THE PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY AND
SAINT SERAPHIM OF SAROV CATHEDRAL

Catechumen Binder

Catechesis Handouts

Table of Contents

Orthodox Church History & Overview, Section 1

Orthodoxy in the USA, by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, The Orthodox Word No. 94 12

What is a Parish, by Fr. Alexander Schmemann 26

The Orthodox Church, by Bishop Alexander of Buenos Aires 28

Big -T little -t Tradition – The Dangerous Distinction, by DOXA 38

Clergy Etiquette, by Orthodoxinfo.com 40

The Symbolism of Vestments, by Roca.org 44

Deaconesses, by PHV Colorado 47

The 40 Day Churching of Women after Childbirth, by PHV Colorado 50

Christianity or the Church, by Archbishop Ilarion 52

A Homily on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, by A Monk of the Holy Cross Hermitage 89

Baptism, Section 2

The Orthodox Cycle of Life, by Orthodoxinfo.com 92

To the Newly Baptized, by Fr. Gregory Williams 101

What's in a Name, by Priest Andrew Phillips 105

Godparenting 101, by Orhtodoxinfo.com 108

Confession, Section 3

We Should Confess, by Fr. Sergei Chetverikov 112

Objections to Confession, by The Forgotten Medicine 114

Rules for a Saving Confession, by The Forgotten Medicine 119

The Mystery of Repentance, by Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky 129

On Confession / Communion, by Bishop Tikhon 133

The Whole Armor of Truth – Preparations for Confessions, by St. Nicholas Varzhansky 138

Proper Confession and Communion, by Orthodoxinfo.com 140

Forgive us, Merciful Lord, by Fr. Artemy Vladimirov 143

Preparation for Confession, by Orthodoxinfo.com 149

How to Confess Properly, by Fr. Athanasios Mitilinaios 155

Self-Examination According to the Ten Commandments, by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) .. 163

Holy Communion, Section 4

Preparation for Holy Communion, by Fr. Lawrence Margitich 169

Prosphora, by Fr. Lawrence Margitich 170

Remainders About Holy Communion, by Fr. Lawrence Margitich 171
The Proskomedia, by Fr. Lawrence Margitich 172

Prayer, Section 5

The Power of the Name, by Bishop Kallistos Ware 175
The Church's Prayer for the Dead, by Orthodoxinfo.com 195
Panikihida, by Fr. Lawrence Margitich 204
A Rule of Prayer and the Reading of the Bible, by Fr. Dionysios 205
Father Arseny on Prayer, from *A Cloud of Witnesses* 206
Intercession & Invocation of the Departed, by Reader Christopher Orr 210

Iconography, Section 6

Iconographic Decoration of Churches, by Constantine Cavanrnos 215
Theology of the Icon, by L. Ouspensky, Vol. 1 219

Great Lent, Section 7

Great Lent, by Fr. Alexander Schmemann 233
Great Lent & Presanctified Liturgy, by Deacon Jeremiah Crawford 246
Resentment & Forgiveness, by Hieromonk Damascene 254
The True Nature of Fasting, by Bishop Kallistos Ware 270
The Rules of Fasting, by Bishop Kallistos Ware 282

Holy Week, Section 8

Holy Week, by Fr. Alexander Schmemann 284
Meatfast Sunday, by St. Nikolai Velimirovic 306
Saturday of Lazarus, by Fr. Alexander Schmemann 316
This is the Blessed Sabbath, by Fr. Alexander Schmemann 318

Orthodox Living, Section 9

Membership, Stewardship and Fasting, by Fr. Lawrence Margitich 326
Practical Tips for Orthodox Living, from *The* Shepherd 327
Christian Giving, by Deacon James 344
On Good Order in the Church, by Unknown 358
O Lord, I Have Loved the Beauty of Thy House, by Fr. John Whiteford & Matushka Olympia Sibley 359
Orthodox Worship – Preparation, Participation and Etiquette, by St. Peter & Paul Bulletin 366
Money in the Church, by Fr. Michael Gillis 369
Junk Food for the Soul, by Archbishop Lazar Puhalo 370

Common Prayers, Section 10

Nicene Creed 371
Before & After Communion 371
Jesus Prayer 372
The Lord's Prayer 372

Revised March 6, 2026

2025-26 COURSE SCHEDULE for Catechism, Part I

	DATE	TOPIC	Catechist
1.	Saturday, Oct. 11	**What is a catechumen**	Fr. Lawrence
2.	Saturday, Oct. 18	**The True God**	Fr. Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Oct. 13	**On St. Seraphim**	John Gilluly
3.	Saturday, Oct. 25	**The Human Being**	Fr. Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Oct. 20	**Setting up a prayer corner**	Ray Basch
4.	Sunday, Nov. 1	**On Sin**	Fr Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Oct. 27	**Icons: Prayer and Theology**	Matushka Ann
5.	Saturday, Nov. 8	**Jesus Christ the Son of God**	Fr. Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Nov. 3	**Participation in the Liturgy**	Matushka Esther
6.	Saturday, Nov. 15	**Jesus Christ the Savior**	Fr. Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Nov. 10	**On Great Vespers**	Gretchen M.
7.	Saturday, Nov. 22	**Repentance and Faith**	Fr. Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Nov. 17	**On Proportional Giving**	D. and S. Geoffrion
8.	Saturday, Nov. 29	**The Holy Spirit**	Fr. Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Nov. 30	**Feast Days of the Church**	Aaron Wilkerson
9.	Saturday, Dec. 13	**The Church**	Fr. Lawrence
a.	Sunday, Dec. 14	**Icons: Prayer and Theology. Pt. 2**	Matushka Ann
10.	Saturday, Dec. 20	**The Virgin Mary**	John Gilluly
a.	Sunday, Dec. 21	**Monasticism**	Reader Andrew M.

A. Classes meet Saturday afternoons from 3:30 until Vespers. Attendance at the Saturday classes is required for Baptism (if absent, listen to a recording of the class)

B. During Liturgy on Sunday, Catechumens are dismissed to attend a class in the library

C. **Reading during the first period of catechesis:** *Know the Faith*—Fr. Michael Shanbour; *Come, Let us Worship*—Fr. Patrick O'Grady; *Gospel of St. Matthew*

Revised March 6, 2026

COURSE SCHEDULE for Catechism, Part 2

DATE	TOPIC	Catechist
11. Saturday, Feb. 7	**The Mystery of Holy Baptism**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sunday, Feb. 8	**First Week of Great Lent**	Gretchen McPherson
12. Saturday, Feb. 14	**The Mystery of Chrismation**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sunday, Feb. 15	**Lenten Services**	Nicolas Custer
13. Saturday, Feb. 21	**The Holy Eucharist**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sunday, Feb. 22	**Lenten Services**	Nicolas Custer
14. Saturday, Feb. 28	**The Mystery of Confession**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sunday, March 1	**Preparing for Communion**	Matushka Esther
15. Saturday, March 7	**The Mystery of the Priesthood**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sunday, March 8	**Preparing for Confession**	Andrew Mikrikov
16. Saturday, March 14	**The Mystery of Marriage**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sunday, March 15	**Baptismal Sermon of St. John**	John G
17. Saturday, March 21	NO CLASS TODAY	Retreat in SF at HTC
Sunday, March 22	**About Holy Week**	Gretchen
18. Saturday, March 28	**Death and the Funeral**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sunday, March 29	**On the Paschal celebration**	Matushka Esther
19. Fri., April 3, 6 PM	**Matins and Baptismal run-thru**	Fr. Lawrence
a. Sat. April 4, 9 AM	*Baptisms/Chrismations*	
	Divine Liturgy, Holy Communion	

Texts To Read (required):
The Beginnings of a Life of Prayer, Father Irenei (Steenburg)
Great Lent, Father Alexander Schmemann
Gospel of St. Mark

Revised March 6, 2026

Catechumen Personal Information Form

Please attach a personal photo to this form

Surname	First Name	Middle Name

Street / Apt #	City	State	Zip

Home Phone	Cell Phone

Email Address 1	Email Address 2

Date of Birth	Place of Birth

Marital Status (Mark X): ☐ Married ☐ Unmarried ☐ Divorced

Date(s) of Divorce(s): _____

Reasons for Divorce(s):

_____

_____

_____

Children: Please provide each child's full name, age and birthdate.

Name	Age	Birthdate

Revised March 6, 2026

Employment

Employer	Years Employed

Education

High School	Year	College / Major(s)	Graduate School / Degree

Revised March 6, 2026

Catechumen Personal Information Form

Name: _____

What month and year did you become a catechumen?

_____

Describe your Religious Background (Attach other sheet if needed):

_____

_____

_____

_____

Church / Denominational Affiliation prior to Orthodoxy:

Church / Denomination	**Years Affiliated**

If Christian, were you baptized in your previous confession? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please attach a copy of the baptismal certificate

Have you notified your previous confession to remove you from their membership rolls?

☐ *Yes* ☐ *No*

Do you have a criminal record? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please arrange to speak with the pastor in person concerning this.

Hobbies / Interests:

_____

Any other important information you would like the priest to know?

_____

Revised March 6, 2026

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Catechumens are to participate in all the classes and Saturday evening Vespers. **If you cannot come to a class, please get the recording for that class. It is our policy to receive into the Church only those who have completed the course in its entirety.**
2. During Great Lent, catechumens are expected to attend the 6 PM Wednesday evening Liturgy of the Presanctified.
3. Catechumens tend the candle sand and candle stubs; at the beginning and end of each service, they should be sure that the candle areas are neat and tidy, and that the sand is clean and tidy. Catechumens manage the oil lamps in the Nave and Narthex.
4. Catechumens, if they have not already, meet with the priest to establish a rule of prayer, fasting, and the doing of acts of mercy.
5. Catechumens are to be listeners and not talkers. They should listen to instruction; they should ask their teachers (priest, deacon, lay catechists, sponsor) questions, but not opine with others or get into theological dialogues or disputes with others.
6. Catechumens may invite others to church with "Come and see," but should not instruct heterodox or non-Christians in dogmatic or spiritual matters.
7. Catechumens may not post theological opinions or enter into theological discussions or debates on social media, discussion groups, chat-sites, etc.
8. Catechumens may and ought to bear witness to "all the good that God is doing" in their lives, and when asked "tell me about the differences..." they should say: "others are more qualified for that. Come and see!" Or "Come and ask the priest."
9. Catechumens should develop a ministry of love with the older members of the congregation. Each Catechumen is asked to interview one of the parish seniors—using an "ice-breaker" list of questions, and send Fr Lawrence a synopsis of that conversation.
10. When a person is serious and wishes finally to be received into the Church, he or she commits to tithing, if he or she has not already: offering his/her first and best 10% to God, for "*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*."

Revised March 6, 2026

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Once a person becomes a Catechumen, he or she can typically expect to spend nine to twelve months preparing to be received. Baptisms/Chrismations may also take place any other time of the year; usually they will occur on the following days: Lazarus Saturday, Holy Saturday, Theophany, Pentecost, or on any designated Sunday.

Prior to Baptism, a Catechumen will prepare a "Lifetime Confession of Sins" and make the confession in the months, weeks and days prior to joining the Church. I recommend the book ***The Path to Confession****, a book for family reading presented to children* and ***Return*** as the best tools for preparing for the Holy Mystery of Confession.

Following Baptism, the newly-illumined will make a confession once a week for a period of a month and thereafter once per month.

Revised March 6, 2026

INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHURCH LIFE

1. WORSHIP

The best "course of studies" for anyone in the Church begins and continues with the corporate prayer of the Church. **The following Services may be considered "obligatory" for the Orthodox Christian and the Catechumen preparing to be Orthodox:**

- the "base-line" minimum service of **Saturday evening Vespers** (the hymns focus on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and serve as a preparation for Communion)
- **Sunday morning Divine Liturgies.** Sunday is the Lord's Day, and we are to keep it holy.
- The Orthodox Christian strives to sanctify time and the calendar by celebrating the glorious Festal Vigils and Liturgies of the Church year—consult the monthly calendar.

The worship of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—is the greatest gift of God to mankind, and we learn how to worship in the Liturgical practice of the Church.

Corporate prayer is not complete without ***personal & and daily prayer.*** We use the prayers in the Orthodox Prayer Book, the Jesus Prayer and our own personal prayers.

Part of the life of an Orthodox Christian, Catechumen or already received, are four further essential components: almsgiving, stewardship, fasting and forgiveness.

2. ALMSGIVING

Works of mercy is the giving of time, money or help—often in secret—to the poor, needy, hungry, destitute, or lonely. We are to be judged in this matter (See Matthew Chapt 25).

3. STEWARDSHIP and PARISH SERVICE

Stewardship is the giving of thanks to God, as directed by the Old Testament and Lord Jesus Christ and St Paul in the New Testament, by making a regular financial offering what God has prospered you. Scriptural passages in support of stewardship are too many to mention here. We are to give proportionally from what we earn.

4. FASTING

The Orthodox Christian fasts from meat and dairy products (animal products) on Wednesday and Friday. This is a "midnight to midnight" fast.

One also fasts prior to the Sunday Divine Liturgy, or the Divine Liturgy on any day, from all liquids, foods, cigarettes, etc. Medication and food with medication is of course allowed as needed. Speak to the priest in these situations.

5. FORGIVENESS & LOVE

Essential to the life of a parish, with all of the interaction and common work, is the active pursuit of loving and forgiving others. "Forgive us our debts (or trespasses) as we forgive our debtors." What more needs to be said?

These things listed above are just a small part of the change (the Greek word is *metania*) in the way of living and thinking that one attempts when becomes an Orthodox Christian. The Beatitudes (*Sermon on the Mount, St Matthew*) are guides to this change.

Revised March 6, 2026

Activities / Check List

In preparation for Baptism

☐ Reading Assignments for both semesters done?

- ○ *Know the Faith*, by Fr. Michael Shanbour
- ○ *Come, Let us Worship*—Fr. Patrick O'Grady
- ○ *Gospel of St. Matthew*
- ○ *The Beginnings of a Life of Prayer*—Father Irenei (Steenburg)
- ○ *Great Lent*—Father Alexander Schmemann
- ○ *Gospel of St. Mark*

☐ All Classes attended or listened to recordings

- ○ What is a catechumen
- ○ The True God
- ○ The Human Being
- ○ On Sin
- ○ Jesus Christ the Son of God
- ○ Jesus Christ the Savior of the World
- ○ Repentance and Faith
- ○ On the Holy Spirit
- ○ On the Church
- ○ On the Theotokos

- ○ On Holy Baptism
- ○ On Chrismation
- ○ On the Eucharist
- ○ On Confession
- ○ On the Priesthood
- ○ On Marriage
- ○ On Death and the Funeral

☐ Confirm Godparent(s). *Speak with Fr Lawrence before asking the potential Godparent.*

Revised March 6, 2026

- [ ] Visit at least two other Orthodox Churches during catechumenate
  - ○ _____
  - ○ _____

- [ ] Attend Liturgical Services—required attendance at:
  - ○ Wednesday Presanctified Liturgies during Great Lent
  - ○ Saturday evening Vespers or Vigils
  - ○ Sunday morning Divine Liturgies

- [ ] Prepare and make life confession ***at least two weeks*** prior to the baptism/chrismation.
- [ ] Establish regular confession practice (start with every week for a month, then no less than once a month, or more often if needed)
- [ ] Obtain a baptismal robe (see Fr. Lawrence)
- [ ] Review the Baptism/Chrismation Service 1x per week in Lent – see link below

https://www.oca.org/files/PDF/Music/Baptism/baptism-service.pdf

Revised March 6, 2026

Prayer Rule Form

Personal Prayer Rule, Scripture Reading, Confession,
Fasting and Alms Giving and Service

Personal Prayer Rule

> *"But as regards prayer, it is certainly our bounden duty to use it every day, morning and evening, before and after both dinner and supper, as far as possible, at the beginning and ending of every work" (Q&A #551 The Longer Catechism of the Orthodox Church – by Metropolitan Philaret, 1830).*

A prayer rule is the outline of our daily prayer routine. It is important to have a thought out rule. Prayer books available in the bookstore or elsewhere. There are also fine resources for developing one's Prayer Rule online. One link is: http://www.orthodoxprayer.org.

Answer the questions below regarding your Personal Prayer Rule:

When will you privately pray during each day?
What will you pray?
What about prostrations? (What will do if you can't do prostrations?) The Jesus Prayer?
Where will you pray?
When will you pray as a family?
What will you pray as a family?
What non-obligatory services will you attend at Church?

Revised March 6, 2026

Scripture Reading

We should read scripture daily. There are Orthodox online scripture readings available. How will you approach learning the "whole counsel of God"?

Please answer the questions below regarding your daily scripture reading:

When will you read Holy Scripture?
What will you read?

Fasting

Do you know and are you keeping the Church standards for fasting?
Do you need to fast from anything particular other than that expected of every other Orthodox Christian?

Almsgiving and Service

Besides your tithe are there areas of service you wish to make an offering to God on a regular basis?

Confession

When will you make your confession? (After you do your life confession)
How will you prepare?

Revised March 6, 2026

Catechumen Renunciations and Affirmations Form

Exercise:
Part of the formal process of conversion is clearly identifying the heresies of one's previous confession and renouncing them. Heresy is from the devil, and all Christians are called upon by God to hate with righteous hatred all heresy. Use the chart below to write down Orthodox doctrines and next to them the doctrines of your former confession which are heretical. Be thorough.

Having identified your heresies you will be asked by the priest who is catechizing and receiving you into the Orthodox Church to renounce these heresies and to affirm Orthodox teachings. In some traditions this formal renunciation takes place at the beginning of the service of the reception of converts.

At the same time it is of the utmost importance for converts to realize that wherever truth is found, it is authored by God Himself. In virtually all religious traditions there are true beliefs and practices, and in some there are many. In the procession of conversion the catechumen should also be able to identify and appreciate the Orthodox elements of his previous confession and be genuinely thankful for them. It is very important to avoid a critical and negative spirit. (List of common heresies are listed below this form)

Name:	
Write the name of your former Confession:	

	Orthodox Beliefs	**Heresies/Errors**
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

(Continued next page)

Revised March 6, 2026

List of Common Heresies

- **Filioque** – The word *filioque* means “and son” in Latin. It is referred to as the “filioque clause” because the phrase “and son” was added to the Nicene Creed, indicating that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father “and Son.”
- **Papal Infallibility** – Papal infallibility is a dogma of the Latin Church which states that, in virtue of the promise of Jesus to Peter, the Pope is preserved from the possibility of error "when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church" (Letter of Pope Agatho, 680, on the two wills of Christ, received by the Third Council of Constantinople). This doctrine was defined dogmatically in the First Vatican Council of 1869-1870. The doctrine of infallibility relies on one of the cornerstones of Latin dogma: that of petrine supremacy of the pope, and his authority to be the ruling agent in deciding what will be accepted as formal beliefs in the Roman Latin Church.
- **Iconoclasm** – Iconoclasm constituted a ban on religious images, accompanied by widespread destruction of images and persecution of supporters of the veneration of images. Today this heresy consists of viewing the reverence of Saints through icons as a form of idolatry.
- **Monophysitism** – Greek: monos meaning "only, single" and physis meaning "nature"), is the Christological position that, after the union of the divine and the human in the historical Incarnation, Jesus Christ, as the incarnation of the eternal Son or Word (Logos) of God, had only a single "nature" which was either divine or a synthesis of divine and human.
- **“Symbolism Only” Sacramental Theology** – The belief that baptism and the Eucharist are non-efficacious – only symbolic.
- **Sola Scriptura** – The Bible alone is authoritative for Christian dogma.
- **Sola Fidei** – Salvation by Faith Alone. The doctrine of sola fide or "by faith alone" asserts God's pardon for guilty sinners is granted to and received through faith, conceived as excluding all "works", alone. God, on the basis of the life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ alone, grants sinners judicial pardon, or justification, which is received solely through faith.
- **Millennialism/Chiliasm** – Christ will come back and rule on earth for 1,000 years before the end.
- **Marian errors** – The belief that the Holy Virgin was not a perpetual virgin, had other children, committed actual sins, Immaculate Conception, etc.
- **Total Depravity** – Total depravity is the fallen state of man as a result of original sin. The doctrine of total depravity asserts that people are by nature not inclined or even able to love God wholly with heart, mind, and strength, but rather all are inclined by nature to serve their own will and desires and to reject the rule of God. Therefore, in Reformed theology, if God is to save anyone He must predestine, call, or elect individuals to salvation since fallen man does not want to, and is indeed incapable of choosing God.
- **Instantaneous salvation** – The belief that justification is a once-for-all, instantaneous pronouncement guaranteeing eternal salvation, no matter how wickedly a person may live from that point on.
- **Invisible Church** – The invisible church or church invisible is a theological concept of an "invisible" body of the elect who are known only to God, in contrast to the "visible church"—that is, the institutional body on earth which preaches the gospel and administers the sacraments. Every member of

the invisible church is saved, while the visible church contains some individuals who are saved and others who are unsaved.

- **Judaizing Errors** – Refers to a Christian who has accepted the necessity of adhering to specific OT laws such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, or observation of the Passover.
- **Soul Sleep** – "Soul Sleep," means that after death believers are not conscious of anything and their souls become completely inert until the time of the final resurrection of the dead. During this period of soul sleep, the soul resides in the memory of God.
- **Annihilationism** – This refers to the belief that when we die, the soul ceases to exist – non-immortality of soul.
- **Original Guilt** – The belief that man is inherently guilty of the sin of Adam from birth.
- **Created Grace** – This belief states that because of the fall, there is a great gulf between God and humanity. We are so corrupted that God cannot dwell within us. Therefore he gives a special, permanent grace, a supernatural substance or infusion, a created grace called Habitual Grace, that changes our nature permanently so that we become acceptable to God, so that God can dwell within us. It is called created grace because the grace includes the aspect of our created response and changed natures.
- **Purgatory** – is the condition of purification or temporary punishment by which those who die in a state of grace are believed to be made ready for Heaven.
- **Indulgences** – The full or partial remission of temporal punishment due for sins which have already been forgiven. The indulgence is granted by the Roman Latin Church after the sinner has confessed and received absolution. An indulgence is thus not forgiveness of sin nor release from the eternal punishment associated with hell in Christian beliefs. The belief is that indulgences draw on the Treasury of Merit accumulated by Christ's superabundantly meritorious sacrifice on the cross and the virtues and penances of the saints. They are granted for specific good works and prayers.
- **Development of Doctrine** – the belief that doctrine improves over time.
- **Superogation** – The technical term for the class of actions that go “beyond the call of duty.” The special merit of supererogatory acts accredited to their agent can be used both for that individual's own salvation and for the salvation of others. In the Roman Latin Church, the “superabundant merit,” most typically collected by the actions of Jesus and the saints, who far exceeded what was required for their own salvation, is deposited in the Spiritual Treasury of the Church to be disposed by the Pope and the bishops for remitting the sins of other, ordinary believers.

Revised March 6, 2026

Catechumen Patron Saint Form

All Orthodox Christians are given Christian names by Christ through his priests. The Christian name is the name of the person's patron saint.

The catechumen is encouraged to propose to the priest a patron saint as soon as possible. It is recommended that if the catechumen already has a Christian name that that name be retained and devotion to that saint begin, if not already in existence. The issue of naming is the prerogative of the priest so catechumens are required to make a proposal, and the priest will confirm the name.

What will be your Christian name with which you are received into Orthodoxy?_____

Who is this Saint? *Obtain a life of this saint and study it. Summarize it here.*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

What is the date of your nameday? _____

What is the Troparion of your patron saint? Write it here.

_____
_____
_____

What is the Kontakion to your patron saint? Write it here.

_____
_____
_____

How does an Orthodox Christian celebrate his nameday?

_____
_____
_____

Revised March 6, 2026

I would like to participate & contribute to Parish Life

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____ DATE: _____

The list below is about blessings, not volunteering. The lists are not definitive, but suggestions. Tasks, ministries and the ordinary, everyday work of parish life may be listed here, but the purpose of listing these things is not to spread the workload around. Like tithing, these things aren't done for God's sake—He lacks nothing, certainly not from us. The tasks listed here are ways in which WE find fulfillment in our Christian life.

In contributing to parish life in some way one finds great blessings; also there are the necessary Christian struggles in living out brotherly love, patience, faith and self-giving. There is no age requirement for living the Christian life, or contributing for the good of the whole. Youth and adults alike receive great blessings from their gift to the Lord.

Church Services & Support
❏ Church Reader
❏ Altar server
❏ Choir
❏ Sacristan Assistant
❏ Prosphora baking
❏ Candle Desk attendant
❏ Greeter or Usher
❏ Church Cleaning
❏ Flower decoration
❏ Sewing, Repairing vestments, Ironing

Building & Grounds
❏ Grass cutting/leaf raking
❏ Gardening
❏ Grounds: Repair & Maintenance
❏ Facilities: Repairs & Maintenance
❏ Hall Facility Maintenance
❏ Duplex Manager & Maintenance

Communication
❏ Live Streaming
❏ Pamphlets, Flyers and signage (design/distribute)
❏ Archivist/photographer
❏ Bookstore attendant

Stewardship (time, talent & treasure)
❏ Parish Council
❏ Sisterhood
❏ Charity Committee

Education
❏ Church school teacher or assistant
❏ Retreat Organization

Hospitality, Fellowship & Outreach
❏ Kitchen Team (various tasks)
❏ Meal prep Sunday and/or Feast Days
❏ Sunday meal set-up
❏ Funeral Team (care for the dead)
❏ Mercy meals for the sick
❏ Men's Fellowship Group

The St. Herman Winter Pilgrimage, 1979

From the time of St. Herman's canonization in 1970, special celebrations have been held in several places to commemorate him on his feast day, December 12/ 25. Several such pilgrimages have been held at Holy Trinity Monastery at Jordanville, New York (see a description of the 1973 pilgrimage in The Orthodox Word, 1973, no. 53). In 1979 the Jordanville pilgrimage attracted some 150 people, chiefly young people from several nearby parishes.

The invited speaker for this year was Hieromonk Seraphim of the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery at Platina, California. His first talk was an informal one on Sunday afternoon, December 10/23, addressed to seminarians and novices, exhorting them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities afforded by the monastery and seminary and not to waste this opportunity by "taking for granted,, the Orthodox treasures -which may be obtained in such a place.

On Monday afternoon Archimandrite Cyprian, the Monastery's iconographer and the one man perhaps most responsible for the spread of traditional Orthodox iconography in the United States, gave a talk reporting on a new misuse of the popular interest in Byzantine icons in the West: the use of traditional icons as decorations on Christmas wrapping paper, indicating a disrespect for these icons which should be avoided by Orthodox Christians.

After the splendid All-night Vigil and the Liturgy on the day of the feast, the main talk of the pilgrimage (printed on the pages that follow) was given by Father Seraphim. It evoked a lively discussion among those present, particularly concerning the ways in which believers today can preserve their Orthodoxy in a world so out of harmony with it.

Following the discussion, Fr. Vladimir Malchenko of Toronto showed slides of his recent trip to Mt. Athos. In conclusion, the Abbot of the Monastery, Bishop Laurus, expressed his wish that all who had participated in the Pilgrimage might take back with them new strength and re solve to lead a God-pleasing life.

ORTHODOXY IN THE USA

ITS HISTORICAL PAST AND PRESENT

A Talk Delivered at the Saint Herman Winter Pilgrimage, December 12/25, 1979,

at Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, N. Y.

By Hieromonk Seraphim Rose
St. Herman of Alaska Monastery, Platina, Ca.

WE HAVE GATHERED here today to venerate St. Herman, first saint of the American land, first Orthodox missionary to America, bringer of Orthodox Christianity to the New World. This feast gives us an opportunity to look at the Orthodoxy he brought: what has happened to it since his time, where it stands in this country today, what are the hopes for it -and for us , who are today's Or-thodox Christians -in the years ahead, nearly two hundred years after the seeds of the true faith were planted here.

I will say only a few words about the past of Orthodoxy in America, in order to concentrate chiefly on what faces us today.

THE PAST OF ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA

First of all, of course, there was the mission of St. Herman himself, with the seven other missionaries who came with him from Valaam and Konevits Monasteries in the north of Russia in 1794. It is really astonishing what an Orthodox foundation these missionaries laid in Alaska, considering how few they were and what obstacles

they faced. One of these eight, Fr. Ioasaph, was consecrated bishop in order to increase the work in America, but he was lost at sea on the return voyage before he could even begin his work. There were few priests in the early years, St. Herman himself wasn't a priest, and the Russian officials in Alaska were not very cooperative -but in those years thousands of natives were baptized, and their descendants remain Orthodox today; and with St. Herman's labors as a monk, preacher, and carer of orphans, America saw for the first time a living example of the traditional Orthodox piety and spiritual life which made Holy Russia. This is something very important for our Orthodoxy today -this example of true Orthodox Christianity in practice.

The next great Orthodox missionary in America was the holy hierarch Innocent of Alaska, who first as priest and then as bishop gave a classic example of Orthodox missionary activity, translating the Gospel into the local languages, caring for the bodies as well as the souls of the flock of his vast missionary territory. In his 1ast years, when he became Metropolitan of Moscow, he supported missionary labors in other places also.

With the sale of Alaska to the American government in 1867, the mission territory changed somewhat: the Russian government continued to send support to Alaska, but the seat of the Diocese now became San Francisco, and for the first time an English-language mission was undertaken. The outstanding missionary at the beginning of this century in San Francisco was Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich, a Serb by birth who died in Yugoslavia in 1940, whose books on Orthodox faith and practice in English are still in print. Bishop Tikhon (the future Patriarch of Moscow) also greatly encouraged the English-language mission, and under him and the other Russian bishops there were missions also for other national groups -Syrians, Serbs, etc.

However, even at this time the beginnings of weaknesses could be noted. America is a vast land; the Russians and other Orthodox settlers were widely scattered; priests were thinly spread; and perhaps most important of all, there were no other-worldly saints like St. Herman to plant the seeds of holiness deep in the American soil. Further, the English-speaking American people were not simple like the natives of Alaska, and they already practiced some form of Christian faith. For all of these reasons we can see the beginning, even before the Russian Revolution, of the terrible disease we see in the Orthodox jurisdictions in America today; the disease of worldliness. Outwardly, the Orthodox clergy began to look like the non-Orthodox clergy around them; inwardly, the concern was mainly to provide priests for the widely-scattered ethnic flock, without deepening their Orthodoxy by providing English texts of the classic Orthodox books or reaching out to tell the non-Ortho-dox who might listen that there is a true Christianity that is undreamed of in the West, the fullness of Holy Orthodoxy.

The Revolution of 1917 in Russia struck a deadly blow to the Orthodox mission: support from Russia was cut off, the oneness of the Church fell apart into national jurisdictions, and the clergy were left pretty much to themselves. The worldliness of American life was left free to put its stamp on the Orthodox mission, and there was not much strength to oppose it. When Archbishop Vitaly (later of Jordanville) came to America in the 1930's to become ruling bishop, he saw that Orthodoxy in America, if left to itself, would simply turn into an "Eastern-rite Protestantism" -that is, it would retain some of the externals of Orthodoxy, but inwardly would be scarcely different from the worldly Protestantism which is the predominant religion of America.

The second wave of Russian emigration after World War II, including the transfer to Jordanville of Archbishop Vitaly's whole

monastic community which he had established in Czechoslovakia -was the first major influence acting against the worldliness which has been engulfing America in the 20th century. But its influence has been mostly restricted to our Russian Church Outside of Russia -the other jurisdictions in America for the most part have continued their worldly path, and this is the chief reason for the widening difference between us and them.

One has only to go into a church of one of the modernist Orthodox jurisdictions in this country to see some of the results of this worldly spirit: pews, often organs, streamlined and sometimes dramatized services, various modern gimmicks for making money; and very often the chief emphasis is placed on ethnic rather than spiritual values -including the newest ethnic emphasis, Americanism.

The churches of our Russian Church Outside of Russia are usually quite different, with no pews or organs, and a more old-worldly kind of piety; and there has been a noticeable revival of traditional church iconography and other church arts. The traditional Orthodox influence is visible even in such external things as the way our clergy dress and the beards which almost all of our clergy have. Just a few decades ago almost no Orthodox clergy in America had beards or wore rassas on the street; and while this is something outward, it is still a reflection of a traditional mentality which has had many inward, spiritual results also. A few of the more conservative priests in other jurisdictions have now begun to return to more traditional Orthodox ways, but if so, it is largely under the influence of our Church, and a number of these priests have told us that they look to our Russian Church Outside of Russia as a standard and inspiration of genuine Orthodoxy.

However, the object of this talk is to go a little deeper than

these externals and to see where our Orthodoxy is today in America, and especially what we ourselves can do to make ourselves more

fervent, more Orthodox, more in the spirit of St. Herman, who for all time has set the "tone" for Orthodoxy in America.

To do this, we must first of all recognize the chief enemy facing us: it is, of course, the devil, who wants to knock us off the path of salvation; and the chief means he uses in our times to do this is the spirit of **WORLDLINESS**. This is what has weakened and watered down Orthodoxy in America -and not just in the other jurisdictions. The spirit of worldliness is in the air we breathe, and we cannot escape it. You cannot watch television, you cannot go to a supermarket, you cannot walk in the streets of any city in America -without being bombarded by this spirit. ln supermarkets and other large stores they even play lighthearted, senseless music in order to catch you in this spirit and make sure that you don't think or feel in an other-worldly way. Our Church and everyone in it is attacked by this spirit, and we can't escape it by isolating ourselves in a ghetto or in a small town; the outside influences can be lessened, perhaps, in such ways, but if we are not fighting an **INWARD SPIRITUAL BATTLE** against worldliness, we will still be conquered by it without fail. And so the chief question regarding the future of our Orthodoxy in America -and in the whole world, for that matter -is: **HOW DO WE REMAIN ORTHODOX AND DEVELOP OUR ORTHODOXY** against the spirit of worldliness that attacks us on all sides?

In order to answer this question we have to ask first another question that might be a little surprising: what is Orthodoxy? But this question is basic; if we aren't sure just what Orthodoxy is, we won't know what we're trying to preserve and develop against the spirit of worldliness. And so let us ask this question:

THE ORTHODOX WORD

WHAT IS ORTHODOXY?

We can define Orthodoxy in no better way than in the words of the great 18th-century Russian Father, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk -a Saint whose fervent spirit is needed very much today by Orthodox Christians. We should read him more and practice what he teaches. St. Tikhon calls Orthodoxy "the true Christianity," and he wrote a whole book under this title. But "true Christianity" does not mean just having the right opinions about Christianity -this is not enough to save one's soul. St. Tikhon in his book, in the chapter on "'The Gospel and Faith," says: "If someone should say that true faith is the correct holding and confession of correct dogmas, he would be telling the truth, for a believer absolutely needs the Orthodox holding and confession of dogmas. But this knowledge and confession by itself does not make a man a faithful and true Christian. The keeping and confession of Orthodox dogmas is always to be found in true faith in Christ, but the true faith of Christ is not always to be found in the confession of Orthodoxy ... The knowledge of correct dogmas is in the mind, and it is often fruitless, arrogant, and proud... The true faith in Christ is in the heart, and it is fruitful, humble, patient, loving, merciful, compassionate, hungering and thirsting for righteousness; it with draws from worldly lusts and clings to God alone, strives and seeks always for what is heavenly and eternal, struggles against every sin, and constantly seeks and begs help from God for this." And he then quotes Blessed Augustine, who teaches: "The faith of a Christian is with love; faith without love is that of the devil" (' 'True Christianity," ch. 287, p. 469). St. James in his Epistle tells us that "the demons also be-lieve and tremble" (James 3:19).

St. Tikhon, therefore, gives us a start in understanding what

ORTHODOXY IN THE USA

Orthodoxy is: it is something first of all of the **HEART**, not just the mind, something **LIVING AND WARM**, not abstract and cold, something that is learned and practiced in **LIFE**, not just in school.

A person who takes Orthodoxy seriously and begins to really work on understanding it with his heart and changing himself -has at least a little of a quality we might call the fragrance of true Christianity; he is different from people who live by nothing higher than the world. St. Macarius the Great, the 4th-century Egyptian desert father, teaches in his Homilies that "Christians have their own world, their own way of life, their own understanding and word and activity; far different from theirs are the way of life and understanding and word and activity of the people of this world. Christians are one thing, and lovers of the world quite another. Inasmuch as the mind and understanding of Christians is constantly occupied with reflection on the heavenly, they behold eternal good things by communion and participation in the Holy Spirit ... Christians have a different world ... a different way of thinking from all other men" (Homily V, 1:20). Later I'll try to say a word on how Orthodox Christians should be absorbing this different world and way of thinking. Orthodoxy, the true Christianity, is not just another set of beliefs; it is a whole way of life that makes us different people, and it is directly bound up with how much heavenly and eternal things are present in our life.

An Orthodox person who is **NOT** different can be worse off than the non-Orthodox. There is nothing sadder than the spectacle of Orthodox Christians, who possess a treasure that cannot be valued by any earthly measure, something which many are seeking and do not find in today's world -nothing is sadder than Orthodox Christians who do not value and do not use this treasure.

I'd like to tell you a little about a group of Protestants who live not too far from our monastery in northern California. In some

ways I think they are actually an example for us, in other ways a warning, and perhaps most of all an indication of the responsibility and opportunity we Orthodox Christians have because we have been given the **TRUE CHRISTIANITY**.

These Protestants have a simple and warm Christian faith without much of the sectarian narrowness that characterizes many Protestant groups. They don't believe, like some Protestants, that they are "saved" and don't need to do any more; they believe in the idea of spiritual struggle and training the soul. They force themselves to forgive each other and not to hold grudges. They take in bums and hippies off the streets and have a special farm for re-habilitating them and teaching them a sense of responsibility. In other words, they take Christianity seriously as the most important thing in life; it's not the fullness of Christianity that we Orthodox have, but it's good as far as it goes, and these people are warm, loving people who obviously love Christ. In this way they are an example of what we should be, only more so. Whether they attain salvation by their practice of Christianity is for God to judge, for some of their views and actions are far from the true Christianity of Orthodoxy handed down to us from Christ and His Apostles; but at least an awareness of their existence should help us to be aware of what we already have. Some of our Orthodox young people -for whatever reason, they don't realize what treasure their Orthodox faith contains -are joining such Protestant groups; and some of our uninformed young people go much fart her from Orthodoxy -one of the 900 victims of Jonestown a year ago was a Greek Orthodox girl, the daughter of an Orthodox priest.

I'm telling you about these Protestants both as a warning of how Orthodox young people can lose the treasure they already have if

they haven't been made aware enough of it, and more importantly, as a means of defining a little better the true Christianity we have and these

Protestants don't have. Some of our Orthodox young people are converted to groups like this, but it works the other way around also - some of these Protestants are being converted to Or-thodoxy. And **WHY NOT**? If we have the true Christianity, there should be something in our midst that someone who sincerely loves the truth will see and want. We've baptized several people from this Protestant group in our monastery; they are drawn to Orthodoxy by the grace and the sacraments whose presence they feel in Orthodoxy, but which are absent in their group. And once they become Orthodox, they find their Protestant experience, which seemed so real to them at the time, to be quite shallow and superficial. Their leaders give very practical teachings based on the Gospel, but after a while the teachings are exhausted and they repeat themselves. Coming to Orthodoxy, these converts find a wealth of teaching that is inexhaustible and leads them into a depth of Christian experience that is totally beyond even the best of non-Orthodox Christians. We who are already Orthodox have this treasure and this depth right in front of us, and we must use it more fully than we usually do; it is a matter of spiritual life and death both for ourselves and for those around us who can be awakened to the truth of Orthodoxy.

Just this last week I crossed the whole of America by train -a vast land, with many different kinds of landscapes and settlements. And I thought of St. Seraphim's vision of the vast Russian land, with the smoke of the prayers of believers going up like incense to God. Perhaps someone will say to me: "Oh, you talk like a convert! America is America. It's full of Protestants and unbelievers, and the Orthodox will always be a little minority of people who stick to themselves

and have no influence on the rest of America." Well, I'm not saying that we Orthodox will "convert America" -that's a little too ambitious for us. However, St. Herman himself did have such a dream. He wrote a letter after participating in the first "missionary conference" on American soi1,

when that small band of missionaries divided up the vast land of Alaska and argued over who would get the most land to cover. St. Herman, hearing this, says that he was so exalted in soul that he thought he was present when the Apostles themselves were dividing up the world for the preaching of the Gospel.

We don't have to have such exalted ideas in order to see that the prayers of believers could be going up to God in America. What if we who are Orthodox Christians began to realize who we are? -to take our Christianity seriously, to **LIVE** as though we actually were in contact with the true Christianity? We would begin to be different, others around us would begin to be interested in why we are different, and we would begin to realize that we have the answers to their spiritual questions.

On this same train trip across the country I had what could be called missionary encounters. Of course, I wasn't passing out tracts in the aisles; but just sitting there in my rassa with a cross and my beard, I attracted attention. Some of it wasn't fruitful, but was typical of how we Orthodox are often regarded in America: one small boy thought I was "Santa Claus," and a woman pointed me out as "Ayatollah!" I also had several encounters with people who **SHOULD** have been Orthodox: one woman who was married to a Greek man; a man who was married to a Greek woman, but neither of them Orthodox because the woman's grandmother had become a Lutheran for social reasons -here it was obvious how worldliness had taken its toll of yet another Orthodox family in America.

But there were some fruitful encounters, too. To several people I was able to speak about Orthodoxy (which they had never heard of) and hand out some copies of "The Orthodox Word." One of these people had a story that should move our Orthodox hearts. For most of the day that I was crossing vast Wyoming -full of nothing but frozen,

barren land and a few antelope herds -I was talking to an intense young man who was searching for the truth after finding out that the "charismatic" movement is not from God. After becoming disillusioned with American religion -the Methodists, Roman Catholics, Baptists, and various Protestant evangelists -as a last resort he is learning Russian in order to go to Russia and find out what he'll be told by people who are suffering for their faith. "Maybe that will be real," he said, as opposed to the religious hypocrisy he sees everywhere. He asked me eagerly about many things, from doctrines to customs to moral teachings, and then read the chapter on the charismatic movement in our book, "Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future" -which he said put into words what he felt (based on his own experience) but didn't have the teaching to express. Here is where Orthodoxy, the true Christianity, can literally save someone who otherwise might fall into despair from the inadequacy of the Christianity of the West. Here again a seed was sown; perhaps Wyoming won't become Orthodox, but a few souls there might.

All this is by way of explaining that Orthodoxy, in St. Tikhon's definition, is the **TRUE CHRISTIANITY**, and it was never more needed than today. We must realize what a treasure we have, and make it active in us. This need not mean going door to door like Jehovah's Witnesses, or preaching in the streets. The outward expression of our faith will come naturally once we have begun to go inward, finding out what this treasure is and letting ourselves be truly changed by it. Recently an Orthodox person of some sensitivity and

depth told me: "Orthodoxy is the truth, but it's too difficult for men today, so I seldom speak of it." There is a kernel of truth in this statement. Orthodoxy **IS** difficult compared to the Western denominations; but still -anyone who is capable of wanting a demanding faith is capable of accepting Orthodoxy. We have to sow more, so there will be more to reap. But first of

THE ORTHODOX WORD

all we have to go inward and make the true Christianity of Orthodoxy a **LIVING PART OF OUR-SELVES**.

GOING DEEPER INTO ORTHODOXY

How do we do this? To some extent, anyone who is close to Church and tries to keep the Orthodox discipline, knows the answer to this question: you attend church services, keep the faith, receive Holy Communion, read Orthodox books. But it is possible to do all this almost mechanically, without going deeper into Orthodoxy.

Therefore, first of all we must not merely attend services and keep the outward form of Orthodoxy -we must be **AWARE** of what we are doing. If you've ever talked to an earnest Protestant or unbeliever who really wants to know what you believe and why you behave the way you do, you will understand how important this awareness is. You can literally save the soul of someone like that if you can begin, even in a little way, to open up to him the depths of Orthodox Christianity. Why do you make the sign of the Cross? Why do you pray to saints'? Why do you stand up in church, or make prostrations during Lent? Why are you always singing "Lord, have mercy"'? What is Holy Communion? Why do you confess your sins to a priest? Especially today, when we are surrounded by people who don't know the truth but some of whom are really thirsting for it -we can't just do these things out of habit; we must be able, as the Apostle Peter says ,

to give an account of what we believe and do to those outside the Church. There are many ways to become educated in Orthodox Christianity -ask your parish priest, read books, obtain a copy of some of the Church's services and begin to enter more deeply into their meaning.

Further, we must be not just aware of what our Church teaches and does -we must be trying to **SATURATE** ourselves in it. St.

ORTHODOXY IN THE USA

Seraphim, in his spiritual instructions, says that the Christian must be "swimming in the law of the Lord" -and this doesn't mean just making the Church a little part of one's life; it means going deeper and doing more. Of course, we start a little at a time. If you have been going to church just on Sundays, you can begin to go to the Vigil on Saturday night, and to feast-day services. If you've been trying to keep the fast of Great Lent, you can begin to go to more of the very moving services of Lent -the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, the Praises of the Mother of God.

And another very important thing: You should be reading spiritual books. St. John Chrysostom goes so far as to say that a Christian who doesn't read spiritual books can't be saved. Why? Because the world, whose spirit we absorb unconsciously many hours a day, is so strong that we will almost automatically follow its ways unless we are consciously filling our minds and hearts with Christian impressions. Innumerable books exist for this purpose, both in Russian and English: first of all the Holy Scriptures and Orthodox commentaries on them. Then the Lives of Saints and recent ascetics; "My Life in Christ" by St. John of Kronstadt; ", Unseen Warfare" by St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and Bishop Theophan the Recluse; the Spiritual Instructions of St. Abba Dorotheos; the Homilies of St. Macarius the Great; the Orthodox service books, several of which are now in English; the "Lausaic History" and the Lives and Sayings of

the Desert Fathers, which are just as fresh now as when uttered 1500 years ago; Lives of Russia's New Martyrs; Archbishop Andrew's "The One Thing Needful." The Monastery bookstore here can sell you these and many other books. If you have a spark of Christian fervor in you, you will be surprised how much your soul will be refreshed by reading books like these; they will give you a taste of that other-worldliness without which the Christian soul withers and dies, especially ,in our worldly times.

THE ORTHODOX WORD

And of course, a central part of this going deeper into Orthodoxy are the Church's medicines of confession and Holy Communion, which you should participate in as fully as possible, according to the counsel of your spiritual father. Then there are the daily opportunities for expressing Christian love -giving alms, visiting the sick, helping those in need. All of these means, if one's heart is in them, are what help to make the Christian different from the world, because they lift his eyes above this passing world to the heavenly Kingdom which is our goal as Christians.

These are the positive means of going deeper into Orthodoxy. There are, of course, negative things you will have to fight against as well. Once you become aware that there is an unseen warfare going on, that our Christianity is constantly being attacked by our unseen enemies, especially through the spirit of worldliness, you will begin to see also the negative things in your life that have to be changed. But with a firm understanding of the positive, inspiring side of Christian life, this struggle against negative faults and habits becomes much easier. Part of our awareness of what Orthodoxy is involves knowing that this world is largely the domain of the devil, the prince of this world, who acts on our souls and hearts chiefly by the love of this passing world. But if we are struggling in an Orthodox way, we are

receiving the grace of God which is the only thing that can raise us above this world that lies in evil.

SOME PITFALLS

Now I'd like to say a word about a few of the pitfalls into which one can fall once one has begun to take up the path of fervent Orthodox Christianity. One might think, hearing about our faith; that all one has to do is to become on fire with zeal for it, and then one can enter the

ORTHODOXY IN THE USA

Heavenly Kingdom. But it so happens that we have an enemy -the devil - and as soon as we become fervent, the enemy comes and begins to fight. I'll speak here of three of the ways in which he attacks, and this will also help us to define a little more precisely what is the true Christianity of Orthodoxy.

The first pitfall occurs when one begins to read Orthodox books, is inspired by them, but does not apply their principles properly to one's own life. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, one of the great Russian Fathers of the 19th century -a beacon light for modern times, together with his contemporary, Bishop Theophan the Recluse -wrote a special book, called in English "The Arena," for the monastics of the last times -our times- where he gives advice which all Orthodox strugglers of our times should heed. In this book he warns beginners on the monastic path not to become so exalted by some inspiring writings of the Holy Fathers or even by the Lives of Saints, that one forms "an impossible dream of a perfect life vividly and alluringly in his imagination" and ceases to do the humble Christian tasks right in front of him (ch. 10). This is a basic pitfall. One can think about living in the desert, while right in front of one there may be an excellent opportunity to practice Christianity -someone may be in trouble, and with our

high ideas we may not even think of helping him. Or, with these same high ideas in our mind, we may begin to criticize others and be lacking in the basic Christian love without which all our high ideas are empty. Through experience we must learn how to apply the writings of the Holy Fathers and the Scripture itself to our own level and circumstances. Our spiritual life is not something bookish or that follows formulas. Everything we learn has to become part of our life and something natural to us. We can be reading about hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer, for example, and begin to say it ourselves -and still be blind to our own passions and unresponsive to a person in need right in front of

us, not seeing that this is a test of our Christianity that comes at a more basic level than saying the Jesus Prayer. We have to read Orthodox books that are on our level -the ones I mentioned above are more for beginners -and we have to read them very humbly, realizing the nature of our times when worldly influences are present everywhere and affect our thinking even when we aren't aware of it, and never dreaming that we are on any level but that of raw beginners.

Bound up with this is a disease of today's Orthodox Christians which can be deadly: the "correctness disease." In a way this is a natural temptation to anyone who has just awakened to Christian faith and to spiritual life -the more one finds out about Christian doctrine and practice, the more one discovers how many. "mistakes" one has been making up to now, and one's natural desire is to be "correct." This is praiseworthy, although in the beginning one is probably going to be too artificially "strict" and make many new mistakes out of pride (to which we are constantly blind). If you are critical of others, self-confident about your own correctness, eager to quote canons to prove someone else is wrong, constantly "knowing better" than others -you have the germs of the "correctness disease." These are signs of immaturity in spiritual life, and often one outgrows them if one is living a normal spiritual life.

But especially in our days, the spirit of worldliness is so strong, and there is obviously so much wrong in our church life -that there is a strong temptation to make "correctness" a way of life, to get stuck in it. And this is not only a disease of converts; one of the best bishops of the Old Calendar Greeks, Bishop Cyprian of Sts. Cyprian and Justina Monastery near Athens, has written that this spirit of "correctness" has already done untold damage to Orthodoxy in Greece, causing fights and schisms one after the other. Sometimes one's zeal for "Orthodoxy" (in quotes) can be so excessive that it produces a situation similar to that which caused an old Russian woman to remark of an enthusiastic

American convert: "Well, he' s certainly **ORTHODOX** all right -but is he a Christian?"

To be "Orthodox but not Christian" is a state that has a particular name in Christian language: it means to be a pharisee, to be so bogged down in the letter of the Church's laws that one loses the spirit that gives them life, the spirit of true Christianity. In saying this my aim is not to be critical or to point to anyone in particular -we all suffer from this -but only to point out a pitfall which can cause one to fail to take advantage of the riches which the Orthodox Church provides for our salvation, even in these evil times. Even when it is not fanatical, this spirit of "correctness" for its own sake turns out to be fruitless. As an example, I can tell you of a very good friend of ours, one of the zealot fathers of Mt. Athos. He is a "moderate " zealot, in that he recognizes the grace of New Calendar sacraments, accepts the blessings of priests of our Church, and the like; but he is absolutely strict when it comes to applying the basic Zealot principle, not to have communion not only with bishops whose teaching departs from Or-

thodox truth, such as the Patriarch of Constantinople, and not only with anyone who has communion with him, but with anyone who has communion with anyone who in any remote way has communion with him. Such " purity" is so difficult to attain in our days (our whole Russian Church Abroad, for example, is "tainted" in his eyes by some measure of communion with the other Orthodox Churches) that he is in communion with only his own priest and ten other monks in his group on the Holy Mountain; all of the rest of the Orthodox Church is not ' 'pure."

Perhaps there are only ten or twelve people left in the world who are perfectly "strict" and "pure" in their Orthodoxy -this I really don't know; but it simply cannot be that there are really only ten or twelve Orthodox Christians left in the world with whom one can have true oneness of faith, expressed in common communion. I think that

you can see that there is some kind of spiritual dead-end here; even if we had to believe such a narrow view of Orthodoxy according to the letter, our believing Christian heart would rebel against it. We cannot really **LIVE** by such strictness; we must somehow be less "correct" and closer to the **HEART** of Orthodox Christianity.

In smaller ways, too, we can get carried away with "correctness:" we can like well-done Byzantine icons (which is a good thing), but we go too far if we are disdainful of the more modern style icons which are still in many of our churches. The same goes for church singing, architecture, the following of correct rules of fasting, of kneeling in church, etc. While striving to be as correct as we can, we must also remember that these things belong to the **OUTWARD** side of our Orthodox faith, and they are good only if they are used in the right spirit of the true Christianity St. Tikhon talks about. Vladimir Soloviev, in his Short Story of Antichrist, ingeniously suggests that Antichrist, in order to attract Orthodox conservatives, will open a mu-

seum of all Christian antiquities. Perhaps the very images of Antichrist himself (Apoc. 13:14) will be in good Byzantine style -this should be a sobering thought for us.

The third pitfall I'll just mention, because it doesn't seem to be a problem in our Church. This is the "charismatic" movement which imagines it is acquiring the Holy Spirit by various Protestant techniques. This movement is filled with such an obvious spirit of inflated self-esteem and has so many of the characteristics of what Orthodox writers describe as spiritual deception (prelest) that I won't dwell on it here. The true Orthodox spirit is something very different.

ORTHODOXY IN THE USA

SOME EXAMPLES OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

After mentioning these pitfalls I'd like to get back to the subject and mention some final ways we have in our Russian Church Outside of Russia today of increasing our awareness of Orthodoxy and helping us to value it more and use it better.

Our Orthodox faith comes down to us through tradition. This means it isn't something we just read about or rediscover through books -it is something passed on from father to son, from one generation to the next, which we see being practiced around us by our fathers and brothers in the faith. If we are in living contact with these people who are passing down the tradition, "correctness" will not be such a temptation for us; we will be "hooked up" with the tradition. This doesn't mean we must believe every opinion we hear from seemingly pious people -we have the writings of the Holy Fathers and the

whole tradition of the Church to guide us if there are doubts or perplexities.

Some of those who pass on the Orthodox Faith have a special message for us. I'd like to mention here just three of those who have something to say to us: two of them died in the last few years, and some of you here knew them; another is still alive. All three are bound up with Russia which is now undergoing the terrible trial of atheist rule, and that also has something to say to us.

The first of these men is Archbishop Andrew of Novo-Diveyevo, who died last year after a long and full life in the Church. He was just setting out in life when the Russian Revolution broke out, and he had to rethink his whole goal in life under the changed circumstances. What is life for, and what is worth doing in life if all the normal foundations of life can be so suddenly overthrown? Having known the warmth of Orthodoxy in childhood, he sought for it as an adult at first in vain, until he discovered that he himself had to **GO DEEPER** and

SUFFER for what he needed. He read Dostoyevsky, which deepened his view on life; he fell in with a non-Orthodox Christian group, which

had fervor but couldn't satisfy his Orthodox soul. He found a priest who opened up to him the **MEANING** behind the Church's services and customs. He read the Holy Fathers, and came back to life from his earlier despair. And then he found the elders of Optina: Nectarius, who taught him what true godliness or piety is -to keep everything of God's in honor; and the Elder Anatole, who gave him St. Tikhon's book "On True Christianity" and told him to **LIVE** by it.

Wherever he was -in Russia, Germany, or America -he strove to establish an atmosphere of Christian warmth where other seekers could find the peace he had found. He saw that most of our Christian

life is outward and cold, and he strove always to awaken the true inward life and warmth of Orthodoxy when it is deeply understood and practiced. He hated the "hothouse" Christianity of those who "enjoy" being Orthodox but don't live a life of struggling and deepening their Christianity. We converts can easily fall for this "hothouse" Orthodoxy, too. We can live close to a church, have English services, a good priest, go frequently to church and receive the Sacraments, be in the "correct" jurisdiction -and still be cold, unfeeling, arrogant and proud, as St. Tikhon has said. In this way we will not grow because we don't have the sense of urgency and struggle that Vladika Andrew talked about. Once, when he only suspected that one of his spiritual children was growing comfortable in his Orthodoxy, he took him by the shoulders and literally shook him and told him: "Don't you be a hypocrite!"

You can read further about Archbishop Andrew and his Orthodox philosophy of life in a booklet published several years ago: "The Restoration of the Orthodox Way of Life." From Vladika Andrew we can learn that Orthodoxy is a matter of life and death, that it requires intense awareness and struggle, that it can't be "comfortable" unless it

is fake. The second man I'd like to mention livved for many years right here in Jordanville. He was a philosopher -I. M. Andreyev. He belonged at first to the liberal intelligentsia, and only gradually, in the first decade of the Revolution, did he come back to Orthodoxy, where he found the whole philosophy of life which the Western schools could not give. His pilgrimages to Sarov, Diveyevo, and other monasteries in Russia just before they were closed, deepened and made real his new-found faith. Then came his years of standing in the truth when he sided with the Catacomb Church in the terrible years of the 1920's and '30's. He was a refined and philosophical thinker, but most

of all he had an Orthodox heart, and he grieved most of all at seeing how few Orthodox people seem to care deeply for God and their faith and their fellow men. In his article "Weep," after describing how a young mother in New York City brutally killed her infant son, he addresses the Orthodox people: "All for one and one for all are guilty... Let each one think of himself ... What were you doing on that evening when this unbelievable but authentic evil deed was performed? Perhaps it was your sin, your immoral deed, your malice, which turned out to be the last little drop which caused the vessel of evil to overflow. This is the way we must reflect, if we are Christians... Weep, brothers and sisters! Do not be ashamed of these tears... Let your tears be a fount of a different energy, an energy of good that fights against the energy of evil... Let these tears also awaken many of the indifferent." Andreyev's burning concern shows us that we must have a **DEEPLY-FEELING HEART**, or else we are not Christians.

Finally, I'd like to mention one man who is alive today in Soviet Russia -Father Dimitry Dudko. He was born already after the Revolution, and came to Christ in the late Soviet period through the sufferings of living under the atheist rule and spending 8 ½ years in prison camp. His words in recent years speak with extraordinary power for us

Orthodox Christians outside of Russia. One might disagree with him on a few theoretical points, but his **HEART** is so right, so Orthodox. In Fr. Dimitry is the same concern and feeling that Andreyev found largely lacking in the West; the same intensity and struggle Vladika Andrew preached. Once, when someone asked him at his question and answer sessions several years ago after the All-night Vigil, recorded in his book, "Our Hope" -Isn't Christianity in the West better off, being in freedom? -he replied: No. There they have spirituality with comfort, and you can't expect much from that; here in Russia we

have martyrs and suffering, and from that can come resurrection and new life.

Actually, if you take seriously what Orthodox teachers like Archbishop Andrew, Andreyev, and Father Dimitry are saying, you can come to think there isn't much hope for us -we're too soft, too unaware, too shallow, too outward. Well, it's good to think like that -it might make us begin to wake up and struggle. Let the words of these fervent souls be a warning for us.

We are in a privileged position of peace and freedom, and this is dangerous for us. We can sit in the midst of our Orthodox treasures, the treasures that give salvation that no one else has -and be satisfied with our situation and so be totally fruitless. If we have difficulty in being Orthodox -then let us rejoice, for that means we must struggle, and there is hope that we won't wither and die spiritually.

*** On Andreyev's life and philosophy, see "The Orthodox Word," 1977, no. 73.**

Often we have the wrong idea about our situation. We think: "If only I could go somewhere else, change my situation, and the like, my problems would be solved;" but usually this is not right at all. We must start right now, wherever we are. If it is difficult, that is all the better - it means we have to fight for our Christianity; and if you have to fight and struggle, you become more aware.

But there are also opportunities in our privileged position, and we should use them.

First of all, perhaps many of you don't know that there are many contacts now between people in Russia and people outside. We can become informed of what is going on there. Read Fr. Dimitry Dudko's books, or his little newspaper. There are also Western sources which give fresh information on what is happening to Orthodox Christians in Russia -Fr. Victor Potapov's "Orthodox Monitor," the Keston News Service, "Aid to the Russian Church," and so forth. Find out about these suffering people and pray for them. Do you know about Nun Valeria, arrested and placed in a psychiatric hospital for selling belts with the Ninetieth Psalm embroidered on them? About Father George Calciu in Rumania, now in prison for his Christian sermons? About Alexander Ogorodnikov, imprisoned for holding a Christian discussion group? About Vladimir Osipov, the Russian patriot and samizdat publisher? About Fr. Gleb Yakunin, Fr. Vasily Romanchuk, Sergei Yermolaev, Igor Ogurtsov -the list is long. We have to start praying for these people who are suffering for their faith.

And we can help them: we have their prison addresses and can send them letters. Even if they don't receive them, the prison officials do, and the treatment of prisoners with "friends abroad" noticeably improves. Through "Orthodox Action" you can send literature in regular envelopes. There are even ways of getting books through. You can write to Fr. Dimitry Dudko -some letters get through, and he even

replies. Everyone can do something, and every bit helps. In the West we've grown too passive -now is the time when we can express our care and concern.

Perhaps even more, we can **LEARN** from the suffering people of Russia and other Communist countries. I don't want to frighten you, but we'd better face the fact that what they're suffering now, or something similar, is probably coming here, and soon. We're living in

the last times, Antichrist is close, and what happens in Russia and other countries like it is the normal experience for our times. Here in the West we're living in a fool's paradise which can and probably will soon be lost. Let's start to prepare -not by storing food or such outward things that some are already doing in America, but with the inward preparation of Orthodox Christians.

Have you ever asked yourself, for example, the question how you will survive if you are placed in prison or concentration camp, and especially in the punishment cells of solitary confinement? How are you going to survive? You will go crazy in a very short time if your mind has nothing to occupy itself with. What will you have in your mind? If you are filled with worldly impressions and have nothing spiritual in your mind; if you are just living from day to day without thinking seriously about Christianity and the Church, without becoming aware of what Orthodoxy is, and you are placed in a situation like solitary confinement where there is nothing to do, nowhere to go, no movies to see, just staying in one spot facing four walls -you will scarcely survive.

The Rumanian Protestant pastor, Richard Wurmbrand, has a tape devoted to this subject which is very interesting. In a crisis situation like that, when all our books and outward props are taken away, we can depend on nothing except what we've acquired within ourselves. He says that all the Bible verses he knew didn't help him much;

abstract knowledge of dogmas didn't help much -what is important is what you have in your soul. You must have Christ in your soul. If He is there, then we Orthodox Christians have a whole program which we could use in prison. We can remember the Orthodox Calendar -which saints and feasts are commemorated when. We don't have to

know the whole Calendar, but from our daily life in the Church we will remember
the milestones of the Church year; whatever we have stored up in our hearts and minds will come back to us. Whatever prayers and hymns we know by heart will help us, we will have to sing them every day. You will have to have people to pray for. The world-wide dispersion of our Russian Church Abroad is ideal for this. You can go over the whole globe in your mind, one country or continent at a time, and pray for those you know, even if you can't think of their names - bishops and abbesses, parishes and priests both Russian and missionary, the monasteries in the Holy Land, prisoners in Russia and Rumania and other lands under the atheist yoke, the missions in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa where it is very difficult, the monks of Mt. Athos, the suffering Old Calendarists of Greece. The more of these you are aware of and praying for now, the better it will be for you when you have to suffer yourself, the more you will have to take with you into prison.

As Andreyev says, it is "one for all and all for one" -we are involved in practicing our Christianity in a world that has become atheist, whether or not open persecution is going on.

Every Christian has a talent from God, and He will ask what we have done with what He gave us. In Soviet Russia and other Communist countries, there is the talent of suffering for Christ and being faithful in the midst of trials. In the free world, the talent given most of us is the talent of **FREEDOM**: we have been given the freedom to practice our faith and the opportunity through our abundance of Orthodox texts to become fully aware of it and deepen it within ourselves.

THE ORTHODOX WORD

But this Orthodoxy must be the **TRUE CHRISTIANITY** that St. Tikhon describes -the Orthodoxy not of the mind but of the heart.

This kind of Orthodoxy cannot be acquired overnight; it requires suffering, experience, testing. But first of all it requires **RESOLVE**. If each one of us puts this resolve in his heart, if we take our Christian Faith seriously and resolve to be faithful to it, there can be a literal resurrection
of true Christianity in our midst, something that Fr. Dimitry Dudko and others mention as beginning to happen in Russia.

Let me end with the words of St. Herman, whose feast we are celebrating -he also was one of those concerned ones who made full use of the opportunities given them. In the famous incident when he asked the officers of a ship what they loved most of all, and then put them to shame by telling them that only God is worth loving so much, he ended his instruction with these words, which you will find on some icons of St. Herman: "From this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us love God above all." A very simple thing -which is exactly what we all must do. May God give us the strength for it, by the prayers of His great Saint, Herman of Alaska. Amen.

ORTHODOX MESSENGER

February 1998
Vol. 8, Issue #1

WHAT IS A PARISH?

On the eve of our annual Parish Meeting, we present an article written a number of years ago by the late Protopresbyter Alexander Schrnemann, a renowned Orthodox pastor and theologian, teacher and author. Fr. Alexander was deeply committed to liturgical and eucharistic renewal and a return to a more genuine and authentic expression of church life. His thoughts on the evolution and development of the contemporary Orthodox parish to its present form, are insightful and thought provoking, 'and very relevant, even though it has been thirty years since the article was written. We hope his insights will also prove challenging as we attempt to grow in Christ and come to a better and deeper understanding our task as a Christian parish. Not all of his remarkes are applicable to this particular parish. Nevertheless, he describes quite well the temptations and misdirection that can plague us as a community in Christ.

What I have to say here may come as a shock to the great majority of Orthodox. Yet it is a self-evident fact that the parish as we understand it now, i.e., as an organization with officers, by-laws, finances, property, meetings, elections, etc., is a very recent phenomenon and exists, in fact, almost exclusively within the Orthodox "Diaspora" [èmigrè communities of Greeks, Russians, Serbians, etc.]. This is to say that what we take for granted as the only nonnative and natural form of the Church's existence is not at all so clearly "granted," and may be not at all so normative.

The "parish" as we know it today is, in spite of all its religious connotations,-and this may come as a second shock - a product of secularization; or, rather, that in the process of its development within the American way of life it has accepted a secularistic basis which little by little dissolves the ultimate seriousness of that which it claims to serve and to be, i.e., the Church. To understand this, one must briefly analyze the genesis and the development of the Orthodox parish in America.

The first thing Orthodox immigrants did as they settled in America was to build churches. The Church was a self-evident, organic part of their life in the old country. It became their first need in the new one. It was a need for the Church - for worship, sacraments, for the possibility to baptize, marry and bury - not for a "parish," as understood today, but rather for a parish in the old and traditional sense of the word, a place where one could worship together with others and have a religious "term of reference" for his entire life. All early documents support this view. The "organization" was forced, so to speak, on the immigrants by purely external factors. In a Greek or Russian village no one ever asked who is the owner of the parish Church. It was literally the property of God for which everyone had to care, but which belonged to no one in particular.

The Church had no other function but that of literally making Christ present through preaching, the sacraments, worship, education, and of making the life of "parishioners" as Christian, as permeated with Christ, as possible. Those who were selected, ordained, set apart to carry out this work of the Church were the "clergy". To give and to administer the Church, both spiritually and materially, was not their "right", but their sacred obligation, the very reason for being "set apart". Similarly the sacred obligation of all other "parishioners", called laity, was to receive the teachings of the Church as diligently as possible, to worship God together, to contribute "according to the will of their heart" to the needs of the Church, and finally, to live as much as possible by the precepts of the Christian Faith.

Here, however, in a completely different legal framework, the land and the Church on it had to be purchased and owned by a corporation. The latter was hastily constituted, usually by some energetic and Church-minded people, with no other purpose that to make the Church possible. It was a purely pragmatic development which, however, introduced, almost subconsciously, the first radical change in the old idea

-continued on next page

-Parish, continued

of the parish: that of the parish as owner of property. And this idea became little by little a real obsession.

Then came the second change. The immigrant parish was poor, and to have even a humble church together with supporting a priest, was costly. Hence, a constant preoccupation which put money and finances at the very heart of the parish's life. In fact the parish organization was born as a material support for the Church, the Church, and not the parish, being at first the goal and the justification of the parish. But an organization, when it is born and whatever the reason for its birth, follows almost inevitably a logic of development which sooner or later makes its own "ultimate values". And in America nearly everything contributed to this logic and to that development: the democratic, i.e., basically anti-hierarchical ideal of society, the cult of "free" i.e., private, enterprise, the spirit of competition, the evaluation of everything in terms of "cost", the emphasis on security and saving, the constant exaltation of the "people" and their will. needs, and interests as the only criterion of all activity, and especially the pragmatic character of American religion in which activity and efficiency are the main religious values.

Finally, the Orthodox parish became what it is today: an end in itself, an organization whose while efforts and energies are aimed at advancing its own good-material stability, success, future security, and a kind of self-pride. And it is no longer the parish that serves the Church, it is, indeed, the Church that is forced more and more to serve the parish, to accept it as its "goal" so that a priest, the last sign and representative of the "Church" in the "parish", is considered good **when he entirely subordinates the interest of the Church to those of the parish.**

The third and the most important change was the inevitable result of the other two: the secularization of the parish and the corresponding loss of religious seriousness. A modern American parish may have many good aspects, but any deeper analysis must admit that it lacks seriousness in the sense we used this term above. Beyond that, however, as organization, i.e., as "parish" it, in fact, opposes this kind of seriousness, because it knows by instinct and from experience that the success it wants and seeks is precisely opposed to religious seriousness. To be "successful" one has to refer and to cater to human pride (the right hand not only knowing what the left one is doing, but spending most of the time acknowledging and publicizing it), the instinct of gain (bingo or raffles, etc., being a more efficient way to fill the parish treasury than any appeal to religious consciousness), vainglory (the best, the greatest, the most expensive...). And since all this is done "for the Church"-it is thereby justified and glorified as "Christian". To be exact, a parish organization lives by the standards and principles, which, when applied to an individual, are condemned outright by Christianity as immoral: pride, gain, selfishness, and self-affirmation. Even the constant preaching in terms of the glory of Orthodoxy is a rather ambiguous substitute for the glory that according to the Gospel is due to God alone. The parish organization has replaced the Church and, by the same token, has become a completely secular organization. In this it is radically different from the parish of the past. It has ceased to be a natural community with a Church as its center and pole of "ultimate reference" and "seriousness". It has not become a religious community, i.e., a group united by and serving a common religious ideal. As it exists today it represents the very victory of secularism within American Orthodoxy.

Can this situation be changed? The answer offered by Fr. Alexander, in a few words, is seen in terms of a religious and spiritual restoration of the parish. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God..." (Ps. 42:2). This and only this is religion, writes Fr. Alexander, and the parish as parish, that is, as the Church, has no other task, no other purpose but to reveal, to manifest, to announce, this living God so that men may know Him, love Him, and then, find in Him their real vocations and tasks. The proper and unique function of the parish is purely and exclusively religious: it is prayer and sanctification; preaching and edification; it is, above everything else, communion with the Living God. The spiritual restoration consists, therefore, in the absolute and total priority of religion in the parish.

The article has been used courtesy of Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Content: A brief overview of the Eastern Orthodox Church's history and teaching. Some contemporary moral questions. The church building. A final note.

History

Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth and founded the Church, through His Apostles and disciples, for the salvation of man. In the years which followed, the Apostles spread the Church and its teachings far; they founded many churches, all united in faith, worship, and the partaking of the Mysteries (or as they are called in the West, the Sacraments) of the Holy Church.

The churches founded by the Apostles themselves include the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome. The Church of Constantinople was founded by St. Andrew, the Church of Alexandria by St. Mark, the Church of Antioch by St. Paul, the Church of Jerusalem by Sts. Peter and James, and the Church of Rome by Sts. Peter and Paul. Those founded in later years through the missionary activity of the first churches were the Churches of Sinai, Russia, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, and many others.

Each of these churches is independent in administration, but, with the exception of the Church of Rome, which finally separated from the others in the year 1054, all are united in faith, doctrine, Apostolic tradition, sacraments, liturgies, and services. Together they constitute and call themselves the Orthodox Church.

The teachings of the Church are derived from two sources: Holy Scripture, and Sacred Tradition, within which the Scriptures came to be, and within which they are interpreted. As written in the Gospel of St. John, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:20). Much teaching transmitted orally by the Apostles has come down to us in Sacred Tradition.

The word Orthodox literally means right teaching or right worship, being derived from two Greek words: orthos (right) and doxa (teaching or worship). As the false teachings and divisions multiplied in early Christian times, threatening to obscure the identity and purity of the Church, the term Orthodox quite logically came to be applied to it. The Orthodox Church carefully guards the truth against all error and schism, both to protect its flock and to glorify Christ whose body the Church is.

An astonishing number of religious groups today claim to be the successors of the early Church. A yardstick for truth is needed by which to compare what the Church originally believed and practiced with what these groups proclaim. Certainly we all have the right to believe whatever we choose. But it is also just good sense to be acquainted with the options before we make our final choices.

It is our hope that this outline of our beliefs will help introduce you to the Christianity espoused and instituted by the Apostles of Jesus Christ. This is the yardstick of truth by which our choices in Christianity need to be measured.

Teaching

God the Father is the fountainhead of the Holy Trinity. The Scriptures reveal the one God is Three Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - eternally sharing the one divine nature. From the Father the Son is begotten before all ages and all time (Psalm 2:7; II Corinthians 11:31). It is from the Father that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds (John 15:26). God the Father created all things through the Son, in the Holy Spirit (Genesis 1 and 2; John 1:3; Job 33:4), and we are called to worship Him (John 4:23). The Father loves us and sent His Son to give us everlasting life (John 3:16).

Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, eternally born of the Father. He became man, and thus He is at once fully God and fully man. His coming to earth was foretold in the Old Testament by the prophets. Because Jesus Christ is at the heart of Christianity, the Orthodox Church has given more attention to knowing Him than to anything or anyone else.

In reciting the Nicene Creed, Orthodox Christians regularly affirm the historic faith concerning Jesus as they say, "I believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father before

all ages, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father; by Whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end."

Incarnation refers to Jesus Christ coming "in the flesh." The eternal Son of God the Father assumed to Himself a complete human nature from the Virgin Mary. He was and is one divine Person, fully possessing from God the Father the entirety of the divine nature, and in His coming in the flesh fully possessing a human nature from the Virgin Mary. By His Incarnation, the Son forever possesses two natures in His one Person. The Son of God, limitless in His divine nature, voluntarily and willingly accepted limitation in His humanity in which He experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue - and ultimately, death. The Incarnation is indispensable to Christianity - there is no Christianity without it. The Scriptures record, "Every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (I John 4:3). By His Incarnation, the Son of God redeemed human nature, a redemption made accessible to all who are joined to Him in His glorified humanity.

The Holy Spirit is one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity and is one in essence with the Father. Orthodox Christians repeatedly confess, "And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified." He is called the "promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4), given by Christ as a gift to the Church, to empower the Church for service to God (Acts 1:8), to place God's love in our hearts (Romans 5:5), and to impart spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:7-13) and virtues (Galatians 5:22, 23) for Christian life and witness. Orthodox Christians believe the biblical promise that the Holy Spirit is given through chrismation (anointing) at baptism (Acts 2:38). We are to grow in our experience of the Holy Spirit for the rest of our lives.

Sin literally means to "miss the mark." As St. Paul writes, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We sin when we pervert what God has given us as good, falling short of His purposes for us. Our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:1, 2), leaving us spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1). To save us, the Son of God assumed our humanity, and being without sin "He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). In His mercy, God forgives our sins when we confess them and turn from them, giving us strength to overcome sin in our lives. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Salvation is the divine gift through which men and women are delivered from sin and death, united to Christ, and brought into His eternal kingdom. Those who heard St. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost asked what they must do to be saved. He answered, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Salvation begins with these three steps: 1) repent, 2) be baptized, and 3) receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. To repent means to change our mind about how we have been, to turn from our sin and to commit ourselves to Christ. To be baptized means to be born again by being joined into union with Christ. And to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit means to receive the Spirit Who empowers us to enter a new life in Christ, to be nurtured in the Church, and to be conformed to God's image.

Salvation demands faith in Jesus Christ. People cannot save themselves by their own good works. Salvation is "faith working through love." It is an ongoing, life-long process. Salvation is past tense in that, through the death and Resurrection of Christ, we have been saved. It is present tense, for we are "being saved" by our active participation through faith in our union with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Salvation is also future, for we must yet be saved at His glorious Second Coming.

Baptism is the way in which a person is actually united to Christ. The experience of salvation is initiated in the waters of baptism. The Apostle Paul teaches in Romans 6:1-6 that in baptism we experience Christ's death and resurrection. In it our sins are truly forgiven and we are energized by our union with Christ to live a holy life. The Orthodox Church practices baptism by full immersion.

Currently, some consider baptism to be only an "outward sign" of belief in Christ. This innovation has no historical or biblical precedent. Others reduce it to a mere perfunctory obedience to Christ's command (cf. Matthew 28:19-20). Still others, ignoring the Bible completely, reject baptism as a vital factor in salvation. Orthodoxy maintains that these

contemporary innovations rob sincere people of the most important assurances that baptism provides - namely that they have been united to Christ and are part of His Church.

New Birth is receipt of new life. It is how we gain entrance into God's kingdom and His Church. Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). From its beginning, the Church has taught that the water is the baptismal water and the Spirit is the Holy Spirit. The new birth occurs in baptism where we die with Christ, are buried with Him, and are raised with Him in the newness of His resurrection, being joined into union with Him in His glorified humanity (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4). The idea that being "born again" is a religious experience disassociated from baptism is a recent one and has no biblical basis whatsoever.

Justification is a word used in the Scriptures to mean that in Christ we are forgiven and actually made righteous in our living. Justification is not a once-for-all, instantaneous pronouncement guaranteeing eternal salvation, regardless of how wickedly a person might live from that point on. Neither is it merely a legal declaration that an unrighteous person is righteous. Rather, justification is a living, dynamic, day-to-day reality for the one who follows Christ. The Christian actively pursues a righteous life in the grace and power of God granted to all who continue to believe in Him.

Sanctification is being set apart for God. It involves us in the process of being cleansed and made holy by Christ in the Holy Spirit. We are called to be saints and to grow into the likeness of God. Having been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, we actively participate in sanctification. We cooperate with God, we work together with Him, that we may know Him, becoming by grace what He is by nature.

The Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God (II Timothy 3:16), and is a crucial part of God's self-revelation to the human race. The Old Testament tells the history of that revelation from Creation through the Age of the Prophets. The New Testament records the birth and life of Jesus as well as the writings of His Apostles. It also includes some of the history of the early Church and especially sets forth the Church's apostolic doctrine. Though these writings were read in the Churches from the time they first appeared, the earliest listings of all the New Testament books exactly as we know them today is found in the 33rd Canon of a local council held at Carthage in 318, and in a fragment of St. Athanasius of Alexandria's Festal Letter in 367. Both sources list all of the books of the New Testament without exception. A local council, probably held at Rome in 382, set forth a complete list of the canonical books of both the Old and the New Testaments. The Scriptures are at the very heart of Orthodox worship and devotion.

Worship is the rendering of praise, glory, and thanksgiving to God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All humanity is called to worship God. Worship is more than being in the "great-out-of-doors," or listening to a sermon, or singing a hymn. God can be known in His creation, but that does not constitute worship. As helpful as sermons may be, they can never offer a proper substitute for worship. Most prominent in Orthodox worship is the corporate praise, thanksgiving, and glory given to God by the Church. This worship is consummated in intimate communion with God at His Holy Table.

As is said in the Liturgy, "To Thee is due all glory, honor, and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen." In that worship we touch and experience His eternal kingdom, the age to come, and we join in adoration with the heavenly hosts. We experience the glory of fulfillment of all things in Christ, as truly all in all.

Liturgy is a term used to describe the shape or form of the Church's corporate worship of God. The word "liturgy" derives from a Greek word which means "the common work." All the biblical references to worship in heaven involve liturgy.

In the Old Testament, God ordered a liturgy, or specific pattern of worship. We find it described in detail in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. In the New Testament we find the Church carrying over the worship of Old Testament Israel as expressed in both the synagogue and the temple, adjusting them in keeping with their fulfillment in Christ. The Orthodox Liturgy, which developed over many centuries, still maintains that ancient shape of worship. The main elements in the Liturgy include hymns, the reading and proclamation of the Gospel, prayers, and the Eucharist itself. For Orthodox Christians, the expressions "The Liturgy" or "Divine Liturgy" refer to the eucharistic rite instituted by Christ Himself at the Last (Mystical) Supper.

Eucharist literally means thanksgiving and early became a synonym for Holy Communion. The Eucharist is the center of worship in the

Orthodox Church. Because Jesus said of the bread and wine at the Last Supper, "This is my body," "This is my blood," and "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19-20), His followers believe - and do - nothing less. In the Eucharist, we partake mystically of Christ's Body and Blood, which impart His life and strength to us. The celebration of the Eucharist was a regular part of the Church's life from its beginning. Early Christians began calling the Eucharist "the medicine of immortality" because they recognized the great grace of God that was received in it.

Communion of Saints: When Christians depart this life, they remain a vital part of the Church, the body of Christ. They are alive in the Lord and "registered in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). They worship God (Revelation 4:10) and inhabit His heavenly dwelling places (John 14:2). In the Eucharist we come "to the city of the living God" and join in communion with the saints in our worship of God (Hebrews 12:22). They are that "great cloud of witnesses" which surrounds us, and we seek to imitate them in running "the race set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). Rejecting or ignoring the communion of saints is a denial of the fact that those who have died in Christ are still part of his holy Church.

Confession is the open admission of known sins before God and man. It means literally "to agree with" God concerning our sins. St. James the Apostle admonishes us to confess our sins to God before the elders, or priests, as they are called today (James 5:16). We are also exhorted to confess our sins directly to God (I John 1:9). The Orthodox Church has always followed the New Testament practices of confession before a priest as well as private confession to the Lord. Confession is one of the most significant means of repenting, and receiving assurance that even our worst sins are truly forgiven. It is also one of our most powerful aids to forsaking and overcoming those sins.

Discipline may become necessary to maintain purity and holiness in the Church and to encourage repentance in those who have not responded to the admonition of brothers and sisters in Christ, and of the Church, to forsake their sins. Church discipline often centers around exclusion from receiving communion (excommunication). The New Testament records how St. Paul ordered the discipline of excommunication for an unrepentant man involved in sexual relations with his father's wife (I Corinthians 5:1-5). The Apostle John warned that we are not to receive into our homes those who willfully reject the truth of Christ (II John 9,10). Throughout her history, the Orthodox Church has exercised discipline when it is needed, with compassion, always to help bring a needed change of heart and to aid God's people to live pure and holy lives, never as a punishment.

Mary is called Theotokos, meaning "God-bearer" or "the Mother of God," because she bore the Son of God in her womb and from her He took His humanity. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, recognized this reality when she called Mary, "the Mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43). Mary said of herself, "All generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). So we, Orthodox, in our generation, call her blessed. Mary lived a chaste and holy life, and we honor her highly as the model of holiness, the first of the redeemed, the Mother of the new humanity in her Son. It is bewildering to Orthodox Christians that many professing Christians who claim to believe the Bible never call Mary blessed nor honor her who bore and raised God the Son in His human flesh.

Prayer To The Saints is encouraged by the Orthodox Church. Why? Because physical death is not a defeat for a Christian. It is a glorious passage into heaven. The Christian does not cease to be a part of the Church at death. God forbid! Nor is he set aside, idle until the day of judgement.

The True Church is composed of all who are in Christ - in heaven and on earth. It is not limited in membership to those presently alive. Those in heaven with Christ are alive, in communion with God, worshipping God, doing their part in the body of Christ. They actively pray to God for all those in the Church - and perhaps, indeed, for the whole world (Ephesians 6:8; Revelation 8:3). So we pray to the saints who have departed this life, seeking their prayers, even as we ask Christian friends on earth to pray for us.

Apostolic Succession has been a watershed issue since the second century, not as a mere dogma, but as crucial to the preservation of the faith. Certain false teachers would appear, insisting they were authoritative representatives of the Christian Church. Claiming authority from God by appealing to special revelations, some were even inventing lineages of teachers supposedly going back to Christ or the Apostles. In response, the early Church insisted there was an authoritative apostolic succession passed down from generation to generation. They recorded that actual lineage, showing how its clergy were ordained by those chosen by the successors of the Apostles chosen by Christ Himself.

Apostolic succession is an indispensable factor in preserving Church

unity. Those in the succession are accountable to it, and are responsible to ensure all teaching and practice in the Church is in keeping with Her apostolic foundations. Mere personal conviction that one's teaching is correct can never be considered adequate proof of accuracy. Today, critics of apostolic succession are those who stand outside that historic succession and seek a self-identity with the early Church only. The burgeoning number of denominations in the world can be accounted for in large measure by a rejection of apostolic succession.

Councils of the Church: A monumental conflict (recorded in Acts 15) arose in the early Church over legalism, the keeping of Jewish laws by the Christians, as means of salvation. "So the apostles and elders came together [in council] to consider the matter" (Acts 15:6). This council, held in Jerusalem, set the pattern for the subsequent calling of councils to settle problems. There have been hundreds of such councils - local and regional - over the centuries of the history of the Church, and seven councils specifically designated Ecumenical, that is, considered to apply to the whole Church. Aware that God has spoken through the Ecumenical Councils, the Orthodox Church looks particularly to them for authoritative teaching in regard to the faith and practice of the Church.

Creed comes from the Latin credo, "I believe." From the earliest days of the Church, creeds have been living confessions of what Christians believe and not simply formal, academic, Church pronouncements. Such confessions of faith appear as early as the New Testament, where, for example, St. Paul quotes a creed to remind Timothy, "God...was revealed in the flesh" (I Timothy 3:16). The creeds were approved by Church councils, usually to give a concise statement of the truth in the face of the invasion of heresy.

The most important creed in Christendom is the Nicene Creed, the product of two Ecumenical Councils in the fourth century. Delineated in the midst of a life-and-death controversy, it contains the essence of New Testament teaching about the Holy Trinity, guarding that life-giving truth against those who would change the very nature of God and reduce Jesus Christ to a created being, rather than God in the flesh. The creeds give us a sure interpretation of the Scriptures against those who would distort them to support their own religious schemes. Called the "symbol of faith" and confessed in many of the services of the Church, the Nicene Creed constantly reminds the Orthodox Christian of what he personally believes, keeping his faith on track.

Spiritual Gifts: When the young Church was getting under way, God poured out His Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and their followers, giving them spiritual gifts to build up the Church and to serve each other. Among the specific gifts of the Spirit mentioned in the New Testament are: apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastoring, teaching, healing, helps, administrations, knowledge, wisdom, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. These and other spiritual gifts are recognized in the Orthodox Church. The need for them varies with the times. The gifts of the Spirit are most in evidence in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

Second Coming: Amid the current speculation in some corners of Christendom surrounding the Second Coming of Christ and how it may come to pass, it is comforting to know that the beliefs of the Orthodox Church are basic. Orthodox Christians confess with conviction that Jesus Christ "will come again to judge the living and the dead," and that His "kingdom will have no end." Orthodox preaching does not attempt to predict God's prophetic schedule, but to encourage Christian people to have their lives in order so that they might be confident before Him when He comes (I John 2:28).

Heaven is the place of God's throne, beyond time and space. It is the abode of God's angels, as well as of the saints who have passed from this life. We pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven." Though Christians live in this world, they belong to the kingdom of heaven, and that kingdom is their true home. But heaven is not only for the future. Neither is it some distant place billions of light years away in a nebulous "great beyond." For the Orthodox, heaven is part of Christian life and worship. The very architecture of an Orthodox Church building is designed so that the building itself participates in the reality of heaven. The Eucharist is heavenly worship, heaven on earth. St. Paul teaches that we are raised up with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). At the end of the age, a new heaven and a new earth will be revealed (Revelation 21:1).

Hell, unpopular as it is to modern people, is real. The Orthodox Church understands hell as a place of eternal torment for those who willfully reject the grace of God. Our Lord once said, "If your hand makes you sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched - where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44-

45). He challenged the religious hypocrites with the question: "How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33). His answer is, "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). There is a day of judgement coming, and there is a place of punishment for those who have hardened their hearts against God. It does make a difference how we will live this life. Those who of their own free will reject the grace and mercy of God must forever bear the consequences of that choice.

Creation: Orthodox Christians confess God as Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1, the Nicene Creed). Creation did not just come into existence by itself. God made it all. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3). Orthodox Christians do not believe the Bible to be a science textbook on creation, as some mistakenly maintain, but rather to be God's revelation of Himself and His salvation. Also, we do not view science textbooks, helpful though they may be, as God's revelation. The may contain both known facts and speculative theory, but they are not infallible. Orthodox Christians refuse to build an unnecessary and artificial wall between science and the Christian faith. Rather, they understand honest scientific investigation as a potential encouragement to faith, for all truth is from God.

Some Contemporary Moral Questions

Ecumenism: One has to welcome rejection of the age-old separation of Christians, but only if this is done with the objective of disclosing the treasures of Orthodoxy, to bring those who have fallen away from the Church back to unity in Orthodoxy.

The attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad toward ecumenism has always been of a sober, strictly Orthodox character, in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Fathers. The outlook of our Church was particularly well defined in a statement issued on December 31, 1931, when the Russian Church Abroad appointed its representative to the Committee for the Continuation of the World Conference on Faith and Order: "Preserving the Faith in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Synod of Bishops confesses that the Church has never been divided. The issue lies only in who does and who does not belong to Her. Moreover, the Synod of Bishops fervently welcomes all attempts by the heterodox to study the teaching of Christ about the Church, in the hope that through such investigation, especially with the participation of representatives of the Holy Orthodox Church, they will eventually arrive at the conviction that the Orthodox Church, which is the `pillar and the ground of truth' (I Timothy 3:15), has fully and without any adulteration retained the doctrine taught by Christ the Savior to His disciples."

The Ecumenical Movement takes as its guiding principle the Protestant view of the Church. Protestants hold that there is no single truth and no single visible Church, but that each of the many Christian denominations possesses a particle of the truth, and that these relative truths can, by means of dialogue, lead to the One Truth and the One Church. One of the ways of attaining this unity, as perceived by the ideologues of the Ecumenical Movement, is the holding of joint prayers and religious services, so that in time communion from a common chalice (intercommunion) may be achieved.

Orthodoxy can never accept such an ecclesiology. It believes and bears witness that there is no need to assemble particles of the truth, since the Orthodox Church is the repository of the fullness of the Truth, which was given to Her on the day of Holy Pentecost.

For the Orthodox, joint prayer and Communion at the liturgy is an expression of an already existing unity within the bounds of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. St. Irenaeus of Lyons (2nd century) concisely expressed this: "Our Faith is in accord with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our Faith." The Holy Fathers of the Church teach that the members of the Church comprise the Church - the Body of Christ - because in the Eucharist they partake of the Body and the Blood of Christ. Outside the Eucharist and Communion there is no Church. Communing together would be an admission that all those receiving Communion belong to the One Apostolic Church, whereas the realities of Christian history even of our time unfortunately point out the deep dogmatic and ecclesiastical division of the Christian world.

Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy by taking the life of the baby before it comes to full term. The Scriptures teach, "For You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb" (Jeremiah 1:5). When a child is aborted, a human being is killed. For the Christian, all children, born or unborn, are precious in God's sight, and are a gift from Him. Even in the rare case in which a choice must be made between the life of the child and the life of the mother, decision-making must be based upon the recognition that the lives of two human persons are at stake.

Cults: The word "cult" has several meanings. The usage to which we refer designates a group of people who focus on a religious doctrine which deviates from the tradition of the historic Church as revealed by Jesus Christ, established by His Apostles, and guarded by the seven Ecumenical Councils of the Church. A cult usually forms around an individual who proclaims a heresy as truth. The error itself assures the separation of the group from historic Christianity. Many cults claim the Bible as their basis, but they alter the historic interpretation of Scripture to persist in their own idea. Cults may do some things that are good (e.g. care for the poor, emphasize the family) and thus at least appear, to casual observers, to be part of true Christianity. St. Paul's counsel on cults is: "From such withdraw yourself" (I Timothy 6:11). The danger of the cult is that it removes those in it from the life of Christ and the Church, where the blessings and grace of God are found. All cults die; the Church lives on.

Marriage in the Orthodox Church is forever. It is not reduced to an exchange of vows or the establishment of a legal contract between the bride and groom. On the contrary, it is God joining a man and a woman into one flesh in a sense similar to the Church being joined to Christ (Ephesians 5:31, 32). The success of marriage cannot depend on mutual human promises, but on the promises and blessing of God. In the Orthodox marriage rite, the bride and groom offer their lives to Christ and to each other - literally as crowned martyrs.

Divorce: While extending love and mercy to those who have divorced, the Orthodox Church is grieved by the tragedy and pain divorce causes. Though marriage is understood as a sacrament, and thus accomplished by the grace of God, and permanent, the Church does not deal with divorce legalistically, but with compassion. After appropriate pastoral counsel, divorce may be allowed when avenues for reconciliation have been exhausted. If there is a remarriage, the service for a second marriage includes prayers offering repentance for the earlier divorce, asking God's forgiveness, and protection for the new union.

Pre-Marital Sex: The Orthodox Christian faith holds to the biblical teaching that sexual intercourse is reserved for marriage. Sex is a gift of God to be fully enjoyed and experienced only within marriage. The marriage bed is to be kept "pure and undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4), and men and women are called to remain celibate outside of marriage. Our sexuality, like many other things about us human beings, affects our relationship with God, ourselves, and others. It may be employed as a means of glorifying God and fulfilling His image in us, or it may be perverted and abused as an instrument of sin, causing great damage to us and others. St. Paul writes, "Do you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body" (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).

Homosexuality: Although there is much more open discussion about homosexuality in the twentieth century than in previous times, there is definite reference to it in ancient writings. The frequently used synonym, sodomy, comes from the apparent homosexual activity among men of Sodom (Genesis 19), and the severity of strictures set forth in the Holiness Code, with nothing short of the death penalty being imposed, suggested that the need for discipline must have been great, (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). The Old Testament understood normal sexual intercourse as not only a way of expressing a loving relationship, but also as a divinely appointed way of procreating new life.

In the New Testament, St. Paul condemns male prostitutes and homosexuals (I Corinthians 6:9-11). In the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans (Romans 1:24-32), he also judges it as unnatural. Homosexuals are included elsewhere among the immoral persons who, St. Paul says, deserve judgement by God (I Timothy 1:10). There is no example in all of the New Testament of approval, acceptance, or even tolerance of homosexuality.

Throughout Christian history, this disapproval has continued to be the case. In the patristic era freedom from homosexuality was seen as a mark of the Christian's ethical superiority to the wanton way of life that converts had left. Patristic thinking, like scriptural references, were directed to the practice of homosexuality, not to the desire itself. The Orthodox Church does not condemn the person who keeps this propensity in check, and ministers to homosexuals who wish to find release from this inclination.

The Church Building

Orthodox churches generally take one of several shapes that have a particular mystical significance. The most common shape is an oblong or rectangular shape, imitating the form of a ship. As a ship, under the guidance of a master helmsman conveys people through the stormy seas to a calm harbor, so the Church, guided by Christ, carries us unharmed across the stormy seas of sin and strife to the peaceful haven of the Kingdom of Heaven. Churches are also frequently built in the form of a

Cross to proclaim that we are saved through faith in the Crucified Christ, for Whom Christians are prepared to suffer all things.

Almost always Orthodox churches are oriented East - West, with the main entrance of the building at the west end. This symbolizes the entrance of the worshipper from the darkness of sin (the west) into the light of truth (the east).

On the roof of Orthodox churches are usually found one or more cupolas (domes with rounded or pointed roofs). A peculiar feature of Russian Orthodox churches is the presence of onion-shaped domes on top of the cupolas. This shape reminds believers of the flame of a candle, burning upward to heaven.

Every cupola is crowned with a Cross, the instrument of our salvation. In the Russian Church, the most common form is the so-called three-bar Cross, consisting of the usual crossbeam, a shorter crossbeam above that and another, slanted, crossbeam below. Symbolically, the three bars represent, from the top, the signboard on which was written, in Hebrew, Latin and Greek, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews (John 19:19); the main crossbeam, to which the hands of Jesus were nailed; the lower portion, to which His feet were nailed.

The three-bar representation existed in Christian art from the very early times in Byzantium, although usually without the bottom bar slanted, which is particularly Russian. The origin of this slanted footbar is not known, but in the symbolism of the Russian Church, the most common explanation is that it is pointing upward to Paradise for the Good Thief on Jesus' right and downward to Hades for the thief on His left (Luke 23:39-43).

Internal Arrangement

The interior of an Orthodox church is divided into several parts. The first is the Narthex (Vestibule; Lity - Greek; Pritvor - Russian), in ancient times a large, spacious place, wherein the Catechumens received instruction while preparing for Baptism, and also where Penitents excluded from Holy Communion stood.

The main body of the church is the Nave, separated from the Sanctuary (Altar) by an icon screen with doors, called the Iconostasis (Icon stand). The walls of the Nave are decorated with Icons and murals, before many of which are hanging lit lamps (lampadas). Especially noticeable in traditional Orthodox churches is the absence of any pews. The Fathers of the Church deemed it disrespectful for anyone to sit during the Divine services (except at certain explicit moments of instruction or Psalm reading) and the open spaces were seen to be especially conducive to the many bows and prostrations typical of Orthodox worship.

At the extreme Eastern end of the church is found the Altar (or Sanctuary), with two rooms - the Sacristy and the Vestry - at either side, separated from the Nave by the Iconostasis.

Holy Icons - Theology in Color

One of the first things that strikes a non-Orthodox visitor to an Orthodox church is the prominent place assigned to Holy Icons. The Iconostasis is covered with them, while others are placed in prominent places throughout the church building. The walls and ceiling are covered with iconic murals. The Orthodox faithful prostrate themselves before Icons, kiss them, and burn candles before them. They are censed by the clergy and carried in processions. Considering the obvious importance of the Holy Icons, then, questions may certainly be raised concerning them: What do these gestures and actions mean? What is the significance of Icons? Are they not idols or the like, prohibited by the Old Testament?

Icons have been used for prayer from the first centuries of Christianity. Sacred Tradition tells us, for example, of the existence of an Icon of the Savior during His lifetime (the "Icon-Made-Without-Hands") and of Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos immediately after Him. Sacred Tradition witnesses that the Orthodox Church had a clear understanding of the importance of Icons right from the beginning; and this understanding never changed, for it is derived from the teachings concerning the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity - Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The use of Icons is grounded in the very essence of Christianity, since Christianity is the revelation by God-Man not only of the Word of God, but also of the Image of God; for, as St. John the Evangelist tells us, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

"No one has ever seen God; only the Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known" (John 1:18), the Evangelist proclaims. That is, He has revealed the Image or Icon of God. For being the brightness of [God's] glory, and the express image of [God's] person (Hebrews 1:3), the Word of God in the Incarnation revealed to the world, in His own Divinity, the Image of the Father. When St. Philip asks Jesus,

"'Lord, show us the Father,' He answered him: 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father'" (John 14:8-9). Thus as the Son is in the bosom of the Father, likewise after the Incarnation He is constubstantial with the Father, according to His divinity being the Father's Image, equal in honor to Him.

The truth expressed above, which is revealed in Christianity, thus forms the foundations of Christian pictorial art. The Image (or Icon) not only does not contradict the essence of Christianity, but is unfailingly connected with it; and this is the foundation of the tradition that from the very beginning the Good News was brought to the world by the Church both in word and image.

St. John of Damascus, an eighth-century Father of the Church, who wrote at the height of the iconoclastic (anti-icon) controversies in the Church, explains that, because the Word of God became flesh (John 1:14), we are no longer in our infancy; we have grown up, we have been given by God the power of discrimination and we know what can be depicted and what is indescribable. Since the Second Person of the Holy Trinity appeared to us in the flesh, we can portray Him and reproduce for contemplation of Him Who has condescended to be seen. We can confidently represent God the Invisible - not as an invisible being, but as one Who has made Himself visible for our sake by sharing in our flesh and blood.

Holy Icons developed side by side with the Divine Services and, like the Services, expressed the teaching of the Church in conformity with the word of Holy Scripture. Following the teaching of the 7th Ecumenical Council, the Icon is seen not as simple art, but that there is a complete correspondence of the Icon to Holy Scripture, "for if the Icon is shown by Holy Scripture, Holy Scripture is made incontestably clear by the Icon" (Acts of the 7th Ecumenical Council, 6).

As the word of Holy Scripture is an image, so the image is also a word, for, according to St. Basil the Great (379 AD):

"By depicting the divine, we are not making ourselves similar to idolaters; for it is not the material symbol that we are worshipping, but the Creator, Who became corporeal for our sake and assumed our body in order that through it He might save mankind. We also venerate the material objects through which our salvation is effected - the blessed wood of the Cross, the Holy Gospel, Holy Relics of Saints, and, above all, the Most-Pure Body and Blood of Christ, which have grace-bestowing properties and Divine Power."

Orthodox Christians do not venerate an Icon of Christ because of the nature of the wood or the paint, but rather we venerate the inanimate image of Christ with the intention of worshipping Christ Himself as God Incarnate through it.

We kiss an Icon of the Blessed Virgin as the Mother of the Son of God, just as we kiss the Icons of the Saints as God's friends who struggled against sin, imitating Christ by shedding their blood for Him and following in His footsteps. Saints are venerated as those who were glorified by God and who became, with God's help, terrible to the Enemy, and benefactors to those advancing in the faith - but not as gods and benefactors themselves. They were the servants of God who were given boldness of spirit in return for their love of Him. We gaze on the depiction of their exploits and sufferings so as to sanctify ourselves through them and to spur ourselves on to zealous emulation.

The Icons of the Saints act as a meeting point between the living members of the Church [Militant] on earth and the Saints who have passed on to the Church [Triumphant] in Heaven. The Saints depicted on the Icons are not remote, legendary figures from the past, but contemporary, personal friends. As meeting points between Heaven and earth, the Icons of Christ, His Mother, the Angels and Saints constantly remind the faithful of the invisible presence of the whole company of Heaven; they visibly express the idea of Heaven on earth.

The Iconostasis

The most prominent feature of an Orthodox church is the Iconostasis, consisting of one or more rows of Icons and broken by a set of doors in the center (the Holy or Royal Doors) and a door at each side (the Deacon's Doors).

A typical Iconostasis consists of one or more tiers (rows) of Icons. At the center of the first, or lowest, tier, are the Royal Doors, on which are placed Icons of the four Evangelists who announced to the world Good News - the Gospel - of the Savior. At the center of the Royal Doors is an Icon of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos (the Mother of God), since this event was the prelude or beginning of our salvation. Over the Royal Doors is placed an Icon of the Mystical Supper (the Last

Supper) since, in the Altar beyond, the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist is celebrated in remembrance of the Savior Who instituted the Sacrament at the Last Supper.

At either side of the Royal Doors are always placed an Icon of the Savior (to the right) and of the Most Holy Theotokos (to the left). On either side of the Royal Doors, beyond the Icons of the Lord and His Mother, are two doors - Deacon's Doors - upon which are depicted either saintly Deacons or Angels - who minister always at the heavenly Altar, just as do the earthly deacons during the Divine services. In our church, on the left Deacon door, is placed an Icon of the Good Thief, the first to enter Paradise. Other Icons of particular local significance are also placed in the first row of the Iconostasis, for which reason the lower tier is often called the Local Icons.

Ascending above the Local Icons are three more tiers of Icons. Immediately above the Icon of the Mystical Supper is placed an Icon of the Savior in royal garments, flanked by His Mother and John the Forerunner and an array of other saints, included the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, the Apostles Peter and Paul and bishop saints and martyrs. This tier is called the Deisis (prayer), since all in this tier are turned to Christ in supplication. The tier immediately above this contains Icons of the principal Feasts of the Lord and of the Theotokos.

The top row contains the Old Testament Prophets - in the midst of which is the Birthgiver of God with the Divine Infant Who is from everlasting and Who was their hope, their consolation, and the subject of their prophecies. At the very top of the Iconostasis is placed the Holy Cross, upon which the Lord was crucified, effecting thereby our salvation.

The Altar

The Altar which lies beyond the Iconostasis, is set aside for those who perform the Divine services, and normally persons not consecrated to the service of the Church are not permitted to enter. Occupying the central place in the Altar is the Holy Table, which represents the Throne of God, with the Lord Himself invisibly present there. It also represents the Tomb of Christ, since His Body (the Holy Gifts) is placed there. The Holy Table is square in shape and is draped by two coverings. The first, inner covering, is of white linen, representing the winding-sheet in which the Body of Christ was wrapped. The outer cloth is made of rich and bright material, representing the glory of God's throne. Both cloths cover the Holy Table to the ground.

A Final Note

These, briefly, are some of the characteristics of the Orthodox Church. The Church is One, since our Lord Jesus Christ founded only one Church. It is Holy through its sanctification by its Founder and Head, Jesus Christ, and through the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is Catholic, since it is universal, and knows no limitations of place or time. It is Apostolic since it was founded by the Holy Apostles and has maintained unbroken the apostolic succession through the Laying-on of Hands. This is the Orthodox Church - the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

For those desiring to learn more about the Holy Orthodox Church we recommend the following literature:

1. *The Orthodox Church* by Timothy Ware. A clear, detailed introduction to the Orthodox Church, written for the non-Orthodox, as well as for Orthodox believers. Part One describes the history of the Eastern Church over the last 2,000 years and particularly its life in 20th century Russia. Part Two explains the beliefs and worship of the Orthodox today.
2. *The Life*, by Clark Carlton, on Salvation
3. *The Way*, What Every Protestant Should Know about the Orthodox Church, Clark Carlton
4. *The Truth, What Every Catholic Should Know about the Orthodox Church*, Clark Carlton
5. *For the Life of the World*, Alexander Schmemann, on the sacraments and an Orthodox approach to life
6. *The Faith We Hold* by Archbishop Paul of Finland. This book was written "to describe Orthodoxy from the inside to those outside." It deals with the Orthodox faith in its most basic elements in three main sections: doctrinal, liturgical, and spiritual, revealing with remarkable simplicity and directness its message of salvation for all mankind.
6. *Orthodox Spirituality* by a monk of the Eastern Church.This classic covers the historical development of Orthodox spirituality, its essentials, the Baptizing Christ and Christ our Passover.
7. *The Way of the Pilgrim*, an Orthodox classic on the Jesus Prayer and unceasing prayer of the heart.

For further information contact:
Fr. Lawrence Margitich
707-584-9491
Lmargitich@aol.com

DOXA

A Quarterly Review
Serving the Orthodox Church

Great Lent 1997 **Cañones, New Mexico, USA**

"Big-T, little-t" Tradition

THE DANGEROUS DISTINCTION

Note to the reader: The title of this article should not be taken to imply that there exists no distinction between The Tradition and lesser traditions. Such a distinction, of course, can be made and at times should be made. Neither are we calling for some sort of "traditionalist fundamentalism," holding that nothing in the Church has ever changed or ever Should be changed. Our point is that making the distinction between Big-T and little-t tradition, not unlike climbing a cliff or flying a plane, is by nature dangerous and can lead to disastrous consequences if one is not very wise and extremely careful. In the last few decades the Big-T. little-I distinction has often been made carelessly and unwisely, as a pretext to abandon certain traditions which turn out not to have been merely disposable customs *at all. To the contrary in some cases their abandonment is proving over time to have disastrous effects.*

> More than by any other factor, modern Roman Catholicism has been damaged by the overnight abandonment of two *merely little-t* Roman Catholic traditions, namely, the Friday meat abstinence and any use of Latin. That was like taking all the feathers away from the Indians, and dispirited Catholics have abandoned their ecclesiastical "reservation" by the millions.

Not long ago a good friend, a newcomer to the Orthodox Faith, queried this monastic writer about his beard. "Do you just have to wear it? Did someone say, 'You must wear a beard or else'?" Perceiving where he was coming from, I knew that neither the answer "no" nor the reply "yes" would relay the truth. To respond "yes" would come across to the average red-blooded American patriot, no matter what his political leanings, as something like "Yes, an oppressive system with no regard for individual liberty controls my unwilling life and makes me wear this beard." But if I were to answer "no," the message heard might well be "No, this beard is just a quaint custom from our somewhat embarrassing Orthodox past that my outdated and irrelevant community foolishly persists in carrying into the 21st century," or worse, "No. I just wear this silly beard to be different." Which is also not true. The Lord speedily gave me the right answer: "This beard is like Indians and feathers! It is part of our monastic tradition, a sign of who we are." That satisfied my friend, and expressed the truth with a vivid simile, the meaning of which no one out here in Indian country would miss! For Native Americans don't wear feathers merely because some Great Chief commands it, or simply because it is a quaint custom, but

(Please continue on page three)

Calcutta. Her lovely veil, far from making her look "'inferior," paradoxically manifests at one at the same time both her powerful feminine authority and her simple humility.

Unfortunately, to our Marxist-molded modern mentality, talk of any kind of human distinctions. especially between women and men, smacks of discrimination. But as Christians we should take note that neither the wedding Epistle nor any other part of the Bible says "Everyone is identical. no one is subject to anyone else, no one deserves special respect. authority is by nature oppressive: only a classless society will be just." It is very true. however. that the Scriptures frequently speak out against oppression. This demand for social justice is refined in the Prophets, and reaches heights of exaltation in the preaching of the Lord in the Gospels, who teaches, among other thing. that those who govern should be as those who serve. But *nowhere* do the Scriptures even suggest that the solution to injustice and oppression is the eradication of distinctions and authorities, the destruction of the Divine/natural axis in male-female relationships. Heaven itself is not a classless society- even the angels delight to be arrayed in nine ranks of descending order!

