



St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

Bulletin for Sunday, March 15, 2020

Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality.

To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine

Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against

racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

Weekly Services

Tuesdays at 8:30a - Daily Matins

Wednesdays at 6:00p - General Confession;
First Wed of the Month

(The Church is open at 4:30p for "Open Doors" - during fasting seasons or by appointment).

Thursday at 8:30a - Daily Matins

Saturday at 5:30p - Great Vespers

Sunday at 9:30a - Divine Liturgy

Members of our Parish Council are:

Joseph Barbera - Council Member at Large
Dori Kuziak - Council Secretary
Natalie Kucharski - Council Treasurer
Glenn PenkoffLidbeck - Council President
Kyle Hollis - Member at Large
Roderick Seurattan - Council Vice President

Pastoral Care - General Information

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 866-5802, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

Announcements

Since last Sunday, and through much of this week, I have had several discussions with parishioners about the impact of the COVID-19 on our parish practices. I have talked with our chancellor, and other priests; I have investigated what other dioceses and jurisdictions are doing as well. What follows is list of practices that our parish will be following until, until at such time, we need to make further modifications.

- It is an article of faith that the Holy Eucharist is received for the "healing of soul and body," therefore nothing will change in regards to its preparation, distribution and reception. If anyone has questions about this, please feel free to talk with me personally.
- We have replaced the "common" use cups for receiving the blessed wine with plastic, single use cups. The blessed bread, rather than distributed in a bowl, will be placed on a plate to minimize *multiple* contact.
- All community surface areas (door handles, light switches, thermostates, hand ralls etc.) will be disinfected before each service.
- All glass surfaces for Icons will be disinfected before each service. Please continue to show your respect and veneration for Icons by bowing before the Icon, rather than kissing it.
- When venerating the Cross at the end of Liturgy, please bow when receiving the priest's bless, and refrain from kissing the Cross and venerating the priest's hand/cuff.
- During this period of heightened awareness, parishioners who exhibit symptoms of the virus such as a fever, cough or shortness of breath should seek medical attention (please, beloved, err on the side of caution), and remain home until these symptoms have been treated and subside.

Currently, there are no plans to cancel any services, but the current health situation

will be evaluated each week and appropriate changes will implemented. If you have any further suggestions or concerns, please do not hesitate to talk with me. If, out of an abundance of caution, you choose to self-isolate (not come to services) or to cease receiving the sacraments, please talk with me directly so that I know the current status of your spiritual health and well-being.

To quote Archbishop Alexander, Bishop of Dallas and the South, "I commend each of you to act rationally in every scenario. This is not a season of trial in which to test one's piety through unreasonable faith, but to focus on the greater good of our neighbors, acting with a heightened awareness that our behaviors might impact others."

In Christ's Love,

Fr Steven

Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



William, Sophia, Robert, Ann, Evelyn, Nina, John, Alex, Vincent, James, Luke, Aaron, Kathryn, Veronica, Richard, Darlyne, Irene, Nancy, Susanne
All of our College Students: Alex, Sam, Nadia, Isaac, Jack and Matthew.

- Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and refugees;
- All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalize, those who have no one to pray for them;
- All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.
- All those who have perished due to hatred and intolerance and all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

Many Years! to Matthew Kuziak on the occasion of his birthday.

Today we commemorate:

St. Gregory Palamas. Synaxis of the Venerable Fathers of the Kiev Caves Lavra. Martyrs Agapius, Publius (Pausis), Timolaus, Romulus, two named Dionysius, and two named Alexander, at Cæsarea in Palestine (303). Hieromartyr Alexander of Side, in Pamphylia (270-275). Martyr Nicander of Egypt (ca. 302).

