

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon
Funeral Service of Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko, March 23, 2015
The Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, PA

On behalf of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America and all the clergy, faithful members and monastics of our Church, and of all Orthodox bishops, clergy and faithful of this great continent of ours, we offer our condolences and prayers to the family of the newly-departed servant of God, Protopresbyter Thomas. We are grateful for the prayers of all, and especially for the hospitality of Mother Christophora and the sisters here at the Monastery. We are thankful for Mother Christophora's words last evening and also to Fr. John [Behr] for his inspiring words this morning.

So, we have only you, Fr. Thomas, to ask: What do you want us to remember? You've given us a multitude of words—podcasts, teachings, lectures. You've told us about *The Arena*, the 38 sayings of St. Anthony, *The Ladder* of St. John. You've given us your own [55] sayings for the Christian life. What are you teaching us by this? Is it not the words we have heard in the psalm today: "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep Thy precepts" (Psalm 118/119:99-100)

This was your life Fr. Tom, and perhaps this is what you are asking each of us to fulfill in our own lives. To receive as much teaching as we can, whether it's from you or any of the teachers the Church has given us, and to *act* upon those words. If there is anything you taught us, it is that you were not speaking to us because you had a lot to say. You only really had one thing to say: Please follow the commandments. Is that not the foundation of all the teachings of our entire Church that we take thousands of volumes and pages and words to express? And yet it comes back to that: follow the commandments.

So how appropriate it is that we read all of Psalm 118/119 today as a testimony to *your* life—that you lived and acted upon those commandments. And now you ask us to do the same. So we pray that indeed, in our own broken and humble way, we can attain to even half the stature you now have before the Lord, in our own humble efforts to follow the commandments of Christ.

And we hope that you will forgive us if we cling to the many words that you left us, the many examples that you left us as encouragement and inspiration. Because very few of us are able to take that step to purely and simply follow the commandments. We all need help. And so we need *your* help. As we've needed your help throughout your life, now we ask for your intercessions and for your continued guidance to each and every one of us as we struggle to take up our cross and follow our Lord Jesus Christ into the heavenly kingdom through the glorious Resurrection.

###