Radical feminism, in its rebellion against the natural order, has caused women more pain than any sins of injustice committed under patriarchy.

I would suggest that radical feminism in its rebellion against the natural order has caused women more pain and harm than any sins of injustice committed under patriarchy. The result of feminism's belief in radical egalitarianism as the cure for injustice, is the message that women are not good enough unless they are identical to men. What a dreadful thing to imply to a woman! What a perverse message to suggest to a little girl! Later feminist rhetoric honoring sisterhood, superimposed upon the feminist dogma of female-male identity, confuses the issue, but the underlying cruel message remains, "You're not good enough as you were created."

Radical feminists view marriage as institutionalized rape, unless the partners are equal (mistaking "equal" for "identical"). The idea that "the husband is the head, the wife the heart" is stridently rejected. and the natural attraction of opposites which is the foundation of male-female union is denied. Instead, marriage is seen as the partnership of fundamentally identical persons. (It doesn't take much imagination to see where that leads!) But many men are as blameworthy for our social chaos as are some women. For two outstanding examples of that, there is widespread male fight from the responsibilities of fatherhood, and no one favors abortion more than men who wish to enjoy sexual gratification without any commitments or inconvenient results.

We noted earlier that little-I traditions can have "reverse causality." My deepest intuitions suggest to me this may well be the case in abandonment of the custom of women covering their heads in church. Obviously that is a little-I tradition not even close to the level of a Big-T Tradition like Holy Matrimony. But has abandoning that little-t tradition harmed a Big T, namely the Sacrament of Marriage? Quite frankly I take no joy in thinking out loud on questions such as the above, given the "ballistic.. reaction it can engender in some quarters. But perhaps the volatile reaction only confirms my intuitions. Whatever, it is definitely time to look again, deeply and honestly, at the intimate and inter-dependent relationships of Big-T Tradition. and many little-I traditions.

Once the bad habit of "merely-istic" pooh-poohing time-honored traditions becomes ingrained, workers in the garden of the Lord, however sincere and well-meaning they may be, show themselves all too often ready to prune off the fruit-bearing branches along with the non-productive suckers, simply because they are not sensitive to the subtle differences between the two. They tend to view every branch on the free of Tradition as a sucker to be pruned, honoring only the trunk as "of the Essence." What a heartbreaking tree this would leave us: a moribund trunk with a few stubby branches!

In Christian Tradition veils denote sacredness. A woman's veiled head denotes her femininity is sacred, and that she is a handmaid of the Lord.

There are a couple of people we greatly respect who chastise DOXA periodically for focusing too often on what they see as nit-picking issues. But we know perfectly well that benches and beards do not rank with baptism, bishops, the Bible and benevolence! Our concern is that insensitivity in relatively minor but deep-rooted matters is leading to greater errors. That is hardly a"nit-picking"concern!

How much little-t tradition can be altered or jettisoned without damaging the Essence? It is evident that, more than by any other factor. modern Roman Catholicism has been damaged by the overnight abandonment of two merely litle-t and theoretically disposable Roman Catholic traditions, namely. the Friday meat abstinence and any use of Latin. The implementation or those two insensitive and clumsy proscriptions by academic theoreticians and well-intentioned but pastorally-disconnected church bureaucrats was like taking all the feathers away from the Indians. As a result, dispirited Catholics have abandoned their ecclesiastical "reservation" by the millions. The Old Believer schism in Orthodoxy was perpetrated by similar well-meant but insensitive · exercizes of power. We would all do well to learn from those grievous and tragic errors. +

Clergy Etiquette

The following is a guide for properly addressing Orthodox clergy. Most of the titles do not exactly correspond to the terms used in Greek, Russian, or the other native languages of the national Orthodox Churches, but they have been widely accepted as standard English usages.

Greeting Clergy in Person. When we address Deacons or Priests, we should use the title "Father." Bishops we should address as "Your Grace." Though all Bishops (including Patriarchs) are equal in the Orthodox Church, they do have different administrative duties and honors that accrue to their rank in this sense. Thus, "Your Eminence" is the proper title for Bishops with suffragans or assistant Bishops, Metropolitans, and most Archbishops (among the exceptions to this rule is the Archbishop of Athens, who is addressed as "Your Beatitude"). "Your Beatitude" is the proper title for Patriarchs (except for the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, who is addressed as "Your All—Holiness"). When we approach an Orthodox Presbyter or Bishop (but not a Deacon), we make a bow by reaching down and touching the floor with our right hand, place our right hand over the left (palms upward), and say: "Bless, Father" (or "Bless, Your Grace," or "Bless, Your Eminence," etc.). The Priest or Bishop then answers, "May the Lord bless you," blesses us with the Sign of the Cross, and places his right hand in our hands. We kiss then his hand.

We should understand that when the Priest or Bishop blesses us, he forms his fingers to represent the Christogram "ICXC" a traditional abbreviation of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ" (i.e., the first and last letters of each of the words "IHCOYC XRICTOC"). Thus, the Priest's blessing is in the Name of Christ, as he emphasizes in his response to the believer's request for a blessing. Other responses to this request are used by many clergy, but the antiquity and symbolism of the tradition which we have presented are compelling arguments for its use. We should also note that the reason that a lay person kisses the hand of a Priest or Bishop is to show respect to his Apostolic office. More importantly, however, since both hold the Holy Mysteries in their hands during the Divine Liturgy, we show respect to the Holy Eucharist when we kiss their hands. In fact, Saint John Chrysostomos once said that if one were to meet an Orthodox Priest walking along with an Angel, that he should greet the Priest first and kiss his hand, since that hand has touched the Body and Blood of our Lord. For this latter reason, we do not normally kiss the hand of a Deacon. [98] While a Deacon in the Orthodox Church holds the first level of the Priesthood (Deacon, Presbyter, Bishop), his service does not entail blessing the Mysteries. When we take leave of a Priest or Bishop, we should again ask for a blessing, just as we did when we first greeted him.

In the case of married clergy, the wife of a Priest or Deacon is also informally addressed with a title. Since the Mystery of Marriage binds a Priest and his wife together as "one flesh," [99] the wife shares in a sense her husband's Priesthood. This does not, of course, mean that she has the very Grace of the Priesthood or its office, but the dignity of her husband's service certainly accrues to her. [100] The various titles used by the national Churches are listed below. The Greek titles, since they have English correspondents, are perhaps the easiest to use in the West:

Greek: Presbytera (Pres—vee—*té*—ra)
Russian: Matushka (*Má*—toosh—ka)

Serbian: Papadiya (Pa—*pá*—dee—ya)
Ukrainian: Panimatushka (Pa—nee—*má*—toosh—ka), or Panimatka (Pa—nee—*mát*—ka)

The wife of a Deacon is called "Diakonissa [Thee—a—*kó*—nees—sa]" in Greek. The Slavic Churches commonly use the same title for the wife of a Deacon as they do for the wife of a Priest. In any case, the wife of a Priest should normally be addressed with both her title and her name in informal situations (e.g., "Presbytera Mary," "Diakonissa Sophia," etc.).

Greeting Clergy on the Telephone. Whenever you speak to Orthodox clergy of Priestly rank on the telephone, you should always begin your conversation by asking for a blessing: "Father, bless." When speaking with a Bishop, you should say "Bless, Despota [*Thés*—po—ta]" (or "Vladika [*Vlá*—dee—ka]" in Slavonic, "Master" in English). It is also appropriate to say, "Bless, Your Grace" (or "Your Eminence," etc.). You should end your conversation by asking for a blessing again.

Addressing Clergy in a Letter. When we write to a clergyman (and, by custom, monastics), we should open our letter with the greeting, "Bless, Father." At the end of the letter, it is customary to close with the following line: "Kissing your right hand...." It is not appropriate to invoke a blessing on a clergyman, as many do: "May God bless you." Not only does this show a certain spiritual arrogance before the image of the cleric, but laymen do not have the Grace of the Priesthood and the prerogative to bless in their stead. Even a Priest properly introduces his letters with the words, "The blessing of the Lord" or "May God bless you," rather than offering his own blessing. Though he can do the latter, humility prevails in his behavior, too. Needless to say, when a clergyman writes to his ecclesiastical superior, he should ask for a blessing and not bestow one.

Formal Address. Deacons in the Orthodox Church are addressed as "The Reverend Deacon," if they are married Deacons. If they are Deacons who are also monks, they are addressed as "The Reverend Hierodeacon." If a Deacon holds the honor of Archdeacon or Protodeacon, he is addressed as "The Reverend Archdeacon" or "The Reverend Protodeacon." Deacons hold a rank in the Priesthood and are, therefore, not laymen. This is an important point to remember, since so many Orthodox here in America have come to think of the Deacon as a kind of "quasi—Priest." This is the result of Latin influence and poor teaching. As members of the Priesthood, Deacons must be addressed, as we noted above, as "Father" (or "Deacon Father").

Orthodox Priests are addressed as "The Reverend Father," if they are married Priests. If they are Hieromonks (monks who are also Priests), they are addressed as "The Reverend Hieromonk." Priests with special honors are addressed in this manner: an Archimandrite (the highest monastic rank below that of Bishop), "The Very Reverend Archimandrite" (or, in the Slavic jurisdictions, "The Right Reverend Archimandrite"); and Proto-presbyters, "The Very Reverend Protopresbyter." In personal address, as we noted above, all Priests are called "Father," usually followed by their first names (e.g., "Father John").

Bishops in the Orthodox Church are addressed as "The Right Reverend Bishop," followed by their first name (e.g., "The Right Reverend Bishop John"). Archbishops, Metropolitans, and Patriarchs are addressed as "The Most Reverend Archbishop" ("Metropolitan," or "Patriarch").

Because they are also monastics, all ranks of Archpastors (Bishops, Archbishops, Metropolitans, or Patriarchs) are addressed by their first names or first names and sees (e.g., "Bishop John of San Francisco"). It is not correct to use the family name of a Bishop—or any monastic for that matter. Though many monastics and Bishops use their family names, even in Orthodox countries like Russia and Greece, this is absolutely improper and a violation of an ancient Church custom.

All male monastics in the Orthodox Church are called "Father," whether they hold the Priesthood or not, and are formally addressed as "Monk (*name*)," if they do not have a Priestly rank. If they are of Priestly rank, they are formally addressed as "Hieromonk" or "Hierodeacon" (see above). Monastics are some-times addressed according to their monastic rank; for example, "Rasophore—monk (*name*)," "Stavrophore—monk (*name*)," or "Schemamonk (*name*)." The Abbot of a monastery is addressed as "The Very Reverend Abbot," whether he holds Priestly rank or not and whether or not he is an Archimandrite by rank. Under no circumstances whatsoever is an Orthodox monk addressed by laymen as "Brother." This is a Latin custom. The term "Brother" is used in Orthodox monasteries in two instances only: first, to designate beginners in the monastic life (novices or, in Greek, *dokimoi* ["those being tested"]), who are given a blessing, in the strictest tradition, to wear only the inner cassock and a monastic cap; and second, as an occasional, informal form of address between monastics themselves (including Bishops).

Again, as we noted above, a monk should never use his last name. This reflects the Orthodox understanding of monasticism, in which the monastic dies to his former self and abandons all that identified him in the world. Lay people are also called to respect a monk's death to his past. (In Greek practice, a monk sometimes forms a new last name from the name of his monastery. Thus a monk from the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery [*Mone Agiou Gregoriou Palama,* in Greek] might take the name *Agiogregorites*.)

The titles which we have used for male monastics also apply to female monastics. In fact, a community of female monastics is often called a "monastery" rather than a convent (though there is nothing improper, as some wrongly claim, in calling a monastery for women a "convent"), just as the word "convent," in its strictest meaning, can apply to a monastic community of males, too. Women monastics are formally addressed as "Nun (*name*)" or "Rasophore—nun (*name*)," etc., and the Abbess of a convent is addressed as "The Very Reverend Abbess." Though traditions for informal address vary, in most places, Rasophore nuns are called "Sister," while any monastic above the rank of Rasophore is called "Mother." Novices are addressed as "Sister."

There are, as we have noted, some differences in the way that Orthodox religious are addressed. What we have given above corresponds to a reasonably standardized vocabulary as one would find it in more traditional English—language Orthodox writings and among English—speaking Orthodox monastics. The influx of Latin converts into Orthodox monasticism and the phenomenon of "monasticism by convenient rule, instant tradition, and fabrication," as Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna has called it, are things that have also led to great confusion in the use of English terminology that corresponds more correctly to the vocabulary of traditional Orthodox monastics.

98 It is, however, permissible to kiss the hand of a deacon, just as we do that of an Abbot (even if not a Priest) or Abbess of a monastery or revered monastic, out of respect or as a sign of dedication.

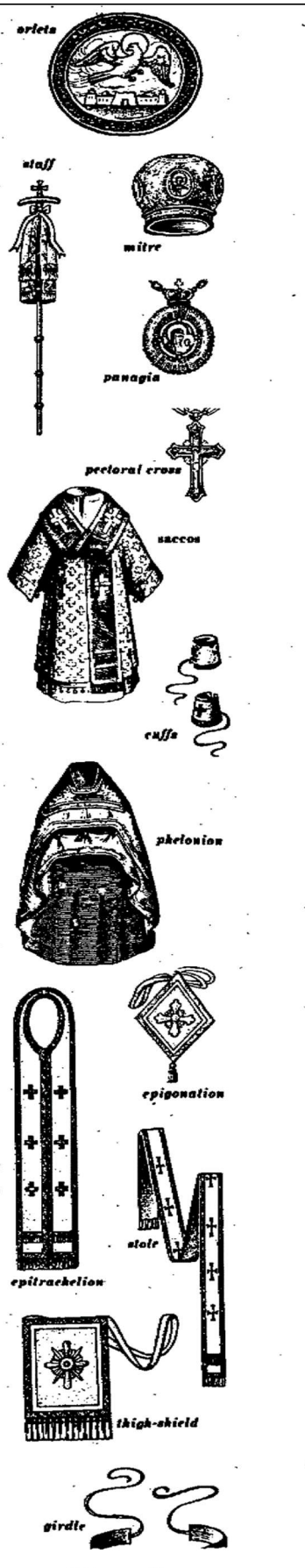
99 Genesis 2:24; St. Matthew 19:6; St. Mark 10:8.

100 See Presbrytera Juliana Cownie, "A 'Share' in the Priesthood," Orthodox Tradtion, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1996), pp. 7-9.

From Father David Cownie and Presbytera Juliana Cownie, *A Guide to Orthodox Life* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1996), pp. 90-96.

The Symbolism of Vestments

Reader Phillip Blyth



Visitors to an Orthodox church service may ask why it is that our clergy wear such seemingly peculiar garments. Accustomed to the sight of a priest in his Sunday vestments, we Orthodox Christians are rarely able to give a satisfactory explanation and our response is often Limited to something about "the beauty of the Church." While it is not necessary for us to become experts on .thhis subject, we could benefit from a closer examination of church vestments-their historical origin and their significance-not only to be able to answer questions, But also to help ourselves enter more deeply into the services.

The historical origin and development of church vestments is a rather complex matter which has lent itself to two different approaches: the "ritualistic"- which assumes that the vestments of the early Christian Church were modeled after those of the Jewish levitical priesthood., and the "anitiquarian"-which holds that it evolved from the ordinary dress of the Roman citizenry in the first few centuries of the Christian era.

That the office of the priesthood was meant to be set apart in its form of dress is clear from the Old Testament. God commanded that when the priests enter the gates of the inner court of the temple, "they shall put on linen robes... and when they go out into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their robes in which they minister and they shall lay them up in the chamber of the sanctuary" (Ezek. 44:17). Linen was considered to be a fine material in comparison with wool which was generally coarser and more commonly used. Besides a linen tunic, the order of Levites was also ordained to wear linen mitres upon their heads and "linen drawers upon their loins" and "they shall not tightly gird themselves" (Ezek. 44:18).

One cannot assume that before Christianity emerged from the catacombs any but the simplest form of vestment was used. The dress commonly worn by men and women 'like in the Roman Empire at that time was the *chiton* or tunic, a long garment with sleeves, which reached to he ground. The preferred color for celebrants was white as a symbol of that holiness and purity which the Lord commanded; "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness" (Ps. 132:9). The garments set aside for Church services were decorated with crosses to distinguish them from ordinary garments. To this day the tunic remains as the vestment common to all three orders of clergy-bishops, priests and deacons-the only difference being that the deacon's tunic or *sticherion* has wide sleeves, while that of the bishop and priest has tight-fitting ones. That this garment has its origin in earlest times is a reminder of the universality of the Church and the immutability of the Faith.

The Symbolism of Vestments

Another item of clerical garb which had its origin the early centuries of the Church was the orarion or *stole.* It is likely that it developed from the towel or scarf which was an indispensable part. of the Roman attire and was generally worn over one shoulder. A fourth century law required that officials wear a sign of office. The stole served this function as well as having more purely spiritual, significance as a symbol of the grace of the holy Spirit flowing down upon the clergy In the case of priests, the stole is worn over both shoulders as sign of the double measure of grace and is called the *epitrachelion* which means "what is worn around the neck." For convenience sake it is sewn or buttoned down the front. Although the~ bishop also wears - an epitrachelion, his distinctive sign of office is the *ontophorion-a* long, broad strip arranged on the shoulders in such a way that one end descends in front and the other behind. The word 'omophorion' means "shoulder covering" and originally referred to a piece of sheepskin worn over the shoulders by the aged and in firm for warmth. Later it was made out of the same material as the rest of the vestment, but its origin still recalls the parable of the lost sheep which the good shepherd found and lay on his shoulders. So too the bishop is entrusted to safely guide his flock and take thought for the conversion of the erring.

The rise of Byzantium and the close relationship of the Church and State had a marked influence on the further development of Orthodox vestments which have essentially remained in the same form up to this day The mitre, for example,-worn by all those in the episcopal office-is modeled after the crown of the Byzantine emperors. .It is highly unlikely that it was modeled after the Old Testament mitre since it was not adopted by bishops of the Church until the 15th century. The mitre represents both the crown of thorns and also the power entrusted to bishops as the leaders of the Church In more recent centuries the Russian Church has given the mitre to some archimandrites and archpriests as an honorary distinction. During the Byzantine era vestments came to be made of very beautiful fabrics such as brocaded silks, and were adorned with embroidery and jewels. With the hierarchs arrayed in such resplendent vestments, the services were reminiscent of the majestic - court ceremonies and were a striking reminder that the worshippers were in the presence of the King of kings

The spiritual significance of all the various liturgical vestments is underlined by the special prayers read during the process of vesting; When the priest or deacon puts on the sticharon, he says: *"My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, for He hath clothed me in the garment of salvation and with the vesture of gladness hath He covered me.* .(Is. 61:10). In putting on the *epimanika* or cuffs, first on the right hand and then on the left, he prays: "Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorified in strength; Thy right hand, O Lord, hath vanquished the enemy, and in the multitude of Thy glory hast Thou crushed the adversaries (Ex. 15:6). "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me..." (Ps. 118:73). The cuffs are symbolic of the bonds of Christ and serve as a re minder that a minister of the Church must rely not on his own strength, but on the help of God. Taking the-epitrachelion, the priest makes over it the sign of the Cross and prays: "Blessed is God Who poureth out his grace upon His priests, like unto the oil of myrrh upon the head, which runneth down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, which runneth down to-the fringe of his raiment" (PS. 132:2). In putting on the *zone* or belt, worn by both bishops and priests, he says: "Blessed is God, Who girded me with power, and hath made my path blameless..." (Ps. 47:32-33). The zone denotes the priest's readiness to serve the Lord and is also a sign that he is bound to Christ. Those priests honored to wear the thigh-shield and also the *epigonation* (in Russian-palitsa), then put these on with the prayer: Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty one.. "(Ps. 443) And indeed, these originated from the "knee-protectors' suspended from the belt and worn on the thigh by soldiers under their swords. The thigh-shield represents the spiritual sword denoting the celebrant as a soldier of Christ. The epigonation also represents the word of God, that is, the spiritual sword (Eph. 6:17) used to fight against all the wiles of the enemy. Over every thing the priest puts on the *phelonion* or chasuble a long, circular and sleeveless garment, shorter in front to allow the hands freedom of movement. It is symbolic of the robe Christ wore during His Passion; the ribbons which decorate it are reminders of the flow of blood on Christ's garments. The phelonion is also a token that the priest is "clothed with righteousness" (Ps. 131:9) and thus hedged off from all iniquities. For centuries it was also worn by bishops until it became customary for them to wear the saccos, a garment like a short tunic with half-sleeves, fashioned in all likelihood after the vestment of the Byzantine emperor; as such is is a sign of special distinction and honor. Symbolically it serves as a reminder that the bishop must rise to holiness of life. The term "saccos" means a "sackcloth garment" or "garment of humility"

The Symbolism of Vestments

The pectoral is worn by both priests and bishops as a reminder that they should not merely carry Christ in their hearts, but also confess Him in the face of all men. The round or oval image of the Saviour or Mother of God, which is worn by bishops, is called a I, meaning 'All-holy."

During the Divine Services bishops use a crozier or staff indicating that they are shepherds of Christ's flock. The top of the staff is made to resemble two serpents' heads, recalling the Saviours' words: "Be ye wise as serpents". As a serpent each year forces its way through thorny plants to shed its old skin, so also must the bishop lead others and follow himself along the thorny path which leads of the renewal of our souls.

The *orlets* is a small round or oval rug bearing the design of an eagle flying above a city. Bishops stand on such rugs as a reminder that they should rise high above the things of this world; through the example of their life and teaching, they are to inspire their flocks also to ascend from earth to heaven.

Although in the early Church the preferred color for vestments was white – as was mentioned above – it was not long before a wide array of colors was used. While there are no set rules as to when to use what colors, certain colors have come by tradition to be connected to particular feasts. White vestments, for example, are associated with the Paschal period (although in some churches the tradition for Paschas is to use red), as the brightest and most radiant celebration of the vanquishing of death. It is a visual reminder that, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment" (Rev. 3:5). Green, the color of life and spring, is used at Pentecost to symbolize the beginning of the life of the Church. It is also used on feasts of certain saints, particular monk saints, who dwelt in the wilderness. Red is used at Nativity, on the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and for Martyrs. Blue is the traditional color of the Mother of God, as she is the Queen of Heaven. Deep purple is used during Lent as a reminder of the purple robe which the soldiers put on Christ to mock Him before His Passion. Outside of festal periods gold is used to remind us of the heavenly Jerusalem: "and the city was pure gold" (Rev. 21:18).

The use of vestments, then, not only adds to the visual splendor of the church; they have a far greater significance in transforming the celebrants, even young acolytes, into representatives of the Kingdom on high, reflecting that otherworldliness which is the essence of Orthodoxy.

(From a talk given at the St. Herman Winter Pilgrimage, Redding, California, 1983).

Deaconnesses

This Pandora's box has recently been opened as the feminist agenda tries to force itself into Orthodoxy. The call for the reinstitution of the ordination of women as deaconesses is making itself heard. Sadly, some clergy, even a few prominent bishops, are joining in favor of this "craze", perhaps because they are afraid of being labeled as misogynist by the vocal minority of women demanding "their place in the altar."

Throughout the history of the Church, monastics have always stood forward in warning of oncoming disaster and/or in defense of the purity of the faith; one only need to look at the iconoclastic controversy to see this clearly, for it was the monastics who were in the forefront in defense of icons. Although the circulation of *The Veil* is not as wide as publications by a number of modernist/"progressive"/radical/liberal Orthodox groups in this country, we still hope that this article will urge those who hold firm to the traditions of the Faith to come forward and join their voices to ours.

It has become very popular in recent years to look at the life of the "early Church." if we do that, certainly we will find those who were called "deaconesses." However, if we look at the early Church we also find political situations which oppressed Christianity even more than that of the tyrannical communist regimes of our own recent history. We find, in the early Church, Christians very willing to die for the faith, who stood by and encouraged their children to remain firm during their young martyrdom for Christ, who truly suffered as confessors before civil authorities; we see Christians who willingly sacrificed everything to follow Christ. Sadly, when many of those who like to cite the "early Church" raise their voice, they tend to be quite selective in which aspects of that "early Church" they would like to emulate. What we do not see in the early Church are people who are living very comfortably and making an "issue" as to what their place in the Church may be. The early Christians fell on their knees, thanking God to be in the Ark of Salvation; they were not clawing their way forward to direct it!

But, let us look at the early Church, the Church during the days of the Apostles. That is where we find the institution of the "deacons." Chapter six of the Acts of the Apostles shows clearly that the first deacons were chosen, had the laying on of hands by the Apostles, and were sent forth to serve the physical needs of the people, to distribute food and other offerings. The Biblical institution of "deacons" was to fulfill a need. Their functions relieved the Apostles (and later the priests) of certain "earthly" responsibilities so that they could give themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word," (Acts 6:4). The role of deacons serving at the altar developed later as time and need demanded, for example, the litanies during the divine services are almost always done by the deacon while the priest is saying certain "silent" prayers which are particular to the priest. However this function came in time and most certainly not at the demand of the deacons themselves wanting a more visible role in the liturgical life of the Church.

Were there "deaconesses" in the early Church? Yes. Most definitely. No one denies that. They fulfilled the female counterpart of the role filled by those very early "deacons", going into areas where men could not go to help the female Christians. Remember, in the early Church vast numbers of adults were becoming Christians and in need of baptism. Baptism was administered by full immersion of the unclothed body in water and the anointing of entire body with oil. Propriety obviously demanded that new Christians who were women could not be thus baptized by male clergy. The deaconesses therefore had this particular role of service to fulfill. In our own days, adult baptisms are done with the new Christian dressed in modest attire which can accommodate the immersion in water and the body is not entirely anointed. *There is <u>no need</u> in our day for a "deaconess" to baptize or anoint a woman with oil for propriety sake.*

Another specific function which the deaconess fulfilled in the early Church was that of visiting unmarried women who were either housebound, ill, or otherwise in need of spiritual counseling. Let us not forget that the early Church existed under Roman domination, in the milieu of Roman law. This law forbade any male from entering the home of an unmarried woman for whatever reason! To deal with this situation, the Church, in her wisdom set aside these pious, unmarried women to fulfill this obvious need which existed.

We also hear the claims that deaconesses carried the Sacrament of Holy Communion to many outside of the temple. Let us also remember that, in the early Church, all of the people took the Body and Blood of our Lord to their homes to commune during the week. The fact that records show deaconesses having a type of "ordination" was specifically to enable them to carry Holy Communion to women who were "shut-ins". Since, as we have made clear, it was forbidden for a male to go into a single woman's home, there was an obvious need for this holy service to be done by a woman, hence, the deaconess. The ordination, or blessing, was to allow her to carry Holy Communion to those women who could not attend the Liturgy.

Such circumstances and needs do not exist today.

Deaconnesses

Yet another function of the deaconesses in the early Church dealt with the matter of guarding the doors of the church and keeping non-Christian women from being present at the Divine Liturgy after the proclamation of "The doors, the doors..." Again, it would not have been considered as proper for a male to physically escort a woman out of the church at that time.

Does this situation or these proprietorial demands exist today?

The role of deaconesses in the early Church was, like the non- liturgical role of deacons, to assist the priest in areas where civil law and propriety prevented him from serving the faithful, specifically women.

The liturgical role which we see deacons fulfilling today never existed for deaconesses. *There was never a need for that!*

Were there deaconesses in the early Church? Yes. Were there "female deacons" serving as the male diaconate now serve? No!

Who, exactly were these deaconesses who served in the above stated ways? They were, first of all, at least over the age of forty and were either widowed or unmarried. There is no evidence anywhere that the deaconesses were married women or that they lived their own "other" worldly life outside of their duties in the Church. They did not wear "vestments" for liturgical celebration, but were clothed in a distinctive garb at all times. The celibate state of these women, their total life of commitment in the Church and their garb, together with the fact that no writings of the early Church mention "nuns" as such should bring us to a very obvious conclusion: The deaconesses of the early Church were "parochial nuns."

One of the earliest indications of "monasteries" for nuns that we can find are in the life of Saint Anthony in the third century. We see that Saint Anthony sold all his belongings and, as he went to live a life of solitude, he *gave his younger sister into a house of Christian virgins.* Christian widows and virgins existed since the very earliest days of the Church, long before even Saint Anthony went off into the desert. As a precursor to the monasteries for nuns which we see today throughout all Orthodox lands, the widows and virgins of the early Church served the needs which existed within the Church, often as deaconesses. As monasticism grew we find less and less mention of the term "deaconess" in the writings of the Church. Advocates for the reinstitution of deaconesses will surely cite the deaconess Olympia who so selflessly served Saint John Chrysostom. No one denies this. The need *for the services of a deacones/1parochial nun still existed at that time!* It is in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom that we see the words "The doors! The doors!" thus showing us that the non-baptized were ushered out of the church at that time, hence a need for deaconesses to escort the women. Adult female baptisms were still performed, hence a need for deaconesses. In the great church of Constantinople surely there was a need to visit women ill in the hospital and in other circumstances which were not considered proper for a priest to enter; hence, a need for deaconesses.

The Orthodox Church is constantly accused of holding on to customs which are antiquated, purely ornamental and of no particular function. Yet, in our own times "modernist" voices are screaming to re-institute a practice on the basis that it existed centuries ago, that it would be "pretty," and that would no longer have a function to serve.

To serve means to give of oneself. What "service" would deaconesses have today? They would be serving only their own egos, their own pride, their own selves! Priests do not need a woman to assist him in baptisms, take Communion to the sick, or guard the doors of the Church. Women already have a myriad of "functions" in the present day Orthodox Church which far surpass the 95% of men who are not ordained clergy. Those women (and men) who wish to serve God completely, under discipline, in a life of celibacy, in distinctive clothing can enter a monastery where they may live by the rules which have existed for centuries, not by their own newly fabricated ones. We cannot talk about "reinstituting the order of deaconesses," because it never became extinct; it is simply known by another name: female monastic.

This writer has not seen the women who are clamoring to be deaconesses knocking at the door of a monastery for admittance. They are not seeking a "reinstitution" of deaconesses, but rather a rewriting of the definition. This definition would include being married, serving in the altar, having a "worldly" life and job. Vestment makers would certainly profit, for they would not only be making "deaconess" vestments, but also "maternity deaconess" vestments!

The Church is one body and each part has its own function. The role of bishop, priest and deacon are male roles, not in order to subject women, but because Christ, in taking flesh, became man, thus putting the male nature in service to

the Church in His image. While there is no subjection, there is order and distinctiveness in the Church just as there is in nature and in all creation: night gives way today, the sea is bound by the land. There is order and distinction in the Trinity Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Son does not seek to be the Father, nor does the Holy Spirit seek to be the Son, but they are unity in Trinity.

So also in the Church there is unity in the one body. The laity do not fulfill the distinctive role of the ordained clergy; the deacons do not seek to fulfill the role of the priest; the priest does not seek to function as a bishop. This is not subordination, but mere distinction so that each part of the body may fulfill its role for the good and well-being of the whole Body.

Those who raise a voice in favor of women being "ordained" as deaconesses are trying to disrupt the order and distinction in the Church. The resistance to allowing "female deacons" is a resistance to allowing disorder into the Church. Women are not "second class citizens" as some would define them in the Church. The Church distinguishes between clergy and laity, not between men and women. Men and women receive Holy Communion together and in the same manner, and all of the sacraments with the exception of Holy Orders are conferred on men and women alike with no distinction. Women have always occupied prime teaching positions in church communities as well as being the principal teacher and upholder of the faith in the home.

The principles of feminism have joined some Orthodox women stronger to their Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish counterparts than to the body of the Church. Their slogans are what has wrought such ruin in certain Protestant denominations and especially within the Episcopalian Church. Members of those denominations, waking up to see that modernism is not what guided the early Church have found the true Faith in Orthodoxy. Let us listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and not to the loud, discordant and sometimes very convincing voices of those who wish to destroy the order of the Body of Christ.

When we hear the cries for the "reinstitution of ordination of deaconesses," rising we must be careful not to be taken in by sentimental pleas. There is no need in the Church for such an "order," one which, as defined by those who wish to see it instituted, would be a far cry from the original role of those selfless servants of Christ. Satan fell from Heaven because he refused the order which existed; he wanted to play the role of God Himself now he has found new disciples in women who want to serve their pride and vainglory by being ordained as deacon(esses) to parade in and out of the altar and stand together with the deacons, priests and bishops.

* Much of the data and information cited in the above article are from a college paper written by Reader Joseph Hirsch IV. We thank him for sharing the result of his extensive research with us.

From *The Veil*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Pascha, 1998). *The Veil* is a publication of the Protection of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Monastery.

THE 40 DAY CHURCHING OF WOMEN AFTER CHILDBIRTH

"Modernistic" attitudes have been attacking so many aspects of Church life and tradition that it seemed but a matter of time before the churching of women forty days after childbirth would be affected. It is not the service of the Churching as such, but the aspect of the new mother remaining at home for forty days which seems to be a problem to some individuals

This seems to be a topic which few writers of our times are willing to approach. Why? Some may feel that it is a non-topic since it is such along-standing tradition in the Church. Some may feel that it is opening a "can of worms". Others may be apprehensive of being labeled "anti-woman. "

In looking into the tradition of the forty day churching of women, we find that the Church is anything *but* anti-woman in this matter! As with so many aspects which tend to be viewed errantly as pro-male/anti-woman, we see in this beautiful tradition that the Church has a *deep respect* for women and their role in creation/redemption. Because of a lack of understanding or misconceptions about the forty day churching of women we are finding that this practice is being ignored in some circles or that the period of time is shortened by some from forty days to thirty, twenty, one week or a matter of just a few days after childbirth. Whether there laxation/shortening/abolition of the forty day period stems from pro-feminist attitude or from one of piety where the new mother desires humbly but fervently to be back in the temple, there is need for a deeper understanding of this tradition. We hope that this humble article will help to clarify the meaning of the forty day church-ing and that this period of time given to women will be respected instead of shortened.

First, it should be stated that during the forty days following child-birth the new mother is not expected simply not to attend Church services. She is expected to *remain at home* and bond with her child. The idea of a new mother not attending Church yet going out to restaurants, movies, dinners, etc. is not in accordance to the tradition of the Church. The Church gives the new mother this period of forty days for healing, for rest, for recuperation. It is not a period of punishment. Childbirth is not a sin and the woman is not considered "guilty" for the act of bringing a life into the world...quite the opposite!

For far too long individuals have viewed this period of forty days when the new mother remains at home as "demeaning" or that the mother is considered to be "unclean," while the father is free to continue in all of his normal daily activities. The Church certainly does distinguish between male and female, for this is the way in which God has created us ... distinct, different, yet equal.

The Inter-Orthodox consultation which convened in Rhodes, Greece in 1988 issued the statement that

> "In the memory of the whole divine Economy of Salvation, women are understood as equally sharing with men in the image of God and as being of equal honor with men. As Such, women in the Church assume their own roles for the restoration of the distorted image of God which are a consequence of sin."

"Their own roles ... "

We are certainly not stating here that the only role a woman has is to bear children, however this certainly is a role which the majority of women fulfill and this is the role which is pertinent to the topic of this article.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law of the Old Testament, not to destroy it (Matt. 5:17), and that law was very clear in regard to the conduct of women following childbirth. In order to understand the Biblical directive which leads to our forty day churching, it helps to look at the Old Testament conception of death, blood and creation.

The role of the woman in conceiving, bearing and giving birth to a child makes her a most intimate co-worker with God in the act of creation. Scripture tells us that God rested on the seventh day after His work of creating. In a very simple explanation, the Church gives the woman her "seventh" day to rest after all of her work to bring forth a new life. This "seventh" day becomes forty days proportionally to the time she gave her body, and indeed, her entire being, to bear her child.

In addition, the Old Testament regarded the shedding of blood as "touching" death. Our Lord Himself died on the Cross by shedding blood. The woman who had an issue of blood but touched the hem of our Lord's garment was healed; why? Because "death" cannot stand before He who is Life.

Death remained an unknown entity, a mystery, a crossing over to something known only to God. Therefore, a woman giving birth, through the blood which is shed, not only works together with God to produce new life, but also touches death in a mystical way. She "dies"

throught this shedding of blood in order to give life to her child and thus she enters into the realm of the mystery of death and life. She has entered a special dimension, the return of which necessitates a period of rest as well as the prayers of the Church to bring her back into the world in which she lives.

This forty day period following childbirth is a spiritual and very mystical time for the new mother as well as for the newborn child. Like so many aspects of Church life, it is both mystical and practical. Mother and child bond together just as we are to bond to our Creator and Lord. Now, just recently, medical science has announced that the immune system of a newborn is not fully developed until the child is approximately six weeks old. Six weeks = 42 days. How interesting that modern science confirms what the Church has been teaching: Keep newborns away from possible infection, and the best way to do this is for the child to be kept at home with its mother.

If we look at another aspect of this tradition of the Church for new mothers to remain at home forty days after childbirth, we come directly to the example of the most holy Theotokos. The Old Testament practice of presenting a forty day old child to the temple had a dual meaning: the child was redeemed and the mother was purified for the reasons stated above. According to the Gospel of SI. Luke, we behold the Theotokos bringing her newborn Child to the Temple. The Child was the Redeemer. The one to be "purified" was the Most Pure! The Mother of our Lord knew that her Child had no need to be redeemed, and her birthgiving which the Church clearly teaches was without blood would have exempted her from the need to be "purified." Yet, what an example she gives us. She remained obedi-ent to the Law and submitted to it. The Mother of God is the model of the Church in submission and obedience. She submitted herself to the rite of "purification" while having no need of such and thus be-comes our model of obedience to the teachings of the Church.

Before we begin to take it upon ourselves to relax the canons and traditions of the Church, before we criticize practices as being "antiquated", or demeaning to anyone, let us first see why the Church has given us these practices and special prayers. Let us look at the examples of the saints and especially of the Mother of the Lord. Let us keep the cancer of modernization away from the precious pearl of our Faith. When we begin abolishing and/or relaxing these very mystical traditions, we will find that the grain of snow becomes a snowball and quickly causes a soul destroying avalanche.

Christianity
or the Church?

Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky).

Content: Introduction. The Church was designed to reflect the perfect unity of the Three-One God. To be Christian means to belong to the Church. The Falsification of the Church with Christianity. Conclusion.

Introduction

Usually, people prefer to remain silent concerning a matter which they know nothing about and do not understand. This, of course, is completely sensible. Let us imagine, for example, a person who knows nothing about chemistry but who, nevertheless, constantly insists upon interfering in the affairs of chemists. He corrects their scientific formulae which have been obtained with great difficulty, changing their order or replacing one with another. We would agree that such a person is acting with the highest degree of imprudence and that we can only have pity for him.

There is one field, however, in which too many people consider themselves to be complete masters, in fact, almost legislators; that is the area concerning the Christian faith and the Church. In this field also, clear and definite formulae have been established with a great effort of theological thought, spiritual guidance, faith, and piety. These formulae are established and must be accepted on faith. Regardless of this fact, a great many people enter into the questions of faith and the Church solely as bold and decisive reformers who want to remake everything according to their own personal desires. In cases where such people have insufficient knowledge or understanding, they are especially averse to remaining silent. To the contrary they begin not only to speak, but to shout. Such shouting on the questions of faith and the

Church usually finds the columns of newspapers and the ordinary conversations of people who, in general, very seldom think of faith and the Church at all. If they do think of such things, they prefer to voice themselves exclusively in an authoritative and accusatory tone.

In such an atmosphere a great multitude of various perverse opinions are born which then become fashionable because no one will trouble himself to consider and examine them. In the prevalence of such opinions it can easily occur that they are unconsciously assimilated even by people who are dedicated in their souls to the faith and the Church.

One of the greatest of these prevalent and "accepted" opinions is what we would call "the separation of Christianity from the Church." We would like to examine it with the help of the word of God and the writings of the holy fathers.

The Church was designed to reflect the perfect unity of the Three-One God

The life of Christ the Savior presents the reader of the Holy Gospels with numerous great moments which fill the soul with some special sense of grandeur. But perhaps the greatest moment in the life of all mankind was that occasion when, in the darkness of a southern night, under the hanging arches of trees just turning green, through which heaven itself seemed to be looking at the sinful earth with twinkling stars, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His High Priestly prayer, proclaimed:

"Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:11; 20-21).

Special attention must be focused upon these words of Christ, for in them the essence of all Christianity is clearly defined. Christianity is not some sort of abstract teaching which is accepted by the mind and found by each person separately. To the contrary, Christianity is a **life** in which separate persons are so united among themselves that their unity can be likened to the unity of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Christ did not pray only that His teaching be preserved so that it would spread throughout all the universe. He prayed for the unification of all those believing in Him. Christ prayed to His heavenly Father for the establishment, more correctly, for the restoration, on earth

of the natural unity of all mankind. Mankind was created from one common origin and of one source (cf. Acts 17:26).

According to the words of Saint Basil the Great, "Mankind would not have had divisions, nor discord, nor wars if sin had not divided its nature"; and, "this is the main point of God's saving *economy of His incarnation* - to bring human nature into unity with Himself and with the Savior. Then, having destroyed the evil part, to re-establish the original unity as the finest physician, through curative treatment, again mends the body which had been cut up in pieces." The Church is formed of this unification of individuals; not of the apostles only, but of all those who believe in Christ according to their words. No earthly thing has ever been found which could be compared to the new community of saved people. There is no form of unity on earth with which one could compare the unity that is the Church. Such unity was found only in heaven. In heaven, the incomparable love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit unites three Persons into one Being so that there are not three Beings, but One God living a triune life. Those people about whom Christ prayed to the heavenly Father*: "that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them"* (John 17:26) are also called **to such a love which could fuse many into a state of oneness**.

In the aforementioned words of Christ, the truth of the Church is placed into the tightest union with the mystery of the All-holy Trinity. People who enter the Church and love Her become like the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, whose love unites them into one being. The Church is like a one-essence of many persons, created by the moral beginning of love. This is precisely the theme which is perceived in the first sacred prayer of Christ the Savior by very many of the eminent fathers and teachers of the Church - Saint Cyprian of Carthage, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose of Milan, Saint Hilary of Poitiers, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Saint Augustine of Hippo and Saint John Cassian. I have allowed myself to introduce short excerpts on this subject from the writings of some of this great and renowned assembly of fathers.

Saint Cyprian of Carthage, in his letter to Magnus, says: "The Lord, teaching us that unity comes from divine authority, affirms and says: *"I and the Father are One"* (John 10:30). In his composition "The Lord's Prayer," Cyprian also says: "Not being satisfied that He expiated us by His blood, He also interceded for us. While interceding for us, here is what He desired: that we will live in the very same state of unity in which the Father and the Son are one."

Here is what Saint Cyril of Alexandria writes: "Christ, having taken as an example and image of that indivisible love, accord and unity which is conceivable only in unanimity, the unity of essence which the Father has with Him and which He, in turn, has with His Father, desires that we too should unite with each other; evidently in the

same way as the consubstantial, Holy Trinity is united so that the whole body of the Church is conceived of as one, ascending in Christ through the fusion and union of two people into the composition of the new perfect whole. The image of Divine unity and the consubstantial nature of the Holy Trinity as a most perfect interpenetration must be reflected in the unity of the believers who are of one heart and mind." Saint Cyril also points out "the natural unity by which we are all bound together, and all of us to God, cannot exist without bodily unity."

All the earthly works of Christ, therefore, must not be thought of as teaching alone. Christ did not come to earth to announce some novel theoretical propositions to mankind. No! He came in order to create a completely new life for mankind, that is, the Church. Christ Himself said that He would build the Church (cf. Matt. 16:18).

This new human community, according to the conception of the Creator Himself, differs vitally from all other associations of people into various societies. Christ Himself often referred to His Church as the Kingdom of God and said that this Kingdom is not of the world, that is, its nature is not of the world, not temporal; it is not comparable with earthly kingdoms (cf. John 14:27; 15:19; 17:14-16; 18:36).

The idea of the Church as a new, perfect community as distinct from a community of the state organization is profoundly and beautifully expressed in the kontakion for the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, when the Church recalls and celebrates its beginning. "When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations, but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all into unity. Therefore, with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit." Here the creation of the Church is placed into opposition to the Tower of Babel and the "confusing of tongues," at which time God, the Most High, came down, confused the tongues and divided the nations.

The biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel has an extremely profound meaning. It is just before this event that the Bible relates the first successes of sinful mankind in the areas of culture and society. It was at this time that man began to build stone cities. At this point the Lord confused the languages of those living on earth so that they stopped understanding each other and were scattered over the entire earth (cf. Gen. 11:4, 7-8). In this "Babylonian tower building" we are presented with a certain general type of civil or state society based on an externally legal norm.

The Russian philosopher V. S. Soloviev defined law thus: "Law is a compulsory demand for the realization of a certain minimum of good or order which does not allow certain manifestations of evil." Even if we accepted this definition of law, it is evident that it would never correspond to Christian morals. Law touches the external aspect and by-passes the essence of man. A society created on a legal basis can never

merge people into unity. Unity is destroyed through self-love and egoism, for law does not destroy egoism. On the contrary, law only affirms it, guarding it from an encroachment on the part of the egoism of others. The purpose of a state based on law consists of creating, as far as possible, such an order in which the egoism of each member can find satisfaction for itself without violating the interests of others. The only path to the creation of such an order can be to place a certain limitation on the egoism of individual members. In this we have the unsolvable contradiction of law: it affirms egoism, yet it imposes limitations upon it. Therefore, a society formed on a legal basis always carries within itself the seeds of its own decay, for it guards egoism which constantly corrodes all unity. The fate of the tower of Babylon is the fate of legal society. In such a society there must frequently occur a "confusion of tongues" when people stop understanding each other even though they speak the same language. Legal order often gives place to terrible disorder.

The Christian society - the Church - is in direct contrast to such a legal, purely temporal society. "But when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity." Christ did not create the Church as a means of guarding human egoism, but as a means of its complete destruction.

The basis of Church unity does not consist of legal principles, which guard personal egoism, but love, which is the opposite of personal egoism. In His parting conversation, Christ said to His disciples: *"A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13:34-35).

It is this "new beginning" of Church unity which creates an organic unity rather than a mechanical unification of internally divided persons. Christ Himself likened Church unity to the organic unity of a tree with its branches (cf. Rom. 11:17,24).

The Apostle Paul spoke in great detail concerning the organic unity of the Church. He also compared the Church to a tree, but more often, the Apostle Paul refers to the Church as a "body" - *soma.* Referring to the Church as a "body" immediately implies its unity, for two bodies cannot be organically joined to one another. This term also indicates the special character of the unification of the members who enter into the composition of the Church. The image of the "body" in application to the Church is beautifully revealed by the Apostle Paul. All who enter in the Church are members separately, but together comprise one body in Christ (cf. Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:20). The body is one, but it has many members and all are members of one body; although they be many, they compose one body. The body is not composed of one member, but of many. If the leg says, "I do not belong to the body because I am not an arm," does

it then in actual fact not belong to the body? And if the ear will say, "I do not belong to the body because I am not an eye," does it then not belong to the body?

God arranged each of the members of the body as it was pleasing to Him (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12; 12:16-18) just as we have many members in one body, not all members have the same function (cf. Rom. 12:4). The eye cannot say to the arm, "you are not necessary to me," nor can the head say such a thing to the legs. God proportioned the body of mutually interdependent parts, but all members are equally responsive to one another. Thus, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one of the members becomes great, all the members rejoice with it (1 Cor. 12:21, 24-26, 27; cf. Rom. 12:6, 9).

But how is it possible to implement such a unity of people in a Church community? The natural state of man corresponds more to the creation of a merely legal society, for sin is the self-assertion and self-love which is guarded by civil law. Indeed, as long as man guards his sinful state, complete unity will be an empty dream which cannot be brought to reality.

Such an implementation is, however, made possible by the concept of the Church. Christ gave the commandment to love one another, but the commandment alone is insufficient. Like every theoretical proposition, it can create nothing if the power for the fulfillment is not provided. If Christianity limited itself to the theoretical teaching of love, it would be of no use because the power for the realization of this teaching is not available in human nature, which is distorted by sin. Reason confesses that this commandment about love is good, but man constantly meets a different law within himself which struggles against the law of the mind and which makes him captive to the sinful law (Rom. 7:22-23). The work of Christ, however, is not limited to theoretical propositions and it is in this that the strength and significance of His work rests.

Mankind is given new strength and so the new unity of the Church is possible for him. There is a new beginning, a new source of life - the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself said that he who is not born of water and of the Spirit cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (cf. John 3:3). It is necessary to be *"born of the Spirit"* (John 3:6, 8). When the Apostle Paul speaks about the unity of people in the Church, he always speaks of the Holy Spirit as the source of this unity.

For the Apostle, the Church is not only *"a single body,"* but also a *"single Spirit"* (1 Cor. 12:11, 13; Eph. 4:3-4, 7). Here we understand, not a conformity of ideas or a unity of religious convictions, as certain Western thinkers wish to believe, but a single Spirit of God which penetrates the entire body of the Church, as the holy fathers and teachers of the Church testify.

"What is the unity of the Spirit?" asks Saint John Chrysostom, and he answers, "Just as the spirit, in the body, controls all and communicates some sort of unity to the diversity which arises from the various bodily members, so it is here. But the Spirit is also given in order to unite people who are diverse among themselves in descent and in their way of thinking." "With these words (*A single spirit*) he (the Apostle) desired to implant in them a mutual accord, as if saying: since you received one Spirit and drank from one Source, then there must be no discord among you."

Blessed Theodoret says, "You are all considered worthy of a common Spirit; you compose one body." Blessed Jerome describes: "One body in the sense of the body of Christ, which is the Church; and one Holy Spirit, one single dispenser and sanctifier of all." Blessed Theophylact the Bulgarian wrote: "Just as the spirit in the body is the foundation which binds and unites all, though the members are diverse, so the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believers unites all even though they differ from one another by birth, temperament, and pursuits."

According to the teaching of the Apostle, all Church life is a manifestation of God's Holy Spirit; each manifestation of love, each virtue is the action of a gift of the Spirit. According to the words of the Apostle Peter, people are but *"stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (1 Pet. 4:10). The Spirit of God has, by Its own power, penetrated the entire body of the Church and given various spiritual gifts to each of its members, making possible a new life for mankind. It unites all into one body, unifying in such a way as to instill a kind of love in the hearts of men which, in their natural state, cannot be a principle of their lives and relationships with other people.

Love is of God - this dictum of the Apostle John can be termed as the general theme of a whole series of apostolic discourses. Love is given the title "of God." The love of Christ constrains the members of the Church (2 Cor. 5:14). Love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). God's love is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given to us (Rom. 5:5). God saved us by means of the renewing action of the Holy Spirit which He shed freely upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior (Tit. 3:5-6).

Thus, the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Church gives each member of the Church strength to become a new creature whose life is guided by love. The teaching of the Apostle Paul concerning the Church is inseparably linked with his teaching of love as the fundamental principle of Christian life. This connection is little noticed by contemporary scholarly commentators, but the holy fathers of the Church point it out. Concerning this apostolic comparison of the Church with the body, Blessed Theodoret says, "this comparison is appropriate in the teaching of love." Saint John Chrysostom, interpreting the words, a *single body*, says, "Paul demands from us a love that would bind us together, making us inseparable one from another, and of such complete unity

that we seem to be members of one body. Only such a love as this produces great good."

In reading the epistles of the Apostle Paul, one may note that he usually speaks about the Church and about love side by side. This, of course, is because both of these ideas are inseparably linked together in the very system of the Apostle. All of his Christian ethics are based upon the dogmatic teaching about the Church. Thus, in the last chapters of his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle speaks in detail about Christian morals. This discourse begins with the ninth verse of the twelfth chapter, and in the five preceding verses (4-8), the Apostle briefly sets forth the teaching of the Church as a body. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, after the teaching about the Church in the twelfth chapter, the "New Testament song of love" directly follows (12:31-13:13). Something similar to this can also be noted in the epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

What follows from all that has been said? The teaching of Christ is a teaching not only about the re-creation of a separate moral person, but also about the re-creation of a perfect society, i.e., about the Church. God's Spirit, living in the Church, gives strength for the realization of Christian teaching in life. Since this teaching is a teaching about love, then its realization again creates a community because love is a foundation which binds and does not divide.

Outside the Church and without the Church, Christian life is impossible. Without the Church, the Christian teaching alone remains as an empty sound, for Christian life is Church life. **Only in the life of the Church can a person live and develop**. In a bodily organism, separate members never grow or develop independently of one another, but always and only in connection with the whole organism. The same applies to the Church. For the growth of the Church is at the same time the growth of its members.

In the New Testament writings, the purpose of the existence of the Church is revealed as the moral perfection of human nature. According to Saint Paul, spiritual gifts and all services in general exist in the Church for the fulfillment of the saints, i.e., for the moral re-birth of Christians until we are all come to oneness in our faith and in our comprehension of the knowledge of the Son of God, becoming the perfect man, mature with the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13).

That is why the Apostle depicts that process by which the reborn mankind reaches the full maturity of Christ. Without entering into a detailed analysis of the Greek text of Eph 4:16, we will confine ourselves to explaining the thought which the Apostle is expressing. The whole body of the Church is united in a steadily increasing harmony by means of the perception of the abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit which act in each

member in a special way. Thus the body of the Church reaches perfection in all its members. All the growth of the entire Church organism depends on each separate member sacredly observing the law of love. The perception of the gift of the Spirit is possible only through love and in union with the Church.

This is the way the aforementioned words of the holy Apostle are understood by Saint John Chrysostom, Blessed Theodoret, Saint John of Damascus, and Blessed Theophylact. Their thoughts are brought together by Bishop Theophan the Recluse whose words we will cite. "Christian faith joins the faithful with Christ and thus it composes one harmonious body from separate individuals. Christ fashions this body by communicating Himself to each member and by supplying to them the Spirit of Grace in an effectual, tangible manner. Thus, the Spirit of Grace descending on each makes him what he ought to be in the body of Christ's Church. Christ's body being harmoniously fit together through this gift of the Spirit, builds itself up in proportion to the measure in which each member answers his purpose or acts for the welfare of the Church in all the fullness of the gift of Grace received."

From this teaching of the Apostle Paul and the interpretation of it by the holy fathers quoted above, it is evident that, according to the New Testament, the perfection of the human personality depends upon its belonging to the Church as a living organism, undergoing growth through the beneficial and abundant influence of the Holy Spirit. If the bond with the body of the Church becomes severed then the personality which is thereby isolated and enclosed in its own egoism will be deprived of the beneficial and abundant influence of the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Church.

"As a matter of fact, if it happened that the hand became separated from the body, the spirit coming from the brain, seeking continuation and not finding it there, would not break loose from the body and pass over into the severed hand. If the hand is not there, it no longer receives any communication. The same applies here if we are no longer bound together by love." "All that has separated from the vital source cannot, with the loss of the saving essence, live and breathe with a special life. " "Take the sun's ray away from its source - its unity will not permit it to exist as a separate light: break off a branch from a tree - the broken part will lose the ability to grow; separate a stream from its source - the separated part will dry up. Likewise, the Church, illuminated by the Lord's light, spreads its rays over all the world; but the light which pours out everywhere is one, and the unity of the body remains undivided. It extends its boughs, heavy with fruit, over all the earth; its abundant streams flow far; and always, the Head remains One. One beginning, one mother, rich with ripening fruitfulness."

In these animated and poetic words, the idea is clearly conveyed that a separate individual or even a separate Christian community is alive only insofar as it lives

Christ's life, insofar as it is unified with the Universal Church. To remain aloof or to be locked up in one's self places the individual or even the local church in the same position as a ray separated from the sun, a stream from the source, or a branch from the trunk of the tree. Spiritual life can exist only in an organic unity with the Universal Church; if this unity is broken, then Christian life will dry up.

We hope that it has been made sufficiently clear that the concept of the Church has a paramount significance in the teaching of the New Testament.

Christianity is not concerned with the interests of reason; but only with those of the salvation of man. In Christianity, therefore, there are no purely theoretical tenets. Dogmatic truths have moral significance, and Christian morals are founded on dogma. Included in the concept of the Church is this: the Church is that point at which dogma becomes moral teaching and Christian dogmatics become Christian life. The Church thus comprehended gives life to and provides for the implementation of Christian teaching. **Without the Church there is no Christianity**; there is only the Christian teaching which, by itself, cannot "renew the fallen Adam."

If we now turn from the doctrine of the Church as revealed in the New Testament to the facts of the history of Christianity, we shall see that this is precisely the concept which was fundamental to the Christian view and which had been shaping its reality. Before anything else, the Christians became conscious of themselves as members of the Church. The Christian community referred to itself as a "Church" in preference to all other names. The word "Church" (*ekklisia*) appears one hundred and ten times in the New Testament, while such words as "Christianity" and similar words are completely unknown in the New Testament. After the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ's disciples and apostles, the Church came into being as a visible community with a spiritual interrelation among its members.

At first there was no comprehensive system of teaching. The faith of Christ was set down in a few of the general dogmas. There was nothing to be learned in Christianity and little common accord called for in any abstract propositions. What did it mean at that time to be a Christian?

In our times we hear many various answers such as: "To be a Christian means to recognize Christ's teaching, to try to fulfill His commandments." This, of course, is the best of such answers. The first Christians, however, answered the question in a completely different way. From the very first pages of its history, Christianity appears before us in the form of a harmonious and unanimous community. Outside of this community there were no Christians. To come to believe in Christ, to become a Christian - this meant uniting with the Church. This is repeatedly expressed in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that the Lord daily added the saved to

the Church (cf. Acts 2:47; 5:13-14). Each new believer was like a branch grafted to the tree of Church life.

Here is a more distinctive example, an illustration of precisely this joining to the Church. The persecutor Saul who had *breathed threatening and murderous desires against the Lord's disciples*, underwent a miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus, and became a follower of Christ. Here before us is a special revelation of God to man. In Damascus, the Lord sent Ananias to baptize Saul. Saul then travelled to Jerusalem in order to join himself to the disciples there. After Barnabas had informed the Apostles about him, "*he abode as one among them."* Thus, even the future great Apostle whom, in the vision of Ananias, the Lord calls a chosen instrument (Acts 9:15), immediately after conversion became united with the Church which was a visible community. Here is graphic evidence that the Lord does not want to know His servants outside of the Church.

It is easy to understand why the holy Apostle Paul speaks so persistently about the Church in his epistles: he is not creating a teaching about the Church, for during his very conversion Paul knew precisely this Church and not something else, for he recalls subsequently: *"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jew's religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it"* (Gal. 1:13). Saul did not persecute followers of some kind of teaching, but, specifically, the Church, as a defined value, perceivable even to "outsiders."

According to the witness of the compiler of the Acts, the first Christian community was the almost complete realization of this concept of the Church. The company of the faithful, we read in the Acts of the Apostles were *"of one heart and of one soul"* (Acts 4:32). It is remarkable that during the fourth century, while the dogma concerning the Holy Trinity was being explained, certain of the holy fathers used the analogy of the early Christians to describe the unity of the Holy Trinity.

How sharply the first Christian community was defined is beautifully demonstrated in one verse from Acts which has somehow been passed over unnoticed. *"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them"* (Acts 5:13).

Thus, on the one hand, conversion to Christianity is conceived of as uniting with the Church, and on the other hand, *"none of those who were not of their number dared join them."* Is it not clear, then, that from the very beginning when the direct disciples of Christ were still alive, Christianity was a visible society - the Church, because it was not then a theory; it was life itself.

Yes, in the first centuries the Church was already opposed to the school. The school was almost a curse word to the ancient Christians. "School" was the name of the

heretical communities which separated from the Church, as can be seen from the works of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon and Hippolytus of Rome. Using this name, they emphasized their own view that outside the Church there is no Christian life, there is room only for a school of rationalism, for scholastic philosophy.

It is even possible to introduce evidence from outside the Church. It is well known how the Protestants have distorted the idea of the Church, preaching some kind of teaching about an "invisible" Church. This teaching is so vague, obscure and indefinite, that a Lutheran theologian, in an official report at the Diet of Speyer in 1875, declared: "Our Protestant teaching about the Church still distinguishes itself with such vagueness and inconsistency, that it can be called the Achilles' heel of Protestantism." Nevertheless, Protestants sometimes attempt to attribute their teaching about the Church to early Christianity. Some of the Protestant scholars resolutely declare that the foundations of the visible Church contradicts evangelical Christianity and has distorted it. Such, for example, was the point of view of Rudolf Sohm.

Lately, however, even in Protestant studies, no such decisive voices are heard concerning the Church of the first centuries. Scholarship alien to the Church is slowly arriving at the realization of the truth that the Church and Christianity were identical concepts and completely inseparable from one another from the very beginning.

Finally, we would make a big omission if we did not cite a few judgments of ancient Church writers on the question interesting us. We shall dwell on the views of only two writers who had labored much on the understanding of the dogma of the Church - Saint Cyprian and Blessed Augustine.

To be Christian means

to belong to the Church

According to the words of Saint Cyprian, to be a Christian means to belong to the visible Church and to submit to the hierarchy which God has placed in it. The Church is the realization of Christ's love and any separation from the Church is a violation of this love, in which both heretics and schismatics sin equally. This is the basic thought of his treatise "On the Unity of the Catholic Church."

This same idea is constantly repeated in the letters of the same holy father. "Christ granted us peace; He commanded us to be in harmony and unanimity; He commanded that we preserve, inviolably and firmly, the bond of affection and love. Whoever

violates the love of Christ by faithless dissent will no longer belong to Christ: he who does not possess this love does not possess God either. Those who do not desire to be unanimous, in God's Church cannot abide with God.

Heretics and schismatics do not have this love, i.e., the basic Christian virtue and, thus, they are Christian in name only. "Heretics and schismatics preserve neither the unity of the Church nor brotherly love." "They act against the love of Christ." "Marcian who joined with Novatian, became an enemy of charity and love." "It is well known that the heretics have deviated from the love and unity of the universal Church." "What unity is observed, what love is preserved or what love is dreamt about by one who, having given himself up to fits of dissension, cleaves the Church, destroys faith, troubles the peace, eradicates love and profanes the sacraments?"

Saint Cyprian even expressed the decisive thought that, not only can there be no Christian life outside the Church, but there can be no Christian teaching either. The pure faith exists only in the Church. Saint Cyprian also calls the Church by the name "Truth," and teaches that the unity of the faith cannot be separated from the unity of the Church, for truth is one even as the Church is one.

He who does not adhere to the unity of the Church cannot think that he is preserving the faith. Any separation from the Church is, without fail, connected with the distortion of the faith. "The enemy has contrived heresies and schisms in order to overthrow the faith, distort the truth, and dissolve unity. His servants proclaim the treachery under the pretense of faith, herald the antichrist in the name of Christ and, concealing the lie by means of imitation righteousness, subtly and guilefully destroy the truth."

"Just as Satan is not Christ although he deceives in His name, so one cannot be a Christian if he does not abide in the truth of His gospel and faith." "A heretic cleaves the Church and destroys faith . . . he arms himself against the Church. In relation to the faith, he is a traitor; in relation to piety, he is a defiler, a recalcitrant servant, a lawless son, a hostile brother."

If one examines the faith of those who believe outside the Church, it would be found that all heretics have a completely different faith; as a matter of fact they have only a wild fanaticism, blasphemy, and a decay which is fighting against holiness and truth." According to Saint Cyprian, to be outside the Church and yet remain a Christian is impossible, for to be outside the Church is to be outside Christ's camp.

Those who separate themselves from the Church and those who act against the Church are antichrists and heathens. Here, for example, is what Saint Cyprian writes to Antonius concerning Novatian: "You have desired, most beloved brother, that I

write you concerning Novatian, what heresy he has introduced. Know that, first of all, we must not be curious about what he teaches when he is teaching outside the Church. *"No matter who or what he is, he is not a Christian as soon as he is not in the Church of Christ."* "How can anyone be with Christ if he does not dwell within the Bride of Christ, if he is not found in His Church?"

Finally, in the treatise, "On the Unity of the Catholic Church," we read the famous words*, "He who does not have the Church as his mother cannot have God as his Father."* Saint Cyprian completely refuses the name "Christian" to all those who stand outside the Church, as if repeating the decisive exclamation of his teacher Tertullian: *"haeretici christiani esse non possunt!"* - heretics cannot be Christians!

Thus we can understand Saint Cyprian's demand that even Novatians, who were only schismatics, should be re-baptized when being received into the Church. For Saint Cyprian, the baptism of schismatics upon being received into the Church was not re-baptism at all, but precisely baptism. "We maintain," he wrote to Quintus, "that we do not rebaptize those who come from there, but we baptize; for they have received nothing there where there is nothing." He adds that baptism outside the Church is only "an empty and impure immersion." "There, people are not washed, but are only profaned more; sins are not cleansed, but are only redoubled. Such a birth promotes children to the devil and not to God."

Saint Cyprian's conviction about the invalidity of any baptism outside the Church, and about the necessity of once again baptizing converts to the Church, was confirmed by a local council of the Church which met at Carthage in 256 A.D. with Cyprian himself presiding. In his closing address, summing up the council's decisions, the Saint says: "Heretics must be baptized by a baptism solely of the Church so that they can change from enemies to friends and from antichrists to Christians."

The above-stated views of Saint Cyprian which, evidently, the entire Carthagenian Council shared, clearly and profoundly witness how totally fused the Church was with Christianity and vice versa, in the third century.

Not all the views of Saint Cyprian were completely accepted by the Church. In particular, his teaching about the necessity to re-baptize even schismatics upon their conversion to the Church was modified. On this point, the views of Blessed Augustine differ somewhat, although his view of the relationship of Christianity to the Church remains exactly the same.

Blessed Augustine held that the Christian teaching, understood theoretically, can be preserved outside the Church. Truth remains truth even though an evil person might express it. For even the demons confessed Christ just as did the Apostle Peter. Gold is

doubtlessly good and it remains gold even when taken by a thief, even though it serves different aims for him. Christ once said to his disciples, *"he that is not against us is for us"* (Luke 9:50). From this it is concluded that one who stands outside the Church on some things is not against the Church and has something of the Church's wealth. Athenians, however, *"honored the Unknown God"* (Acts 17:23) and the Apostle James testified that even the demons believe (James 2:19), and they, of course, are outside of the Church. In his works against the Donatists, Blessed Augustine argues in detail for the validity of schismatic baptism. If, however, it is possible to preserve true teaching outside the Church and if even the sacraments performed in schism from the Church are valid, then is the Church really necessary? Is salvation not possible outside the Church? Does not Blessed Augustine make a distinction between Christianity and the Church? To all these questions a negative reply is given in the system of Blessed Augustine. He ascribes Christian life, which leads to salvation, only to the Church. Outside the Church this life cannot exist.

All the wealth of the Church which is possessed by those who have separated themselves from the Church brings them absolutely no benefit, but only harm. Why is this so? Because, answers Blessed Augustine, all those who have separated from the Church do not possess love. Christ gave a sign by which it is possible to recognize His disciples. This sign is not Christian teaching, not even the sacraments, but only love. Thus, He told His followers, *"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another"* (John 13:35). The Mysteries will not save if the one receiving them has no love. The Apostle says: "If I know all the mysteries (sacraments) and do not possess love, I am nothing." Even Caiaphas prophesied, but he was condemned. The act of separation from the Church is itself the greatest sin, which proves that schismatics do not have love. One who is reborn in baptism, but does not unite with the Church receives no benefit from baptism because he possesses no love; baptism can be beneficial for him only when he unites with the Church. The Grace of baptism cannot cleanse from sin one who does not belong to the Church; its actions are as if paralyzed by the obstinacy of a schismatic heart in the evil of schism. Since one who is baptized outside the Church displays his sinfulness and the absence of love in him immediately after baptism by entering into the darkness of schism, the sins quickly return upon him. The fact that forgiven sins return if there is no brotherly love is clearly pointed out by the Lord when He spoke of the servant whom the master forgave ten thousand talents. When this same servant did not take pity upon his fellow who owed him only one hundred dinars, the master demanded the payment of all that was owed him. Just as this servant had received forgiveness of the debt for a time, so one who is baptized outside the Church is also freed from his sins for a time. Since, however, he remains outside the Church even after baptism, all the sins which he committed before being baptized are again imposed upon him. His sins are forgiven only when he, through love, unites with the Church.

Schismatics are deprived of the hope of salvation not only because their baptism is invalid, but also because they are outside the Church and in enmity with it. The Grace of the Holy Spirit can be received and preserved only by one who is united in love with the Church. He who has separated from the Church does not have love. He who does not love the unity of the Church does not have God's love, it is in vain that he declares that he has the love of Christ. Love can be preserved only in the presence of unity with the Church, because the Holy Spirit revives only the body of the Church. There can be no lawful and sufficient reason to separate from the Church; he who separates from the Church does not possess the Holy Spirit, just as a severed member of the body does not possess the spirit of life, even though it preserves its former identity for some time. Thus, while all those who have separated from the Church oppose it, they cannot be good; although their behavior might appear to be praiseworthy - the very fact of their separation from the Church makes them evil.

Thus, according to the teaching of Blessed Augustine, the Church is a concept narrower than Christianity which is understood only in the sense of abstract theses. It is possible to be in accord with these abstract theses while still remaining outside the Church; but for unity with the Church, the accord of will is indispensible *(consensio voluntatum)*. It is evident that without this latter, abstract accord with Christian teaching alone is completely useless and that there is no salvation outside the Church.

The points of view of Saint Cyprian and Blessed Augustine can be seen to differ somewhat, but they both arrive at exactly the same conclusion: outside the Church there is no salvation! People are saved by their love which is the Grace of the New Testament. Outside the Church it is impossible to preserve love, because it is impossible to receive the Holy Spirit.

What have we discovered in these representative examples of Church thought from the third to the fifth centuries? We have found that they coincide with the conclusions we reached earlier while examining the New Testament teaching about the Church, and the facts of early Christianity. Christianity and the Church are the same thing only when we do not regard Christianity as the sum of a sort of abstract thesis, not obliging anyone to anything. Such an understanding of Christianity can only be called demonic.

It would follow that such Christians also acknowledge in the way of demons who also believe and tremble. Does to know the system really mean to be a true Christian? A servant who knows the will of the master and who does not fulfill it, will be dismissed and rejected and, of course, justly so.

"Christianity is not in the silent conviction, but in the grandeur of the deed," says Saint Ignatius.

No, Christ is not only a great teacher; He is the Savior of the world, Who gave mankind new strength, Who renewed mankind. It is not a teaching only that we have received from our Christ the Savior, but life. If one is to understand Christianity as a new life, not according to the elements of the world which knows only the principles of egoism and self-love, but according to Christ with His teaching and model of self-denial and love, then Christianity will necessarily coincide completely with the Church**. To be a Christian means to belong to the Church, for Christianity is precisely the Church. Outside the Church there is no life and there cannot be.**

Finally, in order to understand how important the concept of the Church is, it is sufficient to look attentively at the Symbol of Faith (the Creed), for the various articles were introduced into the Symbol of Faith after the appearance of various heretics who distorted one or another truth. Thus the whole Symbol of Faith can be called polemical. Its history reveals that its contents were enlarged as the result of the struggle with one heresy or another.

Such is not the case, however, with the ninth article, which concerns the Church. This article was found in the Symbol of Faith from the very beginning. It was introduced independently of the appearance of any sort of false doctrine. At that time there were still no Protestants who dreamt of some sort of churchless Christianity.

It is clear that, from the very beginning, the concept of the Church lay at the head of Christian beliefs and that this truth, that **Christianity is specifically the Church**, can be considered to have been given from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Having risen to this height of Church consciousness, it will be of great benefit to look at contemporary life, at the trends and opinions which are widespread in it and to give them an appraisal from the point of view of the Church.

The falsification of the Church with Christianity

"**I** believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." Thus every Orthodox Christian confesses his faith in the great truth of the Church. But it is hardly possible to point out any other article of the Symbol of Faith which is less understood by the heart of man who has read it with his lips than is the ninth article wherein the truth of the Church is expressed. This is, in part, understandable: for in the ninth article of the Symbol of Faith, man confesses his bond with the visible community of the followers

of Christ. By this, in these short words of confession, he agrees with all the truths taught by the Church, which is acknowledged as the custodian of Christ's teaching. From the practical side, the agreement is given, once and for all, to be submissive to all those laws by which the Church reaches the aims of its existence, and according to which it is governed as a society living on earth. Thus it seems that we will not err if we express the thought that the truth of the Church, above all other truths, touches the very life of each Christian, defining not only his beliefs, but also his life. To acknowledge the Church means more than just dreaming about Christ. It means living in a Christian manner and following the path of love and self-denial. The truth of the Church, therefore, is contrary to those principles of life which have slowly crept into the consciousness and attitude even of the Russian religious community, though for the most part, of course, among the so-called intellectual society.

During the sorrowful times for the Church in the course of the reign of Peter I, the upper strata of Russian society drew away from the Church life of the people and began to live a life in common with all the other European peoples rather than with the Russians. While submitting to Western influence in all spheres of life, Russian society could not avoid the influence of Western confessions upon the formation of its religious attitudes. These confessions were referred to, with good reason, as "heresies against the dogma and essence of the Church and against its faith in itself," by a true son of the Orthodox Church and fatherland, A. S. Khomiakov. It was not in error that he considered the denial of the Church the most characteristic feature of both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

The truth of the Church was greatly distorted in the West after Rome had fallen away from the Church. In the West, God's kingdom began to be viewed more as an earthly kingdom. Latinism obscured the Christian concept of the Church in the consciousness of its members with its legalistic account of good deeds, its mercenary relationship to God and its falsification of salvation.

Latinism gave birth to a legitimate, although very insubordinate, offspring in the form of Protestantism. Protestantism was created from the soil of humanism which was not a religious phenomenon; on the contrary, all its leading ideas are purely earthly, human. It created respect for man in his natural condition. Protestantism, having carried over the basis of humanism into the religious field, was not a protest of genuine ancient Church Christian consciousness against those forms and norms which were created by medieval Papism, as Protestant theologians are often inclined to claim. Far from it; Protestantism was a protest on the very same plane. It did not re-establish ancient Christianity, it only replaced one distortion of Christianity with another, and the new falsehood was much worse than the first. Protestantism became the last word in Papism, and brought it to its logical conclusion.

Truth and salvation are bestowed upon love, i.e., the Church - such is Church consciousness. Latinism, having fallen away from the Church, changed this consciousness and proclaimed: truth is given to the separate person of the Pope, and the Pope manages the salvation of all. Protestantism only objected: Why is truth given to the Pope alone? - and added: truth and salvation are open to each separate individual, independently of the Church. Every individual was thus promoted to the rank of infallible Pope. Protestantism placed a papal tiara on every German professor and, with its countless number of popes, completely destroyed the concept of the Church, substituting faith with the reason of each separate personality. It substituted salvation in the Church with a dreamy confidence in salvation through Christ in egoistic isolation from the Church. In practice, of course, Protestants departed from the very beginning and by roundabout ways, by contraband, so to speak, introduced some of the elements of the dogma about the Church, having recognized some authorities, although only in the area of dogma. Being a religious anarchy, pure Protestantism, like all anarchies, turned out to be completely impossible, and by that, testified before us to the indisputable truth that the human soul is Church-prone by nature.

Still, the theoretical side of Protestantism appealed to human self-love and self-will of all varieties, for self-love and self-will received a sort of sanctification and blessing from Protestantism. This fact is revealed today in the endless dividing and factionalism of Protestantism itself. It is Protestantism that openly proclaimed the greatest lie of all: that one can be a Christian while denying the Church. Nevertheless, by tying its members by some obligatory authorities and church laws, Protestantism entangles itself in a hopeless contradiction: having itself separated the individual from the Church, it nevertheless places limits on that freedom. From this stems the constant mutiny of Protestants against those few and pitiful remnants of Church consciousness which are still preserved by the official representatives of their denominations.

It is easy to understand that Protestantism corresponds to the almost completely pagan outlook generally approved in the West. There, where the cult of individualism blossoms luxuriantly, finding prophets in fashionable philosophy and singers in the belles-lettres, Christ's ideal of the Church can, of course have no place; for it negates self-love and self-will in people and demands love from them all.

There is a direct influence of Protestantism in our contemporary Russian society. All of our Russian rationalistic sectarianism has its ideological roots in Protestantism, from which it descends directly. After all, where do all the sectarian missionaries come from if not from the Protestant countries? All the points of discord between these sectarians and the Orthodox Church come from the denial of the Church in the name of an imaginary "Evangelical Christianity."

Even independently of Protestantism, however, many now come to the denial of the Church, assimilating, in general, the western European attitude which developed outside the Church and which is completely alien and even hostile to the spirit of the Church.

More and more of that haughty western European ideology of self-love penetrates into our community. Russian literature which formerly taught love and moral rebirth, especially in the works of the great Dostoevsky, has, in recent years, in the persons of, for example, Gorky, Andreyev, and others like them, begun to bow to the western European Ball of proud individualism. When, in our Orthodox society, love is forced out by pride and self-love (which is called "noble" - although the holy fathers of the Church speak of self-love and pride only in connection with the devil), when self-denial is substituted by self-assertion and meek obedience is replaced by proud self-will, then a dense fog shrouds the truth of the Church, which is inseparably linked with directly opposite ideals.

During the course of many years, Russian people have gotten out of the habit of being Church-minded, and have begun to lose the knowledge of the Church as a new life of Christ. There was a better time when I. T. Pososhkov bequeathed to his son this charge: I, my son, strongly bequeath and adjure you, with all your strength, to adhere to the Holy Eastern Church as the mother who has given you birth . . . and tear yourself from all who are enemies of the Holy Church and do not have any friendly relations with them since they are the enemies of God." According to the mind of Pososhkov, an enemy of the Church is, without fail, an enemy of God. Many people have already lost such clearness of thought and, little by little, "the most terrible forgery of Christ's faith has been formed in our days." They have looked upon the faith from a purely abstract point of view as a collection of teachings upon which it is possible to carry out various experiments. Christianity, in the sense of Church life and of mankind re-born through Christ the Savior is almost forgotten. Christ Himself said that He was creating the Church; but does one now speak of this Church? No; now they prefer to speak of Christianity; moreover they consider Christianity to be some kind of philosophical or moral teaching. Christianity - it sounds like neo-Kantianism or Nietzchianism! This substitution of the Church with Christianity, like a subtle venom, penetrates into the consciousness of even the Church community. It is a subtle poison because it is hidden under a flowery covering of loud speeches about the defects of "historical Christianity" (i.e., the Church), about its not seeming to correspond with some sort of "pure," "evangelical" Christianity. The Gospel and Christ are contrasted with the Church, which, for some reason, is called "historical" as if there is or ever was a different "non-historical" Church. The truth is, however, that Satan has taken on the image of an angel of light. He gives the appearance that he is concerned about the well-being of Christ's truth, as if he wants to cleanse Christ's truth

from the untruth of mankind. One automatically recalls the wise dictum of the venerable Vincent of Lerins: "When we hear some persons cite the apostolic or prophetic sayings in refutation of the Catholic faith, we must not doubt that the devil is speaking through their lips; and in order to creep undetected among the open-hearted sheep they hide their wolves' appearance, not abandoning their wolves' ferocity. They clothe themselves with sayings from the divine Scriptures, like the fleece of sheep, so that, feeling the softness of the wool, no one will fear their sharp teeth."

In actual fact, these attempts to set the Gospel into opposition with the Church and substitute the Church with an uncertain concept of Christianity have produced many lamentable results: Christian life is drying up. It appears as only one more teaching in the endless series of ancient and new teachings; and a very indefinite teaching at that, for without the Church the possibility is open for an innumerable quantity of the most arbitrary and mutually contradictory understandings. In this respect, Christianity stands incomparably lower than many philosophical schools. In actual fact, the founders of philosophical schools have left whole volumes of their compositions behind. They have left more or less clear expositions of their systems, they have more or less fully expressed themselves so that there is no limitless space for various arbitrary interpretations of their teaching. The Lord Jesus Christ did not leave His system. He wrote nothing. Only once is it said of Him that He wrote with His finger, and even that time He wrote only on the ground (cf. John 8:6).

Thus there is nothing easier than to re-interpret Christ's teaching according to one's personal taste and to invent "Christianity," passing off, under this name, the dreams of one's heart and the images of one's own idle fantasy. The sacred books of the New Testament were written by practical, unscholarly apostles. Throughout the centuries there have been "correctors of the Apostles," as Saint Irenaeus of Lyons calls them, ones who considered themselves higher than the Apostles, those "Galilean fishermen." Does it become a highly educated European of the twentieth century to accept on faith all that is said by some "fishermen"? So many free themselves from the authority of the Apostles and desire to interpret Christ's teaching while being guided only by their personal whims. Leo Tolstoy, for example, bluntly declared that the Apostle Paul did not properly understand Christ's teaching; it follows that Tolstoy considered himself to be higher than the Apostle Paul. One can marvel greatly at how far people go in their "interpretation" of Christianity. Whatever they might desire, they immediately find in the Gospel. It would appear that it is possible to cover one's every idle dream and even ill-intentioned thought by means of the Gospel's authority.

No, the faith of Christ becomes clear and definite for man only when he unhypocritically believes in the Church; only then are the pearls of this faith clear, only then does the faith remain free from the pile of dirty rubbish of all possible, self-

willed opinions and judgments. The Apostle Paul had already spoken of this when he called the Church of the living God the pillar and ground of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).

In the state of separation from the Church, even the Christian teaching appears to be something very indefinite, illusive, and constantly changing according to desires.

The falsification of the Church with Christianity leads to one other falsification - "**the falsification of Christ the God-man with the man Jesus of Nazareth.**" Just as the faith in the Church is inseparably linked with the acknowledgement of the divinity of Christ the Savior, so the denial of the Church unfailingly leads ultimately to the denial of the incarnation of the Son of God, the denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ. It is not at all necessary for Him to be a God-man in order to give some kind of teaching. Christ's state of being God-man is necessary only when He is seen as the Savior, Who poured out strength into human nature and Who founded the Church. In actual fact, is this inseparable tie between the truth of the Church and the truth of His being the Son of God not seen from the words of Jesus Christ Himself? Simon Peter said: *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Then Jesus said to him: thou art Peter, and upon this rock"* (i.e., on the truth of the God-incarnation which Peter confessed). *"I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:16, 18). The ancient Church, in a special effort, with all its strength, defined this truth of the one-essence of the incarnate Son of God with God the Father, because it thirsted for a real renewal of human nature, for the re-creation of the "new creature," i.e., of the Church. The internal motivating force of all the dogmatic movements of the fourth century was the unshakable belief in the fact that the Son of God is the second person of the Holy Trinity, Who came down to earth, became man, revealed the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, founded His Church on earth, suffered for the sins of mankind and, having conquered death, arose from the dead, opening the path for the deification of man, not only in soul, but in body. Why was the battle with Arianism so strenuous? Why did the Arians meet with such a repulse that Saint Athanasius the Great, that pillar of Christ's Church, refused them the name of "Christian"?

To the irreligious contemporary man, all the dogmatic arguments of the fourth century seem incomprehensible and senseless. This was, nevertheless, a struggle between two extremely contradictory views of Christ - the mystical-religious view in which He is the source of life, salvation, immortality, and the deification of man, as opposed to the rationalistic view in which Christ is represented only as an idolized teacher and a model example for his followers. The center of the issue was: in the future, will Christianity remain a religion with all the totality of its pure beliefs and hopes, or will it be reduced to a simple philosophy with religious nuances, of which there were not a few at that time? These questions concerning the divinity of the Son of God, which affected the most intimate side of the believing soul, were discussed in the squares and the market place. 0ne can say that even then the Church defended the truth that its

Founder is of one essence with God the Father. The Arians, people of a rationalistic mentality, denied the one-essence of the incarnated Son of God, looking upon Him as the founder of some school, who, therefore, does not necessarily have to be perfect God. The desire to be a "new creature," a "renewed nature," that is to say, a Church of the living God, demands the recognition of that full divinity of Christ. "God became man so that man may become god." "The Son of God became a human son so that human sons can become the sons of God." Thus did Saint Irenaeus of Lyons and Saint Athanasius the Great define the concept of the incarnation of God. The theology of our Orthodox Church is filled with such definitions. Here are examples from the service of the Nativity of Christ: "Today hath God come upon earth, and man gone up to heaven" (Litia, Second Stichera); "Beholding him that was in God's image and likeness become corrupted through the transgression, Jesus bowed the heavens and came down, and without changing dwelt in a Virgin womb: that thereby He might fashion corrupt Adam anew" (Litia, Fourth Stichera); "Let all creation exult and leap for joy, for Christ hath come to renew it and to save our souls" (The stichera of "Glory" at the Aposticha); "Him that fell through transgression, him who was made in God's image, and became corruption's own, who was fallen from the divine, better life, the wise Maker doth restore again, for He is glorified" (Canon, Ode 1, Troparion 1). The Orthodox Church is the bearer of the concept of the actual, true salvation of man, of his full re-birth, renewal, re-creation, and deification, which man cannot attain by his own strength no matter how much he might philosophize.

The incarnation of the Son of God is absolutely essential for the Church in order for it to be the Church, a society of renewed humanity. Thus for the people of the Church, who have perceived the whole height of the religious ideal of the Holy Church, Jesus Christ always was and is the Son of God, of one essence with God the Father.

"Others," writes Saint Irenaeus, "attribute no significance to the descent of the Son of God, and to the economy of His incarnation, which the Apostles proclaimed and the prophets foretold, and through which the perfection of mankind must be fulfilled. Such persons must be added to the number of the irreligious."

At the time of Saint Irenaeus, some false teachers were asserting that the entire matter of Christ consisted only in that He gave a new law in place of the ancient, which He abolished. Saint Irenaeus, on the other hand, asserted that neither the new law nor the new teaching was the aim of Christ's advent, but its aim was the re-creation of the fallen human nature.

"If," he writes, "there arises within you such a thought: 'what new thing did the Lord bring with His advent?' then know that He brought everything new; He brought Himself and thus renewed and gave life to mankind."

If anyone denies the Church with its religious ideals, then Christ becomes for him only a teacher-philosopher in the category of Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Lao-Tse and others. Moreover, Christ, as a teacher, appears to be far from original. Compliant scholarship cites a multitude of various sources, including Babylonian myths, from which Christ's teachings are supposedly borrowed. Christ is likened to a poor scholar who compiles his work by borrowing, not always successfully, from the works of various other people.

The enemies of Christianity glowingly point to the results of scientific research and declare that, in essence, Jesus of Nazareth did not even give a new teaching; He only repeated what had been said even without Him.

For those who believe in Christ, however, all this talk about various "influences" on Christianity is completely senseless. The essence of Christ's activities, as we have seen, is not at all in teaching, but in salvation. God sent His only-begotten Son so that we could receive life through Him (cf. 1 John 4:9; 5:13).

Even though insights of truth which are close to Christianity can be found in the teachings of earthly philosophers, it was **Christ** Who renewed human nature, created the Church, sent down the Holy Spirit and thus established the beginning of a new life which no mortal philosopher could do. The descent to earth of the Son of God and His death on the cross were indispensable for the creation of the Church; and all those who separate Christianity sooner or later come to the blasphemy of the denial of Christ the God-man and they come to it because the divinity of Christ becomes unnecessary for them.

There are an increasing number of people among us who dream of some sort of churchless Christianity. These people have a seemingly constant anarchical system of thought. They are either incapable, or more often, are simply too lazy to think through to the end of their thoughts.

Without even speaking of the most evident contradictions of the churchless quasi-Christianity, it is always possible to see that it is completely void of the genuine Grace of Christian life, and the inspiration and quickening of the Spirit.

When people take the Gospel book, forgetting that the Church gave it to them, then it becomes like the Koran, said to have been dropped by Allah from the sky. When they somehow contrive to overlook the teaching about the Church in it, then all that remains of Christianity is the teaching, so powerless to re-create life and man, as is every philosophical system.

Our forebears, Adam and Eve, sought to become "like gods" without God, relying on the magical power of the beautiful "apple." This is how many of our contemporaries dream of being saved: with the Gospel, but without the Church and without the God-man. They hope on the book of the Gospel exactly as Adam and Eve hope on the paradise apple.

The book, however, does not have the power to give them a new life. People who deny the Church constantly speak about "evangelical principles," about evangelical teaching; but Christianity as life is completely alien to them.

In the churchless form, Christianity is only a sound, now and then sentimental, but always a caricature and lifeless. It is precisely these people who, while denying the Church, have made Christianity, in the words of V. S. Soloviev, "deathly boring." As David Strauss observed, "When the edifice of the Church is destroyed and, on the bare, poorly leveled place, there is erected only the edifying sermon, the result is sad and terrible."

In the past, our most consistent preacher of churchless Christianity was Leo Tolstoy. Tolstoy confused many with his preaching, but it is in the example of Tolstoyism that one can clearly observe the insolvency of Christianity without the Church.

The initial point in the false teaching of Tolstoy can be called his sharp separation of Christianity from the Church. Tolstoy had roundly condemned the Church, while at the same time admiring Christianity. For him, however, Christianity immediately became only a teaching, and Christ, only a teacher.

When any kind of teaching is placed before us, it is not that important for us to know whose teaching it is. For Tolstoy, the living person of Christ lost all significance and meaning. Having taken Christ's teaching, it appeared possible to forget about Him Himself.

He denied the God-man, referring to Him as "a crucified Jew," and "a dead Jew." With that, the Gospel is severed from its very beginning where the proclamation is made of the supernatural birth of the Son of God from the Virgin Mary, and it is severed from its end where the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead and His ascension into heaven is recorded.

Tolstoy did not limit himself to this cutting off of the Gospel from its beginning and its end; he also restructured its "middle" according to his own tastes. He thus compelled his Jesus to say only what he, the teacher of *Yasnaya Polyana* (the name of Leo Tolstoy's estate), commanded.

Christ Himself promised to send His disciples "another Comforter." This "Comforter," the Divine Advocate, is honored by the Church of Christ as the source of the new, abundant Church life which is the gift of Grace. The Apostle Paul, as we have seen, constantly speaks of the Holy Spirit living in the Church.

Nevertheless, Tolstoy denied the Holy Spirit. He called the Orthodox Church not Christ's but, mockingly, "the Holy Spirit's." He then stooped to blaspheming the Holy Mysteries through which the member of the Church receives the Grace of the Holy Spirit for a new life. Baptism is a mystery of rebirth - for Tolstoy it became "the bathing of infants." The Holy Eucharist, without which, according to the teaching of Christ Himself, one cannot have life within him (cf. John 6:53), became, in the blasphemous terminology of Tolstoy, "soup" which one "swallows from a little spoon."

One can thank Tolstoy for at least being consistent. Having limited all of Christ's work to His teaching alone and, having denied the Church, it was a logical necessity for Tolstoy to come to all of his conclusions which destroyed Christianity itself. At least Tolstoy clearly demonstrated for us what results to expect from the absurd separation of Christianity from the Church and the negation of the Church in the name of imaginary Christianity. If one is to separate Christianity from the Church, then there is no need for the divinity of the Savior and the Holy Spirit is unnecessary.

Without the Holy Spirit, however, and without the divinity of the Savior, without the incarnation of the Son of God, the teaching of Jesus the Nazarene becomes of little value for life, just as any other teaching; for it is impossible to share the Socratic optimism, according to which knowledge is virtue.

The insolvency of Tolstoy's churchless understanding of Christianity is evident from the fact that Tolstoyism created no kind of life. Christianity is possible only in union with the living God-man Christ, and in the Grace-created union of people with the Church. In Tolstoyism there is neither one nor the other.

In place of the enthusiasm of the martyrs and ascetics of the Church, instead of the bond of love which binds the Apostles and believers so strongly that they have "one heart and one soul" - instead of all this, the followers of Tolstoy produced only grotesque and lifeless "Tolstoyite colonies." *"He that hath not the Son of God hath not life"* (1 John 5:12). As V. S. Soloviev said, Tolstoy united around himself only a few dozen stupid people of the sort who are always ready to scatter in various directions. "The Great Teacher" it appears, taught nothing to anyone and the "green staff" saved no one because not a staff but the cross of Christ is necessary for salvation.

Thus, using Tolstoyism as an example, we see that churchless Christianity leads to a terrible distortion and even to the destruction of Christianity itself. It is refuted by its own complete lifelessness.

Protestant false teaching is disgraced by this same lifelessness. What have the Protestants attained, having obscured the concept of the Church with their philosophizing? They have attained only disunity, and most hopeless disunity. Protestantism is constantly breaking down into more sects. There is no Protestant Church life, but some sort of "scarcely living" life of separate sects and communities.

Protestantism has killed the general Church life, about which the Lord Jesus Christ prayed in that first sacred prayer.

In actual fact, the fundamentalist Protestants stand far closer to Orthodox Christians than do the Protestants of extreme rationalistic doctrines who have nothing in common with Christianity, except for the arbitrary and baseless assuming of the name. They do not even seek a blessing for that. What kind of unity is possible between them? What kind of life can they have?

We are not saying all this entirely from ourselves. In some moments of enlightenment Protestants themselves say the very same thing even more sharply. "The country," writes one of them, "which was the cradle of the Reformation is becoming the grave of the Reformationist faith. The Protestant faith is on the verge of death. All the latest works about Germany, just as all personal observations, agree in this."

"Is it not noticeable in our contemporary theology that its representatives have lost everything positive?" another of them asks. Still sadder are the words of a third. "The vital strength of Protestantism is being exhausted in a muddle of dogmatic schools, theological discord, church strife . . . the Reformation is forgotten or is held in contempt; God's word, for which fathers died, is being subjected to doubts; Protestantism is disunited, weak and powerless."

An Orthodox researcher of Lutheranism ends his work with this dismal conclusion. "Left to their own devices, their own subjective reason and faith, Lutherans courageously went ahead on a false path, and autodidacticly perverted Christianity, perverted the symbolic dogma itself, having placed the Lutheran denomination on the edge of ruin. In Lutheranism, the authority of the first reformers is increasingly denied. More and more the community of the faith is being destroyed and Lutheranism is coming closer to its spiritual death."

At the present time, Protestants already openly acknowledge that in Germany not more than a third of the pastors recognize the divinity of Christ. What is this if not a

spiritual death, for according to the Apostle, *"he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"* (1 John 5:12).

At one time in Moscow there was a great clamor about the "International Christian Student Union." In the very center of Russian Orthodox holy places, there arrived a large number of various missionaries of this union, such as John Raleigh Mott and Miss Raus who addressed the Russian students with English preaching.

We also heard a lecture about this overseas union. It was said that the union was non-confessional; in it, freedom was given to every Christian denomination. Denominations unite in the union, according to the terminology of the lecturer, "on a federative basis." Subsequently a form of Christianity independent of the Church is theorized.

This is precisely the reason that the union is something which was born dead. Is there, or can there be any Christian life in such a "union"? If there is, then it is most pitiful. Imagine a "congress" of Christian student organizations at which there appeared "delegates of federative-united denominational fractions," a congress with all its "resolutions," "desires" and so on.

If such a union does take place then how endlessly lower it will be than the genuine Church life of Orthodoxy. Only for a person roaming in some foreign place far from Holy Orthodoxy and from all faith can such a barely living life in union on some sort of "federative basis" seem to be a new revelation, a joy for the empty soul! What kind of blessings are these mere flickers of life in comparison with the fullness of the Orthodox universal life!

While I was listening to the lecture on "The International Christian Student Union," my heart was filled with sadness and sorrow. How many sincere people who are thirsty for God, thirsty for life, are perishing of hunger and being fed the suckle of some overseas student union. Can it be that they do not know how to make use of the abundant bread in the home of the heavenly Father, in the Orthodox Church? It is necessary only to forget all the "federative bases," to freely give oneself up to complete obedience to the Orthodox Church and to adhere to the completeness of Church life, to the life of the body of Christ (in order to make use of these abundant breads).

The concept of the Church was wonderfully understood by A. S. Khomiakov, who said that for the Church of Christ unia is impossible, only unity is possible.

There have been occasions when frivolous people thought to create an international religion by way of the study-room. Millions of appeals were sent out with the

invitation to unite in this "common religion," the project which was credited to these appeals.

This scheme, however, was outlined in the most general terminology, under which a Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, or Jew could sign with identical comfort. Of course, if all people would agree to this scheme, it would in no way unite them among each other: general abstract theses would not obligate anyone to anything. People would remain the same; no one would receive salvation. It is complete madness to attempt to unite people on the basis of some teaching. For this a special supernatural power is required, which is possessed only by the One, Holy, Catholic Church of Christ.

It is not at all difficult to answer the question: what do these and other similar phenomena of our contemporary life mean, and on what grounds could they have appeared? The grounds for them is the fact that, for many of our contemporaries, the genuine Orthodox Christian ideal of the Church appeared to be too lofty. People have now become so stagnated and stiffened in their self-love, that the Orthodox concept of the Church seems to them to be some sort of coercion of personality, an incomprehensible and unnecessary despotism. The Orthodox concept of the Church demands from everyone much self-denial, humility, and love. Thus, in the hearts of our contemporaries, which are impoverished of love and for whom the dearest thing is self-love, this ideal is a burden too uncomfortable to carry.

What is to be done? Oh, mankind knows well how to act in such cases. When an ideal seems to be beyond its strength, too heavy, it is substituted by something more suitable. The true ideal is depreciated and its essence is distorted, although, sometimes, the former name is retained. How many have already given up as hopeless this ideal of love? They say that to build a community life on the basis of this love is a vain dream from which it is better to withdraw early in order to escape failure later.

As if this were not enough, they even condemn as unhealthy and harmful any enthusiasm with the ideal of Church or religious life in general, which would somehow hinder the necessary progress of societal life. Not very long ago when the series *Vekhi* appeared, the most progressive camp of "public-spirited persons" raised a desperate cry: "Reaction! Reaction!" Having set love aside as useless in public life, something reserved only for the personal needs of man, they turned their attention exclusively to law, with which they think to cure all human ailments.

Moreover, virtue in general is substituted with order and external propriety and decency. Gold is expensive and so for its substitution they have invented a gilding just as they have thought up propriety and external decency as a substitute for the missing virtue.

They conduct themselves in exactly this same way with the ideal of the Church, which demands the complete unity of souls and hearts. They substitute the Church with a Christianity having an indefinite value, as we have already said. Their conscience is not troubled by such an act; for all that, it is still "Christianity," a decent sort of a name.

Without the Church, it is possible to place whatever pleases oneself under this name. In this way you will not completely break with Christ and yet you will not especially inconvenience yourself. In a word, the wolves are fed, but the sheep are not eaten!

The great misfortune of our time lies in the fact that no one wishes to admit frankly their own spiritual poverty and that their hearts have been hardened to such a degree that Christ's ideal of the Church has become burdensome and even unintelligible. No, having copper instead of gold, they now wish to declare gold valueless. Now they assault the Church with bitterness and deny the very concept of the Church, hypocritically taking refuge in loud and stereotypically beautiful, tedious phrases about "personal freedom" and "individual interpretation" of Christianity and about a religion of freedom and spirit.

Christ's ideal of a single Church community (*"That all may be one, as We are one"*) appears to them to be a distortion and a disfigurement and thus it loses its vital meaning.

Churchless Christianity, the so-called "evangelical" Christianity, assorted world Christian student unions - all this is nothing other than a debasement and distortion of Christ's concept of the Church, killing all genuine Christian, Grace-filled Church life.

Are these things which we have spoken about, however, the only phenomena that testify to the insufficiency in the contemporary understanding of the unbreakable bond of Christianity with the Church? We meet with this lack of comprehension at absolutely every step. Now people who think about God in general, people who are hardly interested in religious questions, who try to establish themselves in life without any living faith, nevertheless consider it a duty of propriety, as it were, to speak out in respect to Christianity. Their words, of course, resound with manifest falseness and hypocrisy.

We have not yet encountered a full and open contempt for Christianity - this limit has been reached by only a few who are *"oppressed by the devil"* (Acts 10:38), the "progressives" (if, of course, one considers the direction of hell progress).

The ordinary "man-in-the-street" usually speaks about Christianity with a certain amount of respect. "Christianity, oh! that, of course, is a lofty and great teaching. Who

is arguing against that?" This rough approval is how one speaks of Christianity while, at the same time, it is seemingly considered a sign of good form to be in some sort of often unconscious opposition to everything of the Church.

In the souls of many, a respect for Christianity somehow manages to co-exist with a disdain for the Church. Such people are not embarrassed to call themselves Christians at least, but they do not want to hear about the Church and are ashamed to display any Church consciousness in any way. People who, according to their birth certificates are "of the Orthodox Faith," with a strange malicious delight point to the actual and, more often, imaginary shortcomings in Church life. They do not grieve about these shortcomings, in accordance with the commandment of the Apostle*, "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it"* (1 Cor. 12:26), on the contrary, they gloat.

In the so-called "progressive" press, there are many persons who earn their living almost exclusively from slander against the Church institutions and representatives of the Church hierarchy. Slander against everything of the Church has now become, for some, merely a profitable trade. Nevertheless, many hurry to believe these notorious falsehoods without any hesitation. Unkind people, having heard something evil about their enemies, rush to believe all of its evilness, fearing lest its evil be proven untrue.

This is precisely what one must constantly observe among people in their relationship to the Church. Thus, again we see how widely spread is the (notion of) the separation of Christianity from the Church: they consider themselves to be Christians but they want to hear nothing of the Church.

In surroundings far removed from the faith in general, there is an inconceivable confusion of notions. When people who are far from the Church begin to judge it, it can be clearly seen that they have absolutely no understanding of the essence of Christianity and the Church and thus the very virtues of the Church appear to them as its deficiencies.

As an example, how many outbursts of blind enmity towards the Church did the death of Tolstoy (i.e., the refusal of the Church to bury him) provoke? But is the Church guilty of the fact that Tolstoy departed from it, having become its obvious and dangerous enemy?

He, you see, tore himself from the Church, as a visible society, even considering it to be a harmful institution.

If the Church kept such members, however, would this not mean for the Church to deny itself? What, therefore, is the meaning of all these attacks against the Church in the press, at meetings, and in conversations? Reason absolutely refuses to understand

all this. It is completely impossible to find even the most remote rationality in the speeches and actions which one had occasion to listen to and read about. Every political party retains the right to excommunicate from itself members who have betrayed the party views and who have begun to act in a manner harmful to the party. Only the Orthodox Church, for some reason, cannot excommunicate one who himself has departed from it and has become its enemy. Yet, who would begin to reproach and abuse any of the social democrats or cadets because they had stopped having intercourse with and had publicly denounced one of their former members after he had gone over to the camp of the monarchists? Yes, we have observed the blind and senseless outbursts of satanic malice against the Holy Church; but saddest of all is the fact that many have abused the Church in the name of Christianity. Thousands of times one has read: "Here they have excommunicated Tolstoy, but was he not a true Christian?" Forgetting all the blasphemy of Tolstoy and his denial of Christ the God-man, such speeches are repeated by people who were evidently sincere and not by professional newspaper liars alone.

Again we are presented with the idea, firmly embedded in contemporary minds, of the possibility of some sort of "true Christianity" without the Church or even sharply hostile to it. Could anything like this be possible if the idea of the Church was clear, if it had not been substituted by some other completely unintelligible and indefinite values?

Can anyone imagine that in the apostolic period, the Christian Church would have been subjected to any kind of reproaches on the part of heathens because it excommunicated unfit members, heretics for example, from itself? In the first centuries, nevertheless, excommunication from the Church was the most common measure of Church discipline and everyone considered it to be fully lawful and very useful.

Why was this so? Because then the Church was seen as a clear and definite value, precisely as a Church and not some sort of "Christianity." At that time there was no room for the absurd thought that Christianity is one thing and the Church another, as if Christianity were possible apart from the Church. In those times (it was realized) that enmity against the Church was also enmity against Christianity. Animosity towards the Church in the name of some sort of supposed Christianity is solely a product of our sorrowful times.

When Christianity appeared before the eyes of the world precisely as a Church, then this "world" itself clearly understood and involuntarily acknowledged that the Church and Christianity are one and the same. Now there is not such a sharp definition sufficient to distinguish the unity of the Church from everyone outside of the Church. Now everyone is held as on an equal plane, we (those in the Church) and even those

who themselves ask to be excommunicated. One can truly say that there is no Church discipline: everything has become non-obligatory for the intellectual laity - attendance at divine services, Confession, and Holy Communion. Thus the Church has no clear and definite borders which would separate it from "those outside."

Sometimes it seems as if our whole Church is in dispersion, in disorder. One cannot tell who is ours and who is the enemy. Some sort of anarchy is ruling in the minds (of many). Too many "teachers" have appeared and a "dividing of the body" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:25) of the Church has occurred. Ancient Church bishops taught from the "high place." Now, one who says of himself that he is only "at the porch" or even only "near the church walls," nevertheless considers himself entitled to teach the entire Church, including the hierarchy. These people gather and compose all their opinions about Church questions from various "public sheets" (as Metropolitan Philaret used to call newspapers), where items on Church matters are written by defrocked priests and Church renegades of all sorts, or embittered and insolent scoffers (as foretold in 2 Peter 3:3), or people who have no connection with the Church and who feel nothing toward it but animosity, for example, the Jews.

In such a mass of confusion, many are already asking with concern: "Where is the Church?"

That is why in our time there are many varied and fantastic "searchings." In the apostolic age, those who sought the salvation of their souls headed for the Church, and the outsiders did not dare trouble them (Acts 5:13). Then there was no possibility for the question, "where is the Church?" It was a clear and definite value, sharply separated from everything not of the Church. Now there stands some sort of intermediate stage between the Church and the "world" and there is no longer that clear separation: the Church and that which is outside the Church.

There is also some sort of indefinite Christianity and even something else which is not Christianity, but a general abstract religion. These vague concepts of Christianity and religion have darkened the light of the Church so that it is poorly seen by those who seek, which is why "searching" so often now goes over into "wandering."

For this reason there is, in our days, such an abundance of those who are *"ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (2 Tim. 3:7). A new sport has been created, if we may call it that, a sport of "god-seeking." "God-seeking" has become the goal in itself and if their efforts were ever crowned with success, they would feel themselves highly unfortunate and immediately turn, with their former zeal, from "god-seeking" to "god-fighting" (i.e., theomachism).

Many people frankly build a name for themselves in (the sport of) "god-seeking." One recalls the stern condemnation of Bishop Michael (Gribanovsky) against all such "seeking." "They seek," he said, "because they have lost all principles; and while they look for better ones (principles), poorer ones take advantage of the confusion and cheat without any twinge of conscience: for what kind of conscience is there when no one knows what is true, what is good, what is evil."

Intermediate understandings of religion and Christianity only estrange many people from the truth because, for one who sincerely seeks God, they become like "toll-houses." Many join the path of these arduous seekings, but very many do not complete it with success. A significant proportion remain "travelling from ordeal to ordeal," not finding blessed peace. Finally, in this realm of half-light, half truth, in this realm of the lack of understanding and of the indefinite, in this "vague unsettled world," the very soul degenerates, becomes weak, and is poorly receptive to Grace-given inspiration.

Such a soul will continue to seek even after it finds what it is looking for. Then there is created a pitiful type of "religious idler," as F. M. Dostoevsky called them.

The above mentioned state of affairs imposes a special responsibility on all Church members in our time. Members of the Church are very guilty in that they fail to point the way clearly and they poorly illuminate with their examples the final point of arrival for those who are seeking. This point is not the abstract understanding of Christianity, but precisely the Church of the living God.

According to the example of many people who have followed the agonizing path of seeking to its completion, it is possible to discern that a lasting peace draws near only when man comes to believe in the Church; when he accepts, with all his being, the idea of the Church in such a way that, for him, the separation of Christianity from the Church is inconceivable. Then begins the real quickening of Church life. Man feels that he is a branch of a great, ever-budding tree of the Church. He is conscious of himself not as a follower of some kind of school, but as a member of the body of Christ with Whom he has a common life and from Whom he receives this life.

Only one who has come to believe in the Church, who is guided by the concept of the Church in the appraisal of the phenomena of life and the direction of his personal life, one who **has felt a Church life within himself,** he and only he is on the correct path. Much that earlier seemed indefinite and vague will become obvious and clear. It is especially precious that in times of general vacillation, of wandering from side to side, from the right to the left and from the left to the right, every Church-conscious person feels himself standing on a steadfast, centuries-old rock; how firm it feels under his feet.

The Spirit of God lives in the Church. This is not a dry and dogmatic thesis, preserved only through respect for what is old. No, this is truth; truth **which can be experienced and known** by everyone who has been penetrated by Church consciousness. This Grace-filled Church life cannot be the subject of dry scholastic research, for it is accessible for study only through experience. Human language is capable of speaking only vaguely and unclearly about this Grace-filled life.

Saint Hilary of Poitiers spoke correctly when he said, "This is the characteristic virtue of the Church - that it becomes comprehensible when you adopt it."

Only he who has Church life knows about Church life, he requires no proofs; but for one who does not have it, it is something which cannot be proved.

For a member of the Church the object of all his life must be constantly to unite more and more with the life of the Church, and, at the same time, preach to others about the Church, not substituting it with Christianity, not substituting life with dry and abstract teaching.

Now, there is too often talk about the insufficiency of life in the Church, about the "reviving" of the Church. All such talk is difficult to understand and we are very much inclined to acknowledge it as completely senseless. Life in the Church can never run low, for the Holy Spirit abides in it until the end of time (cf. John 14:16).

There is life in the Church and only churchless people do not notice this life. The life of the Spirit of God is incomprehensible to a person who perceives solely with his mind; it may even seem foolish to him, for it is accessible only to a person who perceives with his spirit. People who are of an emotional mode of thinking seldom receive a feeling of the Church-conscious life; yet even now there are people, simple in heart and pious in life, who constantly live by this feeling of the abundant, Grace-filled life in the Church. This atmosphere of Church life and Church inspiration can especially be felt in monasteries.