Parish Calendar

Services and Events

March 15 to March 23, 2020

Sunday, March 15

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas
Evangelism and Outreach Ministry meeting
9:15AM Reading of the 3rd Hour
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, March 16

Sabine the Martyr of Egypt

Tuesday, March 17

Alexis the Man of God
9:00AM Bible Study
9:00AM Daily Matins
6:30PM Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday, March 18

Matthew Kuziak
Cyril, Patriarch of Jerusalem
4:30PM Open Doors
6:00PM Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts

Thursday, March 19

The Holy Martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria
9:00AM Daily Matins

Friday, March 20

Righteous Fathers slain at the Monastery of
St. Savas
6:00PM Lenten Compline

Saturday, March 21

Third Saturday of Lent
5:30PM Great Vespers

Sunday, March 22

Buildings and Grounds Ministry Meeting
Sunday of the Holy Cross
9:15AM Reading of the 3rd Hour
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

Monday, March 23

The Holy Righteous Martyr Nicon and His
199 Disciples

Saints and Feasts

March 15

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

This divine Father, who was from Asia Minor, was from childhood reared in the royal court of Constantinople, where he was instructed in both religious and secular wisdom. Later, while still a youth, he left the imperial court and struggled in asceticism on Mount Athos, and in the Skete at Beroea. He spent some time in Thessalonica being treated for an illness that came from his harsh manner of life. He was present in Constantinople at the Council that was convened in 1341 against Barlaam of Calabria, and at the Council of 1347 against Acindynus, who was of like mind with Barlaam; Barlaam and Acindynus claimed that the grace of God is created. At both these Councils, the Saint contended courageously for the true dogmas of the Church of Christ, teaching in particular that divine grace is not created, but is the uncreated energies of God which are poured forth throughout creation: otherwise it would be impossible, if grace were created, for man to have genuine

communion with the uncreated God. In 1347 he was appointed Metropolitan of Thessalonica. He tended his flock in an apostolic manner for some twelve years, and wrote many books and treatises on the most exalted doctrines of our Faith; and having lived for a total of sixty-three years, he reposed in the Lord in 1359.

His holy relics are kept in the Cathedral of Thessalonica. A full service was composed for his feast day by the Patriarch Philotheus in 1368, when it was established that his feast be celebrated on this day. Since works without right faith avail nothing, we set Orthodoxy of faith as the foundation of all that we accomplish during the Fast, by celebrating the Triumph of Orthodoxy the Sunday before, and the great defender of the teachings of the holy Fathers today.

March 16

Sabine the Martyr of Egypt

The holy Martyr Sabine was from Hermopolis in Egypt, and was known for his zeal and piety. During the persecution of Diocletian, he concealed himself with other Christians in a small dwelling outside the city. But when he was discovered, and professed his faith in Christ, he was taken before Arian the Governor, and after he had been tortured he was drowned in the river. Concerning Arian the Governor, See also December 14.

March 17

Alexis the Man of God

Saint Alexis was born in old Rome of illustrious parents named Euphemiatus and Aglaid, and at their request was joined to a young woman in marriage. However, he did not remain with her even for one day, but fled to Edessa, where he lived for eighteen years. He returned to Rome in the guise of a beggar and sat at the gates of his father's house, unknown to all and mocked by his own servants. His identity was revealed only after his death by a paper that he had on his person, which he himself had written a little before his repose. The pious Emperor Honorius honoured him with a solemn burial. The title "Man of God" was given to him from heaven in a vision to the Bishop of Rome on the day of the Saint's repose.

March 17

Patrick the Enlightener of Ireland

Saint Patrick, the Apostle of the Irish, was seized from his native Britain by Irish marauders when he was sixteen years old. Though the son of a deacon and a grandson of a priest, it was not until his captivity that he sought out the Lord with his whole heart. In his Confession, the testament he wrote towards the end of his life, he says, "After I came to Ireland - every day I had to tend sheep, and many times a day I prayed - the love of God and His fear came to me more and more, and my faith was strengthened. And my spirit was so moved that in a single day I would say as many as a hundred

prayers, and almost as many at night, and this even when I was staying in the woods and on the mountain; and I would rise for prayer before daylight, through snow, through frost, through rain, and I felt no harm." After six years of slavery in Ireland, he was guided by God to make his escape, and afterwards struggled in the monastic life at Auxerre in Gaul, under the guidance of the holy Bishop Germanus. Many years later he was ordained bishop and sent to Ireland once again, about the year 432, to convert the Irish to Christ. His arduous labours bore so much fruit that within seven years, three bishops were sent from Gaul to help him shepherd his flock, "my brethren and sons whom I have baptized in the Lord - so many thousands of people," he says in his Confession. His apostolic work was not accomplished without much "weariness and painfulness," long journeys through difficult country, and many perils; he says his very life was in danger twelve times. When he came to Ireland as its enlightener, it was a pagan country; when he ended his earthly life some thirty years later, about 461, the Faith of Christ was established in every corner.

