

a sermon from LUKE 15:17-24:

THE CHURCH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

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I. A PRAYER

Let us pray: “Glory to GOD in the highest, and peace to His people on earth. Lord GOD, Heavenly King, Almighty GOD and Father, we worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory. Lord JESUS CHRIST, only Son of The Father, Lord GOD, Lamb of GOD, You take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; You are seated at the right hand of The Father: receive our prayer. For You alone are The Holy One, You alone are The Lord, You alone are The Most High, JESUS CHRIST, with The HOLY SPIRIT, in the glory of GOD The Father. Amen.”¹

II. A PROPOSITION

O what rejoicing there is by the saints in Heaven and by the saints on earth when a wayward Christian son or daughter of The Church returns to her blessed folds!

III. A SCRIPTURE—LUKE 15:17-24—WHEN PRODIGAL SONS RETURN TO THE CHURCH

¹⁷ And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

¹⁹ And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

²⁰ And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

²¹ And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

²² But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

²³ And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

IV. INTRODUCTION

Many ask today, “Is The Church essential to the Christian?” Most certainly, “Yes!” Indeed, it is fact that the life of a Christian without The Church is a calamity and a burden so severe that GOD goes to great length to see that we are never far from her! Holy Scripture offers us many examples of the essential roles of The Church in the lives of Christians, of which we will examine but five here: She is as the family of GOD to the

¹ 1, Breaking Bread 2007, “Gloria,” p 7.

Christian; She preaches The Word of GOD to us; She calls us from sin and keeps us from error; She administers The holy Sacraments to us; She teaches us the use of the full armor of GOD! But what of the Christian who wanders away from The Church? Does not our Father Above grieve over us when we, as His people, walk away from The Body of CHRIST on earth? Indeed He does! For O what rejoicing there is by the saints in Heaven and by the saints on earth when a wayward Christian son or daughter of The Church returns to her blessed folds!

V. WHEN CHRISTIANS WANDER AWAY FROM THE CHURCH

Which brings us to CHRIST's parable of the prodigal son as found in LUKE 15. Here we find a young man who, although loved by his father, took his inheritance and spent it on riotous and sinful living in an alien land. This son did the father love most deeply. And when the young man's folly came back upon his own head, causing him to be in want of all the blessings which a family supplies, he considered that his life was worth no more than one who is dead. Deciding to repent and return to his father's house and the family that loved him, he approached his father in humility and penance.² For he said to himself as in LUKE 15:18-19, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants!"³

What does GOD teach us here by Saint Luke, and indeed in our everyday lives? As Calvin says, "Here is described to us the way in which GOD invites men to repentance. If of their own accord they were wise, and became submissive, he would draw them more gently; but as they never stoop to obedience, till they have been subdued by the rod, He chastises them severely. Accordingly, to this young man, whom abundance rendered fierce and rebellious, hunger proved to be the best teacher. Instructed by this example, let us not imagine that GOD deals cruelly with us, if at any time He visits us with heavy afflictions; for in this manner those who were obstinate and intoxicated with mirth are taught by Him to be obedient. In short, all the miseries which

² 2, KJV, LUKE 15:11-24.

³ 2, KJV, LUKE 15:18-19.

we endure are a profitable invitation to repentance!”⁴

Now when the father sees his wayward lost son returning to his family that loved him, the father rejoiced in gladness and bliss! So Saint Luke records further in LUKE 15:20-24, “And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found...!”⁵

The earthly father in this Scripture passage is a picture in part of our Heavenly Father. GOD in Heaven, all the saints in Glory and the local Church on earth are filled with sorrow when a Christian is seen to wander away from the family of GOD on earth! O the sadness at seeing a beloved child of The Church wandering towards and teetering at the edge of the chasm of death of his body, mind and eternal soul! And so our brothers and sisters in The Lord are likewise filled with sorrow to see when we go racing away from the Kingdom of GOD on earth and headlong into the kingdom of the devil, which may only deliver us to sin, sorrow and destruction! But the rejoicing in the family of GOD at seeing the reconciliation of a formerly lost soul with The Father is greater still!