Those who speak about the insufficiency of life in the Church usually refer to the insufficiencies of church administration, the thousands of consistory papers and so on. For all those who genuinely understand Church life, however, it is as clear as God's day that all these consistories with their ukases do not affect the depth of Church life at all. The deep river of abundant, Grace-filled life flows increasingly and gives drink to everyone who wishes to quench his spiritual thirst. This river cannot be dammed up with "paper."

No, it is not the insufficiency of life in the Church which must be spoken of, but of the insufficiency of Church consciousness in us. Many live a Churchly life, not even

clearly realizing the fact. Even if we consciously live a Churchly life we preach little about the blessings of this life. With outsiders we usually only debate about Christian truths, forgetting about Church life. We also are sometimes capable of substituting the Church with Christianity, life with abstract theory.

Unfortunately, we ourselves do not value our Church and the great blessing of Church life enough. We do not confess our faith in the Church bravely, clearly, and definitely. While believing in the Church, we constantly seem to pardon ourselves for the fact that we still believe in it. We read the ninth article of the Creed without any special joy or even with a feeling of guilt.

A Church-conscious person is now often confronted with the exclamation of Turgenev's poetry in prose: "You still believe? But you are altogether a backward person!" And how many have so much courage as to bravely confess: *"Yes, I believe in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, I belong to the Holy Orthodox Church and thus I am the most advanced person, for only in the Church is it possible to have that new life, for the sake of which the Son of God came to the sinful earth; only in the Church can one come to a measure of full growth in Christ - consequently, only in the Church is genuine progress possible!"*

Are we not more often inclined to reply to the question: "Are you not one of Christ's disciples?" with the answer: "I do not know Him"?

Conclusion

Thus it must be considered as the most vital necessity of the present time **to confess openly that indisputable truth that Christ created precisely the Church and that it is absurd to separate Christianity from the Church and to speak of some sort of Christianity apart from the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ.**

This truth, we believe, will illuminate, for many, the final goal in their wearisome journey of seeking; it will show them, not in lifeless teaching, but in Church life, where they can truly *"recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will"* (2 Tim. 2:26). This truth will also help us to identify Church life and to "gather the separated" children of the Church, so that all may be one, as the Lord Jesus Christ prayed before His sufferings.

We shall end our discourse with one parable of the type used by the holy fathers. The Church is like a strong oak, and a man outside the Church is like a flying bird. See

how the unfortunate bird struggles in a strong wind. How uneven is its flight! It either flies upward, or else it is overturned by the wind, or it moves slightly forward, and then it is again pushed backward. That is how a person is carried by the winds of false teaching. But just as the bird is calmed in the dense branches of the tree and peacefully looks out of its refuge on the storm raging past, so a man finds peace when he runs to the Church. From his calm refuge he looks out at the ferocious storm "near the Church walls" and he sorrows for the unfortunate people who are overtaken by this tempest outside the Church and who delay in seeking shelter under its abundant Grace, and he prays to the Lord: "Unite them to Thy Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. . . that they also may glorify with us the most honorable and majestic name of God praised in the Holy Trinity."

Missionary Leaflet # E91
Holy Protection Russian Orthodox Church
2049 Argyle Ave. Los Angeles, California 90068
Editor: Bishop Alexander (Mileant)

An Homily on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

By a monk of the Hermitage

When the pious Empress Helena discovered the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Lord, she had it brought to the Temple of the Resurrection, where the Patriarch Macarius exalted it in the sight of all. Seeing the Cross of the Lord, all the faithful rejoiced and bowed down reverently before it, offering worship to Him Who was crucified thereon. And even today, when Orthodox Christians behold the elevation of the Precious Cross, we rejoice and cry out to the Cross as if it were alive, saying, “Rejoice, precious Cross. Help us, O life-giving Cross.”

How can this be? Why do we say such things? Does the Cross have ears? Does it have a soul that we should address it as if it were a living being? Of course not; rather in addressing the Cross, we refer our petitions to the gracious power of the one Who, being nailed to it, united all creation into one and filled all things with His power, even senseless and inanimate nature. Beholding the Grace that is present in the Cross of the Lord, we are overcome with joy and can express ourselves in no other way but by addressing the Cross itself as our friend and protector.

Even so the Holy King David, when his eyes were opened by divine grace and he beheld all things filled with the glory of God, cried out, “Praise Him O sun and moon, praise him all ye stars and light.” And the three Holy Children in the furnace, when they saw how the flames obeyed their Creator, included all creation in their song of praise, saying, “Bless the Lord, O earth, mountains and hills and all things that spring up therein: praise ye the Lord and supremely exalt Him unto the ages.” Although the hills and trees are not rational as we are, yet all things are alive with the grace of the Comforter, Who is everywhere present and fills all things, so that even if no rational being had the sense to praise his Maker, then, “the stones themselves would cry out,” as the Lord Himself has said. If it be so that stones, hills and mountains are seen by the Saints as being alive through their participation in the will of God, then even more so can the same be said of the Cross, that blessed Tree through which the communion of the Creator and the creature was restored after being lost through man’s transgression.

In the Garden of Eden, all things were filled with divine life. The grace of God coursed through creation like blood through veins. It enlivened all things like the sap in a tree, making all things ever new and glorious by the will,

power and presence of God. Adam saw and knew this grace. He rejoiced in the glorious song of creation, which he clearly understood through the grace which filled his own nature.

But when Adam, through disobedience fell away from this grace, he became like a vessel full of holes. He could no longer contain the power of God within his nature, and he could not hear the song of praise sung by all creation to its Maker. As he had placed himself at enmity with God, so creation was at enmity with Adam, and thorns and thistles came forth from the earth.

The Tree of Life, which would have made Adam and Eve live forever, was hidden from them lest, as St. Gregory the Theologian says, "the sickness [of sin] should become immortal in them." For God did not want man's fall to be permanent like that of the devil and his angels. He did not wish for man to continue forever in this corrupted and miserable state. Not for revenge did God hide the Tree of Life behind the flaming sword, nor out of spite at man's disobedience. Rather, as we sing in the canon of the Exaltation of the Cross, "For the preservation of that which is most precious, the Tree of Life was kept under guard." And what is "that which is most precious" if not the perfection of man in the image of God?

So what did the Lord do? Having hidden the Tree of Life from Adam and his descendants, the Lord planted another Tree, the second Tree of Life. This Tree is the Tree of the Cross, which we celebrate today. The fruit which grows on this Tree is the Lord Himself, even His Body and Blood, whereof if a man eat, he shall never die. By this Tree man's nature is healed of all its sinful disobedience and the effects of our rejection of God's grace are completely removed, so that we may live forever—not in a corrupted state, but rather as God intends us to live: as vessels of His divinity.

And so a new Tree of Life, planted by the Lord, blossomed from the earth. Is the deifying Fruit now hidden from our eyes? Not at all. Those who make a map or draw a diagram use an "X" to show a certain point, that by the intersection of the two lines a precise location may be unmistakably indicated. In the same way, the Lord of all, when He willed to lead all men back to Paradise and give them the Fruit of Eternal Life, set up the Cross in the midst of the earth and said, "Here I will meet you." To all mankind he showed the precious location of our salvation, saying,

Here, on the Cross, I will meet you.

Here, in suffering, I will meet you.

Here, in pain, I will meet you.

Here, in separation from the earth, I will meet you.

Here, in the loss of all worldly glory, I will meet you.

Here, in complete self-sacrifice, I will meet you.

Here, in the rejection of your own will, I will meet you.

Here, in perfect obedience, I will meet you.

Here, in the restraint of your members, I will meet you.

Here, when you are mocked and derided by all, I will meet you.

Here, when you are slandered by all, I will meet you.

Here, when in the eyes of the world you have utterly failed, I will meet you.

Here, in the affliction of your mortal body, I will meet you.

Here in the abandonment which has come to you because of sin, I will meet you, and even in the depths of Hades, I will meet you.

In death itself, I will meet you, and have met you, and will never for all eternity be parte from you who believe in Me crucified and risen from the dead.

And truly in all these things, in our very fall, He has met us and has united Himself inseparably to us who believe in Him. By our sin, we built a wall between God and man, between the creature and the Creator. We separated the eternal from the temporal, making them opposed to one another. But Christ, having nailed our sins to the Cross, brought all things together once more. He fastened our fallen nature to His divine nature, re-uniting the whole creature with its Creator, so that again we may perceive the grace that is hidden in all things. We may know the presence of our God. We may have Him living and abiding in us, for He has taken our nature to Himself completely, destroying the corruption and sickness thereof by His own death on the Cross.

Had He not suffered the cross and death, then, as says St. Gregory of Nyssa, “His proposed design would have remained only half-fulfilled, from His not having touched that second condition of our nature.” But He indeed has entered into that condition, into death, and has filled it with Himself, destroying its power over us. Before the Cross, our life had become filled with death. But the Lord, by His Cross, has filled our very death with His divine life. This life is the fruit of this Tree of the Cross, which is hidden in every suffering that is endured with faith and hope in God.

If we are to partake of this life, then we must ascend the Holy Tree. We must ascend and eat of its fruit. If in the forest we find a tree with beautiful fruit, we do not stand idly at the foot of the tree, but we climb the tree to get the fruit, especially if we are suffering from mortal hunger. Even so, we must ascend the Cross of the Lord if we are to be united to Him forever. If we are afraid of the suffering of the Cross, this only means that we do not have the taste for its fruit, for the grace of Christ sweetens all the sufferings of this life.

Therefore, let us never fear to bear the Lord’s Cross. Let us ascend with joy, striving for all the virtues, accepting all that comes upon us by God’s allowance, knowing that through patience in sufferings we are united with Him who united Himself inseparably with us on the Tree. Thus shall we partake of the true Fruit of the Tree of Life, whose blessing can never be taken away from us by any power in heaven or on earth or below the earth. For Christ has conquered all, has suffered all, has fulfilled all, has united all things in Himself by the power of His grace, through His almighty and life-giving death. To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory, honor, and dominion, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

CHAPTER 3

The Orthodox Cycle of Life

A. Orthodox Baptism

> Great indeed is the Baptism which is offered you. It is a ransom to captives; the remission of offenses; the death of sin; the regeneration of the soul; the garment of light; the holy seal indissoluble; the chariot to heaven; the luxury of paradise; a procuring of the kingdom; the gift of adoption.[102]

The Mystery of Orthodox Baptism has been terribly misunderstood and misrepresented in Orthodox theological and spiritual thinking, particularly among Orthodox in the West. Roman Catholic and Protestant influences have greatly blurred the true meaning of what Baptism is and what it does for the believer. In fact, many nominal Orthodox Christians think of Baptism as some quaint initiation rite. But as Saint Cyril tells us, the Mystery of Baptism transforms the entire person—body and soul—, so that after Baptism we embrace a new life, spiritually restored to the state of innocence and purity for which God created us. Every sin is washed away by Baptism and every demon which has a hold on our hearts is literally drowned in the Baptismal waters. Immediately after coming up from the water of regeneration, before we even have an opportunity to think a sinful thought, we are sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit by the anointing of Holy Chrism. This anointing is not a mere symbolic gesture, but as Saint Cyril says, "...to you not in a figure, but in truth; because ye were truly anointed by the Holy Ghost.... For this holy thing is a spiritual preservative of the body, and a safeguard of the soul."[103]

Baptism and Holy Chrismation actually insure a person against internal demonic influence. The demons can always at-

[102] St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Sacraments,* p. 50.

[103] *Ibid.,*p. 66.

tack us from without, but after a person is Baptized and Chrismated, the demonic powers are limited in their ability to harm us from within—unless, of course, we are so unwise as to invite them back through evil thoughts and deeds. Our souls are completely cleansed of all stain by Baptism. We are restored, again, to purity. This has always been the greatest promise of Christianity: that if we "put off the old man with his deeds...the new man" will be "renewed in knowledge after the image of Him Who created him."[104] Thus, we must never enter into Holy Baptism lightly, nor should we Baptize our children without careful consideration for their moral and spiritual instruction. After all, this cleansing is offered to us only once in our lifetime. If we soil this pristine garment through carelessness or spiritual indolence, we can cleanse it only with the bitter tears of repentance.

Orthodox Baptism for Converts. The Church was, in a sense, founded by converts. On the day of Pentecost, "about three thousand souls"[105] were Baptized, most of them adults and older children. These people all heard the Gospel ("Good Tidings") from Saint Peter and made a conscious and voluntary decision to follow Christ and be "born of water and the Spirit."[106] They were among the first members of the Christian Church. From that day until the present, there have been millions upon millions of souls who have received the regeneration of Baptism as adults, often after leading completely dissolute and vile lives. In response to this fact, the Church required very early on that a person who seeks to be united to Christ enter into a period of study, the catechumenate, in order fully to understand the seriousness of his commitment to God.

Unless a person is prepared to live as an Orthodox Christian for the rest of his life, Orthodox Baptism can leave him in the sad state referred to by our Lord:

---

[104] Colossians 3:9–10.

[105] Acts 2:41.

[106] St. John 3:5.

> He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.[107]

If a convert lightly dismisses his responsibilities towards God as an Orthodox Christian, then he is inviting true spiritual disaster upon himself and his family. This is particularly true of those who choose to be Baptized as adults. We will have no excuse on the Dread Day of Judgment, should we refuse to take upon ourselves the light yoke of living an Orthodox Christian life. And the condemnation that we invite on ourselves we will invite on our families, for having led them away from the Faith by our poor example. For this reason, the final decision to become an Orthodox Christian should, for an adult, be made only after a period of serious study and preparation.

The Catechumenate. When an individual, having sought the Truth, comes to believe that it resides in Orthodoxy, he should discuss his interest with an Orthodox Priest. The Priest will recommend reading material and should be available to discuss this material with the individual. Should no Priest be available locally, one can correspond by letter with a Church or monastery for guidance. Unfortunately, this guidance may be sometimes difficult to find. This is a sadly confusing time in the history of the Church, and the Church in America is a weak and fragmented institution. Those seeking the Truth in America must be very discerning and patient. Because there is no national Church in North America, many different ethnic groups have established ecclesiastical organizations in this country. This diversity opens the door to charlatans and spiritual frauds who prey upon the ignorant. Thus there are many innocent people who have been victimized by would–be elders or quasi–Orthodox gurus, who

[107] St. Luke 11:23–26.

often take a few pieces of Tradition and make up their own brand of Orthodoxy—some of it under the ægis of "established" and "official" jurisdictions or the authority of self–proclaimed guardians of "canonicity."

In such a circumstance, the best gauge any sincere person can use is his own conscience, but this must be an *informed* conscience. Saint Ignatios (Brianchaninov) once wrote that those who wish to know the Truth

> ...must seek out the will of God in Scripture for themselves.... With weeping and heartfelt groanings implore God not to allow you to turn aside from His all–holy will and follow a fallen human will, your own or that of your neighbour—your [spiritual] adviser.[108]

It is better to listen to the dictates of conscience and continue to seek the Truth elsewhere. That is why God gives us a conscience: to protect us from ourselves and the chicanery of others. Also, even if we are Baptized and received into a particular group, this does not relieve us of our responsibility to the Truth. If the situation in which we find ourselves violates the Law of God or our God–given common sense, we have an obligation to act in accordance with the Truth, at all costs.

After having made contact with a Priest, a catechumen should study the catechetical materials recommended. Once a person becomes a catechumen, he should begin to incorporate the various aspects of Holy Tradition into his everyday life. He should begin to attend both Vespers and Divine Liturgy every weekend. This is also the time to establish a routine of prayer and fasting. We should begin to thank God for His bounty to us at each meal. We should set up an Icon Corner and maintain a vigil lamp. All of these things will make a catechumen's study of the Church much more relevant to his life, since, to be meaningful, Christianity requires more than simple study of the believer:

[108] [St.] Bishop Ignatius (Brianchaninov), *The Arena,* trans. Archimandrite Lazarus (Jordanville, ny: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1982), pp. 48–49.

> One of the differences between the eloquent philosophy of the Greeks and the faith of Christians is that the Greeks' philosophy can be clearly expressed in words and comprehended through reading, whereas the Christian faith cannot be fully expressed in words, and still less comprehended by reading alone. For the exposition of the Christian faith, the example of its expounder is indispensable; and for its comprehension and assimilation, both reading and the practice of what is read are necessary to the reader. When Patriarch Photius read the writings of St Mark the Ascetic on the spiritual life, he noticed a lack of clarity in the writer, about which he very sagely remarked: 'This does not proceed from any obscurity of expression, but comes about because the truths here expressed are better understood by practice (rather than through words), and I cannot comprehend them through words alone... and this,' he added, 'is not the case with these homilies alone or this writer alone, but is so in all the works that seek to expound the laws of asceticism, which are better understood in action.'[109]

The ancient tradition reflected in Saint Cyril of Jerusalem's writings shows us that people originally entered into a catechumenate at the beginning of the Great Fast. They would spend the entire period preparing for Great Saturday, when they were Baptized and Chrismated, during the day, in order to commune for the first time that night at the Paschal Liturgy. This is not a rule strictly observed in present times, but it is an ideal which we should emulate, whenever possible.

Preparing for Baptism. As we have noted, a catechumen should observe all of the fasting rules of the Church prior to Baptism. For the Baptism itself, a catechumen should prepare in the same way that he would for Holy Communion. Married couples should, of course, abstain from marital relations at this time as well.

The Baptismal Service. The Baptismal Service consists of three parts: Exorcisms, Baptism, and Chrismation. During the Exorcisms, the Priest reads a series of prayers which ask God to expel every demonic influence or spirit which has a spiritual

[109] *The Prologue,* Vol. 2, pp. 354–355.

hold on the candidate for Baptism. At one point, the Priest breathes on the person saying, "Expel from him (*her*) every evil and impure spirit which hideth and maketh its lair in his (*her*) heart."[110] Baptism is a serious assault against the demons, and the Service makes it very clear Whom the person is accepting and whom he is rejecting. Thus, three times the Priest asks the catechumen: "Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his Angels, and all his works, and all his service, and all his pride?"[111] And the catechumen answers, "I do,"[112] each time. This portion of the Service is extremely important, especially in these times. Many people have become involved in various occult practices. Though these things are at times done with innocent intentions or out of ignorance, demonic powers are able to enter into a person and even act through him as a consequence of such activities. The pre–Baptismal Exorcisms are quite essential in such circumstances.

The Exorcisms are immediately followed by a declaration of faith in Christ, after which the catechumen recites the Symbol of Faith (the Nicene Creed). The Symbol expresses the Church's understanding of Who Christ is and what He did for us. By reciting the Symbol, the catechumen is making a personal statement of his Faith before God. After the Exorcisms, the Priest blesses the Baptismal water, whether in the font or in a stream, in preparation for the Baptism. These prayers contain very clear statements as to the true nature of the spiritual assault which Baptism is:

> We pray thee, O God, that every aerial and obscure phantom may withdraw itself from us; and that no demon of darkness may conceal himself in this water; and that no evil spirit which instilleth darkening of intentions and rebelliousness of thought may descend into it with him (*her*) who is about to be baptized.
>
> ...Wherefore, O Lord, manifest thyself in this water, and grant that he (*she*) who is baptized therein may be transformed;

[110] *Service Book*, p. 273.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

[112] *Ibid.*

> that he (*she*) may put away from him (*her*) the old man which is corrupt through the lusts of the flesh, and that he (*she*) may be clothed upon with the new man, and renewed after the image of him who created him(*her*)....[113]

The Priest then blesses olive oil, "the token of reconciliation and of salvation from the flood,"[114] part of which is then used to bless the water and part of which is used to anoint the person being Baptized. After the anointing, the catechumen is fully immersed in the water three times. Complete immersion is very important, since any part of the body which is not immersed is not cleansed and is subject to demonic attack. In the days of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, when there were Deaconesses to Baptize women, even adults were often Baptized naked. But in these times, without a female Diaconate, it is neither practical nor spiritually correct to do this. Our understanding of the body and the impurity—sad to say!—which we find even among Christians dictates that we Baptize people modestly (in decent swimwear, for example).

Immediately after the Baptism, the newly illumined Christian dons a pure white robe with red Crosses emblazoned on the back and each breast (or, in the case of an infant, new white clothes). The following *troparion* is sung, as this is done: "Vouchsafe unto me the robe of light, O thou who clothest thyself with light as with a garment, Christ our God, plenteous in mercy."[115] The Priest then anoints the newly illumined Christian with Holy Chrism, so as to grant him the fullness of the Gift of the Holy Spirit. In the earliest times, the Apostles themselves laid hands on each person that was Baptized into the Faith, as described in the Acts of the Apostles:

> Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them,

[113] *Ibid.*, pp. 278–279.

[114] *Ibid.*, p. 279.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

> that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were Baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.[116]

As the Church grew, it became physically impossible for an Apostle or Bishop personally to lay hands upon each new convert without there being a long delay. So the Church began to bless a special mixture of oil and spices, called "Chrism," which, when applied by an Ordained Priest and accompanied by specified prayers, functions in the same way as a physical laying on of hands. New Chrism is periodically blessed and the old Chrism added to it, thus perpetuating a chain of blessing reaching all the way back to the Early Church.

The brow, the eyes, the nostrils, the lips, the ears, the breast, both hands, both feet, and between the shoulders are anointed with the Holy Chrism. Every part of the body which interacts with the physical world is "sealed," as it were, with the Gift of the Holy Spirit, rendering the individual immune to internal demonic assault. A small amount of hair is also cut from the head of the newly Baptized person to signify his new commitment. There remains thereafter the lifelong task of maintaining this purity by seeking God with one's whole being and strengthening the flesh through prayer, fasting, and full participation in the spiritual life of the Church; in short, by living a truly Orthodox life.

Infant Baptism. Because of the transforming power which resides in the Mystery of Baptism, Orthodox Christians seek to have their children Baptized very young, usually after the child is forty days old. The purpose of child Baptism, too, is the regeneration of the individual, for sin is not just a set of "wrong acts," but a condition which besets human beings from the very moment of birth. Children, too, are stained by the ancestral sin of Adam and Eve and need the enlightenment of the Mystery of Baptism. One major advantage of infant Baptism is that the

[116] Acts 8:14–17.

Church provides a sponsor for the child who agrees to take responsibility for the child should anything happen to the parents. To sponsor a child at Baptism means that, should the child be left an orphan, the sponsor would be expected to take the child into his home and raise him to adulthood. The Godparent is also responsible for the child's spiritual development and is even expected to remind the child's natural parents of their responsibilities, should they become lax in their instruction of the child. The responsibilities of a sponsor are awesome and demanding. A sponsor must, therefore, be a sober Orthodox Christian and an upright person.

In the West, where heterodox sects and cults have proliferated, infant Baptism is often condemned. It is argued that a child is either without sin and not in need of Baptism—a clearly wrong teaching—or that he is unable to benefit from Baptism because he cannot "understand" it. With regard to the latter argument, we must keep in mind that Holy Baptism itself, not the preparation for it that we appoint for adult converts, enlightens our spiritual faculties and gives us understanding. A child who is Baptized is enlightened and thus grows in Christian knowledge, benefited by the good guidance of his Christian parents. To believe that spiritual enlightenment depends on a mature human intellect is to believe that retarded children or the feeble of mind cannot benefit from the Mysteries of the Church—an impious idea at best. With regard to the Roman Catholic practice of sealing infant baptisms with "confirmation" at the "age of reason," this is an illogical practice that is wholly inconsistent with ancient custom and which many Latin theologians decry for the very reasons that we Orthodox also dismiss sectarian arguments against infant Baptism.

TO THE NEWLY-BAPTIZED...

Welcome once again, dear brethren, to the Community of Faith, the living Body of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Itis in and through Him that you have been reborn, of water and the Spirit, as He commanded and invited. It is in Him that you now live and move and have your being, both internally as the Spirit lives and moves in you, and externally as you share in the life of His Body, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

We often speak of Holy Baptism as a rebirth," and indeed it is - a new birth into a new life, a life as unlike the old as is death unlike life. But no birth occurs unprepared, without conception and pregnancy. The spark of divine life, of course, has been present in you from the moment of your conception, the Holy Spirit calling you to life eternal. But the time of pregnancy did not reach its fulness until these past weeks, during which you gave yourself up wholly to the growth of the Spirit within you, submitting your will to His, your mind to Him in learning, your whole body and self to His cleansing in the exorcisms which you have undergone. Such cleansing, however, is quite insufficient; for, as you know, the man who has his house swept clean of the demons, but then lets it stand empty, only invites the return of the same forces of evil with a multitude of companions.

So it was that only a few hours past you were brought, amidst the whole assembly, to stand in darkness beside the water, to undergo you knew not what. The mystery of Holy Baptism is far too great to permit of trivial small talk beforehand; far too pro- found to allow any meaningful communication concerning it by mere words; far too precious to permit it to be a public spectacle for multitudes ill-prepared to understand it. So it was that you came to stand beside those waters. only in the company of your new brethren who have truly dedicated themselves to a life in the Faith, unaccompanied by uninitiated family or friends.

Like nearly everyone else in this world of ours, you have approached your baptism knowing that you were going to get wet; that you would undergo in it a profound transformation of your being; that in it you would somehow partake of Christ Jesus. Like nearly everyone else, you knew little more. Your training in the past weeks has been focused upon the Gospel, the saving acts of our God, the life and teaching of our Lord, the Truth conveyed to us in Him. But of the most profound Mysteries of the Faith there have been only hints and foreshadowings, for these things in their most profound sense are only accessible to them who have already become one with our Lord and with His Holy Body, the Church. So it is that you now enter a new dimension of your instruction: the revelation to your mind of that which you have already experienced with your senses. And so it must be, for this which has happened and is happening to and in you can only be comprehended by those who undergo it. It is no more intelligible to the uninitiate than is birth to a stone. But make no mistake: it is not entirely intelligible to any created intellect. for the mystery of Baptism partakes of divine reality. While it can be wholly undergone by man, it can never be fully understood by him.

You were asked to come on the night of Great and
Holy Saturday prepared for your baptism, prepared to leave behind you forever the world in which you had so long been a slave. You were given certain instructions concerning your manner of dress, and told to come bearing upon your person nothing apart from that simple clothing, unless it were some token of that past life with which you were prepared to part forever. The reasons for these earlier instructions no doubt became evident when you were

instructed to remove all your clothing and any other adornment, and stand unclad before the heavens and your Creator just as you were at the moment of your first birth. 1t was y9u and you alone whom our Lord sought to join unto Himself in those waters, and nothing of that vain world which had been your captor. You stood naked in manifestation of simplicity, of poverty, and of your willingness to expose yourself entirely to Him, unashamed of His Creation, but fleeing in shame from the overlay of vanity, greed and evil you had allowed to build up upon that blessed simplicity.

Your bare feet upon the uneven stones, your body exposed to the chill of the night and to the searching gaze of the angels both of death and life, arms up- raised in both surrender and petition -you were repeatedly questioned concerning your willingness to renounce once and for all "Satan and all his angels and all his works and all his service and all his pride." "Enough!" you might have said, after the second or third repetition - even as blessed Peter cried to our Lord. But a hundred times could not be enough - indeed, we must continue to renounce him every day and moment of our lives. Words, however, do not suffice - we are creatures of flesh, and our words often belie us. So you were directed to gaze into the darkness of the west, to that place both without and within yourself whence comes all evil, and to reject the Evil One with your whole being, drawing up from the depths of yourself that which is cast out into the gutter. and spitting into his face. You have seen, of course, that the Holy Church takes no account of the reluctance of "civilized" man to admit that his faith is a matter of *Life* and life of bodily, fleshly beings - not merely an affair assent to intellectual propositions. With the devil, it would seem we have no such problem!

Having reviled the devil by breathing and spitting upon him, thereby making yourself his sworn enemy forever (and make no mistake, he takes not such a challenge lightly), you were •turned back to the east, the lights of Christ flickering before you, illumining the darkness, as indeed He illuminates the darkness within those who turn to Him. Standing before Him, your hands at your side, powerless, stripped of all which gave you identity in the world, having left behind the old master, you were interrogated by the new - again insistently. You were called upon to sing before Him the great song of faith, declaring your belief in the new life of the Holy Trinity about to be born in you. Having sung it. you at once fell prostrate on the ground before Him, present to you in Heavens. the water before you, the lights playing upon you and the waters, and, perhaps above all else. the people of His Body surrounding you in joy.

You continued in prayer, in expectant waiting, as the instruments of your birth were prepared. As befits a birth, the minister of it was clad in white, and the whole baptistry filled with the sweet fragrance of incense: at once an offering of sweetness to our God, the representation to ourselves of the sweetness of life in Him, and an odor utterly intolerable to the Enemy. The attention of the assembly was turned from you to the waters and the oil, declaring the presence of God in these fruits of His creation and seeking His blessing upon them - and giving you, as it were, a space in which to meditate on the magnitude of the renunciation and commitment which you had just made. Your betrothal made, you were given a last interval in which to reverse course (God forbid!), were you yet unprepared to enter in joy into the fulness of the wedding-feast. You were not found faint-hearted - glory to God!

Being brought once more to the center of the assembly, before the hallowed waters. the rushing voice of the Spirit in them mingled with the prayers of His people, you had imposed upon you the blessed oil of the olive. Perhaps here it would be good to remind, you that in the

cosmos in which God has become Man, born of a Virgin for our salvation, there is no such thing as a "mere symbol." Everything in creation is real; everything partakes of God the Creator: and it is precisely in and through the concrete reality of His creation that He has prepared the instruments of our salvation.

The oil which was imposed upon you - first in the sign of the Cross upon your mind, heart and senses (dedicating your whole being to Him Who died for you), and then upon your whole body - this "oil of gladness," prepared you as a glistening, fragrant offering for the great festival of your life. This is the oil of death, that death which is life, preparing you for your death unto sin in Christ. your death to the world, that death in which there is no burial because the burial is preempted by re-birth. This is the same oil which burns in thousands upon thousands of lamps. a perpetual offering to our Lord and presence in our life of His light - in it you are prepared to burn. yourself a light in this• world, a witness to His glory.

Then for a moment time was suspended, as it is always at a birth. You descended into the rushing waters, surrounded in the darkness of that place which was at once for you tomb and womb by the icy reality of death and the cold, crisp reality of life. Above you hovered the diamonds of divine light in the skies and the flickering flames of their reflection upon this earth.

Neither your death nor your birth were unattended: beside you in the waters the midwife, as it were; above you, about the waters, your mothers and fathers, about to become your elder brothers and sisters; and filling the whole vault of heaven the choir of angels, rejoicing in the birth of a new child of God. Three times were you plunged into the waters, as every heart stood still, even at the moment of your death allowing the birth within you of the triune divine Life. Not Just a single God is He into Whom you are born, nor yet Three - but in that Mystery which transcends human comprehension Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, He-Who-is. To each of the great names the cry went up to Heaven, "Amen" - So be it! This onetime nameless servant of the powers and principalities is now named anew, born anew, a child of God and an heir to the Kingdom. Blessed be God!

Ah, but the work is not yet finished. The child is amongst us, the 1:1-oment of crisis is past, the birth is accomplished and mother and baby are well, but we have only begun. Singing a psalm of thanksgiving for your deliverance from bondage to sin, we returned, a glittering torchlight parade, to stand before the Holy Altar. It was then that you received a new vesture, replacing the rags left beside the waters, a pure white robe of righteousness, your wedding-garment. The Bridegroom, Who has brought about your birth, awaits you at the Altar. to confirm and seal in you His wedding-gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit, placing upon you the seal of His holy Kingdom, branding you, as it were, as His own once and for all.

And so it was done to you - not ordinary oil, but consecrated chrism, signing you as one of the anointed, a member of a race of kings, even though by adoption, a holy nation, set apart for a witness to His glory, a royal priesthood. And so the holy chrism poured down upon you, again in the sign of the Cross, marking forever the fulness of your being as consecrated unto Him: mind, senses, activity- all that you are. Not only of water are you born, but of water and the Holy Spirit, entering into you under the forms of water and oil and sweet-smelling fragrances. Born again you are, and entitled to the holy name of "Christian" - let it not be sullied in your life!

You were then led in solemn procession about the holy table, celebrating your birth, your wedding. You were led and presented as an offering to God, joining yourself to that perpetual offering which takes place before His holy throne. A man freed from slavery unto sin, you willingly gave yourself up into slavery to the one Master of all - that slavery which alone is true freedom. Take care that you serve well!

But my dear brethren, our celebration of your birth was not quite yet complete. No, the babe must have his first meal - he must be taught where it is that he is to find nourishment for this new life in Christ. For this life no ordinary food will suffice. For the children of this world, worldly food is sufficient for the life of bondage. But for the children of the heavenly Kingdom, only heavenly food will do. So in due time you were brought before the holy altar to partake for the first time, surrounded by the rejoicing company of your brothers and sisters in the Kingdom, of the heavenly food, the precious Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus, at once hidden and revealed to us in the form of bread and wine.

Before, you had seen your Lord in the light sur- rounding you and shining forth from the holy icons; you had felt Him in the gentle softness of the caressing oil spread upon you by the loving hands of those privileged to attend your birth; you had heard Him in the divine word proclaimed tirelessly before the altar; you had smelled His presence in the sweet fragrances. But now... now you were brought to taste of Him, to taste and see how good the Lord is, to take Him as food into your very body, to let Him enter in and penetrate into every cell of your being. It has often been said that we are what we eat - and in this Holy Communion we become indeed Whom we eat, and, in so becoming also become one with each other in Him.

My beloved, it is to no club that you have been admitted, but into the Divine Body that you have been born. In the name of all your elder brethren and sisters here gathered with you, and of all the company of heaven, let me again repeat: Blessed is God, for this our brother who was dead is alive; he who was in bondage is free; he who was lost is found.

There remains much to be shared and explained - and much which can never be explained. In the days of this Holy and Bright Week, as you partake daily of the Heavenly Food, as you continue in the shining brightness of your wedding-garment, as you continue daily in the company of your brothers and sisters, much more of the Mysteries shall be opened to your gaze and understanding. But remember, dear brethren, and never forget: no matter how much we may know, or understand, and no matter how eloquently we may speak, we remain forever in the sight of our Lord as children, children bound to do His will in *all* things. Obedience is our calling. and glory our reward.

-Fr. Gregory (Williams)

Originally printed in *Orthodox Life,* Vol. XXXI No. 2 (March-April 1981).
Reprinted by permission.
THE ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT PRESS
Rt. 1 Box 205; Liberty, TN 37095
ISBN 912927 - 43 – 7

Orthodox America

What's in a Name?

by Priest Andrew Philips

With the progressive de-Christianization of society, the use of the expression "Christian name" is becoming less and less common and is being replaced by "first name" or "forename." Not so long ago, Roman Catholics always gave their children saints' names. Even Protestants used to give their children those names that appeared in the Bible: Jonathan, David, Jeremy, Ruth, Judith, Esther, Rebecca, Rachel, Deborah, Abigail, Sarah were all once popular names in Protestant-based societies. Nowadays, it seems that Orthodox are the only ones to keep the tradition of giving their children saints' names. But many questions are posed as to what exactly a Christian name is and what names those entering the Orthodox Church should take.

First of all, it is necessary to point out that someone entering Orthodoxy should not take a new name if he has one that is already borne by a saint in the calendar. We have come across two cases where men with perfectly good Christian names changed them to exotic-sounding Vladimir and Auxentius. In both cases, the persons concerned were going through identity crises and were motivated in their choice more by a desire to change their identity than by wanting that particular saint's name. (Both men later lapsed from the Orthodox Church.) It would seem that the pastor should discourage uncalled-for changes of name.

Another question which sometimes arises is whether a person with a female form of a male saint's name, for example, Nicole, should be able to keep it. In the Russian practice, this is found only in monasticism, whereas in Greek practice it is quite common among laity. Other differences between Russian and Greek practice also occur. Greek women and girls may be called Maria or Panaghia in honor of the Mother of God. Among Russians, it is held that the name Mary is too holy to be given in honor of the Virgin. In the Russian tradition, girls called Mary are named in honor of other Marys: Saint Mary of Egypt, Saint Mary Magdalene, or Saint Mary the sister of Saint Lazarus, for example. In Greece and the Balkans, names like Christos (accented on the first syllable), Sotiris (Saviour) and Kyriakos are also common. Russians tend to find such names unacceptable, for the same reason that Russian Marias are not named in honor of the Virgin. Another custom, unknown to both

Greeks and Russian, is that of the Serb Slava, whereby individuals may not have individual saints' names at all, but do have a common family feastday in honor of a particular saint. As regards saints' days, there are some which fall on different days in the Greek and Russian calendars. Saint Catherine, for example, is celebrated on November 25 in the Greek Church and on November 24 in the Russian.

Some converts to Orthodoxy change names when it is not necessary simply through ignorance. They may, in fact, bear the name of a little-known saint. The following are examples of names which are perfectly valid Orthodox names, many of them being those of pre-Schism Western saints: Alan, Albert, Alphonse (Saint Ildefonse), Angus, Audrey, Aylwin, Barry, Bernard, Bertrand, Brigid, Claire (Photini or Svetlana), Dominic (equivalent to Kyriakos, Kyriaki in Greek), Duncan, Edgar, Edith, Edmund, Edward, Erasmus, Faith (Vera), Frederic (translation of Irenei), Geoffrey (Saint Ceolfrid), Gerald, Gilbert, Giles, Guy, Harvey, Helga (Olga), Herbert, Hugh, Humphrey, Kevin, Leonard, Mildred, Ottila, Owen, Richard, Robert, Ursula.

Other names, not sounding Orthodox, are often diminutives of perfectly good Orthodox saints' names. For instance:

Alexandra gives Alice and Alison
Catherine gives Karen, Kathleen, Kay, Kittie
Columba gives Malcolm
Dorothy gives Dora, Doreen and Doris
Emiliana gives Amelia, Emily and Milly
Elizabeth gives Bella, Bess, Beth, Elsa, Elsie, Isabelle, Lisa
Helen gives Eileen, Elaine, Eleanor, and Norah
John gives Evan, Sean, and Ian
Joanna gives Jacqueline, Jane, Janet, Janice, Jenny, Jessie.
Juliana gives Gillian and Jill
Mary gives Marian, Marilyn, Maureen, May, Miriam, Moira, Molly, Morag, Polly, Rosemary
Margaret (Marina) gives Greta, Maisie, Marjorie, Meg, Pearl, Peggy and Rita
Nicholas gives Colin

The lists above in no way claim to be complete, but they may be useful.

Ultimately, however, there are names which do have to be changed, since they are simply not saints' names at all. What approaches are there to this question?

Some converts change to a name which is similar to their own. An obvious example is that of those who change from Neil to Nil. Similarly, Lee can easily be changed to Leo or Leon. There are many other examples. Some people have second Christian

names. Thus, someone called Pamela Mary could simply use her second, Christian name as her Orthodox name. Some people have a favorite saint and want to be called by that name. This is the simplest case of all.

Others may wish to take on the name of someone in their family. We know of one little Russian boy who was not baptized and did not have a Christian name. On baptism he took the name of his grandfather, who did have a Christian name. The result was that not only was the little boy baptized, but also that his grandfather started going to church, so bringing happiness to three generations.

There is also the question of how parents should name their children. The tradition was to look in the calendar either on the day of birth, or on the eighth day at the naming ceremony, or else on the fortieth day after the birth. These are pious customs which future parents should bear in mind. If parents choose a name simply because they like it, rather than for the saint, there is another aspect of names which is also often overlooked. This is where there are several saints of the same name. For example, there are several Saint Nicholases in the calendar, but in general only one is honored-this seems most unfortunate. The Church calls us to honor all the saints, not only our favorite few.

Of Anglo-Saxon saints in the English Tradition of Orthodoxy, there are a number whose names could be used, although unfortunately some of them are now out of fashion. For boys there are:

Adamnan, Adrian, Aidan Ailred, Alban, Aylwin, Bede, Benedict, Bernard, Bertrand, Cedd, Chad, Clement, Cuthbert, Dunstan, Edmund, Edward, Edwin, Felix, Geoffrey, Gilbert, Herbert, James, John, Kenelm, Laurence, Ninian, Oswald, Owen, Peter, Philip, Richard, Sigfrid, Theodore, Wilfrid.

For girls: Agatha, Alfreda, Audrey, Eanswythe, Edith, Elfreda, Elgiva, Ethel, Hilda, Mildred, Thecla.

Finally, we come to one other question: how we should remember non-Orthodox in prayer. It seems to be a good custom to write down the names of all those we wish to pray for in our commemoration books, but to put non-Orthodox separately in a clearly-indicated manner. In this way, the priest will be able to pray for all at the Proskomedia, but he will take particles out of the prosphora only for the Orthodox.

We hope that these considerations will be useful for all parents and those wishing to enter the Orthodox Church. May they receive the blessings of the saints through their holy names.

Godparenting 101

It is a known practice in the Orthodox Church that every person, child or adult, should have a godparent (sponsor) at the time that they enter into the faith through Holy Baptism and Chrismation. To be a godparent is at the same time a great honor and a tremendous responsibility. God asks each godparent to assist in leading souls along the narrow path which leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. For this reason the role of the godparent is not to be minimized or trivialized. It is in fact a role that is holy and needs to be taken seriously.

The task of steering a child along the narrow path, and bringing them up according to the law of God is perhaps the greatest of all things in life. St. Theophan the Recluse says that there is no holier act. What better thing can we offer our children than to lead them to our Lord and teach them to imitate Him in their life.

The challenge of raising up a child in the teachings of God is perhaps far greater today than ever before. We are contending against many negative influences that carry with them great appeal. Due to the fallen state that we are in, and the unhealed passions that remain within us, the things that are most harmful are the things that are most enticing. With the many obstacles and temptations, the parents along with the godparents, must help the precious souls entrusted to them through the course of life.

While it is an honor to be asked to be a godparent, one should make sure that the potential sponsor will be committed to the responsibility. The role must be honored and not taken lightly. Every godparent will be accountable to God as to whether or not he or she has fulfilled their duties. Prospective godparents must know their faith, or at least be in the process of learning their faith and be committed to a life in Christ. One problem today is that people who are called upon to be godparents do not know their faith and are not regular participants in the life of the Church. This is also true for some parents. Consequently a child who is baptized may never know anything about Jesus Christ and the Church.

In the early Church heavy emphasis was placed on the educating of the faithful and those who desired to come into the Christian faith. As Christianity spread in a pagan world, the need to teach individuals before their baptisms became crucial. The systematic instruction, which was a preparatory stage for baptism was and is called "catechism."

During catechism one learned the basic elements of the Christian faith and moral life. We see the importance of these teachings and the teachings themselves in the 4th Prebaptismal Catechesis of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. The candidate had to be introduced by one of the faithful, called *anadochos*, (the godparent to be) and be examined by the "doctors" (the Bishops) who were in charge of the catechumens, to ensure that clear spiritual motives led him to enter the Church. Other than in cases of urgency, baptism was not something that was rushed. Not only did the candidate need to understand the teachings of Christ and the Church, but he also had to be living by them.

The *anadochos* which means one who receives (the person out of the font), was responsible for the candidate and played a very important role during the process of his Catechesis and even after the candidate had been baptized. This obviously took place primarily with adult candidates or young people. However, as the faith spread and as entire families were coming into the Body of Christ, infant baptism became more the norm rather than the exception. With the emergence and common practice of infant baptism, the *anadochos* was called upon to be the spokesperson for the infant at their baptism.

The godparent, therefore, is the representative of the infant who is being admitted into the Church of Christ. He speaks for the infant and vows that he will do all he can to assure that the child will be a true soldier of Christ and a devoted member of His Church. He accepts the sacred responsibility of guiding the child into the understanding and practice of the teachings of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The godparent makes a public profession of the Nicene Creed during the Baptism. Likewise, his renunciation of the devil is made on behalf of the candidate for Baptism. The godparent implicitly pledges himself to aid his godchild in whatever necessities that may arise, but most especially in the giving of a good Orthodox Christian example to the Godchild.

How should one go about choosing a Godparent?

1. Parents must exercise the greatest care in the selection of godparents for their children. Certainly they will never select atheists or agnostics, or persons who are lukewarm toward the Church. This would obviously defeat the purpose of having a godparent in terms of their role.

2. The Godparent must bring godliness and holiness to the child. Godparents are parents representing God or parents on God's behalf.

3. Parents should not choose godparents because they feel obligated, or because they think that if they don't ask a certain person or couple that they will be offended. Many, if not most situations, where people who have chosen someone to be a godparent out of guilt or obligation, end up being disastrous.

4. The faith of the godparent and their involvement within the sacramental life of the Church is crucial. The person who confesses Jesus Christ as His Lord cannot ignore and violate in word and deed this faith. How can he promise God that he will make certain that the child will grow to be a true follower of Christ, when he himself lives a life of unbelief and disobedience?

5. It goes without saying that the godparent must be an Orthodox person. How could someone who is not Orthodox provide the proper religious education, example and inspiration to his godchild? It should also be noted that an Orthodox Christian who has not had his or her marriage blessed in the Orthodox Church is excluded from exercising the privilege of serving as a godparent, because they are not considered to be in good standing with the Church.

6. The Church also cautions us to select a person who has reached the age of reason and moral responsibility (at least 12 years of age). It is also good to look for godparents outside of the family. In this way, the family grows and special bonds are created.

What are some other things that are expected of the Godparent?

1. It is a gross misunderstanding to think that the only duty of the godparent is to buy a new outfit and a cross for the infant. Certainly this is a beautiful tradition, but the emphasis must not be on the material but rather the spiritual. Many times people are so concerned with the clothing, the cross, the *martyrika*, (witness pins) and the luncheon afterwards, that they forget the magnitude and the awesomeness of the great mystery and the great gift of Holy Baptism. Both the parents and the godparents should be careful not to fall into this trap, but instead to keep their minds focused on the most important aspect and that is the baptism itself.

2. The godparent should make a faithful commitment to join the struggle with the parents, guided by the Church, to bring the infant carefully and prayerfully along the difficult road to Heaven.

3. After the baptismal service is finished, the godparent delivers the child into the arms of the mother in front of the congregation. As she receives the child, now baptized, sealed and illuminated, she kisses the hand of the godparent as a token of the spiritual relationship that is established between the godparent and the family. This is a Christian expression of gratitude and respect.

4. If the godparent lives in the same city, it is customary for the godparent to bring the infant (or accompany the newly illumined adult) to Holy Communion with the lit baptismal candle for the next three Sundays. After three Sunday's the candle is no longer used, but it is good for the godparent to take the child to communion each week.

5. A faithful godparent will make the effort to maintain close contact with their godchild, building up their relationship. The main focus, however, is the progress of the child in the knowledge and practice of the Christian life. He should at all times model a Christ-like example. For this reason it is important that the godparent stay on top of their own spiritual life. The godparent should pray, fast, read from Holy Scripture, and participate in the sacramental life of the Church. As they grow and mature in the faith, they will in turn be able to offer more and more to their godchild who has been entrusted to them. To neglect their own spiritual life is ultimately to neglect the spiritual life of their godchild.

6. Godparents are encouraged to call to remembrance the sacred and joyous moment of Baptism, which may be done by participating in "Godparents' Sunday", a National Observance by the Greek Orthodox Church in America.

7. Appropriate gift-giving honoring the occasion of the godchild's nameday, birthday or baptism day, could include such things as icons, a Bible, and religious books that will be helpful in building up the spiritual life of the child. These are the most important, but it is not wrong to give other things as well that the child would enjoy and make use of.

8. Most of all, the greatest duty of the godparent is to pray fervently for their godchild that God will always watch over them and guide them throughout his/her life. The Akathist to the Mother of God the Nurturer of Children could be read by the godparent and they could simply replace the word "child" with "godchild".

The role and responsibility of the Godparent can be summed up in the Divine Commandment that is read from the Holy Gospel at the service of Baptism. "Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." It is truly an honor to be called upon to be a godparent. May we all live a life close to the Church, seeking help from Christ, that we may fulfill our sacred duty as godparents in a way pleasing to God.

From the newsletter *Agape* published by St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Eugene, Oregon. Posted on July 4, 2006 with the kind permission of Fr. Timothy Pavlatos.

WE SHOULD CONFESS

We should confess in the presence of our spiritual father. Those who don't want to go to Confession sometimes say: "Why should we tell our sins to a priest? Doesn't God already know our sins without that? And can't he forgive them without Confession?

Confessing our sins, i.e., telling them in front of a priest is necessary not because they would otherwise remain unknown to God, but because this is helpful and necessary to the repentant himself.

Our honest Confession of sins in front of a priest before everything else shows **our sincere readiness to condemn ourselves for these sins**. To the person who has made up his mind to tell his sins to his spiritual father in order to be healed from sin, that sin has already become patently disagreeable and alien. Confessed sins becomes, as it were, external to our soul, much like a splinter which, when removed, becomes external to the body and stops hurting it.

Never will a person condemn within himself his sin with such sincerity and clarity, as he will when he confesses to his spiritual father. This is an indubitable fact of our spiritual life. This is explained by the fact that an open confession of our sin before a father confessor humbles our pride, which often doesn't want to have any witnesses to our defects and sins, especially the shameful ones.

This pride of ours also suggests to us the idea that it is necessary only to have an internal consciousness of sin before God because it is easier to acknowledge one's mistakes before an Invisible God than it is to do so in the presence of another person, visible and like oneself.

The early Christian Church looked even more strictly on this matter than does the Orthodox Church today. Then it was necessary to confess a sin one had committed not just in the presence of a spiritual father, but in the presence of the whole congregation of the faithful. And this was certainly more unpleasant to human pride, but, for someone who was sincerely repentant, this was no obstacle to confession. Confession before a priest is also necessary because he has been given the power to forgive or not to forgive sins.

How should one prepare for Confession? We usu1lly live amid such bustling that we have difficulty concentrating on our inner spiritual condition and being strongly aware of our sinfulness.

In order to help us in this, the Church has instituted a formal preparation before Confession which consists in leaving our usual manner of life for a few days, fasting... reading spiritual books, praying, and spending time in solitude, or, better yet, with a person equally occupied.

Thanks to church attendance, Lenten prayers and melodies, reading and renunciation of our usual worldliness, we enter a new world where spiritual interests prevail. We think about God more; we feel Him within us more; in our consciousness we are more aware of our inner life and its bad, sinful sides. . ..The best reading material for this period of time are the works of Theophanes, for instance, ***The Path to Salvation***, and ***The Spiritual Life***; the ***Arena*** by St Ignati Brianchaninov (19th cent); ***The Journey to Heaven*** by St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, works of St John Chrysostom, the ***Ladder*** by St. John Climacus, ***The Way of the Ascetics***, ***The Lives of the Saints***, ***The Way of the Pilgrim***, and others. Especially, one should be reading the New Testament.

We must confess not just special sins, as some mistakenly believe, but all the uncleanness of our soul in general-one who sincerely recognizes this uncleanness sometimes grieves more strongly over a minor delinquency than a frivolous person does over a major transgression. The weight of sin is determined to a considerable degree by the sensitivity of our conscience.

Confession must be completely honest. That the spiritual father did not question our sins could please only those people who have no concept whatever of the purpose of Confession. If a sin is kept secret, not told at Confession, then it remains inside us...

Besides honesty and self-condemnation, we also must bring to our Confession our earnest desire not to repeat the sins we have committed. Sins committed must appear detestable, repulsive to us [when they don't appear this way, let that serve as a gauge and guide about how far we need to go]. We shake them off from ourselves and from now on we want to begin a new, clean life. And we must believe very strongly that during the Mystery of Confession God is lifting the burden and heaviness of sin from us, and that He will put us on the road to a new life.

- *continued on pg 5*

- *Confession, cont.*

And thus, having come to Confession with this disposition of your heart, and having confessed to your spiritual father honestly, seriously, with sorrow, all your great and small sins, you must now listen with attention and with faith to him as he pronounces the absolution prayer... The past has left you, the dawn of a new life begins.

The awareness of this is always present in those who have worked on themselves during the days of preparation and have made their Confession with faith and a contrite heart.

- *Father Sergei Chetverikov*

MEMBERSHIP, STEWARDSHIP & PLEDGING

It's a well-known teaching of the Gospel that where your treasure is, there is your heart also. This is simply an observation that people will invest in that "thing" that they believe important for their lives. It may be an investment of time, money or material. When something is important to us, we are concerned about it, and involved in it.

When speaking about the Church, we need to be very clear that we are dealing with God's gifts to us of salvation and communion with Him in His Kingdom. We are the ones receiving the inheritance - as sons and daughters of the Heavenly King. We should never, ever, consider that our response to the needs of the Church is charity. Our response is simply that motivated by love and thanksgiving to God for His mercy towards us. Our treasure is not in earthen vessels, in cash, banks and in stocks. Our treasure is the Kingdom. Our hearts are there too.

So then, what defines "Parish Membership"?: caring for the Church, pledging whatever it is you *can* pledge as a sign and measure of your concern for the Church family. If it means little to you, then your response will reflect that. If it means a great deal, than like the widow with an offering of a penny (which is all she had), you will respond as she did, giving in a sacrificial way (If you desire your offering to be anonymous, this is laudable and worthy of emulation, but speak to your spiritual father). The parish functions and operates not on *what we have,* but on faith, and on the good-will of your pledge.

GAYE LeBARON'S NOTEBOOK

A church social like no other

I ran into a friend at the Glendi last weekend. She was having the time of her life. "I can tell you," she said, as dancers whirled to the music of Arabic flutes and the delicious scent of Eritrean spiced beef wafted past our noses, "that the Presbyterians I grew up with never had church socials like this!"

She's right. The annual Glendi that brings several thousand people, I'm sure, down Mountain View Avenue to meet some of their most interesting neighbors, is unlike any other church bazaar. But that's because the Protection of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church, called St. Mary's by those who know it well, is unlike any congregation you've known.

The congregation's priest, a rangy, good-humored man named Father Michael, moves easily among his flock of Russians and Serbs and Bulgarians, Greeks and Romanians, Middle Easterners, Eritreans and young refugees from both Roman catholic and Protestant churches.

People who complain that we do not celebrate diversity, should make a mark on next year's calendar to come to the Glendi. Try one and I guarantee you'll come back.

We remember the first one, 10 years ago, which was a rather tentative reach into the larger community, and how excited and pleased we were to see so many people from different backgrounds with a single purpose - to erect a bigger church behind their precious little one built by Russian *emigres* in 1936.

The new church, St. Seraphim, is built now. The painstaking task of painting the traditional frescoes on the inside walls is underway. Scholars and artists and priests were on hand to conduct tours, deliver lectures and answer questions about Orthodox Christianity, which unites so many Old World cultures.

I can't think of anywhere else: Where you can watch an elderly Greek gentleman dancing, arms outstretched, palms down, in the manner of Zorba-dancing as if in tribute to another life in another place. Where you can see the white-robed Eritrean women, chattering and laughing together as they sip their tiny cups of the world's strongest coffee and prepare their strange but tasty sponge bread that comes with the spiced stew. Where people of all ethnicity and persuasions fall in line to follow the tall immigrant from the Horn of Africa who leads dancers in a circle as musicians play the music of his country. Where elderly ladies who may or may not be descendants of the tsars ladle out their special borscht or sit and visit over Russian tea cakes.

I can't think of any other place like that. Only the Glendi.

• • •

IV
Objections to Confession

How GREAT must be our wickedness! We do not turn to Confession not only because we forget about it, but we do not practice it even when we know about it. What can be more imprudent than this?

Confession is so important to us sinners that we must boldly say there is no salvation for us without Confession. Abba Isaiah expresses the same thought: "If there were no repentance, nobody would be saved. Just as Baptism cleanses us from original sin and from all sins committed prior to Baptism, so repentance, involving a confession of our sins, cleanses us from all lawlessness committed after Baptism."

We do not confess because we have objections to Confession. What are our objections usually? Here are the main ones:

1) One says: "I am so sinful! Can God forgive my sins? I do not believe this! That is why there is no use for me to go to Confession."

But if a man repents sincerely, any sin can be forgiven him. "The power of repentance is based on the power of God. The Doctor is all-powerful, and the Medicine given by Him is all-powerful" (Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov).

St. John Chrysostom, pondering on the miraculous results of sincere repentance, says: "Repentance is a medicine which destroys sin. It is a heavenly gift, a marvelous force which through the grace of God conquers the might and strictness of the laws. It accepts all and transforms all. It does not reject the fornicator, does not send away the adulterer, is not disgusted with the drunkard, does not loathe the idolater, does not neglect the slanderer, does not persecute the reviler nor the haughty man: it regenerates everybody because it is a furnace for purification from sin. The wound and the medi cine, these are sin and Repentance" [Confession-author's note].

Do not tell me: "I have sinned much, how can I save myself?" You cannot, but your God can, and He can do it so that all your sins will be destroyed. Listen carefully to my words: your God destroys your sins in such a manner that there is neither a spot nor trace left of them, and as He restores your health, He presents you with the righteousness which frees you from the death penalty. He gives you righteousness; and the one who has sinned He makes equal to the one who has not, because He destroys sin and makes it disappear as if it had never been.

"But is it possible," you will say, "for the one who repents to be saved?" It is perfectly possible! "But I have spent my entire life in sin: if I repent, will I be saved?" Of course! "How do we know that?" From the love of your God for man. Am I relying on your repentance to destroy your heavy sins? If you were to rely only on your repentance, then, indeed, you should tremble; but the mercy of God unites with repentance. And the mercy of God has no limits; words cannot express His kindness. Your wickedness has an end, but the Medicine for it is boundless! Your wickedness is human wickedness, but God's mercy is ineffable, so, have hope that it will exceed your since. Imagine as spark which falls in the sea: will it start a fire? Will it appear again? Sin is to God’s love for man what the spark is to the seas, not even, but something much smaller! The sea, however big it may be, has an end, but God’s love for man is limitless.

2) Another says: “Why should I go to confession? I have no special sins. Let those who have murdered, stolen, raped, or committed some other sin go to confession.:

This objection to Confession is the complete opposite of the first one. There the man, because of the oppressing realization of his wickedness, does not believe that he can be forgiven. Here, there is a lack of any realization of wickedness. “I have no special sins…” But is it really so? When a man stays in a

closed room for a long time, he gets used to the bad air in it and does not feel how unpleasant it is. But if someone comes in from outside, he will not be able to stand the stench in the room and will run away.

Let those who say, “I have no special sins,” answer whether they have Christ in their hearts. He like to inhabit pure hearts. But are their hearts pure? Hardly! They imagine that they are pure, but imagination is not reality. *If we say that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us* (1 John 1:8), And where there is a lie, there Chris is not.

Then what should we do? –let us confess. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just… to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9)

The Holy Fathers teach us that it is very hard for a man to see his sins. They explain this with the blindness caused by the devil. Abba Isaiah says: “When a man separates from the one on his left side, i.e. from communion with the demons and from following suggestions, then he will see his sins against God in full; then he will know Jesus. But a man cannot see his sins until he separates himself from them through a separation filled with labor and distress. Those who have reached this condition have found tears and prayers; as they remember about their sly friendship with the passions, they do not dare to look towards God, and live constantly with a broken spirit.

If it were easy to see our sins, St. Ephraim the Syrian would not have prayed: "Lord, enable me to see my transgressions." Neither would Father John of Kronstadt say: "This is truly a gift of God -to be able to see your sins in their multitude and in all their loathsomeness."

It turns out that those who think that they do not have any great sins are actually blind. They must pray to God to enable them to perceive their sins and to save themselves from the extremely fatal spiritual delusion that they do not have any particular sins. Even if their sins are as small as specks of dust, if they are not cleaned with constant Confession. they pile up and dirty the room of the heart so that the high heavenly Guest cannot enter there.

The small sins are often more dangerous than the greatest crimes, because the latter weigh heavily on the conscience and insist on being atoned for, confessed, settled, erased, while the small sins do not weigh too much on the soul, but they have that perilous property of making it insensitive to the grace of God and indifferent to salvation. Fewer people have perished from ferocious wild beasts than have from small microbes, invisible to the naked eye. By being considered insignificant, the small sins are usually passed by without any attention. They are easily forgotten, but they create in man the most terrible habit - the habit of sinning, of dulling his moral consciousness. Thus the wretched sinner comes to deceive himself that he is not sinful, that everything is all right with him, when he is both a miserable and abject slave of sin.

Small sins create a true stagnation in the spiritual life of man. Just as the wall clock stops because of the accumulation of fine dust, so the spiritual pulse of man gradually dies out under the thick layer of accumulated small sins. In order for the clock to start running again, the dust must be blown out, In order for man to restore his spiritual life, he needs to confess even the smallest of his sins.

3) A third man says: "All this is true. But why should I confess when I know that tomorrow I will sin again? Is there any point in such confession? I see that one should confess only if one would Sin no more after that!

This objection to Confession contains both something which is very true and something which is not. The, right thing here is the desire not to sin any more after Confession. But we are feeble humans, and we cannot attain right away such a firmness which makes falling into voluntary sins impossible. If we cannot reach such steadfastness in virtue right away, should we surrender to vice? Or should we stop confessing? Which is better -to roll in the mud of the spiritual swamp, or to pick yourself up after each fall and go on with the hope that someday you may reach the solid and beautiful shore of virtue? If you, do not confess, you remain in the mud. If you confess, you pick yourself up from the mud and clean yourself.

But why should I get up if tomorrow I will fall again? “you say. When you fall again, then get up again! Every day begin all over again ..This is undoubtedly better than falling out of the habit of getting up.

A young monk complained to the great ascetic Abba Sisoes: "Abba, what should I do? I fell." The elder answered: “Get up!” The monk said: "I got up, and I fell again!" The elder replied: "Get up again!" But me young monk asked: "For how long should I get up when I fall?" "Until your death," answered Abba Sisoes.

This wise dialogue should be remembered by all of us who want to change but, deceived by the devil, constantly return to our previous sins. Every time we fall into a transgression, we must get up. The "getting up" -this is **Confession**.

"But why should we play at falling and getting up?" ask some. It is not a game, but a struggle in which there is much sense. If we, as feeble humans, fall but get up again, there is a great probability that death will find us when we are standing. Then we are saved. But if we do not intend to get up, death will surely find us lying in the mud. Then we are lost forever!

St. John Chrysostom says: "Repentance opens the heavens for man, takes him to Paradise, overcomes the devil. Have you sinned? Do not despair! If you sin every day, then offer repentance every day! When there are rotten pans in old houses, we replace the pans with new ones, and we do not stop caring for the houses. In the same way, you should reason for yourself: if today you have defiled yourself with sin, immediately clean yourself with repentance.”1

For the washing away of bodily dirtiness God has given water. And for the washing of spiritual foulness, God has given me grace of the holy Sacrament of Confession. Every man, when he dirties his hands, washes them. No one says: "I will not wash my hands anymore, because I will get them dirty again!" But why is it then that many people say, "I will not go to Confession, because I will sin again tomorrow!" It is clear that the enemy of our salvation is enticing us not to wash our souls, so that he can gain power over them.

But we must not give in to such satanic suggestions; we should confess frequently, because frequent washing produces a taste for cleanliness in us.

Leave your house unswept, uncleaned, and unventilated for one year! Will it not turn into a pigsty? Now think about what the soul of a man is like when he has not cleaned it through Confession, not only for a year, but for twenty, forty, sixty, or seventy years!...

4) A fourth man says: "I am confessing before God. What need is there for me to go to the priest?

...God has ordained the priest to administer the Holy Sacraments so that we can receive through them heavenly all-saving grace. Confession is a sacrament, too. If you confess before God, you are doing well, because you are moving your conscience, remembering your sins, and maybe even shedding tears for them. Yet you do not receive God's grace of forgiveness through all that. As when you sit and think how, during the never-ending day of the Heavenly Kingdom, those who have pleased God partake of the unfathomable-for-us heavenly Communion, you do not partake in reality, no matter how moved you may be by your thought, until you accept Visible Holy Communion; so too, until you go to the priest to whom Jesus Christ Himself has given the power to bind and loose: no matter how much you confess before God, you do not receive forgiveness for your sins, because God Himself has condescended to say to the priest: *whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them* (John 20:23), .

Besides, Confession before a priest has an enormous instructive meaning. It humbles us. It cures our pride; it makes us blush savingly; it instills in us shame and fear and thus protects us from future sins.

1. St John Chrysostom, *Works*, Vol. 2, Book 3 (St. Petersburg, 1896), p. 377.

When we sin, we sin against the Omnipotent God, but we are not ashamed before Him because we do not see Him. In the same manner, when we confess before God, we do so easily, because we do not see Him, and it is as if we were talking to ourselves. But what shyness comes over us when we confess before the priests! The man who has submitted to the Church order to confess before a priest will hardly dare to repeat his sins, when he thinks of having to reveal them again during Confession.[2] Jesus Christ has ordered very wisely that our repentance should be done before a priest who is God's witness!

"But how can the priest absolve sins?" you ask. He can, since God has ordered it so. "But is the priest himself not a sinful man?" If he is sinful, what do you lose from that? He is sinful for himself and will answer before God for his sins. The Holy Sacraments administered by him do not cease to be active for you because of his sinfulness if you accept them with faith and humility. Does the sunray get dirty when it falls on mud? In the same way, God's grace does not lessen by being transmitted by a priest muddied with sins. He himself may be denied grace on Judgment Day because of his sinfulness, but you, accepting through him God's grace, will not deprive yourself of it if you show yourself to be worthy.

"But will the priest not give away the secret of my confessed sins?" No! No priest has the right to tell of that which he has heard during Confession. He has to take the secret of the Confession to his grave. So do not worry that the shame of your sinfulness may be announced to society.

But remember that if you avoid Confession because of zeal for your honor, you will shame yourself. If you are ashamed to admit your weaknesses before one man, everyone will begin talking about them! Such is the spiritual law. People sense our weaknesses, no matter how diligently we hide them. If you confess them before one man, God, because of your humility before this single witness, will cover you with His grace before the many.

However, if you are shielding your name before the confessor, your authority will collapse before all. Repent only before one man. Your confession will teach you to struggle with your passions; and if you are really fighting against them, the multitude of people will not find out about them. You, with God’s help, will be healed before you have shamed yourself. But If you do not want to be healed through Confession, then you will both expose your name to abuse here and then be disgraced before the whole universe at the Last Judgment!

5) A fifth man says: "I am going to the priest to have him read the prayer of absolution for me."

This is the most sacrilegious abuse of Confession! What does "the prayer of absolution" mean? It means a prayer for the absolving of sins. The Christian goes to the priest and, without confessing his sins, asks him: "Father, say the prayer of absolution for me!" or "Forgiving prayer"; and the priest puts stole on the head of the repenting man and forgives him the lawlessnesses which he has not confessed, but has hidden.

Stop, you, servant of God! What are you doing? Do you know what sins are hiding in this soul that you forgive them so carelessly? What a responsibility you carry before God, too! What if a deadly sin is being hidden from you, and you so thoughtlessly allow the Christian to partake of Holy Communion? Will you not speed up the death of his soul? Do you not know the words of the holy Apostle Paul: *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* (I Cor. 11:27). Why do you let him eat and drink his eternal condemnation? Why do you give the Sacrament to an unrepentant sinner? Judas, too, took Holy Communion together with the other holy Apostles at the Last Supper, but because he was an unrepentant sinner, instead of God's grace, Satan went into him. Do you want to make a second Judas out of the careless Christian who approaches Christ without Confession, only with an "absolving" prayer? It is better to refuse Holy Communion to the unprepared man until he repents and confesses than to give him fire and condemnation.

2. St. John Climacus, *The Ladder Ascent, 7th edition (Sergiev Posad, 1908), p. 41.*

This reading of the prayer of absolution is the greatest misuse! It is both lying to God and lying to oneself. Ananias and Sapphira paid with their lives for their wicked attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 5: 1-10). Do not fool yourself, Christian! The priest cannot forgive your sins until he hears them during Confession. He cannot loose the knots of your conscience until he has touched them. No prayer of absolution, lulling to your conscience, can help you. You have either confessed your sins and have received forgiveness for them, or you have not confessed them and they have stayed in your soul. If you can wash yourself without touching the water, then you will also be able to clean yourself from your lawlessness without confessing it.

The reading of the prayer of absolution, as a lulling of the conscience's vigilance, is a sin both for the priest and the layman, because in its core there is delusion and lies. This practice does not lead to spiritual healing, but to ever greater sinfulness. Someone is critically ill. The illness is identified with certainty, and the medicine which can over come it is also precisely known; but because it is bitter, the sick man asks for something more pleasant. Then the doctor gives either morphine to dull the pain or some sweet but useless syrup. Will the sick man recover? Never! And who will be responsible for his death? He himself, because he wanted sweet syrups to fool himself, and the doctor, who knew what he should give, but out of a desire to please the man did not give it.

Just recently a good and knowledgeable Christian woman confided in me the following: "I had prepared for Holy Communion. I went to church and looked for the parish priest so that I could confess. The priest was very busy, and his mood, as I noticed, was not good. He met me with a slight irritation: 'Well, why have you come? To confess all the same small sins? You do not have any big transgressions before God. Come here. I will read you the prayer of absolution!' 'But I want to confess; something is weighing me down!' -There is no need! Come and kneel here!' I obeyed, and he read me the prayer of absolution. I got up and walked away, but there was no relief in my soul! The burden remained there and tormented me even more! I returned to the priest from the middle of the temple, but he was already busy with other worshipers. The time for Communion came. I did not dare to take Communion, because I did not feel that my conscience was cleared. On the next Sunday I went to another church. There I went to Confession and took Communion. I felt a great joy from the Confession; it was only then that I was relieved."

Editor's Note: The same warning may be said about the current practice of "general confession," that is, when the priest raises his epitrachelion to the whole congregation and recites the prayer of absolution for all, even though none have given a personal confession.

From the "Forgotten Medicine" pages 29-30

Rules for a Saving Confession

by Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev
Chapter V in *The Forgotten Medicine* (pp 41-57)

ALL CHRISTIANS without exception must go to Confession if they wish to be saved. But how should the truly faithful Confession occur? Many do not know this, and that is why it is necessary to discuss this question more thoroughly. Here we will look at the following three parts of Confession:

a) What we should do before we go to the confessor.
b) What we should do when we are with the confessor.
c) What we should do when we come out of Confession.

What should we do before we go to the confessor?

The first and the last of the Apostles of Christ sinned gravely. Peter denied Christ; Judas betrayed Him. But Peter was forgiven and Judas perished. Peter regained his apostolic dignity, but the condemnation of the ages Is still weighing on Judas. What saved Peter, and what destroyed Judas? What should have this wretch done? Should he have confessed the sin after he committed it? But, technically speaking, he confessed when he went to the scribes and the elders and told them, *I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood* (Matt. 27:4), and with the confession gave back the thirty silver pieces to them. Is this not enough? Alas, no! A confession by itself does not save. Besides a broken heart, a live faith in God's grace is needed. Judas despaired of his salvation; that is why he hung himself after his confession. His body hung on a tree, and his soul went to hell for eternal torment.

Peter did not do so. In the yard of Calaphas he denied Christ, his Benefactor and Teacher, three times: *I do not know the Man* (Matt. 26:74). But at the third denial, when he heard the rooster crow, he remembered what Christ had prophesied, realized his sin, and humbled his heart. He went out of that yard, got out of the bad company of the servants of the high priest, and, most importantly, began to shed bitter tears—tears of sincere, heartfelt, deep repentance. According to one tradition, throughout his whole life, whenever he heard a rooster crow Peter remembered his heavy sin, and his eyes turned into two springs of most repentant tears. Peter did not despair; he believed in God's mercy and thus saved himself.

St. Peter has left us a living lesson: to turn again to God after our fall into sin. It is **faith in God's mercy** which drives away every despair. God is love. However grave our sin may be, He will forgive it, provided we repent from the heart. Even if our sins are as high as the mountains, they will sink in the ocean of God's mercy. However, if a man despairs, he is lost. Despair is the triumph of the devil. In short, let us protect ourselves from despair, because if we despair no one can save us.

We should imitate the holy Apostle Peter in another respect, as well. As he realized his sin, he immediately went out of the accursed yard of the high priest where he had denied Christ. And you, brother or sister, when you want to confess and come back to God, come out of that accursed yard of sin where you have been until now and where you have denied Christ not three times, but thirty-three times. Come out with your body, with your heart, and with your mind! Peter went away from the servants of the high priest. You, too, abandon the friendship with those who teach you to sin or who unwittingly serve as a temptation to you.

The most important moral from the behavior of the repentant Apostle is the following. When St. Peter was left alone, he reflected in himself, relived the horror of his sin, and cried bitterly because of deep suffering. As you prepare to go to your confessor, do not approach him without preparing beforehand. First go away from the noise of daily life, leave every other care, gather your thoughts, and make a short but heartfelt prayer. Remember all your sins and even write them down on a piece of paper, so that you will not forget them in your embarrassment, and thus remain uncleansed of them, when you go to Confession. Remember the Ten Commandments, see which ones you have transgressed, recall whether you have committed a deadly sin, test your conscience, judge yourself, cry for your fall, and in such a mood go to the priest! Then you can be confident that you will receive true forgiveness, because *a heart that is broken and humbled, God will not despise* (Ps. 50:17).

Grieving over the sins committed by LLS is absolutely necessary, if we want to receive God's forgiveness. Indeed, this is what repentance consists of-to shed tears, to feel deep sorrow because of one's fall. As St. Isaac of Syria testifies, God accepts our repentant grief as an offering of repentance.[1]

This is what we need to do before we go to the confessor.

What should we do when we are with the confessor?

We have to do the following: 1) Remember that we have come to Christ's infirmary. Here, the visible doctor is the priest, and the invisible-Christ Himself, 2) Confess our sins without false shame; 3) Not seek excuses for our sins; 4) Consciously conceal absolutely nothing; 5) Do not confess with general phrases which have no meaning; 6) Confess briefly, but precisely, the character of e;ich of our sins; 7) Not reveal other people's sins, and conceal, whenever possible, the names of the persons who have tempted us or who have sinned with us through our fault; 8) Not to boast before the priest of any virtues of ours; 9) Not to transfer the blame on others, but only on ourselves; and 10) Have a sincere desire not to sin again.

1) When we go to Confession, **we enter Christ's infirmary.** Here God Himself is the Doctor, because only He can give and take away life, judge and acquit, punish and for-

[1] Protopriest G. Diatchenko, Lessons and Examples of the Christian Faith, (St. Petersburg), p. 547

give. The priest is only a witness and a representative of God. That is why, standing visibly before the priest, and invisibly before Christ Himself, we must approach the great mystery of spiritual cleansing with great trembling! The priest hears our confession, but God accepts it. The priest examines our soul, but God will heal it. The priest will prescribe the remedies, but God will do the miracle of spiritual renewal.

Be heedful, Christian, to what infirmary you have come, so that you will not go away uncured because of carelessness or neglect, or ignorance or misplaced fear. If you truly have fear of God, be fearless when you come to confess your sins.The judge before Whom you are standing is infinitely merciful! He is dreadful only for those who do not fear Him and in their thoughtlessness refuse to repent.

2) Your confession must be done **without false fear.** In this world, almost all of us live with a Pharisaic hypocrisy. We are one thing, but we want to pass for something else; we do not show ourselves outwardly as we are inwardly. We wish that people would have a good opinion of us, and that is why we hide the bad qualities and show the good ones. If we do not have any good ones, we boast of imagined virtues. That is why you will often meet people in this life who seem to be good on the outside, but are not so in their hearts. Do we not lie to each other like that in this world? But should we lie when we are standing for Confession?

It is true that it is not easy to show yourself sinful before your confessor when you pretend to be good before everyone else. You feel ashamed to reveal your weaknesses. Yet how are you going to be cured if you hide your illness? You conquer your shame when you go to a doctor for examination—that is how you cure your body. Then why are you ashamed when you go to the priest to cure your soul? Do you not see that shame is an obstacle to your salvation? So shrug off the shame and get a grip on determination! You must be ashamed when you sin, not when you confess your sin! God has connected shame with sin, and determination with Confession. Do not listen to the devil who corrupts God's order and inspires shame at the confession of sin, but determination at its commission. He has turned everything upside down in order to destroy you.

When the famous Socrates was walking along a street in Athens, he saw one of his students who was coming out of the house of a certain harlot. The young man became ashamed in front of his teacher and quickly drew back inside again to hide. "Oh, young man," Socrates said to him, "it is not that shameful to come out of such a house, but it is shameful to remain in such a house." Oh, Christian, I will say, it Is not that shameful to disclose your sin in Confession, but it is shameful to remain closed in it, that is, to conceal it from your priest. St. Basil the Great said: "The hidden sin is an incurable sickness of the sold." How can you be cured from your illness if you hide it from the doctor?

Some are ashamed to confess because they have high posts and are high-ranking people, but look at the example of Bishop Potamius. He was of a respectable age, famous for his virtues, a model of celibacy. Yet it so happened that he fell in sin, but he got up immediately and thought of repenting at the council of all the bishops who

were to meet soon in his town. When the council began, Bishop Potamius, being respected by all, was elected as chairman. He began to feel in his heart a horrendous struggle between shame and heartfelt repentance. "Potamius," shame was saying on one side, "are you really going to confess in public?"

"Potamius," repentance was calling on the other side, "why are you delaying and not doing that which you decided to do?"

"Are you not ashamed before the people?" reasoned shame.

"You be ashamed before God!" advised repentance.

"But you are a prelate! You will become a temptation!" reasoned shame.

"Precisely because of your being a prelate, YOU must give the world a good example!" cried repentance.

In the end repentance won, and shame retreated. Potamius got up from his chair and confessed his sin before all. Even the angels in heaven wondered at such a confession!

If a prelate was not ashamed to confess his sin before a whole council, why should we be ashamed to tell of our sins secretly before one servant of God? The moment we tell of them, they stop being sins. When David confessed his sins before Nathan, he immediately heard the comforting word, *The Lord has put away thy sin* (II Kings 12:13). But the unconfessed sin leaves an incurable, deadly wound on the sold. So let us confess boldly!

3) When we are standing before the court of voluntary confession, **we must not seek excuses for our sins.** Let us suffer in voluntary self-exposure. This suffering is expiatory. Let us blush with embarrassment. Our sins are burning in the flames of self-exposure. But if we begin to excuse ourselves, to justify ourselves, that is the end of the saving power of our confession. What is Confession? —repentance. And the truly repentant person knows only one thing—to cry and ask for mercy. If he begins to justify himself, to use cunning, all of his repentant mood will vanish into thin air. In the Sacrament of Confession the repentant mood is very important.

We must remember all of this, because there are many Christians who, as they confess, always want to excuse themselves in some way. Even though they confess their sin, they always try to make it less important and heavy, always looking for some extenuating circumstances, so that they will look more innocent. They must know that the heavenly court is not like the earthly one. Before the earthly court the defendant tries to make himself appear more innocent so that he will be acquitted. Before God's court it is the opposite: whoever accuses himself more is acquitted more.

Is it not for this that Jesus Christ is calling us to Himself, to forgive us all voluntary and involuntary sins? No other religion teaches of a God as full of love for men as ours does.

It is told about Blessed Jerome that, as he lived in Palestine and worked in the cave of Bethlehem where our Saviour was born, he had a wondrous vision on Christmas. Jesus Christ appeared to him as a child and asked him: "Jerome, when everyone presents something to me, what are you going to give me?"

"My virtues and prayers," answered St. Jerome.
"This is good, but what else?"
"My heart, my soul, and all of myself"
"I accept that, too, but I want something else from you as well."
"But what else should I give You, Lord?" wondered the ascetic.
"Give me your sins!"
The Blessed Jerome began to cry brokenheartedly. He asked through tears: "Why do You need my sins, Lord?"
"I want to take them on myself"
Do you hear? "Give me your sins!" Jesus Christ wants from us our sins. Let us give them to Him in the holy Sacrament of Confession, and He will forgive us for them.

4) **We must consciously hide absolutely nothing** before the priest. If we unwittingly forget a sin, we must confess it the next time. To conceal something for which our conscience Is clearly bothering us would mean that we have doubled our sin: doubled, because one, we have committed it, and two, we have concealed it.

Do not hide your sin in your soul. It is a deadly disease. It is an ulcer which, if it is not operated on, can send you to the grave. By concealing our sins we are doing the greatest favor to the devil, who makes us commit lawlessness and afterwards keep it in our souls as his treasure, which will serve him as accusatory material against us. Confess everything which stains your conscience. The more waste you carry out of your soul of your own accord, the more your soul will be swept by God's grace. Whoever sins enters into an alliance with the devil, but whoever confesses breaks up his friendship with the demons. Confession is treason against the devil. It is the only virtuous treachery.

St. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov teaches us wonderfully: "Through the confession of sins the friendship with the demons is broken up. The hatred of sin is a proof of true repentance and of the determination of a man to lead a virtuous life. If you have adopted the habit of sinning, confess your sins more often, and soon you will free yourself from the captivity of sin. Lightly and joyously you will follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The friends of a man who constantly betrays them become his enemies and go away from him as from a traitor who continually seeks their certain peril; and the sins, too, draw back from the man who confesses them, because the sins are based and stand on the pride of the fallen nature and cannot stand exposure.[2]

5) In Confession **we must not use general terms** which do not mean anything. Many, especially among those confessing for the first time, learn what to say before the

---

[2] Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, Works, Vol. 3, (St. Petersburg, 1905), p. 102.

priest when they go to him. Either out of timidity or out of lack of experience, they often say inappropriate things and leave Confession without benefit.

A Christian woman decided to go to Confession, but she did not know what to do. She asked another woman for advice, and that woman taught her: "Say: 'I am guilty of everything!' and that is it." "Oh, it is very easy then," said the first Christian to herself and stood encouraged before the servant of God.

When the priest asked her about her sins, she calmly said: “Father, I am guilty of everything!" and thought that she had finished her confession. "And have you stolen any horses?" he unexpectedly asked. "Have I stolen horses?" she wondered. "It never occurred to me to commit such a sin!" "Ah, so you are not guilty of everything!" wisely said the priest. "There are people who do steal horses. But you, as it turns out, have not committed this sin. Let us see, one by one, in what you have sinned," so he led her to a true confession.

6) When we confess, we must tell **briefly and accurately** the nature of each of our sins. We see that general terms do not benefit the confessing person. He must recount individually each of his transgressions before God. Of course that does not mean that he must begin to tell long and detailed stories. The priest is usually a very busy man. During the feasts, and especially before Communion, many are waiting their turn to confess to him. That is why conciseness, accuracy, and briefness are needed. In order to achieve that, it is recommended that the sins be recorded beforehand on a piece of paper and that they be read during Confession. Do not wait for the priest to ask you questions. The benefit is much greater when you tell about your sins of your own accord. If the confessor stops you and, in order to clarify your spiritual condition for himself, asks you a question, you are obliged to answer accurately and straight to the point.

Some are cunning at Confession and, thinking that they can outwit even God, instead of briefly describing the nature of their sin—i.e., "I hate my neighbor"—out of an improper desire not to compromise themselves, begin to tell long and unnecessary stories of how their neighbor hated them, how he harmed them, etc. Again, instead of saying: "I stole such-and-such a thing," they begin explaining how someone else's property has been left with them. This is not a confession, but a foolish slyness before God.

7) During Confession, **we must not tell of other people's sins,** but only of ours, withholding whenever possible the names of the persons who have caused us to sin or whom we have tempted to sin with us.

Many do not abide by this natural rule and fall into the following unreasonableness: when they come to confess their sins, they speak only about those of other people: "She, my daughter-in-law, did this and that! My husband is an impossible boor!" or "My wife is not obeying me; she has a very bad character, and she is constantly quarreling with me and my family. A friend of mine, his name is so-and-so,—you know him, Father—has insulted me greatly. And so-and-so, Father did this!"

This is not Confession-to accuse others instead of yourself. Rather, It is a judgment of others. Those who do this come to the priest sinful and leave even more so!

8) Others, when they come to Confession, instead of exposing, themselves, which is natural, necessary, and good during Confession, most unexpectedly begin **to boast**: "I, Father, have neither murdered nor stolen. Neither am I a drunkard. I live most respectably. I am held in respect by my neighbors and friends. Well, as a human, I might have sinned somehow at some time, but now I do not remember anything. My conscience is clear."

This terrible smugness is an even greater sin than those horrible sins which such a man boasts of never having committed, because he has sunk in the abyss of sin-dumb, complacent pride.

Many people arrive at the dulling of their moral sense and the belief that they are not sinful because of staying away too long from God's grace, which is given through the Sacraments of Christ's Church. The zealous servant of Christ from the village of Chepelare, the late Archpriest Eustathius Iankov, told me about one such man:

"My parishioner Bocho was a drunkard. He broke off with the Church and always hung around the bar. For a long time he did not come either to confess nor to take Communion. One evening his sister, who was a very devout Christian, called me.

'Come, father, to confess and give Communion to Bocho. He is not sick, but since I know that he would not come to you, you go to him!'

I went. I explained to him how good it would be for him to confess. But he stood silent. I asked him what was on his conscience. Was something bothering him?

'There is nothing. My conscience is clear,' he said.

'But how is it that there is nothing? Are you not a sinful man.' 'I have done nothing wrong.'

'And do you want to take Communion?'

'Why not? I will take Communion,' he answered indifferently.

'Good! Tomorrow I will come to your house with the Holy Gifts.'

I went back home, but something was so heavy on my soul.

Bocho's sister prepared him for Holy Communion—helped him to wash himself, gave him clean clothes to change into.

On the next day I was carrying the Holy Gifts to Bocho's place. But I met some acquaintances of mine, and they told me: 'Bocho died unexpectedly last night!'

I was numbed with horror. Obviously, God did not allow him to take Holy Communion, because he did not want to confess and be humbled before God by admitting to be sinful."

9) When we confess, **we must put the blame not on others, but on ourselves**.

In Paradise our ancestors Adam and Eve sinned: they ate from the tree with the forbidden fruit. God called them to confess, ready to forgive them: "Adam, where are you? Eve, what have you done?" Oh, if they **had confessed their sin bravely!** If they had admitted their guilt! If they had not transferred the blame each on the other! If Adam

had said for himself, "God, forgive me! I am guilty!" and if Eve had hurried to admit: "No, Lord. Adam is not guilty, because I gave him to eat from the forbidden fruit!" If they had done so, they would not have been driven out of Paradise.

Instead, what did they do? When God spoke to them, they began to justify themselves and to transfer the blame one to the other. "Adam, what have you done?" "Not I, Lord, but the woman; she is to blame!" "Eve, what did you do?" "Not I, Lord; the snake, it tempted me." Both of them concealed their guilt. That is why they were driven out of Paradise.

But do not many among us do as Adam and Eve did? When we go to Confession, the priest asks: "Adam, in what condition are You? Eve, what have you done?" We justify ourselves, hide our sins, and blame others. This is not Confession! True Confession is a voluntary self-exposure before the confessor, fearless self-accusation, diligent self-compromise, virtuous self-shaming, deep brokenness, non-hypocritical sorrow for sins, and true desire for correction with God's help.

10) The crown of true repentance is the **firm intention not to sin any more in the future.**

There are people who confess only to be able to take Communion. They are led by the thought that the taking of Communion without Confession is a heavy sin for the soul, but they do not make the decision in their hearts to begin a new life. They think: "I will sin until the next Confession, and I will repent again; if there is Confession, the sin is not so frightful." And some even hurry to commit the sins which they desire but have not yet committed before they confess, so that they can report them in the coming Confession. All thIs is loathsome and base before God! Confession is not beneficial to the one who consciously follows the sinful whimsies of his perverted will and transgresses God's commands on purpose. Such a man who creates sinful habits in himself later wonders in vain why, when he confesses, he cannot correct himself! He cannot correct himself because he himself does not want to.

St. Basil the Great says: "It is not he who says: 'I have sinned', but after that continues to sin that is confessing his sin, but it is he who, according to the words of the Psalm, has seen his sin and has hated it. Of what use is the care of the doctor to the sick man when the one suffering from the diseases is holding steadfastly to that which is detrimental to life? In the same way, there is no use in forgiving the injustices of the man who continues to commit them. The one who continues to live in debauchery does not benefit from the loosing of the sin of debauchery. The wisest Home-builder of our life wants the one who has lived in sins and afterwards has given a vow to begin a new life, to put an end to his past and, after the committed sins, lay a beginning as a person ready for a new life through repentance.[3]

In order for us to have true benefit from Confession, we must firmly resolve not to sin any more in the future. True repentance, according to the Holy Fathers, is in exactly

---

[3] Protopriest Diatchenko, op. cit., p. 556.

this, not to repeat your sin any more! "Whoever allows himself to sin arbitrarily, with the hope that he will repent," says St. Isaac the Syrian, "deals treacherously with God. Death strikes him unexpectedly, and he does not live to the time which he presumed to devote to virtue.[4]

In order for us to have true benefit from Confession, we must resolve not to sin in the future. True repentance, according to the Holy Fathers, consists precisely In not repeating the sin any more. In order for this to happen, in Confession we must wish with all our heart to begin a new life in the future. If we have this saving desire, let us be confident that God will help us by all means.

What Should We Do When We Leave the Confessor?

After we have confessed well, we must carry out the penance which has been given to us: bows, intensified prayer, fasting, diligent reading of God's Word, almsgiving, visiting the sick, caring for orphans, etc. We must pay special attention to the following three points:

1) If you have an enmity against someone, **forgive with all your heart,** so that God will also forgive you (cf. Matt. 6:14-15). Otherwise, your confession will be in vain.

Themistocles and Aristides, distinguished Athenian governors, were in constant enmity between themselves. But their country assigned them to do an important state job together. However, how could they abandon the enmity? Then Aristides said: "Themistoctes, do you want to leave the enmity here, on the border? We will go, do the job, and, if you want, when we come back, we will renew our enmity!"—and so they did. After successfully completing the state job, they came back and again continued to be hostile to each other.

Does it not happen so with Christians who are on hostile terms? They confess, take Communion from the same cup, and leave the hostility on the threshold of the temple; but when they leave the church, they renew the enmity again.... Is this Confession? They are committing a greater sin by confessing and taking Communion without wanting to give up hatred towards their personal enemies. Let us put an end to enmities!

2) Others who have admitted in Confession that they have violated their celibacy or family honor must **give up the bad road forever.** They cannot love both the sin and God.

A philosopher once went boating in the sea. There was a strong storm which almost overturned his boat. It was a miracle that he survived. He came back home and,

---

[4] Ibid, p. 556.

since one of his windows was overlooking the sea, immediately walled up that window, so that he would not look towards the sea and fall into the temptation of wanting to go boating again!

Oh, Christian, how many times you, too, have almost lost both your life and your soul in the sea of lewd love! You have been delivered by a miracle. Now avoid the causes for it! Do not go by that road anymore. Do not enter that house anymore. Do not look toward that window anymore. Close your eyes so that the temptation will not enter your heart. Otherwise, you will perish!

3) Finally, if you have misappropriated another's possession, if you have robbed someone, **return that which does not belong to you.** Otherwise, there is no forgiveness for you.

If you blaspheme God's name, if you deny Orthodoxy, if you are angry, if you are proud, if you envy, or commit other heavy sins—when you repent, everything will be forgiven you. Why? Because with all of these sins you offend God, and God has made the priest His representative for all these sins with which men offend Him. As God's representative, the priest can forgive you the sins against God if you repent.

However, if you keep another's property and confess it but do not return it, the priest does not have the right to forgive you. If you are holding in your hands the property of some poor man, how can the priest forgive you for this sin? The poor man has not made the priest his substitute and has not given him the power to forgive his stolen property on his behalf

But you will say: "I give alms to the monasteries and the poor!" Be quiet! No law, either of God or of man, allows anyone to give away as a gift to someone another man's property. Therefore, in order to receive forgiveness from God, return that which does not belong to you!

We see then what the rules are for a saving Confession: first, before we go to the confessor, we must examine well our conscience; second, when we are with the priest, we must confess sincerely, with a broken heart, and without shame and excuses; third, when we leave the priest, we must carry out our penance, put an end to the hostility, give up our impure life, and return that which *Is not ours '

He who does not correct his behavior through Confession does not confess but talks idly, according to the words of St. Basil the Great.[5]

---

[5] Ibid, p. 540.

Orthodox America

The Mystery of Repentance

Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky

The Mystery of Repentance is a grace- giving sacred rite in which, after the faithful offer repentance of their sins, the remission of sins is bestowed by the mercy of God through the intermediary of a pastor of the Church, in accordance with the Saviour's promise,

In the Mystery of Repentance the spiritual afflictions of a man are treated, impurities of soul are removed, and a Christian, having received forgiveness of sins, again becomes inn6cent and sanctified, just as he came out of the waters of Baptism. Therefore, the Mystery of Repentance is called a "spiritual medicine" One's sins, which draw a man downward, which dull his mind, heart and conscience, which blind his spiritual gaze; which make powerless his Christian will-are annihilated, and one's living bond with the Church and with the Lord God is restored. Being relieved of the burden of sins, a man again comes to life spiritually and becomes able to strengthen himself and become perfected in the good Christian path.

The Mystery of Repentance consists of two basic actions: 1) the confession of his sins before a pastor of the Church by the person coming to the Mystery; and 2) the prayer of forgiving and remitting them, pronounced by the priest

This Mystery is also called the *Mystery of Confession* (even though the confession *of sins* comprises *only the* first, preliminary part of it), and this indicates the importance of the sincere revelation of one's soul and the manifestation of one's sins.

Confession-that is, pronouncing aloud- is the expression of inward Repentance, its result, its indicator. And what is repentance? Repentance is not only awareness of one's sinfulness or a simple acknowledgment of one's unworthiness; it is not even contrition or regret (although all these aspects should enter into repentance), Rather, it is an act of one's Will for correction, a desire and firm intention, a resolve, to battle against evil inclinations; and this condition of soul is united with a petition for God's help in the battle against one's evil inclinations. Such a heartfelt and sincere repentance is necessary so that the effect of this Mystery might extend not only to the removal of sins, but so that there might also enter the opened soul a grace-giving healing which does not allow the soul again to become immersed in the filth of sin..

The very uttering aloud of one spiritual afflictions and falls before a spiritual father

-the confession of sins-has the significance that by means of it there are overcome

a) pride, the chief source of sins, and

b) b) the despondency or hopelessness in one's correction and salvation. The manifestation of the sin brings one already near to casting it away from oneself.

Those who approach the Mystery of Repentance prepare themselves for it by an effort of prayer, fasting, and entering deeply within themselves, with the aim of uncovering and acknowledging their sinfulness.

The mercy of God goes out to meet the repenting Christian, testifying, through the lips of the spiritual father, that the Heavenly *Father does not reject one who comes to Him,* just as Re did not reject the prodigal. son and the repentant publican, This testimony consists in the words of the special prayer and the special words of remission which are pronounced by the priest.

The Institution of the Mystery

The Lord instituted the Mystery of Repentance after His Resurrection, when, having appeared to His disciples who, except for Thomas, were gathered together, He said to them solemnly:

Peace be unto you...And when He had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto then: Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:21-23)

Moreover, even before this, Christ the Savior twice uttered a promise about this Mystery. The first time He said to the Apostle Peter, when Peter, on behalf of all the Apostles, had confessed Him to be the Son of God:

I will give unto thee the keys qi the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, (Matt. 16:19)

Priests are only the visible instruments at the performance of the Mystery, which is performed invisibly through them by God Him- self.

St, John Chrysostom, having in mind the Divine institution of the authority of the pastors of the Church to loose and bind, says:

"The priests decree below, God confirms above, and the Master agrees with the opinion of His slaves. The priest is here the instrument of God's mercy and remits sins not on his own authority, but in the name of the Holy Trinity

The invisible effects of grace in the Mystery of Repentance, in their breadth and power, extend to all the lawless deeds of men, and there is no sin that could not be forgiven men if only they sincerely repent of it and confess it with lively faith in the Lord Jesus and hope in His mercy. *I am come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance* (Matt.. 9:13), said the Saviour, and

as great as was the sin of the Apostle Peter, He forgave him when he sincerely repented. It is known that the holy Apostle Peter called to repentance even the Jews who crucified the true Messiah (Acts 2:38), and later he called Simon the sorcerer, the ancestor of all heretics(Acts 8:22); the Apostle Paul gave remission to the incestuous man who repented, subjecting him first to a temporary excommunication (II Cor. 2:7).

On the other hand, it is essential to remember that the remissionn of sins in the Mystery is an act of mercy, but not an irrational pity. It is given for a man's spiritual profit, *for edification, and not for destruction* (II Cor. 10:8). This lays a great responsibility upon the one who performs the Mystery

Holy Scripture speaks of cases of conditions when sins are *not* forgiven. In the word of God there is mention of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which *shall not be forgiven unto men, neither in this world, neither in the world to come* (Matt. 12:31- 32). Likewise, it speaks of the *sin unto death,* for the forgiveness of which it is not commanded even to pray (I John 5:16). Finally, the Apostle Paul instructs that:

> ***It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spiriti, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew' them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.***
>
> (Heb. 6:4-6)

In all these cases, the reason why the forgiveness of sins is not possible is to be found in the sinners themselves, and not in the will of God; more precisely, it lies in the lack of repentance of the sinners. How can a sin be forgiven by the grace of the Holy Spirit, when blasphemy is spewed forth against this very grace? But one must believe that, even in these sins, the sinners, if they offer sincere repentance and weep over their sins, will be forgiven. "For," says St. John Chrysostom about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, "even this guilt will be remitt6d to those who repent. Many of those who have spewed forth blasphemies against the Spirit have subsequently come to believe, and everything was remitted to them" (Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew). Further, the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council speak of the possibility of forgiveness for deadly sins: "The sin unto death is when certain ones, after sinning, do not correct themselves, ,..In such ones the Lord Jesus does not abide, unless they humble themselves and recover from their fall into sin. It is fitting for them once more to approach God and with contrite heart to ask for the remission of this sin and forgiveness, and not to become vainglorious over an unrighteous deed. *For the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart* (PS.

33:18).

The permission and even the direct demand to repeat the Mystery of Repentance is clear from the words of the Gospel:

Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

(Luke 15:7)

Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky

(Excerpt from the English translation by Fr. Seraphim Rose of Fr. Michael Pomazansky's book *Dogmatic Theology)*

ON CONFESSION & COMMUNION

Below is an article written by His Grace BISHOP TIKHON for his bulletin, regarding Confession and Communion.

Our parish rule on Confession and Communion is based on the Document "Confession and Communion" published by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, which was based on a report to the Synod by Father Alexander Schmemann of blessed memory. The Holy Synod wished to encourage more frequent Communion, while deepening the spirit of repentance among the laity, and blessed the practice of General Confession in addition to personal confession. The Holy Synod clearly stated: "General Confession is not a replace ment of private confession, but is rather for those who commune frequently and who regularly make private confessions..."

Father Alexander Schmemann, in his report, printed in the Holy Synod's document proposed three "fundamental principles". Here are two of them:

First of all, if the desire for and the practice of a more frequent and, ultimately, regular, communion is to be encouraged, it is nevertheless obvious that it would be spiritually wrong and very harmful to impose it in any way. This practice cannot and must not become either a "fad" or the result of any kind of pressure. Therefore, for those who receive communion seldom, (even once a month) ... one must keep in all its strictness the necessity for confession before.

For communion more often than once a month, one needs the blessing of the rector of the parish. This permission will be given only to those persons who are well-known to the rector and after a thorough pastoral examination of the seriousness and rectitude of such person's attitude towards the Church and towards Christian life. In such a case, the relationship between the rhythm of confession and that of communion must be left to the decision of the priest, confession remaining regular, however, and **heard not less than once a month.**

This is self-explanatory, however, in our parish these principles are somewhat modified. Individual permissmn L0r rather, a blessing] need not be obtained from me, the rector, in order to commune more than once a month. This permission· may be given by me or another priest to the individual who comes to us regularly to confession. In addition, I would like to emphasize that neither the Holy Synod nor Father Schmemann (nor do I) wish in any

way to decrease the frequency of confession. It was not only a bad practice when people went to Communion only once a year-it was also a bad practice because people went to Confession only once a year.

Neither Confession nor Communion should be seen as an onerous and occasional obligation. In general, we have usually given to parishioners, individually, permission to commune every Sunday and come to Confession a minimum of once a month as long as a Sunday Communion was not missed and as long as no disturbing sin had intervened.

Unforunately this was looked on not only as a minimum, but as a maximum. This is wrong. Confessions must be heard as often as necessary, even daily, depending on the sensitivity of the individual conscience. Those who are advanced in piety feel the need for Confession frequently. Those who are, so to speak, children in their spiritual development do not see the need to confess more than the absolute minimum "required by the priests".

Unfortunately, some in our parish may even be doing even less, in a careless way. The priest always wishes to give any Christian "the benefit of the doubt", so it may happen that while one priest may impart Holy Communion to a parishioner whose Confession he has not heard for longer than a month, he may at the same time, giving "the benefit of the doubt", assume that the parishioner must have confessed before me or another priest The only solution to that would be to go back to the "old days", where parishioners had to inscribe their names in a book when they went to Confession, and the Priest could refer to this book before imparting Communion in a doubtful case. This attitude and practice would now be rather foreign to our parish. We wish to continue to observe the "honor system".

I therefore, personally ask all parishioners who are coming frequently or infrequently to Holy Communion please review the above principles. Also be aware that you can come to Confession any time by appointments, and before and after all weekday services. Confession is good for us.

A small failing if unremedied can lead to a great fall.

-Bishop Tikhon

"If thou desirest, 0 man, to eat the Body of the Master, approach with fear Jest thou be burnt, for It is fire."

"Behold, I approach the Divine Communion.0 Creator, let me not be burnt by communicating, for Thou art Fire consuming the unworthy." (From the Prayers Before Holy Communion)

Those who desire to have Confession and to commune of the Holy Mysteries must prepare properly, according to the rules instituted by the Holy Orthodox Church. Namely:

Those who desire to commune on Sunday must prepare themselves by *at least* being continually conscious of the fact, during the week that they are preparing to partake of the Most precious Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ

*** Be present at and attentively participate in the evening services before the day of Holy Communion.**

Explanation: Communion of the most pure Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the highest form of communion with the Lord God. Communing is the completion, the culmination of our communion with God. If a person comes to the chalice without having gone through the struggle of prayer, through which he comes nearer to God, if he does not go through a process of ever-increasing interaction with God, then this leap, as it were, from noncomm union to the ultimate level of communion (i.e., Holy Communion) is too drastic. That person is unworthy at that point for the acceptance of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and for that person the Gifts become "fire, consuming the unworthy." In other words, for such a person, Communion brings not healing, but harm. This is why it is necessary to be at the Divine Services preceding Holy Communion, for they are one of the most important forms of interaction with God available to us, and thus an important component of our preparation.

*** Those preparing for Communion should be participating in the sacrament of Confession on a regular basis. If you are receiving Communion each week, then have a regular rule of monthly Confession. (See the *Encyclical of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America* on this issue)**

Explanation: Since we must be in church on the eve of receiving Holy Communion, it is wise for us to have Confession at that time. In the evening there is no hurry; one can calmly and thoughtfully lay out one's thoughts. In the morning the priest is busy with the Proskomedia, and there is little time. Confession becomes hurried, incomplete. Only extreme need is cause enough to pull the priest away from the Proskome.dia for morning Confession.

*** Read at home all the prescribed preparatory prayers out of the prayerbook.**

Explanation: One must definitely read "The Order of Preparation for Holy Communion" (found in the **J**ordanville Prayer Book).* By all means, if one so desires, other prayers can also be read:
1) Supplicatory Canon to our Lord Jesus Christ 2) Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos 3) Canon to the Guardian Angel 4) Akathist to our Sweetest Lord Jesus Christ or Akathist to our Most Holy Lady Theotokos.

*** Ask forgiveness and reconcile yourself with everyone with whom you have had an argument, misunderstanding or any deterioration** in **relationship. By taking Communion without full reconciliation with everyone we do ourselves great harm.**

Explanation: The Church exhorts us to be in peace with everyone 'through the following words which are written in the prayers preparing us for Holy Communion: "If thou desirest,0 man, to eat the Body of the Mastery, approach with fear, lest thou be burnt; for It is frre. And when thou drink.est the Divine Blood unto communion, first be reconciled to them that have grieved thee, then dare to eat the Mystical Food."

*

One must approach the Mysteries without having eaten or drunk anything from midnight on.

Explanation: We prepare ourselves with fasting for the partaking of the Holy Gifts. The final period before Communion we intensify our abstention, and eat and drink nothing. Those who cannot do without certain medication may take it with Holy Water that morning. Small children may eat before Communion in the morning. The sick (for example, diabetics) and those who are weak can receive a blessing from their spiritual father (priest) to eat a small amount the morning of Communion.

*** In the morning, one must come before the beginning of the service, respectfully venerate the icons, light candles, rmd a spot to stand and be prepared for the Divine Liturgy.**

Explanation: One should not rush about before Liturgy, and arrive late. If one has arrived after the Beatitudes, than definitely one should not receive Communion, unless one has a blessing to do so.

* It is **strongly suggested tha women cover their beads while** in **Church.**

Explanation: The Church follows the instruction of the Apostle Paul, who says in his first epistle to the Corinthians (11:4-5): *"Every man praying or prophesying having his h ad covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth and prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head."* Look at the Icon of the Virgin Mary, and the women saints; look at the long Tradition of the Church in this regard and the practice of covering the head that prevailed throughout ALL of Christendom (indeed, in almost every religion except our own watered-down approach) until only recently; consider the head-covering as a vestment and adornment in honor of the Lord. All these examples serve to remind us of the holiness of the Church.

*** No one should take Holy Communion (or even come to church) with lipstick on.**

Explanation: Besides the fact that such a practice is not becoming for God's House, how many pages of our churches' Holy Gospels have been ruinoo by kissing with painted lips. How many church vessels, crosses, spoons, have been treatoo the same way. Look at our icons at the end of a service. They are covered with lipstick smears. Even the Holy Shroud, the Body of Christ, Who sufferoo for us, has been marred with lipstick.

*** After receiving Holy Communion, one must stay and listen attentively to the thanksgiving prayers or diligently read them at home from the prayer book.**

Explanation: In Holy Communion we receive a great gift from God. We express our gratitude for God's great act of mercy through these thanksgiving prayers.

THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF TRUTH

Saint Nicolas Varzhansky

CONCERNING THE HOLY CROSS OF CHRIST

PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

DURING GREAT LENT, and the other fasts of the Church Year, it is customary for all Orthodox Christians to go to confession to their priest. Properly this should be done several times a year, the exact frequency depending upon how often one is blessed to receive the Holy Mysteries and on the counsel and blessing of one's spiritual father. As a preparation for this sacramental confession and to help one examine one's conscience before coming to confession, the following questions are sometimes distributed in parishes and, although of course the list is not exhaustive, it may be a help to those of our readers who are Orthodox Christians.

Sins Against God

- Do you pray to God in the morning and evening, before and after meals?
- During prayer have you allowed your thoughts to wander?
- Have you rushed or gabbled your prayers? or when reading in church?
- Do you read the Scriptures daily? Do you read other spiritual writings regularly?
- Have you read books whose content is not Orthodox or even anti-Orthodox, or is spiritually damaging?
- Have you pronounced the name of God without reverence, joking? Have you asked God's help before starting every activity?
- Have you made the sign of the Cross carelessly, thoughtlessly? Have you sworn? Have you murmured against God?
- Have you sinned by forgetting God?
- Have you been slack in attending church?
- Have you consecrated even part of the feast days, particularly Sundays and the Twelve Great Feasts, to God?
- Have you tried your best to attend church on these days? or have you spent them more sinfully than ordinary days?
- If unable to attend church for some reason, have you nonetheless tried to devote some part of these days to prayer and spiritual reading?
- Have you joined with people not of the Faith in prayer, or attended their worship services?
- Have you kept the fasts?
- Have you behaved irreverently in church, or before the clergy and monastics?

- Have you laughed or talked in church, or moved about unnecessarily, thus also distracting other people from prayer?
- Have dressed modestly and in a becoming manner when in church?
- Have you tried to pay reverent attention to the readings, hymns, and prayers in church?
- Have you striven to pray with the service, crossing yourself, etc., or have you rather simply stood and day-dreamed?
- Have you prepared for the services beforehand, looking up the Scriptural readings, making sure you have the texts to follow the service etc., especially if the service will be in a language you do not readily understand?
- Have you ever left church after the Divine Services, and particularly after receiving the Holy Mysteries and immediately engaged in light talk and thus forgotten the blessings and graces you have received?
- Have you been ashamed of your Faith or the sign of the Cross in the presence of others?
- Have you made a show of your piety?
- Have you used your Orthodox Faith or its teachings merely to browbeat others or belittle them?
- Have you used it as a shield or excuse for your own inadequacies rather than humbling yourself?
- Have you believed in dreams, fortune telling, astrology, signs and other superstitions?
- Do you give thanks to the Lord for all things?
- Have you ever doubted God's providence concerning yourself?
- Do you at least try to perceive His purpose in all the things that come upon you?

Sins Against Your Neighbours

- Do you respect and obey your parents?
- Have you offended them by rudeness or contradiction?
  (These two apply also to priests, superiors, teachers and elders.)
- Have you insulted anyone?
- Have you quarreled or fought with anyone? Have you hit anyone?
- Are you always respectful to old people?
- Are you ever angry, bad tempered or irritable?
- Have you called anyone names? Do you use foul language?
- Have you derided any that are disabled, poor, old or in some way disadvantaged?
- Have you entertained bad feelings, ill will or hatred against anyone?
- Have you forgiven those who have offended you?

Proper Confession and Communion

Proper Confession

Before confession one should attempt to recall all the sins which one has committed voluntarily or involuntarily. One must attentively reexamine one's life in order to recall not only those sins committed since the last confession, but also those which have not been confessed through forgetfulness. Then, with compunction and a contrite heart, approach the Cross and the Gospel and begin the confession of your sins.

1. Confess your sins honestly, remembering that you open them not to a man, but to God Himself. God knows your sins already and only wants your admission of them. You should not be embarrassed before your spiritual father: he is a person just as you are. He knows human shortcomings well, man's tendency towards sin. For this reason your spiritual father cannot be your terrible judge at confession. Is the reason that you are embarrassed before your spiritual father that you are afraid to lose his good opinion of you? On the contrary, your spiritual father will have all the more love for you when he sees your open, honest confession. Furthermore, if you are afraid to reveal your sins before just one person, your spiritual father, how will you overcome your embarrassment when you appear at God's Last Judgment? There, all your sins which you have not confessed will be opened before God Himself, the Angels and all the people.