March 20

Photini the Samaritan Woman

Saint Photini lived in 1st century Palestine and was the woman that Christ met at the well in Samaria as recorded in the Gospel according to John (4:4-26). After her encounter with Christ, she and her whole family were baptized by the Apostles and became evangelists of the early Church.

Photini and her children eventually were summoned before the emperor Nero and instructed to renounce their faith in Christ. They refused to do so, accepting rather to suffer various tortures. After many efforts to force her to surrender to idolatry, the emperor ordered that she be thrown down a well. Photini gave up her life in the year 66.

Hymns of the Day



Tone 6 Troparion (Resurrection)

The angelic powers were
at Your tomb;
the guards became as
dead men.
Mary stood by Your
grave,

seeking Your most pure body.
You captured hell, not being tempted by it.
You came to the Virgin, granting life.
O Lord, Who rose from the dead, //
glory to You.

Tone 8 Troparion (St. Gregory Palamas)

O light of Orthodoxy, teacher of the Church,
its confirmation,
O ideal of monks and invincible champion of
theologians,
O wonderworking Gregory, glory of
Thessalonica and preacher of grace, //
always intercede before the Lord that our
souls may be saved!

Tone 4 Kontakion (from the Lenten Triodion)

Now is the time for action!

Judgment is at the doors!
So let us rise and fast,
offering alms with tears of compunction and
crying:
"Our sins are more in number than the sands
of the sea;
but forgive us, O Master of all,//
so that we may receive the incorruptible
crowns!"

Tone 8 Kontakion (St. Gregory Palamas)

Holy and divine instrument of wisdom,
joyful trumpet of theology,
together we sing your praises, O God-inspired
Gregory.
Since you now stand before the Original Mind,
guide our minds to Him, O Father,//
so that we may sing to you: "Rejoice, preacher
of grace!"

*(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the
following)*

Hymn to the Theotokos

All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace:
the assembly of Angels and the race of men.
O sanctified temple and spiritual paradise,
the glory of virgins,
from whom God was incarnate and became a
Child -
our God before the ages.
He made your body into a throne,
and your womb He made more spacious than
the heavens.
All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of
Grace.//
Glory to you!

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him
in the highest!

The righteous shall be in everlasting
remembrance. He shall not fear evil tidings.
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Gospel and Epistle Readings

Epistle Reading

Prokeimenon. 6th Tone. Psalm 27.9,1.

O Lord, save your people and bless your
inheritance.

Verse: To you, O Lord, I have cried, O my God.

The reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3.

"IN THE BEGINNING, Thou, Lord, didst found
the earth in the beginning, and the heavens
are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but
thou remainest; they will all grow old like a
garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up,
and they will be changed. But thou art the
same, and thy years will never end." But to
what angel has he ever said, "Sit at my right
hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy
feet?" Are they not all ministering spirits sent
forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to
obtain salvation?

Therefore we must pay closer attention to
what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.
For if the message declared by angels was
valid and every transgression or disobedience
received a just retribution, how shall we
escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It
was declared at first by the Lord, and it was
attested to us by those who heard him.

Gospel Reading

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas The Reading is from Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-he said to the paralytic-"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Wisdom of the Fathers

Now Matthew indeed saith, that "they brought him," but the others, that they also broke up the roof, and let him down. And they put the sick man before Christ, saying nothing, but committing the whole to Him.