So when a wayward Christian returns in humble repentance to The Church, O what joy must be proclaimed in Heaven Above, and what gladness there is among the saints on earth! O the rejoicing of the family of GOD for the son or daughter in CHRIST who, having strayed away from the Kingdom of GOD on earth, returns in humble thankfulness to The Church! And so we see that The Church is the very family of GOD to the individual Christian, The Body of CHRIST of which we must be part of and faithful to now, that we may enter into The Body of CHRIST Above forever! For as our

⁴ 3, Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XVI, Harmony of The Evangelists, LUKE XV, 17. And when he came to himself, p 346.

Lord says here in LUKE 15:10, "...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth!"⁶

VI. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH AS THE FAMILY OF GOD TO THE CHRISTIAN

Saint Paul wrote to The Church at Colosse, admonishing them to be faithful to CHRIST, and therefore to the family of GOD which is The Church herself, having been bought out of darkness and damnation with the precious price paid of The very Body and Blood of our Lord! So he writes in COLOSSIANS 1:12-14 even to all Christians in all times and places, that we should always be "Giving thanks unto The Father, Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into The Kingdom of His dear Son: In Whom we have redemption through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins!"⁷

Give thanks O Church, for as Matthew Henry says, CHRIST "...has rescued us from the state of heathenish darkness and wickedness. He hath saved us from the dominion of sin..., from the dominion of Satan, who is the prince of darkness..., and from the damnation of hell, which is utter darkness!" Praise Him, O family of GOD, for CHRIST has "...brought us into the Gospel-state, and made us members of The Church of CHRIST, which is a state of light and purity... [We are] made willing subjects of CHRIST who were the slaves of Satan. [We are redeemed]... into The Kingdom of CHRIST out of the kingdom of the devil. The power of sin is shaken off, and the power of CHRIST submitted to. The Law of The Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS makes... [us] free from The Law of sin and death!"⁸ We are no longer the prisoners of the devil, but sons and daughters of GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost! Such a family He has given us, from which we should never stray!

Consider if a man should walk away from his fleshly family of wife and children, forsaking them and destroying himself in sin and sorrow! Will not his fleshly family

⁵ 2, KJV, LUKE 15:20-24.

⁶ 2, KJV, LUKE 15:10.

⁷ 2, KJV, COLOSSIANS 1:12-14.

⁸ 4, Matthew Henry, COLOSSIANS 1, 12-29, I, 1, v.12-13.

grieve for him and for his absence among them? How much more for the Christian who forsakes his spiritual family, which is The Church! For as Saint Paul admonishes and prays for the honour and steadfastness of The Church in EPHESIANS 3:14-15, so he also prays for us: “For this cause I bow my knees unto The Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, Of Whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named!”⁹ As Matthew Henry says here, “The universal Church has a dependence upon The Lord JESUS CHRIST: Of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named. The Jews were wont to boast of Abraham as their father, but now Jews and Gentiles are both denominated from CHRIST... [both] the saints in Heaven, who wear the crown of glory, and of saints on earth who are going on in the work of grace here. Both the one and the other make but one family, one household; and from Him they are named CHRISTIANS... acknowledging their dependence upon, and their relation to, CHRIST!”¹⁰

JESUS The Messiah, having suffered and died for us upon The Cross, and having risen and ascended, He is now as Paul says in COLOSSIANS 1:18 “...The Head of The Body, The Church...!”¹¹ And if we indeed claim The Name “Christian” over our lives and souls, how can we ever think to separate ourselves from His Body The Church? For separation from His Body means separation from Himself, The Head of His Body. And though we who are saved by His Blood each have our place ordained for us in His Kingdom both now and Above, yet are we all equal in worth before the judgement seat of GOD! In the family of GOD, which is The Church, we are as Saint Paul says in GALATIANS 3:27-28, “For as many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on CHRIST. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS!”¹² To our fleshly families GOD calls us to be true and steadfast. How much more so does He then call us to be faithful and true to our spiritual family The Church!

⁹ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 3:14-15.

¹⁰ 4, Matthew Henry, EPHESIANS 3, 14-21, II, v. 15.

¹¹ 2, KJV, COLOSSIANS 1:18.

¹² 2, KJV, GALATIANS 3:27-28.

