

Holy Friday 04.13.12 (segment)

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We the humans murdered Christ and now that He is laid in the tomb we have to make a choice between these two, either the helpless truth of this world or the almighty, charming, guile spirit of the world that has bewitched the mankind, promising various pleasures. Either one or the other, the bread or the cross. There is no other way out for us. We know many righteous, moral, noble and religious people who lived in the world and the crucified robber was the first to inherit the Heavenly Kingdom. We often say this and we'll say it again today, that we should always keep in our minds, especially during the Holy Week, the way the crucified robber was able to see God in Christ. What a wonder! He saw perfect love and perfect truth and in this perfection of love and truth he perceived the almightiness and the omnipotence of God. Christ's purity, truth and love is so great and evident, that it's impossible for a human being to stay cold-hearted once he opens up his heart to God. It's impossible for him not to choose Christ, not to seek unity with Him and not to want to be called His friend, brother or child. But we should not be self-seeking. Godless people often ask the question - "You the Christians want to be with God because in future you want to enter the paradise. You are being self-seeking. You have no other choice. If you do not obey Christ you can't enter the paradise. This is why your relationship with God is self-seeking." - This is not right! This is not fair! Not knowing the answer to this means that we ourselves don't understand Christianity. This has absolutely nothing to do with being self-seeking. In order to be with God in eternity, you should personally resemble Christ. As per teaching of Paul the Apostle, "Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ". You should resemble Christ. You should seek personal relationship with Him and you have to turn this into your life purpose. In order to have a personal relationship with Christ you must resemble Him in high moral standards that He showed, in humility. He says "I am meek and lowly in heart". Humility that He showed is not easy. It requires an amazing self-sacrificing devotion and a huge perseverance. How can you think of being self-seeking in a struggle where your entire inner world is risen against you, and not just your inner world, the more you try to resemble Christ, the more the entire world rises against you. In the best-case scenario if you'll be able to say like Paul the Apostle "Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ", the world will behead you just like him. How can you think of being self-seeking? Some may not like this, saying, "Father, what are you talking about? We came to almighty God because we have our own problems." So is this why we came to God? At the beginning we may come with our issues, but later this has to turn into loyalty to humanized God, up to Golgotha. Being in a constant relationship with sweet Jesus should be your purpose and your goal. Otherwise you are not a Christian. You may not experience this for a couple of months or years but when it's been ten, fifteen or twenty years already and you call yourself a Christian and this hasn't even been started yet, then comes the question, "Why are you here?" How long can one pretend to be a Christian? I often say this to every single person who comes here, every newcomer and to people who don't go to church. This is a very important issue and in the first place for us, the Christians and especially for the clergy. We have a big mission today. It's our duty to do the missionary work. We have to present the church the way it should be in reality. And what do we do instead? I've often told you and I'll repeat again that it's our number one mistake to present the church as a restricting body restraining certain things - "This is not allowed! You can't do this! You can't act like this! Don't say this!" - or there's another thing, when they issue normative acts on how to act, what kind of forms to accept and how to live. Where is the freedom here? One can only be searching God if his degree of freedom is so high that he no more has room on earth. The world is