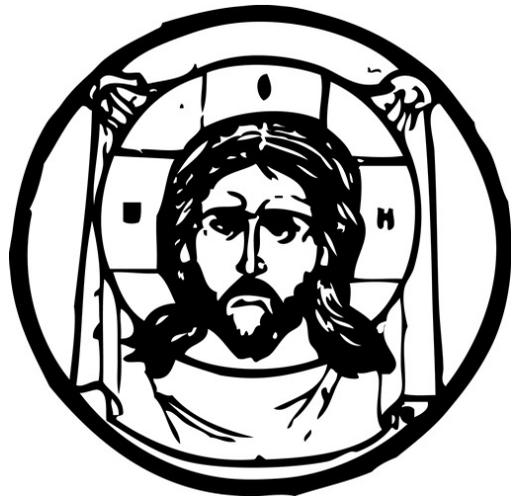
St. John Chrysostom

Homily 29 on Matthew 9, 1. B#54, pp. 195, 196, 4th Century

For though in the beginning He Himself went about, and did not require so much faith of them that came unto Him; yet in this case they both approached Him, and had faith required on their part. For, "Seeing," it is said, "their faith;" that is, the faith of them that had let the man down.

St. John Chrysostom

Homily 29 on Matthew 9, 1. B#54, pp. 195, 196, 4th Century



Beyond the Sermon



Metropolitan Anthony of
Sourzh
SAINT GREGORY
PALAMAS SUNDAY
11 March 1990

In the Name of the
Father, the Son, and the
Holy Ghost.

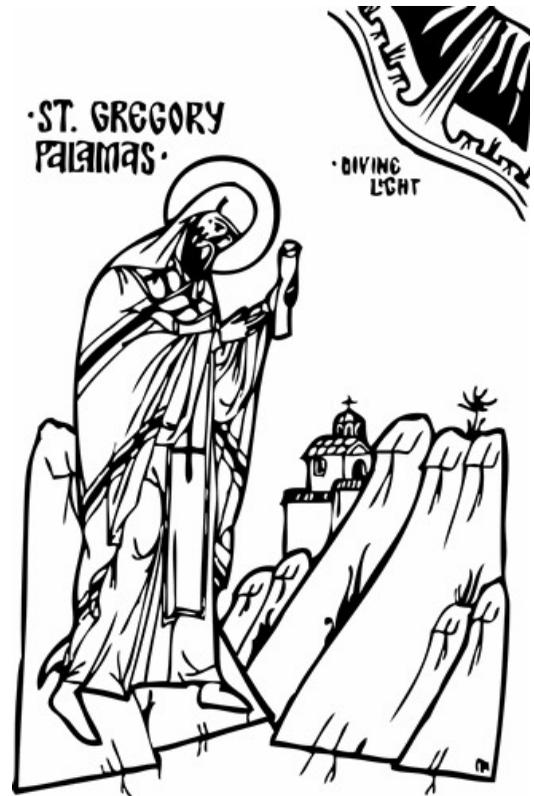
In one of the Psalms we can read the following words: Those who have sown with tears will reap with joy... If in the course of weeks of preparation we have seen all that is ugly and unworthy in us mirrored in the parables, if we have stood before the judgement of our conscience and of our God, then we have truly sown in tears our own salvation. And yet, there is still time because even when we enter into the time of the harvest, God gives us a respite; as we progress towards the Kingdom of God, towards the Day of the Resurrection, we still can, at every moment, against the background of salvation, in the face of the victory of God, turn to Him with gratitude and yet, brokenheartedness, and say, 'No, Lord! I am perhaps the worker of the eleventh hour, but receive me as Thou promised to do!' Last week we have kept the day of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the day when the Church proclaimed that it was legitimate and right to paint icons of Christ; it was not a declaration about art, it was a deeply theological proclamation of the Incarnation. The Old Testament said to us that God cannot be represented by any image

