Saint Tikhon of Moscow

INSTRUCTIONS & TEACHINGS

for the American Orthodox Faithful (1898–1907)

Translated and Edited by Alex Maximov and David C. Ford

St. Tikhon's Monastery Press

MMXVI
A SERMON

Preached at the consecration of the New York church on November 10, 1902

I greet you, Russian Orthodox people, with the celebration of the consecration of your temple. The present day is just as joyful for you as once the day was joyful for Israel when instead of the tabernacle the temple of God was erected during the time of Solomon.

And indeed up to now it is as if we have had in New York only a tabernacle. As the tabernacle was taken from one town to another, we, in the same manner, moved here from one place to another with our temple. And as David at one time felt discomfort that he lived in a cedar house while the Ark of God was under the cover of a tent (cf. 2 Kingdoms 7:2, LXX; 2 Sam. 7:2 in the Hebrew OT), so did we lament many times that our temple was poor and crowded and uncomfortable.

Today the end has come to those laments; and our heartfelt sighs that a temple worthy of the Russian people, and in conformity with the greatness of the Orthodox Faith, should be erected in this great city have been heard by the Lord!

Although in its riches our new temple is inferior to many temples of the great Russian land, it has, just as the temple of Solomon, a missionary significance to make up for it. We hope that those of other faiths will also hear about it, and will come to it, and will pray here, and will raise their hands to our God!

Let us give thanks to our Lord, Who is beneficent to us, Who compelled the kind, Russian people to give alms for the construction of this temple, and Who has sanctified it with the grace of His All-Holy Spirit today!

Having tasted that the Lord, Who has helped you to erect this magnificent stone temple, is gracious (cf. 1 Peter 2:3), you yourselves as well, brethren, according to the word of St. Apostle Peter, "as lively stones, are built up into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). In other words, form from among yourselves a church community that is just as firm and sound as your temple.

Up until now, while you have not had this temple, while you only have had a temporary accommodation for it, it has seemed to others, and you yourselves thought at times, that perhaps the entire cause of the Orthodox Church is only temporary here. Today, with the establishment of this temple, these fears are dispersed.

"I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18); "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:20). We believe and hope that these promises of Christ concern our cause here as well, and therefore approach this temple without fear, with boldness, gathering around it and forming a close family, bound by a union of faith and love. You know that the way we have it in Russia is that the temple and the parish are closely tied together. May it be the same with you. Love your temple and visit it often.

The Russian people are known since olden times as God-loving and as lovers of God's holy churches—Holy Russia stands adorned with its temples. Unfortunately, some Russian people, having found themselves abroad, are embarrassed to preserve here the good customs of the Faith of their homeland due to a weak spirit; and by denying these customs, they hope to gain for themselves the respect of the foreigners. A bitter and sad delusion—no one respects an apostate! Not to say anything about what our Lord said about that kind of person: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall
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the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

You, however, are different. Stand firm in the Orthodox Faith, preserve the customs of your homeland, and love the temple of God.

While uniting around the temple, erect among yourselves “a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5), in order to devote yourselves, your soul, your life to the service of God. Do not forget that just as your temple, your community has a missionary significance: “Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people” to proclaim the wonderful light of Orthodoxy to those of other faiths (1 Peter 2:9).

In one of the wonderful prayers during the consecration of the temple, we ask the Lord that the newly erected temple serve us for the “directing of life, for pious living, and for the fulfillment of all truth.” Therefore, at the blessing of your temple I find it timely to entreat you with the words of the Apostle Peter which closely relate to us as well:

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; and have your conversation honest among those of other faiths, so that “they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God” and your Church. “For so is the will of God, that with well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” “As free, yet not using your liberty as a cloak for maliciousness, but as servants of God,” “be subject to your masters,” “honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God.” “And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover a multitude of sins.” “Be you all like-minded, compassionate, loving your brother, merciful, friendly, wise in humility.” “As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, so that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 2:11–12, 15–18; 4:8; 3:8; 4:10–11).

A SERMON

Preached at the consecration of the Syro–Arabian temple in Brooklyn, New York, on October 27, 1902

I GREET YOU, Orthodox Syrians, with the celebration of the blessing of your temple.

On this present joyous day I recall how four years ago I entered your former temporary temple for the first time, and how then the most honorable Fr. Raphael, your rector, on meeting me was expressing sadness regarding the smallness and poorness of the temple you had at that time. To comfort him, I told him that the King of the world Himself was born in a den and laid in a manger; that He spent thirty years in obscurity in a small town in Nazareth in the poor family of the carpenter Joseph; that at first Christianity only had the poor, the lowborn, those of no social status as its followers; that they arranged their temples in simple living rooms and sometimes even underground (in catacombs); and that the holy ascetics as well often started their holy cloisters somewhere in the wilderness and in great poverty. And afterwards, all of that grew, becoming great and famous. Therefore, I said then that the Lord, in His great and rich mercy, will not pass over you either—as long as faith and love for Him do not diminish in your hearts.

And now the merciful Lord has not put to shame our hope in Him. “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners” (Eph 2:19), and there is no longer a need to rent small and uncomfortable quarters for

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A SERMON

Preached at the first service in the New York Cathedral, on September 25, 1905

This present visit of mine to you, beloved brethren, is somewhat different from those in the past. Up until now I have come to you for relatively short periods of time, rather as a guest. Now, however, compelled by the needs of the Diocese and for the benefit of the missionary undertaking here, I am moving, along with the Consistory, to you to reside here. And so, at this time, at the first service in this temple as a cathedral, my thoughts rest on Christ's parable about the talents read here from the Gospel.

A certain man while departing to another country called his servants and gave gifts to them—talents: five to one, two to another, and one to the third person; and upon his return he demanded from them a report of what each one of them did with his gift. Every one of us, brethren, according to the mercy of God, receives talents, gifts from the Lord, one more, the other one less, each according to his ability (cf. Matt. 25:15); and everyone must exert diligence and effort so that these gifts develop and multiply. Whoever does not care about this, whoever buries his talent in the earth, will have his gift taken away, and he himself will be condemned to suffer. He that has ears to hear, let him hear (Matt. 11:15).

The transfer of the archpastoral cathedra to your city and temple has recently been added to the gifts abundantly poured on your parish from the Heavenly Tsar and the earthly Tsar. And this is given to you according to your ability. Your city is second in the world and first in this country. Which nationality is not present here? And how many temples are there of all sorts of faiths! Why should a representative of the true Orthodox Catholic Church not be present here? It is befitting also for the Russian hierarch to live precisely at this parish, which among all parishes is the most Russian. And your temple, which is the biggest and most splendid in our Diocese, should precisely be the cathedral temple.

But while accepting this gift of the Hierarchical cathedra being transferred to you, according to the parable about the talents, you should yourselves care that this gift will not turn out to be useless for you, that it may not be buried without bearing profit, but that it will be useful in your church life, and will be for your benefit.

From now on your parish becomes the first among other parishes, and it should be like this not in word but in deed also. For this purpose you should exceedingly, more than others, love the Orthodox Faith and the temple of God, come to it diligently and care for beautifying it, be obedient to your pastors, live in brotherly love among yourselves; care for the poor, those who are without work; and care for the Christian upbringing and education of children, and for your own personal enlightenment.

May God indeed help you in all of these good undertakings, and may the Lord's blessing be upon you through His grace and love for mankind, now and ever and unto the ages. Amen.

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