

## Lent Devotional April 15, 2019

### SCRIPTURE

#### Philippians 3:1-14

<sup>1</sup> Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard. <sup>2</sup> Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh—<sup>4</sup> even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

### DEVOTIONAL

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In his letter to the church at Philippi, the Apostle Paul reminds the early Christians there to not lose sight of their ultimate goal as members of Christ's Holy Church. Through his own personal example, Paul implores them to stay strong in their conviction as a community and to never lose sight of their ultimate reward. "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

Lent is a wonderful time for us Christians to reflect on that goal by paying particular attention to our spiritual lives and by making adjustments to it where needed. It is a time to build or re-establish the spiritual habits we should be exercising all the time as a Christian community. Most importantly, it is a time to participate in the activities that enable us to stay focused on seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. For according to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, seeking the Kingdom of God is what we are called to do above all else (Matt. 6:33).

This year, may Lent be for all of us a time of spiritual contemplation, renewal, refreshment, and strength as we "press on" and build up within ourselves the virtues that will guide our lives as together we seek God's Heavenly Kingdom and His righteousness.

### LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of laziness, despair, greed, and gossip. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to thy servant. Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.