because He was unbottomed mystery; He had even no Name except the mysterious name which only the High Priest know. But in the New Testament we have learned, and we know from experience that God has become Man, that the fullness of the Godhead has abided and is still abiding forever in the flesh; and therefore God has a human name: Jesus, and He has got a human face that can be represented in icons. An icon is therefore a proclamation of our certainty that God has become man; and He has become man to achieve ultimate, tragic and glorious solidarity with us, to be one of us that we may be one of the children of God. He has become man that we may become gods, as the Scripture tells us. And so, we could last week already rejoice; and this is why, a week before, when we were already preparing to meet this miracle, this wonder of the Incarnation, softly, in an almost inaudible way, the Church was singing the canon of Easter: Christ is risen from the dead! - because it is not a promise for the future, it is a certainty of the present, open to us like a door for us to enter through Christ, the Door as He calls Himself, into eternity. And today we remember the name of Saint Gregory Palamas, one of the great Saints of Orthodoxy, who against heresy and doubt, proclaimed, from within the experience of the ascetics and of all believers, proclaimed that the grace of God is not a created Gift - it is God Himself, communicating Himself to us so that we are pervaded by His presence, that we gradually, if we only receive Him, open ourselves to Him, become transparent or at least translucent to His light, that we become incipiently and ever increasingly partakers of the Divine nature.

This is not simply a promise; this is a certainty which we have because this has happened to thousands and thousands of those men and women whom we venerate as the Saints of God: they have become partakers of the Divine nature, they are to us a revelation and certainty of what we are called to be and become.

And today one step more brings us into the joy, the glory of Easter. In a week's time we will sing the Cross - the Cross which was a terror for the criminals, and has become now a sign of victory and salvation, because it is to us the sign that God's love has no measure, no limits, is as deep as God is deep, all-embracing as God is all-embracing, and indeed, as tragically victorious as God is both tragic and victorious, awe-inspiring, and shining the quiet, joyful light which we sing in Vespers. Let us then make ourselves ready to meet this event, the vision of the Cross, look at it, and see in it the sign of the Divine love, a new certainty of our possible salvation; and when the choir sings this time more loudly the canon of the Resurrection, let us realise that step by step God leads us into a victory which He has won, and which He wants to share with us. And then we will move on; we will listen to the Saint who teaches us how to receive the grace which God is offering, how to become worthy of Him; and a step more - and we will see the victory of God in Saint Mary of Egypt and come to the threshold of Holy Week. But let us remember that we are now in the time of newness, a time when God's victory is been revealed to us, that we are called to be enfolded by it, to respond to it by gratitude, a gratitude that will make us into new people - and also with joy! And joy

full of tears in response to the love of God, and a joy which is a responsible answer to the Divine love. Amen!



Metropolitan Anthony Sourozh
On Confession.
1st sermon
12th September 1999

In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I was asked to give a certain number of sermons on Confession; because many come to Confession and repeat only things which they have read in manuals of devotion or which other people have told them about. And I would like to start where I start with a child and attract your attention to the fact that our situation is the same.

When a child comes to Confession, usually he brings either on paper or by memory a long list, or a short list, of sins. And when he has finished, I always say, 'Are these things which break your heart? Are these things which you feel are wrong in you? Did you invent for yourself this confession?' And most of the time the answer is, 'No, my mother gave me this list because that makes her cross!' After that I usually have a conversation with the mother. But as far as the child is concerned, it has nothing to do with him, it is not his confession. It is the judgement which the parents have established, accusations against him. And the same could be asked about grown-up people who come with lists of sins which they have found in manuals, or been told to consider by their spiritual fathers. And the answer is always the same: it is not my confession, yet it is a challenge which I was given.

And then, the next move, indeed, is to ask, 'What do you know of Christ? Does He attract you? Do you like Him? Does He mean anything to you? And the answer is varied. Some say, 'No, I know Him from afar off, I know Him from the Church, from what I was taught, but I never had a personal attitude to Him.' Then the answer is, 'Find out. Read the Gospel and try to find out what Christ is like.'

And the next move: ask yourself, 'Do I like Him? Would I wish to be His disciple, His friend? If the answer is 'no', then begin to think about your whole situation, because if Christ means nothing, if you dislike Him, if He is no image of what you would like to be, then you must start a long, long way away. But if you can say, 'Yes! I like Him, I can respect Him, I can admire Him. Yes, I would like to be His personal friend if He was here,' then my next question will be, 'Do you know what friendship is?' Friendship consists most of all in choosing someone among all the people to be to you the one you treasure above all, whom you admire, by whom you are prepared to stand in case of danger or unpleasantness; one to whom you wish to give joy.