not enough for a man, he seeks God, the living God, and you're enframing him, so that his heart bursts, his creativity dies, falls down to zero, in the best-case scenario he becomes indifferent to church and after years he leaves, he comes once in a while. In a worst-case scenario, he likes himself as he fulfills the normative acts precisely and he becomes a pharisee, the one who killed Christ today. And one more thing that we the clergy do wrong. People expect someone else to solve their problems with God and they find this someone - church, as a certain corporation playing the role of a mediator between them and God. Let's recall the way we are - "Father, pray for me. Father, serve the panikhida... or a paraklesis." This especially characterizes the irreligious people who ask for certain services for themselves and their departed ones or for their close people, the healthy ones or those in sickness to enter the gates of Heaven. And then we're surprised to hear them saying, "I went to church" or "I go to church". What do you mean you go to church or you went to church? You can neither go to church, nor attend it. You have to be the living part of the church. Church is not an intermediary circle between you and God. Let's understand this well! There is no one between you and God, between you and the crucified sweet Jesus. There is no church, no priest, no saint, not even the Most Holy Mother of God between you and Christ. Church is the meeting place to unite yourself with the Lord. Who is between you and God when you receive Holy Communion? Who is between you and God when you receive the body and blood of resurrected Savior? No one! As you receive the Holy Communion you become the living part of the church. You can't go to church, you can't enter it, you are the church and once we become the part of the church, the goal and the purpose of going to church is the crucified Jesus which is laid in the tomb today. What do we mean by saying "laid in the tomb"? It is our duty to stay loyal and devoted to Him like women who anointed Jesus. And this duty has to be motivated not by responsibility but by love. In order to inherit eternal life, one must love God. I want to know, how can you love God which you can't see, can't hear, which is almighty and He does not need your love. How to love God? Love expresses itself only in devotion. How to love? God gave you the means. Abasing himself to death by descending into hell. He's been offended, beaten by the human hand. They hit Him with their hands, their feet, with the stick, they spat on Him. Would you feel sorry for Him? Would your heart burn with compassion? Would you follow Him to Golgotha, to the very end? Or would you say that you don't know Him? Haven't we said that? Haven't we hidden our Christianity just like the apostle Peter saying, "I don't know this man." What state would we be in? Christ - everywhere and in everything we do, whether we're praying, kneeling, fasting, saying confession or receiving the Holy Communion. When you're putting a nail in the wall at home, remember Christ! You should be breathing for glorifying God. And loyalty to Him, I repeat again, to Him the human should be the goal and the purpose of life. This is the main requirement for you to have a relationship with God. "What do I get in return?" - asks the fallen mind of a man. What will you get in return? Nothing. You won't get anything in return. As soon as you ask for something in return, you're not getting anything. "Why?" - a man will ask. Because as soon as you ask, "What do I get in return?", you may not make it obvious in front of everyone but deep inside, you may think of getting something in return for being loyal to humanized God and that's when you get nothing in return. Do you know why? - Because the person truly living a life that reflects loyalty to the crucified one, will never think about getting something in return. Why? Because he has already got it. He already has the resurrected Savior in his heart and therefore has an amazing joy in his heart. The person already has it and expects nothing anymore. Whatever he has will never end, neither in this world nor in eternity. Thus, it's impossible for such a man to be deluded or mistaken, not because he is unmistakable, but because he can't be mistaken in the main purpose of life, that's what I mean. We all sin and make mistakes. It's impossible for anyone to scare him, to break his loyalty to truth and to offend his dignity. Do you know why? Because the Spirit of Christ is present in such person. And if anyone will say - "This can't be in everyone, we're just ordinary people" - we all remember the words of the apostle Paul - "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." As I told you yesterday, one of the greatest virtues in a person is the virtue of courage. Because since He's been crucified, beaten, spat on, humiliated, offended, I must have the inner rebel and the desire to defend my Savior. Today, today! Not two millenia ago. Today, today! The church as the mystical body of Christ. Today, all of this has to happen today, it has to happen at this moment, it should be

happening. I should not be able to put up with such state of the Savior and I should not be able to put up with the evil of my fallen nature crying out - "Crucify him!" or just passing Him by with indifference, saying "I don't have time for him now. Poor him, but I have no time to stand by him". I should be struggling with this within me, not to mention the betrayal of Peter and Judas present in each one of us. May the Lord give us the strength to stay loyal to the crucified one, and since I represent the clergy, I would especially tell myself - May the Lord give me the strength of properly seeing how to be loyal to Christ and through my voice, as of the voice of the clergyman, may this become visible for others as well. Otherwise, what would be the value of me being the priest? It would have no value. And if we live this way, there will always be the resurrected Savior, the Spirit of Christ in our souls, in our hearts, in our entire being, filling us with the joy that this world and its wisdom do not have. Let us be the fools of the world and wise before God. Amen!