2. Be specific when you confess, listing all your sins separately. St. John Chrysostom says: "One must not only say: I have sinned, or I am sinful, but one must declare each type of sin." "The revelation of sins," says St. Basil the Great, "is subject to the same law as the Declaration of physical ills..." The sinner is spiritually ill, and the spiritual father is the physician or healer. It stands to reason that one must confess or tell about one's sins in the same way as one who is physically ill describes the symptoms of his illness to a physician from whom he expects to receive healing.

3. Do not mention anyone else during confession, i.e. do not complain about anyone - what sort of confession is this? It is not confession, but judgement and a new sin.

4. Do not attempt to justify yourself in any way during confession: blaming weakness, custom, etc. The more one justifies himself during confession, the less one is justified by God. The more one denounces, judges and accuses oneself, the more one is justified in the eyes of God.

5.When questioned by your spiritual father, do not say: "I can't remember, maybe I committed that sin." God commanded us to always remember our sins. In order not to justify ourselves with not remembering, we must confess our sins as often as possible. Those who, because of carelessness, confess and take communion infrequently, and because of this forget their sins, have no one to blame but themselves. They cannot hope for remission of the sins which they failed to confess. Thus, it is imperative that we try to recall all our sins. When someone owes us something we are sure to remember this. Yet we forget our own debts before God! Does this not reveal an utter absence of concern for our soul on our part?

6. Unless asked by your spiritual father, do not list the sins you have not committed or things you have not done. Doing this, you liken yourself to the Pharisee of the Gospel. You do not confess your sins, but boast, thereby increasing your judgment.

7. We must confess with sorrow and a contrite heart the sins by which we have grieved our Lord God. It is not good that many tell of their sins matter-of-factly, without any remorse. They speak as though they are engaged in some casual conversation. What is worse, some even allow themselves to laugh during confession. These are all signs of unrepentedness. Confessing in this manner, we do not cleanse ourselves of our sins, but rather increase them.

8. Finally, confess your sins with faith in Jesus Christ, with hope in His mercy. Only with faith in Jesus Christ and hope in Him can we receive forgiveness of our sins. Without faith, we cannot receive remission. An example of this is Judas the traitor—who was remorseful of what he did, but did not have faith in Jesus, no hope in His mercy, and thus ended his own life.

This then, is how we must confess in order to receive remission of our sins from our Lord God. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)

Prayerful Preparation for Communion

Of all of the days in the life of a Christian, the happiest is the day on which we receive Holy Communion worthily, with complete attentiveness and preparation. Through confession, we have washed ourselves of all sins, opened before the Lord our entire soul, and received into the house of our soul the Holy Heavenly Guest, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said "He who eats of My Body and drinks of My Blood abides in Me and I in him." On the day on which we receive Communion, it is extremely important for us to recognize what we are doing, and in participating in the awesome Mystery, to understand what responsibility we are taking upon ourselves. To receive the Divine Guest carelessly, without the requisite attention, is to condemn ourselves. May it not be so! Here is the minimum that is essential for us to do in order to derive spiritual benefit.

1. Confess on the eve of the Liturgy, in order to give yourself and your spiritual father time for a complete confession. At the end of this brochure you will find "A Brief Confession Before the Confessor." Before coming to confession, read it at home to help you recall the sins which you have committed, or bring it with you when you come to confession.

2. Read the Prayer Rule before Holy Communion. In the Jordanville Prayer Book, this rule may be found on pp. 334-368. The Rule consists of a series of Psalms, a Canon, and Prayers before Communion. The more zealous may add to this rule the Canon to Sweetest Jesus, the Canon and Akathist to the Most-holy Theotokos, and the Canon to the Guardian Angel. These prayers may also be found in the Jordanville Prayer Book.

3. On the day of Holy Communion, it is essential to come to the church by the beginning of the Liturgy, and on an empty stomach, i.e. having abstained since midnight from food and drink, as well as from smoking. Those who come to church late may not approach the Holy Chalice.

4. We ask female parishioners to ensure that when they commune, they not wear lipstick, and that they have their heads covered.

5. The Church instructs those who approach for Communion to cross their arms over their breast, and to approach with lips confessing Christ, and hearts filled with a fervent love for Him and with thanksgiving. In 961, the 6th Ecumenical Council established this Canon: "Whosoever wishes to partake....let him form his hands into the shape of a cross, and thus approaching, let him receive the communion of grace.... (Canon 101).

6. In the instructions for the Order of Service it is stated that upon receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, swallow them with reverence, and after wiping their lips, kiss the rim of the Chalice as the actual rib of Christ from which flowed blood and water.

7. After Communion, read the thanksgiving prayers. At our church, these prayers are always read while our parishioners are venerating the Holy Cross. Communicants gather at the left side of the church, together listen to the prayers, and only upon their completion, approach the Cross.

The Food of the Mystical Supper is the Heavenly Food of our restoration, of the New Testament between God and mankind. Whoever receives this food without due preparation brings on the opposite—destruction. May it not be so!

A Brief Confession Before Father Confessors

From the Full Confession of St. Demetrius of Rostov

I confess to the Lord my God and before thee, venerable father, all my countless sins, committed by me unto this very day and hour, in deed, word and thought. I sin daily and hourly by mine ingratitude toward God for His great and countless blessings and benevolent providence over me, a sinner.

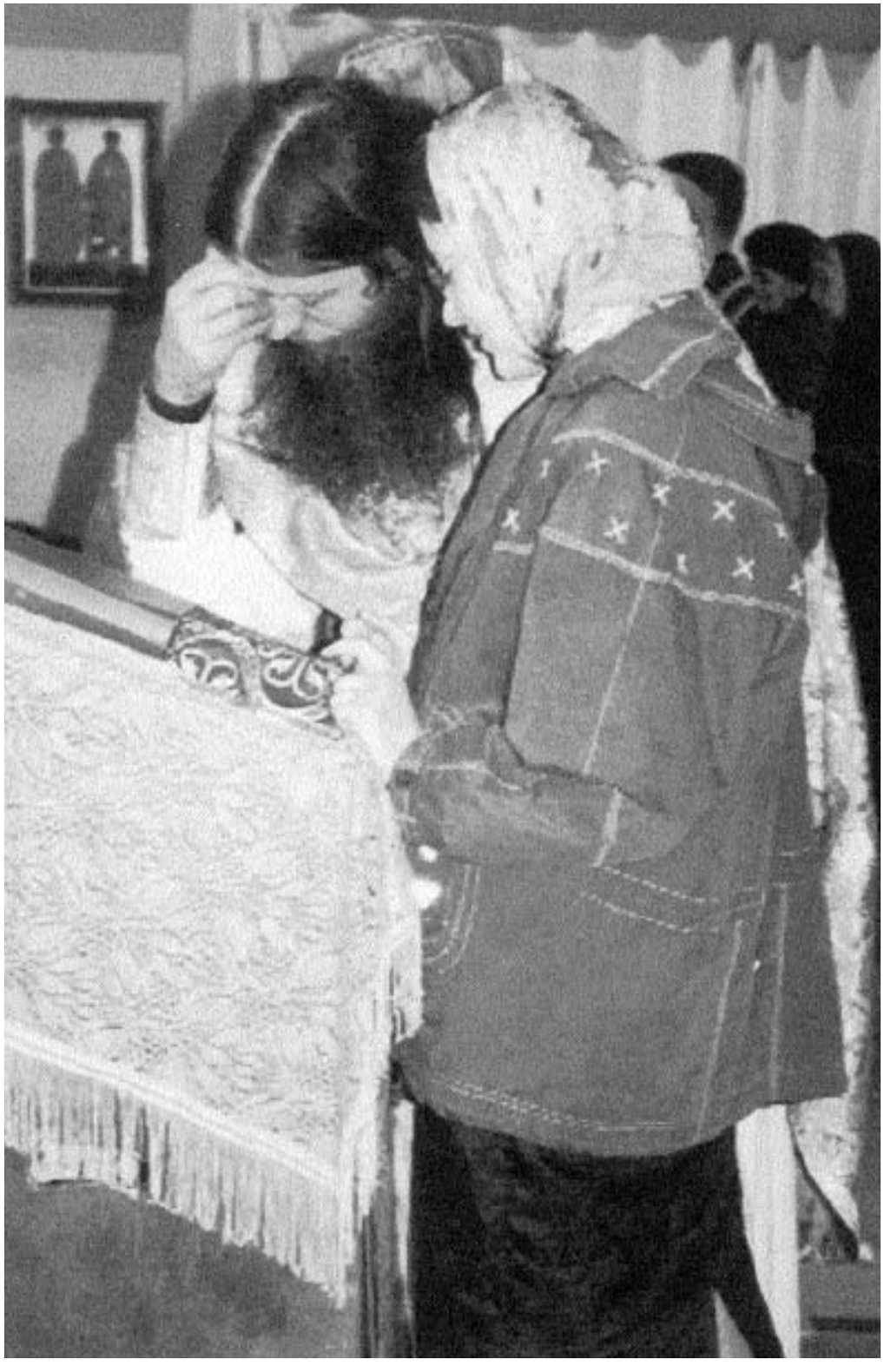
I have sinned through: idle talking, judging others, stubbornness, pride, hard-heartedness, envy, anger, slander, inattention, negligence concerning my salvation, carelessness, indifference, impertinence, irritability, despondency, rendering evil for evil, bitterness, disobedience, complaining, self-justification, contradicting others, self-will, being reproachful, gossiping, lying, light-mindedness, tempting others, self-love, ambition, gourmandizing, eating and drinking to excess, vanity, laziness, entertaining unclean thoughts, acquisitiveness, impure glances, absence from divine services because of laziness and carelessness, absent-mindedness at prayer both in church and at home; I have sinned in deed, word thought; in sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and the rest of my mental and physical senses; of all my sins I repent and beg forgiveness.

(Here one should mention specifically any other sins which may be burdening the soul.)

I also repent and ask forgiveness for all those sins that I have not confessed because of their multitude and my forgetfulness.

Forgive and absolve me, venerable father, and bless me to commune of the holy and life-creating Mysteries of Christ unto the remission of sins and life everlasting.

Prepared by the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Washington, DC.



FORGIVE US, MERCIFUL LORD!

A General Confession for Great Lent

In Russia, where churches are filled to the streets during Christmas and Holy Week, general confessions are held in churches where it would be physically impossible to hear thousands of individual confessions. Although personal confessions are required throughout the year, regular parishioners who frequently partake of the sacraments, have been to confession in the previous weeks, and have not committed any serious sins, are allowed to attend a general confession a few days before these two great feasts in preparation for Holy Communion. The following text from one of these general confessions, led by Fr. Artemy Vladimirov of Moscow, is offered to our readers as a reflection for their own Lenten practice.

There remains, brothers and sisters, only one day of the Great Fast. Many of us remember reading a prayer on the eve of the fast in which we asked our Omnipotent Lord to give us strength and wisdom to walk this road to the end, that we might see Christ's Resurrection. The Christian who has tried to obey mother Church's regulations (though he may not be irreproachable) and repents of having stepped aside voluntarily or involuntarily from the path outlined by the Church for the Great Fast, today bears in his heart good fruit, a mind of profit: the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who supports those who toil, strengthens those who are exhausted, and brings the work undertaken by faithful Christians to a victorious finish.

Standing in church before the icons, we sense the all-seeing, strict yet merciful eyes of Our Saviour upon us. With God's help, let us now weigh our hearts and lives on the scales of Divine truth and love. It is not difficult. If we stand before God in spirit, He, Who is Light, will illumine all the places of our heart, all impurity and sores, all the festering, deadly, and repulsive sins that cry out to God for our condemnation if we do not repent.

Looking, then, into the face of God, let us ask ourselves, brothers and sisters, if we, as God's thinking creatures, have always preferred our Lord Jesus Christ; have always considered Him to be the true God incarnate; named Him the Only-Begotten Son of the Father in Heaven, Co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit; have always felt and seen in Him the source and cause of our existence; gave glory to Him as our Creator, Maker, Redeemer and Saviour, as our Teacher whose word is Spirit, Who Himself is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Looking back, most of us will confess with sorrow that much of our life was covered by the darkness of ignorance, when the image of Jesus Christ was not drawn in our heart and we shielded ourselves from the Eternal Light, perhaps even fighting against God or blaspheming Him, although we felt that He is indeed Light and Goodness. More often we simply turned our backs on Him. Many of us lived from our infancy outside the Church, not knowing its saving warmth, its omnipotent, all-victorious love, like plants devoid of sunlight.

Remembering those years, months, hours, and minutes of our graceless existence, we rejoice that God has called us to His miraculous Light and mourn that, as involuntary apostates, we willingly immersed ourselves in the darkness of ignorance and faithlessness.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

We recall our blasphemous words (we may not have seen them as such then, thinking they were only jokes) when tempted by our classmates, teachers, or sometimes, our parents. We cast this verbal mire at the Lord Jesus Christ, despising the Truth and Love we saw in His face.

"Forgive us, Lord!" we cry, remembering that every sin, every blasphemy of the Son of Man will be forgiven those who did so out of ignorance and sinful blindness.

We confess the temptations we have caused, whether we are aware of them or not: of drawing our children, our relatives, our friends, into the darkness of disbelief in the Living God, and denying by our disorderly lives the vows of baptism pronounced by our godparents in early childhood. Let us repent before God for temptations in word and deed committed in times of ignorance and oblivion.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Contemplating the Lord Jesus Christ, we understand that spiritually serving Him is the real meaning and aim of human life on earth. Standing before God we are to glorify, thank, and praise Him, to live in the angelic doxology: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabbaoth, heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory."

The sin of ingratitude to our Lord is connected to the sin of ignorance. Holy Scripture tells us that we were made to glorify God, to proclaim His perfection to the world, but we have been far from this. For many of us, our gloomy lives have been overshadowed by spiritual night. Our souls were not animated by the breath of thanksgiving, and the world lost its color and warmth as we lost our spiritual connection with the Redeemer.

So, those who have spent days, months, and years of their lives without true thanksgiving, but who pronounced the words "Thank God" as a meaningless phrase, should confess. Ingratitude blinds the human soul. Think of a baby completely dependent on his mother, who is fed with her milk, warmed with her love, but who feels no gratitude to her. Such are we, whom the Lord showers with hidden and open mercies, whom He saves from danger. Let us remember the times when death walked beside us, but God mercifully held it back, even while we lacked the reason to see in this the hand of Christ.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord, for the times about which we knew and were not grateful, and the many times unknown to us, when God sent His angels to save us from certain danger and even death!

We confess to having breathed the God-given air, received our daily food, shelter, clothing, and all earthly goods without gratitude. The Lord brought us together in this life with those who, from all eternity, were destined to be our helpers, relatives and friends, and we accepted all this as our due, daring to be dissatisfied, grumbling (if not against God, against His Providence). Thinking that our life is poor and dull, perhaps we have even been led to blaspheme.

Lord, forgive any of us, who in a moment of madness, damned the day of his birth, reproached his mother for having brought him into this world, or was stung by devilish suicidal thoughts, thus participating in Judas' betrayal.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

It is easy to predict that into the heart of an ungrateful Christian will enter the repulsive, murderous spirit of gloom and sadness. Ignoring the voice of the Resurrected Lord through his apostle, calling us to "*rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks,*" we turned into the living dead, filling our hearts with sadness, disappointment, and perhaps even despair — thereby losing God's grace, which does not abide in weak, uncourageous hearts.

Let us repent if this spirit has entered into our very bones, and drive it out with prayer and repentance, asking the Saviour to enliven us with deep joy, cheerfulness, courage, satisfaction, and especially, gratitude. Even when we are sad and burdened, we are to be thankful. The Lord Himself knows all that we have to bear, and, having been tempted for a little while, we will be rescued. Let us never drop the cross of patience, giving way to faint-heartedness and despondency.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Turning our gaze towards Jesus Christ, we see and feel that God's creation is ruled by love. This is divine and eternal love, pure and holy love, love that has called the world from nonexistence, that maintains the orderly union of all the parts of creation and enlivens every human being, giving him strength to live on earth. Christ is abundance, filling everything with Himself. He is the source of Divine love, and through belief in God, prayer, repentance, and especially through the Church's sacraments, we become the transmitters of this Divine, eternal and ever-growing love.

What can you expect from a person who is so gloomy that he cannot give

thanks? If we have immersed ourselves in this unhappy state, it is no wonder that we only feel coldness, irritation, anger, remembering wrongs, vengefulness, and other hellish emotions in our soul.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Have any of us become joyless beings who whine and burden the people around us with complaints, reproaches, and reprimands?

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Undoubtedly, the "one who hates his brother is a murderer." He lies in darkness. If you do not forgive — with all your heart — those who sin against you, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you. Therefore, we must thoroughly recall those moments and hours when we were filled with cold darkness, hate, and anger. Then, indeed, Satan himself ruled in our heart. How many caustic, spiteful, shameful, impure, murderous, blasphemous words were uttered at that hour? What injuries, unhealed sometimes for months and years, did we inflict upon those who love us, who were connected to us by bonds of kinship and affection?

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

What devastation the passion of anger leaves in the heart after it has scorched the soul with its lightning wrath! Such a person is taken by the evil one into Tartarus. The Christian has to toil, to repent, to pray, to resist with his spirit, mind, and will, that his heart may be completely healed by the action of the Holy Spirit.

Blessed, they say, and three times blessed, is he who has not allowed this murderous passion of anger into his soul. Let us look, brothers and sisters, into the hidden depths of our conscience. Is there not hidden there the poisonous snake of evil-speaking hate? Perhaps this passion has escaped our attention. Maybe we still have someone whom we dare to call an enemy, someone whom, even now, we do not wish to live on this earth, whom we damn, wishing their eternal death, not even attempting to forgive them with all our heart. Here is a poison much more dangerous than narcotics. And if we do not spit this poison out of our soul today, the Saviour will reject us at the Last Judgement saying: "*Depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil, hater of all good, and his angels.*"

Let us ask God, the chief surgeon, to heal any of us who are infected by the passion of anger, who have been tortured, perhaps for many years, by dislike of our close ones. Let us look mentally at each of our relatives and acquaintances to see if there isn't any such poison in our hearts.

Lord, remove these thoughts and feelings, purify and fill the heart with mildness, mercy, meekness, love, patience, compassion. Do not allow this evil passion to continue to drain our life's blood!

✦ We repent, O loving Lord! Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Our omnipotent Saviour is purer than heaven itself with all its angels. Each of us knows well that love is a pure and holy feeling and that the Lord has founded a saving refuge in which we shelter under the grace of God. Such a refuge for the Christian is either blessed celibacy with external or internal dedication of oneself to God, or marriage, accomplished with vows of mutual fidelity before a priest in the sacrament of the Church.

Unfortunately, demons have toiled over us, disfiguring the God-given beauty of our nature by putting into our inexperienced and ignorant souls the passions of impure lust. Even our youngest years were not spared: we did not know when to hide our eyes, how to fight against the thoughts that penetrated for the first time and lodged themselves in the depth of our heart. Even in extreme youth some of us partook of the filth of impure dreams, desires, images, fantasies — the rotten roots that produce the tree of fleshly impurity, the tree that twists and distorts natural virtue and the thirst for heavenly love put into us by God.

Forgive, Merciful Lord, the sins of indiscretion committed in childhood, for peeping and impure touches – perhaps without complete awareness, but already springing from an impure heart; for games we learned watching the unchaste life of adults.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Let us confess to God (and for those who have already confessed, regret) that many of us have sinned against the virtue of innocence, of virginity, having parted with these outside a marriage blessed by God; thus becoming not only criminals to ourselves, but tempters to those who stumbled over our lustful impurity.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

We also beg and pray to wipe out of the book of life all of those sins that must be disclosed to a priest in sufficient detail in private confession, that we may completely drive out of our souls the spirit of sensuality. Especially burdened is the conscience of a Christian who has already promised his faith and fidelity to a beloved spouse, but sins against this first love, falling into adultery. "Be not deceived," says the Apostle Paul, if they do not repent "...neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers ... inherit the Kingdom of God." Marriage was created pure by God and the "marriage bed is undefiled." Let us repent, knowing ourselves to be guilty of these sins as well, if not in deed, then in thought, when we reached for the forbidden fruit.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Let us repent also of the general impurity of our life. There are many people who appear to guard themselves well, living in matrimonial virtue, but you had better not look into their hearts. They themselves avoid doing so because they resemble a stinking pit burning with fire and sulfur from indecent reading and impure images. Through such captivity some have been driven by the devil to unpronounceable sins of self-pollution.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Repentance is very important for those parents who have not been sufficiently attentive towards their children; shutting their eyes to their children's cassettes, disks, and books with unclean contents. Those parents should also repent who did not see anything wrong in allowing their children to watch adult films. The parent who has allowed the mass media in his home to drift with the times has a heavy burden on his soul for connivance, for not opposing evil with good, for not tearing his children from the sources of temptation and impurity. Who, if not the parents, will answer to God for the children's sins?

Forgive us, Merciful Lord! Give us wisdom and strength to put things right, to do everything needful to educate the coming generation.

Our times are also characterized by the sin of not relying on God's providence and mercy. How many of us bear in our hearts exhausting fears, anxiety, vague apprehensions, and panic? The merciful Lord commands us to keep peace in our hearts. The Holy Scripture warns us of the coming time of trial, *"Have my peace within you ... be not terrified ... but pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."*

How many of us Orthodox Christians fail to understand the Lord's command to be the light of the world? In our days, a Christian is like a star shining in the depth of night. However, some of us, while appearing pious, are downcast, gloomy creatures, ill-disposed toward people, never acknowledging the virtues of affability, sympathy, striving towards virtue; all the while hiding under a pious appearance, the repulsive passions of selfishness, self-love, and hard-heartedness.

How can we repent if these things are our skin, our bone, our flesh? We were born in this sin and will die in it if God does not enlighten us with His grace. Let us pray that the Lord takes from us the blinders of self-love and teaches us to serve others, to forget ourselves and our own benefit (at least a little and occasionally) for the good of our neighbor. Lord, help us to apply these words to ourselves and not to the person standing next to us.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Our Saviour is divine abundance, filling everything with Himself, alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. Everything is in Him, and everything moves towards Him. Our Saviour is the One who quenches our thirst for knowledge, for true fulfillment. He is the life of the human soul, but often the soul is not persuaded of this and strong temptation brings about the corruption of both soul and body. Such burdens, such consuming sins, include:

... a weakness for wine.

Lord, help us, purify us and give us victory!

...a weakness for food and drink, inducing us to break the holy fasts, paralyzing us and obscuring our view of eternity.

Lord, teach us to find a right measure here. Give us noble, prayerful hearts, grateful for all that Thou hast given.

...smoking.

Lord, purify this filth from our soul and body.

... and weakness for "light," but actually, very dark reading and television.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Television is the bait for a God-loving soul of our days. Only he who knows what he watches and for what reason does not suffer from this spiritual disease, and can learn useful things for his life on earth. Unfortunately, such people are few; most of us are caught by the forces of worldly evil and through them we live lives of corruption, not as contemplatives, but as blockheaded parishioners of the flickering screen.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord, and help us to rid ourselves of this wicked disease that deprives us of spiritual advancement.

Here, we will probably also want to repent of deeply rooted pride, ambition, vanity, thinking much of ourselves, for our lack of meekness and wise humility.

Forgive us, Lord, for arrogance, conceit and the ignorance that unites them.

Forgive us, Lord, for the inability to ask forgiveness, for our stung self-esteem, for keeping in our memory injuries and insults inflicted by our neighbors.

✦ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Forgive us, Lord, for judging and blaming others, for being Pharisees and hypocrites, for pretending to have virtues that we do not really possess.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord! Purify and enlighten our souls with mildness, mercy, generosity, kind-heartedness. Teach us to judge no one but ourselves.

As we turn to the Lord, perhaps we see some forgotten sins of stealing (even in far-away childhood), dishonesty, lying, greed or love of money.

Let us consider another wound — spiritual adultery. A human being is a creature whose immortal soul seeks God, and he will inevitably worship something higher than himself. Unfortunately, not all of us quickly found the healthy, prophetic, saving, simple, and holy Orthodox faith. Many of us fell into nets of spiritual delusion.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord, for having been strangers to our mother Church, for the doubts that grew like weeds in our soul as we listened to heretical and pagan teachers and guides.

✣ Purify us, Merciful Lord!

Forgive us for satiating our unredeemed curiosity with so-called "mystical" reading, thereby killing our soul. Indulging in "eastern" and "new age" teachings, we appropriated the ugliest and most blasphemous ideas of the impersonal nature of the Divine, of reincarnation, of the unique human personality turning to nothing or losing itself in an ocean of spiritual energy after death.

How hard it is for some people, poisoned by the satanic malice of heresy, to rid themselves of these ideas. Let us repent that God may purify our minds and hearts and never allow these poisonous seeds to be resown.

✣ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Forgive us for false thinking, for not being apostles of Orthodoxy, for being sick with ignorance, mixing faith and superstition. Forgive, O Lord, those of us, who, seeking bodily or spiritual health, addressed occultists, shamen, or "new age" healers. Sometimes, we have even been deceived by the Christian appearance of their homes or offices, when, in fact, they inflicted demonic possession upon us, either in our presence or in our absence.

✣ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Make right our faith, purify and seal us with the Divine, saving, God-disclosed dogma of truth imprinted in the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, and guarded, understood, and taught aright only in the holy, catholic, apostolic, Orthodox Church.

✣ Forgive us, and have mercy on us, Lord!

We repent of all the forgotten, unknown, and unidentified sins, not yet named in our confessions.

✣ Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

We repent of making our sins appear mild, of having no strength to call things by their proper names. It is hard to judge oneself, but it saves, because when we approach the cross and gospel knowing that this could be our last confession, and that ahead of us lies the Great Judgement, then what relief, what purity and joy God gives to even a hardened sinner who confesses without justifying himself.

We repent before Thee, Lord! We have sinned in word, deed and thought, by all of our senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and all other sins, spiritual and bodily. We have sinned by long-forgotten sins, sinned by many blasphemous, impious, impure thoughts, which are impossible to speak aloud.

Brothers and sisters, let us collect all of our sins into one imagined vessel of repentance, and taking this vessel into the hands of our soul, let us mentally plunge it into the sea of God's mercy, that no one may doubt God's grace and love, but will know that God Himself forgives, purifies, and saves us, if only we promise:

"I repent before Thee, O Lord, of all these spoken and unspoken sins. Forgive and absolve me, even as the priest will testify to today's confession at the Last Judgement, and I, sinful *(name)* promise to make every possible effort to guard myself from the sins I have confessed." Amen. ✣

What about conversation? One may converse, not about trifling things, but about spiritual things**. Instead of conversation, it would be better to set aside an hour for reading together.** This would be very suitable in the evening. Nothing would be better, if one of you could give edifying accounts that manifest the power of repentance and Communion. **For your readings together, you should select something from the Lives of the Saints.**

That is enough for now. I will add whatever else is needed later.

34.

PREPARATION FOR CONFESSION

Continuation concerning govenie. Preparation for Confession. Reviewing one's life.

We will continue our discussion of govenie.

Everything that has been said is the framework in which govenie is placed, or the outward rite and performance of it, which is usually observed by good fasters. Work a little to adhere to it, if you want to be a good faster. Of not just adapt a sad countenance, do not disfigure your face.[1] Do everything with willingness, with a good and joyful disposition of spirit. Spend your time in the same way that people who are going to a feast with the king spend time. Such people think and talk only about what the feast is going to be like, how they will meet with the king, what to say when he greets them, how to dress best and not smudge their face, and the like. Ahead of you, however, lies something incomparably better and higher: A feast, not with an earthly king, but with the Heavenly King. If

1. Matthew 6: 16.

you will take a little trouble to get yourself dressed and prepared in a way that will please the King, then you will be favored by Him: You will receive that which is priceless, and you will have unspeakable joy.[1]

You said you would begin to fast; then fast! Lord give the blessing! Think, if you please, how you are going to dress. Get rid of your old dresses, new ones are necessary. If one of the old ones seems suitable, wash it, iron it, and make everything look like it is entirely new. By this I want to say that you need to reexamine yourself; acknowledge what is bad and throw it out, but keep the good, correct it and perfect it.

Let us go inside ourselves then, and begin to look over what is within.

The interference of any outsider in this matter is inappro-priate and completely impossible. No one except for you your-self can go inside of yourself and analyze the workings of your conscience. You will want to do this yourself. I will give you only a few instructions. In the books which you were told to read, there is much in the way of instruction concerning this. I will tell you a few more things, however.

To examine yourself well, you must turn your attention to the three aspects of our active life. These aspects are 1) the actions, those isolated acts which are performed at a given time in a given place and under given circumstances; 2) the dispo-sition of the heart and the characteristic tendencies which are concealed beneath the actions; and 3) the general character of life.

Our entire life is made up of an uninterrupted series of acts: thoughts, words, deeds; some giving way to others, with these in turn being followed by still others. Look over all these acts, each /one separately; there is no way to define their moral value. Even

1. The preceding passage draws imagery from Matthew 22: 1-14, the parable of the marriage feast.

If you took it into your head to review and reassess the acts you have accomplished in one day, you would not be able to do It. Man is a creature of perpetual motion. How many times does he change his mind and re-do things from morning until evening! How many things does he commit from confession to confession! How is one to be then? There is no necessity to review and reassess everything separately. You have an unsleeping guard, your conscience. When something evil is done, it does not let it slip by, and no matter how you try to justify It to your conscience, it will not cease evaluating everything in its own way: This is evil, that is evil. **Here then is your *first step:***

Listen to your conscience and all those action which it exposes to you, without any excuse, acknowledge as sinful and prepare to confess them.

We may call this the first and the last step; that is, the admission that one is undeniably guilty of what the conscience has revealed, and the decision to avoid it in the future. This would be sufficient, if it were possible to be certain that the conscience itself is correct in everything. It does happen that the conscience does not notice something because of some sort of confusion; it might forget something because of old age, and it may not consider something to be a sin out of ignorance and incomplete knowledge of what actions are necessary for us. So it is a necessity here for the conscience to turn for assistance to the command-ments of God that are depicted in the Word of God, and, in reviewing them, to find out if we have done anything contrary to any of them. **By doing this, we may recall much which we have forgotten, and much of that which is recalled will be presented in a form other than how we interpreted it.**

The Word of God becomes like a mirror. Just as each person, when looking in a mirror, sees a blemish or spot on his face or clothing, so the soul, when reading the Word of God and examining the commandments which are enumerated

there, cannot help but see whether it is correct in all of these commandments or not. The conscience, enlightened by this Word of the living God, will tell this to the soul at once quite frankly. **Here then is the *second step* for you. Go over the commandments and see whether you carry them out or not.** For example, the commandment enjoins us to offer charity every time someone asks for it. Look at yourself, do you always offer it, or not? Do you sometimes refuse it, not because of any important reason, but simply because you scorn the beggar? If this turns out to be the case, take note: It is a *sin*. The command-ment says to forgive everyone everything, even that which is unpleasant and offensive. Look at yourself again, to see whether you are always deferential; haven't you had disputes, heated words, and maybe even quarrels? If you can recall any, note once again: It is a *sin*, although the conscience does not always place such actions in this category. Again, you must place all your hope in God. Have you always done this? In the usual course of action you do not notice it. But when you meet with need, it immediately surfaces and becomes apparent on what your soul relies, whether on God or whether you forget about God and rely on something else. It is obvious that you must use all of your abilities in order to pull through difficult situations, for they too are from God, but final success can be hoped for only from God, which is why we pray to Him for help, and when something turns out well, we thank Him as the Sole Deliverer, disregarding our own abilities. Take a look, have you acted in this way? If not, take note once again: It is a *sin*. Do this with each commandment, and note which actions you have commit-ted against which commandment. In this way you will make a detailed examination of your actions.

What is the best way to do this? **Have you studied the catechism? In it each commandment is explained and it is shown which good deeds are required of us with each com-**

mandment, and which sins are forbidden. Take this and review your actions with its assistance. I recall that at your house you have a book by Bishop Platon of Kostroma that tells how to give Confession and how to confess. In it is a very thorough enumeration of many questions, which are to be asked of those who are taking Confession. Perhaps by using this book it will be even easier for you to examine yourself.

I suppose you would like to study yourself in the proper way for the first time, and to determine what you are and what 1s m you. Work on reviewing yourself thoroughly according to these instructions. Later on, it will not be so complicated for you. But work on it a little for now.

I will cover what still remains for you to do after this the next time I write.

35.

THE DISPOSITION OF ONE'S HEART

Continuation. Reviewing the disposition of one's heart. Designating the chief character or spirit of one's life.

To continue. ***The second aspect of life is the disposition or the mood and inclination of the heart. Actions do not provide full knowledge of the self. It is necessary to look more deeply into oneself and to examine what your heart is like, paying more attention to this than to actions.*** Suppose a man who is normally kind-hearted happens to behave stubbornly on a single occasion (say he fails to help somebody). Then you encounter another person who behaves in the same way, not

just by chance, but because he is stingy by nature. On the surface, both actions are identical, but going by the inner disposition of the actors, there is a big difference between them. Acts are actions isolated

in time and in place, while dispositions signify permanent inclinations of the heart by which the character and way of life of a person are defined, and from which come all his greatest desires and the direction for his acts. The good dispositions are called virtues, while the worst are called vices, depraved inclina-tions and passions.

Christ the Savior indicates which dispositions a Christian must have in his heart. These are humility, contrition, meek-ness, love of righteousness and truth, mercifulness, pure heartedness, love of peace, and patience. The Apostle St. Paul indicates the following blessed Christian dispositions of the heart, which are **the fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance** (Gal. 5:22, 23). In another place he writes, *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; Forbearing one an-other, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful* (Col. 3: 12-15). **In contrast to these dispositions are the vices or passions, the sources of all the evil deeds that ruin us. The main ones are pride, vanity, selfishness, intemperateness, anger, hatred, envy, idleness, desire for sen-sual pleasures, gloom, despair.** Concerning these, the Apostle decreed that not only should Christians not possess them, but also that they should not mention them

among themselves: *Let it not be once named among you (*Eph. 5:3).

You see how rigorous this is! Please examine yourself thor-oughly to see if you have any bad inclinations and passions. Everyone possesses each one of them to a small degree, but they are not deeply rooted or permanent**. And everyone has one main passion around which all the others entwine themselves. You**

must take care to seek this one out above all. Although because of your youth such a passion will not be obvious, there should be perceptible traces if you probe. After you have found it, assess the others; find the one that is closest to it, and the one that is farthest. **And you will understand the structure of your heart. What a valuable acquisition!** Because after this, when you purge yourself of passions and bad inclinations, then it will be apparent to you where to direct your efforts and strength, namely, at your main passion. Then you will overcome it, and all the others will disperse in and of themselves. As in war, once the main enemy force has been shattered, you have only to pursue the others and rout them without any trouble. **It is easy to correct deeds. Just do not do it. The heart, however, cannot be transformed and corrected all at once. A struggle lies ahead.** In this struggle, if you do not know where to direct your blows, you will exhaust yourself thrashing about to no purpose, and you will not achieve any success. Take little trouble!

The third aspect of life is the spirit of life. This is the most important as well as the most complex element. **A malicious spirit is so subtle and so able to mask itself with a facade of kindness and opportuneness that one must have the sharpest spiritual vision in order to detect it. A good spirit, on the other hand, is obvious. because it has a unique purpose; that is, having put everything else aside, it lives for God. Contrary to this is the spirit that lives for**

itself (egoism). This type of spirit very often, if not always, adopts a secondary direction: living for the world.

Thus, if we suppose that the spirit of one's life is indicated by who it is a person lives for, it should be easy for you to determine the spirit of your life. This is accomplished once you have determined who it is you live for, or, as you are still just starting out in life, who it is you most wish to live for, what it is you strive for in your heart, and to whom you will to

dedicate your life the most. The spirit of your life, even though your life is still in an embryonic stage like a feeble baby bird, is defined by the characteristics of that to which you most incline, He who lives for God has a God-fearing spirit that endeavors to please the One God. He who lives only for himself has a spirit that is self-pleasing, egoistical, selfish, carnal. He who lives for the world has a world-loving or vain spirit. Going by these characteristics, look and see what kind of spirit breathes in you.

Judging from the fact that you were filled with the desire to draw closer to God, it must be supposed that the main spirit of your life is good, the true spirit is good, as it should be. Again, judging from the fact that you reacted so adversely to the secular way of life in which there is the spirit of the world, it must be supposed that such a spirit has no place or power in you, although it may come over you if you are not careful. Whether or not you possess an egoistical spirit still remains under ques-tion. It seems to me that it is there, although to what extent I do not know. So what if it is present; since you have expressed the desire to draw closer to God, your soul does not belong to the world, and your egoistical spirit will soon dissipate if you give more and more rein to your heart for the kindling of desire for God. Please take this into consideration.

Thus you see what lies ahead for you to do; do it. At first glance, it appears to be an enormous task, but in actual fact it

is simple and easy. Pray to God, begin the task, and you can determine everything in a single evening. You do not have to cross oceans, just examine what is within yourself. However, do not put this off until the evening before Confession. No, begin at this very moment, at the start of the fast. You will gradually discover everything in a thorough and clear manner. It will be difficult, perhaps, but only this one time. If you then begin to live according to the inclination of your good spirit, then life itself will lead you to a more complete self-knowledge. For why

is it that we do not know ourselves for the most part? Because we live in a careless manner.

Let us suppose that you have reexamined yourself thor-oughly and that you have found many faults. What should you do next? What do you gain from such knowledge? I will write you about this next time.

36.

THE MYSTERY OF REPENTANCE AND COMMUNION

Complete preparation for the Mystery of Repentance and Communion. Necessary feelings of one who is repenting. A beneficial reminder about Blessed Theodora and her journey through the toll-houses.

What use car, you make of the knowledge you have achieved of yourself? First of all, you should judge yourself in all your shortcomings, without making any excuses or justifi-cations. At the Presanctified Liturgy, after the choir sings, "Lord I have cried unto thee," the reader recites, "O let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing, let me not be involved in ungodly works." This suggests to Christians to pray

that God not allow them to be filled with craftiness to think up excuses for sins. Do not expect repentance from a person who thinks up such excuses; he who has no repentance cannot begin self-correction. Consequently, the main thing is that to judge yourself without pity, you must bring yourself to the point where you can sincerely utter in your heart, "I am completely guilty."

When you come to say in your heart "I am guilty," then you must apply the fear of the Divine Judgment. If your own conscience condemns you, then God Himself does not excuse

you. And God does see you as guilty. If you are seen as such, then you are condemned as such. If you are condemned, then you are sentenced and a fitting punishment is decided upon. This punishment will fall on you sooner or later, and it is already hanging over you when you are condemned by God.

How then should one be? A person would not know how he is to be if there were no Divine grace**. A gracious God gives us the hope of forgiveness of guilt, if we repent with contrition and set forth a firm intention to flee past sins and not anger God by them. This is the essence of repentance.**

Do not just be a passionless seeker of your shortcomings; mourn them, and sincerely regret that they were committed. Mourning begets the humble resolution to flee shortcomings; while knowledge alone, although it is accompanied by the intention to be cautious, leads to pride, from which deliver us, O Lord!

Once you have made the decision to flee your faults, it is then necessary to plan and decide how to do this successfully, so that you can begin the actual healing of yourself from this moment on. Suppose, for example, that you get angry at some-thing: Do not get angrier. Then decide the best way to correct yourself so that you do not get angry again. Do the same thing with everything else. You must do this now, before

the fact: Decide how you arc going to act in a particular instance so that you do not repeat a shortcoming. The best way to go about chis is to **write down your shortcomings as soon as you are aware of them, and then write out a prescription for how you intend to correct them.** This will be your first general and completely corrective Confession. Put a little effort into doing this, for the sake of the Lord. You will see what control you acquire over yourself, how powerfully you begin to restrain yourself, with the awareness that this way of acting and no other is the right one.

How To Confess Properly

Translated from cassette of Father Athanasios Mitilinaios-Larisa, Greece
St. Nikodemos Publications
Trans. Constantine Zalalas
1433 W. Union Blvd.
Bethlehem, PA 18018

The Sacrament of Confession is probably one of the least understood areas amongst our Orthodox Christians, and yet it is virtually impossible to develop spiritually without it. It is referred to as the "second baptism" by our Church fathers. In this cassette program, Father Athanasios Mitilinaios once again does a wonderful job in providing us with a great deal of insight on how to prosper spiritually by taking advantage of this soul-saving gift of our Lord-the forgiveness of our sins through Holy Confession.

So, my friends, we must prepare ourselves for confession, and for this reason we must mention a few things in order to understand the proper method of confession because from the small knowledge and experience that I possess, I have noticed that very many people unfortunately do not know how to confess properly. This, of course, can hinder their spirituality and their salvation. Initially, we must define repentance.

Repentance according to St. John of Damascus is, "The return from the unnatural state back to the natural, and from the devil towards God after painfulness and exercise." Again, I must return from the unnatural state-which is sinfulness-because sin is an unnatural state just like Adam after he sinned lost his natural state. So I must once again return to the natural state exactly how
God created man. I must depart from the devil and return to God. However, for this to take place it takes a great deal of struggle and exercise. This is exactly what repentance is all about. We must of course know this to be able to say if we truly have repentance or not. So let's see some of the characteristics of repentance-repentance that I will need to confess properly and ask to find forgiveness from God.

The first element is contrition. Contrition is a deep grief, a pain of the heart, for the sins with which I sadden God. St. Paul talks about this, "And don't sadden the Holy Spirit, with which you were sealed. You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, so for this reason do not sadden the Holy Spirit with your behavior which is sinful and opposite to the will of God." Our motive should not be self-interest, even though in this case it may be permissible, but our love towards God. To understand this: think if you ever felt badly because you hurt your mother's or your father's feelings, what is the cause of your sadness? What is the motive behind your sorrow? Is it because you are afraid of your parent's reaction or because of a possible punishment? So you show that you're sorry- do you show a change of heart just to avoid the trouble of punishment? No. Your sorrow must be simply because you have hurt your parents who love you so much. So here, we must feel that we sadden God-our God who loves us so much.

St. John the Chrysostom says something superb on this, "Sigh when you sin, not because you will be punished. Eternally-this is nothing! But because you have opposed God, Who is so gentle and kind, and so loving, Who died on the cross for you! And God went as far as to give His only Son for your salvation." This should shake you up- make you cry out with grief- not because you might face punishment. This is truly a very noble form of repentance, and happy is he that has it.

Second. We must search our conscience. Many days before confession we must prepare ourselves. I would venture to say that from the time of our last confession until our next one, all this time should serve as preparation time. In other words, to be attentive, to make little notes, as I will tell you in a few minutes. Again, in different t;mc:s, : :-nust always check my conscience- every day, every so often, every step of the way-in what way I have sinned and what exactly goes on inside me. I must, therefore-especially if I must confess- collect my thoughts in a state of concentration in a quiet place, to again, recollect and search my conscience.

A very basic element [of this process] is to be objective. I must not be soft on myself. St. Augustine says on this, "Don't try to cover up your sins, but rather be judgmental-be tough on

yourself." In this way, we can say that we are being objective towards ourselves. Much like Hezekias-one of the kings of the Jews-had said, "I will sit and reminisce on all those years of my life that passed bitterly and sinfully." Because sin is bitter-it's bitter in it's nature.

Once again, I told you that the time to prepare is from the moment I finish my last confession until the next one. Not only because of the element of vigilance-having just confessed, I must be careful-but also I must always stay in touch with my conscience. And because of our forgetfulness and absent-mindedness, that's why when I perceive that I have sinned in some things I must write it down on a piece of paper. St. Anthony the Great stated that when someone goes to confession, at that very time the devil takes the sins away from his memory so he will not remember them and not confess them and not be forgiven. That's why he advised the ascetics in the desert to constantly keep a folded piece of paper on which they would mark down everything that would take place on that given day. And what they would write down they should keep in their belts, along with a pencil to write down whatever would happen. And truly I'm telling you that when the time comes for confession then we will discover a lot of things about ourselves.

Of course, to avoid being redundant, we must organize and categorize all the things that we wrote down. Essentially, we should not be reading our diary to our spiritual father, and no need to have dates or times-that's not necessary-but we will concentrate the similar sins, classify them. In other words, if I for instance lied ten times, I will not mention all ten different times, but I will simply say that I lied ten times. Unless, of course, if one of those lies created a problem. If not, and it went unnoticed, we simply say that I lied so many different times, or I lied a few times. But for example if a lie created difficulties, then I must say it in detail and exactly what happened that caused me to lie.

A fourth point-I must pray. I can never search my conscience if the Holy Spirit does not illuminate its corners and depths beforehand. I must pray to God and ask for Him to give me His light, to open my eyes, to enlighten my conscience in its dark spots to see very clearly as a true critic of myself with the proper self-knowledge, to envision my true self. Without fervent prayer, let's not ever try to attempt to truly search ourselves. Of course the subject of prayer must be in all things-while we're studying the Word of God, when we go out of our house, when we come in the house, when we get in the car, out of the car, in all places, at all times-our prayer must be present when we go or enter our school, when we start class, when we exit, when we begin our homework, when we finish our homework, everywhere, and always with prayer. Always with prayer, at all times and places. Then, we safeguard ourselves in all things, and from all things, we really do. We must, then, pray for the spirit of God to help us to see and understand our true self.

Fifth point-We must select a conservative and strict spiritual father. Sometimes we try to find a spiritual father who would be easy on us, or to overlook our sins. Not to forgive them, but to simply overlook them. Of course this means that the spiritual father would simply close an eye so to speak. For instance when we mention to him that we go to parties and dance-this of course is very basic and every spiritual father knows that this is fertile ground and will lead into a very heavy sin, heavy bodily sins, shows a worldly mentality and so on. So, if I push and pressure my spiritual father in a way-I complain and constantly ask him to permit certain things, then he may say, "Well, all right, go then. Go ahead." This does not mean that he forgives my sins, but he is simply overlooking the situation, or overlooking my sins. Or he may not look at these things as sins. Do you know how dangerous this is? This is truly dreadful. So when the spiritual father persists, "No, you will not go." this does not make him strict. He simply does not compromise or patronize.

Strictness would be for him to refuse to forgive your sins. Does he have that right? Yes-when you show no remorse. When you repent, of course, he will forgive your sins. Since God forgives, how could the priest not do so? Is it that he's strict? No. Is it that he may be too demanding? At times, yes. There, i1e ..::an bed little strict-at the level of expectations. When these expectations may be too much for a certain person, then the spiritual father can be considered a little strict. However, the spiritual father is never strict in dealing or describing sin. A sin is a sin. We cannot neutralize it. A sin is a sin. That's final. So we must realistically choose a spiritual father, strict in this fashion-in other words, a man that would not give amnesty to our sins, but truly forgive them according to his mission.

We must also go to confession on our own and willingly, and not from in-home pressure-to have our father or mother tell us that we must go to confession. Something very elementary, and we must understand it on our own. It is something that should be very well established within us-to feel the need to go to confession. This is the reason that we must go to our spiritual father voluntarily, but when we go there, we should not want and expect him to start asking us questions, but we must tell him what we have as far as sins go. Some people come to me and ask me, "Father, ask me some questions." And do you know why they do this? Not only because they did not get prepared-no search of the conscience, no preparation at home, nothing at all-in some cases they will be waiting for hours outside, and I will ask, "Why aren't you prepared?" "I was in a hurry when I was leaving my home." "So you left in a hurry. That's fine. But here you were waiting for hours! Why couldn't you get ready?"

My friends, it's like going to the convenience store or to the grocery store, and telling the clerk. "I'm here to shop." "Well, what would you like to buy?" "Well, I don't really know. Can you ask me questions?" And the clerk begins, "Well, maybe you want some soap. How about some rice? Maybe some noodles? Or macaroni?" And somewhere along the line, you will remember what you need from his questions. Don't you think this is a bit silly, a little ridiculous?

Or, we are to be likened with Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, who had the expectation to have his magicians tell him what type of dream he had, and to interpret it. And they asked, "Well, please tell us your dream and we will interpret it." "No," he said, "you must tell what dream I saw." "Well, how can we tell you? Is this type of thing possible?" In this manner, we go to our spiritual father to ask us questions.

St. John the Chrysostom talks on this issue. He says, "You tell your sins first. Don't wait for him who will question you. You start talking first. That's the meaning of confession: I remove and take outside what I have inside me." The priest is not here to investigate. The spiritual father only hears you. And only at times, when we have difficulty expressing ourselves, he can assist us; or if we happen to forget, or when we did not consider something as sinful, he can ask one or two questions to help us to see and find ourselves, and not start from the beginning a session of questions.

Seventh. Our confession must have an air of contrition-to be contritional in its nature. Many times, we enter with laughter and joy. Don't look at the spiritual father, who is usually and must be likeable and smiling and joyful, because if a person went to a confessor who was stern and always frowning-a real kill-joy-then he would be terrified, thinking, "Boy, what's going to happen to me?" The father needs to be, as I told you, joyful, likeable, polite, so the penitent can relax in a way. But the penitent must be in a state of contrition-to feel that he is a sinner, to have a heart and a spirit of contrition and humility, just like the heart of the woman who was a harlot, or the publican, or the heart of Zacchaeus. To be able to realize, and to feel, he is really a sinful man.

We must also assume here that if the spiritual father has to reprove in some areas, like, "My child, why did you do this?" this is a very important measure. God asked Adam, "Adam, where are you?" He said, "I heard your voice, and I hid because I'm naked, and I was afraid." "Why were you afraid? Did you disobey my command?" What happened here? - A form of reproval. Let's not be afraid of reproval, my friends. A spiritual father will reprove us. Reproval is educational, and an important element.

St. John of the Ladder says, "From your approach, your way, and your thoughts, you must look and treat yourself as a convict. When you are going to confess, your eyes should be lowered. If it were possible, to even kiss the feet of your spiritual father just like you would kiss the feet of a doctor, or Christ." Why all this? Because I unfortunately must tell you, that when a priest exercises some spiritual reproval, like, "My son, why did you do this? You shouldn't have done that," or whatever else, then at times there is back- talk from some of the penitent. And someone can see what hapμens to u;:; sometimes-'with young people, or even adults. The penitent has the spiritual father across from him, treating him as an opponent, and not as a spiritual father. And then, the father feels that he is no longer a spiritual father, but he has the penitent as an opponent as well!

For example, I say, "Look, my son, you will not take Communion this Sunday, because your sin was somewhat serious." Previously, however, another penitent came out, a friend of the

one who is now inside, and I allowed him to take Communion, even though they committed the same sin, for certain reasons. Sometimes, some reasons lead us to use discretion. A spiritual father reasons. He has the power of reasoning and discretion. Now, you question, "Why did you allow the other one to take Communion? Why him and not me?" Does this remind you of anything? Like when you tell your parents, "Why did you give this or that to my brother or sister, and not to me? Why do you allow him, and not me?" What's going on here? We have a verbal exchange-back- talk. He makes the spiritual father into an opponent, and the spiritual father looks at the penitent as an opponent. But tell me, in this environment of opposition, can we still talk about confession? -About genuine, true confession? Absolutely not.

Eighth. Our confession must be self-accusing. Self-accusing in nature-to blame myself, to accuse ourselves and not blame others. Many times, we see this in small children, and unfortunately this happens to the older as well. When you ask a little child, a little boy, five, six years old, lets say, when you bring him to confession-and children must confess from a very young age. Say, "Little Johnny, do you ever lie? Do you lie now and then?" "Uh-um- not me, my sister!" "But my boy, I didn't ask you if your sister or your brother lies, I asked you if you lie." In other words, we pass the buck. Have you noticed this in small children? So the exact thing that happens to the little children happens to the adults, except the method is a little different.

For instance, the wife will come in, and begin to confess the sins of her husband. "You know, my husband goes to the bar, and this or that." Dear lady, what your husband does is his business! I'm not going to offer *him* the prayer of absolution. No, we're talking about you. What do you do? Don't sit there and discuss the faults of others, but what you do. This, my friends, is extremely important. It's the self-blaming type of confession.

St. John the Chrysostom, once again, says, "Do you want to accuse someone? Accuse yourself." And the book of Proverbs also says, "The true Christian, the saintly and holy person, accuses only himself'-"! am the sinner!" And the truly advanced spiritual person does this very consciously-he feels this! He does not pretend. You know what he says? In this whole city, I am the worst sinner. In this whole city, where we live, I am the worst of the sinners. And if at a time he mentioned to someone of us today, "You know, you are a sinner, you have committed some very serious sins," he will respond, "Who, me? No... I didn't do anything wrong in my life! I'm a very good person!" What a tragedy. And unfortunately this happens so often-to have people saying, "I'm a very good person, I'm blameless, I have nothing to confess."

Do you know, my friends, what this means? To go through a full life of fifty, sixty years, and to have a person of this age come into confession for the first time and to tell you, "I committed a very big sin." And you think, "Well, what could this be? What did he do?" "I ate porcupine meat." Then I ask, "Well, assuming that you did not eat that poor porcupine, you would have no other sin?" "No, I wouldn't have any sins." "No sins?" "No sins." "Is this possible?" "Father, would I lie to you?" I ask you now, if you will, where do you start with this person, who lived a life full of sins that he cannot see? He cannot see them. He is not lying! He cannot see his sins because he never learned to inspect himself. This is a tremendous key-a real exercise that must start from our childhood-to inspect ourselves. My children, please pay attention! We're talking tragedy here! Because, let's say, that by having a shortcoming we lost our occupation or our position. Well, no big loss. But to lose our salvation because we did not develop this self-inspection-this is truly terrible.

But once again, St. John of the Ladder says, in his fourth homily, "Say it, and don't be ashamed. 'It is my fault father. I wounded myself; I hurt myself from my carelessness. Nobody else did it. I am responsible. Nobody else is at fault.'" Listen, this is a very fine point. Nobody else was the cause of my sin. Not another person, not the devil. Do you know how many times, and how many people say, "The devil made me do it?" Don't accuse the devil. If you did not want to, you wouldn't have done it. The devil cannot force you. He can suggest it, he can suggest something to yvu, and it 1s yuur d,u;ce to do it or not. Therefore, don't say, "The devil is at fault." Never.

"Maybe my body is at fault. Many times, well, my body is like this." No, not your body. God could not have made a body that would be in opposition with His law and His commandments and against the soul. If you ask me, "Well it is written, where St. Paul says, 'What a wretched man I am. Who would save me from my flesh which is full of sins and turns against my soul because what I do not desire, I do,'" that's something else. There, he presents the state

of man-the state after the fall. That's why it is important to have knowledge of Christian anthropology. The fallen man, who came to have friction within his own abilities, in his own substances, having the soul turn against the body and the body against the soul, is true, but not from the creational view. Not because God created us as such, but because we allowed ourselves to fall. Not only from our personal sins, but from the original sin as well. This means I cannot blame the body. I cannot say my body is at fault. No. Nor anything else but my personal laziness and carelessness, and only this I can really blame.

Something else. Sometimes we may use a sort of craftiness or diplomacy when expressing our sins. This way, we reduce their seriousness, or in some way we cover them up. No, our confession must be accurate, and clear, and straight and honest with all the details of time, place and person, without having to mention names. There is no need to mention names-however, we must mention what is our relationship to the person with which we may have sinned. Is this person a relative? Or another student in our school? Or a stranger? Where, how, what?

Also, we must refer to the actual cause of this happening, also the frequency, and how it happened, without adding or subtracting. Many times, from a false zeal to lower ourselves more, we tend to exaggerate. No, we will not add or subtract, but we must say and stick to the reality of exactly what we are, and without saying half of our sins to one spiritual father, and the other half to confess to another spiritual father, because we may feel shame in front of the one so we select some of our sins to say to a different confessor, so half here and half there. No, we must confess all our sins to the same spiritual father so he can get to know us.

Do you know how important this feeling of shame in front of our confessor is? It will help you, my child, to never do the sin again. That's why God instilled the feeling of shame in Adam and Eve when their eyes were opened and they ran to cover, because they saw their nakedness. God placed the feeling of shame in that area for the sole reason to act as a deterrent, and not abuse those members for the purpose of sin. -To have bashfulness to act as a deterrent. So just to have you say, "You know, how am I going to tell this to my spiritual father-this thing that is now tempting me, and I'm about to do?" Well, this will make you to not do it.

This shame is a big chapter my friends-the chapter of shame-and don't be in a hurry to inactivate it. Especially when some people today say that shame is a weakness, or a disadvantage. No, it isn't! To be shy to go to the store is an inferiority complex, no doubt. To be bashful to say good morning to someone down the street-this is negative, for sure. But to blush, and get red because you did something bad-this is a positive. Because if you don't feel shame when you did something filthy, then you are vulgar, and audacious. You are impolite, and of course this is certainly not honorable.

So in our confession, we must have shame, but consequently **we will** not be so ashamed not to be able to bring out our sins. Again, this shame should not prevent us from saying our sins. Sometimes we think, "How am I going to say this? How will I say it?" And I would especially add here that the sin that causes the most shame, we should mention first to get rid of it-get it out of the way. To eliminate first the type of sin that's causing some difficulty inside us.

Wisdom of Sirach says, "There's shyness that brings sin and evil, but there's shyness that brings glory and grace." And St. John of the Ladder says-this is beautiful-"You cannot rid yourself of shame without shyness. However, there's also the sin from the devil," as you see, shyness in this case because this is the sin from the devil. The devil tells you, 'Don't say that, that's shameful!'

When I discover this, and I ask you, "My child, why didn't you confess that?" "Well, I was ashamed." When you were doing it, weren't you ashamed then? You know what the devil says then? The opposite. "Go ahead, do it. Don't be ashamed." When you want to confess it, he tells you, "It's embarrassing!" Do you see how crafty the devil is?

St. John the Chrysostom says, "Say your sins here on earth, because when you die, your sins will be announcec.i in fn:..n\. of an the saints and the angels and will be made public there. Tell me, which is better? To come here in church and say it, to your confessor and to God-nobody else, nobody else will hear anything-or there, where your sins will be made public in front of thousands of angels?"

I must also mention to you my friends, that when we hide a sin, all our sins remain unforgiven, and we add to the total one more sin. This is something very bad and serious. To

forget is a different story-to forget something, and when I remember it I will confess it, well that's different. But when I purposely hide something, I add a sin, and the other sins remain unforgiven.

We must seriously decide not to repeat whatever we did wrong in the past. This of course is not always easy, because if it were, then with one confession we would become saints. But we don't become saints. We will come to a decision and keep trying. We will not lose heart or lose hope, but we will struggle. Not to say or expect to be virtuous by chance, "If it happens, fine," or "Whatever happens, happens." You will never correct yourself-you will always repeat the same sins if you don't try.

And what happens then? St. Peter describes what can take place, "The dog returns to his own vomit, and the pig that was washed returns to its wallowing in the mud." So realistically, we must not return to the same vomit, to our same vomits. We must not return to the sins that we once vomited. We truly vomit our sins. This is terrible. But we must look forward and come to a strong decision to correct ourselves. To start saying, "My God, I pray to you, please help me! I don't want to ever go back." The devil will fight us. But we must not give in.

Twelfth. We must have the willingness to accept a certain canon,[1] or remedy that our spiritual father will impose on us; and one of the canons is usually not to partake of Holy Communion for a period of time. Or do a few prostrations, or fast one more day other than the specified fasting days, or something of this sort. What does all this mean? That the canon imposed does not have a sense of punishment, but rather a purpose of education and spiritual discipline.

When Miriam had offended her brother Moses, God punished her with leprosy. And Moses pleaded with God to forgive her, and God said, "I forgive her, but she will serve a canon." Watch here, His wisdom. "She will be healed in one week. She will stay outside the camp for one week so she can recognize her fault, her sin." What did God say? Listen to this method of reasoning that God used. "If her father spits in her face, would she wipe herself off and begin to smile right away? Or would she hide in shame? It is a matter of shame."

So here, someone can clearly see that the canon is disciplinary in nature. That a person must feel his sin, and not that he has to pay God or His righteousness or anything of that sort. Once again, this canon is not punishment, but its purpose is to discipline us spiritually. Let's never take Communion if our spiritual father told us not to, as the result of a canon! If he tells you not to take Holy Communion and you disobey, it is a tremendously terrible sin.

My friends, someone here in Larisa-many years ago, before 1963; I'm not going to mention the name obviously, but someone-a young person, over twenty, went to confession, and his confessor told him not to take Communion, and he went home. Well, his mother tells him, "Don't you listen to that. Never mind what he said. You go ahead and take Communion." It was Holy Thursday. He went for Holy Communion, and when he went home, he died.

If you think that this is simply an exaggeration, or a matter of chance, well, I send you to St. Paul, where he says, "That's why many of you become ill, and not a few die, because they don't recognize the Body and Blood of Christ." Please pay attention to these matters, my friends, pay attention! Of course, the mother was stricken by grief, and died shortly after that. I did not know about the above situation, because I was not in the area at the time, but a fellow priest informed me of all these things that I just told you.

Thirteen. When we describe our sins, we must describe them decently. We will not state our sins, let's say raw and impolitely. We can use extreme details, but with much decency.

An element that is technical, and is a matter of consideration and love for the other people which may be waiting their turn, is the habit of endless talk. Let's not talk forever, or repeat over and over again the same thing-talking on and on. Let's be specific. -This, and this, and this. One, two, three, four. Let's be specific. We're not going to start our life story. Let's be concrete. Let's watch this, because the devil can use this to his advantage, the confessor not

---

[1] I believe this is from the Greek word, "xavrov," which is also translated as a "rule," and in this case would probably mean something like a "penance"-though the Orthodox concept of penance is different from the Western understanding and doesn't have quite the same connotations.

being able to get to all the people, some of them will not get to confess. So it is very important that we learn how to prepare ourselves for confession.

This point is of great importance. Let's not forget what the ancient Greeks used to say, "To be a Spartan," or frugal in speech, "is great philosophy." Many feel that by endlessly talking they can paint a better picture. Someone can create a picture with a few words-precise and clear.

Another point. When we go to confession-and always! -we should be dressed decently and tastefully. We should watch our manners, the way we dress, and the way we sit. I remember a young lady-about a high school student-who came in, and she didn't simply sit. She threw herself in the chair, she crossed her legs, and in a rude tone of voice told me, "You know, I've got problems." "No kidding!" I told her. Please tell me now- God help us-please tell me now. Did she behave like she was at a park, or a bar or a restaurant? She came in to discuss her problems.

Another point is-when we come out, we must not make public knowledge what our confessor told us, what canon he gave us. In this manner, we will not offend or betray the Sacrament of Confession. Just like the spiritual father does not have the right to reveal the deep secrecy of confession, in the same way, the penitent as well is forbidden to tell others what the father confessor told him. Because, this will create great confusion. One will be saying, "He told me this, why did he tell you differently?" But the spiritual father uses different discretion as he sees fit. For him to say this, and for you something else. Therefore, I must not publicize what I was told.

Or, when we publicize what the spiritual father said, so the others can laugh. Now, you understand, when we come to the point to make a joke out of this great mystery of confession, then I don't know where we're headed. I really don't know.

Seventeenth. Let's be careful of the advice that we get at the time of confession. Let's not distort anything from what was said to us. Especially if we make these things public-which we must not in the first place. Not only we make them public, but we also happen to distort the truth. My friends, it is dreadful, and I have experienced this type of thing. It has to do with being slanderous and sacrilegious towards the holy sacrament of confession.

It's the very thing that our Lord talked about, "Be careful how you listen." Someone comes out of confession and says, or he goes to the movies or to a theatre, and someone sees him and asks him, "Hey, what are you doing here? You're spiritual and you go to confession, and you hang around here?" "Well, that's OK, my priest allows me to come, and, you know, go to the movies. He gave me the OK." This is a lie. Or worse yet, slander, because to justify himself he stated, *"my* spiritual father allows me to come to the movies." Please tell me now, if we can in this case still talk about repentance. How can we talk about repentance now? Impossible.

And finally, my friends, many times after confession, since we feel that we got rid of our sins, God granted forgiveness, we seem to think that we can run here and there and repeat the same things! -And worse yet, to leave our confession inactive-to have the sacrament of confession and penance inactive in our lives. What does this mean? To simply not produce any fruit.

You know what John, St. John the Baptist, used to say to the crowds going to confession? "Produce, then, fruit worthy of repentance." It wasn't enough, then, simply for someone to state their sins, when at that time they were being baptized by John in the Jordan River, and while in the water they were confessing their sins. Was this enough? Could someone say today about our sacrament of baptism or confession-which is considered the second baptism-that I was simply baptized? Or can you say that you confessed, and this is enough? No. Do you see what St. John says in his teachings, "To produce fruit worthy of repentance?" in other words, to become fruitful. And this fruitfulness is to be worthy of the degree of our repentance.

Zaca1aeu::., iof tiJCali ,pie, when he said, "Lord, I did injustice. I am a sinful man," watch what he did on his own. The Lord did not suggest this. Again, Zacchaeus did this on his own. Of course, the Old Testament did say something to that effect, but what does Zacchaeus say? "If I wronged anyone, I will repay him four times." What is this? It is restitution of the evil that I did. It is the fruit of repentance. But, do you want something that was from Zacchaeus heart, and was not in the Law? "And everything that is left after I pay four times those that I have wronged-what's left, half of this I will give to the poor." What is this? Almsgiving. What is almsgiving? Almsgiving is

the fruit of repentance. You were living in immorality, and now you abstain. You produce the fruit of abstinence and self-control. When you were selfish and stingy, and now you share and give money, what is giving? -Fruit of repentance. When you were a blasphemer, and now you no longer swear, but you talk well about everything-your mouth stays clean-what is this? - Fruit of repentance. So, as you can see, we must not simply say that we went to confession, but we must produce fruit. If you will, that's what true confession is all about. This is God's proof.

Also, as you know, we receive our forgiveness of sins from our confessor. Christ Himself gave the authority, "Whosever sins you forgive on earth, they are forgiven. Whosever sins you bind on earth, they will be bound in heaven, and the sins that you loosen on earth, they will be loosened in heaven." The prayer of absolution grants forgiveness, of course, but wishfully forgiving. Watch this point, this is how we pray: "The grace of the most Holy Spirit, through me the least of servants, *may* have you forgiven and loosened."

May have you forgiven. Realistically, who forgives? God forgives. If you come and play games with me, you tell me lies, and you extract the prayer of absolution from me, what do you think? Do you think that you are a forgiven person? Absolutely not. Because the God above is Who bounds and loosens, forgives or retains. That's why, when we confess, not only we should produce fruits, but we must be careful to get the true and real forgiveness. We should not simply look at the person of the confessor, but through him at the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is He, Who, from above, watches, validates, forgives, or retains. Let's pay close attention to this.

Here, having said all this, I hope it will help you to prepare-in the manner that I told you, more or less-and not a single person should stay without confession these days. -And to learn to confess often, and to take Holy Communion often. -To have the necessary requirements to take Holy Communion as often as possible. Only by being very close to the Sacraments of our Church, we have the hope to stand straight, and in reality to finally be saved.

Self-Examination According to the Ten Commandments

Use the following questions as a guide for self-evaluation.

First Commandment: Thou shall have none other gods before Me (Deuteronomy 5:7)

Have I believed in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God in Three Persons?

Have I acknowledged God as the Lord, the Source of all good things, the Savior of my soul and body?

Have I loved God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength?

Have I constantly had the thought of God in my mind and the fear of God in my heart?

Have I failed to trust in God and His mercy?

Has my faith in God been shaken by skepticism or doubt?

Have I complained against God in time of adversity?

Have I been thankful for God's blessings?

Have I questioned or doubted the holy tenets of the Orthodox Faith?

Have I asked God to strengthen my faith? Have I despaired of God's mercy or help?

Have I prayed to God every day, morning and evening? Have I prayed with zeal?

Have I always attended Divine Services whenever possible? Have I missed any of them without good reason?

Have I tried to serve God and keep His commandments?

Have I preferred religious books over others? Have I, in fact, read them? Have I read atheistic or heretical books out of sinful curiosity?

Have I attended the meetings of heretics and schismatics?

Have I willingly contributed to charitable causes and to the Church?

Have I given a sacrificial portion ofmy resources?

Have I neglected my duties to God through fear of ridicule or persecution?

Have I denied that I am a Christian? Have I denied any teaching of the Orthodox Faith? Have I given way to superstition? Have I consulted astrologers, fortune-tellers or spiritualists? Have I put myself before God? Have I forgotten or neglected the most important thing in life, that is, preparing for etemity?

How will I answer God ifl have given myself up to vanity, sloth, pleasure and carelessness?

Second Commandment: Thou shall not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them... (Deuteronomy 5:8,9a).

Have I made an idol of any person or thing? Have I given to any one or to any thing the worship that is due to God alone? Have I put God first?

Or have I given first place to: accumulation of money, acquisition of property, amusement or entertainment, food and drink, clothes, self-adornment, attention to myself, eliciting praise, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, spending time in distractions, obsession with myself or with other persons or things?

Have I been distracted from God by a passion for watching television or movies, attending the theater or playing games of one sort or another?

Have I been so anxious about myself, my family or my friends that I have neglected God, failed to serve Him and not carried out what is required of me by the Church?

Have I given too much attention to my home and its furnishings, its decoration and repair? Have I paid too much attention to a car, truck, vari, boat or other vehicle of travel?

Have I been irreverent during Divine Services, let my attention wander or been insincere?

Have I neglected to receive Holy Communion regularly? Have I received the Divine Gifts without due preparation?

Have I made an idol of myself? Have I made an idol of some passion? love of money? gluttony? sexual obsession? anger?

Have I allowed a passion to take possession of my heart?

Have I read the Holy Scriptures regularly? Have I read books that would be spiritually nourishing?

Have I set before myself the holy life of Jesus my Savior and tried to imitate Him? Have I called on Him to help me? Have I read the lives of the Saints and tried to imitate their virtues, especially those of my Patron Saint? Have I asked for their prayers and their strength?

Third Commandment: Thou shaft not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain (Deuteronomy 5:11).

Have I profaned the name of God in any way? Have I been thoughtless or irreverent with the name ofGod?

Have I used the name of God in a curse? Have I treated something holy as a joke, or joked about holy things?

Have I grumbled toward God or even renounced Him at any time?

Have I shown due respect to the clergy and the faithful or hindered them in their work?

Have I shown respect for all other people?

Have I prayed absent-mindedly or inattentively?

Have I cursed anyone or anything? Have I sworn a false oath? Have I broken an oath or a promise?

Have I entered into any sinful or unlawful contract or made such a promise? Have I given in to despondency?

Fourth Commandment: Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee (Deuteronomy 5:12).

Have I failed to attend Divine Services on the Lord's Day or on a Great Feast Day without just cause? Have I kept others from attending Divine Services? Have I done unnecessary work on Sundays or on Great Feast Days? Have I violated the sanctity of the Lord's Day or Great Feasts by unwholesome or frivolous activities? Have I distracted others from keeping these days in a godly way? Did I pray at home if I was unable to attend Divine Services on the Lord's Day or a Great Feast Day? Did I make every effort to worship "in spirit and in truth" while I was at a Divine Service? Did I allow myself to be distracted by worldly concerns at a Divine Service? to judge others? to think of unwholesome or frivolous things? Did I make the effort to come to Divine Services on time? Have I diligently kept the fasts of the Church? Have I caused anyone else to violate the fasts or tempted anyone to do so? Have I fasted properly in my heart, realizing a hunger for God and life in Him, rather than legalistically, just to fulfil the letter?

Fifth Commandment: Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Deuteronomy 5:16).

Have I been disrespectful to my parents or inattentive to their advice and concern for me? Have I been lacking in love for them? Have I withheld love from them? Have I disobeyed them? Have I neglected them or failed to help them? Have I cared for my parents in their illnesses or old age? Have I deceived my parents or caused them pain by my words or actions? Have I

prayed for my parents and other relatives? Have I prayed for the repose of my parents and other relatives who are departed? Have I done my duty toward my family? Husbands: Have I sacrificed my life for my wife? Wives: Have I been obedient to my husband? Have I encouraged peace and mutual respect among the members of my family? Have I been responsible toward my spouse, children and others who depend on me for help, counsel, guidance or support? Have I been wanting in love for my spouse or harmed her/him in any way? Have I set a good example for my children? Have I tried to rear my children in godliness? Have I disciplined them with patience? or in anger? Have I been overindulgent with my children? Have I been stingy with any members of my family or with others? Have I neglected my godparents or failed to honor them? Have I neglected my godchildren or failed to instruct, guide or encourage them in the Orthodox Faith? Have I worked for my employer honestly and diligently? Have I treated fairly and respectfully all who worked with me or who are under my supervision? Have I respected and prayed for the civil authorities? Have I honored those who are older than I? Have I shown respect for all others? Have I mocked anyone or made fun of him? Have I respected the clergy of the Church and prayed for them? Have I criticized them or mocked them? Have I been embittered against them, especially when they chastised or corrected me? Have I honored God as my Father, the Church as my Mother, and other human beings as my fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters?

Sixth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill (Deuteronomy 5:17).

Have I killed another person, or have I contributed to the death of another person? Have I had an abortion or given support or encouragement to someone else to have one? Have I wanted another person to die? Have I wanted any type of harm to come to another person or group of people? Have I tried to kill myself or thought seriously about doing it? Have I caused injury to another person? Have I caused injury to myself through smoking, overindulgence, drinking too much alcohol, taking drugs or too much medicine or through evil and intemperate living? Have I given way to anger? Have I cursed anyone or hurt anyone with unduly harsh words? Have I been cruel to anyone? Have I ignored someone who neeued hdp ur faiit<l to defend someone who was being treated unjustly or cruelly? Have I failed to respond to those who are in need: to the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the imprisoned, the homeless, the ill, the troubled, the affiicted, the depressed or those with other needs that I could help? Have I harmed

someone spiritually by leading him into temptation to commit spiritual death through heresy, schism or by some other sin? Have I shown malice or hatred toward another person? Do I bear any malice or resentment or hatred in my heart toward anyone else? Have I failed to forgive anyone or harbored evil thoughts against anyone? Have I mistreated animals or destroyed or harmed any living creature unnecessarily?

Seventh Commandment: Neither shalt thou commit adultery (Deuteronomy 5:18).

Have I committed the sins of adultery or fornication? Have I committed the sin of masturbation? Have I had any sexual experiences outside of marriage? Have I done anything impure alone or with any other person(s)? Have I engaged in bestiality, transvestitism, sodomy or any other abnormal sexual practice? Have I degraded myself or another person in any way? Have I forgotten or ignored human dignity? Have I been immodest? Have I lived in an improper way with anyone else? Have I read or looked at immoral, suggestive or pornographic books, magazines, pictures, websites, movies, tapes, dances, plays or performances? Have I entertained impure thoughts or fantasies? Have I been unfaithful to my spouse through impure thoughts or fantasies? Have I looked at any person or thing in an impure way? Have I spoken or listened to impure or suggestive language, dirty jokes or lewd songs? Have I eaten or drunk too much? Have I tempted others to do so? Have I associated with bad companions? Have I been a to unsavory place? Have I been lazy, idle or wasteful of time? Have I tempted others or led them to commit sinful acts or to entertain sinful thoughts? Have I tempted others through my own immodesty or through suggestive language or actions? Have I been unfaithful to any trust? Have I betrayed the confidence of anyone else? Have I judged any other person?

Eighth Commandment: Neither shall thou steal (Deuteronomy 5:19).

Have I stolen anything or wished to do so? Have I stolen by fraud, deception or conspiracy? Have I kept anything that did not belong to me? Have I stolen by not rendering a service for which I was compensated? Have I tried honestly to find the owner of lost ariid I roun<.i, when it was reasonable to do so? Have I cheated or defrauded anyone? Have I accepted or purchased stolen goods? Have I disposed improperly of the goods of another? Have I paid my debts in a timely way? Have I lived within my means? Have I lived extravagantly or wastefully? Have I been selfish

with what is entrusted to me? Have I been miserly in soul? Have I shared with others? Have I been stingy? Have I given to those in need? Have I given a sacrificial proportion of my goods to the Church for God's service? Have I been honest and upright in my dealings with others?

Ninth Commandment: Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor (Deuteronomy 5:20)

Have I slandered anyone? Have I lied? Have I added to or taken away from the truth? Have I made careless statements or spoken evil of anyone? Have I betrayed the confidence of another person? Have I criticized others? Have I rejoiced in the failings or downfall of others? Have I covered my brother's shame as Shein and Japheth covered their father Noah's? Have I spread gossip or scandal? Have I hurt the reputation of anyone else? Have I concealed the truth or assisted in carrying out a lie? Have I confessed to sins I have not committed? Have I confessed all the sins I have committed? Have I failed to come forward to defend another person when I knew lie was being slandered or spoken against unjustly? Have I tried to see the good in others? Have I concentrated on the shortcomings of others? Have I engaged in idle chatter? Have I spoken unnecessarily? Have I laughed or acted frivolously? Have I made a real effort to be truthful at all times?

Tenth Commandment: Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbors wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbors house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbor's (Deuteronomy 5:2 I).

Have I envied others? either their lives or their goods? Have I desired anything that was another's? Have I damaged or destroyed the possessions or property of others? Have I desired things God has not given me? Have I been discontent with my life? Have I held back anything due to another because I wanted it myself or for any other reason? Have I hoped for the downfall of another so that I might gain by it? Have I failed to be gracious and generous to anyone? Have I wanted from God what I refused to give to a fellow man: forgiveness? goods? grace? physical or spiritual blessings? Have I been greedy? Have I been jealou:s of anoti1er per:son ':s goods, money, appearance, success, love, popularity, being loved by another or others? Have I concentrated my time, efforts and thoughts on the things of the world rather than on the things of the spirit?

PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

I see many who receive the Body of Christ carelessly and casually, and out of custom and rules, rather than attentively and with a pure conscience.

-St. John Chrysostom

Frequent Confession helps us to put into practice the command of the Holy Apostle Paul, that we are to examine ourselves before partaking of the awesome Mystery of the Eucharist, lest we eat and drink "unworthily" unto condemnation rather than salvation (see I Cor. 11 :26 ff). Confession is a practice which helps us to strive toward purity of heart and soul, humility about ourselves, and love for God. God's love for us is light, joy, peace, and mercy, but for those who would approach Him without first preparing to meet Him, He-is an all-consuming fire.

The Statutes of the Orthodox Church in America on Confession and Communion clearly state that for those who receive Communion seldom (even once a month), it is expected that they would go to Confession each time before receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.

This document also tells us that, for those who are striving to live a life centered on the Eucharist, and desire to receive Communion frequently (each week), **one should first have the blessing of his priest to do so, and should be Confessing once a month as a regular practice** (more often if needed, or if the priest has suggested it). Speak to your priest if you have any questions about this well-established and accepted practice of the Church.

St. John Chrysostom said the following

"We must not avoid communion because we deem ourselves to be sinful. We must approach it more often for the healing of the soul and the purification of the spirit, but with such humility and faith that considering ourselves unworthy...we would desire even more the medicine for our wounds. Otherwise it is impossible to receive communion once a year, as certain people do ...considering the sanctification of heavenly Mysteries as available only to saints. It is better to think that by giving us grace, the sacrament makes us pure and holy. Such people manifest more pride than humility...for when they receive, they think of themselves as worthy. It is much better if, in humility of heart, knowing that we are never worthy of the Holy Mysteries we would receive them every Sunday for the healing of our diseases, rather than, blinded by pride, think that after one year we become worthy of receiving them."

The Church's Prayer Book has a number of beautiful prayers which, if we read them attentively, can help us to become aware of the Gift of the Lord's Body and Blood. These prayers should be done the evening before the Divine Liturgy. Some writers suggest that we include one or two of the prayers in our daily **Rule of Prayer** (questions? see your priest), so that they are spread throughout the week. If I do these prayers, I begin to understand that I am certainly not worthy to approach the Saviour and Redeemer, and to receive within my body the all-pure, deifying, and awesome Mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood. Yet I do not despair, because I also understand that God desires all to be saved: it was His "saving command" for us to "take, eat...", and it is by receiving His Body and Blood within me, "in faith and love," that I then possess Him and Everlasting Life as the greatest gifts known to man, the most precious pearl, the one thing needful! My perception of Who Christ is, and who I am, is balanced and given its proper perspective in the praying of the Prayers before Communion.

Fasting is the third component in preparing for Communion. A strict fast is always observed, with no food or d1ink being taken after midnight on the night before. After waking in the morning, nothing should be consumed or drunk until after the Divine Liturgy. Naturally, those who are ill, under medication, or cannot fast for medical reasons, need not follow the usual practice. If there is any question, please see your confessor.

Above all, keep in mind the words of Fr. Alexander Schmemann: the Liturgy 1s a Journey and procession to the Kingdom of God. Each of us begins this journey each Sunday morning the moment we awake. The sacramental act and movement toward receiving Communion has already begun. Let us prepare for the journey with care and attention.

PROSPHORA

The parishioners are to be commended for having their Prosphora brought into the Altar before the beginning of Liturgy, rather than during the Service itself. As you may know, last month's Bulletin had a notice about the use of Prosphora, and your prayer requests/lists for loved ones, those who are sick, and those who have departed in the Lord. The notice asked that lists be brought in before the beginning of Liturgy-with your consideration, that is what has happened.

Some brief comments regarding the lists would be appropriate, especially for those who are new to the Parish. Prosphora is bread which has been set aside for use in the Divine Liturgy. Since very ancient times, the Faithful have brought bread to be used in the Liturgy (bringing also other offerings for the poor, the needy, and for the welfare of the congregation and parish). This bread, stamped with the seal ICXC - the Greek letters for the abbreviation of Jesus Christ -is sent into the Holy Altar, accompanied by a list of names of those to be prayed for. The priest prays for God's mercy upon those people who are listed, at the same time taking a particle of the Prosphora. This particle is placed on the Diskos that is to hold the bread known as the "Lamb."

The particles of bread around the "Lamb" sacramentally and mystically symbolize a gathering around Christ and an offering to Him, of all those for whom we pray, all the Church's faithful members from all time-all of which are alive in Christ The partition between the living and the dead is overcome in Christ and manifested in this act of placing the particles on the Diskos. All of us, whether living or fallen asleep, "have died and our lives are hid with Christ in God."

Fr. Alexander Schmemann writes that "the whole Church, with the Mother of God and all the saints at her head, is gathered on the diskos, for all are united in this offering by Christ of His glorified and deified humanity to the God and Father. Thus, in taking out p_articles and pronouncing names, we are caring not simply for the 'health' of ourselves or certain of our neighbors, nor for the fate of the dead 'beyond the grave'; we offer and return them to God as a 'living and well-pleasing' sacrifice in order to make them participants in the 'inexhaustible life' of the kingdom of God. We immerse them in the forgiveness of sins, which shines forth from the grave, in that healed, restored and deified life for which God has created them." (Fr. A. Schmemann, The Eucharist, p. 111 ff)

> Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. (Rev. 7:15-17, KJV).

If you do not have a list for those that you would like us to pray for at each and every Divine Liturgy, please see Serge Anderson at the Candle-desk, and he will assist you. When filling out the names, please indicate those which are not Orthodox. While the Church certainly does encourage private prayer for all mankind and creation, both friends and enemies, whatever religious or non-religious persuasion, it should be pointed out that the Divine Liturgy is the time and place in which we mystically partake of Communion with Christ and with one another. In reading the list of names, the priest certainly prays for all. However, he removes particles of bread (which will be placed on the Diskos) only for those who are Orthodox - those who are struggling to remain true to the Apostolic and Patristic teachings-and therefore are in conscious Communion in the Church.

Of course, we do not and cannot judge either the living or the dead, that is for God alone. But this sacramental act of the Proskomedia, a symbol of the earthly and heavenly Church, gathered around Christ, as the Church, is also a preparation for the Divine Liturgy, which is not merely a religious "rite" or sacred act, but that in which the Church is most clearly Herself, uniting mystically all Her members in Christ, showing Herself to be the presence of Christ and His kingdom in this world.

REMINDERS ABOUT HOLY COMMUNION

In last month's bulletin it was requested that the women wearing lipstick kindly blot their lips before approaching the Chalice or the Cross, since lipstick residue is left behind on these things.

Also, it was mentioned that after one receives Holy Communion, kiss only the Chalice, and not the priest's hand, since your lips may still be moist with the most precious Blood, and you may accidental knock the Chalice.

A third, and much more important consideration is personal preparation for receiving Communion. There are at least four non-optional points to consider. The explanations and "whys and wherefores" will be covered separately:

• **Frequent Confession**, that is, at least once a month if receiving Communion regularly. This is the standard outlined in the OCA Statutes, and is a requirement for Orthodox Christians. The Apostle Paul tells us that unless a person examines himself (and in the Church practice this means the Mystery of Confession and Repentance) than reception of Communion is to spiritual sickness, rather than health. Be eager and joyful that God always gives us the opportunity to repent and correct this situation. Fr. Lawrence is available any day or time of the week to hear Confessions.

• **Pre/Post Communion Prayers.** These prayers are found in the Prayer Book, and can be prayed anytime during the week, and spread out over a few days.

• **Fasting.** In the Tradition of the Church we see that before receiving Communion we not only fast from midnight the night before from all food, drink (including coffee and water!), and any marital relations, but we also maintain the Wednesday and Friday fasts from meat and dairy as well.

• **Saturday Vespers.** This Service begins the Lord's Day (Sunday), and is meant as a preparation for entering into the Sunday Liturgy more fully. Of course, those who are cannot drive at night or have physical conditions that keep them away are excepted from attending. If you cannot attend for some reason, speak to your spiritual father or priest so that your reason is blessed. But in any case, keep Saturday evening a time of preparation and focus on the approaching Divine Liturgy, rather than a time for worldly entertainments.

The Proskomedia

Before the Liturgy of the Faithful begins each Lord's Day and Feast Day, the Priest comes early to the church to put on his vestments -saying prayers and hymns while doing so -to prepare the bread and wine that will be offered to the Lord at the Eucharist. This Service of preparation of the bread and wine is called the "Proskomedia", meaning carrying in of something to a certain place. It is also called the "Prothesis", meaning offering.

Prosphora

From the earliest times of the Church, Her faithful members have brought bread, wine, food, clothes and money to the place where the Liturgy would be served. The Deacons would receive these gifts, sort them and prepare that portion of them that, as an expression of this entire offering -a "mercy of peace a sacrifice of praise" and love -would be used in the Eucharistic Mystery. The other foods and material gifts and offerings would be distributed to the poor and needy. Thus, the Eucharist, God's charity and love towards us, and our own philanthropy towards others are related and work together.

Those breads that would be used in the Eucharist are called Prosphora. In the preparation of the Eucharistic bread we understand that the New Creation of the Church is gathered around Christ, our Paschal Lamb, and that there cannot be a partition between the living and the dead. In Christ all are alive. Fr. Alexander Schmemann writes in his book the Eucharist that "... for all of us -both the living and fallen asleep -'have died and our lives are hid with Christ in God,' for the whole Church, with the Mother of God and all the saints at her head, is gathered on the Diskos [the plate which holds the Eucharistic bread], for all are united in this offering by Christ of His glorified and deified humanity to the God and Father."

The main prosphora is used for the Eucharistic "Lamb", and is placed in the center of the Diskos, for Christ our Passover is the center and head of the Church. All the other Prosphora are used in the commemoration and prayers for the Church and the health and salvation, or blessed memory, of Her faithful children. All Her members are offered as a "living and well-pleasing" sacrifice in order to make them participants in the "inexhaustible life" of the Kingdom of God. We immerse them in the forgiveness of sins. which shines forth from the grave, in that healed, restored and deified life for which God has created them.

Each bread that enters the Altar during the Service of the Proskomedia is accompanied with a list of names. For each name, the priest removes a particle of the Prosphora, and places it on the Diskos next to the Lamb, as it were, next to Christ, surrounded by the Mother of God, the Saints, angels and all of the Church.

Only after having said all of this, can it now be said that the Liturgy, which includes the Proskomedia, is the place and time when the Church is most Herself, offering Herself to the Lord. Here She ascends to the Throne of God, with all those in Communion with Her (a "common union" of faith, worship and life). And because this rite and Liturgy are Her's alone, then of couse, **ONLY those in Communion with Her** are commemorated with the Prosphora at the Proskomedia.

Indeed, there are times when the Church prays intently for the world and those in it who need God's love and forgiveness and life. But the Liturgy is not that time or place. Rather, the Liturgy is Her source of Life, so that She can then extend, go forth in peace, and minister in a concrete way (not only prayer, yet including it) to those outside of the New Creation, who are being called to come and be renewed in Christ's life in the Church.

Practically speaking, the Priest prays for all those names listed with each Prosphora, yet he removes a particle **only** for Orthodox Christians, who are now, either living or dead, in Communion with Christ and the Church.

The offering of prosphora with the names of the living and the dead is, according to church tradition, done prior to the second part of Divine Liturgy "the Liturgy of the Catechumens," (which begins with Blessed is the Kingdom ...). The faithful are to gather towards the beginning of the second part and not at some other "convenient time." As in our lives there are exceptions to our daily routine and, so too, there are exceptions to the norm in Church life. Reasons for tardiness vary. There may be an illness, traffic or long distances -to mention a few. In such cases a practical approach is to be found.

As a convenience, many parishioners have arranged for their commemorations to be done each Sunday before they arrive. Their book of names stays in the Altar, rather than at the Candle-desk, so that the priest can begin the Proskomedia and commemorations as early as he desires. If you would like to arrange this for your own book, see Serge Anderson or Petar Griovski at the Candle-desk. Each Prosphora costs $1, but a discount is offered if you pay by the year or half-year.

If you send in your book each week, please do so well BEFORE the Liturgy begins. There are parishes that refuse to accept the offering of prosphora after the Little Entrance or even immediately at the beginning of the second part of Liturgy. And there is a good reason for this approach. Firstly, we as Orthodox Christians participate only when we pay full attention to what is being chanted or sung and, thusly reap benefit .

This is not possible when we occupy ourselves with the writing of names, exchanging monies and such like. *Secondly*, it is discourteous even to our very selves (not to mention Our Lord) when prayers are being offered up to God for our own welfare and we choose to ignore them by doing something else. Remember, *there is a time and place for everything* (Ecclesiastes 3:1). *Thirdly*, the priest has to serve liturgy. Often times he is alone and without a deacon or acolytes. When is he to read all the names and commemorate them? He is unable to do two things at once. As a courtesy to the priest and care for those to be commemorated, all synodicons and lists should be brought to the Sanctuary at the time of Proskomedia or, as an exception, before the Little Entrance. Otherwise, the commemorations due to lack of time may not take place.

Neither should the prosphora tray be brought into the Sanctuary during the actual Little Entrance. It has nothing to do with that part of Liturgy.

How to Set Up a Personal Commemoration Book

When entering names in your commemoration book, place all the Orthodox names together, and indicate that they are Orthodox Christians. List your family members, your Heirarchs, those in your parish, your God-children (if you have any), people who have requested prayers, and then any other specifically Orthodox people you wish to pray for. Do not make the list too long, as normally the Priest has hundreds, if not thousands of people to pray for before each Liturgy.

Antidoron

One last remark regarding the Eucharistic Lamb itself. The priest prepares the Iamb by cutting it in a specific way before placing it upon the Diskos. The left-over pieces from the Lamb are called Antidoron (instead of the Gifts), and are to be distributed to those who have fasted, yet are not for some reason receiving Holy Communion.

After the Liturgy

You will receive your offered Prosphora after Liturgy. It is a pious custom to take this holy and blessed bread home, cut it up into smaller pieces, place them in a small bowl to dry, and eat a piece each morning after the morning prayers, and before breakfast and coffee or eating anything. If the bread gets moldy (not likely, if it dries out), than grind up the fragments and bury them in your garden.

The Power of the Name

the Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality

KALLISTOS WARE

Bishop of Diokleia

My doctor is Jesus Christ,
my food is Jesus Christ,
and my fuel is Jesus Christ.

Contemporary Coptic Monk

SLG PRESS
Convent of the incarnation
Fairacres Oxford

© THE SISTERS OF THE LOVE OF GOD 1974

New Edition 1986
Second Impression 1987

ISBN 0 7283 0113 X
ISSN 0307-1405

Prayer and Silence

'When you pray,' it has been wisely said by an Orthodox writer in Finland, 'you yourself must be silent. . . You yourself must be silent; let the prayer speak.'[1] To achieve silence: this is of all things the hardest and the most decisive in the art of prayer. Silence is not merely negative—a pause between words, a temporary cessation of speech—but, properly understood, it is highly positive: an attitude of attentive alertness, of vigilance, and above all of *listening*. The hesychast, the person who has attained *hesychia*, inner stillness or silence, is *par excellence* the one who listens. He listens to the voice of prayer in his own heart, and he understands that this voice is not his own but that of Another speaking within him.

The relationship between praying and keeping silent will become clearer if we consider four short definitions. The first is from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, which describes prayer as '. . . solemn request to God . . . formula used in praying'. Prayer is here envisaged as something expressed in words, and more specifically as an act of asking God to confer some benefit. We are still on level of external rather than inner prayer. Few of us can rest satisfied with such a definition.

Our second definition, from a Russian *starets* of the last century , is far less exterior. In prayer, says Bishop Theophan the Recluse (1815-94), 'the principal thing is to stand before God with the mind in the heart, and to go on standing before Him unceasingly day and night, until the end of life.'[2] Praying, defined in this way, is no longer merely to ask for things, and can indeed exist without the employment of any words at all. It is not so much a momentary activity as a continuous state. To pray is to *stand before God*, to enter into an immediate and personal relationship with him; it is to know at every level of our being, from the instinctive to the intellectual, from the sub-to the supra-conscious, that we are in God and he is in us. To affirm and deepen our personal relationships with other human beings, it is not necessary to be continually presenting requests or using words; the better we come to know and love one another, the less need there is to express our mutual attitude verbally. It is the same in our personal relationship with God.

In these first two definitions, stress is laid primarily on what is done by the human person rather than by God. But in the relationship of prayer, it is the divine partner and not the human who takes the initiative and whose action is fundamental. This is brought out in our third definition, taken from St Gregory of Sinai (+ 1346). In an elaborate passage, where he loads one epithet upon another in his effort to describe the true reality of inner prayer, he ends suddenly with unexpected simplicity: 'Why speak at length? Prayer is God, who works all things in all men.'[3] *Prayer is God*—it is not something that I initiate but something which I share; it is not primarily something that *I* do but something that *God* is doing in me: in St Paul's phrase, 'not I, but Christ in me' (Gal. 2:20). The path of inner prayer is exactly indicated in St John the Baptist's words about the Messiah: 'He must increase, but I must decrease' (John 3:30). It is in this sense that to pray is to be silent. 'You yourself must be silent; let the prayer speak'—more precisely, let God speak. True inner prayer is to stop talking and to listen to the wordless voice of God within our heart; it is to cease doing things on our own, and to enter into the action of God. At the beginning of the Byzantine Liturgy, when the preliminary preparations are completed and all is now ready for the start of the Eucharist itself, the deacon approaches the priest and says: 'It is time for the Lord to act.'[4] Such exactly is the attitude of the worshipper not only at the Eucharistic Liturgy but in all prayer, public or private.

Our fourth definition, taken once more from St Gregory of Sinai, indicates more definitely the character of this action of the Lord within us. 'Prayer', he says, 'is the manifestation of Baptism.'[5] The action of the Lord is not, of course, limited solely to the baptized; God is present and at work within all humankind, by virtue of the fact that each is created according to his divine image. But this image has been obscured and clouded over, although not totally obliterated, by our fall into sin. It is restored to its primal beauty and splendour through the sacrament of Baptism, whereby Christ and the Holy Spirit come to dwell in what the Fathers call 'the innermost and secret sanctuary of our heart'. For the overwhelming majority, however, Baptism is something received in infancy, of which they have no conscious memory. Although the baptismal Christ and the indwelling Paraclete never cease for one moment to work within us, most of us—save on rare occasions—remain virtually

unaware of this inner presence and activity. True prayer, then, signifies the rediscovery and 'manifestation' of baptismal grace. To pray is to pass from the state where grace is present in our hearts secretly and unconsciously, to the point of full inner perception and conscious awareness when we experience and *feel* the activity of the Spirit directly and immediately. In the words of St Kallistos and St Ignatios Xanthopoulos (fourteenth century), 'The aim of the Christian life is to return to the perfect grace of the Holy an Life-giving Spirit, which was conferred upon us at the beginning in divine Baptism.'[6]

'In my beginning is my end,' The purpose of prayer can be summarized in the phrase, 'Become what you are'. Become consciously and actively what you already are potentially and secretly, by virtue of your creation according to the divine image and your re-creation at Baptism. Become what you are: more exactly, return into yourself; discover him who is yours already, listen to him who never ceases to speak within you; possess him who even now possesses you. Such is God's message to anyone who wants to pray: 'You would not seek me unless you had already found me.'

But how are we to start? How, after entering our room and closing the door, are we to begin to pray, not just by repeating words from books, but by offering inner prayer, the living prayer of creative stillness? How can we learn to stop talking and to start listening? Instead of simply speaking to God, how can we make our own the prayer in which God speaks to us? How shall we pass from prayer expressed in words to prayer of silence, from 'strenuous' to 'self-acting' prayer (to use Bishop Theophan's terminology), from 'my' prayer to the prayer of *Christ in me*?

One way to embark on this journey inwards is through the Invocation of the Name.

'Lord Jesus...'

It is not, of course, the only way. No authentic relationship between persons can exist without mutual freedom and spontaneity, and this is true in particular of inner prayer. There are no fixed and unvarying rules, necessarily imposed on all who seek to pray; and equally there is no mechanical technique, whether physical or mental, which can compel God to manifest his presence. His grace is conferred always as a free gift, and cannot be gained automatically by any method or technique. The encounter between God and man in the kingdom of the heart is therefore marked by an inexhaustible variety of patterns. There are spiritual masters in the Orthodox Church who say little or nothing about the Jesus Prayer.[7] But, even if it enjoys no exclusive monopoly in the field of inner prayer, the Jesus Prayer has become for innumerable Eastern Christians over the centuries the standard path, the royal highway. And not for Eastern Christians only:[8] in the meeting between Orthodoxy and the West which has occurred over the past seventy years, probably no element in the Orthodox heritage has aroused such intense interest as the Jesus Prayer, and no single book has exercised a wider appeal than *The Way of a Pilgrim.* This enigmatic work, virtually unknown in pre-revolutionary Russia, has had a startling success in the non-Orthodox world and since the 1920s has appeared in a wide range of languages.[9] Readers of J. D. Salinger will recall the impact of the 'small pea-green cloth-bound book' on Franny.

Wherein, we ask, lies the distinctive appeal and effectiveness of the Jesus Prayer? Perhaps in four things above all: first, in its simplicity and flexibility; secondly, in its completeness; thirdly, in the power of the Name; and fourthly, in the spiritual discipline of persistent repetition. Let us take these points in order.

Simplicity and flexibility

The Invocation of the Name is a prayer of the utmost simplicity, accessible to every Christian, but it leads at the same time to the deepest mysteries of contemplation. Anyone proposing to say the Jesus Prayer for lengthy periods of time each day—and, still more, anyone intending to use the breathing control and other physical exercises in conjunction with the Prayer—undoubtedly stands in need of a

starets, of an experienced spiritual guide. Such guides are extremely rare in our day. But those who have no personal contact with a *starets* may still practise the Prayer without any fear, so long as they do so only for limited periods—initially, for no more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time—and so long as they make no attempt to interfere with the body's natural rhythms.

No specialized knowledge or training is required before commencing the Jesus Prayer. To the beginner it is sufficient to say: Simply begin. 'In order to walk one must take a first step; in order to swim one must throw oneself into the water. It is the same with the Invocation of the Name. Begin to pronounce it with adoration and love. Cling to it. Repeat it. Do not think that you are invoking the Name; think only of Jesus himself. Say his Name slowly, softly and quietly.'[10]

The outward form of the prayer is easily learnt. Basically it consists of the words 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'. There is, however, no strict uniformity. We can say '. . . have mercy on us', instead of 'on me'. The verbal formula can be shortened: 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me', or 'Lord Jesus', or even 'Jesus' alone, although this last is less common. Alternatively, the form of words may be expanded by adding 'a sinner' at the end, thus underlining the penitential aspect. We can say, recalling Peter's confession on the road to Caesarea Philippi, '. . . Son of the living God . . .'. Sometimes an invocation of the Mother of God or the saints is inserted. The one essential and unvarying element is the inclusion of the divine Name 'Jesus'. Each is free to discover through personal experience the particular form of words which answers most closely to his or her needs. The precise formula employed can of course be varied from time to time, so long as this is not done too often: for, as St Gregory of Sinai warns, 'Trees which are repeatedly transplanted do not grow roots'.[11]

There is a similar flexibility as regards the outward circumstances in which the Prayer is recited. Two ways of using the Prayer can be distinguished, the 'free' and the 'formal'. By the 'free' use is meant the recitation of the Prayer as we are engaged in our usual activities throughout the day. It may be said, once or many times, in the scattered moments which otherwise would be spiritually wasted: when occupied with some familiar and semi-automatic task, such as dressing, washing up, mending socks, or digging in the garden; when walking or driving, when waiting in a bus queue or a traffic jam; in a moment of quiet before some especially painful or difficult interview; when unable to sleep, or before we have gained full consciousness on waking. Part of the distinctive value of the Jesus Prayer lies precisely in the fact that, because of its radical simplicity, it can be prayed in conditions of distraction when more complex forms of prayer are impossible. It is especially helpful in moments of tension and grave anxiety.

This 'free' use of the Jesus Prayer enables us to bridge the gap between our explicit 'times of prayer'—whether at church services or alone in our own room—and the normal activities of daily life. 'Pray without ceasing', St Paul insists (I Thess. 5:17): but how is this possible, since we have many other things to do as well? Bishop Theophan indicates the method in his maxim, 'The hands at work, the mind and heart with God'.[12] The Jesus Prayer, becoming by frequent repetition almost habitual and unconscious, helps us to stand in the presence of God wherever we are—not only in the sanctuary or in solitude, but in the kitchen, on the factory floor, in the office. So we become like Brother Lawrence, who 'was more united with God during his ordinary activities than in religious exercises'. 'It is a great delusion', he remarked, 'to imagine that prayer-time should be different from any other, for we are equally bound to God by work at work-time as by prayer at prayer-time.'[13]

The 'free' recitation of the Jesus Prayer is complemented and strengthened by the 'formal' use. In this second case we concentrate our whole attention on the saying of the Prayer, to the exclusion of all external activity. The Invocation forms part of the specific 'prayer time' that we set aside for God each day. Normally, along with the Jesus Prayer, we shall also use in our 'set' time other forms of prayer taken from the liturgical books, together with Psalm and Scripture readings, intercession, and the like. A few may feel called to an almost exclusive concentration upon the Jesus Prayer, but this does not happen with most. Indeed, many prefer simply to employ the Prayer in the 'free' manner without using it 'formally' in their 'set' time of prayer; and there is nothing disquieting or incorrect about this. The 'free' use may certainly exist without the 'formal'.

In the 'formal' usage, as in the 'free', there are no rigid rules, but variety and flexibility. No particular posture is essential. In Orthodox practice the Prayer is most usually recited when seated, but it may also be said standing or kneeling—and even, in cases of bodily weakness and physical exhaustion, when lying down. It is normally recited in more or less complete darkness or with the eyes closed, not with open eyes before an icon illuminated by candles or a votive lamp. *Starets* Silouan of Mount Athos (1866-1938), when saying the Prayer, used to stow his clock away in a cupboard so as not to hear it ticking, and then pull his thick woollen monastic cap over his eyes and ears.[14]

Darkness, however, can have a soporific effect! If we become drowsy as we sit or kneel reciting the Prayer, then we should stand up for a time, make the Sign of the Cross at the end of each Prayer, and then bend from the waist in a deep bow, touching the ground with the fingers of the right hand. We may even make a prostration each time, touching the ground with our forehead. When reciting the Prayer seated, we should ensure that the chair is not too restful or luxurious; preferably it should have no arms. In Orthodox monasteries a low stool is commonly used, without a back. The Prayer may also be recited standing with arms outstretched in the form of a cross.

A prayer-rope or rosary (*komvoschoinion, tchotki*), normally with a hundred knots, is often employed in conjunction with the Prayer, not primarily in order to count the number of times it is repeated, but rather as an aid to concentration and the establishment of a regular rhythm. It is a widespread fact of experience that, if we make some use of our hands as we pray, this will help to still our body and to gather us together into the act of prayer. But quantitative measurement, whether with a prayer-rope or in other ways, is on the whole not encouraged. It is true that, in the early part of *The Way of a Pilgrim*, great emphasis is laid by the *starets* on the precise number of times that the Prayer is to be said daily: 3,000 times, increasing to 6,000, and then to 12,000. The Pilgrim is commanded to say an exact number, neither more nor less. Such attention to quantity is altogether unusual. Possibly the point here is not the sheer quantity but the inner attitude of the Pilgrim: the *starets* wishes to test his obedience and readiness to fulfil an appointed task without deviation. More typical, however, is the advice of Bishop Theophan: 'Do not trouble about the number of times you say the Prayer. Let this be your sole concern, that it should spring up in your heart with quickening power like a fountain of living water. Expel entirely from your mind all thoughts of quantity.'[15]

The Prayer is sometimes recited in groups, but more commonly alone; the words may be said aloud or silently. In Orthodox usage, when recited aloud it is spoken rather than chanted. There should be nothing forced or laboured in the recitation. The words should not be formed with excessive emphasis or inner violence, but the Prayer should be allowed to establish its own rhythm and accentuation, so that in time it comes to 'sing' within us by virtue of its intrinsic melody. *Starets* Parfenii of Kiev likened the flowing movement of the Prayer to a gently murmuring stream.[16]

From all this it can be seen that the Invocation of the Name is a prayer for all seasons. It can be used by everyone, in every place and at every time. It is suitable for the 'beginner' as well as the more experienced; it can be offered in company with others or alone; it is equally appropriate in the desert or the city, in surroundings of recollected tranquillity or in the midst of the utmost noise and agitation. It is never out of place.

Completeness

Theologically, as the Russian Pilgrim rightly claims, the Jesus Prayer 'holds in itself the whole gospel truth'; it is a 'summary of the Gospels'.[17] In one brief sentence it embodies the two chief mysteries of the Christian faith, the Incarnation and the Trinity. It speaks, first, of the two natures of Christ the God-man (*Theanthropos*): of his humanity, for he is invoked by the human name, 'Jesus', which his Mother Mary gave to him after his birth in Bethlehem; of his eternal Godhead, for he is also styled 'Lord' and 'Son of God'. In the second place the Prayer speaks by implication, although not explicitly, of the three Persons of the Trinity. While addressed to the second Person, Jesus, it points also to the Father, for Jesus is called 'Son of God'; and the Holy Spirit is equally present in the Prayer,

for 'no one can say "Lord Jesus", except in the Holy Spirit' (I Cor. 12:3). So the Jesus Prayer is both Christocentric and Trinitarian.

Devotionally, it is no less comprehensive. It embraces the two chief 'moments' of Christian worship: the 'moment' of adoration, of looking up to God's glory and reaching out to him in love; and the 'moment' of penitence, the sense of unworthiness and sin. There is a circular movement within the Prayer, a sequence of ascent and return. In the first half of the Prayer we rise up to God: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God . . .'; and then in the second half we return to ourselves in compunction: ' . . . on me a sinner'. 'Those who have tasted the gift of the Spirit', it is stated in the Macarian Homilies, 'are conscious of two things at the same time: on the one hand, of joy and consolation; on the other, of trembling and fear and mourning.'[18] Such is the inner dialectic of the Jesus Prayer.

These two 'moments'—the vision of divine glory and the consciousness of human sin—are united and reconciled in a third 'moment' as we pronounce the word 'mercy'. 'Mercy' denotes the bridging of the gulf between God's righteousness and the fallen creation. He who says to God, 'Have mercy', laments his own helplessness but voices at the same time a cry of hope. He speaks not only of sin but of its overcoming. He affirms that God in his glory accepts us though we are sinners, asking us in return to accept the fact that we are accepted. So the Jesus Prayer contains not only a call to repentance but an assurance of forgiveness and restoration. The heart of the Prayer—the actual name 'Jesus'—bears precisely the sense of salvation: 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21). While there is sorrow for sin in the Jesus Prayer, it is not a hopeless but a 'joy-creating sorrow', in the phrase of St John Climacus (+ c. 649).

Such are among the riches, both theological and devotional, present in the Jesus Prayer; present, moreover, not merely in the abstract but in a vivifying and dynamic form. The special value of the Jesus Prayer lies in the fact that it makes these truths come alive, so that they are apprehended not just externally and theoretically but with all the fullness of our being. To understand why the Jesus Prayer possesses such efficacy, we must turn to two further aspects: the power of the Name and the discipline of repetition.

The power of the Name

'The Name of the Son of God is great and boundless, and upholds the entire universe.' So it is affirmed in *The Shepherd of Hermas*,[19] nor shall we appreciate the role of the Jesus Prayer in Orthodox spirituality unless we feel some sense of the power and virtue of the divine Name. If the Jesus Prayer is more creative than other invocations, this is because it contains the Name of God.

In the Old Testament,[20] as in other ancient cultures, there is a close connection between someone's soul and his name. His personality, with its peculiarities and its energy, is in some sense present in his name. To know a person's name is to gain an insight into is nature, an thereby to acquire a relationship with him—even, perhaps, a certain control over him. That is why the mysterious messenger who wrestles with Jacob at the ford Jabbok refuses to disclose his name (Gen. 32:29). The same attitude is reflected in the reply of the angel to Manoah, 'Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?' (Judg. 13:18). A change of name indicates a decisive change in a person's life, as when Abram becomes Abraham (Gen. 17:5), or Jacob comes Israel (Gen. 32:28). In the same way, Saul after his conversion becomes Paul (Acts 13:9); and a monk at his profession is given a new name, usually not of his own choosing, to indicate the radical renewal which he undergoes.

