

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Throughout the past few weeks, during our forty-day celebration of Holy Pascha, we readily and joyfully repeated the words of a beautiful passage from the Psalms, "This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalms 118 and 95). Actually, the words of the Psalmist are appropriate for every day of the year, for each and every day provides the opportunity for us to rejoice in what the Lord has done for us. Looking to the weeks ahead, as we enter into the summer months, we realize that we should be grateful for what the Lord provides for us- even in the midst of the Arizona summer heat. Every day of the coming summer will be a gift from the Lord. Every day of this summer will provide us the opportunity to grow in our relationship with Him. Every day will invite us to enter more deeply into life in Christ. The summer, with its (usually) slower days and less hectic pace can be a great time for spiritual growth and renewal.

One man learned to see each day of the year as a blessed opportunity for personal change and renewal. The story is told of Alfred Nobel that, one morning in 1888, he was quite surprised to read his own obituary in a French newspaper. Obviously, it was a journalistic mistake. One of his brothers had died, and a careless reporter had used a prewritten obituary of the wrong man. But as he read his own death notice, Nobel was shocked and deeply disturbed to learn what the world really thought of him. He was seen simply as the inventor of dynamite, the merchant of death, who had amassed a great fortune out of explosives. Nobel had hoped his inventions would be useful to people and to nations, but he was seen as the creator of a great destructive force. At that moment, Alfred Nobel resolved to show the world the true purpose of his life. He revised his last will and testament so that his fortune would be dedicated to the recognition of great creative achievements with the highest award going to those who had done the most for world peace. Today, we all associate him with the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded annually by the King of Sweden to a person who has done great things in promoting peace in the world.

Alfred Nobel recognized that there is always time for spiritual renewal. It is perpetually a possibility in our lives. Every day provides the opportunity. It is never too late. It is only a prayer away. It can come, even if we have lost hope.

Through Christ, we all have the chance to be renewed. The Holy Apostle Paul gets this point across by talking about clothing, of all things. But when they talk about clothing, it's not the kind of clothing you might imagine. In Colossians it is written: "Clothe yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator." Clothing symbolizes a new way of life (Romans 13:14). Saint Paul writes: "We must clothe ourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27). "Put on the armor of light," he writes. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's chosen ones, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience... Clothe yourselves with love" (Colossians 3:12, 14).

Let's pray that the coming months will offer us all a time for a break from the usual routine, some needed rest in the midst of the summer heat, and a time for spiritual renewal. Let's take advantage of these weeks and clothe ourselves in the virtues that will draw us closer to the Lord. To repeat the words of the Psalmist: "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us be glad and rejoice in it."

With love in the Lord,

Father David