

2018 Lenten Daily Reader

Monday February 19 – Sunday February 25, 2018

In preparation for:

*When the Foundations Are Shaken:
Scriptural and Patristic Wisdom from
the Book of Revelation
and the Letters of St. John Chrysostom to St. Olympia*

**Lenten Retreat Led by Drs. Mary and David Ford
Saturday, March 17, 2018
Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross
Medford, NJ**

Saint John Chrysostom: Letters to St. Olympia, translated and edited by
Dr. David Ford, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017
Copies are available for \$10.00 from Fr. John

"You may hear my living voice through my letters" (Letter 8.11.b)

In his letters to St. Olympia—available in English in their entirety for the first time—St John Chrysostom guides, comforts, and instructs his spiritual daughter, St Olympia. Written at the end of Chrysostom's life, while he was in his final exile, we see in these pages the unshaken faith of a saint who triumphed over persecution. We also find the words of a concerned spiritual father, who gives St Olympia the tools to overcome her temptation to despondency and despair.

Chrysostom's Letters to St Olympia are an indispensable resource for those who are interested in the final days of his life, and they continue to be a source of consolation and edification for readers who seek instruction from St John's "golden mouth."

[Note: Each day will include first a passage from The Revelation of St. John (RSJ) and then the Letters of St. John Chrysostom (LJC) to Olympia as chosen by Mary and David Ford].+

Reading #1 - Monday February 19. Ch.1. (RSJ) The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, **2** who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. **3** Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time *is* near.**4** John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits

who are before His throne, **5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

(LJC) – Letter One, June 404, very shortly after the beginning of his journey into exile): "However much we are stretched by our trials, by so much do our consolations increase, giving us firmer hopes for the future. For now everything is flowing along well for us, and we are sailing with fair winds. Who could have foreseen this? Who could have foretold? Reefs and shoals, whirlpools and hurricanes all threaten shipwreck – a moonless night, darkest gloom, precipices and crags. And yet through all this we are settled, sailing on such seas that we are no worse off than a ship rocking in a harbor.

Reading #2 – Tuesday February 20: (RSJ) To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, **6** and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. **7** Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. **8** "I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." **9** I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. **10** I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, **11** saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

(LJC – Letter One) "Taking all these things into account, therefore, my Lady most beloved by God, be lifted up above these tumults and billowing waves, and deem me worthy to make known to me everything concerning your health. For our part, we are in good health and joyful spirits. Indeed, my body has become stronger, as we are breathing pure air. And the guards who are conducting us into exile are taking such good care of us that we have no need of servants, for they are carrying out those tasks. And they have taken upon themselves this office out of their great love for us. And among all the bodyguards, each one esteems himself blessed through this service.

Reading #3 – Wednesday February 21: 1:12-19 (RSJ) Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. **14** His head and hair *were* white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; **15** His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; **16** He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength. **17** And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. **18** I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. **19** Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after

this. **20** The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

(LJC – Letter One): "There is only one thing that causes us pain – not being assured that you also are in good health. Let me know this, so that we may rejoice with great joy, and so that we may render many thanks to my lord and your mostly greatly longed for [spiritual] child, Pergamius. For if you desire to write to us, make use of him for this – since he is trustworthy, he is strongly attached to us, and he is full of respect for your propriety and your piety."

Reading #4 – Thursday February 22: (RSJ) - Ch.2 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: **2** "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; **3** and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. **4** Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. **5 Remember** therefore from where you have fallen; **repent** and **do** the first **works**, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. **6** But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **7** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'"

(LJC – Letter Three – about two months on his journey into exile, July 404): When I see these crowds of men and women on the roads, in the hostels, and in the towns streaming forth to see us, and seeing them weeping, I wonder about what thoughts and feelings you are having. For if these people whom we have seen are weeping so profusely because of their despondency, such that they cannot be easily consoled, but rather when I pray and supplicate and exhort them to stop, they burst out with floods of even hotter tears, it is manifest that for you the tempest is still more violent. But however more violent the tempest is, greater still are the prizes in the contest, if you endure it with thanksgiving and with manly courage, which is exactly the appropriate way for you to bear it. For when a wind blows fiercely, if the pilots deploy the sails skillfully, they keep the boat under control; and if they steer it carefully, in the proper way, they sail with great security.

Reading # 5 – Friday February 23: (RSJ)- Ch. 3 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your **works**, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. **2** Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.**3 Remember** therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and **repent**. Therefore if you will not **watch**, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.**4** You have a few names even in Sardis who have **not defiled** their garments; and they shall walk with Me in

white, for they are worthy. **5** He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. **6** “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

(LCJ, Letter Three: Knowing these things, therefore, my Lady most beloved by God, do not give yourself over to the tyranny of despair, but conquer the storm with reason (*to logismō*). You can do it, for the surging sea is not stronger than your ability to master it. Send me letters proclaiming this to me, so that, while enduring being in a foreign land, we may rejoice with great joy, knowing that with the understanding (*suneseōs*) and wisdom (*philosophia*) that befits you, you have borne this despondency well.

Reading #6 – Saturday February 24: (RSJ) Ch 4: After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. ³ And He who sat there *was* like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

(LJC – from the Fifth Letter): Consider this: that the pleasant and sorrowful things of this present life are altogether passing away. If the gate is narrow and the way is hemmed in, still it is a way. Remember the word that I have often given you: if the gate is wide and the way is broad, it is also a way. And now, escaping from the earth, and especially from the bond of the flesh, open the wings of your wisdom (*philosophia*), not letting it be submerged by shadows and smoke – that is, by human affairs. And if you behold those who have caused us such great evil still having their cities and their power, enjoying honor – and having bodyguards! - repeat these words: “Wide is the gate and broad is the way leading to destruction” (Matt. 7:13); and because of this, weep for them, and groan. For the one doing evil here, and yet not suffering punishment, and enjoying honor from men, will suffer greater retribution having such honor. This is why that rich man is burning bitterly, not only because of the cruelty he showed to Lazarus, but also because in the prosperity which he enjoyed continually in the midst of such cruelty, he did not become better (cf. Luke 16:19-32).

Reading #7 – Sunday February 25: Ch 4:6-11 (RSJ) ⁶ Before the throne *there was*^[e] a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. ⁸ *The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

“Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!”

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

¹¹ “You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created.”

(LJC – from the Seventh Letter) However, even when I see such things, I do not give up an even firmer hope, as I consider the Pilot governing everything, Who prevails over storms, Who calms the raging gale, not through skill and artfulness, but with a single nod. It is not at their beginning – not immediately, when they first arise – that He customarily obliterates evils, but when they increase, when they come to their furthest point (*telos*), when most men fall into despair, then He does wondrous things beyond all expectation, demonstrating His own Power, and training the patience of those who have fallen.