In the Hebrew tradition, to do a thing *in the name* of another, or to *invoke* and *call upon his name*, are acts of weight and potency. To invoke a person's name is to make that person effectively present. 'One makes a name alive by mentioning it. The name immediately calls forth the soul it designates; therefore there is such deep significance in the very mention of a name.'[21]

Everything that is true of human names is true to an incomparably higher degree of the divine

Name. The power and glory of God are present and active in his Name. The Name of God is *numen praesens*, God with us, *Emmanuel*. Attentively and deliberately to invoke God's Name is to place oneself in his presence, to open oneself to his energy, to offer oneself as an instrument and a living sacrifice in his hands. So keen was the sense of the majesty of the divine Name in later Judaism that the *tetragrammaton* was not pronounced aloud in the worship of the synagogue: the Name of the Most High was considered too devastating to be spoken.[22]

This Hebraic understanding of the Name passes from the Old Testament into the New. Devils are cast out and men are healed through the Name of Jesus, for the Name is power. Once this potency of the Name is properly appreciated, many familiar passages acquire a fuller meaning and force: the clause in the Lord's Prayer, 'Hallowed be thy Name'; Christ's promise at the Last Supper, 'Whatever you shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you' (John 16:23); his final command to the apostles, 'Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' (Matt. 28:19); St Peter's proclamation that there is salvation only in 'the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth' (Acts 4:10-12); the words of St Paul, 'At the Name of Jesus every knee should bow' (Phil. 2:10); the new and secret name written on the white stone which is given to us in the Age to Come (Rev. 2:17).

It is this biblical reverence for the Name that forms the basis and foundation of the Jesus Prayer. God's Name is intimately linked with his Person, and so the Invocation of the divine Name possesses a sacramental character, serving as an efficacious sign of his invisible presence and action. For the believing Christian today, as in apostolic times, the Name of Jesus is power. In the words of the two Elders of Gaza, St Barsanuphius and St John (sixth century), 'The remembrance of the Name of God utterly destroys all that is evil.'[23] 'Flog your enemies with the Name of Jesus', urges St John Climacus, 'for there is no weapon more powerful in heaven or on earth. . . . Let the remembrance of Jesus be united to your every breath, and then you will know the value of stillness.'[24]

The Name is power, but a purely mechanical repetition will by itself achieve nothing. The Jesus Prayer is not a magic talisman. As in all sacramental operations, the human person is required to co-operate with God through active faith and ascetic effort. We are called to invoke the Name with recollection and inward vigilance, confining our minds within the words of the Prayer, conscious who it is that we are addressing and that responds to us in our heart. Such strenuous prayer is never easy in the initial stages, and is rightly described by the Fathers as a hidden martyrdom. St Gregory of Sinai speaks repeatedly of the 'constraint and labour' undertaken by those who follow the Way of the Name; a 'continual effort' is needed; they will be tempted to give up 'because of the insistent pain that comes from the inward invocation of the intellect'. 'Your shoulders will ache and you will often feel pain in your head,' he warns, 'but persevere persistently and with ardent longing, seeking the Lord in your heart.'[25] Only through such patient faithfulness shall we discover the true power of the Name.

This faithful perseverance takes the form, above all, of attentive and frequent repetition. Christ told his disciples not to use 'vain repetitions' (Matt. 6:7); but the repetition of the Jesus Prayer, when performed with inward sincerity and concentration, is most emphatically not 'vain'. The act of repeatedly invoking the Name has a double effect: it makes our prayer more unified and at the same time more inward.

Unification

As soon as we make a serious attempt to pray in spirit and in truth, at once we become acutely conscious of our interior disintegration, of our lack of unity and wholeness. In spite of all our efforts to stand before God, thoughts continue to move restlessly and aimlessly through our head, like the buzzing of flies (Bishop Theophan) or the capricious leaping of monkeys from branch to branch (Ramakrishna). To contemplate means, first of all, to be present where one is—to be *here* and *now*. But usually we find ourselves unable to restrain our mind from wandering at random over time and space. We recall the past, we anticipate the future, we plan what to do next; people and places come

before us in unending succession. We lack the power to gather ourselves into the one place where we should be—*here*, in the presence of God; we are unable to live fully in the only moment of time that truly exists—*now*, the immediate present. This interior disintegration is one of the tragic consequences of the Fall. The people who get things done, it has been justly observed, are the people who do one thing at a time. But to do one thing at a time is no mean achievement. While difficult enough in external work, it is harder still in the work of inner prayer.

What is to be done? How shall we learn to live in the present, in the eternal Now? How can we seize the *kairos*, the decisive moment, the moment of opportunity? It is precisely at this point that the Jesus Prayer can help. The repeated Invocation of the Name can bring us, by God's grace, from dividedness to unity, from dispersion and multiplicity to singleness. 'To stop the continual jostling of your thoughts,' says Bishop Theophan, 'you must bind the mind with one thought, or the thought of One only.'[26]

The ascetic Fathers, in particular Barsanuphius and John, distinguish two ways of combatting thoughts. The first method is for the 'strong' or the 'perfect'. These can 'contradict' their thoughts, that is, confront them face to face and repel them in direct battle. But for most of us such a method is too difficult and may, indeed, lead to actual harm. Direct confrontation, the attempt to uproot and expel thoughts by an effort of will, often serves merely to give greater strength to our imagination. Violently suppressed, our fantasies tend to return with increased force. Instead of fighting our thoughts directly and trying to eliminate them by an effort of will, it is wiser to turn aside and fix our attention elsewhere. Rather than gazing downwards into our turbulent imagination an concentrating on how to oppose our thoughts, we should look upwards to the Lord Jesus and entrust ourselves into his hands invoking his Name; and the grace that acts through his Name will overcome the thoughts which we cannot obliterate b our own strength. Our spiritual strategy should be positive and not negative: instead of trying to empty our mind of what is evil, we should fill it with the thought of what is good. 'Do not contradict the thoughts suggested by your enemies,' advise Barsanuphius and John, 'for that is exactly what they want and they will not cease from troubling you. But turn to the Lord for help against them, laying before him your own powerlessness; for he is able to expel them and to reduce them to nothing.'[27]

The Jesus Prayer, then, is a way of turning aside and looking elsewhere. Thoughts and images inevitably occur to us during prayer. We cannot stop them by a mere exertion of our will. We cannot simply turn off the internal television set. It is of little or no value to say to ourselves 'Stop thinking'; we might as well say 'Stop breathing'. 'The rational mind cannot rest idle', says St Mark the Monk,[28] for thoughts keep filling it with ceaseless chatter. But while it lies beyond our power to make this chatter suddenly disappear, what we can do is to detach ourselves from it by 'binding' our ever-active mind 'with one thought, or the thought of One only'—the Name of Jesus. We cannot altogether halt the flow of thoughts, but through the Jesus Prayer we can disengage ourselves progressively from it, allowing it to recede into the background so that we become less and less aware of it.

According to Evagrius of Pontus (+399), 'Prayer is a laying aside of thoughts.'[29] *A laying aside*: not a savage conflict, not a furious repression, but a gentle yet persistent act of detachment. Through the repetition of the Name, we are helped to 'lay aside', to 'let go', our trivial or pernicious imaginings, and to replace them with the thought of Jesus. But, although the imagination and the discursive reasoning are not to be violently suppressed when saying the Jesus Prayer, they are certainly not to be actively encouraged. The Jesus Prayer is not a form of meditation upon specific incidents in the life of Christ, or upon some saying or parable in the Gospels; still less is it a way of reasoning and inwardly debating about some theological truth such as the meaning of *homoousios* or the Chalcedonian Definition. In this regard, the Jesus Prayer is to be distinguished from the methods of discursive meditation popular in the West since the Counter-Reformation (commended by Ignatius Loyola, Francois de Sales, Alphonsus Ligouri, and others).

As we invoke the Name, we should not deliberately shape in our minds any visual image of the Saviour. This is one of the reasons why we usually say the Prayer in darkness, rather than with

our eyes open in front of an icon. 'Keep your intellect free from colours, images and forms', urges St Gregory of Sinai; beware of the imagination (*phantasia*) in prayer—otherwise you may find that you have become a *phantastes* instead of a *hesychastes*![30] 'So as not to fall into illusion (*prelest*) while practising inner prayer,' states St Nil Sorskii (+1508), 'do not permit yourself any concepts, images or visions.'[31] 'Hold no intermediate image between the intellect and the Lord when practising the Jesus Prayer', Bishop Theophan writes. '. . . The essential part is to dwell in God, and this walking before God means that you live with the conviction ever before your consciousness that God is in you, as he is in everything: you live in the firm assurance that he sees all that is within you, knowing you better than you know yourself. This awareness of the eye of God looking at your inner being *must not be accompanied by any visual concept, but must be confined to a simple conviction or feeling.*'[32] Only when we invoke the Name in this way—not forming pictures of the Saviour but simply *feeling* his presence—shall we experience the full power of the Jesus Prayer to integrate and unify.

The Jesus Prayer is thus a prayer in words, but because the words are so simple, so few and unvarying, the Prayer reaches out beyond words into the living silence of the Eternal. It is a way of achieving, with God's assistance, the kind of non-discursive, non-iconic prayer in which we do not simply make statements to or about God, in which we do not just form pictures of Christ in our imagination, but are 'oned' with him in an all-embracing, unmediated encounter. Through the Invocation of the Name we feel his nearness with our spiritual senses, much as we feel the warmth with our bodily senses on entering a heated room. We know him, not through a series of successive images and concepts, but with the unified sensibility of the heart. So the Jesus Prayer concentrates us into the *here* and *now*, making us single-centred, one-pointed, drawing us from a multiplicity of thoughts to union with the one Christ. 'Through the remembrance of Jesus Christ', says St Philotheus of Sinai (?ninth-tenth century), 'gather together your scattered intellect'[33]—gather it together from the plurality of discursive thinking into the simplicity of love.

Many, on hearing that the Invocation of the Name is to be non-discursive and non-iconic, a means of transcending images and thoughts, may be tempted to conclude that any such manner of praying lies altogether beyond their capacities. To such it should be said: the Way of the Name is *not* reserved for a select few. It is within the reach of all. When you first embark on the Jesus Prayer, do not worry too much about expelling thoughts and mental pictures. As we have said already, let your strategy be positive, not negative. Call to mind, not what is to be excluded, but what is to be included. Do not think about your thoughts and how to shed them; think about Jesus. Concentrate your whole self, all your ardour and devotion, upon the person of the Saviour. Feel his presence. Speak to him with love. If your attention wanders, as undoubtedly it will, do not be discouraged; gently, without exasperation or inner anger, bring it back. If it wanders again and again, then again and yet again bring it back. Return to the centre—to the living and personal centre, Jesus Christ.

Look on the Invocation, not so much as prayer emptied of thoughts, but as prayer filled with the Beloved. Let it be, in the richest sense of the word, a prayer of *affection*—although not of self-induced emotional excitement. For while the Jesus Prayer is certainly far more than 'affective' prayer in the technical Western sense, it is with our loving affection that we do right to begin. Our inner attitude, as we commence the Invocation, is that of St Richard of Chichester:

O my merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,
May I see thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly.

Without denying or diminishing the classic teaching of the Hesychast masters on the Jesus Prayer as a 'shedding of thoughts', it has to be acknowledged that over the centuries most Eastern Christians have used the Prayer simply as an expression of their tender, loving trust in Jesus the Divine Companion. And there is surely no harm in that.

Inwardness

The repeated Invocation of the Name, by making our prayer more unified, makes it at the same time more inward, more a part of ourselves—not something that we *do* at particular moments, but something that we *are* all the time; not an occasional act but a continuing state. Such praying becomes truly prayer of the *whole person*, in which the words and meaning of the prayer are fully identified with the one who prays. All this is well expressed by Paul Evdokimov (1901-1970): 'In the catacombs the image that recurs most frequently is the figure of a woman in prayer, the *Orans*. It represents the only true attitude of the human soul. It is not enough to *possess* prayer: we must *become* prayer—prayer incarnate. It is not enough to have moments of praise; our whole life, every act and every gesture, even a smile, must become a hymn of adoration, an offering, a prayer. We must offer not what we *have* but what we *are*.'[34] That is what the world needs above all else: not people who *say* prayers with greater or less regularity, but people who *are* prayers.

The kind of prayer that Evdokimov is here describing may be defined more exactly as 'prayer of the heart'. In Orthodoxy, as in other traditions, prayer is commonly distinguished under three headings, which are to be regarded as interpenetrating levels, rather than successive stages: prayer of the lips (oral prayer); prayer of the *nous*, the mind or intellect (mental prayer); prayer of the heart (or of the intellect in the heart). The Invocation of the Name begins, like any other prayer, as an oral prayer, in which words are spoken by the tongue through a deliberate effort of will. At the same time, once more by a deliberate effort, we concentrate our mind upon the meaning of what the tongue says. In course of time and with the help of God our prayer grows more inward. The participation of the mind becomes more intense and spontaneous, while the sounds uttered by the tongue become less important; perhaps for a time they cease altogether and the Name is invoked silently, without any movement of the lips, by the mind alone. When this occurs, we have passed by God's grace from the first level to the second. Not that vocal invocation ceases altogether, for there will be times when even the most 'advanced' in inner prayer will wish to call upon the Lord Jesus aloud. (And who, indeed, can claim to be 'advanced'? We are all of us 'beginners' in the things of the Spirit.)

But the journey inwards is not yet complete. A person is far more than the conscious mind; besides the brain and reasoning faculties there are the emotions and affections, the aesthetic sensitivity, together with the deep instinctive layers of the personality. All these have a function to perform in prayer, for the whole person is called to share in the total act of worship. Like a drop of ink that falls on blotting paper, the act of prayer should spread steadily outwards from the conscious and reasoning centre of the brain, until it embraces every part of ourselves.

In more technical terms, this means that we are called to advance from the second level to the third: from 'prayer of the intellect' to 'prayer of the intellect in the heart'. 'Heart' in this context is to be understood in the Semitic and biblical rather than the modern Western sense, as signifying not just the emotions and affections but the totality of the human person. The heart is the primary organ of our identity, it is our innermost being, 'the very deepest and truest self, not attained except through sacrifice, through death'.[35] According to Boris Vysheslavtsev, it is 'the centre not only of consciousness but of the unconscious, not only of the soul but of the spirit, not only of the spirit but of the body, not only of the comprehensible but of the incomprehensible; in one word, it is the absolute centre'.[36] Interpreted in this way, the heart is far more than a material organ in the body; the physical heart is an outward symbol of the boundless spiritual potentialities of the human creature, made in the image of God, called to attain his likeness.

To accomplish the journey inwards and to attain true prayer, it is required of us to enter into this 'absolute centre', that is, to descend from the intellect into the heart. More exactly, we are called to descend not from but *with* the intellect. The aim is not just 'prayer of the heart' but 'prayer of the intellect in the heart', for our varied forms of understanding, including our reason, are a gift from God and are to be used in his service, not rejected. This 'union of the intellect with the heart' signifies the reintegration of our fallen and fragmented nature, our restoration to original wholeness. Prayer of the heart is a return to Paradise, a reversal of the Fall, a recovery of the *status ante peccatum*. This means that it is an eschatological reality, a pledge and anticipation of the Age to

Come—something which, in this present age, is never fully and entirely realized.

Those who, however imperfectly, have achieved some measure of 'prayer of the heart', have begun to make the transition about which we spoke earlier—the transition from 'strenuous' to 'self-acting' prayer, from the prayer which I say to the prayer which 'says itself' or, rather, which Christ says in me. For the heart has a double significance in the spiritual life: it is both the centre of the human being and the point of meeting between the human being and God. It is both the place of self-knowledge, where we see ourselves as we truly are, and the place of self-transcendence, where we understand our nature as a temple of the Holy Trinity, where the image comes face to face with the Archetype. In the 'inner sanctuary' of our own heart we find the ground of our being and so cross the mysterious frontier between the created and the Uncreated. 'There are unfathomable depths within the heart', state the Macarian Homilies. '. . . God is there with the angels, light and life are there, the kingdom and the apostles, the heavenly cities and the treasures of grace: all things are there.'[37]

Prayer of the heart, then, designates the point where 'my' action, 'my' prayer, becomes explicitly identified with the continuous action of Another in me. It is no longer prayer *to* Jesus but the prayer *of* Jesus himself. This transition from 'strenuous' to 'self-acting' prayer is strikingly indicated in *The Way of a Pilgrim*: 'Early one morning the Prayer woke me up as it were.'[38] Hitherto the Pilgrim has been 'saying the Prayer'; now he finds that the Prayer 'says itself', even when he is asleep, for it has become united to the prayer of God within him. Yet even so he does not consider that he has as yet attained prayer of the heart in its fullness.

Readers of *The Way of a Pilgrim* may gain the impression that this passage from oral prayer to prayer of the heart is easily achieved, almost in a mechanical and automatic fashion. The Pilgrim, so it seems, attains self-acting prayer in a matter of a few weeks. It needs to be emphasized that his experience, while not unique,[39] is altogether exceptional. More usually prayer of the heart comes, if at all, only after a lifetime of ascetic striving. There is a real danger that, in the early stages of the Jesus Prayer, we may too readily assume that we are passing from oral prayer to prayer of the heart. We may perhaps be tempted to imagine that we have already attained wordless prayer of silence, when in fact we are not really praying at all but have merely lapsed into vacant drowsiness or waking sleep. To guard against this, our teachers in the Hesychast tradition insist upon the need for strenuous effort when first embarking on the Jesus Prayer. They emphasize how important it is to concentrate full attention upon the recitation of the actual words, rather than to form high ambitions about prayer of the heart. Here, for example, is the advice given by a noted spiritual father of Mount Athos, *Geron* Joseph of New Skete (died 1959):

> The work of inner prayer consists in forcing yourself to say the prayer with your mouth continually, without ceasing . . . . Attend only to the words 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me' . . . . Just say the Prayer aloud, without interruption . . . . All your effort must be centred on the tongue, until you start to grow accustomed to the Prayer.[40]

The significance attached here to the power of the spoken word is indeed striking. As St John Climacus tells us, 'Struggle to lift up, or rather, to enclose your thought within the *words* of your prayer.'[41] But of course we never think exclusively about the words on their own; always we are conscious also of the person of Jesus whom our words invoke.

Prayer of the heart, when and if it is granted, comes as the free gift of God, which he bestows as he wills. It is not the inevitable effect of some technique. St Isaac the Syrian (seventh century) underlines the extreme rarity of the gift when he says that 'scarcely one in ten thousand' is counted worthy of the gift of pure prayer, and he adds: 'As for the mystery that lies beyond pure prayer, there is scarcely to be found a single person in each generation who has drawn near to this knowledge of God's grace.'[42] One in ten thousand, one in a generation: while sobered by this warning, we should not be unduly discouraged. The path to the inner kingdom lies open before all, and all alike may travel some way along it. In the present age, few experience with any fullness the deeper mysteries of the heart, but very many receive in a more humble and intermittent way true glimpses of what is signified by spiritual prayer.

Breathing exercises

It is time to consider a controversial topic, where the teaching of the Byzantine Hesychasts is often misinterpreted—the role of the body in prayer.

The heart, it has been said, is the primary organ of our being, the point of convergence between mind and matter, the centre alike of our physical constitution and our psychic and spiritual structure. Since the heart has this twofold aspect, at once visible and invisible, prayer of the heart is prayer of body as well as soul; only if it includes the body can it be truly prayer of the whole person. A human being, in the biblical view, is a psychosomatic totality—not a soul imprisoned in a body and seeking to escape, but an integral unity of the two. The body is not just an obstacle to be overcome, a lump of matter to be ignored, but it has a positive part to play in the spiritual life and it is endowed with energies that can be harnessed for the work of prayer.

If this is true of prayer in general, it is true in a more specific way of the Jesus Prayer, since this is an invocation addressed precisely to God Incarnate, to the Word made flesh. Christ at his Incarnation took not only a human mind and will but a human body, and so he has made the *flesh* into an inexhaustible source of sanctification. How can this flesh, which the God-man has made Spirit-bearing, participate in the Invocation of the Name and in the prayer of the intellect in the heart?

To assist such participation, and as an aid to concentration, the Hesychasts evolved a 'physical technique'. Every psychic activity, they realized, has repercussions on the physical and bodily level; depending on our inner state we grow hot or cold, we breathe faster or more slowly, the rhythm of our heart-beats quickens or decelerates, and so on. Conversely, each alteration in our physical condition reacts adversely or positively on our psychic activity. If, then, we can learn to control and regulate certain of our physical processes, this can be used to strengthen our inner concentration in prayer. Such is the basic principle underlying the Hesychast 'method'. In detail, the physical technique has three main aspects:

i) *External posture*. St Gregory of Sinai advises sitting on a low stool, about nine inches high; the head and shoulders should be bowed, and the eyes fixed on the place of the heart. He recognizes that this will prove exceedingly uncomfortable after a time. Some writers recommend a yet more exacting posture, with the head held between the knees, following the example of Elijah on Mount Carmel.[43]

ii) *Control of the breathing*. The breathing is to be made slower and at the same time co-ordinated with the rhythm of the Prayer. Often the first part, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God', is said while drawing in the breath, and the second part, 'have mercy on me a sinner', while breathing out. Other methods are possible. The recitation of the Prayer may also be synchronized with the beating of the heart.

iii) *Inward exploration*. Just as the aspirant in Yoga is taught to concentrate his thought in specific parts of his body, so the Hesychast concentrates his thought in the cardiac centre. While inhaling through his nose and propelling his breath down into his lungs, he makes his intellect 'descend' with the breath and he 'searches' inwardly for the place of the heart. Exact instructions concerning this exercise are not committed to writing for fear they should be misunderstood; the details of the process are so delicate that the personal guidance of an experienced master is *indispensable*. The beginner who, in the absence of such guidance, attempts to search for the cardiac centre, is in danger of directing his thought unawares into the area which lies immediately below the heart—into the abdomen, that is, and the entrails. The effect on his prayer is disastrous, for this lower region is the source of the carnal thoughts and sensations which pollute the mind and the heart.[44]

For obvious reasons the utmost discretion is necessary when interfering with instinctive bodily activities such as the drawing of breath or the beating of the heart. Misuse of the physical technique can damage someone's health and disturb his mental equilibrium; hence the importance of a

reliable master. If no such *starets* is available, it is best for the beginner to restrict himself simply to the actual recitation of the Jesus Prayer, without troubling at all about the rhythm of his breath or his heart-beats. More often than not he will find that, without any conscious effort on his part, the words of the Invocation adapt themselves spontaneously to the movement of his breathing. If this does not in fact happen, there is no cause for alarm; let him continue quietly with the work of mental invocation.

The physical techniques are in any case no more than an accessory, an aid which has proved helpful to some but which is in no sense obligatory upon all. The Jesus Prayer can be practised in its fullness without any physical methods at all. St Gregory Palamas (1296—1359), while regarding the use of physical techniques as theologically defensible, treated such methods as something secondary and suited mainly for beginners.[45] For him, as for all the Hesychast masters, the essential thing is not the external control of the breathing but the inner and secret Invocation of the Lord Jesus.

Orthodox writers in the last 150 years have in general laid little emphasis upon the physical techniques. The counsel given by Bishop Ignatii Brianchaninov (1807-67) is typical:

> We advise our beloved brethren not to try to establish this technique within them, if it does not reveal itself of its own accord. Many, wishing to learn it by experience, have damaged their lungs and gained nothing. The essence of the matter consists in the union of the mind with the heart during prayer, and this is achieved by the grace of God in its own time, determined by God. The breathing technique is fully replaced by the unhurried enunciation of the Prayer, by a short rest or pause at the end, each time it is said, by gentle and unhurried breathing, and by the enclosure of the mind in the words of the Prayer. By means of these aids we can easily attain to a certain degree of attention.[46]

As regards the speed of recitiation, Bishop Ignatii suggests:

> To say the Jesus Prayer a hundred time attentively and without haste, about half an hour is needed, but some ascetics require even longer. Do not say the prayers hurriedly, one immediately after another. Make a short pause after each prayer, and so help the mind to concentrate. Saying the Prayer without pauses distracts the mind. Breathe with care, gently and slowly.[47]

Beginners in the use of the Prayer will probably prefer a somewhat faster pace than is here proposed—perhaps twenty minutes for a hundred prayers. In the Greek tradition there are teachers who recommend a far brisker rhythm; the very rapidity of the Invocation, so they maintain, helps to hold the mind attentive.

Striking parallels exist between the physical techniques recommended by the Byzantine Hesychasts and those employed in Hindu Yoga and in Sufism.[48] How far are the similarities the result of mere coincidence, of an independent though analogous development in two separate traditions? If there is a direct relation between Hesychasm and Sufism—and some of the parallels are so close that mere coincidence seems excluded—which side has been borrowing from the other? Here is a fascinating field for research, although the evidence is perhaps too fragmentary to permit any definite conclusion. One point, however, should not be forgotten. Besides similarities, there are also differences. All pictures have frames, and all picture-frames have certain features in common; yet the pictures within the frames may be utterly different. What matters is the picture, not the frame. In the case of the Jesus Prayer, the physical techniques are as it were the frame, while the mental invocation of Christ is the picture within the frame. The 'frame' of the Jesus Prayer certainly resembles various non-Christian 'frames', but this should not make us insensitive to the uniqueness of the picture within, to the distinctively Christian content of the Prayer. The essential point in the Jesus Prayer is not the act of repetition in itself, not how we sit or breathe, but *to whom* we speak; and in this instance the words are addressed unambiguously to the Incarnate Saviour Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary.

The existence of a physical technique in connection with the Jesus Prayer should not blind us as to the Prayer's true character. The Jesus Prayer is not just a device to help us concentrate or relax. It is not simply a piece of 'Christian Yoga', a type of 'Transcendental Meditation', or a 'Christian mantra', even though some have tried to interpret it in this way. It is, on the contrary, an invocation specifically *addressed to another person*—to God made man, Jesus Christ, our personal Saviour and

Redeemer. The Jesus Prayer, therefore, is far more than an isolated method or technique. It exists within a certain context, and if divorced from that context it loses its proper meaning.

The context of the Jesus Prayer is first of all one of *faith*. The Invocation of the Name presupposes that the one who says the Prayer believes in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Saviour. Behind the repetition of a form of words there must exist a living faith in the Lord Jesus—in who he is and in what he has done for me personally. Perhaps the faith in many of us is very uncertain and faltering; perhaps it coexists with doubt; perhaps we often find ourselves compelled to cry out in company with the father of the lunatic child, 'Lord, I believe: help my unbelief' (Mark 9:24). But at least there should be some *desire* to believe; at least there should be, amidst all the uncertainty, a spark of love for the Jesus whom as yet we know so imperfectly.

Secondly, the context of the Jesus Prayer is one of *community*. We do not invoke the Name as separate individuals, relying solely upon our own inner resources, but as members of the community of the Church. Writers such as St Barsanuphius, St Gregory of Sinai or Bishop Theophan took it for granted that those to whom they commended the Jesus Prayer were baptized Christians, regularly participating in the Church's sacramental life through Confession and Holy Communion. Not for one moment did they envisage the Invocation of the Name as a substitute for the sacraments, but they assumed that anyone using it would be a practising and communicant member of the Church.

Yet today, in this present epoch of restless curiosity and ecclesiastical disintegration, there are in fact many who use the Jesus Prayer without belonging to any Church, possibly without having a clear faith either in the Lord Jesus or in anything else. Are we to condemn them? Are we to forbid them the use of the Prayer? Surely not, so long as they are sincerely searching for the Fountain of Life. Jesus condemned no one except hypocrites. But, in all humility and acutely aware of our own faithlessness, we are bound to regard the situation of such people as anomalous, and to warn them of this fact.

The journey's end

The aim of the Jesus Prayer, as of all Christian prayer, is that our praying should become increasingly identified with the prayer offered by Jesus the High Priest within us, that our life should become one with his life, our breathing with the Divine Breath that sustains the universe. The final objective may aptly be described by the Patristic term *theosis*, 'deification' or 'divinization'. In the words of Archpriest Sergei Bulgakov, 'The Name of Jesus, present in the human heart, confers upon it the power of deification.'[49] 'The Logos became man,' says St Athanasius, 'that we might become god.'[50] He who is God by nature took our humanity, that we humans might share by grace in his divinity, becoming 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4). The Jesus Prayer, addressed to the Logos Incarnate, is a means of realizing within ourselves this mystery of *theosis*, whereby human persons attain the true likeness of God.

The Jesus Prayer, by uniting us to Christ, helps us to share in the mutual indwelling or *perichoresis* of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The more the Prayer becomes a part of ourselves, the more we enter into the movement of love which passes unceasingly between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Of this love St Isaac the Syrian has written with great beauty:

> Love is the kingdom of which our Lord spoke symbolically when he promised his disciples that they would eat In his kingdom: 'You shall eat and drink at the table of my kingdom.' What should they eat, if not love? . . . When we have reached love, we have reached God and our way is ended: we have passed over to the island that lies beyond the world, where is the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit: to whom be glory and dominion.[51]

In the Hesychast tradition, the mystery of *theosis* has most often taken the outward form of a vision of light. This light which the saints behold in prayer is neither a symbolical light of the intellect, nor yet a physical and created light of the senses. It is nothing less than the divine and uncreated Light of the Godhead, which shone from Christ at his Transfiguration on Mount Tabor and

which will illumine the whole world at his second coming on the Last Day. Here is a characteristic passage on the Divine Light taken from St Gregory Palamas. He is describing the Apostle's vision when he was caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4):

> Paul saw a light without limits below or above or to the sides; he saw no limit whatever to the light that appeared to him and shone around him, but it was like a sun infinitely brighter and vaster than the universe; and in the midst of this sun he himself stood, having become nothing but eye.[52]

Such is the vision of glory to which we may approach through the Invocation of the Name.

The Jesus Prayer causes the brightness of the Transfiguration to penetrate into every corner of our life. Constant repetition has two effects upon the anonymous author of *The Way of a Pilgrim.* First, it transforms his relationship with the material creation around him, making all things transparent, changing them into a sacrament of God's presence. He writes:

> When I prayed with my heart, everything around me seemed delightful and marvellous. The trees, the grass, the birds, the earth, the air, the light seemed to be telling me that they existed for man's sake, that they witnessed to the love of God for man, that everything proved the love of God for man, that all things prayed to God and sang his praise. Thus it was that I came to understand what *The Philokalia* calls 'the knowledge of the speech of all creatures' . . . I felt a burning love for Jesus and for all God's creatures.[53]

In the words of Father Bulgakov, 'Shining through the heart, the light of the Name of Jesus illuminates all the universe.'[54]

In the second place, the Prayer transfigures the Pilgrim's relation not only with the material creation but with other humans:

> Again I started off on my wanderings. But now I did not walk along as before, filled with care. The Invocation of the Name of Jesus gladdened my way. Everybody was kind to me, it was as though everyone loved me. . . . If anyone harms me I have only to think, 'How sweet is the Prayer of Jesus!' and the injury and the anger alike pass away and I forget it all.[55]

'Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me' (Matt. 25:40). The Jesus Prayer helps us to see Christ in each one, and each one in Christ.

The Invocation of the Name is in this way joyful rather than penitential, world-affirming rather than world-denying. To some, hearing about the Jesus Prayer for the first time, it may appear that to sit alone in the darkness with eyes closed, constantly repeating '. . . have mercy on me', is a gloomy and despondent way of praying. And they may also be tempted to regard it as self-centred and escapist, introverted, an evasion of responsibility to the human community at large. But this would be a grave misunderstanding. For those who have actually made the Way of the Name their own, it turns out to be not sombre and oppressive but a source of liberation and healing. The warmth and joyfulness of the Jesus Prayer is particularly evident in the writings of St Hesychius of Sinai (?eighth-ninth century):

> Through persistence in the Jesus Prayer the intellect attains a state of sweetness and peace . . . .
>
> The more the rain falls on the earth, the softer it makes it; similarly, the more we call upon Christ's Holy Name, the greater the rejoicing and exultation it brings to the earth of our heart . . . .
>
> The sun rising over the earth creates the daylight; and the venerable and Holy Name of the Lord Jesus, shining continually in the mind, gives birth to countless thoughts radiant as the sun.[56]

Moreover, so far from turning our backs on others and repudiating God's creation when we say the Jesus Prayer, we are in fact affirming our commitment to our neighbour and our sense of the value of everyone and everything in God. 'Acquire inner peace,' said St Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833), 'and thousands around you will find their salvation.' By standing in Christ's presence even for no more than a few moments of each day, invoking his Name, we deepen and transform all the remaining moments of the day, rendering ourselves available to others, effective and creative, in a way that we could not otherwise be. And if we also use the Prayer in a 'free' manner throughout the day, this enables us to 'set the divine seal on the world', to adopt a phrase of Dr Nadejda Gorodetzky

(1901-85):

> We can apply this Name to people, books, flowers, to all things we meet, see or think. The Name of Jesus may become a mystical key to the world, an instrument of the hidden offering of everything and everyone, setting the divine seal on the world. One might perhaps speak here of the priesthood of all believers. In union with our High Priest, we implore the Spirit: Make my prayer into a sacrament.[57]

'We can apply this Name to people . . . .' Here Dr Gorodetzky suggests a possible answer to a question that is often raised: Can the Jesus Prayer be used as a form of intercession? The reply must be that, in the strict sense, it is distinct from intercessory prayer. As an expression of non-discursive, non-iconic 'waiting upon God', it does not involve the explicit recalling and mention of particular names. We simply turn to Jesus. It is true, of course, that in turning to Jesus we do not thereby turn away from our fellow humans. All those whom we love are already embraced in his heart, loved by him infinitely more than by us, and so in the end through the Jesus Prayer we find them all again in him; invoking the Name, we enter more and more fully into Christ's overflowing love for the entire world. But if we are following the traditional Hesychast pattern of the Jesus Prayer, we do not bring others before him specifically by name, or hold them deliberately in our mind, as we recite the Invocation.

All this, however, does not exclude the possibility of also giving to the Jesus Prayer an intercessory dimension. On occasion, alike in the 'free' and the 'formal' use, we may feel moved to 'apply' the Name to one or more particular persons, invoking Jesus upon them as we say '. . . have mercy on *us*', or even including the actual name or names, '. . . have mercy on *John*'. Even if this is not exactly what the Hesychast texts envisage, it is surely a legitimate and helpful extension to the practice of the Jesus Prayer. The Way of the Name has a wideness, a generosity, not to be confined within rigid and unvarying rules.

'Prayer is action; to pray is to be highly effective.'[58] Of no prayer is this more true than of the Jesus Prayer. While it is singled out for particular mention in the office of monastic profession as a prayer for monks and nuns,[59] it is equally a prayer for laymen, for married couples, for doctors and psychiatrists, for social workers and bus conductors. The Invocation of the Name, practised aright, involves each one more deeply in his or her appointed task, making each more efficient in his actions, not cutting him off from others but linking him to them, rendering him sensitive to their fears and anxieties in a way that he never was before. The Jesus Prayer makes each into a 'man for others', a living instrument of God's peace, a dynamic centre of reconciliation.

NOTES

1. Tito Colliander, *The Way of the Ascetics* (London 1960), p.79.
2. Cited in Igumen Chariton of Valamo, *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, translated by E. Kadloubovsky and E.M. Palmer (London 1966), p.63.
3. *Chapters*, 113 (PG 150, 1280A). See KallistosWare, 'The Jesus Prayer in St. Gregory of Sinai', *Eastern Churches Review* iv (1972), p.8.
4. A quotation from Psalm 118 [119]: 126. In some English versions of the Liturgy this is translated, 'It is time to do [sacrifice] unto the Lord', but the alternative rendering which we have used is richer in meaning and is preferred by many Orthodox commentators.

   The original Greek uses the word *kairos*: 'It is the *kairos* for the Lord to act'. *Kairos* bears here the special meaning of the decisive moment, the moment of opportunity: he who prays seizes the *kairos*. This is a point to which we shall return.
5. *Chapters*, 113 (PG 150, 1277D).
6. *Century*, 4 (PG 147, 637D). The idea of prayer as the discovery of God's indwelling presence can be expounded equally in terms of the Eucharist.
7. The Jesus Prayer is nowhere mentioned, for example, in the authentic writings of St Symeon the New Theologian or in the vast spiritual anthology of Evergetinos (both of the eleventh century).
8. There existed, of course, a warm devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus in the medieval West, not least in England. While this displays certain points of difference from the Byzantine tradition of the Jesus Prayer, there are also obvious parallels. See Kallistos Ware, 'The Holy Name of Jesus in East and West: the Hesychasts and Richard Rolle,' *Sobornost* 4:2 (1982), pp.163-84.
9. It has even been translated into one of the major languages of the Indian sub-continent, Mahratti. The introduction to this translation has been written by a Hindu university professor who is a specialist in the spirituality of the Name: see E.R. Hambye SJ, in E*astern Churches Review* v (1973), p.77.
10. 'A Monk of the Eastern Church' [Lev Gillet), *On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus* (The Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, London 1950), pp.5-6.
11. *On stillness and the two ways of prayer*, 2 (PG 150, 1316B).
12. *The Art of Prayer*. p.92.
13. Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection (1611-91), Barefooted Carmelite, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, ed. D. Attwater (Paraclete Books, London 1962), pp.13,16.
14. Archimandrite Sofrony, *The Undistorted Image: Staretz Silouan* (London 1958), pp.40-41.
15. Quoted in E. Behr-Sigel, 'La Priere a Jesus ou le mystere de la spiritualite monastique orthodoxe', *Dieu Vivant* 8 (1947), p.81.
16. *The Art of Prayer*, p.110.
17. *The Way of a Pilgrim*, tr. R.M. French (London 1954), p.29.
18. H. Berthold, *Makarios/Syrneon, Reden und Briefe. Logos* B33, 2,1: vol. ii(Berlin 1973), p.29.
19. *Sirnilitudes*, ix, 14.
20. See J. Pedersen, *Israel*, vol. i (London/Copenhagen 1926), pp.245-59; but compare J. Barr, 'The Symbolism of Names in the Old Testament', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 52,

1(1969), pp.11-29.

21. Pedersen, op. cit., p.256.

22. For the veneration of the Name among medieval Jewish Kabbalists, see Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (3rd ed., London 1955), pp.132-3; and compare the treatment of this theme in the remarkable novel of Charles Williams, *All Hallows' Eve* (London 1945).

23. *Questions and Answers*, ed. Sotirios Schoinas (Volos 1960), para.693; tr. L. Regnault and P. Lemaire (Solesmes 1972), para.692.

24. *Ladder*, 21 and 27 (PG 88, 945C and 1112C).

25. See Kallistos Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St. Gregory of Sinai' (article cited in note 3 above), pp.14-15.

26. *The Art of Prayer*, p.97.

27. *Questions and Answers*, ed. Schoinas, para.91; tr. Regnault and Lemaire, para.166.

28. *On Penitence*, 11 (PG 65, 981B). The Greek text in Migne requires emendation here.

29. *On Prayer*, 70 (PG 79, 1181C).

30. *How the hesychast should persevere in prayer*, 7 (PG 150, 1340D).

31. *The Art of Prayer*, p.101.

32. *The Art of Prayer*, p.100.

33. *Texts on Watchfulness*, 27: cf. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware (trans.), *The Philokalia*, vol. iii (London 1984), p.27.

34. *Sacrernent de l'amour. Le rnystere conjugal a la lumiere de la tradition orthodoxe* (Paris 1962), p.83.

35. Richard Kehoe OP, 'The Scriptures as Word of God', *The Eastern Churches Quarterly* viii (1947), supplementary issue on 'Tradition and Scripture', p.78.

36. Quoted in John B. Dunlop, *Staretz Anivrosy: Model for Dostoevsky's Staretz Zossima* (Belmont, Mass., 1972), p.22.

37. *Hom*. xv, 32 and xliii, 7 (ed. Dorries/Klostermann/Kroeger [Berlin 1964], pp.146,289).

38. *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p.14.

39. *Starets* Silouan of Mount Athos had only been practising the Jesus Prayer for three weeks before it descended into his heart and became unceasing. His biographer, Archimandrite Sofrony, rightly points out that this was a 'sublime and rare gift'; not until later did Father Silouan come to appreciate how unusual it was (*The Undistorted Image*, p.24). For further discussion of this question, see Kallistos Ware, '"Pray without Ceasing": The Ideal of Continual Prayer in Eastern Monasticism', *Eastern Churches Review* ii (1969), pp.259-61.

40. *Ekphrasis monastikis empeirias* (Monastery of Philotheou, Holy Mountain 1979), pp.25-28.

41. *Ladder*, 28 (PG 88, 1132C).

42. *Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh*, translated by A.J. Wensinck (Amsterdam 1923), p.113.

43. 'Elijah climbed to the crest of Carmel. There he crouched to the ground with his face between his knees' (1 Kings 18:42). For an illustration of a hesychast praying in this position, from a 12th century MS of John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, see *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold SJ (SPCK. London 1986), plate 3, following p.194.

44. For further bibliography on the control of the breathing, see Kallistos Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St. Gregory of Sinai' (cited above), p.14, note 55. On the various physical centres and their spiritual implications, see Father Anthony Bloom (now Metropolitan of Sourozh), *Asceticism* (*Somatopsychic Techniques*) (The Guild of Pastoral Psychology, Guild Lecture No. 95: London 1957).

45. *Triads in defence of the Holy Hesychasts*, I, ii, 7 (ed. J. Meyendorff [Louvain 1959], vol. i, p.97).

46. *The Arena: An Offering to Contemporary Monasticism*, translated by Archimandrite Lazarus (Madras 1970), p.84 (translation slightly altered).

47. Op. cit., p.81.

48. See Louis Gardet, 'Un probleme de mystique comparee: la mention du nom divin (*dhikr*) dans la mystique musulmane', *Revue Thomiste*, lii (1952), pp.642-79; liii (1953), pp.197-216; reprinted in G.C. Anawati and L. Gardet, *Mystique musulmane: aspects et tendances—experiences et techniques* (Paris 1961), pp.187-256.

49. *The Orthodox Church* (London 1935), p.170 (translation altered).

50. *On the Incarnation*, 54.

51. *Mystic Treatises*, tr. Wensinck, pp.211-12.

52. *Triads in defence of the Holy Hesychasts*, I, iii, 21 (ed. Meyendorff, vol. i, p.157).

53. *The Way of a Pilgrim*, pp.31-2,41.

54. *The Orthodox Church*, p.171.

55. *The Way of a Pilgrim*, pp.17-18.

56. *On Watchfulness and Holiness*, 7, 41, 196: cf. Palmer, Sherrard and Ware, *The Philokalia*, vol. i (London 1979), pp.163,169,197.

57. 'The Prayer of Jesus', *Blackfriars* xxiii (1942), p.76.

58. Tito Colliander, *The Way of the Ascetics*, p.71.

59. At the clothing of a monk, in both the Greek and the Russian practice, it is the custom to give him a prayer-rope (*komvoschoinion*). In the Russian use the abbot says the following as it is handed over: 'Take, brother, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, for continual prayer to Jesus; for you must always have the Name of the Lord Jesus in mind, in heart and on your lips, ever saying: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.' See N.F. Robinson SSJE, *Monasticism in the Orthodox Churches* (London/Milwaukee 1916), pp.159-60. Note the usual distinction between three levels of prayer: lips, mind, heart.

FURTHER READING

'A Monk of the Eastern Church' [Archimandrite Lev Gillet], *The Jesus Prayer* (new edition, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York 1987). The best introduction to the history of the Prayer, with valuable suggestions on its practical use and detailed bibliography.

Irenee Hausherr Sj, *The Name of Jesus* (Cistercian Studies Series 44: Kalamazoo 1978). Historical; an authoritative scholarly treatment.

The Way of a Pilgrim, tr. R.M. French (London 1954). A classic nineteenth-century Russian text.

Bishop Ignatti *Brianchaninov*, *On the Prayer of Jesus*, tr. Fr Lazarus (London 1952). Quotes many earlier authors.

Mother Maria, *The Jesus Prayer* (Library of Orthodox Thinking, Greek Orthodox Monastery of the Assumption, Normanby 1972). Talks given by an Orthodox nun to an Anglican Benedictine Community.

Wendy Robinson, *Exploring Silence* (Fairacres Publication 36: Oxford 1974). On prayer as listening.

Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Mowbrays, London and Oxford 1979). A popular general account of the *doctrine*, worship and life of Orthodox Christians, which raises the basic issues of Christian theology and prayer.

The Church's Prayer for the Dead

(ektenia = Litany)

The Holy Orthodox Church, like a concerned mother, daily, at every divine service, offers up prayers for all her children who have departed for the land of eternity. Thus, at the midnight service troparia and prayers for the departed are read, and they are commemorated at its concluding ektenia. This is so also at compline. At matins and vespers the departed are remembered by name at the Augmented Ektenia, "Have mercy on us, O God ..." They are commemorated three times during the Liturgy: at the Proskomedia, at the ektenia following the Gospel, and after the consecration of the Precious Gifts when "Meet it is in truth . . ." is sung. Furthermore, one day of the week is set aside for prayers for the dead -Saturday, on which it is customary to have a service for the dead, unless it coincides with a feast, if such is to be served on that day.

The Third Day

We commemorate the dead on the third day firstly, because those who have departed had been baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the One God in three Persons, and had kept the Orthodox faith they received at holy baptism; secondly, because they preserved the three virtues which form the foundation of our salvation, namely: faith, hope and love; thirdly, because man's being possesses three internal powers—reason, emotion and desire—by which we all have transgressed. And since man's actions manifest themselves in three ways—by deed, word, and thought—by our commemoration on the third day we entreat the Holy Trinity to forgive the departed all transgressions committed by the three above-mentioned powers and actions. When St. Macarius of Alexandria besought the angel who accompanied him in the desert to explain to him the meaning of the Church's commemoration on the third day, the angel replied to him: "When an offering is made in church on the third day, the soul of the departed receives from its guardian angel relief from the sorrow it feels as a result of the separation from the body. This it receives because glorification and offering is made in the Church of God which gives rise in it to blessed hope, for in the course of the two days the soul is permitted to roam the earth, wherever it wills, in the company of the angels that are with it. Therefore, the soul, loving the body, sometimes wanders about the house in which his body had been laid out, and thus spends two days like a bird seeking its nest. But the virtuous soul goes about those places in which it was wont to do good deeds. On the third day, He Who Himself rose from the dead on the third day commands the Christian soul, in imitation of His resurrection, to ascend to the Heavens to worship the God of all."

The Ninth Day

On the ninth day, the Holy Church offers prayers and the Bloodless Sacrifice *(means Divine Liturgy)* for the departed, that his soul be accounted worthy to be numbered among the choirs of the saints through the prayers and intercession of the nine ranks of angels. St. Macarius of Alexandria, in accordance with the angel's revelation, says that after worshipping God on the third day, it is commanded to show the soul the various pleasant habitations of the saints and

the beauty of Paradise. The soul considers all of this for six days, lost in wonder and glorifying the Creator of all. Contemplating all of this, it is transformed and forgets the sorrow it felt in the body. But if it is guilty of sins, at the sight of the delights of the saints it begins to grieve and reproach itself, saying: "Woe is me! How much I busied myself in vanity in that world! Enamored of the gratification of lust, I spent the greater portion of my life in carelessness and did not serve God as I should, that I too might be accounted worthy of this grace and glory. Woe is me! Poor me!" After considering all the joys of the righteous in the course of six days, it again is borne aloft by the angels to worship God.

The Fortieth Day [1]

From earliest antiquity the Holy Church has correctly and devoutly made it a rule to commemorate the departed in the course of forty days, and on the fortieth day in particular. As Christ was victorious over the devil, having spent forty days in fasting and prayer, so the Holy Church likewise, offering for the departed prayers, acts of charity and the Bloodless Sacrifice throughout the forty days, asks the Lord's grace for him to conquer the enemy, the dark "prince of the air" *(see St. Paul)*, and that he receive the Heavenly Kingdom as his inheritance. St. Macarius of Alexandria, discussing the state of man's soul after the death of the body, says: "After the second adoration, the Master of all commands that the soul be led to hell and that it be shown the places of torment there, the various parts of hell, and the diverse tortures of the wicked, in which the souls of sinners ceaselessly wail and gnash their teeth. The soul is borne about these various places of torment for thirty days, trembling lest it itself be imprisoned therein. On the fortieth day it is once again borne aloft to adore the Lord God, and it is at this time that the Judge determines the place of confinement proper to it in accordance with its deeds. This is a great day for the deceased, for it determines his portion until the Dread judgment of God, and therefore, the Holy Church correctly commands that fervent prayer be made for the dead on this day."

The commemoration of the departed at the first opportunity after death is important and essential because it alleviates the passage of the soul of the departed through the so-called "toll-booths". [2] St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "At Our soul's separation from the body, there will stand before us on one side warriors and powers of Heaven, and on the other side the powers of darkness, the princes of this world, the aerial publicans, the torturers, the prosecutors of our deeds... Seeing them, the soul is dismayed, it shudders, and in consternation and horror will seek protection from the angels of God; but being received by the holy angels and passing through the aerial space, lifted on high under their protection, it encounters the toll-booths, as it were, certain gates or toll houses in which taxes are exacted which will bar its way into the Kingdom, will halt and hold back its progress towards it. At each of these toll-booths an account is demanded for particular sins." *(this is a metaphor)*

The Venerable Theodora, as she passed through the toll-booths, was greatly aided by the intercession of her elder St. Basil the New, which served to outweigh the torments for those sins not covered by repentance.[3] Thus does commemoration benefit departed sinners.

A commemoration has been established by the Orthodox Church on the twentieth and fortieth days after death, and also on the halfyear and yearly anniversaries of the death. Grain (i.e., koliva

or kutiya) [4] is brought by the relatives for the commemoration, presenting an image of the Resurrection itself. In general, the custom of observing days for the commemoration of the dead has been continuously observed in the Orthodox Church from the beginning of its establishment until our own times, being handed down from generation to generation, from century to century. The Divine Liturgy has always been celebrated in memory of the dead, the great propitiatory sacrifice is offered up for them, psalms are read, and on these days many have increased and continue to increase their offerings in the church, assisting the poor and needy brethren out of love for their departed brethren. [5]

Aside from personal days set aside for commemorating our departed friends and relatives, the Orthodox Church, like a mother that loves her children, has set aside certain days on which all Orthodox Christians that have departed in hope of resurrection and eternal life must be commemorated in general. Such days are termed "universal," or simply "ancestral" days. They are as follows:

Meatfare Saturday

The first universal, ancestral Saturday is on Meatfare Saturday. It falls during Meatfare Week and before the last day on which one may eat meat before the Great Fast begins. The following day, Sunday, commemorates the Dread judgment of Christ, and the Church prays for all that have departed in faith and hope of resurrection, beseeching the righteous judge to show forth His mercy upon them on the very day of impartial retribution at the universal judgment. The establishment of this Saturday dates from the first years of Christianity. Among the prayers during the divine services on this Saturday, we hear one for all "that from Adam until today have reposed in piety and correct faith," of every calling and every age; "for all that have drowned, that battle hath mown down, that earthquake hath swallowed up, that have been slain by murderers, that fire hath consumed, that have been food for the wild beasts, birds and serpents, that have been struck by lightning and have perished in freezing cold, that have fallen by the sword, that the horse hath trampled, the rock struck or the earth covered up, that have been slain by deadly potion or poison, or have choked on bones ... ", i.e. all that have met untimely deaths and have been left without a proper funeral.

Thus does the Church care for all our fathers, brethren and relatives.

Trinity Saturday

This falls on the eve of Pentecost, hence the appellation "Trinity Saturday." On the day of Pentecost (or Trinity Day), the Holy Spirit descended upon the earth to teach, sanctify and lead all people to eternal salvation. Therefore, the holy Church calls upon us to make a commemoration on this Saturday, that the saving grace of the Holy Spirit wash away the sins from the souls of all our forefathers, fathers and brethren, that have reposed throughout the ages and, asking that they all be united in the Kingdom of Christ and praying for the redemption of the living and for the return of their souls from captivity, she begs the Lord to "give rest to the souls ... that have fallen asleep, in ... a place of refreshment; ... . for the dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord, neither shall they that are in hell make bold to offer unto Thee confession. But we

that are living will bless Thee, and will pray, and offer unto Thee propitiatory prayers and sacrifices for their souls."

Second, Third and Fourth Saturdays of the Great Fast

Since throughout the Great Fast such commemorations as are performed at every other time during the year do not occur during the celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy, it is the accepted practice in our Orthodox Church to commemorate the departed on these three Saturdays, that the dead be not deprived of the Church's saving intercession. (The remaining Saturdays of the Great Fast are consecrated to special celebrations: Saturday of the first week to St. Theodore the Recruit; Saturday of the fifth week to the praise of the Theotokos; the sixth Saturday commemorates the resurrection of the Righteous Lazarus.) [7]

Tuesday of St. Thomas Week

On this day, in accordance with accepted custom, a commemoration of the dead is made by the faithful, with the pious intent that, having celebrated a radiant festival to the glory of Christ's Resurrection they share the great joy of this paschal feast with those that have departed in the hope of their own blessed resurrection, the joy of Which our Lord Himself announced to the dead when He descended into hell to proclaim His victory over death and to lead forth the souls of the righteous of the Old Testament. Because of this great spiritual joy, the day of this commemoration bears the name "day of rejoicing." [8] There is indication of the commemoration of the dead on St. Thomas Monday or Tuesday in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. [9]

Day Commemorating Orthodox Soldiers

Aside from days designated for the general commemoration of all the departed, the Holy Orthodox Church has instituted two days for the commemoration of Orthodox soldiers and all that have laid down their lives in battle for faith and fatherland. These are:

August 29th

On this day, the Church remembers the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner. Those that lay down their lives for faith and fatherland and all that die on the field of battle are like unto this righteous man who suffered for the truth. Thus, the Holy Church considers it proper to pray on this day, August 29th, for all Orthodox soldiers. This commemoration was instituted in 1769, during the reign of Empress Catherine II, at the time of the war with the Turks and Poles.

The Saturday of St. Dimitry (the Saturday before October 26th)

On this day, the Holy Church commemorates all Orthodox Christians killed in battle; it was established by Great Prince Dimitry Ivanovich Donskoi [10] on his patron saint's day, in 1380. When he had gained his famous and glorious victory over the wicked Tartar prince Mamai on the field of Kulikovo (beyond the River Nepryadva in the present-day province of Tula), he made a pilgrimage to the Lavra of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius from which he had gone forth to that battle at which two warrior monks of that monastery (the former boyars Oslyabya and Peresvyet) fell. Having commemorated all that fell in the war, he decided later to make this

commemoration annually on the Saturday before October 26th, St. Demetrius' day. Subsequently, Orthodox Christians began to commemorate on this Saturday not only those Orthodox warriors that laid down their lives on the field of battle for faith and fatherland, but also all Orthodox Christians that have died in the faith.

Examples of the Efficacy of Prayers Offered for the Dead at the Liturgy and of the Church's Prayers for the Dead

St. Gregory the Dialogist (6th Century), Pope of Rome [11], sets before us a remarkable example of the effectiveness of prayer and the bringing of offerings for the departed, which took place in his monastery.

"One brother," he says, "for breaking the vow of poverty, was deprived of a church funeral and prayers after his death for a period of thirty days, in order to strike fear in the hearts of the others. But later, out of compassion for his soul, the Bloodless Sacrifice and prayers were offered up for him for the space of thirty days. On the last of these days, the deceased appeared in a vision to his brother, whom he had left among the living, and said: 'Until now it has gone badly for me, but now I am at peace, for today I received communion.'"

This same holy Father, in his dialogues with the Deacon Peter, tells of the apparition of a dead man who begged a priest to help him by praying for him to God. "From this it is obvious," he concludes, "how profitable the Sacred Sacrifice is for souls; for the souls themselves ask it of the living, and indicate the means by which they are cleansed of sins."

St. John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria, [12] often celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the dead, and stated that it is a great aid to their souls. To corroborate this, he cites the following:

"There was a certain prisoner whose parents, considering him dead, had the Liturgy served three times a year for him—on Theophany, Pascha and Pentecost. After he had been released from captivity, returning unexpectedly to his parents, he recalled that on those very days a certain man of glorious appearance came to him in prison carrying a torch. The fetters fell from his hands and he was freed; the rest of the days he was again in chains as a prisoner."

St. Gregory the Dialogist also relates that during the lifetime of St. Benedict of Nursia [13] there lived two women who had the unfortunate habit of judging their neighbors, speaking evil and reproaching others. Learning of this, the Venerable Benedict said to them: "Curb your tongues, or I will have to excommunicate you from the Holy Mysteries." But, all the same, they did not cease their evil habits and even said nothing in reply to the saint's paternal admonition. Several days later both women died in their virginity and were buried together in the church. When the Divine Liturgy was served and the deacon exclaimed: "Catechumens, depart!", many Christians beheld the two virgins leaving their tombs and the church, for they were unable to remain there during the Divine Liturgy. This occurred at each Divine Liturgy. When St. Benedict discovered this, he took pity on them and, taking a prosphora, he commanded them to take it to the church and to remove a particle from it for the repose of their souls. He also ordered them commemorated during the performance of the Mysteries of Christ. After that, none of the Christians saw them leaving the church. From this, all understood that, owing to the Holy

Church's prayer for the departed and the offerings, the departed virgins had received forgiveness from God. [14]

The Greek Emperor Theophilus [15] lived carelessly and did not concern himself with the salvation of his soul. Death found this sovereign in the midst of his sinful life. The Empress St. Theodora, Theophilus' consort, was horrified at the heavy lot that would befall her husband in eternity. At her behest, prayers were increased in the churches, alms were distributed, good works were performed. And what was the result? The prayers of the Church reached the Lord. Theophilus was forgiven, to the spiritual joy of his grieving spouse and to the consolation of the Church, which has so merciful and mighty a Lord, Who gives life to the dead and leads them forth from the abyss of hell, not only bodily, but spiritually. [16]

"But who can number," asks St. John of Damascus, "all of the testimonies found in the biographies of holy men, in the accounts of the lives of the holy martyrs and the divine revelations, which clearly indicate that even after death tremendous benefit is rendered to the departed by prayers, Liturgies and the distribution of alms for them. For nothing given to God perishes in return, but is rewarded by Him with the greatest interest."

Examples of the Efficacy of Prayers for the Dead

St. John of Damascus relates: "A certain holy man had a disciple who was living heedlessly. And what happened? Death found him in the midst of his carelessness. The merciful Heavenly Father, roused by the tears and cries of the elder, revealed to him the youth burning in flames up to his neck, like the merciless rich man mentioned in the parable of Lazarus. And when the saint subjected his flesh to strict mortification, fervently beseeching God for the forgiveness of his disciple, he beheld him enveloped in flame up to his waist. Finally, when the holy man had increased his ascetic labors yet more, God revealed him in a vision to the elder, removed from the flame and completely free."

The holy martyr Perpetua [17] relates: "One day, at the time of general prayer in prison, I unexpectedly uttered the name of my dead brother Dinocrates. Struck by this unusual occurrence, I began to pray and sigh for him before God. On the following night I received a vision: I saw Dinocrates come forth, as though from a dark place. He was in intense heat, tormented by thirst, filthy in appearance and pallid. On his face was the wound from which he had died. Between us yawned a deep crevasse, and we were unable to approach each other. Beside the place where Dinocrates stood there was a full cistern, the lip of which stood much higher than my brother's stature, and Dinocrates stretched, trying to reach the water. I was filled with pity, for the height of the rim prevented my brother from drinking. Immediately after this I awoke and realized that my brother was in torment. But believing that my prayer could help him in his suffering, I prayed all day and night in the prison, with cries and lamentations, that Dinocrates be treated mercifully. And on the day on which we were kept in chains, I received a new vision: the place which before I had seen had been made bright, and Dinocrates, with a clean face and beautiful apparel, was enjoying its coolness. Where he had had a wound, I saw only a trace of it. The rim of the cistern was no higher than the waist of the young man, and he was able to draw water from it without effort. On the rim of the cistern stood a golden cup full of water. Dinocrates approached it and began to drink from it, but the water in it did not

decrease. Satisfied, he stepped away from it and began to rejoice. With this the vision ended. I then understood that he had been released from punishment.

One day the Venerable Macarius of Egypt was walking about the desert and found a dried-out human skull lying on the ground. Turning it over with his staff, the saint heard a sound, as though from a distance. Then Macarius asked the skull: "What manner of man wast thou?"

"I was the chief of the pagan priests that dwelt in this place," it replied. "When thou, O Abba Macarius, who art full of the Spirit of God, pray for us, taking pity on them that are in the torments of hell, we then receive a certain relief."

"And what manner of relief do ye receive?" asked Macarius. "And tell me, what torments are ye subjected to?"

"As far as heaven is above the earth," replied the skull with a groan, "so great is the fire in the midst of which we find ourselves, wrapped in flame from head to toe. At this time we cannot see each others' faces, but when thou prayest for us, we can see each other a little, and this affords us some consolation."

On hearing this reply, the venerable one wept and said: "Cursed is that day when man broke the divine ordinance!" And once again he asked the skull: "Are there any other tortures worse than yours?"

"Beneath us, much farther down, there are many others," it replied.

"And who are found in such unbearable torments?" asked Macarius.

"We who did not know God, yet experience the mercy of God a little," answered the skull. "But they that knew the name of God, yet rejected Him and did not keep His commandments, undergo much heavier and worse torments below."

After this St. Macarius took the skull, buried it in the ground and departed thence. [18]

Examples of the Efficacy of Alms Distributed in Memory of the Dead

The Blessed Luke relates that he had a brother who, having, become a monk, concerned himself little with his soul and died, not having prepared himself for death. The holy elder wished to discover what his brother had been accounted worthy of, and he began to entreat God to reveal his lot. One day, during his prayers, the elder beheld the soul of his brother in the hands of demons. Meanwhile, money and costly things had been found in the cell of the deceased, from which the elder understood that the soul of his brother was suffering, among other reasons, for breaking the vow of poverty. All the money that had been found the elder gave to the poor. After that, he again began to pray, and beheld the judgment seat of God and the radiant angels contending with the demons for the soul of his brother. The demons cried out to God: "Thou art just! Judge Thou! This soul belongs to us, for it hath done our deeds!" But the angels said that the soul of the dead man had been freed by the alms which had been distributed for it. To this the evil spirits objected, saving: "Did the deceased distribute the alms, or did this elder distribute them?", indicating the Blessed Luke.

The elder was terrified by this vision, but nonetheless summoned up the courage to say: "It is true that I distributed the alms, but not for myself, but for this soul." The outraged spirits, hearing the elder's reply, straightway vanished, and the elder, consoled by this vision, ceased to doubt and grieve over the fate of his brother.

The holy Abbess Athanasia of Aegina [19] stipulated in her testament that the sisters of her convent prepare meals for the poor in her memory throughout the forty days following her demise. But the nuns carried out this command only until the ninth day, and afterwards ceased. Then the saint appeared to them with two angels and said: "Why have ye forgotten my bequest? Know ye not that alms given for the soul until the fortieth day and the feeding of the poor move God to mercy as well as the prayers of the priests? If the souls of the departed were sinful, God granteth them remission of sins; and if they were righteous, the charity performed on their behalf serves for the salvation of them that perform the charitable works." Having said this, the Venerable Athanasia drove her staff into the ground and vanished. The next day the sisters saw that her staff had sprouted. Then they gave glory to God, the Creator of all things. [20]

Endnotes

1. Throughout the forty days it is essential for each Orthodox Christian to commemorate his departed (newly-reposed) relatives. This consists of commemorating the departed during forty daily liturgies at Proskomedia and in the ektenias of offering to the Church prosphoras, wine, incense and candles, and of distribution of alms for the repose of the newly-departed.

2. Toll-booths (Gr. *telonion*)—a term borrowed from the history of the Hebrew nation and used metaphorically to describe the barriers souls encounter in the ascent to Heaven. In Roman Palestine, the publicans stood at special tax-collection booths at which they extorted money from the populace. The Fathers of the Church, notably St. Cyril of Alexandria in his "Homily on the Departure of the Soul" (*PG* 77.981), applied this term to the aerial places of torment the soul meets after death. Further evidence of the toll-booths, or aerial customs, may be found implied in Homily XXII of St. Macarius of Egypt (Spiritual Homilies, p. 171), the *Ladder of St. John Climachus* (Step VII:50, p. 120), and in many of the divine services and the lives of the saints.

3. cf. the Life of St. Basil the New, March 26.

4. *Koliva* or *kutiya* is grain or rice cooked with honey or sugar and sometimes mixed with plums, raisins and other sweets. The grain and fruit brought to the commemoration of the dead signifies that the dead will truly rise again from the grave, for both grain which is sown in the earth and the fruit which is laid on the earth, decays first, and afterwards brings forth abundant ripe, whole fruit. The honey or sugar used in the *kutiya* signifies that after the resurrection of the Orthodox and the righteous, there awaits a joyous and blessed life in the Heavenly Kingdom, not a bitter or sorrowful one. The *koliva* or *kutiya* prepared from grain expresses the faith of the living in the resurrection of the dead to a better life, just as that seed, having fallen upon the ground, although undergoing corruption, yet grows to attain a better ap- [*Webmaster note*: the original text breaks off here unexpectedly.]

5. They also remember the departed on the days of their birth and of their patron saint.

6. "Prayer at Pentecost Vespers," *Service Book of the Holy Catholic-Apostolic Church*, trans. Isabel F. Hapgood (3rd ed. rev.; Brooklyn, N.Y.: Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese, 1956), p. 256.

7. The origin of the commemoration of the dead on the second, third and fourth Saturdays of the Great Fast dates back to the compilation of the Church's typicon, but when and by whom it was instituted is unknown.

8. "Radunitsa" or "radonitsa".

9. St. John Chrysostom very clearly mentions the commemoration of the dead performed on Tuesday of St. Thomas week in his "Homily on the Cemetery and the Cross": " For what cause," asks the hierarch, "did our fathers, leaving their houses of prayer in the city, establish the practice of assembling outside the city on this day and in this very place? In as much," answers Chrysostom, "as here rests a multitude of the departed; today Jesus Christ went down to the dead; thus we also gather here. Why, this very place is called a place of sleep (cemetery), that you might know that they [who] have died and lie here have not died, but rest and sleep" ("Sermon on the Cemetery and the Cross," *Works* of *our Holy Father John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, in Russian Translation,* Vol. II, Book I, p. 431. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg theological Academy, 1896).

10. Reigned 1363-1399.

11. Commemorated March 12.

12. Commemorated November 12.

13. Commemorated March 14.

14. St. Gregory the Dialogist, The *Life and Miracles of St. Benedict,* ch. 28 (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, n.d.), pp. 52-54.

15. Reigned 829-842.

16. Cf. Synaxarion, Meatfare Saturday, *Lenten Triodion*, p. 21 (Moscow, 1897).

17. Commemorated February 1.

18 Cf. the "Life of St. Macarius the Great" in the *Lives of the Saints,* compiled by St. Dimitry of Rostov, January volume, pp. 610-611.

19. Commemorated April 12.

20. *Ibid.,* St. Dimitry of Rostov, April volume, pp. 175-176.

From *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp. 15-26. Translated from a pamphlet, published by the Russian Orthodox Convent of Our Lady of Vladimir in San Francisco, n.d.

PANIKHIDA

"Pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

The rememberance and prayer for those we love, those who are our acquaintances, our enemies, and for those in our Parish community, is an essential element of our Orthodox faith. Our prayer for one another is based on love and our mutual common strivings and sufferings in Christ.

St. Paul wrote: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die; we are the Lord's." This is a very important and essential element in our prayers for each other, and is one reason why we prayer for those who have departed this life. Bishop Kallistos writes that "death cannot sever the bond of mutual love which links the members of the Church together." (Orthodox Church, pg. 254)

The memorial service of the Orthodox Church, called either by the name "Panikhida", or "Trisagion" is one of the means by which the Church as a community prays for those who have departed this life. There are specific times appointed when this short service is to be done: particularly, immediately after the death of the person, nine days later, 40 days later, and an annual commemoration.

There are also times appointed by the Holy Kanons when the Memorial Service **is not to be sung**, Sunday being one of these days. But why is this so? Haven't parishes been serving Panikhidas after Sunday Liturgies for many years? What is wrong about remembering those whom we love after the Sunday Liturgy?

To answer that question, we need to look at the teaching and Tradition of the Church. *The Holy Kanons*-those guides and signposts for our healthy individual and common spiritual life-clearly indicate that Sunday is the Lord's Day. In Slavonic, it is called "Resurrection; thus, it is the day on which we commemorate His Resurrection, and is often called a "little Pascha" because of that.

Some early Christian writings refer to Sunday as "The Eighth Day". In other words, that Day after the Sabbath (the Seventh Day) on which the Lord rose from the dead and fulfilled the Sabbath. It is also called the Eighth Day because it is the day beyond all other days, an "unwaning day" of the Kingdom of God, the day of the New Creation, and the Pass-over, or *Pascha*, from the present age to the one which is here in the Church, yet is also to come in all its glory.

Finally, it is the day in which all those "in Christ", **both the living and departed**, are gathered in worship. "As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint one for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22: 29).

This teaching about the "Eighth Day" forms part of how we understand the Sunday Divine Liturgy, and explains why we do not serve Panikhidas on Sunday: in the Eucharistic experience of the Church all things are offered to God and fulfilled in Him; both the living and the dead are remembered before His Throne, and in Him all are made alive and partake of communion with Him and with each other at His Table in the Kingdom.

It becomes obvious that a separate service for the dead after Liturgy on the Lord's Day ignores the awesome mystery which was just accomplished. What more could be desired or accomplished? What other prayer should take precedence? All those desires for eternal life and love expressed for the one departed could not be fulfilled in a more perfect way than that which is done in the Eucharist. So, far from being some kind of obscure rule and regulation, the Tradition that Panikhidas are not to be served on Sunday reflects the Church's profound understanding of the Day of the Lord (the same spiritual vision forms the reason why we do not kneel on Sundays, Feast Days or during the Paschal Season, except for those prostrations at the Consecration of the Gifts). It should be noted as well that Memorial Services are normally not served for non-Orthodox, for many of the same reasons that we do not have communion with non-Orthodox.

Please call Father Michael to schedule Memorial services, Weekdays, provided it is not a Feast day, or Saturday mornings or afternoons before Vespers would be most appropriate.

When we love God, then we seek to be in His loving and forgiving presence as much as possible; we try to do His will; we seek the Kingdom of God, which is within us, by living the life of the Church. This includes prayer, of course. Prayer is so important, yet I find that many of our own Orthodox people pray very little, and hardly ever read the Bible. Without this spiritual nourishment, we neglect our salvation and God's will. The "Rule" below is meant for those who may not pray or read the scriptures regularly, but want to begin.

Not everyone has the same Prayer Rule. Some may pray for a long time each day, some for a short time. The crucial element is not necessarily the number of prayers we pray, but the quality of our prayer and the honesty of our lives as Christians. The Prayer Rule which we present below is only one of many possible. As always, we are encouraged to discuss our interior prayer life with our confessor and spiritual father. Pray is a vast subject, and is called the art of arts, so this brief article should be seen as only a scratch on the surface.

A RULE OF PRAYER AND THE READING OF THE BIBLE

-Fr. Dionysios of Holy Cross Monastery, Theva, Greece

So often we hear the words in the Gospel, the words of our Lord, calling us to prayer. This call to prayer is something we do alone in the privacy of our homes, and it includes regular prayer within the context of the church community. Most of us have grown accustomed to the prayer life of the community and the Divine Services celebrated throughout the year in the Church, but personal prayer is equally important. To facilitate a rule of prayer for those of us who may be searching for something simple and not too time-consuming, I sug-gest the following presecription:

FIRST THING IN THE MORNING ~ 15 MINUTES

Three prostrations. These can be full body prostrations to the floor if you are physically able, or, simply to touch the floor in front of your toes. Do this slowly, understanding that you come before the Lord. Make the sign of the Cross before each prostration. [I would also suggest the Trisagion Prayers, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed]. Sit in a hard chair with your prayer rope. The hard chair helps keep the mind attentive, whereas a soft chair is made for comfort and sleep. Keeping the mind attentive, recite the Jesus Prayer slowly: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." It is best not to create any pic-tures in your mind. Recite the prayer for each knot on the prayer rope until you make the complete circle. [How many knots, how big the prayer rope? It depends ...]

From the Scriptures: read two chapters from the Old Testament, and one chapter from the New Testament. Again, while sitting in the hard chair, keeping the mind attentive. (By the end of two years, you will have read the entire Bible.)

Still seated in the hard chair, complete one more prayer rope, reciting the Jesus Prayer. Three prostra-tions, as before. Then, continue with your normal routine.

IN THE EVENING ~ 15 MINUTES

When you have completed your day's work, and after you have prepared yourself fully for bed, repeat the same rule of prayer as you did in the morning. Using this rule, the Lord becomes our first thoughts in the morning, and our last thoughts at night. Before praying keep a moment of silence-within and without; then ignore the phone, and shut off the TV or radio.

*The article above was excerpted from the magazine **Praxis**, vol 2, #2.*

Father Arseny ON PRAYER

MANY TIMES I WAS present at Father Arseny's talks with people who had come to visit him; sometimes the talks would be repeated if those who had arrived earlier had not heard what Father Arseny had said. Here are two of his talks on the subject of prayer:

All the words of the Gospel are inspired by God. But it is with exceptional feeling that I hear the words of the Lord, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). There is an excellent and profound prayer, apparently composed in the sixteenth century, but never included in a single prayer book, it's called popularly, "A Prayer in Accord." There are many theories about its possible composer, but I believe it sprang from the souls of many Orthodox Christians since its main words are taken directly from the Gospel. As a rule, when tragedies or sorrows arise, several Orthodox Christians agree to read this prayer at the same time of day and ask God for the healing of the sick one, for mercy to the fallen one, for the salvation of a soldier or a captive. The people praying can be in different homes, or even in different towns, but they all read the prayer at the same time, whether in the morning, during the day, or in the evening. Many know this prayer, but I will read it now:

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Thou hast said by Thy pure lips that 'if two or three agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them.'

"Inscrutable are Thy words, O Lord. Thy love of mankind knows no limits. Thy mercy is without end. We, Thy servants (name those praying), pray in accord for Thy servants (mention the names and circumstances). Help us in all our works, today, tomorrow and on any day, that these may be to Thy glory. But not as we will, but as Thou dost will. Thy will be done. In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All believers are members of the Church of Christ. Without the Church, it is difficult for one person alone to find the way of salvation, the right way to act in this earthly life. Outside the Church, a person ails: he easily gives in to temptation, to doubts, to confusion, to depression of the spirit. The Church spiritually nourishes every person who comes to it. We live amidst different people: bad, good, believers, nonbelievers. We meet with followers of teachings that are dangerous for the soul. Unaware of this, we strive to give them something of our own, but more often receive something that is bad for us, some unnecessary knowledge, some unhealthy information. Our faith in the Lord is gradually pushed out by foreign ideas and, although we consider ourselves to be Orthodox Christians, we in fact become a weak reflection of a Christian. Regular *contact* with the Church helps battle the evil that surrounds us and reestablishes in us the spirit of Christ, the spirit of faith.

If a person prays by himself and does not live the life of the Church, the trials and worries of this age will carry him further and further from the way of faith. It is necessary to attend Church regularly, to pray with all who stand there, since "where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them," to go to confession, and to receive the Holy Mysteries. The prayer of one person alone can be compared to a lone candle burning, while prayer in church, hundreds of people praying together, unite the lights of their burning candles, and this produces an enormous pillar of light enlightening all those who stand there. And our prayers, united as one, will be carried to the House of the Lord, the Church, to the Creator. And He hears and receives our prayer. When in church, pray for your friends, that the Lord will help them live, that they may keep and multiply their faith; pray also for your enemies and for those who have hurt you, in order to be reconciled with them; and never forget to pray for the dead: your prayer helps the souls of the departed. Remember that you must always help other people. On the tombstone of the merciful Dr. Haas, you can read these words, "Make haste to do good!" Yes, yes, make haste; this is a Gospel truth. Kindness and prayer, that is what Jesus Christ teaches us.

+

This second talk about prayer was given on the day of Saint Alexis, the Man of God, on March 30, l 973; nine or ten people were present. The conversation lasted a long time. People argued about the meaning of prayer, its influence on human soul, and the meaning of prayer at home versus prayer in church. Four people were talking. Father Arseny did not say anything, while the others, including myself, just listened and did not participate in their heated debates. When all were silent, Father Arseny said:

I am a hieromonk. My duty, with the blessing of the elders, is to help people, to bring peace and tranquility, to bring love, to teach how to pray and how to love your neighbor and God with all your heart and all your mind. I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit- the undivided Trinity. My faith is exactly the one professed *in* the creed that was established by the Ecumenical Councils. I have been ordered never to enter theological arguments, and I consider them useless.

If I am not mistaken, if my memory does not fail me, almost every apologist and theologian, after he has written many good books, has always admitted to one or two inaccuracies for which he was criticized cruelty and was blamed by his opponents (but it is true that great theologians have sometimes been canonized for their work). I have accepted the obedience to serve people and what I am going to say about prayer comes only from the canons of the Church and from my own pastoral experience

which I have gathered during the many years I have been close to my spiritual children and to the other people who have come to see me.

I have listened to you talking about prayer with great interest, and each one of you is right: prayer is varied and diverse and it does come out of the heart (the soul) of each person in its own way depending on his inner being, his spiritual experience, his knowing how to tune himself up for prayer, and his ability to lift up his heart.

Almost everything I am going to say is well known, but I will repeat it for the sake of those who have just come and do not know it. All the Church Fathers have written about the importance of prayer tor believers. In the nineteenth century, these included [Holy] Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov) of Moscow, [Holy] Bishop Theophan (Vichenski) [the Recluse], [Holy] Bishop Ignaty (Brianchaninov). the elders of Optino (in their letters to their spiritual children) and other spiritual writers; recently even a classification of prayers has appeared. As far as I am concerned, I think what is most important in prayer is spiritual concentration, complete sincerity; a departure from all worldly bustle and temptations, and full immersion in the state of prayer. Only then can the soul really concentrate on God, but this ability is not given to everybody in the same degree.

You could classify prayer this way:

1. Intercessory prayer. The one praying asks God to help him in difficult times or in his grief, or he asks God to help his loved ones, heal their sickness, console them in their sadness, feed them, or forgive their transgressions; or he prays for the departed. For most people this prayer is the most important: even a person who does not feel God to be very close, will sometimes, in difficult circumstances, address Him with a request When coming to church and praying, we always ask God for something.

2. Prayer of thanksgiving. You thank God for the help you or loved ones have received from Him, or for the fulfillment of a request you made in your intercessory prayers. You also thank God for having given you life and His mercy. Many people only ask for things, just like people who only borrow from others and forget to repay what they owe. Prayers of thanksgiving are addressed to God, the Holy Mother of God and the saints. It is not sufficient to pray this way once only, but you must do it many times, it is as if you returning what you owe to God tor His having listened to your prayers. But, as I have said before, not everyone addresses God in order to thank Him. The responsibility of the priest is to explain to those who come to him that they must thank God, His Holy Mother and the saints for all the help they have received.

3. Prayer of glorification. This is the highest prayer to God, the creator of heaven and earth, glorifying Him for everything and everyone. For calamities, for sadness. for being saved or for deliverance, for the fact that we live, for joys and for sorrow and, I repeat, for everything and for everyone. God is our Creator; everything comes from Him. He created us and He gives us the possibility, through his mercy; to attain the Kingdom of God by leading a pious life on earth. This is the great prayer of a perfect soul; each one of us, after having learned the prayer of thanksgiving, can enter the circle of glorifying prayer

The prayer of glorification can always be heard in church, and especially during the greatest of Church services, the liturgy.

+

I will say a few words on the subject of how we must pray. To separate yourself from the world around you and enter into the words and spirit of prayer is difficult for those who lack long prayer experience. You pray, trying to concentrate on your prayer, but the prayer comes absentmindedly. In tandem with the prayer you have earthly thoughts and you are unable to let go of them. To overcome this, you must pray more and more often; it is important in the beginning to pray aloud, if this is possible.

Often do priests say and write that absentminded and distracted prayer is unacceptable to God and is even sinful because the one who prays does not give his soul fully to God and in that way he sins. Of course. such prayer is not of full value. The one praying tries to gather his will and put the soul in a prayerful mode, but due to his weakness is unable to do it, but at least he did try to do it. Only God can decide on the sincerity and the spiritual value of such prayer. But, as far as I am concerned, I believe that, if the prayer was sincere but, due to reasons unknown to us, the person was unable to achieve a warm and sincere prayer, he did still pray. He did not forget to pray his rule of prayer at his regular time - that is already an offering, an effort held up to God - and God will accept this prayer having weighed the spiritual state and the sincerity of the one praying. Many people, and even many priests will not agree with me, but this is what I think, and I have found some indirect confirmation of my words in spiritual literature and even in old "Lives of the Fathers of the Church."

Whatever the level of prayer, be it a prayer of intercession, of thanksgiving or glorification, a person must aim to pray with his whole soul, trying to get away from all concerns of earthly life. If you absolutely cannot find the ability to pray sincerely, you must talk about that with your spiritual father and ask his advice.

When people come to me I often pray with them for a long time aloud, articulating each word and every sentence, trying to put all my soul in each word. Later I explain the meaning and importance of prayer. Usually, the prayers of intercession are the most sincere ones, because the one who prays, even if he did not yet reach spiritual perfection, is entirely sincere in these prayers: he is asking for healing, mercy, help for those he loves, or he asks for the good things of life, for them to be saved from death, from illness; in short, he prays for what gives him pain and suffering.

+

I wrote down these conversations about prayer from memory. These two talks by Father Arseny about prayer were typical of the ones he gave to new visitors. Father Arseny always had a personal talk about prayer with each new person who came to him and became his spiritual child, and the conversation about prayer would be followed by a talk about how to relate to other people. He considered it important and requested that each person should have and follow without fail a rule of prayer. He first asked what the rule was that the person followed, listened carefully to the answer and then, depending on the spiritual state of the person, he would give his advice: which prayers to include, which to exclude. He recommended that you should look carefully at the previous day, at your actions, thoughts, conversations, you had to figure out what you had done wrong and pray to God to ask His forgiveness. You should try not to repeat those evil actions on subsequent days. Father Arseny did not approve of long rules of prayer; he used to say that, towards the end of them, the person praying would get tired and repeat the prayers without feeling, mechanically; however, he recommended to some people that they pray for an hour or more.

He advised people to pray morning and evening, always at a fixed time of day; to parents with children, he recommended that they pray as a family but, so that the children do not get tired, first you should have a short prayer with them and then continue the complete rule of prayer among adults. He suggested that you pray on the way to work or from work repeating the whole rule or part of it; he considered that this was a good way to prevent people from having empty and useless thoughts. He constantly reminded people, "Pray to God, but do not forget to pray for other people, and to do good deeds. Prayer to God and love for others must be united: the one without the other does not stay alive."

From *Father Arseny- A Cloud of Witnesses,* St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001, pp. 213-9.

Page-8-

On The Intercession and Invocation of the Departed Saints

Christopher Orr

Protestants often have a difficult time coming to terms with prayer to the saints. It is condemned as a christianized paganism, an example of the corruption of Christianity after the conversion of the Roman Empire under Constantine in 313 AD.

This issue falls under two broad headings: intercession and invocation. Most Protestants would accept the fact that we are prayed for by the departed saints and angels in heaven (intercession by the saints), just as our family, friends, and clergy here on earth pray us for. The difficulty lies with our asking (praying) the departed saints and angels for their prayers (invocation of the saints). How do we know they can hear us? Some, High Church Anglicans, would accept intercession and invocation, but not the Roman "excesses" of this practice. The 1917 [Roman] Catholic Encyclopedia expresses succinctly the position of the various traditional Protestant bodies:

...the High Church Anglicans contend that it is not the invocation of saints that is here rejected, but only the "Romish doctrine ", i. e. the excesses prevailing at the time and afterwards condemned by the Council of Trent. "In principle there is no question herein between us and any other portion of the Catholic Church. . . . Let not that most ancient custom, common to the Universal Church, as well Greek as Latin, of addressing Angels and Saints in the way we have said, be condemned as impious, or as vain and foolish" [Forbes, Bishop of Brechin (Anglican), "Of the Thirty-nine Articles", p. 422].

The reformed Churches, as a body, reject the invocation of the saints. Article xxi of the Augsburg Confession says: "Scripture does not teach us to invoke the Saints, or to ask for help from the Saints; for it puts before us Christ as the one mediator, propitiatory, high-priest and intercessor." In the "Apology of the Augsburg Confession" (ad art. xxi, sects. 3, 4), it is admitted that the angels pray for us, and the saints, too, "for the Church in general"; but this does not imply that they are to be invoked.

The Calvinists, however, reject both intercession and invocation as an imposture and delusion of Satan, since thereby the right manner of praying is prevented, and the saints know nothing of us, and have no concern as to what passes on earth ("Gall. Confess.", art. xxiv; "Remonst. Conf." c. xvi, sect. 3).[1]

It was my contention as an inquirer into Orthodox Christianity- which accepts the intercession and invocation of the saints- that if I was willing to accept the testimony of the Fathers of the Church when it came to such abstruse dogmas as that of the Trinity (three hypostases, one ousia) and Chalcedonian Christology (two ousia, one hypostasis), as well as the final canon of the New Testament Scriptures which was finally settled by St. Athanasius, then I must also accept their testimony concerning the intercession and invocation of the saints. That is, if they had ever said anything about it. If St. Athanasius can fight for homoousios over homoiousios; and, in similarly abstract language Sts. Gregory the Theologian and Basil the Great could fight for the full divinity of the Holy Spirit, then certainly they would have commented on the error of the intercession and invocation of the saints. That is, if it existed in their day. I vaguely assumed that this "pagan practice" must have developed later, or outside of the truly Christian spheres in which these basic dogmas of our faith were formulated.

This led me to a study of the Patristic sources to find if there was, in fact, early testimony one way or the other concerning the intercession and invocation of the saints. Did major patristic figures such as Sts. Athanasius, Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian support or teach this practice? Was there only isolated testimony to this practice in Rome, Palestine, Syria, Africa, or Asia Minor separately, or was it widespread across the ancient world implying a common apostolic foundation?

I have compiled a less than exhaustive digest of patristic and scriptural citations concerning both the intercession and invocation of the departed saints of God. I have stressed texts referring to our invocation of the saints- of our asking them for their prayers. I hate to admit it, but I actually didn't do this research before I became Orthodox. I assumed there was no written testimony to be had until many centuries after the Church came out of the catacombs in 313-14. I simply prayed my way into understanding that the saints can hear us. I was shocked to find that there was, in fact, testimony in support of "prayer to the saints. And this testimony came not from some random, half-pagan "saint" from the backwaters of Mesopotamia, Cilicia, or the Pentapolis but from the defenders and promoters of the Nicene Creed: the Fathers who had suffered, struggled, and died for the doctrine of the Trinity, the full divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and who described this relationship in language too rarified for me to fully comprehend to this day. These doctrines most Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians still hold in common- in the face of all that we disagree on. The witness, therefore, of these Christian giants must be taken as more than simply "the doctrine of men". They prayed to the saints without considering them to be demi-gods, they asked the prayers of those who to whome the Psalmist and Christ said, "Ye are gods."[2] Could the Church which Christ promised would withstand the "gates of Hades" really have apostatized within a generation of its freedom across the breadth of the entire ancient world?

All ye saints, pray to God for us!

PATRISTIC AND SCRIPTURAL TESTIMONY

Righteous Job the Long-Suffering (1000 - 300 BC)

If there shall be an angel speaking for him . . . He shall have mercy on him, and shall say: Deliver him, that he may not go down to corruption" (Job xxxiii, 23).

Book of Tobit (200 - 100 BC)

When thou didst pray with tears... I [Archangel Raphael] offered thy prayer to the Lord. (Tobit xii, 12)

St. John the Evangelist (+101)

And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel. (Apoc., viii, 3, 4)

Origen of Alexandria (+ 253 or 254)

But not the High-Priest [Christ] alone prays for those who pray sincerely, but also the angels . . . as also the souls of the saints who have already fallen asleep (ai te ton prokekoimemenon hagion psychai).[3]

St. Cyprian of Carthage (+258), writing to Pope Cornelius of Rome

Let us be mutually mindful of each other, let us ever pray for each other, and if one of us shall, by the speediness of the Divine vouchsafement, depart hence first, let our love continue in the presence of the Lord, let not prayer for our brethren and sisters cease in the presence of the mercy of the Father.[4]

St. Hilary of Poitiers (+368)

To those who would fain stand, neither the guardianship of saints nor the defences of angels are wanting.[5]

St. Ephraim the Syrian (+373)

Remember me, ye heirs of God, ye brethren of Christ, supplicate the Saviour earnestly for me, that I may be freed though Christ from him that fights against me day by day.[6]

Ye victorious martyrs who endured torments gladly for the sake of the God and Saviour; ye who have boldness of speech towards the Lord Himself; ye saints, intercede for us who are timid and sinful men, full of sloth, that the grace of Christ may come upon us, and enlighten the hearts of all of us that so we may love him.[7]

St. Athanasius the Great, Patriarch of Alexandria (+373)

Christ became man that men might become gods.[8]

Dr. George Bebis writes that "In one of his letters, St. Basil [the Great] explicitly writes that he accepts the intercession of the apostles, prophets and martyrs, and he seeks their prayers to God. (Letter 360) Then, speaking about the Forty Martyrs, who suffered martyrdom for Christ, he emphasizes that they are common friends of the human race, strong ambassadors and collaborators in fervent prayers. (Chapter 8) St. Gregory of Nyssa asks St. Theodore the Martyr ...to fervently pray to our Common King, our God, for the country and the people (Encomium to Martyr Theodore)."

Dr. Bebis continues, "The same language is used by St. Gregory the Theologian in his encomium to St. Cyprian. St. John Chrysostom says that we should seek the intercession and the fervent prayers of the saints, because they have special "boldness" (parresia), before God. (Gen. 44: 2 and Encomium to Julian, Iuventinus and Maximinus, 3)."[9]

St. Basil the Great, of Caesarea in Asia Minor (+379)

According to the blameless faith of the Christians which we have obtained from God, I confess and agree that I believe in one God the Father Almighty; God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; I adore and worship one God, the Three. I confess to the oeconomy of the Son in the flesh, and that the holy Mary, who gave birth to Him according to the flesh, was Mother of God. I acknowledge also the holy apostles, prophets, and martyrs; and I invoke them to supplication to God, that through them, that is, through their mediation, the merciful God may be propitious to me, and that a ransom may be made and given me for my sins. Wherefore also I honour and kiss the features of their images, inasmuch as they have been handed down from the holy apostles, and are not forbidden, but are in all our churches.[10]

We beseech you, O most holy martyrs, who cheerfully suffered torments and death for his love, and are now more familiarly united to him, that you intercede with God for us slothful and wretched sinners, that he bestow on us the grace of Christ, by which we may be enlightened and enabled to love him.[11]

O holy choir! O sacred band! O unbroken host of warriors! O common guardians of the human race! Ye gracious sharers of our cares! Ye co-operators in our prayer! Most powerful intercessors![12]

Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

By the command of Thine only-begotten Son we communicate with the memory of Thy saints . . . by whose prayers and supplications have mercy upon us all, and deliver us for the sake of Thy holy name which is invoked upon us.[13]

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (+386)

We then commemorate also those who have fallen asleep before us, first, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, that God, by their prayers and intercessions, may receive our petitions.[14]

St. Gregory the Theologian, Patriarch of Constantinople; of Nazianzus in Asia Minor (+389)

Mayest thou [Cyprian] look down from above propitiously upon us, and guide our word and life; and shepherd [or shepherd with me] this sacred flock . . . gladdening us with a more perfect and clear illumination of the Holy Trinity, before Which thou standest.[15]

Reference to St. Gregory[16]

"As pointed out by St. Thomas (Aquinas), we invoke the angels and saints in quite different language from that addressed to God. We ask Him to have mercy upon us and Himself to grant us whatever we require; whereas we ask the saints to pray for us, i.e. to join their petitions with ours. However, we should here bear in mind Bellarmine's remarks: "When we say that nothing should be asked of the saints but their prayer for us, the question is not about the words, but the sense of the words. For as far as the words go, it is lawful to say: 'St. Peter, pity me, save me, open for me the gate of heaven'; also, 'Give me health of body, patience, fortitude', etc., provided that we mean 'save and pity me by praying for me'; 'grant me this or that by thy prayers and merits.' For so speaks Gregory of Nazianzus (Orat. xviii - according to others, xxiv - "De S. Cypriano" in P. G., XXXV, 1193; "Orat. de S. Athan.: In Laud. S. Athanas.", Orat. xxi, in P. G., XXXV, 1128); in "De Sanct. Beatif.", I, 17... In like manner does Gregory pray to St. Athanasius (Orat. xxi, "In laud. S. Athan.", P. G., XXXV, 1128)."

St. Gregory of Nyssa in Lower Armenia (+395-400)

...I wish to commemorate one person who spoke of their noble testimony because I am close to Ibora, the village and resting place of these forty martyrs' remains. Here the Romans keep a register of soldiers, one of whom was a guard ordered by his commander to protect against invasions, a practice common to soldiers in such remote areas. This man suffered from an injured foot which was later amputated. Being in the martyrs' resting place, he earnestly beseeched God and the intercession of the saints. One night there appeared a man of venerable appearance in the company of others who said, "Oh soldier, do you want to be healed [J.167] of your infirmity? Give me your foot that I may touch it." When he awoke from the dream, his foot was completely healed. Once he awoke from this vision, his foot was restored to health. He roused the other sleeping men because he was immediately cured and made whole. This men then began to proclaim the miracle performed by the martyrs and acknowledged the kindness bestowed by these fellow soldiers.... We who freely and boldly enter paradise are strengthened by the [martyrs'] intercession through a noble confession in our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.[17]

Do thou, [St. Ephraim the Syrian] that art standing at the Divine altar, and art ministering with angels to the life-giving and most Holy Trinity, bear us all in remembrance, petitioning for us the remission of sins, and the fruition of an everlasting kingdom.[18]

St. Ambrose of Milan (+397)

May Peter, who wept so efficaciously for himself, weep for us and turn towards us Christ's benignant countenance.[19]

St. Jerome, b. Dalmatia, d. Palestine (+419)

If the Apostles and Martyrs, while still in the body, can pray for others, at a time when they must still be anxious for themselves, how much more after their crowns, victories, and triumphs are won! One man, Moses, obtains from God pardon for six hundred thousand men in arms; and Stephen, the

imitator of the Lord, and the first martyr in Christ, begs forgiveness for his persecutors; and shall their power be less after having begun to be with Christ? The Apostle Paul declares that two hundred three score and sixteen souls, sailing with him, were freely given him; and, after he is dissolved and has begun to be with Christ, shall he close his lips, and not be able to utter a word in behalf of those who throughout the whole world believed at his preaching of the Gospel? And shall the living dog Vigilantius be better than that dead lion?[20]

St. John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople; b. Antioch, Syria (+407)

When thou perceivest that God is chastening thee, fly not to His enemies . . . but to His friends, the martyrs, the saints, and those who were pleasing to Him, and who have great power [parresian, "boldness of speech"].[21]

He that wears the purple, laying aside his pomp, stands begging of the saints to be his patrons with God; and he that wears the diadem begs the Tent-maker and the Fisherman as patrons, even though they be dead.[22]

St. Augustine of Hippo, in North Africa (+430)

At the Lord's table we do not commemorate martyrs in the same way that we do others who rest in peace so as to pray for them, but rather that they may pray for us that we may follow in their footsteps.[23]

Notes

1 Catholic Encyclopedia, 1917. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08070a.htm.
2 John 10:34.
3 "De Oratione", n. xi, in P. G., XI, 448.
4 Ep. lvii, in P. L., IV, 358.
5 "In Ps. cxxiv", n. 5, 6, in P. L., X, 682.
6 "De Timore Anim.", in fin..
7 "Encom. in Mart.".
8 "De Incarn.", n. 54; cf. St. Augustine, "Serm. De Nativitate Dom.".
9 Bebis, George. "The Saints of the Orthodox Church" (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, http://www.goarch.org/en/resources/saints/).
10 Letter 360, "Of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the invocation of Saints, and their Images".
11 "Homily on the Forty Soldier Martyrs of Sebaste", quoting St. Ephrem the Syrian, "Homil. in SS. Martyres", Op. Gr. and Lat. ed. Vat. an. 1743, t. 2, p. 341.
12 "Hom. in XL Mart.", P. G., XXXI, 524.
13 Cf. the Liturgy of Jerusalem, the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom, the Liturgy of Nestorius, the Coptic Liturgy of St. Cyril, etc..
14 "Cat. Myst.", v, n. 9 in P. G., XXXIII, 1166.
15 Orat. xvii -- according to others, xxiv -- "De S. Cypr.", P. G., XXXV, 1193.
16 Catholic Catechism, 1917. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08070a.htm.
17 "Second Letter Concerning the Forty Martyrs".
18 "De vita Ephraemi", in fin., P. G., XLVI, 850.
19 "Hexaem.", V, xxv, n. 90, in P. L., XIV, 242.
20 "Contra Vigilant.", n. 6, in P. L., XXIII, 344.
21 Orat. VIII, "Adv. Jud.", n. 6, in P. G., XLVIII, 937.
22 "Hom. xxvi, in II Ep. ad Cor.", n. 5, in P. G., LXI, 581.
23 "In Joann.", tr. lxxxiv, in P. L., XXXIV, 1847.

Christopher Orr splits his time time between New York City and the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. He is a Reader and Chanter at the OCA Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection in Manhattan, and a member of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Stroudsburg, PA.

CHAPTER II

ICONOGRAPHIC DECORATION OF CHURCHES

One of the most distinctive features of Eastern Orthodoxy is the extensive and systematic use of holy icons in churches. Every Orthodox church has an *iconostasis*, a wooden or marble screen supporting panel icons and separating the *bema* or sanctuary from the main body of the church, the nave. Also, there are *proskynetaria* or icon stands, on which special icons are placed for veneration. Except in very small chapels, there is at least one *proskynetarion*, with the icon of the sacred person or persons to whom the church is dedicated. The faithful cross themselves before this icon and kiss it upon entering the church. Panel icons are often attached to the walls. In addition to panels, an Orthodox church generally has a certain number of murals depicting sacred persons and incidents, executed either by brush or by inlaying small pieces of, colored glass or stone, the latter being known as mosaics. Sculptured representations are rare, and are limited to bas-reliefs: statues are not employed. The reliefs themselves have the character of paintings.

In a typical Greek Orthodox church there are two tiers of icons on the iconostasis, a lower tier of large icons and an upper tier of considerably smaller ones. (In Russian churches the number of tiers has been increased to three.) The lower series always includes at least the following three icons: that of Christ, that of the Theotokos[1] and Child, and that of the sacred person, persons, or event specially celebrated by the particular church. The icon of Christ is invariably placed immediately to the south of the door which is at the middle of the iconostasis and is known as the Beautiful Gate (*Horaia Pyle*), while that of the Theotokos is always placed immediately to the north of the Beautiful Gate. These icons are known as *Despotikai*, 'Sovereign.' The icon depicting the person or event specially celebrated by the church is customarily set next to that of the Theotokos, but sometimes beside that of Christ, particularly in small churches which have only three large icons on the iconostasis. In larger churches, the first row of icons almost always includes the icon of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist, placed immediately next to Christ's. Except in very small chapels, the lower tier comprises other icons, their number depending on the length of the iconostasis. The latter invariably has a side doorway on the north side, and in larger churches one on the south, too. When there are doors here, these are mounted with the icons of the archangels Michael and Gabriel -that of Michael is placed on the north door, that of Gabriel on the south. The tier of small icons on the upper part of the iconostasis comprises either representations of the 'Twelve Great Festivals' (the *Dodekaorton*), or of the twelve apostles, each festival or apostle being depicted separately. The 'Twelve Great Festivals' are the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entrance into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension Pentecost, and the Dormition of the Theotokos.

Above the Beautiful Gate, at the top of the iconostasis, is placed a cross with the figure of Christ crucified. To the right of the crucifix stands the figure of the All-Holy Virgin, and to the left that of St. John the Theologian, depicted on panels. On the hinged doors (*bemothyra*), which form the lower part of the Beautiful Gate, there is usually a representation of the Annunciation.

The special importance given to the icons of the Virgin and the Baptist, in placing them on the iconostasis to the right and to the left of Christ, has its justification in statements made in the Gospels. The Virgin Mary is said to have "found favor with God,"[2] to have been "overshadowed" by the power of the Highest,[3] to have miraculously conceived and given birth to the Son of God, Jesus Christ;[4] while John the Baptist is characterized by Christ as "more than a prophet, for this is he of whom it is written, 'Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee:'"[5]

1 'The Godbirthgiver,' the All-Holy Virgin Mary, who gave birth Christ God as man.
2 Luke 1:30
3 Luke 1:35
4 Luke: 1: 32.
5 Matt. 11: 9-11.

In the decoration of a church with wall paintings or mosaics, certain areas are set apart for particular representations. Thus, the top part of the dome is used for the representation of Christ as *Pantocrator*, 'Ruler of All' 'Almighty;' the spaces between the windows of the drum of the dome, for the prophets; the four pendentives below, for the evangelists; the vaults and upper walls in the nave, for the Twelve Great Festivals; the lower parts, for the miracles and parables of Christ; the lowest areas of all, for individual saints; the conch of the main eastern apse, for the Theotokos as *Platytera*. This is, in part, the general scheme that has prevailed in Orthodox churches during the last thousand years. The Scheme varies somewhat from church to church, according to the shape and size of the building, the period when is was decorated, and the region where it is built. Thus, the scheme indicated above applies, so far as the dome is concerned, to the domed church; in a basilica there cannot very well be a central Pantocrator, and the prophets and evangelists have to be painted elsewhere. Also, in a small church, even when the representations are considerable reduced in scale, they must necessarily be fewer in number.

The domed church, rather than the domeless basilica, is typical of Eastern Orthodoxy, and expresses more successfully its distinctive spirit. In such a church, the figure of Christ as Pantocrator, depicted in the central dome, which dominates the whole edifice, is the largest and most impressive of all the icons. This representation consists of a large bust of Christ enclosed in a multicolored circle. The God-Man holds the book of the Gospels in His left hand and blesses with His right. His head, which is encircled with a large halo inscribed with a cross, His face, His neck and shoulders all suggest great power and magnificence. His facial expression is that of an all-seeing and austere, yet merciful, lawgiver and judge. This icon reminds the faithful of the words of the Apostle Paul: And God the Father "raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"[6] It also reminds the faithful of the hymn: "Know and behold that I am God, Who searches the hearts and chastizes thoughts, scrutinizes acts, and sets sin fire."[7]

It may be noted that the term 'Pantocrator' and the idea behind it appear in the book of Revelation. Thus, in 1:8 it is said: "I am Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord Who is, and Who was, and Who is to come, the Pantocrator." Also, the use of the multicolored band around Him is based on Revelation 4: 3, where the *iris* or rainbow is said to surround the throne of God.

In churches where the size of the dome permits, the Pantocrator is often surrounded, on the round strip immediately below the iris, by the Theotokos, St. John the Forerunner, in an attitude of prayer, and angels. The Theotokos is painted on the east side of the strip; the Forerunner, on the west. Here is expressed in line and color what the closing part of the Divine Liturgy says in words: "May Christ our true God have mercy upon us, through the intercessions of His most pure and most blessed holy Mother;… and through the protection of the precious, incorporeal Spiritual Powers in heaven; through the supplications of the precious, glorious Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist ..." The representation of the Theotokos so close to Christ Pantocrator and surrounded by a choir of angels is also in keeping with another part of the Liturgy, which says: "It is truly meet to bless thee, Theotokos, the ever-blessed and most pure Virgin and Mother of our God. Thee who art more honorable than the Cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim, who, while chaste, didst bear God, the Logos; thee, who art verily the Theotokos, we magnify." The proximity of John the Baptist to Christ is justified by Christ's own characterization of the Baptist which has already been mentioned in connection with his icon on the iconostasis. Sometimes he is depicted with wings, according to this passage in Scripture: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face."[8] The word 'messenger' is a translation of the Greek *angelos*, which means both messenger and angel.

Further down the dome, on the drum, are depicted Old Testament prophets: Moses, David, Solomon, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Elijah, Isaiah, and others, with one or two between the windows, Their number

6 Ephesians 1: 20-23..
7 Triodion, Venice, 1876, p. 261.
8 Matthew 10: 11.

varies considerably, depending on the size of the dome. The presence of the prophets here reminds the faithful who turn their gaze upward to the dome of the troparion: "Thou hast been seen by the prophets, O Master, as far as they had the capacity of beholding Thy splendor; through their prayers, render us capable of receiving Thy rays of illumination, having cleansed our souls of sinful thoughts and feelings."[9]

Below the prophets, on the four pendentives (the spherical triangles between the adjoining arches that support the dome) are depicted the evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John: Matthew and John are always depicted in the northeast and southeast pendentives respectively, while Mark and Luke are usually painted in the northwest and southwest. They' are represented seated, engaged in writing. John is depicted with his head turned back, according to the statement in the book of Revelation: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice… And I turned to see the voice that spake with me."[10] Sometimes they are shown with their symbols: Matthew, with an angel; Mark, with a lion; Luke, with a calf; and John, with an eagle. This is in accordance with the statement in the book of Revelation that round about the throne of God "were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the rust beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle."[11]

Second in importance only to the central dome in mural decoration is the main eastern apse. The dominant figure here, that of the All-Holy Virgin, appears in the conch or semidome. This icon is known as *Platytera*. The representation consists either of the upper half of her body, with arms outstretched in prayer, and the Child Christ against her chest, or of the entire figure, usually with the Child in her lap. In the latter case she is generally enthroned. The Child blesses with His right hand and holds a scroll in His left, or blesses with both hands. Often the Virgin is flanked on either side by the archangels Michael and Gabriel (to her right and left, respectively).

The representation of the Theotokos in this part of the church is in line with a very old tradition, and consonant with the Gospel assertion that Jesus Christ, Savior of mankind, was born of the Virgin Mary; it also accords well with the architectural and hymnographic symbolism of the Eastern Church. Professor George A. Soteriou, the eminent Byzantinist, has this to say about the significance of depicting the Virgin here: "During the Byzantine period, the allegorical meaning of the apse as a point uniting the roof of the church with the floor, and symbolically heaven with the earth, contributed to the placing of the icon of the Theotokos as *Platytera*. The Theotokos hovers as it were between heaven and earth, as 'the heavenly Ladder, where by God has descended,' and 'the Bridge leading those on the earth to heaven.' (The symbolism is taken from the Akathistos Hymn.) She is chiefly represented as praying before the Pantocrator in the dome, but also as holding the Child."[12]

The full name of this icon of the Virgin is 'She who is wider than the heavens' (Platytera ton ouranon). She is so called because she gave birth to Christ God, Who is the Creator of all things, present in them and transcendent of them. This appellation appears in various hymns to her, for example in the one which says: "When Gabriel said to thee, O Virgin, 'Rejoice,' with this utterance the Master of all became incarnate in thee, the holy Ark, as the righteous David said; thou wast shown to be wider than the heavens, having held thy Creator…"[13]

On the area of the apse immediately below the Platytera is depicted the Divine Liturgy . In the middle of this composition there is a ciborium with the Holy Table under it, on which rests the Book of the Gospels. Christ, clad in episcopal vestments, and assisted by angels who are dressed as deacons, officiates. Sometimes the Divine Liturgy is depicted instead in the prothesis, the northern apse of the sanctuary (bema), where the preparation of the sacred elements of the Eucharist takes place during the first part of the Liturgy.

Below the Divine Liturgy is represented the Holy Communion. In the center there is a ciborium, with the Holy Table having a paten and chalice on it, containing the Eucharistic bread and wine. Christ,

9 Parakletike, Venice, 1851, p. 46.
10 1: 10, 12.
11 4: 6-7.
12 Nea Hettia, Athens. 1955, Christmas issue, pp. 408-409.
13 Parakletike, p. 42.

usually garbed in a tunic and mantle and assisted by two angels dressed as deacons, offers the sacred elements to His disciples. This composition bears the inscription: "Take, eat,"[14] and "Drink ye all, of. it."[15]

On the lower part of the apse are depicted, in episcopal robes, the great hierarchs: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Chrysostom, St. Athanasios the Great, and others, as space permits. They are represented as taking part in the Liturgy.

The narthex, too, which runs across the west end of the church, has traditionally been decorated with wall paintings or mosaics. The most important area for iconographic decoration here is that over the main entrance which leads to the nave. Usually a bust of Christ as Teacher is painted here, the Lord blessing with His right hand and holding in His left the book of the Gospels, open at the statement: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved;”[16] or, “ Iam the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[17] On either side of Him are the Theotokos and John the Forerunner, turned towards Him in an attitude of prayer.

The other parts of the narthex -the vaults, walls, etc. -are decorated with events from the life of the Theotokos and of the martyrs, or with visions from Daniel and the book of Revelation, as well as with individual saints, both full length figures and busts.

A definite pattern of church decoration was gradually developed, and this became more definitely established after the victory of the Church over Iconoclasm in 843. The system of arrangement is set forth in *the Explanation of the Art of Painting* (*Hermmeia tes Zographikes Technes*) by the Athonite monk Dionysios of Fourna (1670-c. 1745).[18] Although this work was first printed in the last century (1853), it was probably written about 1730, and is based on several anonymous earlier writings. In it, Dionysios explains how panel icons and frescoes are executed, how each saint or scene is to be depicted, and how the icons are to be arranged in domed churches and basilicas. Dionysios' book has been superseded by *the Explanation of Orthodox Iconography* (*Ekphrasis tes Orthodoxou Eikonographias*), written by Photios Kontoglou, the foremost modem Greek icon painter, and published in 1960 at Athens. Kontoglou's work is based on writings elder than those which were employed by Dionysios of Fourna, as well as on bis own extraordinarily rich experience as an iconographer and restorer of Byzantine paintings. It is free from certain errors and marks of Western Influence that are to be found here and there in the book of Dionysios, and is written with greater clarity.

