



Ouzkourni Fi Malakoutika  
Remember me in Your Kingdom

**The homily of Father Philip Raczka during the Divine Liturgy**

**For the faithful departed in the Hope of the Resurrection**

**«Remember me in Your Kingdom»**

**Our Lady of the Annunciation, West Roxbury, Massachussets.**

October 24, 2012

### **Does God Send People to Hell?**

Does God send people to hell? This is a good question. We all know that after we die either we go up to heaven or down to hell. 20 years ago the movie “Ghost” showed this by having good people see a bright light and follow it and people who committed murder were grabbed by dark demons and taken down screaming into hell. If we look in the Bible, we see several places where Jesus talks about bad people being condemned for their sins. In *Matthew* chapter 25, Jesus says that those who do not care for others will be condemned and banished from his sight at the end of the world. There are other places where He talks about those who do not obey God being condemned. So, God indeed condemns some people to hell.

But other people go there because they want to go. This may sound strange and it is. How could someone want to go to hell? It starts out in very small ways that people run from the presence of God. When we are in God’s presence especially in Church and at prayer we see ourselves,

as we are both what is good and what is bad. People do not want to see what is bad.

- They do not want someone to tell them that stealing money from work is wrong.
- They do not want someone to tell them that living together before marriage is wrong.
- They do not want someone to tell them that being mean to others is wrong.

When we are in the presence of God, our own conscience will tell us these things. So what do people do? They start to run away from God. They do not spend time in prayer. They do not go to the liturgy. They avoid things to do with God. This way their conscience will not tell them, they are wrong.

This running away from God becomes a habit with them. It gets stronger as it goes along so that they even do things like going to the wedding reception and not the wedding in the church or the baptism reception and not the baptism. They even go to wakes and when the priest starts praying, they run out of the place as if it was on fire. What happens when this person dies? They spent years running away from God. Do they all of sudden turn and run towards Him? Maybe so, but also they may keep running as they have been doing all their life. The person who went towards Jesus all their life, would I think, go to Him at the end also.

The great writer C. S. Lewis wrote a book about this phenomenon called *the Great Divorce*. In the book people in hell are given a holiday to go to heaven to see if they would want to be there instead. In the book, they go and everyone wants to be there instead. Then an angel or saint

comes to them and tells them that if they want to stay in heaven they have sins they must confess.

- One told to be sorry for divorcing her husband, but she is not.
- A bishop told to be sorry for being more interested in his own ideas about Jesus than Jesus Himself, but he is not sorry, and so the story continues ultimately only one person from the bus is willing to be sorry for his sins and stay in heaven. The others go back to hell so they can keep their sins.

We should spend our lives running towards Jesus and not away from Him. By running towards Him, we will see what is wrong in us and we can be sorry for it, and when we see Him after death, we will be happy to see Him and go towards Christ. If we spend our life running away from God, we will be running away from Him after death, also and will indeed send ourselves to hell.