oh, the cruelty and ingratitude of

* Kontakion of the Nativity of Christ, refrain.

⁹ Psalm 104:2 [103:2] (*Psalm references are given in the forms used by English bibles first, then in brackets Russian (and Greek) Bibles*).

¹⁰ 1 Peter 2: 8

¹¹ John 1: 11

¹² Luke 19: 14

¹³ Isaiah 1: 2

¹⁴ John 10: 20

¹⁵ Matthew 9: 34

¹⁶ Matthew 11: 19

men! Oh, the patience and magnanimity that You showed, my Lord! And more – they sought to kill You, their Savior. You beheld their wicked plans, their hearts instinct with hatred. You looked into them, Reader of hearts; yet You suffered in silence. They found an instrument for their designs, Your ungrateful disciple. And he sold them Him Who is without price for thirty pieces of silver. He sold for this paltry sum Him Who is more precious than the whole world, than a thousand worlds! You witnessed this evil design, this iniquitous bargain; and You permitted it, desiring to suffer for my sake, Your unworthy servant, to cleanse me with Your blood, to give me new life by Your death, to honor me through Your disgrace. Glory be to You for all, O my Lover!

You were betrayed and sold; or, to speak more truly, You gave Yourself up to them and freely went to them, knowing all that would follow. And they bound You, the Lord inaccessible to the Seraphim and the Cherubim! They judged You, the Judge of the living and the dead! They insulted and dishonored You, spat upon Your holy face, to which angels dare not lift their gaze! And they buffeted Your cheek and condemned You to death – You, the Life of all! They preferred a robber and a murderer to You, the Son of God, the only good and just One! The people cried with one voice: “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas. Crucify him, crucify him.”¹⁷ Oh wonder! Oh, fearful and unheard-of crime! They led Him out of the city like a condemned criminal, and they hung Him like a villain, between two villains. They put to death the Immortal One, and as He hung on the cross they mocked Him “and wagged their heads”¹⁸. “They fed Your hunger with gall and quenched Your thirst with vinegar”¹⁹. They “pierced Your hands and Your feet and numbered all Your bones”²⁰. And when You expired, they pierced Your side. And then once more they mocked You in death: “We have remembered, that that seducer said, while he was yet alive: After three days I will rise again.”²¹ They placed a guard over Your most pure body and sealed Your tomb. This is what Your people did to You, my Lord; to You Who came to save them!

You suffered their fury, and “like a lamb led to the slaughter”²², You did not open Your lips. The Lord suffered at the hands of His servants, the Creator at the hands of His creatures, the King at the hands of His subjects, the Benefactor at the hands of those who received from Him innumerable gifts, the Just and Innocent at the hands of the lawless. He suffered before Heaven and earth, in the sight of angels and men, before a great multitude of spectators, in the sight of friends and enemies. He suffered, naked and abandoned by all. And because He came into the world for the sake of all, He therefore suffered for me too, for I am one of all, O my Lord! For my sake did he bear so great a humiliation, O my Lord! And who am I, and what am I? “Ashes and clay”²³, a sinner and a worthless slave! Oh, new and unheard-of miracle! Oh, unutterable and ineffable mercy! Incomprehensible indulgence! Arise, my soul, arise! Be filled with awe; humble yourself, bow low and fall at the feet of your Lord! “O sing unto the Lord a

17 Mark 15: 13 – 14

18 Matthew 27: 39

19 Psalm 69: 21 [68:21]

20 Psalm 22: 16 – 17 [21: 17 – 18]

21 Matthew 27: 63

22 Jeremiah 11: 19

23 Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 10: 9

new song, for the Lord has done marvellous things.”²⁴

My Lord and Creator suffered, endured His passion, and died for His worthless servant and lawbreaker. I who broke the law, I the traitor; I who utter insults and blasphemies; I who have given myself up to my enemy, the Devil. I deserve to be spat upon by the Devil; I deserve to be mocked, insulted, buffeted, beaten, tortured, to die for all eternity! But You, my Lord and Sovereign, have suffered in my place. The servant sinned, but my Lord suffered the punishment; the servant erred, but my Lord was scourged; the servant stole, and my Lord offered compensation; the servant was indebted, but my Sovereign paid the debt. And in what manner did He pay it? Not in gold and silver but with His disgrace, His wounds, His blood, His death on the cross.²⁵ For me, wretched and accursed, He bore the curse²⁶, He Who is blessed throughout all eternity. For my blasphemies and my insults, He suffered disgrace, He Who is the Lord of Glory. For me – I who was held captive for sin – He was sold; He Who is beyond price. For me He stood trial and was condemned. For me He suffered death, my Lord and Creator! Glory be to You, glory be to You, glory be to You for all things! I have nothing else to bring to You but this: glory be to You!