14 Matthew 26: 26.
15 Matthew 26: 27.
16 John 10: 9.
17 John B: 12.
18 This book is referred to by English writers as the Painter’s Guide, or Byzantine Guide to Painting, It was translated in the last century into French by Paul Durand. and was published with an Introduction and numerous notes b)' Adolphe N. Didron under the Manuel d’iconographie chrètienne in 1845, at Paris, The French version of Dionysios work contained In Didron’s Manuel d’iconographie chrètienne was translated into English by Margaret Stokes, and appears as Appendix II, "Byzantine Guide to Painting," in the English version of Didron's book, which was published, under the title Christian Iconography; or History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages, in 1886 at London and was reprinted in 196.5 at New York. Regarding Dionysios of Fourna, see my book The Holy Mountain, 1973, pp. 27-28.

Introduction

A large number of works about Christian sacred art exist in various languages. This art has been studied from the historical, aesthetic, sociological and archaeological points of view. All of these aspects are indeed components of sacred art. But they represent only its external side and are not concerned with its very essence, that is, that which this art conveys. At the same time, many works are dedicated to explaining the external and explicit connection of the image to the Holy Scriptures and to the other liturgical texts. Other works, finally, explain this art from a theological and philosophical point of view. But what does the Church itself think of the art which it has created? What are its teachings on this subject? How was sacred art understood by the holy councils and the Fathers who were concerned with it? All of this has not been the object of special attention. Moreover, as we shall see, certain authors go so far as to deny the Church's participation in the creation of its art. But can one imagine that the Church would neglect figurative art, at least as a strong means of influencing man? Figurative art was abundantly used in the paganism which surrounded the Church from the first centuries, and, later, by the Christian state. It is certain that the Church could not have ignored it. Its entire outlook on the image is a witness to this fact, and it is precisely with this that we shall begin our study.

It is well known that the veneration of holy icons plays a very important role in the Orthodox Church. The veneration of the icons of Christ, of the Virgin, of angels and of the saints is a dogma of the Christian faith formulated at the Seventh Ecumenical Council and proceeds from a basic doctrine of the Church: its confession of the Son of God who became man. His icon is a witness to the true and non-deceptive Incarnation of God. In the course of its history, the Church triumphed over heresy many times. But of all its victories, only the victory over iconoclasm, the victory

of the icon, was solemnly proclaimed as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy," a victory which we celebrate each year on the first Sunday of Lent. This demonstrates the importance which the Church attributes to the image, and not just to any image, but to the specific image which it wrought in its fierce struggle against paganism, against iconoclasm and against other heresies, to the image which was paid for with the blood of a large number of martyrs and confessors.

Why does the Church attribute such a great importance to the icon? The icon is not just a simple image, nor a decoration, nor even an illustration of Holy Scripture. It is something greater. It is an object of worship and an integral part of the liturgy. The Church sees in its holy image not simply one of the aspects of Orthodox teaching, but the expression of Orthodoxy in its totality, the expression of Orthodoxy as such. The icon is one of the manifestations of the holy Tradition of the Church, similar to the written and oral traditions. As we shall see in our study, the "icon," according to the teaching of the Church, corresponds entirely to the "word" of Scripture. "That which the word communicates by sound, the painting shows silently by representation," says St Basil the Great.[1] And the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council repeat these words and specify that "through these two mediums which accompany each other. . . we acquire the knowledge of the same realities."[2]

It is absolutely impossible to imagine the smallest liturgical rite in the Orthodox Church without icons. The liturgical and sacramental life of the Church is inseparable from the image. Even before entering the sanctuary to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, the priest recites a prayer of purification before the Royal Doors (the central portal of the iconostasis) and a declaration of faith before the "local" icons. The icon is an object of worship embodying divine grace and forming an integral part of the liturgy. Often, and with good reason, the icon is called "theology in images." It is understandable that the basis of sacred art, its meaning and its content can only be a subject of theology similar to the study of the Holy Scripture. Therefore, one can neither understand nor explain sacred art outside of the Church and its life. Such an explanation would always be partial and incomplete. In relation to sacred art itself, it would be false.

1 *Hom. 19, On the 40 Martyrs,* PG 31: 509 A.
2 Mansi 13: 300 C.

In fact, sacred art not only reflects the life of the Church in all its complexity and in all its depth; it is an integral part of this life, just as a branch is a part of a tree. An object of worship, the icon is not merely provoked or inspired by the Liturgy: Together they form a homogeneous whole. The icon completes the Liturgy and explains it, adding its influence on the souls of the faithful. The contents and the meaning of the icon and of the Liturgy are the same, and this is why their form, their language, is also the same. It is the same symbolism, the same sobriety, the same depth in content. This is why, as everything in the Church, sacred art has a double dimension: Its very essence is unchangeable and eternal since it expresses the revealed truth, but at the same time it is infinitely diverse in its forms and expressions, corresponding to different times and places. Our study will therefore be, on the one hand and foremost, a theological study. On the other hand, on the historical and archaeological level, we will use the facts provided by secular archaeologists or historians of art.

The content and the meaning of sacred art determines one's attitude towards it. To understand this point more clearly, let us compare the attitudes of the Orthodox Church and of the Roman Catholic Church towards sacred art. The Roman Catholic Church confesses, as does Orthodoxy, the dogma of the veneration of icons. But its attitude towards sacred art differs considerably from the Orthodox attitude. Let us take as an example the decision of the Council of Trent, which has until now been the basis of all the regulations issued by the Vatican in the field of art. All these regulations have a negative tone: They pronounce what sacred art should not be. The following is the decision of the Council of Trent (1563, the twenty-fifth and last session):

> The Holy Council upholds that no image should be placed in the churches which is inspired by a false dogma and which can mislead the simple people; it wills that all impurity be avoided and that the images should not have any provocative attributes. To assure the regard to these decisions, the Holy Council prohibits any improper image from being placed anywhere, even in the churches which are not subject to the visit of the ordinary, unless the bishop has first approved it.[3]

This rule is repeated, some parts of it literally, in the new regulations

3 Quoted from E. Mâle, *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente* (Paris, 1932), 1.

on the subject (June 30, 1952). These are the orders of a 1947 encyclical letter of Pius XII: "The field must be left absolutely open for the art of our time when it shows the respect and honor due to the buildings and the sacred rites. In such a way, it will enter into the wonderful concert which famous men have sung to the catholic faith in past centuries..."[4] The Pope adds that "everything which is not in accord with the holiness of the place" must be removed from the sanctuaries. As we see, neither the decision of the council, nor the papal encyclical letter of 1947, nor the other directives of the Roman Church set any criterion or indicate any connection with Tradition. They only indicate what should not be in sacred art, and this in not very clear terms. What is an "improper image"? What traits can be considered "provocative"? All of this remains unclear. Even in the West, this vagueness stirs up sharp criticisms which underline the negative aspect of rules pertaining to sacred art. Some have said concerning the regulations of 1952 that they preserve only a minimum of "tradition": just enough to keep the faithful from confusing a church steeple with a factory chimney. Otherwise they sanction all the mistakes of the past and of the present and proclaim that sacred art must search for a "new style." To participate in "the wonderful concert of famous men," as it is put by Pius XII, the Roman Church therefore appeals to the most famous of contemporary painters to decorate its churches, without being in the least concerned with whether they belong to the Church or not, or even if they are believers or atheists. How can there even be a question of intercourse between the image and the word of Scripture when the person who decorates a church or paints a sacred image is an atheist or when he belongs to another religion? One could in such a case speak only of a formal illustration of the letter of the scriptural text or, what would be even worse, of a personal interpretation by the painter, the application of his own ingenuity to a scriptural subject. This is being done in the field of art. This shows the extent to which the very meaning of the sacred image has been lost in the Roman Catholic Church.

This vagueness in the directives communicates the chaotic state of sacred art itself, which has now reached a critical point. In fact, the Roman Catholic Church has been forced to accept secular art, which often has a very doubtful spiritual content, or else to do without art

4 F. R. Regamey, *L'art sacré du XX^e siècle* (Paris, 1952), 432.

altogether. For example, the following was written in an article which appeared several years ago in a French magazine:

> The Church [the Roman Catholic Church] finds itself today in the same situation as any individual. It must accept the criteria of pure aesthetics... Therefore the Church, unless it succumbs to sentimental bad taste, should either come to terms with the solutions reached by artists outside itself or else refrain from resorting to art.

The Orthodox Church, on the other hand, offers a positive teaching. It stipulates that artists paint icons as they were painted by the ancient and holy iconographers (see, for example, the Hundred Chapters Council in 1551). At first glance, this directive may appear to be very imprecise. But its entire significance becomes clear if one remembers the masterly expression of St Paul, quite relevant in its sobriety and power: "Be imitators of me," he wrote, "as I am of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). To paint icons as they were painted by the ancient and holy iconographers means to follow Tradition and denotes a particular attitude towards sacred art. "Use colors according to Tradition," says St Symeon of Thessalonica. "This is true painting, as Scripture is its books..."[5] It is not a matter of copying the ancient iconographers. St Paul did not imitate Christ by copying His gestures and His words, but by integrating himself into His life, by letting Him live in him. Similarly, to paint icons as they were painted by the ancient iconographers does not mean to copy the ancient forms, since each historical period has its own forms. It means to follow the sacred Tradition, to live in the Tradition. But the power of Tradition is the power of the Holy Spirit and of continuity in the spiritual experience of the Church, the power of communion with the spiritual life of all the preceding generations back to the time of the apostles. In Tradition, our experience and our understanding are the experience and understanding of the Apostle Paul, of the holy iconographers and of the entire Church: We no longer live separately, individually, but in the Body of Christ, in the same total body as all of our brothers in Christ. This is in fact the case in all areas of spiritual life, but it is particularly true in that of sacred art. The contemporary iconographer must rediscover the internal outlook of the iconographers of old and be guided by the same living inspiration. He will then find true faithfullness to Tradition, which is not repetition but a

5 *Dialogue against heresies*, ch. 23, PG 155: 113 D.

new, contemporary revelation of the internal life of the Church. Indeed, an Orthodox iconographer faithful to Tradition always speaks the language of his time, expressing himself in his own manner, following his own way. We see, therefore, how the decisions of the Roman Church are vague in spite of their prolixity, and how the basic guidelines of the Orthodox Church are precise and concrete in their laconism.

We spoke briefly of the icon in the life of the Church, and we explained in a few words the importance which the Church ascribes to its sacred art. But if we now turn to the practice of the Church, we will frequently see a great discrepancy between the traditional teaching about the image and the image itself. We often see in our churches a large number of heteroclite, secular or semi-secular images which have little in common with the icon. These are, in fact, usually images of a secular art having merely a religious subject. Anything can be found, even Masonic symbols such as an eye in a triangle, called the "all-seeing eye." In most of our churches, true icons are lost amidst a multitude of representations foreign to Orthodoxy—these, so as not to be called simply Roman Catholic, are euphemistically characterized as "paintings in the Italian style" or icons "of the Italian genre." On the other hand, icons which are truly Orthodox are called "images of the Byzantine style," "Novgorodian," etc. One can speak of style in scientific analyses, in historical or archaeological studies, but to use this idea in the Church to characterize its art is as absurd as discussing the "style" in which the Creed or the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete is written. It is clearly a meaningless statement. In the Church there is only one criterion: Orthodoxy. Is an image Orthodox or not? Does it correspond to the teaching of the Church or not? Style as such is never an issue in worship.

Many faithful believe that one can pray before any image, Orthodox or Roman Catholic, as long as there is an image, since it is only of secondary importance. This is why they bring all kinds of images into churches. Those who think in this way do not know that during the iconoclastic period of the eighth and ninth centuries, it was precisely this struggle for an authentic Orthodox image which called forth from the Church a large number of martyrs and confessors. Of course, one can pray before any image. One can also pray without any images at all, or even without a church. One can and one must pray always and everywhere. But this

certainly does not mean that one can dispense with the Church and the image, or that the external appearance of the church and the images in it are a matter of indifference. One must not forget that when one enters a church, it is not only to pray in it. We also receive the teaching of Orthodoxy, and this beneficial teaching is our guide throughout our whole life, in addition to our prayers. It often happens in our churches that the sacred word is our guide and teaches us in a certain way, while the image, being heterodox, teaches us and guides us in a completely different way. How is this possible? We have preserved the Orthodox veneration of the image. But under the influence of Catholicism and Protestantism, we have become indifferent to the very contents of the image. This is why we can no longer distinguish the Roman Catholic image, which expresses, as we shall see, the Roman teaching, from the authentic Orthodox image. We accept everything and take a passive attitude toward the realm of sacred art.

Let us give several examples. There exists an opinion according to which nothing which has been used by the Church can be discarded. Human error is normal, but a theory based on an error and the erroneous practice which it produces are inadmissible in the Church. If this were not the case, we would not, for example, have any reason to reject the synodal regime in the Russian Church. Indeed, the regime lasted for many centuries, and the period was illumined by great saints, such as St Seraphim of Sarov, St Mitrofan of Voronezh, St Tikhon of Zadonsk and others. This same reference to practice is invoked in preserving iconographic subjects borrowed from heterodox art, based solely on the imagination of the artist, and which not only did not correspond to the Gospel but, on the contrary, contradicted it. These subjects are not rejected, since it is believed that the mere fact of their existence in our Church for two or three centuries is proof that they have become Orthodox. But time is not a criterion of truth. If a falsehood has been accepted for two hundred years, this does not mean that it has become a truth. And if it happens that the ecclesiastical authorities have been mistaken, then the Church always, in the end, corrects their error. Thus, a local council of Moscow in 1553-1554 accepted a representation borrowed from the West—the image of God the Father—under the pretext that this image had already been introduced into the practice of the Church. But in 1667, the Great

Council of Moscow considered the question from a different angle, asking whether or not this image corresponded to the Orthodox teaching. It reached the conclusion that it did not. The decision of the previous council was annulled, and this representation was forbidden.

On the other hand, even among the Orthodox there exist people who are disturbed by the Orthodox icon, believing as do some archaeologists and art historians that liturgical art is "medieval," "outdated," "idealistic," etc., and who are afraid of being left behind the times. But the opinion of scholars and philosophers of aesthetics cannot, as such, be an authority for the faithful. Often ignorant of the very basis of sacred art and applying secular standards to it, their views can only be unilateral and partial. It is amazing that those persons who are disturbed by the presence of icons are not, however, disturbed by the fact that our Liturgy goes back to the same times as does the icon and, to a great extent, even as far back as the Old Testament. But in spite of its antiquity, the Liturgy retains its fundamental importance, and very few consider it to be "outdated."

But the plague of our times is aestheticism. There is a dictatorship of "taste." Personal taste is usually accepted as the only criterion for the appreciation of a sacred image. One speaks of "good taste" and "bad taste." But in the Church, taste can be neither good nor bad and should not be used as a criterion. By what right should one person's taste be considered good and another's bad? By its very definition, taste is something subjective and changeable. For a sacred image, just as for the sacred writings, a relative and variable criterion cannot be valid. The notion of taste may apply to the artistic value of the image, but not to its value as a liturgical image. If one bases one's understanding exclusively on individual, aesthetic, or some other kind of appreciation, one reaches the point which St John of Damascus feared when he wrote: "If each person could act according to his desire, little by little, the entire body of the Church would be destroyed."[6] It is precisely in defending icons during the iconoclastic period in the eighth century that St John of Damascus wrote these words.

The Orthodox Church has always fought to defend its sacred art against secularization. Through the voice of its councils, its hierarchy and

6 *Third Treatise in the Defense of Holy Icons*, ch. 41, PG 94: 1356.

its faithful, it fought to retain the purity of the sacred image against the penetration of foreign elements characteristic of secular art. The Church did not fight for the artistic quality of its art, but for its authenticity, not for its beauty, but for its truth. It has retained unchanged the sacred tradition in art, the understanding of its dogmatic contents and of the spiritual significance of sacred art. We are constantly reminded of this in the Liturgy. It is, in particular, the stichera and canons of the feasts of the various icons (for example, that of the Holy Face on August 16, and especially the Liturgy of the Triumph of Orthodoxy) which uncover the meaning of the image in all its depth. But in times of spiritual decadence like our own, the voice of the Church is a voice which is not heard. Shamelessly, we listen without hearing the words which the Church proclaims, and we look without seeing, just as those of whom Christ speaks in His Gospel (Mt 13:13).

One must admit that the confusion existing in the Orthodox Church concerning sacred art is, to a large extent, a consequence of the education received by the clergy, which does not stress the priest's responsibility for the purity of the icon. Indeed, before his ordination, every priest promises to "obey all the rules established by the councils." But the learning which he acquires in religious institutions does not prepare him to be able to keep such a promise in the realm of sacred art. He is taught nothing about the theology of the image, though at the same time a future priest is taught archeology and art history. But these subjects cannot be useful unless they are limited to an auxiliary role. By themselves, without a theological basis, they give the future priest a false idea of what an image is in the Church. This is why, when a student becomes a priest, he is often incapable of distinguishing an icon from a secular image, or even certain icons from others, and of interpreting the representations of the principal feasts. How can he, under these circumstances, distinguish in an image the real from the false and explain to others the contents of the image? One usually replies that art is a special field, that to understand it one must be a specialized expert. Yes, certainly this is true when one is concerned with the historical or artistic aspect of the image. But if one is concerned with the contents, such a point of view is absolutely false. The icon, in fact, is art, but it is above all liturgical art, a part of the Liturgy. Thus, just as the celebrant should not be required to be a historian or a

lover of literature in order to understand sacred Scripture, so also the understanding of the sacred image requires neither precise knowledge of art history nor the refinement of an aesthete. A priest should simply know how to "read" an icon as well as the Liturgy.

But whether priest or lay, we are all members of the Church. We are all called to witness to its truth in a world which does not understand it. This is why it is essential that each one of us be conscious of this truth in whatever form it is expressed, verbally or in images. The Orthodox teaching of the image was formulated several times, in response to errors and misunderstandings. These errors and misunderstandings repeat themselves, and our century has discovered nothing new in this field. The Orthodox Church has retained intact an immense richness not only in the realm of Liturgy and patristic thought, but also in that of sacred art, and we who enjoy the riches of this treasure should know about it and be witnesses to it. Those who confess Orthodoxy should be careful not to bring into the world a truth mixed with falsehood. Let us not forget that, just as thought in the realm of religion has not always reached the level of theology, so artistic creation has not always reached the level of authentic iconography. This is why one cannot consider every image, even one that is very old and very beautiful, as an infallible authority, especially if it originated in a time of decadence such as our own. Such an image may correspond to the teaching of the Church or it may not. It can deceive rather than teach. In other words, the teaching of the Church can be falsified by the image as much as by word. In the conditions existing today, we are facing a painful situation which leads to conflicts and polemics and often throws the faithful and particularly the painters into total confusion. Each one of us should be able, at every instant, to confess our faith by word and through the image.

The aim of this work, then, is to make known from a historical perspective the evolution of the icon and its content. Volume One is a revision of an earlier publication entitled *Essai sur la théologie de l'icône dans l'église orthodoxe* (Paris, 1960; trans., *Theology of the Icon* [New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978]); Volume Two consists of various chapters published, in Russian, in *Messager de l'Exarchat du Patriarche russe en Europe occidentale.*

1

The Symbolism of the Church

Before we begin our discussion of the icon, it is necessary to consider briefly the whole of which it is a part: the church building and its symbolic significance.

What is symbolism? Symbolism expresses indirectly, through images, that which cannot be expressed directly in material or verbal forms. Being a mysterious language, symbolism also hides truths which it reflects from those who are not initiated and makes them understandable to those who know how to approach them. Everyday language frequently confuses the ideas of "sign" and "symbol," as if they were identical. In fact, there is a necessary spiritual distinction between them. A sign only portrays reality; a symbol always qualifies it in a certain way, bringing forth a superior reality. To understand a symbol is to participate in the presence; to understand a sign is to translate an indication. Let us take the example of the cross. In arithmetic, it is a sign of addition; as a road sign, it is a symbol which expresses and communicates the inexhaustible contents of Christianity.

In the Church, symbolism plays a very important role because the entire Church is, in a way, both material and spiritual. That which is material is directly accessible to us; that which is spiritual is indicated through symbols. The symbolism of the Church cannot be effectively studied outside of the Liturgy, because it is a liturgical symbolism and it is through the Liturgy that the Fathers explained it. Separated from the divine services, symbolism loses its meaning and becomes a series of sterile abstractions.

The word "Church" (in Greek ἐκκλησία) means "convocation" or "reunion." The Church "is thus named because it convokes all men and unites them with one another," says St Cyril of Jerusalem.[1] Other Fathers

1 *Catechetical Orations*, 18, 24 PG 33: 1044.

(for example, St Athanasius the Great, St John Chrysostom, St Augustine) express this same thought. The verb καλέω means "to summon;" ἐκκαλέω means "to convoke" from somewhere. Those who are called together are the apostles and the disciples of Christ, the new Israel. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were distinct from the world so that they could announce to it the divine Incarnation and prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. The new Israel—the Church—in turn brings the presence and the promise of the Kingdom of God to the fallen world; it prepares this world for Christ's Second Coming.

The word "Church" also designates the Body of Christ, His Kingdom made up of the communion of the faithful, and also the place of worship. In our prayers for the consecration of churches, the place of worship is, indeed, called the "house comparable to the heavens," "the image of the house of God." It is consecrated "to the image of the most holy Church of God, that is, of our very body which Thou deigneth to call Thy temple and the members of Thy Christ by the mouth of Thy glorious Apostle Paul," that is, to the image of the Church, the Body of Christ, according to the words of St Paul (Eph 1:23 and Col 1:18). Thus a church is an image, an icon, of the Church, the Body of Christ. It expresses symbolically that which cannot be expressed directly, because neither words nor direct images can represent the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, the object of our faith but invisible in its fullness.

The foundation of Christian life has always been the same, both in the first centuries of our era and today. It is the birth of a new life, an intimate union with God which is essentially fulfilled in the sacrament of the Eucharist. A church, as the place where this sacrament is fulfilled and where men, united and revived, are gathered together, is different from all other places and buildings. It is characteristic that, among the various names which the first Christians gave to their temple, such as "church" or "the house of the Church," the most frequent designation was "the house of the Lord."[2] This name itself already underlies the difference between a church and all other buildings and expresses its specifically Christian meaning.

This meaning is connected with the heritage of the Old Testament.

2 H. Leclercq, *Manuel d'archéologie chrétienne*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1907), 361-2.

The tabernacle of the Old Testament, a prefiguration of the New Testament churches, was built according to the image shown to Moses on Mount Sinai. God Himself indicates both its general plan and its disposition in the smallest detail. The history of the Church shows us that the first Christians had not broken with the past. On the contrary, they believed themselves to be the direct heirs of the Old Testament. The Christians were the new Israel, the fulfillment of the prophecies. The Apostles and the Fathers constantly emphasized the traditional character of the new faith. The Apostles and the first Christians generally went to the synagogues and to the temple in Jerusalem and participated in Jewish worship. It is only after they were forbidden access to these places that they built Christian sanctuaries, and they did so in strict accord with the revealed character of the place of worship, with the very principle according to which the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple had been built. But they also gave this principle its true meaning, as expressed in the New Testament and as the fulfillment of the prophecies. This is why one cannot doubt that the essential significance of a church, so directly connected with the very essence of Christianity, was understandable to everyone in the first centuries of our era, even though it was not immediately manifested in external or conceptual forms.

We learn from history and archaeology that the Christians of the first centuries did not only have catacombs and places of prayer in private homes, as we know from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles,[3] but that they also built churches above ground.[4] These churches were destroyed in the times of the persecutions; they were rebuilt. But in spite of the existence of these churches, neither the Fathers of the first centuries, nor writers in general, describe the Liturgy extensively or dwell upon its meaning or the symbolism of the church. There are two reasons for this silence: (1) There was no need to write about that which everyone understood, that which everyone lived; (2) Christians did not want to initiate the pagans into their sacraments, to lay bare their faith and their hope. The truths of the faith were confessed by life itself and needed no formulation.

3 Acts 12:12, 20:7-8; Rom 16:4; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15.

4 H. Leclercq, vol. 1, 378ff; Sisto Scaglia, *Manuel d'archéologie chrétienne* (Turin, 1916), 143-144.

There exist, nevertheless, some indications dating back to the first centuries, showing how early Christians understood their place of worship. According to the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a church should remind the faithful of a boat. We know that the Fathers frequently used the image of the boat and, particularly, that of Noah's ark to symbolize the Church. Noah's ark was seen as a prefiguration of the Church: Just as this ark was a refuge during the flood, so the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit through the tides of life, is a salutary refuge for Christians. Even today, we continue to call the central part of our churches "the nave," from the Latin *navis*, ship. Symbolic images of Noah's ark can be found in ancient monuments, in the form of a square box,[5] sometimes with a dove flying above it. Archaeological diggings show that many churches in the first centuries were built in a square shape, that is, in the image of the ark. At first sight, this analogy may appear to be artificial, but for the small Christian communities, surrounded by a more or less hostile paganism, the Church was indeed an ark, where salvation could be found in the sacraments.

From the fourth century on, Christian authors begin to explain the symbolism of the church in more detail. Two particular circumstances made such explanations necessary:

(1) In the fourth century, under St Constantine, the Church received the right to legitimate existence in the Roman Empire. This historical event, of capital, importance led to the triumph of the Church and had very important consequences for its art. Construction and adornment of the churches was developed to a point unknown until that time. The famous church historian Eusebius of Caesarea speaks at length and very enthusiastically about these structures. A large multitude of recent converts filled these new churches. Most of them needed spiritual guidance and direct explanation of the Christian faith. One of the ways this instruction was accomplished was through the symbolism of the churches and of worship, which was now explained in detail.

(2) In the fourth century, Christian worship took more precise and determined forms. The liturgies of both St John Chrysostom and St Basil the Great date to this time. The rapid progress in the definition of rites

5 H. Leclercq, vol. 1, 395.

and in the decoration of churches can be seen in a description by Eusebius of the reign of St Constantine:

> A clear and luminous day, without even the smallest cloud, illuminates with rays of divine light the churches of Christ in the whole universe... Churches are again rebuilt to a great height and have a much better appearance than the ancient, destroyed churches... Feasts of renovation and consecration of new churches are beginning to be celebrated in the town... The worship which is celebrated by the priest and the sacred rites become more perfect, the customs of worship become more beautiful.[6]

Certain ancient liturgies (for example, the Syriac text of the Liturgy of St James) contained commentaries for the instruction and guidance of the faithful. These commentaries were part of the liturgical text and were read by the deacon during the celebration. It is believed that these commentaries were introduced at the end of the third or in the beginning of the fourth centuries, that is, at the time when they were made necessary by the large number of new converts in the Church. This makes us think that today, too, such commentaries would not be superfluous, at least during a sermon.

What is the basis of the symbolism in churches? Christian life is based on two essential realities. One is the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, the need to participate in this sacrifice, to partake of communion in it in order to be saved. The other essential truth is the goal and the result of this sacrifice: the sanctification of man, and with him, of the whole visible world, resulting in peace between God and the world. This second truth is the main subject of Church symbolism, which points to the forthcoming universal Kingdom of God. It is precisely this orientation toward the future, this building up of the future, which distinguished Christian worship from all others.

Worship can be celebrated in different languages and can take many forms. Similarly, a church can be shaped like a cross, a basilica or a rotunda. It can be built according to the tastes and the ideas of any epoch or of any civilization, but its meaning was, is, and will always be the same. Each people leaves its characteristic traits in the construction of churches. But this diversity of forms only serves to emphasize the unity of meaning, the confession of the same truth.

6 *Ecclesiastical History* X, 1 and 2, PG 20:845A, 845C and 848B.

In a homily on the consecration of a church in Tyre at the beginning of the fourth century, Eusebius already devotes a rather detailed passage to the symbolism of the building. His fundamental thought is that, in a church, what we see is identical to what we hear. The building corresponds to the worship which we celebrate in it. It is the house of God, for God lives in it with the faithful, the receivers of His Spirit. It is the heavens on earth, it is already the earth of the time to come, when God will be all in all. The beauty of a church reveals, in a way, the beauty of the celestial Jerusalem which God prepares for those who love Him.[7] But Eusebius does not limit himself to commenting on the church as a whole. He already provides several explanations of its parts: the sanctuary, separated by a barrier, the nave and the narthex.

It is particularly in the seventh and eighth centuries that the symbolism of the churches acquires its most complete theoretical expression. The most systematic commentaries can be found in the *Mystagogy* of St Maximus the Confessor (seventh century), who also left us a remarkable study of the Liturgy; in the writings of St Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem (seventh century); in those of St Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople (d. 740), an important confessor of Orthodoxy during the iconoclastic period; and in the words of St Simeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica (fifteenth century). The seventh and eighth centuries, when symbolism became so popular, are also the time of vigorous liturgical creativity, the time of the great hymnographers, St Andrew of Crete, St Cosmas of Maium and St John of Damascus.

When one studies these commentaries, one must never forget that they do not express the subjective opinion of the authors. The symbolism of the Church is objectively based on the essence of Christianity. It expresses a well-defined reality, the liturgical life, i.e., one of the principal aspects of Tradition. This is why St Simeon of Thessalonica begins his *Book on the Church* with the words:

> With love, we pass on to you that which we have taken from the Fathers. For we offer nothing new, but only that which has been passed on to us, and we have changed nothing but we have retained everything, like a creed, in the state in which it has been given to us. We worship exactly as Christ Himself did and as did the apostles and the Fathers of the Church.[8]

7 *Ecclesiastical History* X, 4, PG 20: 873.
8 PG 155: 701AB.

This presents a striking parallel with theological thought, in which the Fathers also tried to avoid all individual and subjective valuation. "I pray God so as not to think or to pronounce on Him, as did Solomon, anything which comes from me personally," writes St Gregory Nazianzen.[9]

St Maximus the Confessor and St Sophronius see in the church the image of the spiritual and visible worlds, the image of that which we perceive spiritually and that which we perceive with our senses. They particularly emphasize the cosmic importance of a church, as an image of the entire created but transfigured world.

St Germanus speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ and of the church as a place of worship in the same terms and in the same sentence, thus emphasizing that the latter is but an image of the former. He says: "The Church is the heavens on earth, where God, who is higher than the heavens, lives." He continues: "It is reminiscent of the crucifixion, the burial and the resurrection of Christ; it is more glorified than the tabernacle of the Covenant," which obviously refers to the place of worship. "It was prefigured in the patriarchs, based on the apostles...it was announced by the prophets, adorned by the hierarchs, sanctified by the martyrs, and its altar is founded on their holy relics." Having clearly emphasized the analogy between the Church, the Body of Christ, and a church as the place of worship, St Germanus goes on to explain the meaning of the place of worship:

> The church is a divine house where the mysterious and vivifying sacrifice is fulfilled; it contains the interior sanctuary, the holy cave, the sepulcher, the meal which saves and vivifies the soul; it is the place where you will find the pearls of the divine dogmas which the Lord taught unto His disciples.

St Simeon of Thessalonica also emphasizes this significance of the church and specifies, among other things, that the most solemn rite of the consecration of a church presents it to us as "a mysterious heaven and the Church of the first-born." It is obvious that the Church about which the Fathers speak is not only the terrestrial Church in its present state, but it is also the celestial Church which is intricately connected with it; in other words, the Kingdom of God which will come in its power when God will be "all in all" (Eph 1:23). This is what the church expresses. St Simeon of

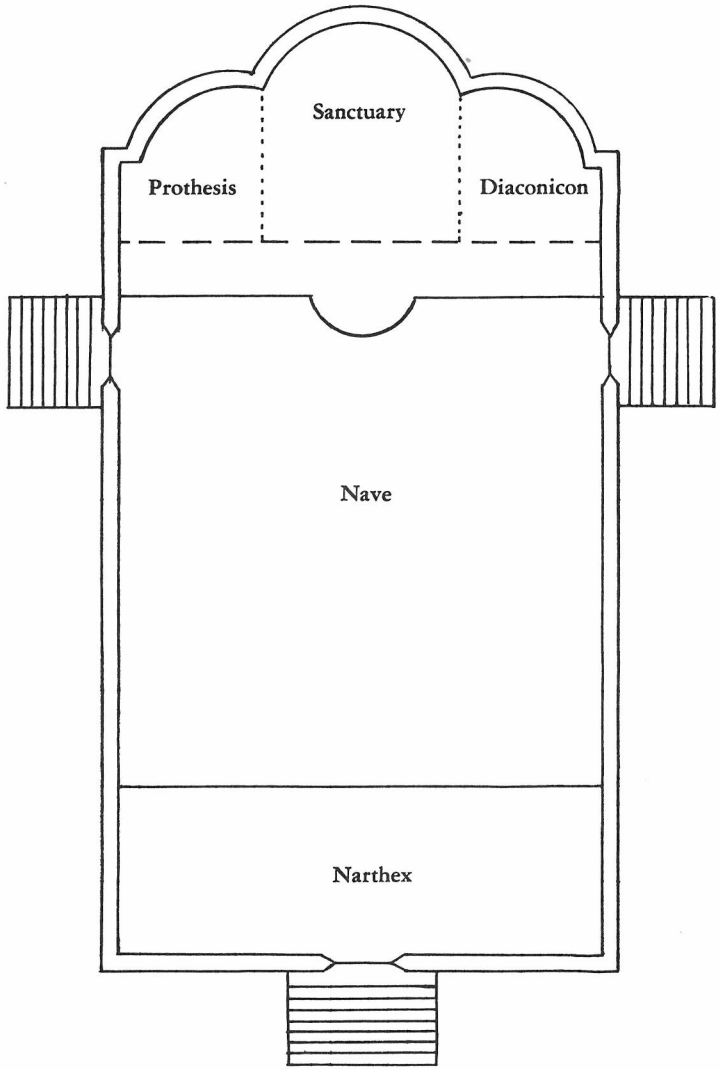
9 *Hom. 20, On the Trinity*, PG 35: 1069C.

Thessalonica calls a church "paradise," and the "gifts of paradise," for it contains not the tree of life, but life itself, which acts in the sacraments and is communicated to the faithful.

Thus, a church is a very complex reality, having a meaning rich in content. It is a sacred place where the members of the Church commune in the divine life through the sacraments. Being the first fruits of the Kingdom to come, it is both a part of this Kingdom, as it already exists on the earth, and an anticipation of its coming in glory. It is an image of the divine Kingdom, toward which the Church leads the world.

But patristic commentaries do not limit themselves to explaining the symbolism of the church building. They also clarify the meaning of each of its parts. The patristic conception of a church and of its parts is well summarized in a contemporary work, Archbishop Benjamin's *Novaia Skrizhal'* ("New Table of the Law"). The church can be divided into three parts (the sanctuary, the nave and the narthex), according to the plan of the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon. Just as the people of Israel, the Church of the Old Testament, prefigured the Church of the New Testament, so also the tabernacle and the temple prefigured the sacred places of the New Covenant, which have preserved the same plan (Fig. 1). St Simeon of Thessalonica is reminded of the Holy Trinity by this tripartition of the three orders of the celestial hierarchs and of the Christian people themselves, who are divided into three categories: the clergy, the faithful, and the penitents and catechumens.

The sanctuary is reserved for the clergy. It is the most important part of the church, where the sacrament of the Eucharist is performed, and corresponds to the holy of holies in the tabernacle. Symbolically, the sanctuary represents the house of God, "the heaven of the heavens," according to St Simeon of Thessalonica. According to the words of St Germanus, it is "the place where Christ, King of all things, rules with the apostles." The sanctuary is usually in the eastern part of the building, so that the whole church faces east. This orientation also has a symbolic significance. On the one hand, the lost paradise was "in the East." On the other hand, and more important, the coming of the Kingdom is often identified with the sunrise: Christ is glorified as "the Orient from on high." This Kingdom of God to come is often seen, particularly in the first centuries of Christianity, as "the eighth day" of creation. The coming



1. Plan of an Orthodox Church

of this "day without end," which we await and prepare for, its rising, as it were, is symbolized by the sunrise in the east. This is why St Basil stipulates, in his canon 90, that our prayers should always be oriented towards the east, where the sun rises.

The central part of the church, the nave, corresponds to the "holy" of the tabernacle, which was separated from the courtyard by a veil. Every day, the Jewish priests would enter it to bring the sacrifices. In the Church of the New Testament, it is the faithful laypeople, "the royal priesthood, the holy people," according to the expression of St Paul, who enter into this part and pray to God. This part of the church is therefore for those persons who are enlightened by the faith and who are preparing themselves to partake in the grace of the eucharistic sacrament. Having received this grace, they are redeemed and sanctified; they are the Kingdom of God. If the sanctuary represents that which goes beyond the created world, the house of God Himself, then the nave of the church represents the created world. But it is a world which is justified, sanctified and deified; it is the Kingdom of God, the new earth and the new heavens. This is how the Fathers describe this part of the church. St Maximus the Confessor, for example, says the following:

> Just as, in man, the carnal and spiritual principles are united, even though the carnal principle does not absorb the spiritual, nor does the spiritual principle absorb the carnal into itself, but rather spiritualizes it, so that the body itself becomes an expression of the spirit, so also in a church, the sanctuary and the nave communicate: the sanctuary enlightens and guides the nave, which becomes its visible expression. Such a relationship restores the normal order of the universe, which had been destroyed by the fall of man. Thus it reestablishes what had been in paradise and what will be in the Kingdom of God.[10]

The narthex, finally, corresponds to the courtyard of the tabernacle, the external part, which was reserved for the people. Today, the sanctified people stand in the nave, and it is the catechumens and penitents who remain in the narthex, that is, those who are only preparing themselves to enter the Church and those whom the Church places in a special category and who are not permitted to partake in the communion of the holy gifts. This is why, once the sacrament is fulfilled, those who do not partake of it are asked to leave, some because they are not yet members of the

10 *Mystagogy*, chs. 8-21, PG 91: 672.

Church and others because they have fallen away or are considered unworthy. Thus the very plan of a church makes a clear distinction between those who participate in the Body of Christ and those who do not. The latter are not driven out of the church and can remain until a certain moment. But they cannot participate in the internal, sacramental life of the Church. They are neither completely outside the church, nor a part of it. They are, so to speak, on the periphery, at the limit between the Church and the world. The narthex, according to the Fathers, symbolizes the unredeemed part of the world, the world lying in sin, and even hell. It is always at the end of the church opposite from the sanctuary, that is, at the west end.

A "temporal" significance, which changes during the different moments of worship, is added to the "spatial" and permanent significance of a church. The Church also uses images in order to show that a church, a place of worship, is an image of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, that it is the real first fruits and the image of the Kingdom of God to come, and in order to make this image more precise, by suggesting the presence of this Kingdom to come. The iconographic subjects are distributed according to the meaning of each part of a church and its role in worship. If the symbolism of the Liturgy was explained by the Fathers during the pre-iconoclastic period, in contrast, it is after the iconoclastic period that the relationship between the decoration of the church and this symbolism was made more specific. The decoration acquired the forms of a clear and precise theological system.

We will speak here only in very general terms of the classical plan of decoration which prevailed from the ninth century, that is, from the post-iconoclastic period, when the system of decorating of churches was definitely established, until the end of the seventeenth century. Obviously, this stability and uniformity exists only in the general shape of the decoration, not in its details.

In the sanctuary, the first row of paintings, beginning from the bottom, represents the Fathers, authors of liturgies, and with them the other holy hierarchs and deacons in their rank of concelebrants. Above these, the Eucharist itself is represented in the form of bread and wine. Above the Eucharist, the image of the Mother of God is placed directly behind the altar. Her place, close to the sacrament, corresponds to her place in the eucharistic canon where, immediately after the epiclesis, she is mentioned

at the head of the entire Church. At the same time, the Mother of God personifies the Church itself, because she contained in herself the Creator of the world whom the whole world cannot contain. This is why, in this part of the sanctuary, she is usually represented in the *orante* position, that is, interceding before God for the sins of the world, which is simultaneously her role and the role of the Church. This representation of the Virgin praying in the very place where the sacrifice is fulfilled reflects a very special meaning. The uplifted hands are a gesture which completes the sacrifice. This is why the priest also makes this same gesture during the Liturgy. This position of uplifted hands is not a formal requirement, but it has become deeply rooted in the Liturgy, as it is bound to the sacrifice and is the image of prayer itself.

Because the sanctuary is the place where the unbloody sacrifice established by Christ is offered, the image of Christ is placed above that of the Virgin. It is He who is Himself the offered sacrifice and the Sanctifier who offers, and His image has a uniquely eucharistic significance here. Finally, Pentecost is represented in the vault. This image indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit, through whom the sacrament of the Eucharist is fulfilled.

This very brief survey permits us to see the capital importance of the sanctuary: It is the place which sanctifies the entire church. When the Royal Doors are opened during the Liturgy, it is as if the heavens themselves were opened a bit, permitting us to catch a glimpse of their splendor.

The nave of the church, as we already know, symbolizes the transfigured creation, the new earth and the new heavens, and at the same time, the Church. This is why the leader of the Church, Christ the Pantocrator, is painted in the dome. The Church had been announced by the prophets and was established on the apostles; they are represented immediately under the image of Christ. They are followed, in the four corners, by the four evangelists, who announced the good news and preached the Gospel in the four parts of the world. The columns which support the building are decorated with the images of the pillars of the Church: the martyrs, the hierarchs and the ascetics. The most important events of sacred history are found everywhere on the walls, particularly those events which the liturgical feasts celebrate, the "pearls of divine dogmas," in the words of St Germanus of Constantinople. Finally, on the western wall, the Last

Judgment is presented: the end of church history and the beginning of the age to come.

Thus, the decoration of Orthodox churches does not depend on the individual conception of artists. The iconographic themes are distributed according to the meaning of the church as a whole and the meaning of each of its parts.

The Church of the Old Testament, as well as all other religions, used symbols. This symbolism prefigured the coming of Christ. But Christ has come, and, nevertheless, the symbolism inherited from Israel continues to exist in the new Church, as an indispensable part of its worship, penetrating the entire Liturgy with its words, its gestures and its images. This symbolism is an initiation into the mysteries which are fulfilled in the Church and the revelation of a reality which is always present in it and which cannot be expressed directly. This reality is the Kingdom of God, whose authentic first-fruits are present as a spiritual, material and physical reality in the Eucharist, the central sacrament of the Church. For "it is impossible for us to raise ourselves to the contemplation of spiritual objects without some kind of intermediary, and to lift ourselves, we need something which is close and familiar to us," says St John of Damascus.[11] In other words, worship, and everything which is a part of it, is a path toward our sanctification, toward our deification. Everything in a church is oriented toward this goal. After the Fall, the Old Testament was the first step, but it was not yet a direct preparation for the age to come; it was only the preparation for the second stage, that of the New Testament. That which was, in the Old Testament, the future, has now become the present; and this present, in turn, prepares and leads us to that which is still to come, the celestial Jerusalem. Here is how St John of Damascus understands the Epistle to the Hebrews:

> Notice that the law and everything that was established by the law, as well as the whole worship which we now offer up, are sacred things made by man which, through the intermediary of matter, we lift towards the immaterial God. The law and everything that was established by the law [that is, the entire Old Testament] was a prefiguration of our present worship. And the worship which we presently offer up is an image of the things to come. These things [that is,

11 *First Treatise in the Defense of Holy Icons*, ch. 2 PG 94: 1233.

> reality itself] are the celestial, immaterial Jerusalem which is not made by the hand of man, according to the words of the Apostle, "for here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come" [Heb 13:14], that is, the celestial Jerusalem of which God is the "builder and maker" [Heb 11:10]. Indeed, everything that was established both by the law and by our present worship only exists in relation to the celestial Jerusalem.[12]

A church is, therefore, the prefiguration of the peace to come, of the new heavens, and of the new earth where all creatures will gather around their Creator. The construction and decoration of churches is based on this image. The Fathers do not stipulate any style of architecture; they do not indicate how the building should be decorated and how icons should be painted. Everything flows from the general meaning of the church and follows a rule of art which is analogous to the rule of liturgical creativity. In other words, we have a very clear, albeit general, formula which guides the architect and the artist, while leaving him the freedom of the Holy Spirit. This formula is passed on from generation to generation by the living Tradition of the Church, the Tradition which dates back not only to the apostles but even to the Old Testament. If we live in this Tradition, we can understand the Church as it was understood by our holy Fathers, and we will decorate it accordingly. If we move away from this Tradition, we can introduce into our churches elements which do not correspond to the Church's very nature, but which reflect only our everyday life. Thus, we secularize the Church.

The very meaning of the church, its *raison d'être*, requires it to be different from all other buildings. According to the words of Jesus Christ Himself, His Church is a Kingdom "which is not of this world." However, the Church lives in the world and for the world, for its salvation. This is the goal of its existence. Being the "Kingdom which is not of this world," it has its own nature which is distinct from the world. And it can fulfill its goal only by remaining faithful to its specific nature, to itself. Its way of life, its actions and methods, are different from those of the world. Its art, in particular, does not resemble the art of the world. It expresses different kinds of truths and has other goals. If it mingles with secular art, it no longer corresponds to the goal which it must serve.

From the first centuries, the Christian Church established the interior

12 *Second Treatise in the Defense of Holy Icons*, ch. 23, PG 94: 1309.

aspect of its temples, the character of the sacred images, the hymns, the sacerdotal vestments, etc. All this forms a harmonious whole, a perfect unity and a liturgical fullness in the Church and in the Liturgy. This unity, this convergence toward the same goal, implies that each of the elements which make up the divine service is subordinate to the general meaning of the church and, consequently, no element has value in itself alone. Images and hymns express, each in their own way, the same transfigured universe and prefigure the same peace to come.

United by this common goal, these different elements which enter into worship realize this "unity in diversity" and this "richness in unity" which express, both as a whole and in every detail, the catholicity of the Orthodox Church, its *sobornost'*. They create the beauty of the church which is so different from the beauty of the world because it reflects the harmony of the age to come. As an example, one can remember the Russian chronicler's account of the conversion of St Prince Vladimir. When his messengers, whom he had sent to Constantinople as part of his program of comparing the different religions, returned, they told of how, when they were participating in a Liturgy at St Sophia, they no longer knew whether they were on earth or in heaven. Even if this is only a legend, it corresponds perfectly to the Orthodox understanding of beauty. The imperial palace was also beautiful, but it did not leave the same impression on the messengers of St Vladimir.

All of this of course is not new, but the obvious experience of one who lives in the Church. The Church never loses this Tradition, and reminds us of it constantly by the Liturgy, by the voice of its councils, by its hierarchs and its faithful. Thus, in 1945, the Patriarch of Moscow, Alexis, called us to Tradition by writing the following to the clergy of Moscow:

> So as to indicate what true beauty is in the church, in worship, and, in particular, in liturgical music, not according to my personal taste but in the very spirit of the Church, I wish to give the following directions, which are indispensable for all priests and for all churches.
>
> In a church, everything is different from that which we constantly see around us and in our homes. The images are not the same as those we have in our homes. The walls are painted with sacred images; everything shines brightly; everything raises the spirit and removes it from the usual thoughts and impressions of this world. And when we see in a church something which does not correspond to its greatness and its meaning, we are shocked. The holy Fathers, who not only

established the rite and the worship, but also the external aspect and the internal arrangement, thought of everything. They foresaw and ordered everything so as to create in the faithful a special spiritual state, so that nothing impedes their flight toward the heavens, toward God, toward the celestial world whose reflection a church should be. If in a hospital everything is directed toward treating the maladies of the body, and conditions are created which correspond to the needs of the sick person, so in a spiritual hospital, a church of God, one should also provide all the things that are needed.[13]

In his message, the late patriarch particularly emphasized music, which, just like the image, is one of the grave questions of our day. "To sing liturgical hymns in the shrill manner of worldly songs or of the passionate tunes of opera is to deprive the faithful of any possibility of concentrating, as well as of grasping the contents and the meaning of the hymns." However beautiful these songs and these tunes may be in themselves, they do not fulfill the purpose of church singing. The same can be said about images. Of course, each one of us has his habits and his tastes. But in church we must learn to transcend them and to sacrifice them. Moreover, the role of a church is not at all to satisfy the habits and tastes of some individual; it consists in directing him or her on the saving path of Christ.

The symbolism of the church shows us the foundation on which the symbolic language of worship, and, in particular, of the icon, is based—this language which we have unfortunately forgotten. All the testimonies of the Fathers and of the ecclesiastical writers which we have mentioned are only a few expressions of that by which the Church has lived from its beginning and by which it will live until the Second Coming of Christ.

The direct image is a characteristic trait of the New Testament. This New Testament image will not disappear until the coming of the reality which it prefigures: the Kingdom of God. But as long as we are still on the way, as long as the Church is still only building this Kingdom to come, we will continue to live in the realm of the image. It is through the image that the Church shows us the way toward our goal.

We could not participate in the building up of the Kingdom of God, we could not ask in all good conscience, "Thy Kingdom come," if we had

13 "Paschal Message to the Rectors of the Churches in Moscow," *Calendar of the Patriarchate of Moscow for 1947* (in Russian).

no idea of what this Kingdom will be. The symbolism of an Orthodox church and, in particular, of an icon is an authentic reflection, though of course a very weak one, of the glory of the age to come. In the words of St Symeon the New Theologian:

God can be known to us in the same way as a man can see an endless ocean by standing at the shore at night with a dimly lit candle. Do you think he can see much? Not much, almost nothing. And nevertheless, he sees the water well. He knows that there is an ocean in front of him, that this ocean is huge and that he cannot see it all at once. The same is true of our knowledge of God.[14]

14 Oration 61, *Works* (Moscow, 1892—in Russian), 100.

Chapter Five

LENT IN OUR LIFE

1. "TAKING IT SERIOUSLY . . ."

So far we have been speaking of the Church's teaching about Lent as conveyed to us primarily by lenten worship. Now these questions must be asked: How can we apply this teaching to our lives? What could be not only a nominal but a real impact of Lent on our existence? This existence (do we need to recall it) is very different from the one people led when all these services, hymns, canons, and prescriptions were composed and established. One lived then in a relatively small, mainly rural community within one organically Orthodox world; the very rhythm of one's life was shaped by the Church. Now, however, we live in an enormous urban, technological society which is pluralistic in its religious beliefs, secularistic in its world view, and in which we Orthodox constitute an insignificant minority. Lent is no longer "visible" as it was, let us say, in Russia or in Greece. Our question thus is a very real one: how can we—besides introducing one or two "symbolical" changes into our daily life—keep Lent?

It is obvious, for example, that for the great majority of the faithful the daily attendance at lenten worship is out of the question. They continue to go to church on Sundays, but, as we already know, on Sundays of Lent the

Liturgy, at least in its externals, does not reflect Lent and thus one can hardly have even a "feel" of the lenten type of worship, the main means by which the spirit of Lent is communicated to us. And since Lent is in no way reflected in the culture to which we belong, it is no wonder then that ours today is mainly a *negative* understanding of Lent—as a season when certain different things such as meat and fats, dancing and entertainment are forbidden. The popular question, "What are you giving up for Lent?" is a good summary of that common negative approach. In "positive" terms, Lent is viewed as the time when we must fulfill the annual "obligation" of Confession and Communion ("... and not later than Palm Sunday...," as I have read in a parish bulletin). This obligation having been fulfilled, the rest of Lent seems to lose all positive meaning.

Thus it is evident that there has developed a rather deep discrepancy between, on the one hand, the spirit or the "theory" of Lent, which we tried to outline on the basis of lenten worship, and, on the other hand, its common and popular understanding which is very often shared and supported not only by laity but also by clergy themselves. For it is always easier to reduce something spiritual to something formal rather than search for the spiritual behind the formal. We can say without any exaggeration that although Lent is still "observed," it has lost much of its impact on our lives, has ceased to be that bath of repentance and renewal which it is meant to be in the liturgical and spiritual teaching of the Church. But then, can we rediscover it, make it again a spiritual power in the daily reality of our existence? The answer to this question depends primarily, and I would say almost exclusively, on whether or not we are willing to *take Lent seriously.* However new or different the conditions in which we live today, however real the difficulties and obstacles erected by our modern world, *none* of them is an *absolute* obstacle, none of them makes Lent "impossible." The real root of the progressive loss by Lent of its impact on our lives lies deeper. It is our conscious or unconscious reduction of religion to a superficial nominalism and symbolism which is precisely the way to by-pass

and to "explain away" the seriousness of religion's demands on our lives, religion's demand for commitment and effort. This reduction, we must add, is in a way peculiar to Orthodoxy. Western Christians, Catholics or Protestants, when faced with what they consider as "impossible" would rather change religion itself, "adjust" it to new conditions and thus make it "practicable." Quite recently, for example, we have seen the Roman Church first reduce fasting to a bare minimum and then practically dispose of it altogether. With just and righteous indignation, we denounce such an "adjustment" as a betrayal of Christian tradition and as minimizing Christian faith. And indeed, it is the truth and the glory of Orthodoxy that it does not "adjust" itself to and compromise with the lower standards, that it does not make Christianity "easy." It is the glory of *Orthodoxy,* but certainly *not* of us Orthodox people. Not today, not even yesterday, but long ago we have found a way to reconcile the absolute demands of the Church and our human weakness, and this not only without "losing face" but with additional reasons for self-righteousness and good conscience. The method consists of fulfilling these demands symbolically, and symbolic nominalism permeates today our whole religious life. Thus, for example, we would not even think of revising our liturgy and its monastic regulations—God forbid!—we will simply keep calling a one-hour service an "All-Night Vigil" and proudly explain that it is the same service the monks of the Lavra of St. Sabbas served in the 9th century. In regard to Lent, instead of asking fundamental questions—"What is fasting?" or "What is Lent?"—we satisfy ourselves with Lenten symbolism. In church magazines and bulletins appear recipes for "delicious lenten dishes," and a parish might even raise some additional money by means of a well-advertized "tasty lenten dinner." So much in our churches is explained sympolically as interesting, colorful, and amusing customs and traditions, as something which connects us not so much with God and a new life in Him but with the past and the customs of our forefathers, that it becomes increasingly difficult to discern behind this religious folklore the utter seriousness of religion. Let

me stress that there is nothing wrong in the various customs themselves. When they appeared they were the means and the expressions of a society *taking religion seriously;* they were not symbols, but life itself. What happened, however, was that as life changed and became less and less shaped by religion in its totality, a few customs survived as symbols of a way of life no longer lived. And what survived was that which on the one hand is most colorful and on the other hand the least difficult. The spiritual danger here is that little by little one begins to understand religion itself as a system of symbols and customs rather than to understand the latter as a challenge to spiritual renewal and effort. More effort goes into preparing lenten dishes or Easter baskets than into fasting and participation in the spiritual reality of Easter. This means that as long as customs and traditions are not connected again with the total religious world view which produced them, as long as symbols are not taken *seriously,* the Church will remain disconnected from life and have no power over life. Instead of symbolizing our "rich heritage," we must start integrating it into our real life.

To *take Lent seriously* means then that we will consider it first of all on the deepest possible level—as a spiritual challenge which requires a response, a decision, a plan, a continuous effort. It is for this reason, as we know, that the weeks of preparation for Lent were established by the Church. This is the time for the response, for the decision and the planning. And the best and easiest way here is to follow the Church's guidance—be it only by meditating on the five Gospel themes offered to us on the five Sundays of the pre-lenten season: that of desire (Zacchaeus), of humility (Publican and Pharisee), of the return from exile (Prodigal Son), of the judgment (Last Judgment), and of forgiveness (Forgiveness Sunday). These Gospel lessons are not merely to be listened to in church; the whole point is that they are to be "taken home" and meditated upon in terms of *my* life, *my* family situation, *my* professional obligations, *my* concern for material things, *my* relation to the concrete human beings with whom I

live. If to this meditation one adds the prayer of that pre-lenten season, "Open to me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life . . . ," and Psalm 137—"By the rivers of Babylon . . ."—one begins to understand what it means to "feel with the Church" how a liturgical season colors the daily life. It is also a good time to read a religious book. The purpose of this reading is not only to increase our knowledge about religion; it is mainly to purify our mind from all that which usually fills it. It is simply incredible how crowded our minds are with all kinds of cares, interests, anxieties, and impressions, and how little control we have over that crowd. Reading a religious book, concentrating our attention on something entirely different from the usual contents of our thinking, creates by itself another mental and spiritual atmosphere. These are not "recipes"—there may be other ways of preparing oneself for Lent. The important point is that during this pre-lenten season we look at Lent as it were from a distance, as something coming to us or even perhaps sent to us by God Himself, as a chance for a change, for renewal, for deepening, and that we take that forthcoming chance *seriously,* so that on Forgiveness Sunday when we leave our home for Vespers we may be ready to make ours—be it only in a small way—the words of the *Great Prokeimenon* which will inaugurate Lent:

> Turn not away Thy face from Thy servant,
> for I am afflicted . . . .

2. PARTICIPATION IN LENTEN SERVICES

No one, as we have already said, can attend the entire cycle of lenten worship. Everyone *can* attend some of it. There is simply no excuse for not making Lent first of all the time for an increased attendance of and participation in the liturgy of the Church. Here again, personal conditions, individual possibilities and impossibilities can vary and result in different decisions, but there must be a decision, there must be an effort, and there must be a "follow-up."

From the liturgical point of view, we may suggest the following "minimum" aimed not at the spiritually self-destructive sense of having fulfilled an obligation, but at receiving at least the essential in the liturgical spirit of Lent.

In the first place, a special effort must be made on the parish level for a proper celebration of the *Forgiveness Sunday Vespers.* It is indeed a tragedy that in so many churches this service is either not celebrated at all, or not given sufficient care and attention. It must become one of the great "parish affairs" of the year and, as such, well prepared. The preparation must consist in training the choir, explaining the service by means of sermons or parish bulletins, planning it for a time when the greatest number of parishioners can attend; in short: in making it a true spiritual *event.* For, once more, nothing better than this service reveals the meaning of Lent as the crisis of repentance, reconciliation, as embarking together on a common journey.

The next "priority" must be given to the first week of Lent. A special effort must be made to attend at least once or twice the *Great Canon of St. Andrew.* As we have seen, the liturgical function of these first days is to take us into the spiritual "mood" of Lent which we described as "bright sadness."

Then, throughout the entire Lent, it is imperative that we give at least one evening to attend the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts* with the spiritual experience it implies—that of total fasting, that of the transformation of at least one day into a real expectation of judgment and joy. No reference to conditions of life, lack of time, etc., are acceptable at this point, for if we do only that which easily "fits" into the conditions of our lives, the very notion of lenten effort becomes absolutely meaningless. Not only in the 20th century, but in fact since Adam and Eve, "this world" was always an obstacle to the fulfillment of God's demands. There is, therefore, nothing new or special about our modern "way of life." Ultimately it all depends again on whether or not we take our religion *seriously,* and if we do, eight or ten additional evenings a year at church are

truly a minimal effort. Deprived of that evening, however, we are depriving ourselves not only of the beauty and the depth of the lenten services, not only of a necessary spiritual inspiration and help, but of that which, as we shall see in the next section, makes our fasting meaningful and effective.

3. "...BUT BY PRAYER AND FASTING"

There is no Lent without fasting. It seems, however, that many people today either do not take fasting seriously or, if they do, misunderstand its real spiritual goals. For some people, fasting consists in a symbolic "giving up" of something; for some others, it is a scrupulous observance of dietary regulations. But in both cases, seldom is fasting referred to the total lenten effort. Here as elsewhere, therefore, we must first try to understand the Church's teaching about fasting and then ask ourselves: how can we apply this teaching to our life?

Fasting or abstinence from food is not exclusively a Christian practice. It existed and still exists in other religions and even outside religion, as for example in some specific therapies. Today people fast (or abstain) for all kinds of reasons, including sometimes political reasons. It is important, therefore, to discern the uniquely Christian content of fasting. It is first of all revealed to us in the interdependence between two events which we find in the Bible: one at the beginning of the Old Testament and the other at the beginning of the New Testament. The first event is the "breaking of the fast" by Adam in Paradise. He ate of the forbidden fruit. This is how man's original sin is revealed to us. Christ, the New Adam—and this is the second event—begins by fasting. Adam was tempted and he succumbed to temptation; Christ was tempted and He overcame that temptation. The results of Adam's failure are expulsion from Paradise and death. The fruits of Christ's victory are the destruction of death and our return to Paradise. The lack of space prevents us from giving a detailed explanation of the meaning of this parallelism. It is clear, however, that in this perspective

fasting is revealed to us as something decisive and ultimate in its importance. It is not a mere "obligation," a custom; it *is* connected with the very mystery of life and death, of salvation and damnation.

In the Orthodox teaching, sin is not only the transgression of a rule leading to punishment; it is always a mutilation of life given to us by God. It is for this reason that the story of the original sin is presented to us as an act of eating. For food is means of life; it is that which keeps us alive. But here lies the whole question: what does it mean to be alive and what does "life" mean? For us today this term has a primarily biological meaning: life is precisely that which entirely depends on food, and more generally, on the physical world. But for the Holy Scripture and for Christian Tradition, this life "by bread alone" is identified with death because it is mortal life, because death is a principle always at work in it. God, we are told, "created no death." He is the Giver of Life. How then did life become mortal? Why is death and death alone the only absolute condition of that which exists? The Church answers: because man rejected life as it was offered and given to him by God and preferred a life depending not on God alone but on "bread alone." Not only did he disobey God for which he was punished; he changed the very relationship between himself and the world. To be sure, the world was given to him by God as "food"—as means of life; yet life was meant to be communion with God; it had not only its end but its full content in Him. "In Him was Life and the Life was the light of man." The world and food were thus created as means of communion with God, and only if accepted for God's sake were to give life. In itself food has no life and cannot give life. Only God has Life and is Life. In food itself God—and not calories—was the principle of life. Thus to eat, to be alive, to know God and be in communion with Him were one and the same thing. The unfathomable tragedy of Adam is that he ate for its own sake. More than that, he ate "apart" from God in order to be independent of Him. And if he did it, it is because he believed that food had life in

itself and that he, by partaking of that food, could be like God, i.e., have life in himself. To put it very simply: he *believed in food,* whereas the only object of belief, of faith, of dependence is God and God alone. World, food, became his gods, the sources and principles of his life. He became their slave. *Adam*—in Hebrew—means "man." It is my name, our common name. Man is still Adam, still the slave of "food." He may claim that he believes in God but God is not his life, his food, the all-embracing content of his existence. He may claim that he receives his life from God but he doesn't live in God and for God. His science, his experience, his self-consciousness are all built on that same principle: "by bread alone." We eat in order to be alive but we are not alive in God. This is the sin of all sins. This is the verdict of death pronounced on our life.

Christ is the New Adam. He comes to repair the damage inflicted on life by Adam, to restore man to true life, and thus He also begins with fasting. "When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He became hungry" (Matt. 4:2). Hunger is that state in which we realize our dependence on something else—when we urgently and essentially need food—showing thus that we have no life in ourselves. It is that limit beyond which I either die from starvation or, having satisfied my body, have again the impression of being alive. It is, in other words, the time when we face the ultimate question: on what does my life depend? And, since the question is not an academic one but is felt with my entire body, it is also the time of temptation. Satan came to Adam in Paradise; he came to Christ in the desert. He came to two hungry men and said: eat, for your hunger is the proof that you depend entirely on food, that your life is in food. And Adam believed and ate; but Christ rejected that temptation and said: man shall not live by bread alone but by God. He refused to accept that cosmic lie which Satan imposed on the world, making that lie a self-evident truth not even debated any more, the foundation of our entire world view, of science, medicine, and perhaps even of religion. By doing this, Christ restored that relation-

ship between food, life, and God which Adam broke, and which we still break every day.

What then is fasting for us Christians? It is our entrance and participation in that experience of Christ Himself by which He liberates us from the total dependence on food, matter, and the world. By no means is our liberation a full one. Living still in the fallen world, in the world of the Old Adam, being part of it, we still depend on food. But just as our death—through which we still must pass—has become by virtue of Christ's Death a passage into life, the food we eat and the life it sustains can be life in God and for God. Part of our food has already become "food of immortality"—the Body and Blood of Christ Himself. But even the daily bread we receive from God can be in this life and in this world that which strengthens us, our communion with God, rather than that which separates us from God. Yet it is only fasting that can perform that transformation, giving us the existential proof that our dependence on food and matter is not total, not absolute, that united to prayer, grace, and adoration, it can itself be spiritual.

All this means that deeply understood, fasting is the only means by which man recovers his true spiritual nature. It is not a theoretical but truly a practical challenge to the great Liar who managed to convince us that we depend on bread alone and built all human knowledge, science, and existence on that lie. Fasting is a denunciation of that lie and also the proof that it is a lie. It is highly significant that it was while fasting that Christ met Satan and that He said later that Satan cannot be overcome "but by fasting and prayer." Fasting is the real fight against the Devil because it is the challenge to that one all-embracing law which makes him the "Prince of this world." Yet if one is hungry and then discovers that he can truly be independent of that hunger, not be destroyed by it but just on the contrary, can transform it into a source of spiritual power and victory, then nothing remains of that great lie in which we have been living since Adam.

How far we are by now from the usual understanding

of fasting as a mere change of diet, as what is permitted and what is forbidden, from all that superficial hypocrisy! Ultimately, to fast means only one thing: *to be hungry*—to go to the limit of that human condition which depends entirely on food and, being hungry, to discover that this dependency is not the whole truth about man, that hunger itself is first of all a spiritual state and that it is in its last reality *hunger for God.* In the early Church, fasting always meant total abstinence, a state of hunger, pushing the body to the extreme. It is here, however, that we discover also that fasting as a physical effort is totally meaningless without its spiritual counterpart: "... by fasting and *prayer.*" This means that without the corresponding spiritual effort, without feeding ourselves with Divine Reality, without discovering our total dependence on God and God alone, physical fasting would indeed be suicide. If Christ Himself was tempted while fasting, we have not a single chance of avoiding that temptation. Physical fasting, essential as it is, is not only meaningless, it is truly dangerous if it is disconnected from the spiritual effort—from prayer and concentration on God. Fasting is an art fully mastered by Saints; it would be presumptuous and dangerous for us if we attempted that art without discernment and caution. The entire lenten worship is a constant reminder of the difficulties, the obstacles, and the temptations that await those who think that they may depend on their will power and not on God.

It is for this reason that we need first of all a spiritual preparation for the effort of fasting. It consists in asking God for help and also in making our fast God-centered. We should fast for God's sake. We must rediscover our body as the Temple of His Presence. We must recover a religious *respect* for the body, for food, for the very rhythm of life. All this must be done before the actual fast begins so that when we begin to fast, we would be supplied with spiritual weapons, with a vision, with a spirit of fight and victory.

Then comes the fast itself. In accordance with what has been said above, it should be practiced on two levels:

first, as *ascetical* fast; and second, as *total* fast. The *ascetical* fast consists of a drastic reduction of food so that the permanent state of a certain hunger might be lived as a reminder of God and a constant effort to keep our mind on Him. Everyone who has practiced it—be it only a little—knows that this ascetical fast rather than weakening us makes us light, concentrated, sober, joyful, pure. One receives food as a real gift of God. One is constantly directed at that inner world which inexplicably becomes a kind of food in its own right. The exact amount of food to be received in this ascetical fasting, its rhythm and its quality, need not be discussed here; they depend on our individual capacities, the external conditions of our lives. But the principle is clear: it is a state of half-hunger whose "negative" nature is at all times transformed by prayer, memory, attention, and concentration into a *positive* power. As to the *total* fast, it is of necessity to be limited in duration and coordinated with the Eucharist. In our present condition of life, its best form is the day before the evening celebration of the Presanctified Liturgy. Whether we fast on that day from early morning or from noon, the main point here is to live through that day as a day of expectation, hope, hunger for God Himself. It is a spiritual concentration on that which comes, on the gift to be received, and for the sake of which one gives up all other gifts.

After all this is said, one must still remember that however limited our fasting, if it is true fasting it will lead to temptation, weakness, doubt, and irritation. In other terms, it will be a real fight and probably we shall fail many times. But the very discovery of Christian life as fight and effort is the *essential aspect of fasting.* A faith which has not overcome doubts and temptation is seldom a real faith. No progress in Christian life is possible, alas, without the bitter experience of failures. Too many people start fasting with enthusiasm and give up after the first failure. I would say that it is at this first failure that the real test comes. If after having failed and surrendered to our appetites and passions we start all over again and do not give up no matter how many times we fail, sooner

or later our fasting will bear its spiritual fruits. Between holiness and disenchanted cynicism lies the great and divine virtue of *patience*—patience, first of all with ourselves. There is no short-cut to holiness; for every step we have to pay the full price. Thus it is better and safer to begin at a minimum—just slightly above our natural possibilities—and to increase our effort little by little, than to try jumping too high at the beginning and to break a few bones when falling back to earth.

In summary: from a symbolic and nominal fast—the fast as obligation and custom—we must return to the *real* fast. Let it be limited and humble but consistent and serious. Let us honestly face our spiritual and physical capacity and act accordingly—remembering however that there is no fast without challenging that capacity, without introducing into our life a divine proof that things impossible with men are possible with God.

4. A LENTEN "STYLE OF LIFE"

Attending liturgical services, fasting, and even praying at regular intervals do not exhaust the lenten effort. Or rather, in order to be effective and meaningful, they need the support of our whole life. They need, in other terms, a "style of life" which would not be in contradiction with them, would not lead to a "split" existence. In the past, in Orthodox countries, such support was given by society itself: it was that complex of customs, external changes, legislation, and public and private observances which is covered by the Russian word *"byt"* and which is partly rendered by the English word *culture.* During Lent, the whole society accepted a certain rhythm of life, certain rules, which kept reminding the individual members of that society of the lenten season. In Russia, for example, one could not forget Lent if only because of a special lenten church bell ringing; theaters were closed; and, in more ancient times, the courts suspended their activities. By themselves, all those externals were obviously unable

to force man into repentance or toward a more active religious life. But they created a certain atmosphere—a kind of lenten climate—in which personal effort was made easier. Being weak, we need external reminders, symbols, signs. Of course there is always the danger that these external symbols may become ends in themselves and instead of being mere reminder become in popular opinion the very content of Lent. This danger has already been mentioned above when we spoke of external customs and observances replacing genuine personal effort. Properly understood, however, these customs constitute that "belt" which connnects the spiritual effort to the totality of life.

We are not living in an Orthodox society and no lenten "climate" can therefore be created on a social level. Lent or no Lent, the world around us and of which we are an integral part does not change. Consequently, this requires from us a new effort of rethinking the necessary religious relationship between the "external" and "internal." The spiritual tragedy of secularism is that it forces us into a real religious "schizophrenia"—dividing our life into two parts: the religious and the secular, which are less and less interdependent. Thus a spiritual effort is needed in order to transpose the traditional customs and reminders, the very means of our lenten effort. In a tentative and, of necessity, schematic way, one can consider this effort in terms first of *home,* and second, *out of home* existence.

In the Orthodox world view, the home and the family constitute the first and most important area of Christian life, of *application* of Christian principles to daily existence. It is certainly the home, the very style and spirit of family life, and not the school, not even the Church, that shapes our fundamental world view, that shapes in us that fundamental orientation of which we may not even be aware for a long time, but which ultimately will become a decisive factor. Dostoevsky's "staretz" Zosima—in *The Brothers Karamazov*—says: "A man who from his childhood can remember good things is saved for his whole life." It is very significant that he makes this remark after recalling his mother taking him to the Presanctified Liturgy, the

beauty of the service, the unique lenten melody of "Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as incense . . .". The wonderful effort of religious education which is being made today in our church schools will mean very little unless it is rooted in the home and family life. What then could and should be done during Lent at home? Since it is impossible to cover here all aspects of family life, I will concentrate on one of them.

Everyone will no doubt agree that the whole style of family existence has been radically altered by radio and television. These media of "mass communication" permeate today our whole life. One does not have to "go out" in order to "be out." The whole world is permanently here within my reach. And, little by little, the elementary experience of living within an inner world, of the beauty of that "interiority," simply disappears from our modern culture. If it is not television, it is music. Music has ceased to be something one listens to; it is fast becoming a kind of "background sound" for conversation, reading, writing, etc. In fact, this need for permanent music reveals the incapacity of modern man to enjoy silence, to understand it not as something negative, as a mere absence, but precisely as a presence and the condition for all real presence. If the Christian of the past lived in great measure in a silent world, giving him ample opportunity for concentration and inner life, today's Christian has to make a special effort to recover that essential dimension of silence which alone can put us in contact with higher realities. Thus the problem of radio and TV during Lent is not a marginal one but in many ways a matter of spiritual life or death. One must realize that it is impossible simply to split our life between the "bright sadness" of Lent and "The Late Show." Those two experiences are incompatible and one eventually kills the other. It is very likely, however, that unless a special effort is made "The Late Show" has a greater chance against the "bright sadness" than vice versa. A first "custom" to be suggested, therefore, is that the use of TV and radio be drastically reduced during Lent. We do not dare to hope here for a "total" fast but only for an "ascetical" one which,

as we know, means first of all a change of diet and its reduction. There is nothing wrong, for example, with continuing to watch the news or selecting serious, interesting, and intellectually or spiritually enriching programs. What must be stopped during Lent is the "addiction" to TV—the transformation of man into a vegetable in an armchair, glued to the screen and passively accepting anything coming from it. When I was a child (this was the pre-TV era) my mother used to lock the piano during the first, fourth, and seventh weeks of Lent. I remember this more vividly than the long lenten services, and even today a radio playing during Lent shocks me as almost a blasphemy. This personal recollection is only an illustration of the impact some very external decisions can have on a child's soul. And what is involved here is not a mere isolated custom or rule but the experience of Lent as a special time, as something which is constantly present and must not be lost, mutilated, or destroyed. Here also however, as with fasting, a mere absence or abstinence is not sufficient; it must have its positive counterpart.

The silence created by the absence of the world's noises made available by the media of mass communication is to be filled with positive content. If prayer feeds our soul, our intellect also needs its food for it is precisely the intellect of man which is being destroyed today by the ceaseless hammering of TV, radio, newspapers, pictorial magazines, etc. What we suggest then, in addition to the purely spiritual effort, is an intellectual effort. How many masterpieces, how many wonderful fruits of human thought, imagination, and creativity we neglect in our life simply because it is so much easier returning home from work in a state of physical and mental fatigue to push the TV button or to plunge into the perfect vacuum of an illustrated magazine. But suppose we plan our Lent? Suppose we make in advance a reasonable list of books to be read during Lent? Not all of them must necessarily be religious books; not all people are called to be theologians. Yet there is so much implicit "theology" in certain literary masterpieces, and everything which enriches our intellect,

every fruit of true human creativity, is blessed by the Church and, properly used, acquires a spiritual value. In the preceding chapter I have mentioned that the fourth and fifth Sundays of Lent are dedicated to the commemoration of two great teachers of Christian spirituality: *St. John of the Ladder* and *St. Mary of Egypt.* Let us understand this as a broad indication that what the Church wants us to do during Lent is to seek the enrichment of our spiritual and intellectual inner world, to read and to meditate upon those things which are most likely to help us recover that inner world and its joy. Of that joy, of the true vocation of man, the one that is fulfilled inside and not outside, the "modern world" gives us no taste today; yet without it, without the understanding of Lent as a journey into the depth of our humanity, Lent loses its meaning.

Secondly, what could be the meaning of Lent during the long hours we spend outside of home—commuting, sitting at our desks, taking care of our professional duties, meeting our colleagues and friends? Although no clear-cut "recipe" can be given here as in any other area, some very general considerations are possible. In the first place, Lent is a good time to measure the incredibly superficial character of our relations with men, things, and work. The "keep smiling" and "take it easy" slogans are truly the great "commandments" which we joyfully keep, and they mean: don't get involved, don't question, don't deepen your relations with human beings; keep the rules of the game which combine a friendly attitude with total indifference; think of everything in terms of material gains, benefits, advancement; be, in other terms, a part of the world which, while constantly using the great words "freedom," "responsibility," "care," etc., *de facto* follows the materialistic principle that man is what he eats! Lent is the time for the search for *meaning:* meaning of my professional life in terms of vocation; meaning of my relationship to other persons; meaning of friendship; meaning of my responsibility. There is no job, no vocation, which cannot be "transformed"—be it only a little—in terms not of greater efficiency or better organization but in those of human

value. It is the same effort of "interiorization" of all our relations that is needed here, for we are free human beings who have become (without very often knowing it) prisoners of systems that progressively de-humanize the world. And if our faith has any meaning, it is to be related to life in all its complexity. Thousands of people think that necessary changes come only from outside, from revolutions and change in external conditions. It is for us Christians to prove that in reality everything comes from *inside*—from faith and life according to faith. The Church, when she entered the Greco-Roman world, did not denounce slavery, did not call for a revolution. It was her faith, her new vision of man and life that progressively made slavery impossible. One "saint"—and saint here means very simply a man taking his faith seriously all the time—will do more for changing the world than a thousand printed programs. The saint is the only true revolutionary in this world.

Finally, and this is our last general remark, Lent is the time to control our speech. Our world is incredibly verbal and we are constantly flooded by words which have lost their meaning and therefore their power. Christianity reveals the sacredness of the word—a truly divine gift to man. For this reason our speech is endowed with tremendous power either positive or negative. For this reason also we shall be judged on our words: "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37). To control speech is to recover its seriousness and its sacredness, to understand that sometimes an innocent "joke," which we proffered without even thinking about it, can have disastrous results—can be that last "straw" which pushes a man into ultimate despair and destruction. But the word can also be a witness. A casual conversation across the desk with a colleague can do more for communicating a vision of life, an attitude toward other men or toward work, than formal preaching. It can sow the seeds of a question, of the possibility of a different approach to life, the desire to know more. We have no idea how,

in fact, we constantly influence one another by our words, by the very "tonality" of our personality. And ultimately men are converted to God not because someone was able to give brilliant explanations, but because they saw in him that light, joy, depth, seriousness, and love which alone reveal the presence and the power of God in the world.

And thus if Lent is, as we have said at the very beginning, the recovery by man of his faith, it is also his recovery of life, of its divine meaning, of its sacred depth. It is by abstaining from food that we rediscover its sweetness and learn again how to receive it from God with joy and gratitude. It is by "slowing down" on music and entertainment, on conversation and superficial socializing, that we rediscover the ultimate value of human relationships, human work, human art. And we rediscover all this because very simply we *rediscover God Himself*—because we return to Him and in Him to all that which He gave us in His infinite love and mercy.

And thus, on Easter night we sing:

> Today are all things filled with light,
> Heaven and earth and the places under the earth;
> All creation does celebrate the Resurrection of Christ
> On whom it is founded....

Of this expectation, do not deprive us, O Lover of Man!

some ways actually is, rather sceptical about that abstract "humanity," but it commits a mortal sin against itself each time it gives up its concern and love for the person. Social activism is always "futuristic" in its approach; it always acts in the name of justice, order, happiness to come, to be achieved. Christianity cares little about that problematic future but puts the whole emphasis on the *now*—the only decisive time for love. The two attitudes are not mutually exclusive, but they must not be confused. Christians, to be sure, have responsibilities toward "this world" and they must fulfill them. This is the area of "social activism" which belongs entirely to "this world." Christian love, however, aims beyond "this world." It is itself a ray, a manifestation of the Kingdom of God; it transcends and overcomes all limitations, all "conditions" of this world because its motivation as well as its goals and consummation is in God. And we know that even in this world, which "lies in evil," the only lasting and transforming victories are those of love. To remind man of this *personal* love and vocation, to fill the sinful world with this love—this is the true mission of the Church.

The parable of the Last Judgment is about Christian love. Not all of us are called to work for "humanity," yet each one of us has received the gift and the grace of Christ's love. We know that all men ultimately need this *personal love*—the recognition in them of their unique soul in which the beauty of the whole creation is reflected in a unique way. We also know that men are in prison and are sick and thirsty and hungry because that personal love has been denied them. And, finally, we know that however narrow and limited the framework of our personal existence, each one of us has been made responsible for a tiny part of the Kingdom of God, made responsible by that very gift of Christ's love. Thus, on whether or not we have accepted this responsibility, on whether we have loved or refused to love, shall we be judged. For "inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me. . . ."

5. FORGIVENESS
(Cheese-Fare Sunday)

And now we have reached the very last days before Lent. Already during Meat-Fare Week, which precedes *"Forgiveness Sunday,"* two days—Wednesday and Friday—have been set apart as fully "lenten": The Divine Liturgy is not to be served and the whole order and type of worship have the liturgical characteristics of Lent. On Wednesday at Vespers we greet Lent with this beautiful hymn:

> The lenten spring has come!
> the light of repentance;
> Let us, brothers, cleanse ourselves from all evil,
> crying out to the Giver of Light:
> Glory to Thee, O Lover of man.

Then on Cheese-Fare Saturday the Church commemorates all men and women who were "illumined through fasting:" the Saints who are the patterns we must follow, guides in the difficult art of fasting and repentance. In the effort we are about to begin we are not alone:

> Let us praise the assemblies of holy fathers:
> Anthony the Great, Euthymius the Great and all of their company!
> Passing through their lives as through a paradise of sweetness. . . .

We have helpers and examples:

> We honor you as examples, O holy fathers!
> You truly taught us to walk on the right path;
> You are blessed for you worked for Christ. . . .

Finally comes the last day, usually called *"Forgiveness Sunday,"* but whose other liturgical name must also be remembered: the *"Expulsion of Adam from the Paradise of Bliss."* This name summarizes indeed the entire preparation for Lent. By now we know that man was created for paradise, for knowledge of God and communion with Him. Man's sin has deprived him of that blessed life and his existence on earth is exile. Christ, the Savior of the world, opens the door of paradise to everyone who follows Him, and the Church, by revealing to us the beauty of

the Kingdom, makes our life a pilgrimage toward our heavenly fatherland. Thus, at the beginning of Lent, we are like Adam:

> Adam was expelled from paradise through food;
> Sitting, therefore, in front of it he cried:
> 'Woe to me....
> One commandment of God have I transgressed,
> depriving myself of all that is good;
> Paradise holy! Planted for me,
> And now because of Eve closed to to me;
> Pray to thy Creator and mine
> that I may be filled again by thy blossom.'
> Then answered the Savior to him:
> 'I wish not my creation to perish;
> I desire it to be saved and to know the Truth;
> For I will not turn away him who comes to Me....'

Lent is the liberation of our enslavement to sin, from the prison of "this world." And the Gospel lesson of this last Sunday (Matt. 6:14-21) sets the conditions for that *liberation.* The first one is *fasting*—the refusal to accept the desires and urges of our fallen nature as normal, the effort to free ourselves from the dictatorship of flesh and matter over the spirit. To be effective, however, our fast must not be hypocritical, a "showing off." We must "appear not unto men to fast but to our Father who is in secret." The second condition is *forgiveness*—"If you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you." The triumph of sin, the main sign of its rule over the world, is division, opposition, separation, hatred. Therefore, the first break through this fortress of sin is forgiveness: the return to unity, solidarity, love. To forgive is to put between me and my "enemy" the radiant forgiveness of God Himself. To forgive is to reject the hopeless "dead-ends" of human relations and to refer them to Christ. Forgiveness is truly a "breakthrough" of the Kingdom into this sinful and fallen world.

Lent actually begins at Vespers of that Sunday. This unique service, so deep and beautiful, is absent from so many of our churches! Yet nothing reveals better the "tonality" of Great Lent in the Orthodox Church; nowhere is better manifested its profound appeal to man.

The service begins as solemn Vespers with clergy in bright vestments. The hymns (stichira) which follow the Psalm "Lord, I have cried..." announce the coming of Lent and, beyond Lent, the approach of Pascha!

> Let us begin the time of fasting in light!
> Preparing ourselves for the spiritual efforts.
> Let us purify our soul; let us purify our body.
> As from food, let us abstain from all passion
> and enjoy the virtues of the spirit,
> So that perfected in time by love
> We may all be made worthy to see
> the Passion of Christ and the Holy Pascha
> In spiritual joy!

Then comes, as usual, the Entrance with the evening hymn: "O Gladsome Radiance of the holy glory...." The celebrant then proceeds to the "high place" behind the altar for the proclamation of the evening *Prokeimenon* which always announces the end of one and the beginning of another day. This day's *Great Prokeimenon* announces the beginning of Lent:

> Turn not away Thy face from Thy servant
> for I am afflicted!
> Hear me speedily.
> Attend to my soul and deliver it!

Listen to the unique melody of this verse—to this cry that suddenly fills the church: "...for I am afflicted!"—and you will understand this starting point of Lent: the mysterious mixture of despair and hope, of darkness and light. All preparation has now come to an end. I stand before God, before the glory and the beauty of His Kingdom. I realize that I belong to it, that I have no other home, no other joy, no other goal; I also realize that I am exiled from it into the darkness and sadness of sin, "for I am afflicted!" And finally, I realize that only God can help in that affliction, that only He can "attend to my soul." Repentance is, above everything else, a desperate call for that divine help.

Five times we repeat the *Prokeimenon.* And then, Lent is here! Bright vestments are put aside; lights are extin-

guished. When the celebrant intones the petitions for the evening litany, the choir responds in the lenten "key." For the first time the lenten prayer of St. Ephrem accompanied by prostrations is read. At the end of the service all the faithful approach the priest and one another asking for mutual forgiveness. But as they perform this rite of reconciliation, as Lent is inaugurated by this movement of love, reunion, and brotherhood, the choir sings the Paschal hymns. We will have to wander forty days through the desert of Lent. Yet at the end shines already the light of Easter, the light of the Kingdom.

Chapter Two

THE LENTEN WORSHIP

1. "BRIGHT SADNESS"

For many, if not for the majority of Orthodox Christians, Lent consists of a limited number of formal, predominantly negative, rules and prescriptions: abstention from certain food, dancing, perhaps movies. Such is the degree of our alienation from the real spirit of the Church that it is almost impossible for us to understand that there is "something else" in Lent—something without which all these prescriptions lose much of their meaning. This "something else" can best be described as an "atmosphere," a "climate" into which one enters, as first of all a state of mind, soul, and spirit which for seven weeks permeates our entire life. Let us stress once more that the purpose of Lent is not to force on us a few formal obligations, but to "soften" our heart so that it may open itself to the realities of the spirit, to experience the hidden "thirst and hunger" for communion with God.

This lenten "atmosphere," this unique "state of mind," is brought about mainly by means of worship, by the various changes introduced during that season into the liturgical life.[4] Considered separately, these changes may appear as incomprehensible "rubrics," as formal prescriptions to be formally adhered to; but understood as a whole, they

GREAT LENT AND THE PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY:

Historical Development and Contemporary Practice

By Jeremiah A. Crawford

1.24.2001

The source of the Orthodox Church's lenten practice can be found in ancient Israel's preparation to return to God. Historically Israel continually fell away from God's grace and protection. Through the divinely inspired phenomena of their prophets, the instrument and spokesmen of His will on earth. God called Israel to return to the way of life He originally gave to them. Israel's sin, their voluntary rejection of God, and subsequent lapse into idolatry and unfaithfulness, caused them to suffer the inevitable curse of sin. They inherited corruption and death. But God, because He is merciful and loves His people, provided Israel with a way in which they could be received once again into His presence and protection. Thus the riveting utterance of all the prophets of Israel beckoned the people to turn from their wickedness and live once again as a people worthy of communion with God. For our purposes we see all the prophets of Israel personified in Joel and his pronouncement to Israel to ,"...sanctify a fast...gather the people" (Joel 2:15-17). This appeal to Israel to return to God, to embrace once again the only path of salvation in this world, begins with repentance. If Israel will humble themselves before the Lord God, if from the least to the greatest of the people, they will weep and mourn their sins, if they will rend their hearts as they do their garments, God has promised to receive them back into His grace and protection. In Israel's response to the prophets we see the Old Testament pattern for the Orthodox practice of lent.

We of the Orthodox Church, the New Israel, a people called into existence by the incarnation and life of Jesus Christ and adopted into the family and descendants of Abraham, also fall into sin and idolatry and become separated from the Father. But in His mercy and love God calls us back to Himself through the institution of "...a fast and a gathering of the people." It is during this fast, known as Great Lent, that God, through the Church provides us with a means by which we might return to a more Christ-centered life. Through this time of repentance and purification we prepare ourselves to return to our true inheritance in God's Kingdom. And just as Joel's message to ancient Israel ended with the promise of restoration and blessing, so we too in the Church are promised full restoration to God's grace if we will return to the Father. We will see these ancient themes of purification and renewal through the spirit-bearing potential of the material creation embraced and further elaborated in the historical development of Great Lent in the Orthodox Church.

Unlike ancient Israel, the source of the repentance and fasting of the Church is not just the sorrow and remorse of the consciousness of sin, but most importantly the remembrance of the resurrectional joy of the Pascha of Christ. In order to experience the full power of this joy however, the Church must pass through the difficult process of repentance and purification. In the Church of the first three centuries we can observe this process in the lives of those people preparing for holy illumination, otherwise referred to as baptism.[1] These candidates for church membership, called catechumens. depending on local traditions of varying lengths of time, were introduced to the life of the Church by special rites including exorcisms, prayers. and explanations of the Holy Scriptures. This time of preparation involved not just the catechumens but the entire Christian community.As the catechumens prepared themselves for illumination through Christ in the Church, the Church prepared itself for the reception of the catechumens. In this dual preparation of the catechumens for membership in the Church and the Church for the reception of the catechumens, we see the historical origin of the pre-paschal liturgical season which we now call Great Lent.

At the heart of the Orthodox faith is not only the knowledge of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of humanity, but also the certainty of His resurrection from the dead on Jewish Passover. It is reasonable to assume from that moment forward when Passover was celebrated by the earliest Christians, at this time still predominately Jewish, the feast was dedicated to the remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. Whether or not the Paschal feast was celebrated as an annual event in those first years, it was certainly celebrated as a Christian Passover by the second century, usually on a Sunday.[2]

(This practice was eventually confirmed at the Council of Nicea in 325.) It was widely believed that the second advent of Christ would occur on this Paschal Vigil. This celebration was preceded by a one-day fast, held on a Saturday by those who kept Passover on a Saturday. By this time Wednesday and Friday, as mentioned in the instructions of the 2nd century manual of church discipline the **Didache**, had become established as regular fasting days. So now in practice it was a two-day fast that preceded Pascha. By the middle of the third century a fast lasting six days had come into practice in many places, thus providing the background for the observation of a full Holy Week by the fourth century. By the fourth century in Jerusalem, under the episcopate of St. Cyril, Holy Week as we now know it, emerged.[3] It was probably in order to provide for the needs of the many pilgrims coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover that St. Cyril devised the liturgical observances that soon became the model for churches in most other places. By the fourth century the fast before Christian Passover was generally observed throughout the church, in many places lasting forty days, following Christ's example of fasting in the wilderness after his baptism. By this time the fast included two elements, the six day fast observed directly before Pascha, and the additional weeks of preparation of the catechumens for illumination, which eventually came to be observed by all Christian believers. The earliest references to the pre-lenten period of a week of preliminary fasting are in the fifth and sixth centuries. The observance of the three preparatory Sundays did not become universal practice in the Greek church until the tenth or eleventh century.[4]

Lent as it exists today in the Orthodox church. is the result of a rather long period of historical development which includes the convergence of pre-and post-Nicene practices.[5] That portion of the Church Year covered by the services of the hymn book of Great lent, the **Lenten Triodion**. now fall into three periods:

(1) **The Pre-Lenten Period**: this includes the three preparatory Sundays; the Publican and the Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, the Last Judgment, and a preliminary week of partial fasting, ending with the Sunday of Forgiveness.
(2) **The Forty Days of the Great Fast**: this period begins at Sunday Vespers on the evening before the first week and ends with the reading of the Ninth Hour on Friday in the sixth week.
(3) **Holy Week**: this is preceded by the Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday.[6]

The contemporary Orthodox Christian finds himself in a significantly different world than the one in which the Lenten worship of the Church was established. In the world of the first Christian millennium most Orthodox believers lived in relatively small, essentially rural communities situated within an organically Orthodox world, a world whose very rhythm was shaped by the life of the church.[7] Today we live as members of a seemingly insignificant religious minority in immense urban areas of dazzling technological sophistication. We live within a culturally pluralistic world whose ideals, goals, and ethos are relentlessly secular. How then is it possible live out the reality of fullness of the faith in the midst of a world whose invasive noise, violence. and stupidity offers unending opportunities for distraction? The task of remaining faithful to Christ in such inauspicious, if not outright antagonistic conditions, necessitates a vigorous response to the prophetic message of the Church. The passage of thousands of years has not altered the content of the original prophetic call to Israel. We must return to the Father if we are to be His inheritors. Today, when the temptations of the world are more insidious than ever, Orthodox Christians must enter the "...fast and gathering of the people." It is in this fast and gathering that we learn to use the weapons the church gives us to survive in such a hostile environment. We learn to wage the kind of warfare demanded of us by these conditions. During Great Lent the Church teaches us to rely not on our own strengths and resources but on the grace and love of Jesus Christ. We learn how very weak

and finite we are. We learn that the purpose of our ascetic effort is the unification of our body and soul fragmented by sin and death. Slowly we learn to fast not only from food, but also from sin. The ultimate goal of our effort is always communion with God and the transformation of our lives into the image of Christ.

The Church provides us with many tools to help us return to the Father. But only our cooperation with the power of the Holy Spirit will provide us with access to those means of grace. It is through one of these means of grace, through the ascetic practice of fasting, that we learn to become "...poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). Through this practice we learn to reject the world insofar as it is dominated by those sinful passions which drag us down into corruption, death and Hell. Through Jesus Christ our repentance and ascetic effort are empowered to deliver us from slavery to lust. Ever so gradually we are transformed into creatures capable of love. Through asceticism and communion we experience the power of Orthodox spirituality. The spirituality of the Church presupposes the connection of the sacraments (mysteries) and asceticism. Echoing St. Gregory Palamas and the rest of the Church Fathers, Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos states, "What saves man are the mysteries connected with asceticism."[8] While there has never been absolute uniformity of practice. the following Lenten pattern for fasting is agreed on by most Orthodox authorities:

(1) During the week between the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and that of the Prodigal Son, there is a general dispensation from fasting. Meat and dairy products may be eaten even on Wednesday and Friday.

(2) The following week the usual fast is kept on Wednesday and Friday. Otherwise there is no special fasting.

(3) In the week before Lent, meat is forbidden, but eggs, cheese and other dairy products may be eaten, including on Wednesday and Friday.
(4) On weekdays during the seven weeks of Lent, there are restrictions on both the number of meals and the types of food eaten. There is, however, no restriction on the quantity of food eaten.

a) On weekdays in the first week, fasting is very severe. Strictly speaking, in the first five days only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday, and one on Friday, both after the Presanctified Liturgy. On the other days those who can are encouraged to keep an absolute fast. At the meals on Wednesday and Friday dry eating, xerophagy, is prescribed. The following categories of food are excluded: (i)meat; (ii) dairy products: (iii) fish; (iv) oil and wine.
b) On weekdays of weeks 2-6, one meal a day is prescribed taken after Vespers, and xerophagy is to be observed.
c) Holy Week: on the first three days there is one meal each day with xerophagy. On Holy Thursday one meal is eaten with wine and oil. On Great Friday a strict fast is observed until after vespers. On Holy Saturday, strictly speaking, there is no meal but as is usually the practice, one meal is eaten with wine but not oil, after the Vesperal Liturgy.

The rule of xerophagy is relaxed on the following days:

(1) On Saturdays and Sundays during Lent, with the exception of Holy Saturday, two main meals are taken at mid-day and the evening, with wine and oil; but meat, fish, and dairy products are not permitted.
(2) On the Feast of the Annunciation and Palm Sunday, fish is permitted as well as wine and oil. (There are special rules for the observation of this feast depending on the day on which it falls.)
(3) Wine and oil are permitted on the following days, if they fall on a weekday in the 2-6 weeks:
    a. First and Second Finding of the Head of John the Baptist (Feb. 24)

b. Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (Mar. 9)
c. Forefeast of the Annunciation (Mar. 24)
d. Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel (Mar. 26)
e. Patronal festival of the Church or Monastery.

(4) Wine and oil are also permitted on Wednesday and Friday in the fifth week, because of the vigil for the Great Canon. Wine is also permitted on Friday in the same week, because of the vigil for the Akathistos Hymn.[9]

It should be noted that the rules for fasting have become, in some instances, quite relaxed in the modem era, with not altogether beneficial results for the individual believer or parish. Generally speaking the rules for fasting should be observed as strictly as possible. There are, of course, many extenuating and mitigating circumstances which prevent the individual Orthodox Christian from observing the fasting rules as strictly as one might desire. Whatever one's circumstances, whether one desires to be very strict or very moderate with the fast, one should consult with his spiritual Father in order to obtain the full power of the blessing the Church offers us during this liturgically rich and spiritually challenging season.

It is also during the Lenten season that, because of it's paschal character, the normal Divine Liturgy is not served on weekdays. In its place the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served. This service, as stated by Fr. Thomas Hopko, is "... one of the great masterpieces of Orthodox piety and liturgical creativity."[10] This exceedingly beautiful and moving service is called "Presanctified" because there is no eucharistic consecration during the service, the Holy Gifts having been sanctified at the Liturgy of the previous Sunday. The service is simply the office of vespers, followed by the distribution of the previously sanctified Holy Gifts. While this service was not officially specified to be celebrated until the Council in Trullo (canon 52) in 692, it is, like Great Lent itself, the result of ancient practice and a long period of historical development. While it is challenging to determine the exact point of origin for this service it is not so difficult to discern the reason why the service was instituted. Most likely the Presanctified Liturgy was given to us by the Church in order that the Orthodox faithful should not be deprived of communion during the rigorous fasting of the weekdays of Great Lent.

The earliest scientific evidence for the Presanctified Liturgy's existence dates from the beginning of the sixth century.[11] An early testimony, found in the **Chronicon Paschale**, states:

> "In thus year, the fourth year of the indication (615), at the time of the Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople, after 'Let my prayer arise' chanting was introduced; and while the Presanctified Gifts were transferred from the Skeuophylakion, following the priest's exclamation: 'Through the gift of thy Christ', the people immediately intoned: 'Now the powers of heaven do serve invisibly with us. Lo, the King of Glory enters. Lo, the mystical sacrifice is upborne, fulfilled. Let us draw near in faith and love, and become communicants of life eternal. Alleluia.' " [12]

Another piece of evidence comes from the life of St. Gregory the Chozebite (end of 6th-beginning of 7th century). According to a disciple of St. Gregory's, Anthony, the Saint was in the habit of sending a young man named Zeno to Jericho to obtain prospheras for visitors to the monastery. One day while standing near the sanctuary during the eucharist Zeno heard the Saint say the words of the consecration and committed them to memory. One Sunday when Zeno was returning from Jericho with the prosphoras and was meditating on the words, the Holy Spirit came down and consecrated both the

gifts and Zeno. At the same time St. Gregory received a visit from an angel who said: "Rise, priest, and celebrate the service of the Presanctified over the offering which the young man is carrying, for it has been sanctified." [13]

Many scholars believe that the origin of the Presanctified Liturgy is to be found in the practice of self-communion when the Sanctified Gifts were brought home from the Divine Liturgy by the faithful to be consumed during the week. The source of this tradition has been traced to the apostles when, according to St. Basil the Great, the custom arose during the era of the persecutions by the Roman State. St. Basil wrote:

> "It is needless to point out that for anyone in times of persecution to be compelled to take the communion in his own hand without the presence of the priest or minister is not a serious offense, as long custom sanctions this practice from the facts themselves."[14]

Many early Fathers of the Church bear witness to the wide-spread usage of this practice. During the time of Justin Martyr (2nd century) deacons used to bring Communion to the homes of Christians who, for honorable reasons, could not take part in the eucharistic service. Tertullian refers to self-communion as a common daily occurrence. Clement of Alexandria says that after the breaking of the eucharistic bread the faithful were allowed to take a portion to their homes.[15] The practice of self-communion continued after the end of the persecutions as evidenced by various writings of St. Basil and St. Gregory the Theologan.[16] The practice spread from the Greeks to the southern Slavs and the Russian church where it existed as late as the end of the 17th century.

The earliest order for self-communion is found in the codex the **Horologion according to the rule of the Lavra of our Holy Father Sabbas**. Dating from the 9th century this Horologion (service book) was connected with the rule of St. Sabbas the Sanctified which was kept by certain Palestinian monks. They were in the habit of partaking of communion while in the solitude of the desert from January 20 until Lazarus Saturday.[17]

The key to the reconstruction of the service of the Presanctified Liturgy is found, however, in the so-called Barbarini **Euchologion 336** (prayer book), which dates from the end of the 9th century. This Euchologion contains essentially the prayers from the contemporary order of the Presanctified Liturgy. The rubric preceding the prayers also speaks of the service occurring at the time of lamp lighting, demonstrating that this was an evening service. As the service developed historically we find that the oldest elements are found in: (1) the instruction of catechumens and those preparing to receive baptism, which commenced in the second half of the day and continued until the onset of evening. The first reading from the book of Genesis is a vestige of the catechumenate. (2)The exclamation, "The light of Christ illurnineth all" is from the ancient rite of bringing the]amp into the gathering for prayer. and (3)"Let my prayer arise..." which is Psalm 140, the psalm of lamp lighting, is performed responsorially. The prayers which followed---for the catechumens, for those preparing for Holy Illumination, and for the faithful---constituted the conclusion of the ancient Syriac vespers. To this order of service was added Holy Communion. [18]

The rite of Communion in the context of the Presanctified Liturgy also has a long period of historical development. The establishment of the service has been ascribed to many church fathers including; St. John Chrysostom, Basil the Great, Gregory the Great, Epiphanius of Cyprus, Patriarch

Germanus of Constantinople, and even the apostles James, Peter, and Mark. Modern scholarship has demonstrated however, that the establishment of a rite of public church communion utilizing the Presanctified gifts was an innovation in the history of the Eucharist. While the historical development of the Presanctified Liturgy took place over the course of many centuries and had diverse influences, it is now generally believed that Severus, the monophysite Patriarch of Antioch. was responsible for replacing, during Great Lent, the practice of self-communion at home with public communion in church.[19] The Syrian Monophysites also, considered it possible to sanctify the use of the chalice in communion by adding the usual eucharistic prayers , and also by placing a portion of consecrated bread into a chalice, containing wine. A similar practice also existed in the Orthodox Church by at least the11th century.20 The custom of intincting the presanctified bread had become a common practice in the church by the 15 century.[21]

The acceptance and spread of the practice of public church communion was given impetus when it was accepted by the Church of Constantinople in the 6th century during the rule of the Emperor Justinian (527-565). Constantinople not only accepted the practice of the Presanctified Liturgy, but also introduced a more frequent celebration of it. In addition to it's sacramental significance the Presanctified Liturgy also served as a refutation to the erroneous Nestorian teaching that the eucharistic bread was the body of Christ only on the day of the celebration of the liturgy, that anything remaining over to the next day reverted back to common bread.22 (On a personal note I find it fascinating that in the office for the reception of converts to the Orthodox church, those converting from the Lutheran confession are made to renounce that very teaching.)[23]

During the 11th and 12th centuries the **Sabbas Ordo**, named after St. Sabbas the Sanctified, was widely spread and eventually came to supersede the Jerusalem **Typikon** of the Holy sepulchre as the one used throughout the Orthodox East. In this ordo the old vespers together with the communion of the Presanctified Gifts which followed it were incorporated into the usual monastic vespers. Immediately after the vesperal Entrance there were readings followed by "Let my prayer arise,' the Augmented Litany, Litanies and prayers for the catechumens. prayers for those preparing for holy illumination. and two prayers for the faithful. The final result was the joining together of vespers followed by the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts into a double celebration.[24] The desire to fill out the Presanctified Liturgy with rites from the full liturgy later led to the reading of prayers before the great Entrance.[25] It is interesting to note that neither the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian, nor the elevation of the gifts are mentioned in the oldest Service books and the prayer, "Attend O Lord..." is only mentioned in some of the early Service books. However, the communion of the clergy during which the song, "Taste and see..." is present in the oldest sources.[26] The concluding rites of communion developed gradually. The communion of the people followed immediately after the communion of the clergy. The exclamations. "In the fear of God...", and "O God save thy people..." along with Psalm 33 and the singing of “Blessed be the name of the Lord...", were all added from the full liturgy in the 16th century. The hymn, "Taste the Heavenly bread and the cup of life..." was added sometime in the 17th cemury.[27]

With the universal acceptance of the Jerusalem ordo, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts came to be celebrated on Wednesday and Friday of weeks 1-4 and 6 of Great Lent; and during the 5th week on Thursday as well. During Holy Week the service is prescribed for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. It should also be celebrated on the patronal feast of a church should it fall during lent. on the day of the Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist, and on the day of the Forty Holy Martyrs.[28]

If the purpose of man's life, as the Orthodox Church teaches, is communion with God, then those who live for the fulfillment of their own ideals will inevitably squander their lives in the endless distractions and vanities of this world. Those who desire to attain the goal of union with Christ, however, will respond to the prophetic call of the church to "return to the Father." The obstacles in the way of attaining this goal are immense and seemingly overwhelming. The war we fight is fierce and our enemy is powerful. We will surely be conquered if we rely only on our own resources. But Christ through the Church has provided us with the means to overcome our adversaries. The Church has given us many weapons to wage a successful war. Two of them are the ascetic fasting of Great Lent, and the Holy Gifts of the Presanctified Liturgy. Through these means of grace Christ provides the strength to resist our enemies and the context in which our transformation into His image is perfected. One means of grace prepares us to receive the other. Together, both work toward our salvation.

Bibliography

Basil. "Letter to Caesarea," the Patrician's Wife on Communion.

Hapgood, I. F. Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church.

New York: Syrian Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocise 1965

Mary, Mother and Ware, Kallistos. The Lenten Triodion. London: Faber and Faber, 1978.

Orthodox Church in America, The Liturgy of the Persanctified Gifts. New York 1975. Schmemman, Alexander. Great Lent. Crestwood: SVS Press. 1969 and later editions.

Of Water and the Spirit. Crestwood: SVS Press. 1974. Schmemann, Alexander

Uspensky, Nicholas. Evening Worship in the Orthodox Church. Crestwood: SVS Press, 1985

Vlachos, Bishop Hierotheos. The Illness and Cure of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition.

Levadia, Greece: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery 1993.

Wybrew, H. Orthodox Lent. Holy Week and Easter. Crestwood: SVS Press 1997.

Resentment and Forgiveness

by Hieromonk Damascene

A talk delivered at the Annual Assembly of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America, St. George Serbian Orthodox Church, San Diego, California, February 28, 2003.

1. The Misuse of the Incensive Power

Since we are approaching Forgiveness Sunday, I've chosen, with the blessing of His Grace Bishop Longin, to speak on the subject of Anger, Judgment, and Resentment, and on their cure: Forgiveness and Reconciliation. First I will speak about the problem and then I'll discuss the solution.

Anger, judgment, remembrance of wrongs, grudges, resentment: these are passions with which all of us struggle in one way or another. Why are we prone to them? According to the Holy Fathers of the Church, the power that causes anger was part of man's original nature, which was created "good" by God (cf. Genesis 1:31). The Fathers say that man's soul was originally created with three powers: the intellective or "knowing" power, the appetitive or "desiring" power, and the incensive or "fervent" power. Man was supposed to use his intellective power to know God, his appetitive power to yearn for God, and his incensive power to courageously repel temptation—beginning with the temptation of the serpent in the Garden.

Instead of using their incensive power to repel temptation, however, Adam and Eve succumbed to their first temptation: they ate of the forbidden fruit. According to the Holy Fathers, the essence of the serpent's temptation lies in these words: "Eat of this fruit and you shall be as gods" (cf. Genesis 3:5). St. John Chrysostom says that Adam "expected to become himself a god, and conceived thoughts above his proper dignity." [1] This is a key point which we'll keep coming back to.

When the primordial Fall occurred, man's original nature, created in the image of God, became corrupted. He acquired what the Holy Fathers call a fallen nature. He still had the image of God in him, but the image was tarnished: "buried," as it were, under the corruption of his nature. Now he had an inclination toward sin, born of his desire to be God without God's blessing. All of us share that fallen nature; there is a part of each one of us that wants to be God. In popular modern terms, that part of us is called the "ego."

When man fell, the three powers of his soul became subject to corruption, along with his body, which became subject to death and decay. Now man used his intellective power to puff up with knowledge and be superior to others; now he used his appetitive power to lust after other people, after the things of this world, after sinful pleasures, wealth, and power; and he used his incensive power, not against temptation, but against other people, against things, and sometimes against life and God Himself. The incensive power expressed itself as sinful anger and wrath. The first man born of woman, Cain, got so angry and jealous that he murdered his own brother, Abel.

So, here we are, all members of the family of Adam and Eve, possessing a fallen nature that wants to be God, and a corrupted incensive power that gets angry at the wrong things.

Very clear teachings on anger and the incensive power can be found in the first volume of *The Philokalia,* in the teachings of St. John Cassian, a Holy Father of the fifth century. According to St. John Cassian, all anger directed at other people—all such wrong use of our incensive power—blinds the soul. He writes: "We must, with God's help, eradicate the deadly poison of anger from the depths of our souls. So long as the demon of anger dwells in our hearts ... we can neither discriminate what is good, nor achieve spiritual knowledge, nor fulfill our good intentions, nor participate in true life.... Nor will we share in divine wisdom even though we are deemed wise by all men, for it is written: *Anger lodges in the bosom of fools* (Eccles. 7:9). Nor can we discriminate in decisions affecting our salvation even though we are thought by our fellow men to have good sense, for it is written: *Anger destroys even men of good sense* (Proverbs 15:1). Nor will we be able to keep our lives in righteousness with a watchful heart, for it is written: *Man's anger does not bring about the righteousness of God* (James 1:20)....