VII. THE CHURCH PREACHES THE WORD OF GOD TO THE CHRISTIAN

It is in The faithful Church that we hear The Holy Scriptures, read, preached and expounded to us from week to week. This, so that the man of faith may believe The Word of GOD, walk in the righteousness of The Lord and be saved. In ROMANS 10 Saint Paul takes The Words of Moses from DEUTERONOMY 30:11-14 to declare to The Church that the same Truth of salvation once declared to Israel - that The Word of GOD is before us even now! It calls us to walk in His Ways, to love Him completely, to receive His Word in faith, to be made righteous by His Spirit working in us and through His Word. So Moses says of The Great Commandment - to love GOD with all our hearts, minds and souls - "For This Commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off... But The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it!"¹³ As Wycliffe says here of the faithful Israelite, called by The Word of GOD under The Law of Moses, "The man who practices the righteousness that The Law demanded] shall live by it."¹⁴

Saint Paul speaks of this in ROMANS 10:4-9, "For CHRIST is the end of The Law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of The Law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them... The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, The Word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth The Lord JESUS, and shalt believe in thine heart that GOD hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved!"¹⁵ GOD The Father has declared His Special Revelation to man, that we may know the way of righteousness and be redeemed into eternal life in GOD The Son, that our souls may be sanctified in GOD The Holy Ghost. And He has commissioned His servants, first in part through Biblical Israel and now completely through The faithful Church, to declare it. For when men hear GOD's Word declared and believe in faith, we are brought to trust CHRIST and call upon His Name to receive the good tidings of The Gospel of salvation!

¹³ 2, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 30:11-14.

¹⁴ 5, Wycliffe Bible commentary, ROMANS 10:5, p 1214.

¹⁵ 2, KJV, ROMANS 10:4-9.

As Wycliffe says, “Reaching men for GOD begins with the commission of the messengers. Then through preaching, hearing and trusting, men are brought to call upon The Name of The Lord.”¹⁶ So our Heavenly Father has ordained that The Gospel shall offer eternal salvation to all that confess CHRIST as their Savior. But Scripture reminds us that The Word of GOD requires a vehicle in this world to reach men with the glorious offer of Divine salvation. So The Church sends forth its servants – preachers and priests who have been properly commissioned by her - that they may preach and declare The Holy Scriptures to all who will hear. And by thus hearing of The Word of GOD, as The HOLY SPIRIT works within the souls of men, that many may believe and be saved.

Saint Paul declares these further things in ROMANS 10:10-17, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation... For whosoever shall call upon The Name of The Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach The Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ...So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by The Word of GOD!”¹⁷ Where else shall we hear and be taught The Word of GOD, but by and in The faithful Church?

Where then would the individual Christian be without The Church to preach to him The Gospel? He would be alone, without The Word of GOD, and naked before the specter of eternal separation from The Creator! He would not know to call upon The Name of The Lord to be saved from eternal hell. He would be without a preacher to preach to him and devoid of The written Word to declare to him the blessings of The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Without The Church, he would see his saving faith crumble away under the assaults of a wicked world and the demons of hell. Without The Church, he would loose sight of the peace and glad tidings emanating from The blessed Scriptures into his life, only to be engulfed again and again by the darkness of sin and

¹⁶ 5, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, ROMANS 10:14-15, p 12115.

¹⁷ 2, KJV, ROMANS 10:10-17.

despair. And so, we see that the individual Christian is in need of The Church to preach and declare to him The saving Word of GOD.

VIII. THE CHURCH CALLS US FROM SIN AND KEEPS US FROM ERROR

The faithful Church, being The very Body of our Lord JESUS CHRIST on earth, is given to call her children from sin and keep them from error. The writer of HEBREWS reveals to us that GOD corrects and, when necessary, punishes us to purge us of iniquity and deliver us from the bondage of unrighteousness. For even we His saints, though secured by The precious Body and Blood of our Lord at The Cross, do still stumble and fall in our Christian walk in this life. Therefore it is necessary for The Almighty to chastise and discipline us at times. If we have faithfully taken our place in The Church on earth, when we do stumble and fall, The Almighty will often do so through His Church.

