

## A CHALLENGE TO YOU FROM JESUS CHRIST

**I** am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live.” (John 11:25)

How are Jesus' words a challenge to you? If you're like most people, your life is probably in a rut. You do the same things every day: work eat, sleep, pass the time. By the time most people reach 30 or 35, they feel they've gone about as far as they can go: the only thing left to do is to kill time until time kills you.

Jesus says that life is much more than that: it has a fullness, a richness when it is lived with Him. He says:

*“I came that they might have life... and have it to the full.”*

## WHAT IS "LIFE TO THE FULL"?

**W**hat is this fullness of life Christ promises? What excitement does He offer us? The Bible tells us what this life without limit is:

*“This is eternal life: for men to know You, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ whom You sent.”* (John 17:3)

“But I know about God and Jesus – it hasn't done anything for me!” – and you're right. Knowing God is very different from knowing about Him, just as reading a file about you is worlds apart from being your friend. We are invited by Christ to know Him, to enter into a relationship with Him, to be His friend.

Having this relationship with God and His Son will provide us with enough excitement for an eternity. When we know God we see:

- that God loves us with an endless love;
- that we are made in His image, in His likeness (cf. Genesis 1:26);
- that we are invited to be the adopted sons and daughters of God (cf. Ephesians 1:5) and sharers in His divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:3);
- that the Spirit of God dwells within us (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16);
- that life with Him is a daily progress from glory to glory (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18).

And when we know these things, the trials and disappointments in life fade in comparison. *“If God is for us, who call be against us?”* (Romans 8:31).

## HOW THIS LIFE COMES TO US

**W**e can claim this promised new life from Christ for ourselves and transform our way of living into "Life to the Full" by letting Christ into our lives. He calls to us:

*“Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into his house and eat with him and he will eat with Me.”*

We open the door to our lives by:

- **Accepting Baptism** – *“No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again of water and the Spirit”* (John 3:5).
- **Regularly Receiving His Body and Blood** – *“I tell you the truth: if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His*

*blood, you will not have life in yourselves”* (John 6:53).

- **Involving Ourselves with His Church** – *“Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Whoever listens to you, listens to Me; whoever rejects you rejects Me; and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me’* (Luke 10:16).
- **Allowing Him to Change Our Way of Living** – *“The Spirit has given us life; He must also control our lives”* (Galatians 5:25).

Christ offers us this life: He does not force it on us. The choice is ours to make. I can say:

*“Jesus, I don't trust Your offer of life. I don't think You can change my life for me. I don't believe what You say about baptism and communion. I don't want to be involved with Your Church or change my way of doing things. I'll stay right where I am.”*

Or I can say:

*“Jesus, I don't fully understand Your offer of life, but I trust You. I hear You knocking at the door of my heart and I want You to come in. Because I accept that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, I accept what You say about baptism and communion. I accept how You identify Yourself with Your Church and commit myself to it. Work in me by Your Holy Spirit to change me into a sharer of Your glory.”*

But that is the choice we all must make, once we have truly heard Christ's invitation to a fuller life. Do you choose life? Or refuse it?

This invitation comes to you from a Church of the Byzantine Catholic tradition. Our ways have come down to us from the very first Christians who lived in the Holy Land. We came here with few material goods, but with the treasure of this ancient Christian Tradition. We invite you to share this treasure and in it to discover the life Christ offers us.

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in"* (Revelation 3:20). God knocks, but waits for man to open the door — He does not break it down. The grace of God invites all but compels none. In the words of John Chrysostom: 'God never draws anyone to Himself by force and violence. He wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one' (Sermon on the words 'Saul, Saul...' 6 (P.G. 51, 144)). 'It is for God to grant His grace,' said Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (died 386); 'your task is to accept that grace and to guard it' (*Catechetical Orations*, 1, 4).

But it must not be imagined that because a man accepts and guards God's grace, he thereby earns 'merit.' God's gifts are always free gifts, and man can never have any claims upon his Maker. But man, while he cannot 'merit' salvation, must certainly work for it, since "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17).

Metropolitan Kallistos (Timothy) Ware  
*The Orthodox Church*

We call upon You, Lord our master, come to our help; hear our petition and have mercy on our souls. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, enlighten our mind.

In faith I knock at Your door, answer me in Thy mercy. Open my eyes to behold Your truth and worship Your holy name. Protect my youth, as I have trusted in Your mercy.

Give to me, Lord, a pure heart. Grant to my intellect the wisdom of salvation from Your absolute perfection.

Vest me with a spiritual weapon against the evil one. Seal me with Your holy name and deliver my life from destruction.

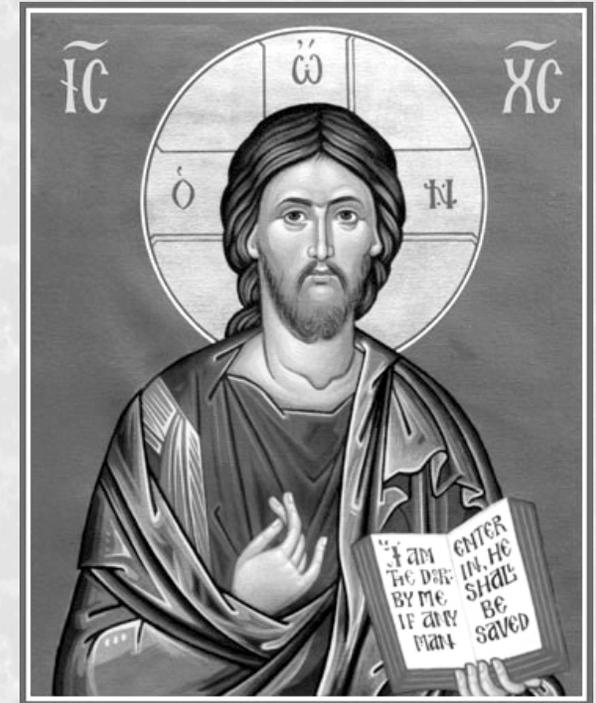
I have followed You with love because of Your goodness, May I not be ashamed. My Master and merciful Father I intend to belong entirely to You, and I adore You.

O Good Shepherd! make me a lamb of Your flock. Glory to Your name, Father of the world and king of life; let my prayers enter before Your majesty like an oblation.

You who hear all and accept petitions, listen to our prayers and have mercy on us.

*From a Hymn of James of Saroug*

# A CHALLENGE TO YOU FROM JESUS CHRIST



OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES  
MELKITE EPARCHY OF NEWTON  
<http://melkite.org/>

Iconography © Convent of St. Elizabeth  
the Grand Duchess of Russia  
<http://www.conventofsaintelizabeth.org/>