"If, therefore, you desire to attain perfection and rightly pursue the spiritual way, you should make yourself a stranger to all sinful anger and wrath. Listen to what St. Paul enjoins: *Rid yourselves of all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and all malice* (Eph. 4:31). By saying 'all' he leaves no excuse for regarding any anger as necessary or reasonable. If you want to correct your brother when he is doing wrong or punish him, you must try to keep yourself calm; otherwise you yourself may catch the sickness you are seeking to cure and you may find that the words of the Gospel now apply to you: *Physician, heal yourself* (Luke 4:23), or *Why do you look at the speck of dust in your brother's eye, and not notice the beam in your own eye?* (Matt. 7:3).

"No matter what provokes it, anger blinds the soul's eyes, preventing it from seeing the Sun of righteousness.... Whether reasonable or unreasonable, anger obstructs our spiritual vision. Our incensive power can be used in a way that is according to nature only when turned against our own impassioned or self-indulgent thoughts. [2]

Here St. John Cassian is telling us that, when we use our incensive power against temptation—against impassioned or self-indulgent thoughts—we are using this power as it was originally intended to be used, according to our original, virtuous nature, created in the image of God. However, when we use our incensive power against anything else—especially against other people—we are *misusing* it, according to our *fallen* nature.

2. Playing God

Often anger is evoked in us because of our pride. This again is a function of our fallen nature: that part of us that wants to be God. As would-be gods, we want to be in control, we want things to go our way. When things don't go our way, when other people don't follow our lead and go along with our program, we get angry. This leads us to judge others. Judging others is one way of playing God.

God is King, and He is Judge. Of course, it's best to be a King. Therefore, in trying to play God, our ego first of all tries to get above others and above life itself by playing King. We can try to be King in many ways. It may be by trying to run the show and get our own way. It may be by seeking acceptance, approval, praise, respect, popularity, earthly security, or an important

position. It may be through our achievements and abilities, which are used toward ultimately selfish ends. It may be through vanity over our looks, our intellect, and so on.

Even if we were to have the world at our feet all the time, and thus confirm our King-status in our own mind, we would eventually feel conflict—for we're not meant to be King. You can see this vividly in the lives of celebrities, many of whom, having risen to the "top" in the eyes of the world, are filled with inward conflict.

Most of us, however, find it impossible to play King all the time. The world is not at our feet. We try so hard to get our own way and make things work out exactly like we want, but it just doesn't happen that way. People don't want to cooperate with our own way of doing things. We don't get enough of the respect and admiration we need in order to keep up the illusion of our Kingship. On the contrary, we often experience the exact opposite: rudeness, disrespect, neglect, abandonment, injustice.

What is the ego—our fallen nature—to do in this case? How can it still play God? How else than by *judgment*? As we said, God is King and He is Judge. When we can't be King, we take the *loser's* way of playing God: we become the Judge. No matter what happens to us, or what people have said and done to us, we can always *seem* to get above them by being their Judge. For a time it feels great! Other people and the circumstances of our life made us feel less like a god; they have hurt and humiliated us. But we can still be a god in our own mind by judging!

Judgment brings with it an exhilaration of false power. Its energy comes from the wrong, prideful use of our incensive power. But, like playing King, playing Judge eventually leads to inward conflict. If we are setting ourselves up in God's place, our soul cannot fulfill its original purpose of worshiping, serving and loving God. Thus, each time we judge, we're placing a barrier between ourselves and God. A wall immediately goes up.

3. Resentment

If left unchecked, anger and judgment will pass into what the Holy Fathers call "secret anger," "remembrance of wrongs," or "resentment."

Resentment—prolonged anger—is deadly to the soul. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk says: "Just as fire if it is not extinguished quickly will swallow many houses, so anger if it is not stopped right away will do great harm and will cause many troubles. [3] The Holy Apostle Paul tells us: *Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil* (Eph. 4:26-7). "If we take St. Paul's saying literally," writes St. John Cassian, "it does not permit us to keep our anger even until sunset. What then shall we say about those who, because of the harshness and fury of their impassioned state, not only maintain their anger until the setting of this day's sun, but prolong it for many days? Or about others who do not express their anger, but keep silent and increase the poison of their anger to their own destruction? They are unaware that we must avoid anger not only in what we do but also in our thoughts; otherwise our mind will be darkened by our anger, cut off from the light of spiritual knowledge and discrimination, and deprived of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. [4]

Why is resentment such a deadly sin? The Holy Scriptures tell us that *God is love.* Therefore, explains the Russian Holy Father St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, "Resentment or rejection of love is rejection of God. God withdraws from a resentful person, deprives him of His Grace, and gives him up to spiritual death, unless the person repents in good time so as to be healed of that deadly moral poison, resentment. [5]

If for whatever reason we do not forgive someone and hold onto our anger, it will truly be to our own destruction. It can poison our entire lives, make us the captives of the devil, and eventually prevent us from entering the Kingdom of Heaven. To help us not to lose our salvation due to resentment, God allows us to feel inward conflict. This inward conflict helps us to become aware of the fatal danger of the malady of resentment, and to seek to be cured by the Supreme Physician, Jesus Christ.

The inward conflict may take many forms. We may feel weighed down, unable to breathe lightly or freely, as if we are captives. We may experience irrational fear, commonly known as anxiety. We may become susceptible to physical ailments. In most cases, we will feel an inward emptiness. That emptiness comes from the fact that, by holding onto our anger and judgment, we have separated ourselves from God. We no longer have His Grace, His Life, inside us, and without that we are just hollow vessels.

Our spiritual emptiness may express itself in a generally dissatisfied and cynical attitude, in which we're always attracted to negative thoughts and words about others. We may try to fill the void with drugs or the excessive use of alcohol. Interestingly, the Alcoholics Anonymous "Big Book" says: "Resentment is the 'number one' offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stems all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. [6]

Sometimes our resentment hurts the person we are resenting, sometimes it does not. However, in either case *we* gain nothing; we only lose, for in either case we are the ones who are hurt the most. Let's say someone has actually wronged us. If that person repents, he will be forgiven by God. But if we hold onto our anger, we will not be forgiven and will suffer the consequences.

4. Forgiveness

Having looked at the malady of anger, judgment, and resentment, let's go on to look at the cure. What are we to do to be freed of this sickness?

Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us clearly: *Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. And to him who smites you on the one cheek, offer also the other* (Luke 6:27-29).

Rather than resenting those who wrong us, we are to love them, and we express this love by blessing them and praying for them. We do this because we are commanded to do so by Christ. He has commanded this for our own sake, for our own salvation, because He loves us; and we do it for His sake, because we love Him. Our fallen nature rebels against this: "What? Bless and pray for that person who wronged me?" But for Christ's sake, we go against our fallen nature,

and force ourselves to pray. We ask God to bless and have mercy on the person who hurt us, we wish good things for him, we wish his salvation, just as our Lord wishes his salvation. In this way we begin to become like God Himself, Who, according to the words of Christ, *is kind to the unthankful and the evil* (Luke 6:35). In going against our fallen nature, we return to our original nature—the image of God in us—and we grow in the likeness of God.

Abba Dorotheus, a Desert Father of the sixth century, says that we can be healed of the sickness of resentment "by prayer right from the heart for the one who has annoyed us. We can pray such words as, 'O God, help my brother, and me through his prayers.'" "In this," says Abba Dorotheus, "we are interceding for our brother, which is a sure sign of sympathy and love, and we are humiliating ourselves by asking help through our brother's prayers. [7]

When we *continually* force ourselves to bless and pray for others in this way, we will find that our Lord Jesus Christ will change, renew, and refresh our hearts. It may take some time and persistence, but gradually, almost imperceptibly, we will be changed. The poison of resentment, by the Grace of Christ, will leave our system.

Again our Lord has told us: *Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven* (Luke 6:37).

The cure for anger, judgment, and resentment is forgiveness, pure and simple. No matter what terrible afflictions and unspeakable injustices have befallen us, we can be free of their negative effects on us through forgiveness.

I once asked a Romanian Orthodox priest named Fr. George Calciu about this. For twenty-one years he had been locked in Communist prisons, where he had endured the most unimaginable horrors ever perpetrated by human beings. And yet when I met him here in America, he was happy, joyful, like a child, totally free of any negative effects of this torture on his soul. He had found the secret of forgiveness. I asked him, "How can people overcome judgment?" He looked at me, almost with astonishment, and answered, "It's simple. Just don't judge!"

It's truly simple. But we must keep in mind that we can't do it on our own: We need God's help to heal our fallen, wounded nature, to humble our pride. Therefore, as we pray for those who have hurt us, we should pray that God will *help* us to forgive, that He will soften our hard hearts, warm our cold hearts, and grant us a loving, merciful, and forgiving spirit.

Elder Sampson (Seivers) of Russia, who reposed in 1979, was a man well-equipped to speak on the subject of forgiveness. As a young novice monk, he was arrested by the Communist authorities, shot in a mass execution, and thrown into a common grave. By Divine Providence he survived the shooting, and was pulled out of the grave still breathing by his brother monks and nursed back to health. Later he was arrested again and spent nearly twenty years in Communist concentration camps. But he never held onto bitterness and resentment: He completely forgave both his executioners and his torturers. In his later years, when he was serving as a spiritual father to many people, he was especially tough when his spiritual children refused to forgive someone, even for some petty annoyance. He said: "I've always concluded: this means that they still have not gotten the point, that the whole secret, that all the salt of Christianity lies in this: to forgive, to excuse, to justify, not to know, not to remember evil.

"The Holy Fathers are the children of the Grace of the Holy Spirit. The result of this action of Grace is when the heart excuses. It loves, it can speak well of someone and pray for him. It does not remember offense or evil.

"Therefore," said Elder Sampson, "it is impossible to forgive and not excuse. This is a psychological fact. The heart is made this way. It was not the brain, not the nervous system—as science attempts to teach, and the psychiatrists especially—but it was the heart that was made this way by God. It is called a Christian heart. It excuses, it does everything possible in order to justify and excuse. Isn't that so?! That is a Christian quality!

"The pagan or the Moslem does not know about this ... the action of the Grace of the Holy Spirit.... Try telling a Moslem to justify and excuse, to love his enemy. He will kill you. [8]

Once Elder Sampson was asked, "What can an angry person do?" He replied, "He must pray and pray for healing. For the sake of his faith, for the sake of his insistence, the Lord will change his heart." [9]

5. Watchfulness and Prayer

The Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers affirm that, as we pray for spiritual healing from passions like anger and resentment, we must also practice constant *watchfulness* or *attention* over our thoughts. Christ spoke much about watchfulness, both directly and in parables. At the conclusion of one such parable, He said: *What I say to you I say to all: Watch* (Mark 13:37). Later, as He was going to His final Passion, He told His disciples: *Watch and pray*, lest you enter into temptation (Mark 14:38).

Watchfulness and prayer are closely connected. St. Symeon the New Theologian explains this connection as follows: "Watchfulness and prayer should be as closely linked together as the body to the soul, for the one cannot stand without the other. Watchfulness first goes on ahead like a scout and engages sin in combat. Prayer then follows afterwards, and instantly destroys and exterminates all the evil thoughts with which watchfulness has already been battling, for attentiveness alone cannot exterminate them. [10]

The evil one wants to trap us. He tempts us with evil thoughts against our brothers and sisters, trying to sow the seeds of judgment and resentment against them, inciting our fallen nature so that we will stray far from our first-created image and be separated from God. We must not take the bait. Whether our anger arises from our own fallen nature or from the suggestions of the evil one, we need to cut it off at once. And to recognize it at once, we must practice watchfulness over our thoughts.

St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "The passions and desires rarely attack by themselves—they are most often born of thoughts. From this we can make a rule: cut off thoughts and you will cut off everything. [11]

In *The Philokalia,* the growth from a thought to a passion is described with scientific precision. First comes the *provocation* of the thought, then the *conjunction* of the thought with emotion, then the *joining* or agreement of the will with the thought. If the soul does not pull back at this

point, the thought becomes a *habit,* and the mind is constantly preoccupied with the object of the passionate urge. Finally the person falls into the *captivity* of the urge, and rushes to satisfy it. [12]

From this it can be seen why it is so important to cut off angry and judgmental thoughts at the time of their provocation. St. John Cassian writes: "If we wish to receive the Lord's blessing, we should restrain not only the outward expression of anger, but also angry thoughts. More beneficial than controlling our tongue in a moment of anger and refraining from angry words is purifying our heart from rancor and not harboring malicious thoughts against our brethren. The Gospel teaches us to cut off the roots of our sins and not merely their fruits. [13]"

The more we entertain thoughts of anger, the more they will grow and harden inside of us, making it harder to uproot them later on. Abba Dorotheus uses the analogy of a tree to explain this: when the tree is young and small, it is easy to pull out of the ground; but when it matures, it is much more difficult to uproot. In another place, Abba Dorotheus uses the analogy of a spark on tinder, which, if it is not put out, can grow into a raging flame. He writes: "Someone who is lighting a fire first sets a spark to the tinder. This is someone's provoking remark, this is the point where the fire starts. Of what consequence is that person's remark? If you put up with it, the spark goes out. But if you go on thinking, 'Why did he say that to me, and what should I say back to him?' and 'If he did not want to annoy me, he would not have said that,' then you add a small bit of wood to the flame, or some bit of fuel, and you produce some smoke: this is a disturbance of the mind. This disturbance floods the mind with thoughts and emotions, which stimulate the heart and make it bold to attack. This boldness incites us to vengeance on the person who annoyed us.... If, therefore, you put up with a sharp retort from someone, the little spark is extinguished before it causes you any trouble. Even if you are a little troubled and you desire promptly to get rid of it, since it is still small, you can do so by remaining silent with a prayer on your lips and by one good heartfelt act of humility. But if you dwell on it and inflame your heart and torment yourself with thoughts about why he said that to me, and what should I say to him, you are blowing on the embers and adding fuel and causing smoke! From this influx of thoughts and conflicting emotions the heart catches fire and there you are—in a passion." [14]

When a thought of anger or judgment arises in our mind, therefore, we are to *cut it off* or *repulse it* at once. In this way we use our incensive power in the way it was intended to be used: to cut off temptation.

Cutting off thoughts does not mean arguing with them or struggling against them. St. Silouan of Mount Athos affirms: "It is best of all not to argue with thoughts. The spirit that debates with such a thought will be faced with its steady development, and, bemused by the exchange, will be distracted from remembrance of God, which is exactly what the demons are after. [15]

Our struggle should not be *against* thoughts, but *towards* remembrance of God. It is enough just to observe our thoughts through the practice of watchfulness. We will thereby recognize our angry and judgmental thoughts right away. We see them, we know that we don't want them because they separate us from God, and we simply let them go. If we do not align ourselves with the thoughts, they will naturally disappear. The fifth-century Desert Father, Abba Pimen, says: "If

we do not do anything about thoughts, in time they are spoiled, that is to say, they disintegrate. [16]

The thought may come again and again, but each time we are to cut it off in the same way. When the thoughts are continual, it is *especially* important to turn to God in prayer, asking for His forgiveness and for deliverance from the continual thoughts. This prayer, as mentioned earlier, should include a prayer of good will for the person at whom we are angry or irritated.

In the practice of watchfulness and prayer, we have no better tool than the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." There is no more powerful name on earth than the name of Jesus Christ to oppose the proud fallen spirits. And, in the words of the Holy Apostle Peter, *There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12).

When we ask Christ to have mercy on us, we are also humbling our proud fallen nature. We are admitting that we are not God, and that we need God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. In seeking God's forgiveness, we are acknowledging the infirmity of our nature, and this helps us to forgive and have mercy on others who share our fallen, wounded nature.

Since the Jesus Prayer is so short and single-pointed, it lends itself to the practice of watchfulness. We can keep our attention on the words of the Prayer more easily than we can with other prayers. This helps us to learn how to repulse or cut off intrusive thoughts, and to keep our attention raised to God. It helps us to develop the *habit* of inward attention. At the same time, by means of this Prayer we are calling down Divine Grace into our hearts, for we are calling upon the Source of Grace, Jesus Christ.

As we seek to forgive people for whom we feel bitterness, we should also call upon the Mother of God to help us forgive. When Elder Sampson was once asked how he was able to forgive his executioners and torturers, he said: "One need only pray to the Mother of God and the offense is taken away. It is taken away if you only ask the Mother of God. It is enough for your heart to have some kind of direct contact with the Mother of God, and that horror, offense, injury, sorrow and slander will be taken away." [17]

6. Reconciliation Through Self-Accusation

Now we've looked at the sickness—anger and resentment—and we've looked at the cure: forgiveness and the cutting off of angry thoughts by means of watchfulness and prayer. But what if anger and resentment have already poisoned our relationship with someone else? What then are we to do? Both the Gospels and the Holy Fathers tell us that we are to humble ourselves and seek reconciliation. Christ says: *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother will be in danger of the judgment.... Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift* (Matt. 5:21-24).

The Holy Fathers tell us that, in order to be reconciled to someone with whom we are at odds, the first thing we are to do is to *accuse ourselves,* not the other person. If we do not accuse ourselves, we will never find rest, and we will never make true and lasting peace with our neighbor. We will always be holding onto our pride. Abba Dorotheus provides us with a good example of this from his own experience as the Superior of a monastery. He says: "Once there came to me two brothers who were always fighting. The older one was saying about the younger one, 'I arrange for him to do something and he gets distressed, and so I get distressed, thinking that if he had faith and love towards me he would accept what I tell him with complete confidence.' And the younger was saying, 'Forgive me, reverend father, but he does not speak to me with the fear of God, but rather as someone who wants to give orders. I guess this is why my heart does not have full confidence in him, as the Holy Fathers say.' Notice that each blames the other and neither blames himself. Both of them are getting upset with one another, and although they are begging each other's pardon, they both remain unconvinced 'because he does not from his heart show me deference and, therefore, I am not convinced, for the Fathers say that he should.' And the other says, 'Since he will not have complete confidence in my love until I show him deference, I, for my part, do not have complete confidence in him.' My God, do you see how ridiculous this is? Do you see their perverse way of thinking? God knows how sorry I am about this; that we take the sayings of the Holy Fathers to excuse our own will and the destruction of our souls. Each of these brothers had to throw the blame on the other.... What they really ought to do is just the opposite. The first ought to say: 'I speak with presumption and therefore God does not give my brother confidence in me.' And the other ought to be thinking: 'My brother gives me commands with humility and love, but I am unruly and have not the fear of God.' Neither of them found that way and blamed himself, but each of them vexed the other.

"Don't you see that this is why we make no progress, why we find we have not been helped towards it? We remain all the time against one another, grinding one another down. Because each considers himself right and excuses himself, all the while keeping none of the Commandments yet expecting his neighbor to keep the lot!" [18]

Abba Dorotheus points out a possible objection to this teaching on self-accusation. Someone might say: "Suppose a brother troubles me and I examine myself and find that I have not given him any cause, how can I accuse myself?" To this Abba Dorotheus replies: "If a man really examines himself, in the fear of God, he will usually find that he *has* given cause for offence, either by deed or word or by his attitude or bearing. But if, in scrutinizing himself, he sees that he has given no cause in any of these ways at that moment, it is likely that at another time he has offended him either in the same circumstances or in others, or perhaps he has offended another brother and he would want to suffer on that account or for some other wrongdoing. If he examines himself in the fear of God and gropes about diligently in his own conscience, he will always find cause for accusing himself." [19]

Here is a recent example of what Abba Dorotheus was writing about. It comes from the wonderful book *Counsels for Life:* the Life and counsels of a modern Greek Elder, Fr. Epiphanios Theodoropolos, who reposed in 1989. In this book we read: "A former spiritual child of the Elder, acting aimlessly and against the counsel of the Elder, was ordained. Fr. Epiphanios was deeply grieved and declared this to him. Of course, the Elder's grief was misinterpreted by that youth.

Thus, one day, the young man came to the Elder's house and, full of anger, without controlling himself, started scolding Fr. Epiphanios and calling him passionate, bitter, envious, egotistical, etc. Bowing and speechless, the Elder listened to him. And while we awaited from moment to moment for the Elder to cut him off like a rushing stream and make him recover from this misbehavior, the Elder suddenly lifted up his eyes and in tears told him, 'Thank you, my child, for all you said. And, furthermore, if you open my heart, you will see that I am worse than what you call me.'" [20]

From this account we see that, according to Abba Dorotheus, "The habit of accusing ourselves will work out well for us and bring us much profit, and nothing else that we can do will bring this about. [21]"

It sometimes happens that, after a quarrel, one person will come to the other and say, "Forgive me, *but* ..." and then go on to justify himself. In other words, "Forgive me, but I'm right after all." This is not good enough. Yes, the outward form of saying "Forgive me" is there, but behind that outward form is a heart that is still refusing to accuse itself. Our apology should rather be *unconditional*. We need to acknowledge our own sins, not call attention to the sins of another. We're not responsible before God for the other person's sins, we're only responsible for our own.

As the above examples indicate, if we are at odds with another person, we should not wait for the other person to come to us in repentance before we ourselves apologize. It sometimes happens that a person who is older or of a higher rank will think that his inferior should apologize first. But our Lord Jesus Christ has never said that the lesser one should first ask for forgiveness. If the younger one does not have the sense to take the first step toward reconciliation, then by all means the one who is older or in higher rank should be the first to humble himself. A moving example of such humility is found in the Life of St. John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria, who lived in the seventh century. Once, when St. John was serving the Divine Liturgy, he suddenly remembered that one of his subordinates from the lower clergy was angry with him for something. Then St. John, the Patriarch, left the holy throne, called the lower clergyman to himself, and fell at his feet, asking him for forgiveness. The clergyman was disturbed and ashamed by the great humility of the Patriarch, and himself fell at the Saint's feet and cried with tears, "Forgive me, Father." In this way, St. John showed by example that even those with higher status can ask first for forgiveness and that the humility of the greater affects their subordinates very powerfully. [22]

Yet another example of the power of humility and forgiveness comes from the Life of the above-mentioned Greek Elder, Fr. Epiphanios Theodoropolos:

"Someone thought that the Elder had treated him unjustly. He did not want to accept his explanations for anything. So he went to the Elder, full of anger, and showered him with a storm of accusations and curses. As he peeled an apple, the Elder listened to him silently till the end. As soon as the angry one finished cursing, the Elder offered him a piece, telling him, 'Would you like, my child, a little apple?'

"A second shower of cursing: 'Not from you, hypocrite!'

"The person got up abruptly to leave. Then the Elder stopped him and told him: 'I will only tell you one word. Life has many changes. If you ever end up in need and think that I might be able to help you, don't hesitate to knock on my door, fearing that I will remember these things you told me today. I have already forgotten them. Go with God's blessing, my child!'

"Sure enough, a few years later, the person knocked on the Elder's door—a plain shipwreck of life. Not only was he then aided and supported, but, crushed and humble, he also became a frequent visitor of the Elder's confessional." [23]

7. Endurance

All of the stories I've related so far have ended in the mutual reconciliation of the parties involved. It happens in life, however, that no matter how many attempts one person makes to be reconciled to the other, the other person remains hardened in his malice and will not be reconciled. What is one to do in such cases? The Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers clearly tell us: Endure. *He that shall endure to the end will be saved,* says our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 10:22). Our Lord has given us the ultimate example of endurance and forgiveness when He, the Incarnate God, suffered without complaining on Golgotha and prayed on the Cross for his enemies: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34). St. Stephen the Archdeacon acted in the same way by praying for his murderers while they were stoning him: *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge* (Acts 7:60).

According to the Holy Fathers, when we endure injustices without harboring bitterness—this is a kind of martyrdom. It is unto our salvation. Our Lord has told us: *Blessed are you, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy: For behold, your reward is great in heaven* (Luke 6:22-23).

In his book *Strife and Reconciliation,* Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev points out: "If we make peace with our enemy, our success is double: we have snatched both ourselves and him from the claws of the evil one. If we do not succeed in persuading our enemy to be reconciled, we should not continue in our spitefulness toward him. We should not hate him as he hates us, so that the loss will not be doubled and our soul not perish together with his. In such cases, the wisest thing to do is to forgive him, so that if he perishes at least we will not be devoured by the devil." [24]

In *The Prologue of Ohrid,* St. Nikolai Velimirovich relates a profitable tale that powerfully illustrates this point. In the entry for February 9, the Life of the Holy Martyr Nicephorus, we read:

The biography of this martyr clearly demonstrates how God rejects pride and crowns humility and love with glory. There lived in Antioch two close friends, the learned priest Sapricius and the simple layman Nicephorus. Somehow their friendship turned into a terrible hatred for each other. The God-fearing Nicephorus attempted on many occasions to make peace with the priest. However, at no time did Sapricius desire to be reconciled. When a persecution of Christians began in the year 260, the presbyter Sapricius was condemned to death and brought to the place of execution. The sorrowful Nicephorus followed after Sapricius, beseeching him along the way to forgive him before his death, so that they might depart in peace.

"I beseech you, O martyr of Christ," said Nicephorus, "forgive me if I have sinned against you!" Sapricius did not even want to look at his opponent, but quietly and arrogantly walked toward his death. Upon seeing the hardness of the priest's heart, God did not want to accept the sacrifice of his martyrdom and crown him with a wreath, so He mysteriously withheld His Grace. At the last moment, Sapricius denied Christ and declared before the executioners that he would bow down before the idols. So it is with blind hatred! Nicephorus implored Sapricius not to deny Christ, saying, "O my beloved brother, do not do that; do not deny our Lord Jesus Christ; do not forfeit the heavenly wreath!" But all was in vain. Sapricius remained adamant. Then Nicephorus cried out to the executioners, "I too am a Christian; behead me in place of Sapricius!" The executioners informed the judge of this, and the judge ordered the release of Sapricius and beheaded Nicephorus in his place. Nicephorus joyfully lowered his head on the block and was beheaded. Thus, he was made worthy of the Kingdom and was crowned with the immortal wreath of glory. [25]

8. The Law of Forgiveness

Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us a spiritual law: *If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (Matt. 6:14-15).

Elder Sampson affirms that this Divine law is absolute: "No virtue," he says, "can atone for the lack of forgiveness. No *podvig* [ascetic undertaking], no almsgiving can atone for the refusal to forgive.

"*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors* (Matt. 6:12). That is the only condition for being heard by God, for salvation. You cannot buy off God with formalities. The law of God is an absolute law! That is why it is so painful and difficult for us when we meet souls which are not Christian, that is, souls which have no intention, or even the desire, to forgive." [26]

In the Lives of the Saints, there are many accounts which show that Christ's law regarding forgiveness is truly absolute. For example, in *The Spiritual Meadow* we read the account of the Desert Father, Abba Isaac:

"Once," says Abba Isaac, "a demon approached me in the form of a youth. 'You are mine,' the demon said. I asked him how he could say that. 'Because three Sundays running you have received Holy Communion while being at daggers-drawn with your neighbor,' he said. I told him he was lying. But he said, 'Are you not harboring a grudge against him because of a plate of lentils? I am the one who is in charge of grudges, and, from now on, you are mine.' When I heard that, I left my cell, went to the brother and prostrated myself before him in order to be reconciled with him. When I returned to my cell I found that the demon had burned my mat on which I prostrated myself, because he was so consumed with jealousy for our love." [27]

An even more sobering tale is found in the Russian Lives of Saints for February 27: the Life of St. Titus of the Kiev Caves, who lived in the twelfth century:

In the Russian monastery of the Kiev Caves there lived a hieromonk by the name of Titus. He and the deacon Evagrius loved each other very much and got along very well. Everyone

marveled at their sincere friendship, but the devil then embroiled them so badly that they could not stand each other. When one of them was censing the church, the other one ran away from the incense; and even if he could not escape in time, the first one did not cense him. A long time passed and they lived constantly in this sinful darkness, and thus irreconciled they dared to take Holy Communion. The brothers pleaded with them to make peace, but they would not hear of it.

It was God's Providence that the priest Titus should fall fatally ill. He then began to cry bitterly for his sin and sent people to ask the deacon Evagrius for forgiveness on his behalf. The deacon not only did not forgive him, but he cursed him with bitter words. The brothers, when they saw that Titus was already in agony, brought Evagrius by force to reconcile them. The sick man stood up with great difficulty, fell at the feet of the deacon, and begged him with tears in his eyes, "Forgive me, Father!" But Evagrius callously turned his face away from him and said, "I do not want to forgive him, either here or in the life to come!" As he said these words, he tore himself from the hands of the brothers and fell to the ground. They wanted to lift him up, but they found him dead. At the same time, the blessed Titus was immediately healed. Everyone was terrified by the occurrence and began asking Titus what it meant. Then he told them what he had seen with his spiritual eyes: "When I was ill and I did not give up my anger towards my brother, I saw that the angels were withdrawing from me and were crying over the death of my soul, and that the demons were rejoicing at my anger. That is why I asked you to go to the brother and implore him for his forgiveness for me. When you brought him to me, and I bowed before him and he turned away from me, I saw an angel who was holding a fiery spear and who struck the unforgiving one with it. Immediately, he fell dead. But to me the same angel gave his hand and helped me up, and here I am healthy again." [28]

In the book *Strife and Reconciliation,* Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev comments on this story:

"How often in life it happens that embittered and irreconciled Christians suddenly leave this world and set out for the Kingdom of Eternity with anger in their souls! What pardon can they expect from God if they themselves have not forgiven those who have sinned against them?! It is terrible to live irreconciled, but it is even worse to die irreconciled! Bitterness and strife make the soul unfit to bear Divine Grace, and thus they destroy it....

"In the Life of St. Basil the New it is said that the last trial with which souls passing to the other world are tested is the trial of mercifulness. This is not by accident, but in accordance with God's law. If we have observed and fulfilled all the commandments and avoided all sins, but we have remained irreconcilable and bitter towards our personal enemies, we will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only the merciful will be shown mercy. The man who has been lenient towards others will enjoy God's lenience toward his own weaknesses. The spiteful will remain unforgiven. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk says clearly: 'The doors of God's mercy open before the thieves, murderers, fornicators, publicans, and all other sinners, but they close before the spiteful.'" [29]

In his monastery in Romania, St. Paisius Velichkovsky commanded that, if some disturbance were to occur among the brethren, there must be true reconciliation on that very day, according to the Scripture: *Do not let the sun go down on your anger* (Eph. 4:26). And if someone were to grow hard in heart, not wishing to be reconciled, he was not allowed over the threshold of the Church, nor allowed to say the "Our Father" until he became reconciled. [30] How could he say

without hypocrisy the words, *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,* unless he had truly forgiven?

By not allowing irreconciled brothers into the church, St. Paisius made them aware that their prayers would not be heard, and they would not be allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, if they held onto their resentment. As we enter the church, and especially as we approach the Holy Chalice, let us remember this. Let us remember everything that the Holy Scriptures, the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and the Lives of Saints have told us about how necessary it is to shed our resentments and have a forgiving heart. If we forgive our neighbors their transgressions, then and only then will God forgive us. Then and only then will we be able to pray boldly: *And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,* because He Himself has said: *Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.*

9. Offenses as Blessings

If looked at in the right way, the offences that come to us are actually blessings in disguise. They offer us an opportunity to forgive and thus receive God's blessings and Grace. As St. Ignatius Brianchaninov affirms, "All the sorrows and sufferings caused us by other people never come to us except with God's permission for our essential good. If these sorrows and troubles were not absolutely necessary for us, God would never allow them. They are indispensable, in order that we may have occasion to forgive our neighbors and so receive forgiveness for our own sins.... Let us force our heart to accept from our neighbor all kinds of offences and injuries that they may inflict upon us, so as to receive forgiveness for our countless sins." [31]

When we forgive, then our hearts, once darkened and weighed down by the sin of resentment, are made light and free. We receive the ability to attain true, pure prayer, undistracted by any cares or anxieties about ourselves, or by any fears and apprehensions. We live in simplicity of heart, free from care, for, as the Scripture says, *Perfect love casts out fear* (I John 4:18). This simplicity, this peace and lightness, is a foretaste of the heavenly blessedness that awaits all those who follow the commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ: *Forgive.*

I would like to conclude now with a poem by St. Nikolai Velimirovich, entitled "Forgiveness," which well sums up everything that has been said thus far:

That God may forgive us, let us forgive men.

We are all on this earth as temporary guests.

Prolonged fasting and prayer is in vain

Without forgiveness and true mercy.

God is the true Physician; sins are leprosy.

Whomever God cleanses, God also glorifies.

Every merciful act of men, God rewards with mercy.

He who returns sin with sin perishes without mercy.

Pus is not cleansed by pus from infected wounds,

Neither is the darkness of the dungeon dispelled by darkness,

But pure balm heals the festering wound,

And light disperses the darkness of the dungeon.

To the seriously wounded, mercy is like a balm;

As if seeing a torch dispersing the darkness, everyone rejoices in mercy.

The madman says, "I have no need of mercy!"

But when he is overcome by misery, he cries out for mercy!

Men bathe in the mercy of God,

And that mercy of God wakens us to life!

That God may forgive us, let us forgive men,

We are all on this earth as temporary guests. [32]

Endnotes

1. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies Concerning the Statutes* 11:3, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 413.
2. St. John Cassian, "On the Eight Vices," in *The Philokalia,* vol. 1 (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 83.
3. St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, *Tvoreniya* (Works), vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1912), p. 205 (in Russian).
4. St. John Cassian "On the Eight Vices," p. 84.
5. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *The Arena* (Jordanville, N. Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983), p. 159.
6. *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, third edition, 1976), p. 64.
7. St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Discourses and Sayings* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1977), p. 154
8. Elder Sampson (Seivers), "Discussions and Teachings of Elder Sampson," *The Orthodox Word* no. 177 (1994), pp. 214-15
9. [i] Ibid., p. 224.
10. St. Symeon the New Theologian, "The Three Methods of Prayer, in *The Philokalia,* vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 67.
11. St. Theophan the Recluse, *The Path to Salvation* (St. Herman Brotherhood, 1996), p. 289.
12. St. Hesychius the Presbyter, "On Watchfulness and Holiness," in *The Philokalia,* vol. 1, pp. 170-71. See also I. M. Kontzevitch, *The Acquisition of the Holy Spirit in Ancient Russia* (St. Herman Brotherhood, 1988), pp. 39-43.
13. St. John Cassian, "On the Eight Vices," p. 86.
14. St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Discourses and Sayings,* p. 150.
15. Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *St. Silouan the Athonite* (Essex, England: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991), p. 66.
16. Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Oxford: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1975), p. 142.
17. Elder Sampson (Seivers), "Discussions and Teachings," p. 222.
18. St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Discourses and Sayings,* pp. 144-45.
19. *Ibid.,* pp. 141-42.
20. *Counsels for Life: From the Life and Teachings of Father Ephipanios Theodoropoulos* (Thessaloniki, Greece: "Orthodox Kypseli," 1995), p. 80.
21. St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Discourses and Sayings,* p. 143.
22. Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev, *The Meaning of Suffering and Strife and Reconciliation* (St. Herman Brotherhood, 1994), p. 95.
23. *Counsels for Life,* pp. 80-81.

24. Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev, *Strife and Reconciliation,* p. 102.
25. St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue of Ohrid,* vol. 1 (Alhambra, Calif.: Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America, 2002), pp. 143-44.
26. Elder Sampson (Seivers), "Discussions and Teachings," p. 219.
27. St. John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1992), pp. 132-33.
28. Archimandrite Seraphim Aleksiev, *Strife and Reconciliation,* pp. 73-74.
29. *Ibid.,* pp. 74, 109-10.
30. *Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky* (St. Herman Brotherhood, 1976), p. 109.
31. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *The Arena,* p. 164.
32. St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue of Ohrid,* vol. 1, pp. 208-9.

Published with permission of the St. Herman Brotherhood.

The True Nature of Fasting

Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos Ware, From The Lenten Triodion

'We waited, and at last our expectations were fulfilled', writes the Serbian Bishop Nikolai of Ochrid, describing the Easter service at Jerusalem. 'When the Patriarch sang "Christ is risen", a heavy burden fell from our souls. We felt as if we also had been raised from the dead. All at once, from all around, the same cry resounded like the noise of many waters. "Christ is risen" sang the Greeks, the Russians, the Arabs, the Serbs, the Copts, the Armenians, the Ethiopians one after another, each in his own tongue, in his own melody... Coming out from the service at dawn, we began to regard everything in the light of the glory of Christ's Resurrection, and all appeared different from what it had yesterday; everything seemed better, more expressive, more glorious. Only in the light of the Resurrection does life receive meaning.'

This sense of resurrection joy, so vividly described by Bishop Nikolai, forms the foundation of all the worship of the Orthodox Church; it is the one and only basis for our Christian life and hope. Yet, in order for us to experience the full power of this Paschal rejoicing, each of us needs to pass through a time of preparation. 'We waited,' says Bishop Nikolai, 'and at last our expectations were fulfilled.' Without this waiting, without this expectant preparation, the deeper meaning of the Easter celebration will be lost.

So it is that before the festival of Easter there has developed a long preparatory season of repentance and fasting, extending in present Orthodox usage over ten weeks. First come twenty-two days (four successive Sundays) of preliminary observance; then the six weeks or forty days of the Great Fast of Lent; and finally Holy Week, Balancing the seven weeks of Lent and Holy Week, there follows after Easter a corresponding season of fifty days of thanksgiving, concluding with Pentecost.

Each of these seasons has its own liturgical book. For the time of preparation there is the Lenten Triodion or 'Book of Three Odes', the most important parts of which are here presented in English translation. For the time of thanksgiving there is the Pentekostarion, also known in Slav usage as the Festal Triodion. The point of division between the two books is midnight on the evening of Holy Saturday, with Matins for Easter Sunday as the first service in the Pentekostarion. This division into two distinct volumes, made for reasons of practical convenience, should not cause us to overlook the essential unity between the Lord's Crucifixion and His Resurrection, which together form a single, indivisible action. And just as the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are

one action, so also the 'three holy days' (triduum sanctum) - Great Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday constitute a single liturgical observance. Indeed, the division of the Lenten Triodion and the Pentekostarion into two books did not become standard until after the eleventh century; in early manuscripts they are both contained in the same codex.

What do we find, then, in this book of preparation that we term the Lenten Triodion? It can most briefly be described as the book of the fast. Just as the children of Israel ate the 'bread of affliction' (Deut. 16: 3) in preparation for the Passover, so Christians prepare themselves for the celebration of the New Passover by observing a fast. But what is meant by this word 'fast' (nisteia)? Here the utmost care is needed, so as to preserve a proper balance between the outward and the inward. On the outward level fasting involves physical abstinence from food and drink, and without such exterior abstinence a full and true fast cannot be kept; yet the rules about eating and drinking must never be treated as an end in themselves, for ascetic fasting has always an inward and unseen purpose. Man is a unity of body and soul, 'a living creature fashioned from natures visible and invisible' , in the words of the Triodion; and our ascetic fasting should therefore involve both these natures at once. The tendency to over-emphasize external rules about food in a legalistic way, and the opposite tendency to scorn these rules as outdated and unnecessary, are both alike to be deplored as a betrayal of true Orthodoxy. In both cases the proper balance between the outward and the inward has been impaired.

The second tendency is doubtless the more prevalent in our own day, especially in the West. Until the fourteenth century, most Western Christians, in common with their brethren in the Orthodox East, abstained during Lent not only from meat but from animal products, such as , eggs, milk, butter and cheese. In East and West alike, the Lenten fast involved a severe physical effort. But in Western Christendom over the past five hundred years, the physical requirements of fasting have been steadily reduced, until by now they are little more than symbolic. How many, one wonders, of those who eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday are aware of the original reason for this custom to use up any remaining eggs and butter before the Lenten fast begins? Exposed as it is to Western secularism, the Orthodox world in our own time is also beginning to follow the same path of laxity.

One reason for this decline in fasting is surely a heretical attitude towards human nature, a false 'spiritualism' which rejects or ignores the body, viewing man solely in terms of his reasoning brain. As a result, many contemporary Christians have lost a true vision of man as an integral unity of the visible and the invisible; they neglect the

positive role played by the body in the spiritual life, forgetting St. Paul's affirmation: 'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. . . . glorify God with your body' (I Cor. 6: 19-20). Another reason for the decline in fasting among Orthodox is the argument, commonly advanced in our times, that the traditional rules are no longer possible today. These rules presuppose, so it is urged, a closely organized, non-pluralistic Christian society, following an agricultural way of life that is now increasingly a thing of the past. There is a measure of truth in this. But it needs also to be said that fasting, as traditionally practiced in the Church, has always been difficult and has always involved hardship. Many of our contemporaries are willing to fast for reasons of health or beauty, in order to lose weight; cannot we Christians do as much for the sake of the heavenly Kingdom? Why should the self-denial gladly accepted by previous generations of Orthodox prove such an intolerable burden to their successors today? Once St. Seraphim of Sarov was asked why the miracles of grace, so abundantly manifest in the past, were no longer apparent in his own day, and to this he replied: 'Only one thing is lacking - a firm resolve'.

The primary aim of fasting is to make us conscious of our dependence upon God. If practiced seriously, the Lenten abstinence from food - particularly in the opening days - involves a considerable measure of real hunger, and also a feeling of tiredness and physical exhaustion. The purpose of this is to lead us in turn to a sense of inward brokenness and contrition; to bring us, that is, to the point where we appreciate the full force of Christ's statement, 'Without Me you can do nothing' (John 15: 5). If we always take our fill of food and drink, we easily grow over-confident in our own abilities, acquiring a false sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency. The observance of a physical fast undermines this sinful complacency. Stripping from us the specious assurance of the Pharisee - who fasted, it is true, but not in the right spirit - Lenten abstinence gives us the saving self dissatisfaction of the Publican (Luke I 8: 10-1 3). Such is the function of the hunger and the tiredness: to make us 'poor in spirit', aware of our helplessness and of our dependence on God's aid.

Yet it would be misleading to speak only of this element of weariness and hunger. Abstinence leads, not merely-to this, but also to a sense of lightness, wakefulness, freedom and joy. Even if the fast proves debilitating at first, afterwards we find that it enables us to sleep less, to think more clearly, and to work more decisively. As many doctors acknowledge, periodical fasts contribute to bodily hygiene. While involving genuine self-denial, fasting does not seek to do violence to our body but rather to restore it to health and equilibrium. Most of us in the Western world habitually eat more than we need. Fasting liberates our body from the burden of excessive weight and makes it a willing partner in the task of prayer, alert and responsive to the voice of the Spirit.

It will be noted that in common Orthodox usage the words 'fasting' and 'abstinence' are employed interchangeably. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church made a clear distinction between the two terms: abstinence concerned the types of food eaten, irrespective of quantity, whereas fasting signified a limitation on the number of meals or on the amount of food that could be taken. Thus on certain days both abstinence and fasting were required; alternatively, the one might be prescribed but not the other. In the Orthodox Church a clear-cut distinction is not made between the two words. During Lent there is frequently a limitation on the number of meals eaten each day, but when a meal is permitted there is no restriction on the amount of food allowed. The Fathers simply state, as a guiding principle, that we should never eat to satiety but always rise from the table feeling that we could have taken more and that we are now ready for prayer.

If it is important not to overlook the physical requirements of fasting, it is even more important not to overlook its inward significance. Fasting is not a mere matter of diet. It is moral as well as physical. True fasting is to be converted in heart and will; it is to return to God, to come home like the Prodigal to our Father's house. In the words of St. John Chrysostom, it means 'abstinence not only from food but from sins'. 'The fast', he insists, 'should be kept not by the mouth alone but also by the eye, the ear, the feet, the hands and all the members of the body': the eye must abstain from impure sights, the ear from malicious gossip, the hands from acts of injustice. It is useless to fast from food, protests St. Basil, and yet to indulge in cruel criticism and slander: 'You do not eat meat, but you devour your brother' . The same point is made in the Triodion, especially during the first week of Lent:

As we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion. . .

Let us observe a fast acceptable and pleasing to the Lord. True fasting is to put away all evil, To control the tongue, to forbear from anger, To abstain from lust, slander, falsehood and perjury. If we renounce these things, then is our fasting true and acceptable to God. Let us keep the Fast not only by refraining from food, But by becoming strangers to all the bodily passions.

The inner significance of fasting is best summed up in the triad: prayer, fasting, almsgiving. Divorced from prayer and from the reception of the holy sacraments, unaccompanied by acts of compassion, our fasting becomes pharisaical or even demonic. It leads, not to contrition and joyfulness, but to pride, inward tension and irritability. The link between prayer and fasting is rightly indicated by Father Alexander Elchaninov. A critic of fasting says to him: 'Our work suffers and we become

irritable. . . . I have never seen servants [in pre-revolutionary Russia] so bad tempered as during the last days of Holy Week. Clearly, fasting has a very bad effect on the nerves.' To this Father Alexander replies: 'You are quite right. . . . If it is not accompanied by prayer and an increased spiritual life, it merely leads to a heightened state of irritability. It is natural that servants who took their fasting seriously and who were forced to work hard during Lent, while not being allowed to go to church, were angry and irritable.'

Fasting, then, is valueless or even harmful when not combined with prayer. In the Gospels the devil is cast out, not by fasting alone, but by 'prayer and fasting' (Matt. 17: 21 ; Mark 9: 29); and of the early Christians it is said, not simply that they fasted, but that they 'fasted and prayed' (Acts 13: 3; compare 14: 23). In both the Old and the New Testament fasting is seen, not as an end in itself, but as an aid to more intense and living prayer, as a preparation for decisive action or for direct encounter with God. Thus our Lord's forty-day fast in the wilderness was the immediate preparation for His public ministry (Matt. 4: 1-11). When Moses fasted on Mount Sinai (Exod. 34: 28) and Elijah on Mount Horeb (3 [1] Kgs. 19: 8-12), the fast was in both cases linked with a theophany. The same connection between fasting and the vision of God is evident in the case of St. Peter (Acts 10: 9-17). He 'went up on the housetop to pray about the sixth hour, and he became very hungry and wanted to eat; and it was in this state that he fell into a trance and heard the divine voice. Such is always the purpose of ascetic fasting - to enable us, as the Triodion puts it, to 'draw near to the mountain of prayer'

Prayer and fasting should in their turn be accompanied by almsgiving - by love for others expressed in practical form, by works of compassion and forgiveness. Eight days before the opening of the Lenten fast, on the Sunday of the Last Judgment, the appointed Gospel is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matt. 25': 31-46), reminding us that the criterion in the coming judgment will not be the strictness of our fasting but the amount of help that we have given to those in need. In the words of the Triodion:

> Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life: Let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, Let us clothe the naked, let us welcome strangers, Let us visit those in prison and the sick. Then the Judge of all the earth will say even to us: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.'

This stanza, it may be noted in passing, is a typical instance of the 'evangelical' character of the Orthodox service-books. In common with so many other texts in the Triodion, it is simply a paraphrase of the words of Holy Scripture.

It is no coincidence that on the very threshold of the Great Fast, at Vespers on the Sunday of Forgiveness, there is a special ceremony of mutual reconciliation: for without love towards others there can be no genuine fast. And this love for others should not be limited to formal gestures or to sentimental feelings, but should issue in specific acts of almsgiving. Such was the firm conviction of the early Church. The second-century Shepherd of Hermas insists that the money saved through fasting is to be given to the widow, the orphan and the poor. But almsgiving means more than this. It is to give not only our money but our time, not only what we have but what we are; it is to give a part of ourselves. When we hear the Triodion speak of almsgiving, the word should almost always be taken in this deeper sense. For the mere giving of money can often be a substitute and an evasion, a way of protecting ourselves from closer personal involvement with those in distress. On the other hand, to do nothing more than offer reassuring words of advice to someone crushed by urgent material anxieties is equally an evasion of our responsibilities (see Jas. 2: 16). Bearing in mind the unity already emphasized between man's body and his soul, we seek to offer help on both the material and the spiritual levels at once.

'When thou seest the naked, cover him; and hide not thyself from thine own flesh.' The Eastern liturgical tradition, in common with that of the West, treats Isaiah 58: 3-8 as a basic Lenten text. So we read in the Triodion:

> While fasting with the body, brethren, let us also fast in spirit. Let us loose every bond of iniquity ; Let us undo the knots of every contract made by violence; Let us tear up all unjust agreements; Let us give bread to the hungry And welcome to our house the poor who have no roof to cover them, That we may receive great mercy from Christ our God.

Always in our acts of abstinence we should keep in mind St. Paul's admonition not to condemn others who fast less strictly: 'Let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats' (Rom. 14: 3). Equally, we remember Christ's condemnation of outward display in prayer, fasting or almsgiving (Matt. 6: 1-18). Both these Scriptural passages are often recalled in the Triodion:

> Consider well, my soul: dost thou fast? Then despise not thy neighbor. Dost thou abstain from food? Condemn not thy brother.

Come, let us cleanse ourselves by almsgiving and acts of mercy to the poor, Not sounding a trumpet or making a show of our charity. Let not our left hand know what

our right hand is doing; Let not vainglory scatter the fruit of our almsgiving; But in secret let us call on Him that knows all secrets: Father, forgive us our trespasses, for Thou lovest mankind.

If we are to understand correctly the text of the Triodion and the spirituality that underlies it, there are five misconceptions about the Lenten fast against which we should guard. In the first place, the Lenten fast is not intended only for monks and nuns, but is enjoined on the whole Christian people. Nowhere do the Canons of the Ecumenical or Local Councils suggest that fasting is only for monks and not for the laity. By virtue of their Baptism, all Christians - whether married or under monastic vows - are Cross-bearers, following the same spiritual path. The exterior conditions in which they live out their Christianity display a wide variety, but in its inward essence the life is one. Just as the monk by his voluntary self-denial is seeking to affirm the intrinsic goodness and beauty of God's creation, so also is each married Christian required to be in some measure an ascetic. The way of negation and the way of affirmation are interdependent, and every Christian is called to follow both ways at once.

In the second place, the Triodion should not be misconstrued in a Pelagian sense. If the Lenten texts are continually urging us to greater personal efforts, this should not be taken as implying that our progress depends solely upon the exertion of our own will. On the contrary, whatever we achieve in the Lenten fast is to be regarded as a free gift of grace from God. The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete leaves no doubt at all on this point:

> I have no tears, no repentance, no compunction; But as God do Thou Thyself, O Saviour, bestow them on me.

In the third place, our fasting should not be self-willed but obedient. When we fast, we should not try to invent special rules for ourselves, but we should follow as faithfully as possible the accepted pattern set before us by Holy Tradition. This accepted pattern, expressing as it does the collective conscience of the People of God, possesses a hidden wisdom and balance not to be found in ingenious austerities devised by our own fantasy. Where it seems that the traditional regulations are not applicable to our personal situation, we should seek the counsel of our spiritual father - not in order legalistically to secure a 'dispensation' from him, but in order humbly with his help to discover what is the will of God for us. Above all, if we desire for ourselves not some relaxation but some piece of additional strictness, we should not embark upon it without our spiritual father's blessing. Such has been the practice since the early centuries of the Church's life:

> Abba Antony said: 'I know of monks who fell after much labor and lapsed into madness, because they trusted in their own work and neglected the commandment that says: "Ask your father, and he will tell you.'" (Deut. 32: 7)
>
> Again he said: 'So far as possible, for every step that a monk takes, for every drop of water that he drinks in his cell, he should consult the gerontes, in case he makes some mistake in this.'

These words apply not only to monks but also to lay people living in the 'world', even though the latter may be bound by a less strict obedience to their spiritual father. If proud and willful, our fasting assumes a diabolical character, bringing us closer not to God but to Satan. Because fasting renders us sensitive to the realities of the spiritual world, it can be dangerously ambivalent: for there are evil spirits as well as good.

In the fourth place, paradoxical though it may seem, the period of Lent is a time not of gloom but of joyfulness. It is true that fasting brings us to repentance and to grief for sin, but this penitent grief, in the vivid phrase of St. John Climacus, is a 'joy-creating sorrow' . The Triodion deliberately mentions both tears and gladness in a single sentence:

> Grant me tears falling as the rain from heaven, O Christ, As I keep this joyful day of the Fast.

It is remarkable how frequently the themes of joy and light recur in the texts for the first day of Lent: With joy let us enter upon the beginning of the Fast. Let us not be of sad countenance. . . . Let us joyfully begin the all-hallowed season of abstinence; And let us shine with the bright radiance of the holy commandments. . . . All mortal life is but one day, so it is said, To those who labor with love. There are forty days in the Fast; Let us keep them all with joy.

The season of Lent, it should be noted, falls not in midwinter when the countryside is frozen and dead, but in spring when all things are returning to life. The English word 'Lent' originally had the meaning 'springtime'; and in a text of fundamental importance the Triodion likewise describes the Great Fast as 'springtime': The springtime of the Fast has dawned, The flower of repentance has begun to open. O brethren, let us cleanse ourselves from all impurity And sing to the Giver of Light: Glory be to Thee, who alone lovest mankind.

Lent signifies not winter but spring, not darkness but light, not death but renewed vitality. Certainly it has its somber aspect, with the repeated prostrations at the weekday services, with the dark vestments of the priest, with the hymns sung to a subdued chant, full of compunction. In the Christian Empire of Byzantium theatres were closed and public spectacles forbidden during Lent; and even today weddings are forbidden in the seven weeks of the fast. Yet these elements of austerity should not blind us to the fact that the fast is not a burden, not a punishment, but a gift of God's grace:

> Come, O ye people, and today let us accept The grace of the Fast as a gift from God.

Fifthly and finally, our Lenten abstinence does not imply a rejection of God's creation. As St. Paul insists, 'Nothing is unclean in itself' (Rom. 14: 14). All that God has made is 'very good' (Gen. I: 31): to fast is not to deny this intrinsic goodness but to reaffirm it. 'To the pure all things are pure' (Titus I: I S), and so at the Messianic banquet in the Kingdom of heaven there will be no need for fasting and ascetic self-denial. But, living as we do in a fallen world, and suffering as we do from the consequences of sin, both original and personal, we are not pure; and so we have need of fasting. Evil resides not in created things as such but in our attitude towards them, that is, in our will. The purpose of fasting, then, is not to repudiate the divine creation but to cleanse our will. During the fast we deny our bodily impulses - for example, our spontaneous appetite for food and drink - not because these impulses are in themselves evil, but because they have been disordered by sin and require to be purified through self-discipline. In this way, asceticism is a fight not against but for the body; the aim of fasting is to purge the body from alien defilement and to render it spiritual. By rejecting what is sinful in our will, we do not destroy the God-created body but restore it to its true balance and freedom. In Father Sergei Bulgakov's phrase, we kill the flesh in order to acquire a body.

But in rendering the body spiritual, we do not thereby dematerialize it, depriving it of its character as a physical entity. The 'spiritual' is not to be equated with the non-material, neither is the 'fleshly' or carnal to be equated with the bodily. In St. Paul's usage, 'flesh' denotes the totality of man, soul and body together, in so far as he is fallen and separated from God; and in the same way 'spirit' denotes the totality of man, soul and body together, in so far as he is redeemed and divinized by grace. Thus the soul as well as the body can become carnal and fleshly, and the body as well as the soul can become spiritual. When St. Paul enumerates the 'works of the flesh' (Gal. 5: 19-21), he includes such things as sedition, heresy and envy, which involve the soul much more than the body. In making our body spiritual, then, the Lenten fast does not suppress the physical

aspect of our human nature, but makes our materiality once more as God intended it to be.

Such is the way in which we interpret our abstinence from food. Bread and wine and the other fruits of the earth are gifts from God, of which we partake with reverence and thanksgiving. If Orthodox Christians abstain from eating meat at certain times, or in some cases continually, this does not mean that the Orthodox Church is on principle vegetarian and considers meat-eating to be a sin; and if we abstain sometimes from wine, this does not mean that we uphold teetotalism. When we fast, this is not because we regard the act of eating as shameful, but in order to make an our eating spiritual, sacramental and eucharistic - no longer a concession to greed but a means of communion with God the giver. So far from making us look on food as a defilement, fasting has exactly the opposite effect. Only those who have learnt to control their appetites through abstinence can appreciate the full glory and beauty of what God has given to us. To one who has eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, an olive can seem full of nourishment. A slice of plain cheese or a hard boiled egg never taste so good as on Easter morning, after seven weeks of fasting.

We can apply this approach also to the question of abstinence from sexual relations. It has long been the Church's teaching that during seasons of fasting married couples should try to live as brother and sister, but this does not at all signify that sexual relations within marriage are in themselves sinful. On the contrary, the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete - in which, more than anywhere else in the Triodion, we find summed up the significance of Lent states without the least ambiguity: Marriage is honorable, and the marriage-bed undefiled. For on both Christ has given His blessing, Eating in the flesh at the wedding in Cana, Turning water into wine and revealing His first miracle.

The abstinence of married couples, then, has as its aim not the suppression but the purification of sexuality. Such abstinence, practiced 'with mutual consent for a time', has always the positive aim, 'that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer' (1 Cor. 7: 5). Self restraint, so far from indicating a dualist depreciation of the body, serves on the contrary to confer upon the sexual side of marriage a spiritual dimension which might otherwise be absent.

To guard against a dualist misinterpretation of the fast, the Triodion speaks repeatedly about the inherent goodness of the material creation. In the last of the services that it contains, Vespers for Holy Saturday, the sequence of fifteen Old Testament Lessons opens with the first words of Genesis, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the

earth... : all created things are God's handiwork and as such are 'very good'. Every part of this divine creation, so the Triodion insists, joins in giving praise to the Maker:

> The hosts of heaven give Him glory; Before Him tremble cherubim and seraphim; Let everything that has breath and all creation Praise Him, bless Him, and exalt Him above all for ever.
>
> O Thou who coverest Thy high places with the waters, Who settest the sand as a bound to the sea and upholdest all things: The sun sings Thy praises, the moon gives Thee glory, Every creature offers a hymn to Thee, His Author and Creator, for ever.
>
> Let all the trees of the forest dance and sing. . . .
>
> Let the mountains and all the hills Break forth into great rejoicing at the mercy of God, And let the trees of the forest clap their hands.

This affirmative attitude towards the material world is founded not only on the doctrine of creation but also on the doctrine of Christ. Again and again in the Triodion, the true physical reality of Christ's human nature is underlined. How, then, can the human body be evil, if God Himself has in His own person assumed and divinized the body? As we state at Matins on the first Sunday in Lent, the Sunday of Orthodoxy:

> Thou hast not appeared to us, O loving Lord, merely in outward semblance, As say the followers of Mani, who are enemies of God, But in the full and true reality of the flesh.

Because Christ took a true material body, so the hymns for the Sunday of Orthodoxy make clear, it is possible and, indeed, essential to depict His person in the holy icons, using material wood and paint:

> The uncircumscribed Word of the Father became circumscribed, Taking flesh from thee, O Theotokos, And He has restored the sullied image to its ancient glory, Pilling it with the divine beauty. This our salvation we confess in deed and word, And we depict it in the holy icons. 30

This assertion of the spirit-bearing potentialities of the material creation is a constant theme during the season of Lent. On the first Sunday of the Great Fast, we are reminded

of the physical nature of Christ's Incarnation, of the material reality of the holy icons, and of the visible, aesthetic beauty of the Church. On the second Sunday we keep the memory of St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1 359), who taught that all creation is permeated by the energies of God, and that even in the present life this divine glory can be perceived through man's physical eyes, provided that his body has been rendered spiritual by God's grace. On the third Sunday we venerate the material wood of the Cross; on the sixth Sunday we bless material branches of palms; on Wednesday in Holy Week we are signed with material oil in the sacrament of Anointing; on Holy Thursday we recall how at the Last Supper Christ blessed material bread and wine, transforming them into His Body and Blood.

Those who fast, so far from repudiating material things, are on the contrary assisting in their redemption. They are fulfilling the vocation assigned to the 'sons of God' by St. Paul: 'The created universe waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. . . . The creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail until now' (Rom. 8 : 19-22). By means of our Lenten abstinence, we seek with God's help to exercise this calling as priests of the creation, restoring all things to their primal splendor. Ascetic self-discipline, then, signifies a rejection of the world, only in so far as it is corrupted by the fall; of the body, only in so far as it is dominated by sinful passions. Lust excludes love: so long as we lust after other persons or other things, we cannot truly love them. By delivering us from lust, the fast renders us capable of genuine love. No longer ruled by the selfish desire to grasp and to exploit, we begin to see the world with the eyes of Adam in Paradise. Our self-denial is the path that leads to our self-affirmation; it is our means of entry into the cosmic liturgy whereby all things visible and invisible ascribe glory to their Creator.

RULES OF FASTING

Within this developed pattern of Lent, what precisely· do the rules of fasting demand? Neither in ancient nor in modern times has there ever been exact uniformity, but most Orthodox authorities agree on the following rules:

(1) During the week between the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee and that of the Prodigal Son, there is a general dispensation from all fasting. Meat and animal products may be eaten even on Wednesday and Friday.

(2) In the following week, often termed the 'Week of Carnival ' , the usual fast is kept on Wednesday and Friday. otherwise there is no special fasting.

(3) In the week before Lent, meat is forbidden, but eggs, cheese and other dairy products may be eaten on all days, including Wednesday and Friday.

(4) On weekdays (Monday to Friday inclusive) during the seven weeks of Lent, there are restrictions both on the number of meals taken daily and on the types of food permitted; but when a meal is allowed, there is no fixed lim itation on the quantity of food to be eaten.

(a) On weekdays in first week, fasting is particularly severe. According to the strict observance, in the course of the five initial days of Lent, only two meals are eaten, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday, in both cases after the Liturgy of the Presanctified. On the other three days, those who have the strength are encouraged to keep an absolute fast; those for whom this proves impracticable may eat on Tuesday and Thursday (but not, if r::ossi ble, on Monday), in the evening after Vespers, when they may take bread and water, or perhaps tea or fruit-juice, but not a cooked meal. It should be added at once that in practice today these rules are commonly relaxed. At the meals on Wednesday and Friday xerophagy is prescribed. Literally this means 'dry eating'. Strictly interpreted, it signifies that we may eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread and honey. In practice, octopus and shell-fish are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable
oil, not made from olives. But the following categories of food are definitely
excluded:

(i) meat;
(ii) animal products (cheese, milk, butter, eggs, lard, dripping);
(iii) fish (i.e. fish with backbones);
(iv) oil (i.e. olive oil) and wine (i.e. all alcoholic drinks).

(b) **On weekdays** (Monday to Friday inclusive) in the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth weeks, one meal a day is permitted, to be taken in the after-noon following Vespers, and at this one meal xerophagy is to be observed.

(c) **Holy Week**. On the first three days there is one meal each day, with xerophagy; but some try to keep a complete fast on these days, or else they eat only uncooked food, as on the opening days of the first week.
On **Holy Thursday** one meal is eaten, with wine and oil (i.e. olive oil).
On **Great Friday** those who have the strength follow the practice of the early Church and keep a total fast. Those unable to do this may eat bread, with a little water, tea or fruit-juice, but not until sunset, or at any rate not until after the veneration of the Epitaphion at Vespers.
On **Holy Saturday** there is in principle no meal, since according to the ancient practice after the end of the Liturgy of St. Basil the faithful remained in church for the reading of the Acts of the Apostles, and for their sustenance, were given a little bread and dried fruit, with a cup of wine. If, as usually happens now, they return home for a meal, they may use wine but not oil; for on this one Saturday, alone among the Saturdays of the year, olive oil is not permitted.

The rule of xerophagy is relaxed on the following days:

(1) On **Saturdays and Sundays** in Lent, with the exception of Holy Saturday, two main meals may be taken in the usual way, around mid-day and in the evening, with wine and olive oil; but meat, animal products and fish ---. are not allowed.

(2) On the **Feast of the Annunciation** (March 25) and **Palm Sunday**, fish is permitted as well as wine and oil, but meat and animal products are not allowed. If the Feast of the Annunciation falls on the first four days of Holy

Week, wine and oil are permitted but not fish. If it falls on Great Friday or Holy Saturday, wine is permitted, but not fish or oil.

(3) Wine and oil are permitted on the following days, if they fall on a weekday in the second, third, fourth, fifth or sixth week:
First and Second Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist (Feb. 24)
Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (March 9)
Forefeast of the Annunciation (March 24)
Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel (March 26)
Patronal festival of the Church or Monastery

(4) Wine and oil are also allowed on Wednesday and Thursday in the fifth week, because of the vigil for the Great Canon. Wine is allowed -and, according to some authorities, oil as well -on Friday in the same week, because of the vigil for the Akathistos Hymn.

It has always been held that these rules of fasting should be relaxed in the case of anyone elderly or in poor health. In present-day practice, even for those in good health, the full strictness of the fast is usually mitigated. only a few Orthodox today attempt to keep a total fast on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday in the first week, or on the first three days in Holy Week. On weekdays -except, perhaps, during the first week or Holy Week -it is now common to eat two cooked meals daily instead of one. From the second until the sixth week, many Orthodox use wine, and perhaps oil also, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and less commonly on Mondays as well. Permission is often given to eat fish in these weeks. Personal factors need to be taken into account, as for example the situation of an isolated Orthodox living in the same household as non-Orthodox, or obliged to take meals in a factory or school canteen. In cases of uncertainty each should seek the advice of his or her spiritual father. At all times it is essential to bear in mind that 'you are not under the law but under grace' (Rom. 6:14), and that 'the letter kills, but the spirit gives life' (2 Cor. 3:6). The rules of fasting, while they need to be taken seriously, are not to be interpreted with dour and pedantic legalism; 'for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17).

A LITURGICAL EXPLANATION OF HOLY WEEK

The Very Rev. Alexander Schmemann

LAZARUS SATURDAY

The Beginning of the Cross: Saturday of Lazarus

"Having fulfilled Forty Days... we ask to see the Holy Week of Thy Passion." With these words sung at Vespers of Friday, Lent comes to its end and we enter into the annual commemoration of Christ's suffering, death and Resurrection. It begins on the Saturday of Lazarus. The double feast of Lazarus' resurrection and the Entrance of the Lord to Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) is described in liturgical texts as the "beginning of the Cross" and is to be understood therefore, within the context of the Holy Week. The common Troparion of these days explicitly affirms that by raising Lazarus from the dead Christ confirmed the truth of general resurrection. It is highly significant that we are led into the darkness of the Cross by one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. Light and joy shine not only at the end of Holy Week but also at its beginning; they illumine darkness itself, reveal its ultimate meaning.

All those familiar with Orthodox worship know the peculiar, almost paradoxical character of Lazarus Saturday services. It is a Sunday, i.e., a Resurrection, service on a Saturday, a day usually devoted to the liturgical commemoration of the dead. And the joy which permeates these services stresses one central theme: the forthcoming victory of Christ over Hades. Hades is the Biblical term for Death in its universal power, for that unescapable darkness and destruction that swallows all life and poisons with its shadow the whole world. But now -- with Lazarus' resurrection -- "death begins to tremble." For there the decisive duel between Life and Death begins and it gives us the key to the entire liturgical mystery of Pascha. In the early church Lazarus Saturday was called "announcement of Pascha", it announces and anticipates, indeed, the wonderful light and peace of the next Saturday - the Great and Holy Saturday, the day of the Lifegiving Tomb.

Lazarus, the Friend of Jesus

Let us first of all understand that Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, personifies the whole mankind and also each man, and Bethany, the home of Lazarus the Man, is the symbol of the whole world as a home of man. For each man was created friend of God and called to this Divine friendship: the knowledge of God, the communion with Him, the sharing of life with Him. “In Him was life and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) And yet this Friend whom God loves, whom in love He has created, i.e. called to life, is destroyed and annihilated by a power which God has not created: death. God

encounters in His own world a power which destroys His work and annihilates His design. The world is but lamentation and sorrow, tears and death. How is this possible? How did this happen? These are the questions implied in John's slow and detailed narrative of Jesus' coming to the grave of His friend. And once there, "Jesus wept." (John 11:35) Why does He weep if He knows that in a moment He will call Lazarus back to life? Byzantine hymnographers fail to grasp the true meaning of these tears. They ascribe them to His human nature, whereas the power of resurrection belongs to God in Him. But the Orthodox Church teaches that all actions of Christ are "theandric," i.e., both Divine and human, are actions of the one and same God-Man. But then His very tears are Divine. Jesus weeps because He contemplates the triumph of death and destruction in the world created by God.

Love, the Power of Life

"It stinketh." say the Jews trying to prevent Jesus from approaching the corpse, and this awful warning applies to the whole world, to all life. God is Life and the Giver of Life. He called man into the Divine reality of Life and behold "it stinketh"...The world was created to reflect and proclaim the glory of God and "it stinketh." At the grave of Lazarus God encounters Death, the reality of anti-life, of destruction and despair. He meets His Enemy, who has taken away from Him His World and become its prince. And we who follow Jesus as He approaches the grave, enter with Him into that hour of His, which He announced so often as the climax and the fulfillment of his whole work. The Cross, its necessity and universal meaning are announced in the shortest verse of the Gospel: "and Jesus wept"... We understand now that it is because He wept, i.e., loved His friend Lazarus, that Jesus had the power of calling him back to life. The Jesus had the power of calling him back to life. The power of Resurrection is not a divine "power in itself," but power of love, or rather love as power. God is Love and Love is life, Love creates Life...It is Love that weeps at the grave and it is Love that restores life. This is the meaning of the Divine tears of Jesus. In them love is at work again – recreating, redeeming, restoring the darkened life of man: "Lazarus, come forth!..." And this is why Lazarus Saturday is the beginning of both: the Cross, as the Supreme sacrifice of love, the Resurrection, as the ultimate triumph of love.

PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday: The Entrance

The Saturday of Lazarus from the liturgical point of view is the pre-feast of Palm Sunday - the Entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem. Both feasts have a common theme; triumph and victory. Saturday reveals the Enemy, which is Death. Palm Sunday announces the meaning of victory as the triumph of the Kingdom of God, as the

acceptance by the world of its only King, Jesus Christ. In the life of Jesus the solemn entrance in the Holy City was the only visible triumph. Up to that day, He consistently rejected all attempts to glorify Him. But six days before the Passover, He not only accepted to be glorified, He Himself provoked and arranged this glorification by doing what the prophet Zacharias announced: "behold, Thy King cometh unto thee... lowly and riding upon an ass.. "(Zac. 9:9). He made it clear the He wanted to be acclaimed and acknowledged as the Messiah, the King and the Redeemer of Israel. The Gospel narratives stress all these Messianic features; the Palms, the cry from the crowd of "Hosannah", the acclamation of Jesus as the Son of David and the King of Israel. The history of Israel is now coming to its end, such is the meaning of this event, for the purpose of that history was to announce and to prepare the Kingdom of God, the advent of the Messiah. And now it is fulfilled. For the King enters His Holy City and in Him all prophecies, all expectations find their fulfillment. He inaugurates His Kingdom. The Liturgy of Palm Sunday commemorates this event. With palm branches in our hands, we identify ourselves with the people of Jerusalem, together with them we greet the lowly King, singing Hosannah to Him. But what is the meaning of this today for us?

Citizenship in the Kingdom

First, it is our confession of Christ as our King and Lord. We forget so often that the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated and that on the day of our Baptism we were made citizens of it and promised to put our loyalty to it above all other loyalties. We must remember that for a few hours Christ was indeed King on earth in this world of ours, for a few hours only and in one city. But as in Lazarus we have recognized the image of each man, in this one city we acknowledge the mystical centre of the world and indeed of the whole of creation. For such is the biblical meaning of Jerusalem, the focal point of the whole history of salvation and redemption, the holy city of God's advent. Therefore, the Kingdom inaugurated in Jerusalem is a universal Kingdom, embracing in its perspective all men and the totality of creation. For a few hours – yet these were the decisive time, the ultimate hour of Jesus, the hour of fulfillment by God, of all His promises, of all His decisions. It came at the end of the entire process of preparation revealed in the Bible: it was the end of all that God did for men. And thus this short hour of Christ's earthly triumph acquires an eternal meaning. It introduces the reality of the Kingdom into our time, into all hours, makes this Kingdom the meaning of time and its ultimate goal. The Kingdom was revealed in this world - from that hour - its presence judges and transforms human history. And at the most solemn moment of our liturgical celebration, when we receive from the Priest a palm branch, we renew our oath to our King and confess His Kingdom as the ultimate meaning and content of our life. We confess that everything in our life and in the world belongs to Christ, nothing can be taken away from its sole real Owner, for there is no area of life in which He is not to rule, to save and to redeem. We proclaim the universal and total responsibility of the Church for human history and uphold her universal mission.

The Way of the Cross

We, know however, that the King whom the Jews acclaimed then, and whom we acclaim today, is on His way to Golgotha, to the Cross and to the grave, we know that this short triumph is but the prologue of His sacrifice. The branches in our hands signify, therefore, our readiness and willingness to follow Him on this sacrificial way and our acceptance of sacrifice and self-denial as the only royal way to the Kingdom.

And finally these branches, this celebration, proclaim our faith in the final victory of Christ. His Kingdom is yet hidden and the world ignores it. It lives as if the decisive event had not taken place, as if God had not died on the Cross and Man in Him was not risen from the dead. But we, Orthodox Christians, believe in the coming of the Kingdom in which God will be all in all and Christ the only King.

In our liturgical celebrations we remember events of the past. But the whole meaning and power of Liturgy is that it transforms remembrance into reality. On Palm Sunday this reality is our own involvement in, our responsibility to, the Kingdom of God. Christ does not enter into Jerusalem and more. He did it once and for all. And He does not need any "symbols," for He did not die on the Cross that we may eternally "symbolize" His life. He wants from us a real acceptance of the Kingdom which He brought to us ... and, if we are not ready to stand by the solemn oath, which we renew every year on Palm Sunday, if we do not mean to make the Kingdom of God the measure of our whole life, meaningless is our commemoration and vain the branches we take home from the Church.

HOLY MONDAY, TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY

Holy Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: The End

These three days, which the Church calls Great and Holy have within the liturgical development of the Holy Week a very definite purpose. They place all its celebrations in the perspective of End; they remind us of the eschatological meaning of Pascha. So often the Holy Week is considered one of the "beautiful traditions" or "customs," a self-evident "part" of our calendar. We take it for granted and enjoy it as a cherished annual event which we have "observed" since childhood, we admire the beauty of its services, the pageantry of its rites and, last but not least, we like the fuss about the paschal table... And then, when all this is done we resume our normal life. But do we understand that when the world rejected its Savior, when "Jesus began to be sorrowful and very troubled... and His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death," when He died on the Cross, "normal life" came to its end and is no longer possible. For there were

"normal" men who shouted "Crucify Him!" who spit at Him and nailed Him to the Cross. And they hated and killed Him precisely because He was troubling their normal life. It was indeed a perfectly "normal" world which preferred darkness and death to light and life... By the death of Jesus "normal" world, "normal" life were irrevocably condemned. Or rather they revealed their true and abnormal nature, their inability to receive the Light, the terrible power of evil in them. "Now is the judgement of this world" (John 12:31). The Pascha of Jesus signified its end to "this world" and it has been at its end since then. This end can last for hundreds of centuries, this does not alter the nature of time in which we live as the "last time." "The form of this world is passing away..." (I Corinthians 7:31)

The Ultimate Passage

Pascha means passover, passage. The Feast of Passover was for the Jews the annual commemoration of their whole history as salvation, and of salvation as passage from the slavery of Egypt into freedom, from exile into the Promised Land. It was also the anticipation of the ultimate passage -- into the Kingdom of God. And Christ was the fulfillment of Pascha. He performed the ultimate passage: from death into life, from this "old world" into the new world, into the new time of the Kingdom. And he opened the possibility of this passage to us. Living in "this world" we can already be "not of this world," i.e., be free from slavery to death and sin, partakers of the "world to come." But for this we must also perform our own passage, we must condemn the old Adam in us, we must put on Christ in the baptismal death and have our true life hidden in God with Christ, in the "world to come..."

And thus Pascha is not an annual commemoration -- solemn and beautiful -- of a past event. It is this Event itself shown, given to us, as always efficient, always revealing our world, our time, our life as being at their End, and announcing the Beginning of the new life... And the function of the three first days of the Holy Week is precisely to challenge us with this ultimate meaning of Pascha and to prepare us to the understanding and acceptance of it.

1. This eschatological -- and it means ultimate, decisive, final -- challenge is revealed, first, in the common troparion of these days:

> "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh at midnight and blessed is he whom He shall find watching, but unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, do not be weighed down with sleep, lest you be given up and shut out from the Kingdom. But, rouse yourself crying: Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O God. Through the Theotokos, have mercy on us."

Midnight is the moment when the old day comes to its end and a new day begins. It is thus the symbol of the time in which we live as Christians. For, on the one hand, the Church is still in this world, sharing in its weaknesses and tragedies. Yet, on the other hand, her true being is not of this world, for she is the Bride of Christ and her mission is to announce and to reveal the coming of the Kingdom and of the new day. Her life is a perpetual watching and expectation, a vigil pointed at the dawn of this new day... But we know how strong is still our attachment to the "old day," to the world with its passions and sins. We know how deeply we still belong to "this world." We have seen the light, we know Christ, we have heard about the peace and joy of the new life in Him, and yet the world holds us in its slavery. This weakness, this constant betrayal of Christ, this incapacity to give the totality of our love to the only true object of love are wonderfully expressed in the Exapostalarion of these three days:

> "I behold Thy Bridal chamber richly adorned, O my Savior; but I have no wedding garment to worthily enter. Make radiant the garment of my soul, O Giver of Light and save me."

2. The same theme develops further in the Gospel readings of these days. First of all, the entire text of the four Gospels (up to John 13:31) is read at the Hours (1st, 3rd, 6th and 9th). This recapitulation shows that the Cross is the climax of the whole life and ministry of Jesus, the Key to their proper understanding. Everything in the Gospel leads to this ultimate hour of Jesus and everything is to be understood in its light. Then, each service has its special Gospel lesson:

On Monday

At Orthros: Matthew 21:18-43; the story of the fig tree, the symbol of the world created to bear spiritual fruits and failing in its response to God.

At the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: Matthew 24:3-35; the great eschatological discourse of Jesus. The signs and announcement of the End. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

On Tuesday

At Orthros: Matthew 22:15-23:39; condemnation of Pharisees, i.e., of the blind and hypocritical religion, of those who think they are the leaders of man and the light of the world, but who in fact "shut the Kingdom of heaven against men."

At the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: Matthew 24:36-26:2; the End again and the parables of the End: the ten wise virgins who had enough oil in their lamps and the ten foolish ones who were not admitted to the bridal banquet; the parable of the ten talents "... Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." And, finally, the Last Judgement.

On Wednesday

At Orthros: John 12:17-50; the rejection of Christ, the growing conflict, the ultimate warning: "Now is the judgement of this world... He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings, has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day."

At the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts: Matthew 26:6-16; the woman who poured the precious ointment on Jesus, the image of love and repentance which alone unite us with Christ.

3. These Gospel lessons are explained and elaborated in the hymnology of these days: the sticheras and the triodia (short canons of three odes each sung at Orthros). One warning, one exhortation runs through all of them: the end and the judgement are approaching, let us prepare for them:

> "When the Lord was going to His voluntary Passion, He said to His Apostles on the way: behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up, as it is written of Him. Come therefore, and let us accompany Him, with minds purified from the pleasures of this life, and let us be crucified and die with Him, that we may live with Him, and that we may hear Him say to us: I go now, not to the earthly Jerusalem to suffer, but unto My Father and you Father, and My God and your God, and I will raise you up into the upper Jerusalem, in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Monday Orthros)

> "Behold, O my soul, the Master has confided to Thee a talent; receive the favor with fear; lend to Him who gave; distribute to the poor, and acquire for thyself thy Lord as thy Friend; that, when He shall come in glory, thou mayest stand on His right hand and hear His blessed voice: Enter, my servant, into the joy of thy Lord. O my Savior, deem me, the wanderer, worthy of this, through Thy great mercy." (Tuesday Orthros)

4. Throughout the whole Lent the two books of the Old Testament read at Vespers were Genesis and Proverbs. With the beginning of the Holy Week they are replaced by Exodus and Job. Exodus is the story of Israel's liberation from Egyptian slavery, of their Passover. It prepares us for the understanding of Christ's exodus to His Father, of His fulfillment of the whole history of salvation. Job, the sufferer, is the Old Testament icon of Christ. This reading announces the great mystery of Christ's sufferings, obedience and sacrifice.

5. The liturgical structure of these three days is still of the Lenten type. It includes, therefore, the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian with prostrations, the augmented reading of the Psalter, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and the Lenten Liturgical chant. We are still in the time of repentance for repentance alone makes us partakers of the Pascha of our Lord, opens to us the doors of the Paschal banquet. And, then, on Great and Holy Wednesday, as the last Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is about to be completed, after the Holy Gifts have been removed from the Altar, the Priest reads for the last time the prayer of St. Ephraim. At this moment the preparation comes to an end. The Lord summons us now to His Last Supper.

HOLY THRUSDAY

Holy Thursday: The Last Supper

Two events shape the Liturgy of the Great and Holy Thursday: the Last Supper and the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. The Last Supper is the ultimate revelation of God's redeeming love for man. The betrayal by Judas reveals that sin, death and self-destruction are also due to love, but love directed at that which does not deserve love. The mystery of this unique day, and its liturgy where light and darkness, joy and sorrow are so strangely mixed, challenges us with the choice on which the eternal destiny of each one of us depends. "Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come... having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end... "(John 13:1) To understand the meaning of the Last Supper, we must see it as the very end of the great movement of Divine Love which began with the creation of the world and is now to be consummated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Love, Life, Communion

God is love. (1 John 4:8) And the first gift of Love was life. The meaning, the content of life, was communion. To be alive man was to eat and to drink, to partake of the world. The world was thus Divine love made food, made Body of man. And being alive, i.e., partaking of the world, man was to be in communion with God, to have God as the meaning, the content and the end of his life. Communion With the God-given world was indeed communion with God. Man received his food from God and making it his body and his life, he offered the whole world to God, transformed it into life in God and with God. The love of God gave life to man, the love of man for God transformed this life into communion with God. This was the paradise. Life in it was, indeed, Eucharistic. Through man and his love for God the whole creation was to be sanctified and transformed into one all-embracing sacrament of Divine Presence and man was the priest of this sacrament.

But in sin man lost this Eucharistic life. He lost it because he ceased to see the world as means of Communion with God and his life as eucharist, as adoration and thanksgiving. He loved himself and the world for their own sake; he made himself the content and the end of his life. He thought that his hunger and thirst, i.e., his dependence of his life on the world, can be satisfied by the world as such, by food as such. But world and food, once they are deprived of their initial sacramental meaning – as means of Communion with God, once they are not received for God's sake, and filled with hunger and thirst for God, once, in other words, God is no longer, their real "content," can give no life, satisfy no hunger, for they have no life in themselves. Thus by putting his love in them, man deviated his love from the only object of all love, of all hunger, of all desires. And he died. For death is the inescapable "decomposition: of life cut from its only source and content. Man thought he would find life in the world and in food, but he found death. His life became communion with death, for instead of transforming the world by faith, love and adoration into communion with God, he submitted himself entirely to the world, ceased to be its priest and became its slave. And by his sin the whole world was made a cemetery, where people condemned to death partook of death and "sat in the region and shadow of death." (Matthew 4:16)

But through sin, if man betrayed, God remained faithful to man. He did not "turn Himself away forever from His creature whom He had made, neither did He forget the works of His hands, but He visited him in diverse manners, through the tender compassion of His mercy." (Liturgy of St. Basil) A new Divine work began, that of redemption and salvation. And it was fulfilled in Christ, the Son of God, Who, in order to restore man to his pristine beauty and to restore life as communion with God, became Man, took upon Himself our nature, with its thirst and hunger, with its desire for and love of life. And in Him life was revealed, given, accepted and fulfilled as total and perfect Eucharist, as total and perfect communion with God. He rejected the basic human temptation: to live "by bread alone." He revealed that God and His kingdom are the real food, the real life of man. And this perfect eucharistic Life, filled with God, and therefore Divine and immortal, He gave to all those who would believe in Him, i.e., find in Him the meaning and the content of their lives. Such is the wonderful meaning of the Last Supper. He offered Himself as the true food of man, because the life revealed in Him is the true Life. And thus the movement of Divine Love which began in paradise with a Divine "take, eat... " (for eating is life for man) comes now "unto the end" with the Divine "take, eat, this is My Body..." (for God is life of man...) The Last Supper is the restoration of the paradise of bliss, of life as Eucharist and Communion.

But this hour of ultimate love is also that of the ultimate betrayal. Judas leaves the light of the Upper Room and goes into darkness. "And it was night."(John 13:30) Why does he leave? Because he loves, answers the Gospel, and his fateful love is stressed again and again in the hymns of Holy Thursday. It does not matter, indeed, that he loves the "silver." Money stands here for all the deviated and distorted love which leads man

into betraying God. It is, indeed. Love stolen from God and therefore, Judas is the Thief. When he does not love God and in God, man still loves and desires, for he was created to love and love is his nature, but it is then a dark and self-destroying passion and death is its end. Each year, as we immerse ourselves into the unfathomable light and depth of Holy Thursday, the same decisive question is addressed to each one of us: do I respond to Christ's love and accept it as my life, or do I follow Judas into the *darkness* of the night?

The Services of Thursday

The liturgy of Holy Thursday includes: a) Orthros, b) Vespers and, following Vespers, the Liturgy of St Basil the Great. In the Cathedral Churches the special service of the Washing of Feet takes place after the Liturgy; while the Deacon reads the Gospel, the Bishop washes the feet of twelve Priests, reminding us that Christ's love is the foundation of life in the Church and shapes all relations within it. It is also on Holy Thursday that Holy Chrism is consecrated by the primates of autocephalous Churches, and this also means that the new love of Christ is the gift we receive from the Holy Spirit on the day of our entrance into the Church.

At Orthros the Troparion sets the theme of the day: the oppositon between the love of Christ and the "insatiable desire" of Judas.

> "When the glorious disciples were illumined by washing at the Supper, Then was the impious Judas darkened with the love of silver And to the unjust judges does he betray Thee, the just Judge. Consider, 0 Lover of money, him who hanged himself because of it. Do not follow the insatiable desire which dared this against the Master, 0 Lord, good to all, glory to Thee."

After the Gospel reading (Luke 12:1-40) we are given the contemplation, the mystical and eternal meaning of the Last Supper in the beautiful canon of St. Cosmas. Its last "irmos," (Ninth Ode) invites us to share in the hospitality of the Lord's banquet:

> "Come, O ye faithful Let us enjoy the hospitality of the Lord and the banquet of immortality In the upper chamber with minds uplifted...."

At Vespers, the stichira on "Lord, I cry" stress the spiritual anticlimax of Holy Thursday, the betrayal of Judas:

> "Judas the servant and deceiver, the disciple and traitor, the friend and devil, was proved by his deeds, for, as he followed the Master, within himself he planned His betrayal...."

After the Entrance, three lessons from the Old Testament:

1) Exodus 19: 10-19. God's descent from Mount Sinai to His people as the image of God's coming in the Eucharist.

2) Job 38:1-23, 42:1-5, God's conversation with Job and Job's answer: "who will utter to me what I understand not? Things too great and wonderful for me, which I knew not..." - and these "great and wonderful things" are fulfilled in the gift of Christ's Body and Blood.

3) Isaiah 50:4-11. The beginning of the prophecies on the suffering servant of God,

The Epistle reading is from I Corinthians 11:23-32: St Paul's account of the Last Supper and the meaning of communion.

The Gospel reading (the longest of the year is taken from all four Gospels and is the full story of the Last Supper, the betrayal of Judas and Christ's arrest in the garden.

The Cherubic hymn and the hymn of Communion are replaced by the words of the prayer before Communion:

> "Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant, for I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies, neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss; but like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom."

GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY

Friday: The Cross

From the light of Holy Thursday we enter into the darkness of Friday, the day of Christ's Passion, Death and Burial. In the early Church this day was called "Pascha of the Cross," for it is indeed the beginning of that Passover or Passage whose whole meaning will be gradually revealed to us, first, in the wonderful quiet of the Great and Blessed Sabbath, and, then, in the joy of the Resurrection day.

But, first, the Darkness. If only we could realize that on Good Friday darkness is not merely symbolical and commemorative. So often we watch the beautiful and solemn sadness of these services in the spirit of self-righteousness and self-justification. Two thousand years ago bad men killed Christ, but today we -- the good Christian people --

erect sumptuous Tombs in our Churches -- is this not the sign of our goodness? Yet, Good Friday deals not with past alone. It is the day of Sin, the day of Evil, the day on which the Church invites us to realize their awful reality and power in "this world." For Sin and Evil have not disappeared, but, on the contrary, still constitute the basic law of the world and of our life. And we who call ourselves Christians, do we not so often make ours that logic of evil which led the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldiers and the whole crowd to hate, torture and kill Christ? On what side, with whom would we have been, had we lived in Jerusalem under Pilate? This is the question addressed to us in every word of Holy Friday services. It is, indeed, the day of this world, its real and not symbolical, condemnation and the real and not ritual, judgment on our life... It is the revelation of the true nature of the world which preferred then, and still prefers, darkness to light, evil to good, death to life. Having condemned Christ to death, "this world" has condemned itself to death and inasmuch as we accept its spirit, its sin, its betrayal of God -- we are also condemned... Such is the first and dreadfully realistic meaning of Good Friday -- a condemnation to death...

The Day of Redemption

But this day of Evil, of its ultimate manifestation and triumph, is also the day of Redemption. The death of Christ is revealed to us as the saving death for us and for our salvation.

It is a saving Death because it is the full, perfect and supreme Sacrifice. Christ gives His Death to His Father and He gives His Death to us. To His Father because, as we shall see, there is no other way to destroy death, to save men from it and it is the will of the Father that men be saved from death. To us because in very truth Christ dies instead of us. Death is the natural fruit of sin, an immanent punishment. Man chose to be alienated from God, but having no life in himself and by himself, he dies. Yet there is no sin and, therefore, no death in Christ. He accepts to die only by love for us. He wants to assume and to share our human condition to the end. He accepts the punishment of our nature, as He assumed the whole burden of human predicament. He dies because He has truly identified Himself with us, has indeed taken upon Himself the tragedy of man's life. His death is the ultimate revelation of His compassion and love. And because His dying is love, compassion and co-suffering, in His death the very nature of death is changed. From punishment it becomes the radiant act of love and forgiveness, the end of alienation and solitude. Condemnation is transformed into forgiveness...

The Destruction of Death

And, finally, His death is a saving death because it destroys the very source of death: evil. By accepting it in love, by giving Himself to His murderers and permitting their apparent victory, Christ reveals that, in reality, this victory is the total and decisive defeat of Evil. To be victorious Evil must annihilate the Good, must prove itself to be

the ultimate truth about life, discredit the Good and, in one word, show its own superiority. But throughout the whole Passion it is Christ and He alone who triumphs. The Evil can do nothing against Him, for it cannot make Christ accept Evil as truth. Hypocrisy is revealed as Hypocrisy, Murder as Murder, Fear as Fear, and as Christ silently moves towards the Cross and the End, as the human tragedy reaches its climax, His triumph, His victory over the Evil, His glorification become more and more obvious. And at each step this victory is acknowledged, confessed, proclaimed -- by the wife of Pilate, by Joseph, by the crucified thief, by the centurion. And as He dies on the Cross having accepted the ultimate horror of death: absolute solitude (My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me!?), nothing remains but to confess that "truly this was the Son of God!..." And, thus, it is this Death, this Love, this obedience, this fullness of Life that destroy what made Death the universal destiny. "And the graves were opened..." (Matthew 27:52) Already the rays of resurrection appear.

Such is the double mystery of Holy Friday, and its services reveal it and make us participate in it. On the one hand, there is the constant emphasis on the Passion of Christ as the sin of all sins, the crime of all crimes. Throughout Orthros during which the twelve Passion readings make us follow step by step the sufferings of Christ, at the Hours (which replace the Divine Liturgy: for the interdiction to celebrate Eucharist on this day means that the sacrament of Christ's Presence does not belong to "this world" of sin and darkness, but is the sacrament of the "world to come") and finally, at Vespers, the service of Christ's burial the hymns and readings are full of solemn accusations of those, who willingly and freely decided to kill Christ, justifying this murder by their religion, their political loyalty, their practical considerations and their professional obedience.

But, on the other hand, the sacrifice of love which prepares the final victory is also present from the very beginning. From the first Gospel reading (John 13:31) which begins with the solemn announcement of Christ: "Now is the Son of Man glorified and in Him God is glorified" to the stichera at the end of Vespers -- there is the increase of light, the slow growth of hope and certitude that "death will trample down death..."

> "Hell shuddered when it beheld Thee, the Redeemer of all Who was laid in a tomb. Its bonds were broken; its gates were smashed! The tombs were opened; the dead arose. Then Adam cried in joy and thanksgiving: Glory to Thy condescension, O Lover of man!"

And when, at the end of Vespers, we place in the center of the Church the image of Christ in the tomb, when this long day comes to its end, we know that we are at the end of the long history of salvation and redemption. The Seventh Day, the day of rest, the blessed Sabbath comes and with it -- the revelation of the Life-giving Tomb.

GREAT AND HOLY SATURDAY

This is the Blessed Sabbath

The "Great and Holy Sabbath" is the day which connects Good Friday, the commemoration of the Cross with the Day of His Resurrection. To many, the real nature and the meaning of this "connection," the very necessity of this "middle day" remains obscure. For a good majority of Church-goers, the "important" days of the Holy Week are Friday and Sunday, the Cross and the Resurrection. These two days, however, remain somehow "disconnected." There is a day of sorrow, and then, there is the day of joy. In this sequence, sorrow is simply replaced by joy... But according to the teaching of the Church, expressed in her liturgical tradition, the nature of this sequence is not that of a simple replacement. The Church proclaims that Christ has "trampled death by death." It means that even before the Resurrection, an event takes place, in which the sorrow is not simply replaced by joy, but is itself transformed into joy. Great Saturday is precisely this day of transformation, the day when victory grows from inside the defeat, when before the Resurrection, we are given to contemplate the death of death itself... And all this is expressed, and even more, all this really takes place every year in this marvelous morning service, in this liturgical commemoration which becomes for us a saving and transforming presence.

Psalm 118 – Love for the Law of God

On coming to the Church on the morning of Holy Saturday, Friday has just been liturgically completed. The sorrow of Friday is, therefore, the initial theme, the starting point of Orthros of Saturday. It begins as a funeral service, as a lamentation over a dead body. After the singing of the funeral troparia and a slow censing of the church, the celebrants approach the Epitaphios. We stand at the grave of our Lord, we contemplate His death, His defeat. Psalm 118 is sung and to each verse we add a special "praise" which expresses the horror of men and of the whole creation before the death of Jesus:

> "O all ye mountains and hills, and all ye gatherings of men,
> mourn, weep and lament with me, the Mother of your God..."

And yet, from the very beginning, alongside with this initial theme of sorrow and lamentation, a new one makes its appearance and will become more and more apparent. We find it, first of all, in Psalm 118 -- "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!" In our liturgical practice today this psalm is used only at the funeral services, hence, its "funeral" connotation for the average believer. But in early liturgical tradition this Psalm was one of the essential parts of the Sunday vigil, the weekly commemoration of Christ's Resurrection. Its content is not "funeral" at all. This psalm is the purest and the fullest expression of love for the law of God, i.e., for the Divine design of man and of his life. The real life, the one which man lost through sin,

consists in keeping, in fulfilling the Divine law, that life with God, in God and for God, for which man was created.

> "In the way of thy testimonies I delight as much as in all riches." (Verse 14)
>
> "I will delight in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." (Verse 16)

And since Christ is the image of a perfect fulfillment of this law, since His whole life had no other "content" but the fulfillment of His Father's will, the Church interprets this psalm as the words of Christ Himself, spoken to His Father from the grave.

> "Consider how I love thy precepts! Quicken me, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness." (Verse 159)

The death of Christ is the ultimate proof of His love for the will of God, of His obedience to His Father. It is an act of pure obedience, of full trust in the Father's will; and for the Church it is precisely this obedience to the end, this perfect humility of the Son that constitutes the foundation, the beginning of His victory. The Father desires this death, the Son accepts it, revealing an unconditional faith in the perfection of the Father's will, in the necessity of this sacrifice of the Son by the Father. Psalm 118 is the psalm of that obedience, and therefore the announcement that in obedience the triumph has begun...

The Encounter with Death

But why does the Father desire this death? Why is it necessary? The answer to this question constitutes the third theme of our service, and it appears first in the "praises," which follow each verse of Psalm 118. They describe the death of Christ as His descent into Hades. "Hades" in the concrete biblical language means the realm of death, that state of darkness, despair and destruction which is death. And, being the realm of death, which God has not created and which He did not want, it also signifies that the Prince of this world is all-powerful in the world. Satan, Sin, Death – these are the "dimensions" of Hades, its content. For sin comes from Satan and Death is the result of sin -- "sin came into the world, and death through sin" (Romans 5:12). "Death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Romans 5:14), the entire universe has become a cosmic cemetery, was condemned to destruction and despair. And this is why death is "the last enemy" (I Corinthians 15:20) and its destruction constitutes the ultimate goal of the Incarnation. This encounter with death is the "hour" of Christ of which He said "for this purpose, I have come to this hour" (John 12:27)...

Now this hour has come and the Son of God enters into Death. The Fathers usually describe this moment as a duel between Christ and the Death, Christ and Satan.

For this death was to be either the last triumph of Satan, or his decisive defeat. The duel develops in several stages. At first, the forces of evil seem to triumph. The Righteous One is crucified, abandoned by all, and endures a shameful death. He also becomes the partaker of "Hades," of this place of darkness and despair... But at this very moment, the real meaning of this death is revealed. The One who dies on the Cross has Life in Himself, i.e., He has life not as a gift from outside, a gift which therefore can be taken away from Him, but as His own essence. For He is the Life and the Source of all life. "In Him was Life and Life was the light of man." The man Jesus dies, but this Man is the Son of God. As man, He can really die, but in Him, God Himself enters the realm of death, partakes of death. This is the unique, the incomparable meaning of Christ's death. In it, the man who dies is God, or to be more exact, the God-man. God is the Holy Immortal; and only in the unity "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" of God and Man in Christ can human death be "assumed" by God and be overcome and destroyed from within, be "trampled down by death..."

Death is Overcome by Life

Now we understand why God desires that death, why the Father gives His Only-begotten Son to it. He desires the salvation of man, i.e., that the destruction of death shall be not an act of His power, ("Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53), nota violence, be it even a saving one, but an act of that love, freedom and free dedication to God, for which He created man. For any other salvation would have been in opposition to the nature of man, and therefore, not a real salvation. Hence the necessity of the Incarnation and the necessity of that Divine death... In Christ, man restores the obedience and love. In Him, man overcomes sin and evil. It was essential that death were not only destroyed by God, but overcome and trampled down in human nature itself, by man and through man. "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead." (I Corinthians 15:21).

Christ freely accepts death, of His life He says that "no one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord." (John 10:18) He does it not without a fight: "and He began to be sorrowful and troubled." (Matthew 26:37) Here is fulfilled the measure of His obedience, and therefore, here is the destruction of the moral root of death, of death as the ransom for sin. The whole life of Jesus is in god as every human life ought to be, and it is this fullness of Life, this life full of meaning and content, full of God, that overcomes death, destroys its power. For death is, above all, a lack of life, a destruction of life that has cut itself from its only source. And because Christ's death is a movement of love towards God, an act of obedience and trust, of faith and perfection -- it is an act of life (Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit -- Luke 23:46) which destroys death. It is the death of death itself...

Such is the meaning of Christ's descent into Hades, of His death becoming His victory. And the light of this victory now illumines our vigil before the Grave.

> "How, O Life, canst Thou die? Or abide in a grave. For Thou dost destroy the kingdom of death, O Lord, and Thou raisest up the dead of Hades realm."
>
> "In a grave they laid Thee, O my Life and my Christ. Yet behold now, by Thy death, death is stricken down, and Thou pourest forth life's streams for all the world."
>
> "O, how full that joy was! O, how great that delight! Wherewith Thou didst fill all them that were held by Hades, when Thou shonest forth Thy light in those dark depths."

Life enters the Kingdom of death. The Divine Light shines in its terrible darkness. It shines to all who are there, because Christ is the life of all, the only source of every life. Therefore He also dies for all, for whatever happens to His life -- happens in Life itself... This descent into Hades is the encounter of the Life of all with the death of all:

> "Thou hast come down to earth to save Adam, and having not found him on earth, Thou hast descended, searching him, even into Hades..."

Sorrow and joy are fighting each other and now joy is about to win. The "praises" are over. The dialogue, the duel between Life and Death comes to its end. And, for the first time, the song of victory and triumph, the song of joy resounds. It resounds in the "troparia on Psalm 118," sung at each Sunday vigil, at the approach of the Resurrection day:

> "The company of the angels was amazed, when they beheld thee numbered among the dead, yet, Thyself, O Savior, destroying the power of death, and with Thee raising up Adam and releasing all men from Hell."
>
> "Wherefore, O women disciples, do ye mingle sweet-smelling spices with your tears of pity? The radiant angel within the Sepulcher cried unto the Myrrh-bearing women: Behold the grave and understand; for the Savior is risen from the tomb."

The Life-giving Tomb

Then comes the beautiful Canon of Great Saturday, in which once more all the themes of this service -- from the funeral lamentation to the victory over death -- are resumed and deepened, and which ends with this order:

> "Let all creation rejoice, and all the earth be glad; for Hades and the enemy have been spoiled. Let the women meet me with myrrh; for I redeem Adam along with Eve and all their descendants, and will rise on the third day."

"And will rise on the third day." From now on paschal joy illumines the service. We are still standing before the Tomb, but it has been revealed to us as the life-giving Tomb. Life rests in it, a new creation is being born, and once more, on the Seventh Day, the day of rest -- the Creator rests from all His work. "The Life sleeps and Hades trembles" -- and we contemplate this blessed Sabbath, the solemn quiet of the One who brings life back to us: "O come let us see our life, resting in the grave..." The full meaning, the mystical depth of the Seventh Day, as the day of fulfillment, the day of achievement is now revealed, for

> "...The great Moses mystically foreshadowed this day, saying: and God blessed the seventh day. This is the blessed Sabbath; it is the day of rest, and on it the Only-begotten Son of God rested from all His works. He kept the Sabbath in the flesh, through the dispensation of death. But on this day, He returned again through the Resurrection. He has granted us eternal life, for He alone is good, the Lover of mankind."

We now go around the Church in a solemn procession with the Epitaphios, but it is not a funeral procession. It is the Son of God, the Holy Immortal, who proceeds through the darkness of Hades, announcing to "Adam of all generations" the joy of the forthcoming Resurrection. "Shining as the morning from the night," He proclaims that "all the dead will rise again, all those in the graves will live, and all those created will rejoice..."

Expectation of Life

We return to the Church. We know already the mystery of Christ's life-giving death. Hades is destroyed. Hades trembles. And now the last theme appears – the theme of Resurrection.

Sabbath, the seventh day, achieves and completes the history of salvation, its last act being the overcoming of death. But after the Sabbath comes the first day of a new creation, of a new life born from the grave.

The theme of Resurrection is inaugurated in the Prokeimenon:

> "Arise, O Lord, help us, and deliver us, for the glory of Thy name. O God, we have heard with our ears."

It is continued in the first lesson: the prophecy of Ezekiel on the dry bones. (Chapter 37) "...there were very many upon the valley; and lo, they were very dry." It is death triumphing in the world, and the darkness, the hopelessness of this universal sentence to death. But God speaks to the prophet. He announces that this sentence is not the ultimate destiny of man. The dry bones will hear the words of the Lord. The dead will live again. "Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel..." Following this prophecy comes the second Prokeimenon, with the same appeal, the same prayer:

> "Arise, O Lord my God; lift up Thine hand..."

How will it happen, how is this universal Resurrection possible? The second lesson (I Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 3:13-14) gives the answer: "a little leaven leavens the whole lump..." Christ, our Pascha, is this leaven of the Resurrection of all. As His death destroys the very principle of death, His Resurrection is the token of the Resurrection of all, for His life is the source of every life. And the verses of the "Alleluia," the same verses, which will inaugurate the Pascha service, sanction this final answer, the certitude that the time of the new creation, of the day without evening, has begun:

> "Alleluia!! Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee from before His face... Alleluia!! As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish, as wax melts before the fire."

The reading of the prophecies is over. Yet, we have heard but prophecies. We are still in Great Saturday before Christ's tomb. And we have to live through this long day, before we hear at midnight: "Christ is risen!", before we enter into the celebration of His Resurrection. Thus, the third lesson -- Matthew 27:62-66 -- which completes the service, tells us once more about the Tomb -- "So they went and made the sepulcher secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard."

But it is probably here, at the very end of Orthros, that the ultimate meaning of this "middle day" is made manifest. Christ arose from the dead, His Resurrection we will celebrate on Pascha Day. This celebration, however, commemorates a unique event of the past, and anticipates a mystery of the future. It is already His Resurrection, but not yet ours. We will have to die, to accept the dying, the separation, the destruction. Our reality in this world, in this “aeon,” is the reality of the Great Saturday; this day is the real image of our human condition. We believe in the Resurrection, because Christ has risen from the dead. We expect the Resurrection. We know that Christ's death has annihilated the power of death, and death is no longer the hopeless, the ultimate end of everything... Baptized into His death, we partake already of His life that came out of the

grave. We receive His Body and Blood which are the food of immortality. We have in ourselves the token, the anticipation of the eternal life... All our Christian existence is measured by these acts of communion to the life of the "new aeon" of the Kingdom... and yet we are here, and death is our inescapable share.

But this life between the Resurrection of Christ and the day of the common Resurrection, is it not precisely the life in the Great Saturday? Is not expectation the basic and essential category of Christian experience? We wait in love, hope and faith. And this waiting for "the Resurrection and the life of the world to come," this life which is "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3-4), this growth of expectation in love, in certitude; all this is our own "Great Saturday." Little by little, everything in this world becomes transparent to the light that comes from there, the "image of this world" passes by and this indestructible life with Christ becomes our supreme and ultimate value.

Every year, on Great Saturday, after this morning service, we wait for the Pascha night and the fullness of Paschal joy. We know that they are approaching -- and yet, how slow is this approach, how long is this day! But is not the wonderful quiet of Great Saturday the symbol of our very life in this world? Are we not always in the "middle day," waiting for the Pascha of Christ, preparing ourselves for the day without evening of His Kingdom?

HOLY PASCHA

The Feast of the Resurrection

This is the starting point for our understanding of the sanctification of time. It is the Orthodox experience, which goes back to the apostles themselves, that in the centre of our liturgical life, in the very centre of that time which we measure as year, we find the Feast of Christ's Resurrection. What is the Resurrection? Resurrection is the appearance in this world, completely dominated by time and therefore by death, of life that shall have not end. The One who rose again from the dead does not die anymore. In this world of ours, not somewhere else, not in any "other" world, there appeared one morning someone who is beyond death and yet in our time. This meaning of Christ's Resurrection, this great joy, is the central theme of Christianity; and it has been preserved in its fullness in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church. There is much truth expressed by those who say that the central theme of Orthodoxy, the centre of all its experience, the frame of reference for everything else in her, is the Resurrection of Christ.

We Orthodox living in the West are in danger of losing this resurrection spirit of Christianity. We are concerned with death much more than with resurrection, and

church life sometimes is dominated by the funeral rather than the resurrection type of piety. Yet no one can understand the real structure of the liturgical cycle of the year unless he understands that the center, the day that gives meaning to all days and therefore to all time, is the yearly commemoration of Christ's Resurrection at Pascha. Pascha is always the end and always the beginning. We are always living after Pascha, and we are always going towards Pascha. The whole spirit and meaning of liturgical life is contained in Pascha, together with the subsequent fifty-day period which culminates in the feast of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. This unique Paschal celebration is reflected every week in the Christian Sunday, the day which Russians, for example, still call *Voskresenie*, "Resurrection." Though it man seem strange to you, it is important to realize that every Sunday is a little Pascha. I say "Little Pascha," but it is really "Great Pascha." Every week the Church comes to the same central experience: "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ . . ." Every Saturday night, when the Priest carries the Gospel from the Altar to the center of the Church, after he has read the Gospel of the Resurrection, the same fundamental fact of our Christian Faith is proclaimed: CHRIST IS RISEN! St. Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (I Cor. 15:14). There is nothing else to believe. This is the heart of our Faith; and it is only the reference to Pascha, as the end of all merely natural time and the beginning of the new time, that we can understand the whole liturgical year.

Pentecost and Pascha

Pentecost is the fulfillment of Pascha. If you open a calendar, you will find all our Sundays are called Sundays after Pentecost, and Pentecost itself is fifty days after Pascha. Pentecost is the fulfillment of Pascha. Christ ascended into heaven and sent down His Holy Spirit. When He sent down His Holy Spirit into the world, a new society was instituted, a body of people, whose took on a new meaning. This new meaning comes directly from Christ's Resurrection. We are no longer people in meaningless time that leads to a meaningless end. We are given not only a new meaning in life, but even death itself has acquired a new significance. In the troparion of Pascha we say, "trampling down death by death." We do not say that He trampled down death by the Resurrection, but by death. And although a Christian still faces death, being in this way similar to any other man, death has for him a new significance. It means entering into the Pascha of the Lord, into His own passage from the old into a new life. This is the key to the liturgical year of the Church. Christianity is, first of all, the proclamation in this world of Christ's Resurrection. Orthodox spirituality is paschal in its inner content, and the real content of the Christian life is joy.

We speak of feasts, and the feast is the expression of Christianity as joy. When you teach children, you convey to them not only certain knowledge but also the spirit which is behind this knowledge. You know that the one thing a child accepts easily is joy.