So we read in HEBREWS 12:6-11, “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, GOD dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”¹⁸ As Calvin says here, “For however severe and angry a judge GOD may shew Himself towards the reprobate, whenever he punishes them; yet He has no other end in view as to the elect, but to promote their salvation; it is a demonstration of His paternal love!”¹⁹

As Calvin offers, such chastening will bring some men to repentance and obedience, others to further rebellion and destruction: “As when a perverse youth, leaving his father’s house, wanders far away and becomes exhausted with hunger, cold, and other evils, he indeed suffers a just punishment for his folly, and learns by his sufferings the benefit of being obedient and submissive to his [earthly] father, but yet he

¹⁸ 2, KJV, HEBREWS 12:6-11.

¹⁹ 6, Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXII, Epistle to The HEBREWS, Chap. XII, 6. For whom The Lord loveth, p 316.

does not acknowledge this as a paternal chastisement.”²⁰ But when an upright youth, though having strayed from obedience and submission to his earthly father, comes to the same conclusion, he is driven to return to the path of the upright. He confesses and repents, not for the sake of his own gain, but because he is convicted in his soul to humbly and thankfully return to his father’s household. Such is the road of the Christian who strays for a time away from the family of GOD, then being chastised by the arm of The LORD, and being convicted to humbly and thankfully return to The Church.

When we are saved in CHRIST, we are as children of GOD our Father. Now every earthly father who loves his child will discipline him when he walks in error. How much more so does Scripture tell us that our Heavenly Father Who, because of His great love for us, corrects us when we walk in sin. And it is during those times of Divine chastisement that we most need The Church about us to understand us, support us and help us bear such times. For the Church is our family and home on earth, beyond even our human families and homes, because it is the very body of CHRIST on earth. And when one part of a body suffers hurt, so does the entire body feel that pain. And likewise, when a member of the body of CHRIST so endures suffering, the entire body strives to speed the wayward part back towards healthful and righteous peace. And so we see The Church supports the individual Christian during times of trial and tribulation.

IX. THE CHURCH ADMINISTERS THE SACRAMENTS TO THE CHRISTIAN

CHRIST has ordained that The Church be the instrument whereby the Holy Sacraments are administered to the individual Christian. Article XXV of the Anglican Church’s “39 Articles of Religion” declares that there are “two Sacraments ordained of CHRIST our Lord in The Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and The Supper of The Lord.”

²¹ Article XXV confesses that The “Sacraments ordained of CHRIST be not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and GOD’s good will towards us, by the which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in

²⁰ 6, Calvin’s Commentaries, Volume XXII, Epistle to The HEBREWS, Chap. XII, 6. For whom The Lord loveth, p 316.

²¹ 7, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXV, “Of The Sacraments,” 2nd paragraph.

Him.”²²

So we see that our Savior Himself gives us the signs of grace in the Sacraments. They proclaim a Christian man's Faith in CHRIST JESUS as The Savior. They witness to the individual Christian himself and to all those around him - especially within The Church - causing encouragement in The Faith. They are an everlasting reminder that GOD wishes only goodness and righteous completion in the life of the Christian. They give strength and blessing in the life of the Christian of GOD's unchanging and never failing love for His saints. And they are the means of Grace, whereby men receive and are secured into salvation in CHRIST. So we see that the individual Christian needs The Church for the administration and blessings of The Holy Sacraments.

The Catechism of The Catholic Church ties salvation in CHRIST and Baptism into The Church this way: "...The Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: The one CHRIST is the Mediator and the way of salvation; He is present to us in His Body which is The Church. He Himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of The Church, which men enter through Baptism as through a door."²³ Therefore, no man enters into The Kingdom of GOD except by CHRIST, and through The Church, and that by The Sacrament of Baptism. No man may rightly claim CHRIST as "Lord, Lord!" unless he is the dutiful recipient of The Grace of GOD through The Sacraments, which are kept and administered only by The faithful Church!

X. THE CHURCH TEACHES THE USE OF THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

The Christian way in this life is one of daily warfare against evil and the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. It is in The faithful Church that we learn to be steadfast and competent soldiers of The Cross of our Lord. Saint Paul writes of taking up the "armor of GOD" in EPHESIANS 6:11-13, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the

²² 7, 39 Articles of Religion, Article XXV, "Of The Sacraments," 1st paragraph.