You lived on earth, King of Heaven, to lead me to heaven – I who had been cast out of paradise. You were born in the flesh of the Virgin to give me birth in the spirit. You suffered insults to silence the mouths of my enemies who calumniated me. You abased Yourself, You Who are higher than all honors, in order to honor me, the dishonored. You wept to wipe the tears from my eyes. You sighed, grieved, sorrowed to save me from sighing, grieving, suffering pain throughout eternity, to give me eternal joy and gladness. You were sold and betrayed that I might be freed, I who was enslaved. You were bound that my bonds might be broken. You submitted to an unjust trial – You Who are “the Judge of all the earth”²⁷ – that I might be freed from eternal judgment. You were made naked in order to “clothe me in the robe of salvation, in the garment of gladness”²⁸. You were crowned with thorns that I might receive the crown of life. You were called king in mockery – You, the King of all! – to open the kingdom of heaven for me. Your head was lashed with a reed that my name should be written in the book of life. You suffered outside the city gates in order to lead me, one who had been cast out of paradise, into the eternal Jerusalem. You were “numbered with the transgressors”²⁹ – You Who are the only Just One – that I, the unjust, might be justified. You were cursed, the One Blessed, that I, the accursed³⁰, should be blessed. You shed Your blood that my sins might be cleansed away. You were given vinegar to drink that I might eat and drink at the feast in Your kingdom³¹. You died – You Who are the life of all – in order to revive me, the dead. You were laid in the tomb that I might rise from the tomb. You were brought to life again that I might believe in my resurrection. You ascended into heaven in order that I too might ascend into heaven and be glorified in Your kingdom. This You have done for me, Your servant!

24 Psalm 98: 1 [97: 1]

25 cf Philippians 2: 8 “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

26 cf Galatians 3:13 “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.” see also note 30, Gal. 3: 10.

27 Genesis 18: 25

28 Isaiah 61: 10

29 Isaiah 53: 12; Mark 15: 28

30 cf Galatians 3: 10, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” see also note 26, Gal 3: 13.

31 Luke 22:30

“O Lord! ... What is man that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that Thou visitest him?”³² Man is “dust and ashes”³³ and the destroyer of Your sacred law. Yet You have honored him, who has dishonored You, Lord and Creator! You have benefited Your creature, my Creator! You have forgiven Your servant, my Master! You have found Your lost sheep, my Shepherd! You have called the one who had been rejected; You have released the one who was in chains, O my Liberator! You have restored to life the one who was dead, O my Life! You have raised the fallen one, O my Strength! You have honored the dishonored one and have defended the defenseless one, O my Intercessor! “thou hast loosed my bonds. ... I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving”³⁴ I offer thanksgiving for Your grace. I kiss Your love of mankind. I adore Your kindness and Your mercy. I pay homage and sing praises to Your ineffable condescension!

How shall I repay Your generosity, O my Lover? “What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me?”* Had I died a thousand times for Your sake, it would be as nothing. For You are my Lord, my Creator and my God, and I am but “clay and ashes”, a sinner and a worthless servant, deserving of all manner of deaths, not alone in time but in eternity. How shall I thank You, my Lord, my Lover, my Intercessor, my Liberator, my Redeemer? How shall I reward You, Who did not spare Yourself, but for my sake gave Yourself up to dishonor, insult, mockery, infamy; to be spat upon, condemned, scourged, wounded, crucified, put to death that I, poor wretch, should be made joyful? How shall I reward You? I who possess nothing that is my own except for my corruption, my impotence, my sin. My soul and body – my nature – Is from You – Yours, but alas, corrupted and spoiled by me. The counsel of the Evil One and my own will have corrupted me. I shall offer You a grateful heart, and that alone You desire of me. But even this thing I cannot do without You. For without You I cannot know You, or having known You, love You.

Oh, how poor, how indigent I am! how weak, miserable, corrupt! Oh, how deeply my enemy has wounded, how he has broken me! But O my Liberator, forgive me! For You have loved me and have given Yourself up for me. Forgive me, and enlighten me, that I may know You in Whom is my life. Kindle the love of You in my heart; “set my feet upon the rock; and order my steps”³⁵, so that I may follow You, my Liberator and my only Leader, guiding me to heaven and to eternal life. Draw me after You, O burning Love! Let us run in the path You have trod! I will follow the scent of Your myrrh.³⁶ For wherever You are, there shall I also be, I, the servant whom You have redeemed, so that I may behold Your glory. O Merciful, O Generous, O Lover of men, give me the heart that is able to follow You; guide me along Your ways, along the path of Your chosen ones; lead me after You by Your Holy Spirit! “Thy good spirit shall lead me into the land of righteousness.”³⁷

You have accomplished a deed so sublime that my mind cannot grasp it! You, the Lord, the King of Heaven and Earth, have come down from Heaven, and have given Yourself flesh of the Virgin Mother of God, and have suffered, have been crucified, have shed Your blood, for me,

32 Psalm 8: 1, 4.

33 Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 10: 9

34 Psalm 116: 16 – 17 [115: 7 - 8]

* Psalm 116: 12 [115: 3]

35 Psalm 40: 2 [39: 3]

36 cf Song of Songs (Song of Solomon) 1:4 “They have drawn thee; we will run after thee for the smell of thine ointments. The king hath brought me into his chamber. Let us rejoice and be glad in thee; we will love thy breasts more than wine; uprightness hath loved thee.”