Ask yourself these questions with regard to Christ; and ask yourself, in what way have you tried in the past week to give some joy to the Lord Jesus Christ, or in what way have you been for Him a cause of pain. 'I have loved him to the point of giving My life and My death to him and he does not care at all. Not for My suffering or My death, but for Me'.

If that is the conclusion, begin to re-examine all your status as a Christian. If you can say, 'yes, I choose Him as a friend,' begin to ask yourself every day, every day: what have I done, said, thought, felt, been, which can be to Him a joy or a pain?

And when you will come to Confession that is what you must bring to Confession; between the last Confession and today's Confession this is what I have been: an unfaithful friend, an indifferent friend, a cowardly friend, or on the contrary, no, I have chosen Him for my friend and I stood by Him . . .

Think in those terms; and we will see in the following sermons of mine what else we can think and do, and prepare, to pronounce a Confession that will be your own; the truth, the rock bottom of your life and heart, the truth about your relationship with Christ. Amen.

Metropolitan Anthony Sourozh

On Confession

2nd sermon

26th September 1999

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I have been asked to give a couple of sermons on Confession. This is my second sermon on the subject. When we come to Confession we come to meet a friend face to face. We are not coming to be judged and condemned. We do not come in terror of what will happen. We come to the One who, being God, beyond suffering, beyond death, has chosen, for the love of us, to become Man, to take upon Himself all our human destiny and to give His life for us. His life, His death are to us evidence that we are so loved of God that we can come up to Him whether we are good or bad with hope that He will receive us with open arms; that if anyone is to cry over our unworthiness and our sins it is Him, for compassion, for pity, for love - with a readiness, as He said in a vision to one of the saints, that if there was only one sinner in the world He would again become Man and again die for him, because He cannot endure the thought of anyone perishing.

This is the God, the Christ, to Whom we come when we come to Confession - to the One who is open to us with all His life and death; One who waits for us to come to be healed, to be consoled, to be supported - not to be condemned, not to be judged.

And then, what is the role of the priest? In the prayer which is read before Confession we are told, 'I am but a witness'. What does it mean? A witness to what? To the fact that you have come? That would not be enough. But if you think of what witnesses are: there are accidental, occasional witnesses. You are present in the street when an accident takes place. You are asked: what did happen? You are neither in favour of the ones or the others. You are just telling what your eyes have seen. It's for others to judge and to know.

There are other forms of witness. At times a friend of ours is brought to judgement. And we come to defend him, to testify for him, to save him. That's another kind of witness.

And then there is the witness which the Holy Gospel mentions speaking of St. John the Baptist: as the friend of the Bridegroom, the one who comes to the wedding, invited both by the bride and the bridegroom, because he is the nearest, the closest, to them both. And he is there to share their joy, the miracle of their encounter, the miracle of a blessing that will come upon them and out of two make one, unite them so that they are inseparable for ever in the mystery of eternal love, of divine love shared with them.

This is the position of the priest. He is called by Christ to be before the person, the sinner, a witness to the fact that he, the sinner, is loved, that Christ is there, that He has no other desire or intention but the salvation and the joy eternal of the one who has come today. And the priest comes also in the name of the sinner saying: Christ, my God, our Lord, this person has sinned, yes, but look, he trusts in You, he believes in You, we all love him with the same love as You possess. We are prepared to give our lives for him to be reconciled and find peace and joy and be at one with You, our Lord, our God, our Saviour, our Lover.

When you come to Confession next time, think of these things. Think of the way you come: not with fear of punishment or of rejection but with open heart to pour out everything evil or doubtful there is in this heart. And Christ will receive you. Your confession may be to Him a new crucifixion but He accepts it. He doesn't reject it. He does not reject you. Come, open your heart, speak in all truth to Him, knowing that you are loved beyond judgement, to the point of sacrifice and death: His death, and your life - life in time and life eternal. Amen.