²³ 8, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 846, p 244. "Outside The Church There is no Salvation."

darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”²⁴

We are, as Wycliffe notes, to both “stand” and “withstand” in the daily spiritual warfare in CHRIST: “the former is the ability to win the fight, to hold one’s position; the latter shows the result of the conflict!”²⁵ The armor of GOD, and the training needed to use it – and not as a lone wolf but within the ranks of the saints of GOD on earth – are found only in The faithful Church. We can neither “stand” nor “withstand” against the wiles of the devil and this evil day apart from The Body of CHRIST! And no wonder, for the “armor of GOD” is complicated and intricate, consisting of many demanding parts, the proper use and function of which only The faithful Church is ordained and authorized by CHRIST to impart to her members.

Now Saint Paul catalogues them for us in EPHESIANS 6:14-18, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of GOD: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints!”²⁶ Scripture warns us that, as Christians, we are in the midst of a spiritual war between GOD and the devil; between good and evil. Indeed, has it not been said that the devil and his minions roams about the earth as a ravenous animals, seeking whom they may devour?

The weapons of The Spirit granted unto the Christian man at the Cross of CHRIST will, however, be of no avail if he knows not how to employ them. Note here the weaponry of the Christian man is both defensive and offensive: The defensive are those by which we literally put on CHRIST, which Saint Paul compares to the body

²⁴ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 6:11-13.

²⁵ 5, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 6:13, p 1316.

armor of a Roman soldier: truth over our loins; righteousness over our chest, in which is our very breath of life; CHRIST's Gospel of peace over our souls; the protective shield of faith; The Lord's salvation over our minds. There is then The Word of GOD, Which is "The Sword of The Spirit [which] is the only offensive as well as defensive weapon" given to us by GOD.²⁷ Soldiers must be taught to use their weaponry to "stand" in battle, that they be not overcome. And to secure "withstand" in victory, soldiers must be taught to go over to the offensive.

Where is the Christian soldier to take his stand in this life? We may again answer our own question, "Only in The faithful Church!" For it is only in The Church that the individual Christian becomes part of GOD's Army of the saints who form up and support one another to do battle against spiritual wickedness and demonic forces that seek our utter destruction! It is in The Church that the individual Christian learns how to wield the Armor of GOD in daily battle for the Christian life. In The Church we are taught to make full use of the truth, righteousness, peace, salvation, faith, prayer, intercession and The Word of GOD. Thus, The Church is where the individual Christian learns to properly employ the full armor of GOD, so as to withstand evil.

XI. IN CONCLUSION

We began with our Lord's parable in LUKE 15 of the returning prodigal son of and the rejoicing father who rejoiced with all his household at the return of his wayward child. As he returned to the fold, the father joyfully proclaimed as in LUKE 15:24, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found...!"²⁸ Even more so does our Father in Heaven, along with all the saints of The Church Above and The faithful Church on earth, rejoice at the return of the wayward son or daughter who has strayed from her loving fold!

And we have observed a few of the many reasons why The Lord gives us His saints The Church: First, The Church is as the family of GOD to the Christian. Second,

²⁶ 2, KJV, EPHESIANS 6:14-18.

²⁷ 5, Wycliffe Bible Commentary, EPHESIANS 6:14-17, p 1316.

²⁸ 2, KJV, LUKE 15:24.

The Church preaches The saving Word of GOD to the individual Christian. Third, The Church supports the individual Christian during times of difficulty and trial. Fourth, The Church delivers The Sacraments to the individual Christian. Fifth, the Church teaches the individual Christian to use the full armor of GOD to protect against evil. So we clearly see that The Church is so necessary to the life and very survival of the individual Christian!

We must ask then, “What earnest man as a lone Christian island in the sea of this sinful world should desire to be cut off from The Church on earth?” For the Church is as needful to the individual Christian as the body is to the hand or eye. Should we not always be found to be living out These Words: PSALMS 35:18, “I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise Thee among much people.”²⁹ And in HEBREWS 10:23-25, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering... And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...!”³⁰

Let us, O Lord, be forever in both this life and the next be found always in Your congregation and among Your people praising Your holy Name! And may it be, O CHRIST, that we Your people never forsake the gathering of ourselves together in Your Name to serve, honor and worship You! For O what rejoicing there is by the saints in Heaven and by the saints on earth when a wayward Christian son or daughter of The Church returns to her blessed folds! In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

²⁹ 2, KJV, PSALMS 35:18.

³⁰ 2, KJV, HEBREWS 10:23-25.

XII. REFERENCES

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