37 Psalm 143: 10 [142: 10]

for the sake of Your servant! What a sublime, a sublime wonder!

I believe and I confess, I acknowledge and I preach, and I marvel that so great a love has been shown me! O Lover of men, my Lover, grant me, a sinner, yet another favor, I humbly implore You: cleanse me of all my sins with Your precious blood, the blood You have shed for the sake of Your sinning servant. Confirm me in fear of You, and in love of You. Grant that I may follow in Your steps through faith and charity. And guard me by Your strength from my enemies, who seek to stay my feet and to turn me from You, O Redeemer. "And Thy mercy" O Lord, "will follow me all the days of my life"³⁸: so that, being preserved by Your grace, I shall offer You thanksgiving, face to face, with Your chosen ones, and shall sing, and praise, and glorify You, with the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit, unto endless ages. Amen.

FROM ST. TIKHON'S WILL

Glory be to God for everything!

Glory be to God for having created me to His image and likeness.

Glory be to God for having redeemed me, the, fallen.

Glory be to God for having extended his solicitude to me, the unworthy.

Glory be to God for having led me, the sinner, to repentance.

Glory be to God for having offered me His holy words, like a lamp in a dark place³⁹,
thus setting me on the path of righteousness.

Glory be to God for having illumined the eyes of my heart.

Glory be to God for having made known to me His holy name.

Glory be to God for having washed away my sins through the bath of baptism.

Glory be to God for having shown me the way to eternal bliss.

The way is Jesus Christ, Son of God, Who says of Himself:

"I am the way and the truth and the life."⁴⁰

Glory be to God, that He has not brought me to perdition through my sins,
but suffered them because of His kindness.

Glory be to God for showing me the vanity and emptiness of the world.

Glory be to God for helping me in various temptations, misfortunes, and calamities.

Glory be to God for protecting me in accidents and mortal dangers.

Glory be to God for defending me against the Devil, who is the enemy.

Glory be to God for raising me when I was prostrate.

Glory be to God for comforting me in my sorrow.

Glory be to God for converting me when I was erring.

Glory be to God for punishing me as a father.

Glory be to God for announcing to me His last Judgment,
that I might fear it and repent of my sins.

Glory be to God for revealing to me eternal torment and eternal bliss,
that I might flee the one and seek the other.

38 Psalm 23: 6 [22: 6]

39 2 Peter 1:19

40 John 14:6

Glory be to God for offering to me, the unworthy one,
food which strengthened my body,
clothing which covered my nakedness, a house wherein I found shelter.

Glory be to God for all the other benefits He granted me for my comfort and sustenance.
I received benefits from Him as often as I breathed.

Glory be to God for everything!

Now, my brethren, I address my words to you. I cannot speak to you as I did formerly, with my voice and my lips, for I am silent, and my breath is spent. But I can talk to you by means of this short letter.

1. The temple of my body has been destroyed, and earth returns to earth, according to the word of God: “Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.”⁴¹ But with the holy Church, I expect resurrection from the dead and the life of the world to come. My hope is sitting at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ, my Lord and God. He is my life and resurrection. He says to me: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall not die but live.”⁴² With His voice will He awaken me from my sleep.

2. I have gone away from you according to the way of earthly things; I have departed, and we no longer see each other as we did before. But we shall see each other in that place where shall be gathered all the nations that have lived from the beginning of the world and to its very end. O God, grant that we may see each other there, where God is seen face to face⁴³, and gives new life to those who see Him, and comforts and gladdens them, and gives them ineffable joy for all eternity. There do men shine like the sun; there is true life; there is true honor and glory; there is true joy and gladness; there is true ecstasy, and all that is eternal and endless. “Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in thee.”⁴⁴

3. I greatly thank my benefactors, who did not forsake me in my weakness and misery, but out of their mercy and love, provided me with their goods. May God render to them their kindness on the day when all shall be rendered their due.

4. I have forgiven, and I forgive, all who have offended me; may God forgive them in His gracious mercy. I too pray to be forgiven wherein I have offended anyone, being a man. “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven,”⁴⁵ God has said.

5. As I have no belongings, nothing remains after me. I pray that those who lived at my side and served me may want nothing.

Pardon, my beloved, and remember Tikhon!

41 Genesis 3:19

42 John 11:25

43 1 Corinthians 13:12

44 Psalm 33:22 [32:22]

45 Matthew 6:14