But we have made our Christianity so adult, so serious, so sad, so solemn, that we have virtually emptied it of that joy. Yet Christ has said, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15, and Luke 18:17). To become like a child, in Christ's words, means to be capable of that joy of which an adult is no longer capable, to enter into communion with things, with nature, with other people, without suspicion or fear or frustration. We often use the term grace, but what is grace? *Charis* in Greek means not only grace but also joy. If I stress this point so much, it is because of my certainty that our first message must be this message of Paschal Joy. When on Pascha night we stand at the door of the Church and the Priest says, "Christ is Risen," the night in the words of Gregory of Nyssa, becomes "lighter than the day." Here is the strength, the real root of the Christian experience. And only within the framework of this joy can we understand everything else.

Let us keep in mind that Pascha is the real beginning of our liturgical year. The year "officially" begins on September 1st; but I am speaking here in terms of its spiritual principle and foundation, because Pascha truly opens our understanding of time. The world was dark, and Someone brought in light and warmth. The world was sad because it had become a cemetery, and Someone said, "Death is no more." This is what Christ did in this world. It was cold and sinful and cruel, and He came and said, "Rejoice!" This is the way Christ addressed His disciples. "Rejoice! Peace be with you!" Paschal joy is, therefore, the beginning of Christian experience.

11. MEATFAST SUNDAY

The Gospel on the Last Judgement
Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying: "Lord, H-!1en saw we Thee an hun-gred, and fed Thee, or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in, or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?" And the King shall answer and say unto them: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not." Then shall they also answer Him, saying: "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?" Then shall He answer them, saying: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these, ye did it not to Me." And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

(French word)

Statisticians reckon that there are a milliard and a half people living on earth. Of this one and a half milliard, no one person can, by using his mental processes, tell you what will happen to the world at the end of time, and what will happen to us when we die. And all those thousands of millions of human beings who have lived on earth before us had no way, through their mental

processes, of telling us, with firmness and certainty, about the end of the world and what awaits us after death -anything that we could, with our minds and our hearts, accept as true. Our life is short and our days are numbered, but time is long -counted in hundreds and thousands of years. Who among us can reach out from the confines of time to its end, and see the last things, and inform the rest of us, saying: "Thus and so will it be at the last edge of time; thus and so with the world and thus and so with you men"? No-one. Truly, no-one of all men living, unless there were one who could convince us that he had entered into the mind of the Creator of the world and mankind, and seen the whole plan of creation, and that he was alive and aware before the beginning of the world, and had a clear view of the end of time and the events that will mark the end. Is there such a man among the milliards who are alive at this time? Has there been such a one from the beginning of the world till now? No; there neither is nor has been. There have been seers and prophets who, not from their own minds but from God's revelation, have said something -something brief and incomplete -about what will be at the end, not so much with the intention of giving an exact description of the end of the world as, by God's providence, to warn men through their visions to turn back from the way of lawlessness, and to repent and think more about the fateful time that is to come than about the petty and transitory things that, like a cloud, conceal the fiery and terrible event by which the whole of human life in the world, and the existence of the very world itself, and the stars in their courses and the cycle of day and night, will come to an end.

One, and One only, has spoken to us clearly and definitely about all that will come to pass at the end of time: the Lord Jesus Christ. Were anyone soever to say what He said about the end of the world, we would not believe him, though he were the greatest sage living. Were he to speak from his human understanding, and not from God's proven revelation, we would not believe him. For human understanding and human logic, however great they may be, are too puny to reach to the world's beginning and its end. Understanding is useless where vision is needed. We need a seer, who sees as clearly as we see the sun -to see the whole world, from its beginning to its end, and the beginning and the end themselves. There has only ever been one such: the Lord Jesus Christ. Him alone we can and must believe when He tells us what will happen at the end. For all that He prophesied has come to pass, both to individuals such as Peter and Judas and the other apostles, to specific peoples, such as the Jews, and to specific places, such as Jerusalem, Capernaum, Bethsaida and Chorazin, and to the Church of God, founded in His blood. Only His prophecy of the events at the very end of the world, of its end and of the Last Judgement, has not yet been fulfilled. But he who has

eyes to see can see clearly that, in our day, those events that He told us would be signs of the end's approach have already begun to appear in the world. Have not many peddlers of happiness appeared, seeking to replace Christ and His teaching with themselves and their teaching? Has not nation risen up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom? Does not the earth tremble, and our hearts with it, at the many wars and revolutions that cover our planet? Do not many betray Christ, and many forsake His Church? Has not iniquity abounded, and the love of many grown cold? Has not the Gospel of Christ been preached throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations (Matthew 24:3-14)? It is true that the worst is yet to come, but it is coming quickly and without delay. It is true that the Antichrist has not yet appeared, but his forerunners and prophets are in every nation. It is true that the most catastrophic misfortune that there has ever been since the world began is not yet with us, nor the unbearable death-rattle, but the catastrophe can clearly be seen by all those spiritual men who are awaiting Christ's coming. It is true that the sun has not yet been darkened nor the moon left without its light, nor the stars fallen from heaven -but when this comes to pass, there will be no more writing or speaking about it. Men's hearts will be filled with fear and trembling, men's tongues will be frozen and men's eyes will stare into the fearsome darkness, on an earth without day and a heaven without stars. All at once, in this darkess. the sign of the Son of Man will appear, a resplendent Cross stretching from east to west and from north to south, of a brightness never achieved by the sun above our heads. And then all men on earth will see the Lord Jesus *sitting on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*. And the angelic host will sound the trumpet, and all the nations on earth will be gathered before Him; the trumpet will sound for an assembly such as there has never been from the foundation of the world, and for the Judgement that is once and for all.

All these signs and events that will come to pass at the end of the world and of time are described in another place in the Holy Gospel. Today's Gospel, though, describes the final settling of accounts between time and eternity, between heaven and earth, between God and mankind. It describes the Last Judgement and the way in which it, *the day of the Lord's anger* (Zephaniah 2:2), will come to pass. It describes for us that fearsome moment – most joyful for the righteous – when God’s mercy will give place to God’s justice. When it will be too late for good works, and to late for repentance. When lamentation will receive no reply, and when our tears will no longer fall on the angels' hands.

When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angles with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. As in the parable of

the Prodigal Son, where God is seen as a man, so here Christ is called the Son of Man. It is He, and none other than He. When He comes into the world the second time, He will not come unknown and humble, as He did the first time, but openly and in great glory. By this glory is meant, firstly, the glory that Christ had in eternity before the world began (John 17:5), and secondly the glory of the Victor over Satan, over the old world and over death. He does not come alone, but with all the holy angels, whose number is uncountable, and He comes with them because they, as God's servants and warriors, took part both in the battle against evil and in the victory over it. It is His joy to share the glory with them. And to emphasise the sublime nature of this event, it is specially stated that all the angels will come with the Lord. There is no other event at which it is mentioned that all God's angels are present. They have always appeared in greater or lesser numbers, but at the Last Judgement they will all be present, gathered around the King of glory.

Many seers, in both the former and the latter days, have beheld the throne of glory (Isaiah 6:I; Daniel 7:9; Revelation 4:2, 20:4). This throne signifies the heavenly powers, on whom the Lord is enthroned. It is the throne of glory and victory, on which the heavenly Father is seated, and on which the Lord Christ took His place after His victory (Revelation 3:21). Oh, how majestic the Lord's coming will be, surrounded by such strange and fearsome events! The Prophet Isaiah, in his discernment, foretold: "Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind" (Isaiah 66:15); Daniel beheld, at that coming, that a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the judgement was set, and the books were opened (Daniel 7:10).

And when the Lord comes in glory and sits on His throne, *then all nations shall be gathered before Him; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left*. Many of the Fathers questioned about the place in which Christ would judge all the nations. Quoting the Prophet Joel, they reckoned that the Judgement would take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where King Jehoshaphat, with no fighting or use of arms, had such a complete victory over the Moabites and the Ammonites that none of the enemy remained alive (II Chronicles 20). And the Prophet Joel said: "*Let the heathen be wakened, and come lip to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about*" (Joel 3:12).Perhaps the Lord's throne will be placed over that valley, but there is no valley in the world in which all nations and peoples could be gathered, the

living and the dead from the beginning to the end of the world, who would be numbered in many billions. The whole of the earth's surface, with all the oceans added, would not give enough space for all the men who have ever lived on earth to be able to stand together. If this were just a gathering of souls, then it might be possible to bring them all together in the valley of Jehoshaphat, but as it will be of men in the body -for the dead will arise with their bodies -then the prophet's words must be understood in a figurative way. The valley of Jehoshaphat is the whole world, from furthest east to furthest west; and, as God aforetime showed His power and judgement in the valley of Jehoshaphat, so He will on the last day show this same power and judgement over the whole human race.

And He shall separate them one from the other. In one moment, all those gathered together will be separated -as a shepherd, with his voice, sends the sheep to one side and the goats to the other -some to the left and some to the right. as by an irresistible magnetic force, in such a way that none can move from the left side to the right, or from the right side to the left.

Then shall the King say unto them all His right hand: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." At the beginning, Christ calls Himself the Son of Man -that is, the Son of God -and He here calls Himself the King, for the kingdom and the power and the glory are given to Him. "*Come, ye blessed of My Father*:" They are truly blessed whom Christ calls blessed, for God's blessing contains in itself all the good things and all the joy and grace of heaven. Why does the Lord not say "*My blessed*," but "*the blessed of My Father*"? Because He is the only Son of God, the only-begotten and uncreated, from all eternity and in all eternity, and the righteous are, by God's blessing, adopted, and thus become as brothers to Christ. God calls the righteous to receive the kingdom that He has prepared for them *from the foundation of the world*. This means that God, even before the creation of mankind, had prepared the kingdom for him. Before He made Adam, all was made ready for his life in Paradise. A whole kingdom, resplendent in light, only awaited its king. Then God led Adam into this kingdom, and the kingdom was completed. Thus God, from the beginning, prepared the kingdom for the righteous. It was only awaiting its rulers, with Christ the King Himself at their head.

Calling the righteous into the kingdom, the Judge immediately explained why He was giving it to them:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." At this wonderful explanation, the righteous hesitantly and meekly asked the

King when they had seen Him hungry and thirsty, naked and sick, and when they had done all this for Him. To this, the King once more gave a wonderful *reply: "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."*

This whole explanation has two meanings: an outward and an inward. The outward meaning is clear to all. He who gives food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked and shelter to the stranger has done this to the Lord. He who visits the sick or those in prison has done this to the Lord. For it is said in the Old Testament: "*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again"* (Proverbs 19:17). The Lord tests our hearts through those who seek our help. God makes use of nothing from us for Himself: He needs nothing. He who created bread cannot be hungry, nor He who created water be thirsty. He who clothes His whole creation cannot be naked, nor He who is the source of health be sick, nor He who is the Lord of lords be a captive. But He seeks that we give alms, in order, in this way, to soften and ennoble our hearts. God is able, in His almighty power, to make all men at once rich and satiated, clothed and satisfied. But He lets men experience hunger and thirst, sickness, suffering and poverty, for two reasons: firstly, that those who endure these things will, by this means, have their hearts softened and ennobled, and will turn to God, worshipping Him with faith and prayer; and secondly, that a man may sense his own suffering in that of others, his humiliation in that of others, and come to understand the brotherhood and unity of all people on earth through the living God, the Creator and Provider of all on earth. The Lord desires mercy of us -mercy above all else. For he knows that mercy is the way in which faith in God, hope in God and love for God can be restored.

This is the outward meaning. The inner meaning has to do with Christ within us ourselves. In every pure thought of our minds, in every noble feeling of our hearts and in every lofty aspiration of our souls towards the accomplishing of good, Christ reveals Himself within us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He calls all these pure thoughts, noble feelings and lofty aspirations His little, or His least, brethren. He so names them because they are in us in an insignificant minority compared with the great field of worldly dross and evil within us. If our mind hungers for God, and we feed it, we have fed Christ within us; if our heart is bare of every good and noble thing that is of God, and we clothe it, we have clothed Christ within us; if our soul is sick and imprisoned by our evil being, our evil actions, and we are mindful of it and visit it, we have visited Christ within us. In brief, if this other being within us, that once took pride of place and that represents the righteous man, is subjugated and humiliated by the evil and sinful man within us, and we give

this righteous man protection, we are protecting Christ within ourselves. This righteous man within us is very, very small, and the sinner within us is a veritable Goliath. But this righteous man within us is Christ's little brother, and the sinner within us is the Goliath-like enemy of Christ. If, then, we protect the righteous man within us, if we free him, strengthen him and bring him to the light; if we raise him up above the sinner, so that he is completely dominant over the sinner and we could say with the Apostle Paul*: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"* (Galatians 2:20) -then we shall be called blessed, and shall hear the King's words at the Last Judgement: *"Come. ye blessed of Mv Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*

But to those on the left, the Judge will say: *"Depart from Me, ye cursed. into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."* The Judgement is dreadful, but it is righteous. And so the King calls the righteous to Himself, and gives them the Kingdom, while He drives the sinners from Him and sends them into eternal fire, into the evil company of the devil and his servants. (St Basil the Great, in his treatise "*On the Last Judgement*" [No. 14], says: "If there is any end to eternal torment, then it follows that there is an end to eternal life. But, as it is impossible to imagine an end to eternal life, how is it possible to imagine an end to eternal torment?"). What the Lord does not say is very important: that eternal fire is prepared for sinners from the foundation of the world, as the Kingdom is for the righteous. What does this mean? It is absolutely clear that the Lord prepared the eternal fire only for the devil and his angels, and that He prepared the Kingdom for all men from the foundation of the world. For God *will have all men to be saved* (I Timothy 2:4; cf. Matthew 18: 14; John 3: 16; II Peter 3:9; Isaiah 45:22), and that not one perish. Therefore, God did not intend men to perish, but to be saved; neither did He prepare in advance the devil's fire for them, but He prepared His Kingdom, and this alone. It is clear from this, that they who say of a sinner: "he is predestined to be a sinner", are astray in their thinking. Were he thus predestined, this would not be from God but from the man himself. That this is not predestined for him by God is seen in the fact that God did not prepare in advance any sort of place of torment for men, but only for the devil. Therefore, at the Last Judgement, the righteous Judge will have no place to which to send the sinners but the dark realm of the devil. And that it is in His justice that the Judge sends them there is clear from the fact that they, during their earthly lives, fell right away from God, and gave themselves to the devil's service.

Pronouncing judgement on the sinners on His left, the King immediately explains to them why they are accursed, and why He is sending them

into eternal fire: *"For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick, and ill prison, and ye visited Me not."* They had, then, done none of those things that the righteous on the right hand had done. Listening to these words from the King, the sinners asked, like the righteous: *"Lord, when saw we Thee a hungred or athirst... ?"* The Lord replied: *"Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."*

The whole of this explanation that the King gave the sinners also has two meanings -an outward and an inward -as in the first instance, with the righteous. The sinners were darkened in mind, hard of heart and with souls of evil intent towards their hungry and thirsty, naked, sick and captive brethren on earth. They were unable, with their gross minds, to perceive that Christ was calling them to mercy through their poor and suffering brethren. Their hard hearts could not be softened by the tears of others. Neither could Christ's example and that of His saints turn their evil-intentioned souls to desire good, and do it. And so, being unmerciful to Christ in their brethren, they were unmerciful to Christ in themselves. They deliberately extinguished all pure thoughts as soon as they were formed, replacing them with impure and blasphemous thoughts; they uprooted all noble feelings in their hearts as soon as they were formed, replacing them with mercilessness, lust and selfishness; they quickly and harshly suppressed every desire in their souls to do some good thing -following God's commandments -and in their place called forth the desire to do evil to men, and sin to provoke God's anger. And so Christ's least brother in them -that is, the righteous man in them -was crucified, ki1led and buried, and the dark Goliath they had nurtured -the unrighteous man in them, or the devil himself -remained as the victor on the field of battle. What can God do with such as these? Can He receive into His Kingdom those who have completely driven this Kingdom out of themselves? Can He call to Himself those who have uprooted in themselves all likeness to God, and who have proclaimed themselves, both secretly in their hearts and openly before the world, to be God's enemies and the devil's servants? No; they have, by their own free choice, become the devil's servants, and the Judge will, at the Last Judgement, send them to keep company with those with whom, during their lifetime, they openly associated -in the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his servants. Directly after this, that process that is the greatest and yet the briefest in the history of the created world comes to an end. *They (the sinners) will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal*. Life and torment are here set against each other. Where there is life, there is no torment; where there is torment, there is no life. Indeed, the fullness of life

excludes torment. The heavenly Kingdom confers the fullness of life, while the abode of the devil gives torment, and torment alone, without the life that comes from God. We see, in this earthly life, how the soul of a sinful man, that has little life within it (i.e: little of God), is filled with far greater torment than the soul of a righteous man, that has more life within it (i.e: more of God). As was wisely said in olden times: *"The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days ... a dreadful sound is in his ears ... he believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword ... Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid, they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle. For he stretcheth out his hand against God"* (Job 15:20-25). So, then, this time on earth is great torment for the sinner. And the sinner finds it harder to bear the slightest suffering in this life than the righteous man, for only he who has life in himself can bear torment, scorn suffering. and, overcoming all the evil of the world, can rejoice. Life and joy are indivisible. And so Christ Himself says to the righteous. whom the world pillories, persecutes and reviles: *"Rejoice. and be exceeding glad!"* (Matthew 5: 12).

The whole of this our earthly life is but a pale shadow of life -real life, full life -in the Kingdom of God, as all suffering on earth is only a pale shadow of the terrible torment of sinners in hell. (In the *Apophthegmata Patrum* [the alphabetical collection of the sayings of the Desert Fathers], we read: They asked some great elder: "How, father, do you so patiently bear such labours?" The elder replied: "All my toil in this life is not equal to one day of torment".) Life on earth -however sublime it may be -is mingled with torment, for here there is no fullness of life; as torment on earth -however great it may be -is mingled with life. But at the Last Judgement, life will be separated from torment. And the one and the other will be eternal. What this eternity means cannot be grasped by our human understanding. To him whose delight will be one moment of beholding God's face, it will seem as though it has lasted thousands of years; and to him who will be tormented for one moment by the devil in hell, it will seem like thousands of years. For there will no longer be time as we know it -the rhythm of day and night -but there will be *one day, which shall be known to the Lord* (Zechariah 14:7; cf. Revelation 22:5). There will be no other sun but God, and this sun shall not rise and set, that eternity should be counted in days as time is now reckoned. The blessed will reckon eternity in terms of their joy, and the tormented sinners in terms of their torments.

This, therefore, is how the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the last and greatest event that was to take place in time, on the edge of time and eternity. And we believe that all this will literally come to pass, firstly because all the other predictions that Christ made have literally come to pass, and secondly

because He is our greatest Friend and the One true Lover of mankind -and in perfect love there is no falsehood or error. Perfect love contains perfect truth. If all this were not to come to pass, He would not have told us of it. But He did tell us, and it will come to pass. But He did not tell us of this in order to demonstrate His knowledge to men. No; He did not seek glory from men (John 5:41). He said it all for our salvation. He who has understanding, and who confesses Christ the Lord, can realise that he needs to know this in order to be saved. For the Lord did nothing, nor spoke any word, nor permitted anything to happen to Him during His earthly life, that was not for our salvation.

Let us therefore be wise and sober, keeping always before our spiritual eyes the image of the Last Judgement. This image has already turned many sinners from the way of destruction to the way of salvation. Our time is short, and when it has run out there is no more repentance. By our life in this brief time, we must make a decision that will be fateful for us in eternity: shall we be placed at the right hand, or at the left, of the King of glory? God has given us a short and simple task, but the reward and the punishment are vast, going far beyond the power of any human tongue to express them.

Let us then not waste a single day, for each day could be the last, decisive one; each day could bring the destruction of this world and the dawn of that long-awaited Day. (St Gregory the Dialogist says: "It is written: *'Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?'* [James 4:4]. It follows that he who does not rejoice at the approaching end of the world shows that he is its friend, and therefore God's enemy. But such thoughts are far from the faithful, from those who know by faith that another life exists and who truly desire it." ["*Homilies on the Gospel*", Book I, Homily 1: "On the Signs of the End of the World]). May we be unashamed on the Day of the Lord's Anger; before the Lord and before the hosts of His angels and the many billions of the righteous and the saints. May we not be separated forever from the Lord, and from His angels and saints, and from our kinsmen and friends who will be at the right hand. But, together with the countless, resplendent hosts of angels and the righteous, may we sing the hymn of joy and victory: "Holy, holy, holy Lord of Sabaoth! Alleluia!". May we, together with all the heavenly host, glorify our Saviour and Lord, the Son, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit -the Trinity consubstantial and undivided, for all eternity. Amen.

Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemann

Saturday of Lazarus

The joy that permeates and enlightens the service of Lazarus Saturday stresses one major theme: the forthcoming victory of Christ over Hades. "Hades" is the Biblical term for Death and its universal power, for inescapable darkness that swallows all life and with its shadow poisons the whole world. But now — with Lazarus' resurrection — "death begins to tremble." A decisive duel between Life and Death begins giving us the key to the entire liturgical mystery of Pascha. Already in the fourth century Lazarus' Saturday was called the "announcement of Pascha." For, indeed, it announces and anticipates the wonderful light and peace of the next — The Great — Saturday, the day of life-giving Tomb.

Lazarus, the *friend* of Jesus, personifies the whole of mankind and also each man, as Bethany — the home of Lazarus, — stands for the whole world — the home of man. For each man was created as a friend of God and was called to this friendship: the knowledge of God, the communion with Him, the sharing of life with Him: "in Him was Life and the Life was the light of men" (John 1:4). And yet this Friend, whom Jesus loves, whom He has created in love, is destroyed, annihilated by a power which God has not created: death. In His own world, the fruit of His love, wisdom and beauty, God encounters a power that destroys His work and annihilates His design. The world is but lamentation and sorrow, complaint and revolt. How is this possible? How did this happen? These are the questions implied in John's slow and detailed narrative of Jesus' progression towards the grave of His friend. And once there, Jesus wept, says the Gospel (John 11:35). Why did He weep if He knew that moments later He would call Lazarus back to life? [redacted] "As man Thou weepest, and as God Thou raisest the one in the grave..." They arrange the actions of Christ according to His two natures: the Divine and the human. [redacted] the Orthodox Church teaches that all the actions of Christ are both Divine and human, are actions of the one and same person, the Incarnate Son of God. He who weeps is not only man but also God, and He who calls Lazarus out of the grave is not God alone but also man. And He weeps because He contemplates the miserable state of the world, created by God, and the miserable state of man, the king of creation... "It stinketh," say the Jews trying to prevent Jesus from approaching the corps, and this "it stinketh" can be applied to the whole of creation. God is Life and He called the man into this Divine reality of life and "he stinketh." At the grave of Lazarus Jesus encounters Death — the power of sin and destruction, of hatred and despair. He meets the enemy of God. And we who follow Him are now introduced into the very heart of this *hour of Jesus*, the hour, which He so often mentioned. The

forthcoming darkness of the Cross, its necessity, its universal meaning, all this is given in the shortest verse of the Gospel — "and Jesus wept."

We understand now that it is because He wept, i.e., loved His friend Lazarus and had pity on him, that He had the power of restoring life to him. The power of Resurrection is not a Divine "power in itself'," but the power of love, or rather, love as power. God is Love, and it is love that creates life; it is love that weeps at the grave and it is, therefore, love that restores life... This is the meaning of these Divine tears. They are tears of love and, therefore, in them is the power of life. Love, which is the foundation of life and its source, is at work again recreating, redeeming, restoring the darkened life of man: "Lazarus, come forth!" And this is why Lazarus Saturday is the real beginning of both: the Cross, as the supreme sacrifice of love, and the Common Resurrection, as the ultimate triumph of love.

"Christ — the Joy, Truth, Light and the Life of all and the resurrection of the world, in His love appeared to those on earth and was the image of Resurrection, granting to all Divine forgiveness."

Archpriest Alexander Schmemann

The Christian Way, 1961

Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemann

This is the Blessed Sabbath

The "Great and Holy Sabbath" is the day which connects Good Friday, the commemoration of the Cross, with the day of Christ's Resurrection. To many the real nature and meaning of this "connection," the very necessity of this "middle day," remains obscure. For a good majority of churchgoers, the "important" days of Holy Week are Friday and Sunday, the Cross and the Resurrection. These two days, however, remain somehow "disconnected." There is a day of sorrow, and then, there is the day of joy. In this sequence, sorrow is simply replaced by joy . . . But according to the teaching of the Church, expressed in her liturgical tradition, the nature of this sequence is not that of a simple replacement. The Church proclaims that Christ has "trampled death by death." It means that even before the Resurrection, an event takes place in which the sorrow is not simply replaced by joy, but is itself transformed into joy. Great Saturday is precisely this day of transformation, the day when victory grows from inside the defeat, when before the Resurrection, we are given to contemplate the death of death itself... all this is expressed, and even more, all this really takes place every year in this marvellous morning service, in this liturgical commemoration which becomes for us a saving and transforming present.

Psalm 118 — Love for the Law of God

On coming to Church for the Matins of Holy Saturday, Friday has just been liturgically completed. The sorrow of Friday is, therefore, the initial theme, the starting point of Matins of Saturday. It begins as a funeral service, as a lamentation over a dead body. After the singing of the funeral troparia and a slow censing of the church, the celebrants approach the Epitaphion. We stand at the grave of our Lord, we contemplate His death, His defeat. Psalm 119 is sung and to each verse we add a special "praise," which expresses the horror of men and of the whole creation before the death of Jesus:

> O hills and valleys,
>
> the multitude of men,
>
> and all creation, weep and lament with me,
>
> the Mother of your God. *(I:69)*

And yet, from the very beginning, along with this initial theme of sorrow and lamentation, a new theme makes its appearance and will become more and more apparent. We find it, first of all, in Psalm 119 — "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord." In our liturgical practice today this psalm is used only at the funeral services, hence its "funeral" connotation for the average believer. But in early liturgical tradition this psalm was one of the essential parts of the Sunday vigil, the weekly commemoration of Christ's Resurrection. Its content is not "funeral" at all. This psalm is the purest and the fullest expression of love for the law of God, i.e., for the Divine design of man and of his life. The real life, the one which man lost through sin, consists in keeping, in fulfilling the Divine law, that life with God, in God and for God, for which man was created.

> In the ways of Thy testimonies, I delight as much as in all riches. . . (v. 14)
>
> I will delight in Thy statutes. . . (v. 16)

And since Christ is the image of the perfect fulfillment of this law, since His whole life had no other "content" but the fulfillment of His Father's will, the Church interprets this psalm as the words of Christ Himself, spoken to His Father from the grave.

> Consider how I love Thy precepts! Give me life, according to Thy mercy. . . (v. 159)

The death of Christ is the ultimate proof of His love for the will of God, of His obedience to His Father. It is an act of pure obedience, of full trust in the Father's will; and for the Church it is precisely this obedience to the end, this perfect humility of the Son that constitutes the foundation, the beginning of His victory. The Father desires this death, the Son accepts it, revealing an unconditional faith in the perfection of the Father's will, in the necessity of this sacrifice of the Son by the Father. Psalm 119 is the psalm of that obedience, and therefore the announcement that in obedience the triumph has begun.

The Encounter with Death

But why does the Father desire this death? Why is it necessary? The answer to this question constitutes the third theme of our service, and it appears first in the "praises," which follow each verse of Psalm 119. They describe the death of Christ as His *descent into Hades*. "Hades" in the concrete biblical language means the realm of death, which God has not created and which He did not want; it also signifies that the Prince of this world is all-powerful in the world. Satan, Sin, Death — these are the

"dimensions" of Hades, its content. For sin comes from Satan and Death is the result of sin — "sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12), "Death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Romans 5:14), the entire universe has become a cosmic cemetery, was condemned to destruction and despair. And this is why death is "the last enemy," (I Corinthians 15:20) and its destruction constitutes the ultimate goal of the Incarnation. This encounter with death is the "hour" of Christ of which He said that "for this hour have I come. (John 12:27)

Now this hour has come and the Son of God enters into Death. The Fathers usually describe this moment as a duel between Christ and Death, Christ and Satan. For this death was to be either the last triumph of Satan, or his decisive defeat. The duel develops in several stages. At first, the forces of evil seem to triumph. The Righteous One is crucified, abandoned by all, and endures a shameful death. He also becomes the partaker of "Hades," of this place of darkness and despair . . . but at this very moment, the real meaning of this death is revealed. The One who dies on the Cross has Life in Himself, i.e., He has life not as a gift from outside, a gift which therefore can be taken away from Him, but as His own essence. For He is the Life and the Source of all life. "In Him was Life and Life was the light of man." The man Jesus dies, but this Man is the Son of God. As man, He can really die, but in Him, God Himself enters the realm of death, partakes of death. This is the unique, the incomparable meaning of Christ's death. In it, *the man who dies is God*, or to be more exact, the God-Man. God is the Holy Immortal; and only in the unity "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" of God and Man in Christ can human death be "assumed" by God and be overcome and destroyed from within, be "trampled down by death."

Death is Overcome by Life

Now we understand why God desires *that* death, why the Father gives His Only-Begotten Son to it. He desires the salvation of man, i.e., that the destruction of death shall not be an act of His power ("Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53), not a violence, be it even a saving one, but an act of that love, freedom and free dedication to God for which He created man. For any other salvation would have been in opposition to the nature of man, and, therefore, not a real salvation. Hence the necessity of the Incarnation and the necessity of that Divine death. In Christ, man restores obedience and love. In Him, man overcomes sin and evil. It was essential that death be not only destroyed by God, but overcome and trampled down in human nature itself, by man and through man. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." (I Corinthians 15:21)

Christ freely accepts death; of His life He says that "no man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." (John 10:18) He does it not without a fight: "and He began to be sorrowful and very heavy." (Matthew 26:27) Here is fulfilled the measure of His obedience and, therefore, here is the destruction of the *moral root* of death, of death as the ransom for sin. The whole life of Jesus is in God as every human life ought to be, and it is this fullness of Life, this life full of meaning and content, full of God, that overcomes death, destroys its power. For death is, above all, a lack of life, a destruction of life that has cut itself from its only source. And because Christ's death is a movement of love towards God, an act of obedience and trust, of faith and perfection — *it is an act of life* ("Father! Into Thy hands I commend My spirit," Luke 23:46) which destroys death. It is the death of death itself.

Such is the meaning of Christ's descent into Hades, of His death becoming His victory. And the light of this victory now illumines our vigil before the Grave.

> O Life, how canst Thou die?
>
> How canst Thou dwell in a tomb?
>
> Yet by Thy death Thou hast destroyed the reign of death,
>
> and raised all the dead from hell. *(1:2)*
>
> In a tomb they laid Thee,
>
> O Christ the Life.
>
> By Thy death Thou hast cast down the might of death
>
> and become the font of life for all the world. *(1:7)*
>
> O, how great the joy,
>
> how full the gladness,
>
> that Thou hast brought to Hades' prisoners,
>
> like lightning flashing in its gloomy depths. *(1:49)*

Life enters the Kingdom of death. The Divine Light shines in its terrible darkness. It shines to all who are there, because Christ is the life of all, the only source of every life. Therefore He also dies for all, for whatever happens to His life — happens in Life

itself ... This descent into Hades is the encounter of the Life of all with the death of all:

> Wishing to save Adam,
>
> Thou didst come down to earth.
>
> Not finding him on earth, O Master,
>
> Thou didst descend to Hades seeking him. *(1:25)*

Sorrow and joy are fighting each other and now joy is about to win. The "praises" are over. The dialogue, the duel between Life and Death comes to its end. And, for the first time, the song of victory and triumph, the song of joy resounds. It resounds in the "troparia on Psalm 119," sung at each Sunday vigil, at the approach of the Resurrection day:

> The angelic host was filled with awe when it saw Thee among the dead! By destroying the power of death, O Savior, Thou didst raise Adam and save all men from hell!
>
> In the tomb the radiant angel cried to the myrrhbearers, "Why do you women mingle myrrh with your tears? Look at the tomb and understand: the Savior has risen from the dead!"

The Life-giving Tomb

Then comes the beautiful Canon of Great Saturday, in which once more all the themes of this service — from the funeral lamentation to the victory over death are resumed and deepened, and which ends with this order:

> Let creation rejoice! Let all born on earth be glad! For hateful hell has been despoiled. Let the women with myrrh come to meet me; for I am redeeming Adam and Eve and all their descendants, and on the third day shall I arise!

"And on the third day shall I arise!" From now on paschal joy illumines the service. We are still standing before the Tomb, but it has been revealed to us as the life-giving Tomb. Life rests in it, a new creation is being born, and once more, on the Seventh Day, the day of rest the Creator rests from all His work. "The Life sleeps and Hell trembles" — and we contemplate, this blessed Sabbath, the solemn quiet of the One who brings life back to us: "Come, let us see our life lying in the tomb. . ." The full

meaning, the mystical depth of the Seventh Day, as the day of fulfillment, the day of achievement is now revealed, for

> The great Moses mystically foreshadowed this day, when he said,
>
> God blessed the seventh day.
>
> This is the Blessed Sabbath;
>
> this is the day of rest,
>
> on which the Only-Begotten Son of God rested from all His works.
>
> By suffering death to fulfill the plan of salvation,
>
> He kept the Sabbath in the flesh;
>
> by returning again to what He was,
>
> He has granted us eternal life through His resurrection,
>
> for He alone is good, and the Lover of man.

We now go around the Church in a solemn procession with the Epitaphion, but it is not a funeral procession. It is the Son of God, the Holy immortal, who proceeds through the darkness of Hades, announcing to "Adam of all generation" the joy of forthcoming resurrection. "Rising early from the night," He proclaims, "The dead shall arise, those in the tombs shall awake, and all those on earth shall greatly rejoice."

Expectation of Life

We return to the Church. We know already the mystery of Christ's life-giving death. Hades is destroyed. Hades trembles. And now the last theme appears — *the theme of Resurrection.*

Sabbath, the seventh day, achieves and completes the history of salvation, its last act being the overcoming of death. But after the Sabbath comes the first day of a new creation, of a new life born from the grave.

The theme of Resurrection is inaugurated in the Prokeimenon:

> Arise, O Lord, and help us! Deliver us for Thy Name's sake. We have heard with our ears, O God...

It is continued in the first lesson: the prophecy of Ezekiel on the dry bones (ch. 37). ". . . There were very many in the open valley, and, behold, they were very dry." It is death triumphing in the world, the darkness, the hopelessness of this universal sentence to death. But God speaks to the prophet. He announces that this sentence is not the ultimate destiny of man. The dry bones will hear the words of the Lord. The dead will live again. "Behold, My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of the graves, and bring you up into the land of Israel ..." Following this prophecy comes the second prokeimenon — with the same appeal, the same prayer:

> Arise, O Lord my God, lift up Thy Hand! . . .

How will it happen, how is this universal resurrection possible? The second lesson (I Corinthians 5:6, Galatians 3:13-14) gives the answer: "a little leaven leveneth the whole lump…" Christ, our Pascha, is this leaven of the resurrection of all. As His death destroys the very principle of death, His Resurrection is the token of the resurrection of all, for His life is the source of every life. And the verses of the "Alleluia," the same verses which will inaugurate the Easter service, sanction this final answer, the certitude that the time of the new creation, of the day without evening, has begun:

> Alleluia! Let God arise! Let His enemies be scattered! Let those who hate Him flee from before His face ... Alleluia! As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish, as wax melts before the fire!

The reading of the prophecies is over. Yet, we have heard but prophecies. We are still in Great Saturday before Christ's tomb, and we have to live through this long day, before we hear at midnight: "Christ is risen," before we enter into the celebration of His Resurrection. Thus, the third lesson — Matthew 27:62-66 — which completes the service, tells us once more about the Tomb — "which was made secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard."

But it is probably here, at the very end of Matins, that the ultimate meaning of this "middle day" is made manifest. Christ rose again from the dead, His Resurrection we will celebrate on Easter Day. This celebration, however, commemorates a unique event of the past, and anticipates a mystery of the future. It is already His Resurrection, but not yet ours. We will have to die, to accept the dying, the separation, the destruction. Our reality in this world, in this "aeon," is the reality of the Great Saturday; this day is the real image of our human condition. We believe in the Resurrection, because Christ has risen from the dead. We expect the Resurrection. We know that Christ's death is no longer the hopeless, the ultimate end of everything. Baptized into His death, we partake already of His life that came out of the grave. We receive His Body and Blood which are the food of immortality. We have in ourselves

the token, the anticipation of the eternal life. All our Christian existence is measured by these acts of communion to the life of the "new eon" of the Kingdom, and yet we are here, and death is our inescapable share.

But this life between the Resurrection of Christ and the day of the common resurrection, is it not precisely the life in the Great Saturday? Is not expectation the basic and essential category of Christian experience? We wait in love, hope and faith. And this waiting for "the resurrection and the life of the world to come," this life which is "hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:34), this growth of expectation in love, in certitude; all this is our own "Great Saturday." Little by little everything in this world becomes transparent to the light that comes from there, the "image of this world" passes by and this indestructible life with Christ becomes our supreme and ultimate value.

Every year, on Great Saturday, after this morning service, we wait for the Easter night and the fullness of Paschal joy. We know that they are approaching — and yet, how slow is this approach, how long is this day! But is not the wonderful quiet of Great Saturday the symbol of our very life in this world? Are we not always in this "middle day," waiting for the Pascha of Christ, preparing ourselves for the day without evening of His Kingdom?

Father Alexander Schmemann

Matins of Holy Saturday. With the Praises and Psalm 110. Prepared by David Anderson [and] John Erickson. Introduction by Rt. Rev. Alexander Schmemann.

Approved for Publication +Metropolitan Theodosius

March 13, 1982

ISBN 0-86642-023-1

Department of Religious Education — Orthodox Church in America P.O. Box 675, Syosset, New York, 11791, 1982

- *Confession, cont.*

And thus, having come to Confession with this disposition of your heart, and having confessed to your spiritual father honestly, seriously, with sorrow, all your great and small sins, you must now listen with attention and with faith to him as he pronounces the absolution prayer... The past has left you, the dawn of a new life begins.

The awareness of this is always present in those who have worked on themselves during the days of preparation and have made their Confession with faith and a contrite heart.

- *Father Sergei Chetverikov*

MEMBERSHIP, STEWARDSHIP & PLEDGING

It's a well-known teaching of the Gospel that where your treasure is, there is your heart also. This is simply an observation that people will invest in that "thing" that they believe important for their lives. It may be an investment of time, money or material. When something is important to us, we are concerned about it, and involved in it.

When speaking about the Church, we need to be very clear that we are dealing with God's gifts to us of salvation and communion with Him in His Kingdom. We are the ones receiving the inheritance - as sons and daughters of the Heavenly King. We should never, ever, consider that our response to the needs of the Church is charity. Our response is simply that motivated by love and thanksgiving to God for His mercy towards us. Our treasure is not in earthen vessels, in cash, banks and in stocks. Our treasure is the Kingdom. Our hearts are there too.

So then, what defines "Parish Membership"?: caring for the Church, pledging whatever it is you *can* pledge as a sign and measure of your concern for the Church family. If it means little to you, then your response will reflect that. If it means a great deal, than like the widow with an offering of a penny (which is all she had), you will respond as she did, giving in a sacrificial way (If you desire your offering to be anonymous, this is laudable and worthy of emulation, but speak to your spiritual father). The parish functions and operates not on *what we have,* but on faith, and on the good-will of your pledge.

GAYE LeBARON'S NOTEBOOK

A church social like no other

I ran into a friend at the Glendi last weekend. She was having the time of her life. "I can tell you," she said, as dancers whirled to the music of Arabic flutes and the delicious scent of Eritrean spiced beef wafted past our noses, "that the Presbyterians I grew up with never had church socials like this!"

She's right. The annual Glendi that brings several thousand people, I'm sure, down Mountain View Avenue to meet some of their most interesting neighbors, is unlike any other church bazaar. But that's because the Protection of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church, called St. Mary's by those who know it well, is unlike any congregation you've known.

The congregation's priest, a rangy, good-humored man named Father Michael, moves easily among his flock of Russians and Serbs and Bulgarians, Greeks and Romanians, Middle Easterners, Eritreans and young refugees from both Roman catholic and Protestant churches.

People who complain that we do not celebrate diversity, should make a mark on next year's calendar to come to the Glendi. Try one and I guarantee you'll come back.

We remember the first one, 10 years ago, which was a rather tentative reach into the larger community, and how excited and pleased we were to see so many people from different backgrounds with a single purpose - to erect a bigger church behind their precious little one built by Russian *emigres* in 1936.

The new church, St. Seraphim, is built now. The painstaking task of painting the traditional frescoes on the inside walls is underway. Scholars and artists and priests were on hand to conduct tours, deliver lectures and answer questions about Orthodox Christianity, which unites so many Old World cultures.

I can't think of anywhere else: Where you can watch an elderly Greek gentleman dancing, arms outstretched, palms down, in the manner of Zorba-dancing as if in tribute to another life in another place. Where you can see the white-robed Eritrean women, chattering and laughing together as they sip their tiny cups of the world's strongest coffee and prepare their strange but tasty sponge bread that comes with the spiced stew. Where people of all ethnicity and persuasions fall in line to follow the tall immigrant from the Horn of Africa who leads dancers in a circle as musicians play the music of his country. Where elderly ladies who may or may not be descendants of the tsars ladle out their special borscht or sit and visit over Russian tea cakes.

I can't think of any other place like that. Only the Glendi.

• • •

Practical Tips for Orthodox Living

Excerpts from *The Shepherd*

General Tips

THE FOLLOWING "TIPS" were sent us by Mother Pelagia of Lesna Convent, who prefaces them with the remark: "Orthodox families train their children from a very early age to acquire religious habits, in some of which I was myself, as a Protestant, brought up." Her first tips are:

1) Prayers are said morning and evening, either together as a family or individually.

2) A blessing (grace, we called it) is said by the head of the family before a meal, and a prayer of thanks afterwards.

3) On entering a room where there is an icon, cross yourself before it and say a brief prayer.

4) When leaving one's dwelling, make the sign of the cross over the door and pray for its protection.

5) On seeing a priest, abbot or abbess, or even when phoning them or writing to them, always ask their blessing.

6) Before going to bed, make the sign of the cross over it and pray for protection during sleep.

7) When you hear of anyone's death, immediately say a prayer for their eternal memory.

8) If discussing or planning the future say: "As God wills."

9) If you offend or hurt anyone, say as soon as possible, "Forgive me," always trying to take the blame yourself

10) If something turns out well, say "Praise be (to God)."

11) If something turns out badly, if there is pain, sickness or any kind of trouble, say "Praise be to God for all things," since God is all good and, though we might not understand the purpose of these things, undoubtedly they have been permitted by God

12) If you begin some task, say, "God help me," or if someone else' working: "May God help you," (How sad that this expression is so perverted in the modern exclamation "God help you!")

13) Cross yourself and say a brief prayer before even the shortest journey by car.

14) For a longer and more difficult journey, ask a priest to sing a Moleben, failing that, at home say the troparion and kontakion for a journey.

15) If there is a possibility of future trouble of any kind, either for yourself or for someone you care for, say an Akathist to the Mother of God.

16) When you receive a blessing after prayer, always remember to thank God; if it is a small thing, you may add a prayer of thanksgiving to your daily prayers or make an offering. For

matters of greater import, ask the priest to serve the Thanksgiving Moleben. But NEVER neglect to give thanks.

Preparing for Confession

WHENEVER POSSIBLE, make sure that you allow sufficient time for your Confession. Conditions in the Orthodox diaspora, where people sometimes live far from a church, are difficult, and often we find people cannot get to church except on the day of their receiving Communion. They are thus unable to come—as they normally would—to Confession before or after the Vigil on the previous evening. This is understandable and most sensible priests will allow for this. But if this is the case, come particularly early on the day itself. Do not expect to arrive just before the advertised time of the Liturgy or even when the Hours are already being read (when likely as not a dozen others will have done the same) and expect that the priest will have time properly to hear your confession. At that time usually he has other things to do in any case. This results in a very brief Confession—in which the priest barely has time to read the prayers and you have time only to mention a couple of things—, and all with a feeling of being rushed. This going through the outward motions of Confession will not help you much and may even be harmful to you spiritually. If it is impossible for you to come the day before, then arrange to see him sometime earlier in the week, when you can confess unhurriedly, even write your confession in a letter, and on the day itself just come to bring him up to date or hear his advice. Better still, rather than just "going to Confession" when it is required, develop a relationship with your pastor whereby he gets to know you, and you discuss things with him as a normal part of life. Then you will need less time actually in Confession. Also if you have a car, remember that there are others who rely on public transport or on lifts from friends and might have a more difficult time than you have in getting to church for Confession. Come earlier so that you can be confessed before those who have no way of getting there when they would like to, and thus might have to leave their confessions to the very last moment. Remember the old and the infirm too, who perhaps have not the strength to come early and stay long in church. Remember the priest who is hearing your confession and the strain you put on him. There is little point in coming to Confession if in the very act of doing so you are being inconsiderate of others—perhaps abusing the leniency of your pastor—and thus sinning! Incidentally, some think that you only go to Confession as part of the preparation for receiving Communion. This is not so. You may go to Confession at any time that you feel it is needed, whether or not you are preparing to receive the Holy Mysteries.

ALL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS know the importance of Confession in their spiritual lives. However, there are practical aspects which we tend time and time again to forget, and the following might help some people, First of all, make a proper preparation before you come to confession. Examine your life, and to help in this you may use the Beatitudes, the list of the eight principle passions, the lists of sins in the daily prayers especially those before sleep. If necessary, write out a list and bring it with you to confession. In confessing, try to be brief and concise and, although sometimes necessarily explaining the circumstances of a particular sin, refrain from excusing yourself or confessing the sins of others. Some people like to tell a good story—this is not necessary. Some preach sermons in confession (the best are at least self –condemnatory) but this too is not the purpose of confession—let the confessor do that if necessary. Oftentimes many people come to confession at one time—on the eves of Great Feasts, etc.—this is good

and commendable, but it also makes being concise and to the point even more desirable. The priest may have to hear a dozen or twenty or more confessions, others will be waiting their turn—be considerate of him and them. If you come on the day of the Liturgy at which you wish to receive, then come before the service begins, and not at the last moment when the Hours are being read. Also warn the priest beforehand when you will be coming, so that he will have some idea what to expect and will not suddenly be confronted by a queue of people wanting confession minutes before the Liturgy is to begin.

Properly the Church does not allow the faithful to come to confession during the Divine Liturgy, but in the circumstances we find ourselves in the diaspora this is sometimes unavoidable. People travel long distances to church; they are unable to come the evening before, and so confessions are sometimes heard just before Communion itself. If this is the case with you, please bear in mind that this is a special concession, do not abuse it, and remember the following things: a) then it is even more desirable to be brief, such a concession does disrupt the Liturgy, and the other worshippers in church have to wait for you; b) only use this concession if it is absolutely necessary, if it is quite impossible because of infirmity, old age, or distance to come another time; c) if you are not hoping to receive the Divine Mysteries at that Liturgy, do not come to confession at that time, rather ask the priest to hear your confession after the service, so that you do not cause an unnecessarily long disruption of the Divine Service; d) if you have some personal difficulties or some particularly troublesome problems in your spiritual life, and need to discuss them at length, then arrange to come at some other time, perhaps for a talk as well as confession, and only use the concession of confessing during the Liturgy for a brief "brush-up" before receiving the Mysteries. Otherwise, at the very time of confessing and while hoping to be absolved of your sins, you might find you are adding to your sins by not showing love and consideration for your confessor or for your brothers and sisters in Christ waiting in church.

Avoid Making Excuses

BEWARE of making excuses either to yourself or to / for others. In the psalm that we chant every evening at Vespers, "Lord, I have cried" (Ps.140), the psalmist inspired by the Holy Spirit identifies excuses with "words of evil," praying, "Incline not my heart unto words of evil, to make excuse with excuses in sins" (v.4). The excuse comes very close to an explanation which is of course permissible, but it does not have the honesty of an explanation, and it fails to be an apology. It has in it an element of deviousness—it is admitting that it has done wrong without really admitting it. Such an approach is of course not Christian and we see why the psalmist likens it to "words of evil," because its very dishonesty and deviousness are works of the evil one. To make an explanation is very useful at times; for instance last week we had a couple phone up and say they would not be at church on Sunday because they had flu. This is straightforward, an explanation. Particularly in a small congregation, where one tends to worry about people who are inexplicably absent, it is a great help. An apology falls after the event, and contains not only a straightforward confession of the fault but a request for forgiveness, and this is of course excellent and of the essence of the Christian life. The excuse might come after the event, or even more shamefully before it, and it is an attempt to deceive. There are several things most clergymen will have noticed, being almost continually subjected to excuses: a) they do not convince in any case; b) they are often made repeatedly, because the offending person is

unable to unburden themselves of their guilt by such "words of evil," c) they are very often addressed to the wrong person. One often finds habitual excusers, making their excuses to all and sundry, whether their hearers have any interest in the matter or not. In such a way they seem to spread a knowledge of their sin or their supposed sin. In many cases this can be sadly amusing. How many times, for instance, does a pastor have to hear an excuse for someone not attending church? And yet the excuse is directed to the wrong person in such a case. Naturally the pastor is concerned for his flock, and suffers some hurt when he sees that they are not trying to live as they should; but it is not he who is the one primarily hurt if someone does not come to church. He has his Liturgy, he has the children whom the Lord hath given him, however many or few that might be. The Church herself is not diminished—she has all the fullness of grace. God is not diminished. The person hurt is the one who makes the excuses—they have lost out on attending church and the benefit it might bring them. They obviously feel some guilt about it and have to bear that, and they have been trapped by the author of "words of evil," the father of lies, to make excuses. So, give an explanation if it is helpful; certainly always make apology for what you have done wrong, but avoid excuses like the plague!

Sundays: The Minimal Obligation

A SIMPLE THING to bear in mind (but a fundamental one for anyone who wants to live as an Orthodox Christian): Sunday is the Lord's Day. It, and the major feasts, are days on which we should go to church. Nowadays many people seem to be under the impression that going to church is an option on Sundays, and nothing more than that. (They do not even think that it is an option on other days of the week.) Sometimes one hears excuses for not coming—"I had so much to do!" and the like, —but there are no excuses from this base-line commitment. These are not excuses but admissions of sin. Church attendance on Sundays is not simply one of several options. It is essential for our spiritual well-being. In fact, Sunday church attendance and attendance on the Twelve Great Feasts is so essential for us (not for God, not for the priest, not for the parish community, but for our own spiritual lives), that even if we are away from home, on holiday, or travelling, we should make enquiries, find a church, and try our best to attend a service on these days. Of course, occasions do occur when we are prevented from going to church; but then, rather than just dismissing it, we should make a special effort to read the Scriptures and services at home, still to keep holy the Lord's day. This is particularly important for those who have the responsibility of bringing up children. Also, if through necessity you have missed a Sunday Liturgy, try to attend on some other day in that week. If we consistently neglect this, we shall find that the neglect becomes habitual and will quickly spread into other areas of our spiritual life, resulting in our becoming one of the saddest of all the creatures on the face of the earth—a nominal Christian, i.e. a spiritually dead Christian.

Do Not Be Habitually Late

NATURALLY it is better to go to church for part of the service rather than omit it altogether, but one should avoid making coming late habitual, as many Orthodox Christians seem to consider a quite normal and acceptable practice. Habitually coming late, if it can be avoided, is an insult to the Lord in Whose house we are guests. It is also disturbing to the other worshippers, setting a bad example for them. One would not go to a concert, a play or a sports event for only the last

fifteen minutes. Nor, if invited to a dinner at a friend's house, would one turn up at the end of the meal as a matter of course. So why do we treat God in this way, and then expect His blessings? Try by all means to be present from the start of the Divine Services and to attend to them. Very often, we are phoned by people inquiring about the services—and we know other clergy are as well—and asked not only when the services begin but also—and it seems more importantly—when they end. Except on days when one might have other commitments, this should not be one's first consideration; and certainly it should not be a way of trying to calculate when one should arrive!

Paying Attention During the Services / Language Issues

THIS MAY SEEM SIMPLISTIC ADVICE, but it is nonetheless something which we all very often forget and it can bear spelling out. When in church, attend to the words and actions of the divine service. Often in church we find our thoughts drifting, we sometimes become bored or tired by services which are admittedly long. But the remedy is not to seek for some distraction, or come for ever shorter portions of the services, but to apply ourselves to listening to what is being sung or said. This is especially important in the portions of the service proper to the feast or commemoration of the day, such as the canon in Mattins. These portions can tell us so much about our Faith. By beginning to listen comprehendingly—(and it is to remind us of this necessity, after all, that the priest or deacon so often exclaims, "Wisdom" or "Let us attend"), — not only will we find our interest is engaged, but our souls and minds will be nourished by the teaching contained in the services. Some might argue that this is not always possible, because in many churches the services are conducted in languages they do not readily understand. In which case, you do not have to do nothing. You have four positive courses of action: a) to follow what you can with a book in your own language; b) (if a sizable number of you share a need in this regard) to make your needs known to the pastor (who after all has the care of your spiritual well-being) and ask that at least some of the service might be in your language; or c) to find a church where the services are in a readily understandable language; d) make an attempt to learn the liturgical language of your church. This last idea might not seem very practicable; and of course peoples' abilities with regard to learning languages vary considerably; but it is an odd thing that people will try to learn foreign languages when going abroad for a two-week continental holiday, and will invest quite a lot of effort and money to do so, but the same people will "happily" stand in church and daydream Sunday after Sunday for years on end, without giving a thought to learning at least something of the language used. The present writer has done this, and remembers when he first started attending services in Slavonic some thirty years ago, that for about four years it did not even occur to his minute mind that one could learn to understand the language of the services! But it can be done. You may never learn much, but you will find encouragement in beginning to understand more and more. Paradoxically it seems often to be those who are born into Orthodox families and traditions who most often seem to entertain the soul-destructive idea that the services are not to be understood—I expect our non-Orthodox readers will be shocked by such a thought, but it is prevalent, and would that all the Orthodox were shocked by it too. If you want to try and learn the liturgical language, ask help and advice of the pastor or the readers, and more particularly ask help from the heavenly choir of Saints.

Talking in Church

IN OUR FIRST SECTION, "From the Fathers," this month we have included teaching from St Basil the Great concerning talking in church. This is something that we perhaps all need to read through again and again, and take to heart. But we must also remember to be careful about talking AFTER the church services (*before* is not usually so much of a problem as there are so few people there!). When the service ends, often people immediately break into conversations. They thus commit two wrongs: they dishonour the house of God, wherein even when our services are over, the holy things remain and the prayer of the Heavenly Church continues; and they immediately lose what spiritual benefit they might have received in the time of prayer. It is as if one has a bath and then immediately rolls in filth. Of course, after we have left the church itself we should greet our fellow-worshippers and talk to them. If there is an opportunity to eat with them—or at least have a cup of tea with them, as happens in many parishes—, this is good too. It helps us to grow together as a church family. But in doing so we should still carefully hold fast to what we have received in church lest we lose it, making our return journey home having profitted nothing.

The Importance of Communing Children

PARENTS ARE USUALLY AWARE that from the age of seven, children should be brought to confession before receiving Holy Communion. In the Russian Church this is a strict ruling, in other national Orthodox Churches it is a guideline date as children vary immensely in their maturity and capabilities. In both instances it is helpful to talk with your children about it first and to talk with the priest before presenting them for their first confession. Maybe also arrange for him to talk to them with you, so that they are not anxious when they come for confession for the first time. However, it should also be emphasized that just because children are required to go to confession above this age, they should nonetheless be brought to Holy Communion no less frequently than previously. The reception of the Holy Mysteries is important for a child's spiritual growth and it is no less important after seven! Very often one notices that until they are seven children are brought perhaps even weekly to Communion (and this is commendable and something all Orthodox parents should try to do), but from about seven on parents bring their children less often for Communion. By the time they are in their teens, when perhaps they most need the anchor of confession and the contact that that gives them with their pastor, they are infrequent communicants, and so in their adult years, if they do not altogether lapse, they quite naturally descend to the widespread but deplorable custom of only receiving the Holy Mysteries on a few occasions in the year.

On the Use of Antidoron

MOST ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS are aware that one should keep a strict and complete fast from midnight before receiving the Holy Mysteries, but one should also receive holy water and the antidoron (the blessed bread given out at the end of the Liturgy) fasting. If, as many do, you keep a supply at home, use a little each day to break your fast, when you have said your morning prayers and before eating anything else. If you are attending the Divine Liturgy, then keep a fast until the service is over (as in any case one should) and you receive your antidoron from the priest. If for some reason, you have eaten when you attend the Liturgy, then take the

antidoron home as a blessing and consume it on another day, thus showing reverence for the things of God and the blessing which this bread has received.

Praying at Home

WHEN saying your private prayers, either alone or with the family, always stand before the holy icons, sitting only if you are aged, infirm or ill. Some, it seems, think that to read one's prayers, one sits as if reading a book, but unless absolutely necessary this is not a good practice. Our outward deportment effects our inward disposition. If we sit and read our prayers as if we are sitting and reading a novel or a work report, we will not bear in mind that we are coming before the Lord in prayer. At best we shall be just getting through our "prayers." There can be few of us, at least among readers of this magazine, whose prayer-rule is so protracted that they need to sit down through it.

WHEN PRAYING AT HOME before your icons, take some time to look at them. This might seem obvious, but particularly when we are reading a Prayer Rule, the Prayers Before Sleep, or the Preparation for Reception of the Holy Mysteries, to our shame we are often so determined simply to "get through the prayers" that our eyes are glued to the book and we never for a moment look up at the icons. Looking at them will remind us before Whom we stand and Whom we are addressing, and it is itself edifying and spiritually nourishing.

Making the Sign of the Cross

THIS MONTH, we have the festival of the Holy Cross, and so it seems a good time to remind the faithful how to make the sign of the Cross reverently. First of all, we should always remember that in making this sign we are making an act of worship, a confession of our Faith and a prayer, and therefore it should not be done carelessly or thoughtlessly, nor simply a matter of habit or nervous reaction. To make the sign, first join the tips of the thumb, index finger and second finger of your right hand, while folding the other two fingers into your palm. Recollect that the three joined digits represent the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The two folded fingers are an expression of that other fundamental teaching of our Church, the Incarnation, for folded into the palm (the earth) they recall God the Son Who came down to earth and became man and is known in two natures, being both perfect God and perfect man. With the hand held thus, make the sign over yourself by touching in turn the forehead, the stomach, the right and the left shoulder. In this way taking up His Cross, dedicate your whole being to Christ in fulfillment of the commandment to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind." Having done this, you then bow from the waist. Oftentimes this bow is slight, but sometimes during divine services we bow deeply to touch the floor with the fingers (now extended) of the right hand, or even make a full prostration to the ground, touching it with the forehead. This bowing reminds us of the attitude of the Publican, who feeling his unworthiness to stand before God, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven. The touching of, or prostrating to, the ground, can remind us of our end, that "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19). With such dispositions and such reverent care, our making of the sign will indeed be a call for God's mercy. Perhaps we should add one warning: although it is right and proper to make the sign reverently and with care, bearing in mind its rich significance, we should try to avoid doing it theatrically or

demonstratively. No one in this life who sees you will be awarding prizes for the way you do it! And in the life to come, you will find that the Awarder of Crowns will have been looking rather at the disposition of your heart than your melodramatic talents.

Body Position While at Prayer

WHEN STANDING IN CHURCH or during prayer at home, you will find it easier if you stand straight, with your feet a little apart and bearing your weight equally. As soon as you begin to shift the weight from one foot to another, or to lean or "relax" your posture a little, you will not only find that you can less easily pay attention (and therefore inevitably will find the service more tiring and boring), but you will find it physically more tiring. Also one should stand with one's hands at one's side. Some seem to adopt the stance of officials at American state functions—or of unbelievers at a funeral forced for a brief spell to be "reverent" but embarrassed by it and unused to it—with their hands clasped in front of them. This not only looks ugly and irreverent (a kind of studied nonchalance), but it means that one's hands are not ready for spiritual combat, ready to make the sign of the Cross. One is striking the pose of a spectator rather than a participator in worship, and will inevitably adopt the attitude of a spectator too.

[*Webmaster note*—There seems to be some differences of opinion regarding the issue of folded hands. *Orthodox Tradition* has also contained information about bodily positions in church, stating that the proper stance is hands clasped in front. These are minor points of difference. The important thing is to recognize that our bodily positions both affect and reflect the attitude of our heart; and to not stand in such a way as to give a place to sloth, inattentiveness, or irreverence is wholly improper. Incidentally, both publications firmly agree that it is unacceptable for one to stand with hands behind the back, to sit with crossed legs in church (if you have the occasion to sit), or to lean against any part of the church (for the walls, pillars, etc. of the church are holy, and leaning is too casual and relaxed a position).]

On Prostrations

DURING THE WEEKDAYS following Pentecost we begin again to make prostrations in church. Some have asked when these should be made. In some parishes, three full prostrations are made when one first enters the church, although that is not a custom we keep here. In some churches prostrations are made on Saturdays; in others they are not. Our custom is generally not to make them on Saturdays. This follows the pattern which is set in Great Lent, when prostrations are appointed at various points during the Monday-Friday services (the days when "Alleluia" is sung at the beginning of Matins), but not on Saturdays. Outside of Lent the times when one should make prostrations are less rigidly defined. However, the following guidelines might help if you are in doubt:

During the Divine Liturgy, prostrate to the ground at: 1) "Let us give thanks unto the Lord" (the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer); 2) at the end of the hymn, "We hymn Thee, we bless Thee" (after the consecration of the Gifts); 3) at the end of the hymn to the Mother of God; 4) before the "Our Father;" 5) at "The Holies are for the holy;" 6) when the Chalice is brought out at the

words "With fear of God;" and 7) (if one has not taken Communion) at the presentation of the Chalice at the words, "Now and ever."

One can make prostrations when venerating the relics and icons, and at other times during the service when you feel moved to do so. When the unconsecrated gifts are brought out at the Great Entrance, the Russian practice is to refrain from prostrating lest it seem that we are offering adoration to the unconsecrated bread and wine; however the Greeks generally see no difficulty in prostrating at this point as well.

Those who have received a blessing to enter the altar / sanctuary, whether it be during the service time to serve, or outside of service time, should—if they have not already done so—make three full prostrations to the ground, bow to the High Place, and then bow to the senior clergyman present and ask his blessing. They should bear in mind the sanctity of that place, and that in entering there they are being granted something not permitted to the greater number of the believers, but only to those whose service as ordained ministers requires them to be there, or who have otherwise received specific permission from the Bishop or their parish priest.

[*Webmaster note*—The guidelines for prostrations outside of the sanctuary will undoubtedly vary from parish to parish, country to country. As always, use your head and consult the priest if you are unccertain about what to do. As a general rule of thumb in unfamiliar circumstances—and especially when you are in doubt—, do as the other parishioners do unless they are clearly violating Holy Tradition (e.g., prostrations on Sundays). You should endeavor not to call attention to yourself, or have a "super-correct" attitude when it comes to matters like this, judging others who "do not do it right."]

EXCEPT FOR SUNDAYS and the days of Pentecost (the fifty days between Pascha and Pentecost-Trinity Sunday) and in many churches Saturdays too, Orthodox Christians make prostrations during their worship in church and during their prayers at home. Very often, under the guidance of their spiritual fathers, they attempt to keep a rule of making an allotted number of prostrations every day. In the weekday services in Lent, the number of prostrations is greatly increased and at various points the whole congregation make prostrations together: during the Prayer of St Ephraim, the lenten verses on the Hours, at the end of Vespers and during Great Compline. Very often those new to Orthodoxy, or new to keeping Orthodox traditions, make these prostrations in ways which are ungainly, difficult and possibly injurious—by kneeling down and flopping forward for instance. The better way to make them and the way employed by people from Orthodox cultures is difficult to explain in words, but much easier to execute; it is thus: make the sign of the Cross, bow forward from the waist, and continue down, bending the knees somewhat, until both hands touch the floor in front of you. Make sure your hands are placed directly below the shoulders, not too close and not too far apart (this will make rising easier). Then bend the knees more till they touch the floor, at the same time bringing down your forehead to the floor. In rising, first lift the head and then push up on the arms to straighten out. If you find this difficult to understand, ask an "experienced prostrater" to show you and help you. You will find this much easier than the "kneel and flop" method, and that you will almost be able to make the whole movement down (death) and up (resurrection) in one. Of course, if you are elderly, pregnant or infirm, you should be careful about making prostrations and no one will

expect you to do so. One can bow at the times when the others are prostrating. Don't be too ready to excuse yourself on account of infirmity though—I can remember elderly Russian ladies at the old Cathedral at Emperors's Gate showing an example by making prostrations to the ground, even if it required two younger and fitter people then to pick them up afterwards!

Commemoration Books

IN MANY CHURCHES, particularly Slavic rite ones, it is the custom for the faithful to send up lists of names of Orthodox Christians (both living and departed) for commemoration in the Divine Liturgy with a small prosphora to be blessed. The purchase of this prosphora is, in effect, a donation to the church. (In the Greek practice, the person who wants commemorations made usually bakes a prosphora and brings it to the church with a list a names—a much more beautiful custom.) Sometimes people deposit commemoration books at the church with the request that the names be read at the Divine Liturgy, making a donation for this. If doing so, you should be very careful to do two things: a) to keep the listing of the names up-to-date—one often finds names of people who have died months before still among the living, or people ordained to a higher rank still listed as laymen, all giving the impression that rather than really caring for the people commemorated, those who own these books are simply farming out prayers (something which cannot rightly be done); and b) make sure that you pray for these people too, at home and in church. If your list is deposited with the church, keep a duplicate and remember the people inscribed there in your own prayers, asking for the return of the book occasionally to bring it up to date. Otherwise this custom which has developed as a manifestation of our love for the people remembered will become the very opposite—a witness of our lack of concern for them and of our carelessness.

Preparing for Lent

IN THE SHORT TIME before the beginning of the Great Lent, find a spiritually edifying book and undertake to read it during Lent as a part of your lenten struggle. Sometimes, we simply keep Lent, if we do at all, by just adhering to the fasting regulations, by attending the more important lenten services in church, but we are somehow still left unnourished. Spiritual reading, which is something that we should do at all times of the year, is particularly important during the lenten period and is something which can deepen and broaden our spiritual lives. If necessary, take advice on which book to choose as your lenten reading.

AS EXPLAINED earlier, most of February will fall with in the 22 day period that the Church assigns as a preparation for the Great Lent. Oftentimes, we treat this period as if it were something simply symbolic or liturgical, and therefore we pay it little or no heed. Spiritually a much wiser course would be to use it as is intended: to prepare ourselves for the fast. Many things can be done—we can see how best we can keep the dietary prescriptions of the fast; we can ensure that we keep the period as clear as possible of commitments which will mean that we have to travel or visit; we can mark in our diaries the extra church observances that we should keep in the course of the fast (the Great Canon in the first and fifth weeks, the Akathist hymns on Friday evenings, the Presanctified Liturgies, etc.); we can find spiritually helpful books to read; assess and perhaps make arrangements for meaningful (rather than symbolic) almsgiving; prepare for the Rite of Forgiveness by trying to be reconciled to any that have

become our enemies; seek advice and counsel from our spiritual fathers if there are areas about the fast that we think will cause us difficulties. We can even do simple things by finding out, if we do not already know, how to prepare Koliva for St Theodore Saturday and the Soul Sabbaths, or bake the special bird-shaped pastries for the feast of the Forty Martyrs [known as "Larks"]. There are a host of things to be done before Clean Monday, so by all means enjoy the pancakes in Cheesefare Week, but do not let your pre-lenten observance consist only in that! Lay a firm foundation now for the building of your fast.

MAKE SURE, if you have not already done so, to make arrangements so that you can attend as many of the Passion Week and Paschal services as possible. With many Orthodox Christians in this country living far from churches, they sometimes make arrangements to stay near a church at least for the end of Passion Week and the day of Pascha itself. Perhaps time will have to be taken off from work or schedules altered in other ways, and it is best to plan for this ahead. The services of Passion Week and Pascha are the most important in the Christian Year and every conscientious Orthodox should try his or her best to prepare for them, participate in them, to confess, and to receive the Holy Mysteries.

Breaking a Fast

BE ON GUARD at the end of the Nativity Fast. Very often the more conscientious among the faithful make real efforts to keep the fast, both with regard to the dietary disciplines, and with regard to their inner life: contending with the passions and thoughts, avoiding and resisting temptations, spiritual reading, prayer, preparation for confession, more frequent reception of the Holy Mysteries, etc; but then in the first hours of the feast itself they completely lose an the profit they might have gained by abandoning all that they have so carefully practised during the fast. It is true that we keep the feasts as times of rejoicing and that we are released from the discipline of fasting, but we should be careful not to do this is such a way that we abandon every appearance of Christian struggle.

TRY to remember to keep Pascha holy. This might seem an odd and unnecessary tip, but it happens that at all the greater festivals, and particularly at Christmas and Pascha, one finds that after the fast, there is a temptation simply to let go. True, we can start eating non-lenten products again, but this does not mean that we should plunge into gluttony or drunkenness. The church services are shorter and the typicon less demanding, but very often one notices that there is a veritable apostasy after a major feast. If we have gained anything spiritually in the course of the fast, let us try to hold it fast and not to lose it heedlessly. In this way, step by small step, with each fast and each feast we shall be able to make some little progress spiritually, using each as the rungs of a ladder.

Changes for Pentecost & Kneeling in Church

REMEMBER that during Pentecost—the fifty days between Pascha (Easter) and Pentecost or Trinity Sunday—we do not kneel in church at all, nor do we make prostrations. It is as if every day was a Sunday. This is a very ancient practice of the Church dating back at least to the second century, and a canon of the First Œcumenical Council (Nicea, 325 A.D) confirmed the practice. Our not kneeling indicates that we have risen with Christ and is a proclamation that we

look forward to the future Resurrection and the life of the Age to come, when our bodies will be resurrected and stand in the Kingdom.

Changes for Pentecost: Our Prayers

REMEMBER that from Pascha until the Vigil for Pentecost, we do not use the prayer, "Heavenly King, O Comforter," in our prayers at home or in church. Until, but not after, Ascension Day, it is replaced by the threefold repetition of the Paschal troparion: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath He trampled down death, and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life." In church, when a service begins with the threefold, "O come, let us worship…," this too is replaced by the Paschal troparion throughout the forty days of Pascha, but is re-introduced at Ascension.

Patron Saints and Namedays

REMEMBER to keep holy your Nameday, the annual commemoration of the Saint after whom you were named in Holy Baptism. If circumstances permit, you should make every attempt to attend the services for this day in church, and prepare yourself to receive the Holy Mysteries on this day each year. If, as so often happens, this is not possible, then at least obtain a copy of the service to your Saint and read it with your prayers at home. Ask that you be remembered in the prayers in a church where the Liturgy is being celebrated, even if you cannot attend. Ask for your loved ones too. Always keep an icon of your Patron Saint at home and take it with you when you travel; also keep and read often the life of the Saint after whom you are called. In this way you will begin to form a spiritual bond with that Saint, and will experience the benefit of their intercessions for you. For children, especially young ones, it is good to make their Nameday just as important to them as their birthday, not only with the church practices but by giving presents or even having a party. In fact, it is more important, because the birthday simply marks the passage of time, whereas the Nameday links us to one of the citizens of Heaven who has already shown his or her love for us by granting us their name. We should respond to that love and try in every way to enflame it.

On Pilgrimages

THIS ISSUE already contains a practical tip in the suggestion that we make pilgrimages to the sites associated with the saints. We might add to this that if you do plan to make such a pilgrimage, do a little preparation first. Read about the saints, and if possible the place associated with them. Also, and perhaps more importantly, take with you the hymns appropriate to the saint, if only the troparion and kontakion from the General Menaion, so that you can chant them at the holy place. Particularly if you are going alone, take with you the Scriptures or the life of the Saint so that you can read them quietly at the holy place, so that your visit becomes something more than just religious tourism but is truly a pilgrimage, a time set apart to pray, to reflect, to grow closer to the communion of the saints.

Be On Guard Against Deception

AT ALL TIMES be on your guard against deception. In the West there seems to be almost a culture of accepting deceptions—even of seeking them!—, especially if they come decked out in religious finery. A monastic correspondent recently sent us the following edifying story: "Two

years ago a visitor told us of what had happened to an inexperienced monk in his monastery. One night he was awoken by a bright light, and there was a beautiful Angel gazing down at him with loving eyes. 'Get up and pray,' he said, so the monk obeyed. The vision was repeated the next night, and again the monk prayed. When it had happened on four consecutive nights, he became anxious and went to his Abbot, who wisely told him that if the Angel came again, he should just turn over and go to sleep. The Angel came as before, but this time the monk ignored him and turned over as if to sleep. No sooner had he done so than there was a violent slamming of doors and such a disgusting stench that the monk could no longer remain in his cell. The next day he repented of his pride which had led him to think he was worthy of seeing an Angel, the consequence of which was that he had willingly obeyed the devil." In all probability we shall not be tempted by such a manifest appearance of the demon. Nonetheless, in all circumstances we must be on our guard against his deceits; and rather than ready to accept such deceits, we should be on guard against them.

On Death

OUR LEAD ARTICLE this month is about death, yet was given the rather cheery title "Let's Talk About Death" by its authoress. This might seem inappropriate to some, but that is because by and large we have abandoned a Christian attitude to death and adopted the attitudes of the world around us. Death is a natural part of our existence; indeed it might be said that the whole point of our being Christians is to prepare for death. And yet, so often we try to hide it and hide from it. This causes two deep hurts. First of all it can hurt anyone in our immediate circle or family who is dying. They can he made to feel that somehow they are failing, that they are causing embarrassment, and the like. And very often because they are not given an opportunity by their loved ones to accept their impending death openly, they are denied opportunities to prepare for it. Rather, as Christians, we should strive to help people approach death openly and give them opportunities to prepare for it—by spiritual reading, prayer, going to church if possible, by receiving the Mysteries, by talking about what they are going through. Secondly our faithless attitude often hurts those who have died, because, having tried to hide from the reality of the approaching death, we are spiritually thrown off balance when they die. We have lost an opportunity to do some little preparation (albeit always inadequate) for it ourselves, and so we are taken by surprise. We throw ourselves into a host of things which profit little and often completely neglect the needs of the soul that has departed from us. We think of flowers and types of coffin and the like, and forget that at that moment that what the departed needs is our prayers and those of the Church, that we should have memorial services chanted, commemoration made at the Liturgy, that we can give alms in remembrance of our loved one, and that above all we should show obedience to the teachings of the Church with regard to the funeral rites for the departed—(cremation and embalming, for instance, are never permitted Orthodox Christians)—and thus bring them and ourselves another blessing. If in any doubt, as most assuredly most of us are at such times, we should immediately contact our parish pastor so that he can guide us and help us.

Asking Others for their Prayers

THERE is an ancient and commendable custom among Orthodox Christians, rooted in the Apostolic teachings, of asking prayers of one another in times of sickness or need, and especially of asking prayers at churches and monasteries. We would like to suggest two things with regard to this practice. The first is of primary importance! That is that we should not only pray and ask prayers in time of need, but we should also give thanks when, as we desired or otherwise, our prayers have been answered. How many ask for prayers for various needs, but never ask for a thanksgiving Moleben when the hour of need has passed! Secondly, on a more mundane level, if you ask prayers or for commemoration at church, then show courtesy to those whose prayers you ask, whether they be monastics, clergy or lay people, by keeping them informed about the matter. In our own small world, we have often been asked to pray for someone who is sick, and try to do so—perhaps weeks later, we see the person again, ask how their loved one is, only to find that not only has the illness long passed but it has been forgotten.

Learn As Much As You Can!

Learn! Learn as much, as broadly, and as deeply as you can about your Faith. Very often, and perhaps especially among those who come to Orthodoxy as adults, we tend to think that in becoming Orthodox we have reached the peak—just as in some ways many people think that getting married is an aim and goal and one achieved at the wedding ceremony (!), whereas in fact rather than having finalised the matter we have only just begun it. Also having "become Orthodox," many cease to inquire and so their understanding of the Faith remains shallow. After the initial exaltation it becomes lack-lustre, and people often drift away. So take every opportunity to lean more. Read, for sure: the Scriptures, the lives of saints, the writings of the Fathers, commentaries. Ask questions and don't be embarrassed to do so. But take every opportunity to learn in practical ways too: how to bake prosphora, how to chant, how the services are put together. If you have any gift or talent, find a way to use it for the Church. Ask for help if you have any difficulty or need in doing this. Ask for guidance too. Do not be ashamed even to learn the simplest of things: the names of the saints on the icons in church for instance, and from that go on to learn about and from their lives. Learn to turn to them in prayer. If there is anything that you realize that you do not know; seek to find out. Lose no opportunity to learn. The Saviour said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt.18:3). This, of course, refers to the guilelessness and innocence of little children, but we who claim to be "converted," to be "converts," must become little children in this too, for little children are always ready and eager to learn and seeking out new things to learn, and so must we be.

Don't Hesitate to Ask

IF ANYTHING in Church-life worries you or disquiets you in any way—however trifling it may seem—, ask about it. This could be either something in your personal spiritual life or, in the life of the parish or community to which you belong. It could be something incidental, or something about the Faith and practice of the Church itself. Often people do not ask because they think that it will make them look stupid or ignorant, or that it will cause offence; but then they waste an opportunity to learn more and they probably give the evil one occasion to tempt them at some stage. For however insignificant the matter might seem, it will be like an untreated

wound that will likely go septic. They may even cause hurt to their fellow Orthodox Christians; for very often when people have difficulties and do not set about resolving them in a right way, they talk about them with people from whom they cannot hope to receive help. In this way they not only receive no help themselves, but perhaps also spread their doubts, worries, or complaints to others, ultimately becoming a source of temptation for them.

Preparing to Travel

IN PLANNING your holidays for the coming year, try to remember three things which are very often completely neglected even by conscientious Orthodox Christians.

a) First study the calendar before deciding on dates. One should try to avoid travelling during the four fast periods in the year, and should also try and ensure that you will be at home, in your parish church, for the principal feasts, particularly for the dedication festival of your parish. It is not always possible to choose a time so as to be at home for all the Great Feasts, but at least try and ensure that you are not holidaying during the fasts.

b) In contemplating where to go, don't simply be concerned with sightseeing, pleasures and pastimes. Try to find somewhere, where you will be able to find an Orthodox church nearby so that you can at least attend the Sunday Liturgy. If need be consult with your parish priest, who may have directories which can help you, before finalizing your plans. Remember we should never take a holiday from our church observance! If we do, it takes a lot of struggle to re-establish our spiritual life.

c) Make sure that you take with you some notice of your being Orthodox, and a request that in case of emergency a priest should be contacted. This notice could also have on it the name and address of your home parish and of your spiritual father, so that they might be contacted if necessary.

Cultivate Quietness

PARTICULARLY DURING LENT, but at all times, try to regain a measure of quiet in your lives. Today we are bombarded with noise, with news bulletins, opinions, even piped music in shops, and as a result we are frazzled, but do not know the cause of this and seek solace in more noise. Just recently I was struck by a statement from an elderly Orthodox person, who had grown up in the "Old Regime" and remarked on the need of quiet in the life of children. Seeing how through the media, at home and at school, as well as at play, we seem now to try and fill their lives with noise, this remark was all the more striking, but on reflection how true it is. We, adults, also need quiet and a time to reflect, and should actively strive to make such times in our daily routines. Switch the television or radio off for a while, do not bother to peruse the papers or magazines to find something to distract, but instead just sit quietly or go for a walk. During such quiet, you can begin to pray, and then the periods of set prayer at the beginning and end of each day will also seem less of a chore.

The Importance of Communal Life

THERE is an old dictum that "One Christian is no Christian." And this is certainly true. Of course there is the specific calling of the eremitic life (the life of the hermit or solitary), but this is something which few if any of us can aspire to. For the generality of us, we are saved by living in communities: in parishes or monasteries, in families. The necessity for our salvation of living in communities does not simply concern our worshipping together, although this is of paramount importance. It means that we must also, as much as circumstances allow, live together, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ (see Gal. 6:2). Perhaps in earlier generations when society was broadly ordered along Christian principles, this did not need to be stressed. But now we live in a mammon-motivated society, within which the conscientious Christians are fairly lightly scattered. We must bear this in mind, and take measures to ensure that we have some 'community care" within our own Orthodox community, and real community care rather than the state sponsored variety where the very expression is just another example of governmental "economy with the truth"! It is for this reason that we always have a parish breakfast after our Sunday Liturgies—so that we can grow together. This itself is, of course, only a small beginning. There are a host of other things that we can do to help, support and care for each other, and one that particularly came to our notice recently is simply offering people lifts to church. Our Orthodox community is extremely widely scattered; some people are elderly, have no means of transport, or sick and therefore cannot easily get to church. Try to find out if there are such people that you could help by picking them up and taking them to church. Ask the priest if he knows anyone in your area who would appreciate a lift; maybe even put an advert in the local paper, library, or neighbourhood notice board, to find people (this might or might not find people, but at the very least it will let others know that there are Orthodox Christians trying to exercise brotherly love, and that itself would not be without profit).

Preparing for a New Year

WE ARE COMING to the end of 1996 and begin to make plans for the coming year. Of course, spiritually the faithful should always bear in mind that all plans are conditional on God's will for us; carefully read James 4:13-15 and take it to heart. But on a practical level there are two things which we can do to help us spiritually in the coming year. First of all, if you do not have a church diary, mark the feasts for 1997 in your diary, mark in when Lent begins, remember to note that eves of Feasts are times for Vigils and so mark these in as well, so that your church observance will be for the coming year "as at the head of your joy" (see Ps. 136:8). Secondly, in planning holidays for the next year, ensure now that they will not coincide with the fast 'periods, that you will avoid (if at all possible) missing an important feast in your home-church, particularly the feast of the church itself, and that you will be going somewhere where you can get to an Orthodox church or contact a priest if necessary. Obtain the addresses of the local churches and clergy before setting out—make this an essential part of your holiday planning.

House Blessings

AT HOLY THEOPHANY, it is traditional to have one's house blessed by the priest, with the waters sanctified at the festival. In Orthodox countries, the priest will make a circuit of the houses in his parish on the day of the feast. In the situation that we now find ourselves in, this is rarely possible, because the faithful rarely live in the immediate neighbourhood of their church.

However, they should invite their pastor to bless their homes during the feast, or if this is not possible as soon as is practicable afterwards. Make an appointment for him to come. Often the priest will lead a short prayer service in each home, before going through the house, gardens and outside-buildings, blessing with Theophany water. Prepare for this by setting up a table in front of the principal icon corner in your home, the one where the family prayers are usually said. The table should be covered with a clean cloth, and there should be a lighted candle or lamp there. A bowl of Theophany water with a sprinkler (or twig of greenery), a Gospel Book and hand Cross will also be needed. In some instances the priest will bring these with him with his vestments, but it is as well to ask if he would like you to have them ready. A hand censer might also be lit. If possible all the believing members of the family should gather, properly attired as if for church, for the service. They should lead the priest round the house chanting the troparion of the festival, as he sprinkles the rooms, and so they should have this hymn ready too. At the end of the service, the priest will bless each member of the household by sprinkling them with holy water as they approach to kiss the Cross. Each month of the year thereafter, and on special occasions (both festivals and family celebrations, as well as in times of temptation or after arguments and unpleasantness), the blessing can be "renewed" by the family themselves sprinkling their home with the waters blessed at the monthly Lesser Blessings of Water which take place at the beginning of each calendar month.

MAKE ABSOLUTELY SURE that you have your home blessed by your parish priest at Theophany. The home is for an Orthodox Christian a house-church, and yet it is also the place of their spiritual struggle and so a place where there are often temptations and trials. This annual blessing dedicates it again to the Lord and brings refreshment for those who live there. Ensure that the priest knows that you want your house blessed, make a definite appointment with him, and prepare for his coming. This preparation should be that you set up a small table, covered with a clean white cloth, before the icon corner or the place where you say your family prayers. Have on it a lighted candle and a bowl of the water blessed at the Theophany service. Try if possible to get all the family there for the blessing, dressed and behaving as though at church. Leave a list of the Christian names of all the house's occupants for the priest to commemorate, and when the time comes lead him around the house from room to room to sprinkle it with the holy water. As different priests have slightly different ways of going about these things, it is a good idea to check with the priest before he comes if anything else is needed. If you know of other Orthodox Christians in your area, it would be a great help to arrange the blessing of your home and theirs together, so that the priest does not have to make several journeys in the same direction. You might also find someone who is largely cut off from church-life and perhaps feels neglected, who would find it a joy to have their house blessed but is not sure how to go about it—maybe you can help them.

From various issues of *The Shepherd*.

CHRISTIAN GIVING

By Deacon David M. James

For many of us, the need for raising money in the Church is viewed much as the Victorians viewed sex: necessary, but not very nice. Clergy and lay people alike see the fund-raising task in the parish as an unwelcome interruption in the continuing spiritual life of the parish -if, indeed, even that, and not instead as an unwelcome intrusion of a totally needless element in their personal lives, as opposed to their spiritual lives.

For most the issue of parish finances is often treated a little like the commercials in the middle of the Rose Bowl or Super Bowl. It is something separate from the program itself both in sound and in content, with no connection to what occurs just before the collection or just after. It is not, for most, a part of the Divine Liturgy itself Even the clergy are tempted, and often surrender to the temptation, to keep the "money" messages as short as possible in order to get on with the real business of what we are here to do -worship.

Sometimes the topic is wrapped in such a series of onion-like layers of spiritual clichés and piety as to go unnoticed; too much repetition ren-ders a message invisible -and inaudible. The "feeling" persists that many of our people are still theologically and spiritually crippled when the subject of money is raised.

If the topic of money makes you uncomfortable (and it usually does), it does so because of your conditioning, for the most part; it is because you are not aware of the recorded approach of Christ to the subject of your relationships with money. Many who do discover (and they are few) that relationship are astonished to find that our Lord understood the deep and compelling potential for both good and evil that exist in man's relationships to 'his property.' Many think Christ spoke only of 'Peace" and 'For-giveness' and 'Prayer' and 'Sacrifice' and 'The King-dom of God.' Not at all true. A full sixth of all the words our Lord ever spoke concern themselves with the relationship of people to their material posses-sions -an astonishing percentage. There are few subjects to which a higher percentage is allocated. A full third of all the parables are devoted to it. Money, and what money represents to us, has been a major preoccupation of every generation in the history of the Church, and I submit that neither the Church, nor pastors, nor parishioners, should treat discussions about money as though it were a 'dirty subject.' On the contrary, this subject should have the same high priority in every church's program of education that our Lord Himself placed upon it; it ought to be right up there with the reception of the Sacraments and religious education. All year round all of us, from the priest at the altar to the youngest child still learning to cross himself should be made mindful of our responsible relationships to our ma-terial possessions, and to the obligations which possession of them entails.

At the outset, I want to establish different definitions for "fundraising" and for "Christian stewardship." "Fundraising" means "getting people to give more money." "Christian stewardship," on the other hand, helps people to be more giving. Christian stewardship could be defined as the "effective commitment or investment of human and material resources in participation with Christ in His love for others."

There are two primary points to be made. The first is that stewardship always has to do with a Christian's task to give away gifts that have already been given to him by God. This presupposes, of course, acceptance of the belief that all things are conferred on us by God. The second point is that stewardship always has to do with a Christian getting free of what binds him. In our culture, nothing binds us more than money-the symbol of material things. The first point has to do with turning to a new life; the latter, with turning away from an old life. In other words, stewardship is entwined with conversion. One has to be turned away from what binds him, and turned toward what frees him. This is the test of genuine conversion.

We must become deeply convinced that the relationship of a person and his money is fundamentally a spiritual matter, as fraught with impli-cations for an individual's spiritual life as is his life of prayer or any other "religious" activity. Our Lord

said in Matthew 6:21, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Some-how, in some way, what a person does with his money, how he thinks about it, where he spends it, what he will do to earn it, and the things to which he will give it, are some of the real clues to who he is inside, to what is essentially important to him, to what is really in his heart. It is signifi-cant to note the order of things in the words of our Lord. He does not say, "Where your heart is, there will your treasure be also." Try an experi-ment. Go out and buy a few shares of stock. Make it enough so that the financial interest is important to you. Then notice what part of the newspaper you turn to first when you pick it up. I'd be willing to bet it will be to the financial page to check on your investment. Interest and enthu-siasm follow one's money. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

To put it another way, the places where we make our most serious financial investments are the places where our real self, our inner self, is go-ing to be most interested, most teachable, most re-sponsive, and most open. To deal with a person

in terms of what he does with his money is to deal with most people where they really live. A properly conceived stewardship effort in the Church can thus be an avenue to genuine spiritual growth. Good stewardship has that potential. That is something of what our Lord meant when He said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." It is therefore extremely important that we begin to recover a soundly Orthodox theological basis for our stewardship efforts.

We are all aware that the basic questions of life will ultimately be satisfied only by theological an-swers. This includes questions about money and our uses of it. And yet, how seldom we think of the-ology when promoting the issue of financial sup-port for our parishes, and how badly we handle the task there!

THREE WRONG REASONS FOR GIVING TO THE CHURCH

A sound theology of money has the potential to tap the spiritual roots of Orthodox Christians at a point where they are most teachable, because it is here where they are most concerned and involved.

There are as many different approaches as there are parishes, but there are three common styles that are guaranteed to bring failure and mis-understand-ing-and sow hatred, discord and bit-terness and re-sentment through the spiritual lives of the people of any parish.

(1) The Numbers Approach

One of the three methods guaranteed to bring failure and misunderstanding is "the Numbers Ap-proach." The people responsible sit down and cal-culate what will be needed next year to carry out the work in that parish. For example, let's sup-pose that in a given parish a 10% increase will be needed next year. The message is communicated that if every-one would just raise his contribution for next year by 10%, we will make it fine. Several things go wrong with this approach.

First, it puts the emphasis in the wrong place. The fact that the emphasis has always been in the wrong place is small comfort. The Numbers Ap-proach will always put the emphasis on the dol-lars the church needs, rather than on the giving it-self. When you start with a budget, the center of at-tention remains on the numbers, on the balance sheet. That's also the problem with reports and statements; they tend to focus the attention on things other than on the giving itself. You can talk all you like about "giving as responsible Chris-tians," but few will hear what you say be-cause· there is this natural tendency to sharpen pen-cils to go over the budget to see what can be cut or to complain about how much legitimate programs in fact cost.

Second, the Numbers Approach is essentially unfair. The basis of the message is in the as-sump-tion that everyone is giving evenly, that Fam-ily A and Family Bare already giving conscien-tiously in relation to their means. In fact, there is no parish I know of where this is in fact the case. In no parish do families give fairly and conscientiously in

relation to their means-only a small portion of each parish does. The facts belie the assumption. While some families do give conscientiously, many more -far many more- give far less than they could. Far less, in fact, than they should. To ask for a percentage increase puts an unfair burden on those who are already doing their best to be faithful in their giving, and it allows the token giver to remain exactly where he is in comparison. Even if he does respond to the increase, he will remain a token giver.

Third, the approach represents a minimum rather than a maximum request. Perhaps it's the fear of asking too much and facing failure that tempts us. But with the Numbers Approach, what we ask as an increase is almost certainly already 'educated' by what we already expect to be 'achievable.' We tend to cut the cloth to the measure of the expectations, rather than the other way around. Consequently, it doesn't challenge anyone spiritually. We ask our people to give to the Church, the diocese, or a given parish, and the ef-fect is to base our appeal on the people's responsi-bility for the survival of the parish (as legitimate as this is), on parish loyalties, or on interest in parish activities, or even on loyalty to a particular parish priest -a popularity contest, in effect. To base our appeals on any of these things is to preclude any serious consideration of giving as a matter of a person's spiritual life, as a serious matter between an Orthodox Christian and his God.

Church people operate on at least three levels of loyalty. We live on the level of denominational loyalty; that is, loyalty to the Orthodox Church. In addition to that, we live on the level of parish and jurisdictional loyalty -to the parish and to the diocese. We have an interest in seeing our par-ish survive, prosper and grow. And that's perfectly legitimate. Beyond these loyalties, however, there ought to be a loyalty, a commitment -to God in and through our Lord Jesus Christ! At our best, all three loyalties complement and supplement each other. However, all too often the first three loyal-ties are used as a substitute for the loyalty to our Lord. We can so easily be caught up in a kind of

"Churchianity," a particular form of modern her-esy and schism. Indeed, to be faithful to a parish is a far easier commitment than to be faithful to Christ! And when we deal with our stewardship duties on the level of parish commitments, we run the very real risk of allowing these to be a substi-tute for any challenge to grow in relationship and commitment to God Himself. While we may say that our stewardship is a matter of the spirit, when push really comes to shove, it's the other loyalties on which we are really banking. That's the real message church members will hear -and it's the real message most of you have heard over the past half-century and more. Please consider that seri-ously in your examination of conscience before confession.

(2) The "Shame on You" Approach

The "Shame-On-You" approach is the second of the three ineffective avenues to church funding. The message comes across something like this: as a nation we spend $3 billion on cosmetics, $3 bil-lion on tobacco, $10 billion on entertainment, $12 billion on alcohol and $1.5 billion on churches and charities. The climax of this is the question, implied or explicit, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" The question is a valid one -but, of course, validity often has little to do with effective-ness, as when Christ told the Scribes and Pharisees to "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). They continued to do nei-ther.

If it is not obvious, it ought to be. The statistics above are, sadly, all too true. The priorities of most Americans, and likewise of most Orthodox Christians, are not what they ought to be. But this approach, like the one mentioned last week, puts the emphasis in the wrong place.

As a nation, we are a comfort-loving and pleasure-seeking people. We must learn to recognize this not as something healthy and good, but as a sign of spiritual disease; we must learn to beg God's forgiveness, and with His help to begin loving Him more than we love our own selfish desires.

But to play on people's guilt, as well-deserved as that guilt usually is -it is that very guilt which probably caused them to be spending their money on comfort and pleasure in the first place -can only increase their involvement with "how I feel," and concentrate their efforts all the more on feeling good again, because now they have been made "to feel

bad." The emphasis on "feeling good" is a spiritual disease in its own right. But it serves little purpose to cater to it simply for the sake of raising money. There is a case to be made for making people feel guilty about those things for which they need to feel guilt; otherwise there is rarely ever any motivation to correct the habits and atti-tudes which give rise to the guilt-but it ought to be done for the sake of the spiritual welfare of the people themselves rather than simply and solely for the purpose of raising funds. The practice may get an increase in offerings, but almost certainly because the parishioners are thinking "Give him some money and he'll be quiet and I'll feel better." In the end, it always leads to leaving the church even more lacking in funds than before.

But when a people will respond to nothing else there is nothing a pastor can do but to preach the truth and jab their consciences, no matter how badly it makes people feel. In the end, it all boils down to how prepared a people are to love their God and to demonstrate it in the details of their lives.

(3) The "Cry Poor" Approach

The third tactic, often tried, is the "Cry Poor Approach." Not as illegitimate a tactic as all that, since the facts of the matter are that the parish is living "in difficult times," but realities seldom seem to matter to people who are intent on main-taining their own values, rather than those of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The message comes out some-thing like this, however legitimate it may be: "Friends, we are living in difficult times. Our par-ish is in grave danger." And then are listed all the desperate needs of the parish which might include leaks in the roof, cracks in the sidewalk or founda-tions, the need for parish help (secretaries, house-keepers, janitors, etc.), perhaps a whole new school curriculum, if there is a parochial school attached. It all adds up to a message that says: "Poor old SS. Peter & Paul! Won't you all please dig a little deeper to help her out in this time of crisis?" The theory, of course, is that very few people can resist such a plea from their own parish. But the approach seems to have some severe liabilities. Far too many people use the "power of the pocketbook" to punish either the pastor, the parish or the bishop for real or imagined wrongs. Some simply like the feeling of power that defiance in the matter gives them. Some simply like to resist -against what, they do not know. But it feels good to reject the legitimate appeals of legitimate authority. It is a substitute way of "feeling free" without actually assuming the burdens of "being" free.

The approach plays upon feelings, like the others. This time on the feeling of pity. Pity is not a Christian virtue. It is, in fact, the antithesis of one. Compassion is the Christian virtue; so is em-pathy, so also sympathy. But not pity! Pity is no more an appropriate basis for Christian steward-ship, for Christian giving, than is guilt.

Certainly, when there is a special need, one beyond the normal resources of the parish budget, a special appeal must be made, and, indeed, should be made. And the parishioners should, from compassion, from divine love, respond generously. But simply to "cry poverty" as a matter of routine, is either to misrepresent the Church, the glorious mystical Body of Christ, the radiant Bride of Christ -or to represent sadly the real spiritual state of the parish when it becomes necessary to make those constant appeals. In an ideal parish, there ought hardly ever be a need for any appeals at all, save for the most serious of unexpected circumstances. And that should be the case simply because the people already are providing willingly, freely and out of love for their Divine Savior and the Church which He founded for their salvation, all that they already can provide.

I'm very much afraid that the last circumstance is without doubt the least common circumstance in the United States. I know of no parish anywhere which is achieving, as a matter of course, anywhere close to the most minimal of what conscience would demand. There is a pettiness and smallness to stewardship in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad which indicates that our members have learned little of what is expected of them: "Of them to whom much has been given, from them will much be demanded." Note -the word is demanded. Not "asked."

ONE RIGHT REASON FOR GIVING TO THE CHURCH

Experience has shown that there is a way that is more theologically sound and much more spiritually challenging than the approaches just described. The Book of Genesis begins with the words: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." The theme of God's ownership re-curs in both the Old and the New Testaments. The author of Deuteronomy, after listing many of the accomplishments of the hand of man -the building of his house, of his herds and flocks, and his accumulation of money -then warns: "Be-ware lest thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that hath given thee power to get wealth ... " (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).

God is the source, and man is the recipient, of God's gifts. In I Chronicles 29: 14-16, King David prays, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee... 0 Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee a house for Thy Holy Name cometh of Thine hand, and is all Thine Own."

The same theme is caught by the prophet Malachi. He chastises the people for withholding their offerings to God, and He asks: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings ... Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse" (Malachi 3:8-10).

Turning to the New Testament we hear the same basic principle sounded again: God is the owner of all things! In the Parable of the Talents, our Lord is saying that whatever we possess has been given by God's hand. And from the gift, some return to God is expected. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard declares that God is a giver of gifts, not wages, and that we do not earn His bounty. The words of the parable, "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me," put in the mouth of God, are a proclamation of God's ownership of His creation. Indeed, the earth is the Lord's, and we are the recipients of His great gifts. Any coherent theology of money, the earning, spending, and giving of it, must begin with this.

This principle is expanded for a Christian in one magnificent way. The greatest gift of God to us is the Gift of His Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and, through Him, the opportunity to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, when we think about the gifts of the earth, of life, and the human qualities of body, brain, talents and the like, and identify these as gifts of God, we have only begun to recognize His gracious self-emptying love to us.

The Motive for Giving

Understanding this, we give because that is one way we have of directly expressing our thanksgiving to God for these gifts. The purest of motives for giving is to give because we have been given to! Giving can be our thankful response to God, Who has given to us.

It is critical to note what that kind of motive does to (or for) the giver. To ask him to give out of thanksgiving is to ask him to relate creatively with his God, and not to a parish budget. This makes "giving" a matter of spiritual survival, rather than of parish survival. It asks a person to be a Christian with his money -and not just a fund raiser or budget supporter, which tends to support a parish with other people's money.

A foundation built on these principles is not only desirable, but essential, to any stewardship effort. Indeed, built on such a foundation, our considerations of stewardship can then open up the genuine possibilities of spiritual growth, both in the life of the individual Christian and in the life of a parish as a whole.

At this point we must begin to talk about a truly crucial concept. It is the principle of "Tithing." A great deal is said today about tithing as the highest form of Christian giving. The tithe - 10% -has often been held up as "the standard" for Christian stewards, and there are many advantages to it. (1) It is a Biblical standard; (2) It is proportional to income and not to a church's budget; (3) It has a "universality" about it, in that the concept itself is at least as old as the Old Testament; (4) It is childishly easy

to figure. Write down the amount of your gross weekly income, and move the decimal one place to the left. That is your "tithe."

However, as St. Paul observed, we are no longer under the Law, but under grace. This is what St. John Chrysostom has to say: "Woe to him, it is said, who doeth not alms; and if this was the case under the Old Covenant, much more is it under the New. If, where the getting of wealth was allowed, and the enjoyment of it, and the care of it, there was such provision made for the succoring the poor, how much more in that Dispensation, where we are commanded to surrender all we have? For what did they of old not do? They gave tithes, and tithes again upon tithes for orphans, widows and strangers; whereas some one was say-ing to me in astonishment at another, 'Why, such an one gives tithes.' What a load of disgrace does this expression imply, since what was not a matter of wonder with the Jews has come to be so in the case of the Christians? If there was danger then in omitting tithes, think how great it must be now." [St. John Chrysostom, Homily N on Ephesians, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 13, p. 69]

A Christian, recognizing that all he possesses is &om God and wanting in gratitude to return a portion of his income to Him, is not afraid to give even more than 10%. Indeed, almsgiving, along with prayer and fasting so central to the Christian life, cannot even begin until we have tithed, be-cause the tithe belongs to God: "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord" Lev. 27:30. No gift of ours can ever "repay" God's gift of Himself to us, but the gift of love that is almsgiving cannot begin until we give the Lord His due, because "the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:32).

The advantage of tithing combined with almsgiving, is that they allow us to express this love no matter how little we happen to have, or how we happen to feel about it. The method is simple. Take your annual gross income and mul-tiply it by the percentage that you want to share with God in your material giving: (e.g., for 12% multiply by .12) then divide that amount by the weeks in one year, fifty-two. Or figure the per-centage you have chosen from your income for each week as it comes. The amount you come up with seldom comes out to even dollar amounts. But that has the real value of moving away from the prison that puts gifts in round numbers with-out basing the giving on any systematic measure. A weekly gift of an odd amount -$72.11, for example -will continually focus attention on the percentage and will be a constant reminder to the tither to also give alms every time the check is written. The major advantages of tithing are: (1) It puts the emphasis where it belongs; on giving out of income. (2) It keeps a person honest about his giving; honest about the real value of his gift in relation to what he has. The measure is not by pure dollar amounts, against what others with more can give, or against what others with less are able to give. The measure remains where it needs to be -yourself against the Biblical stan-dard, what you give against what God has given you. (3) It allows every person to stand on equal ground as givers. The giver with modest income who gives 10 percent of that income is able to be affirmed in his giving along with the big giver who gives 10 percent of a much larger income. Their dollar amounts will vary considerably, but each is sharing equally with God through the Church out of what he has.

Every good gift comes down from the Father of Lights. In giving to His Church a proportion of those gifts, we follow His glorious example in love.

"Upon the first day of the week [Sunday] let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:2).

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

When the Lord had finished the original work of creation and called it "very good," He took man, the walking, breathing, thinking Icon of Himself, and set him in the midst of it all to manage it and care for it. The world was God's and everything in it, but the joy and honor of being eternally occupied with His Father's business was given to man. This worked out well for ·a while. As long as Adam realized that it all belonged to the Lord and while he lived in harmony with the Lord's Will, he was able to make all the right choices and keep the Garden the way God wanted it kept.

The trouble came when Adam got the idea that he knew~ much as his Creator: that at least part of the creation (the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) belonged to him personally, and that it was selfish and unfair of God to tell him how to dispose of his own property.

In short, man lost Paradise because he thought that his ways were better than God's ways. He said to God, "I can take care of myself." It was a kind of Declaration of Independence.

God honored man's demands and withdrew from the harmonious communion they had shared. Adam discovered, however, as is the case in most divorces, that what had promised to be freedom turned out to be slavery, and that instead of Paradise, there remained only a wasteland. The fi-nal blow was man's discovery that he had cast off a loving Father only to acquire two wicked and harsh taskmasters: Sin and Death.

Fortunately, God was too kind to abandon man to the eternal tyranny of sin and death. At once He set out to woo mankind back. He spoke to a few who were still faithful to their true Father. Enoch walked with God and "was translated that he should not see death" (Heb. 11 :5). Noah also had such faith and ignored the scoffing of his neighbors to prepare an ark.

At length, God called Abraham, who aban-doned the wealth and prosperity of his earthly city to wander in a strange country (Genesis 12:1-8). God taught man through sacrifices and through the written law, to offer Him a portion, the best tenth of all that he acquired, as a sign of acknowledgment that God is King of all. Not that these sacrifices, offered time and again by feeble and sin-laden men had any real value (Heb. 9:9), for God does not eat the flesh of bulls or drink goat's blood (Psalm 49: I3). Rather these were like primary school games meant to prepare children for adult life. They were "a shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10: 1). God also sent holy men: prophets, to warn the people that the mere performance of rituals was not only unacceptable, but a stench to His nostrils (Proverbs 2 l-2Z).

Then, in the fullness of time, God the Father sent His only and eternal Son, born of a woman, born under the Old Law, to buy us back. Our Lord Christ was the Father's special gift of love to us. As Our Lord Himself declared; "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" John 3: 16).

Our Lord didn't die only for the good people; otherwise nobody would have been saved. Saint Paul rather tells us that all have sinned and "be-come unprofitable" (Romans 3:12). Rather, He was, as St. John the Baptist announced, "The Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world" John 1 :29). It was "while we were yet sin-ners that Christ died for us." By His coming and offering of Himself for us, He not only opened the Gates of Paradise to Adam, and to all who had lived by faith under the Old Law, but He gave us New Life as well -and the power to become the Sons of God! Sons "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh" (John 1:13), but sons "born of water and of the Spirit" John 3:5).

Now we are beneficiaries not only of the first creation, but also of the second. Not only are we the restored Icons of our Heavenly Creator, but we are His sons and daughters! And by the power of the Holy Spirit, we have been made true members of the Mystical Body of Christ (I Corinthians

12:12-13).

"For thou didst not cease to do all good things for us until Thou hadst raised us up to Heaven and bestowed upon us Thy Kingdom which is to come" (Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).

What, then, is our task but that of Adam? To be stewards of all good things, and to tend the Treasure House of God? For us, then, there can be no talk of "paying my dues." We, with Abraham, realize that we are but strangers and pilgrims in this world; that we brought nothing into it with us, and that we can certainly carry nothing out. The whole earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it (Ps. 23:1). We acknowledge that we owe God ev-erything, even Life, both natural life and everlast-ing life. We recognize a summons to a commit-ment that is not partial, but total. Or, in the Words of Our Lord:

"Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark 12:30).

If you disagree with the assertion that God has a claim on your entire life, or that He is ready and willing to direct you in the discharge of your duty, lovingly to manage all that He has given to you -if you don't agree that you owe ALL to Christ and that Christ is able to take care of you -then don't bother to read any farther. Furthermore, you might very well be questioning whether it is of any benefit to you, personally, to consider yourself a Christian at all. It is certain you are doing no good at all for the cause of Christ, and little, if anything for your own.

If, however, you accept Christ's lordship in your life, then you are a Christian; and as an Or-thodox Christian, a steward (trustee or manager) of the Mysteries of Our Lord Christ. It is to you that what follows will be of interest and of help in living your total commitment to the Lord.

Of What Am I a Steward?

As you have already gathered, to be a Christian means to be "a steward or trustee for God." But what does this involve? Well, we said that Christian commitment must be unconditional and total, so that it involves quite literally everything. Our Lord often equated unrepentant sin-ners with bad, dishonest, careless or unappreciative stewards (e.g. Matt. 21 :33-43). As we have seen, this was the cause of Man's original down-fall and the source of the great problems which yet plague mankind: war, famine, pollution, etc. These are the collective manifestations of a whole lot of mismanaged lives.

Let's make an inventory of the things of which we are to be stewards. Of course, we think first of our money and possessions, and it is surely these with which we will be dealing primarily; still, let's make a list of the things God has given us to hold in trust, and we'll find that these things still fall pretty close to the bottom -which is not at all the same thing as saying that they are negligible therefore, and can safely be ignored. 1) The Christian Gospel and the Mysteries (Sacraments); 2) Life itself -our own, and those given for a time into our charge (children, etc.); 3) Physical health; 4) Personal relationships with others; 5) Time; 6) Talents, skills, education and abilities; 7) Material pos-sessions, property, wealth; 8) power or authority conferred by rank or honor (political, military or ecclesiastical office).

I am steward of: 1) The Gospel and the Mys-teries of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are all called to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to all men (Mark 16:15) and to come together with our brethren to offer our common Liturgy (Greek = "leiturgeia" -"the work of the people") to God and to make frequent use of the Mysteries of God and other means of His Grace. 2) Life: We are to cherish and to protect human life, born and unborn; to stand up for the right to life of the weak, the defenseless, the elderly, the unborn. We are to cherish our own everlasting life and the everlasting lives of others over and above our mortal lives, and to seek first the Kingdom of God. We are to direct the hearts and minds of our children, grandchildren and other charges toward the attainment of everlasting life. 3) Physical Health: We are to care for our own bodies and those of others and to treat them for what they are -living temples of the Holy Spirit, and not willingly to weaken, destroy or profane them by excessive eating, drinking, smoking, use of dangerous drugs or immorality of any sort. 4) Personal Relationships: We are to love others in the same way as we are to love our-selves, and we are to be like unto Christ and to see Christ even in the most wicked and insufferable of our fellow human beings. 5) Time: We are to extend the victory of Christ over death into every moment of every day, to "redeem the times," "co pray without ceasing," and to do ev-erything we do, whatever it is, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 6) Talents, Skills, Educa-tion, and Abilities: We are to consecrate to God both our inherent and developed talents, skills and abilities; to employ them for the building up of the Kingdom of Christ; to seek our place in the life of the Church; for there are many gifts from the One Spirit, just as there are many func-tions assigned the organic members of the hu-man body (I Corinthians 12:1-12). 7) Property, Material Possessions, Wealth: We are to hold our material possessions in trust, to provide for our needs and for those of our dependents, to care for the poor, and to provide for the spreading of the Gospel; for the spiritual and physical well-

being of the clergy and the people of God's household. ("Let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Galatians 6: 10) and for the erection, provision and mainte-nance of the temples of God. 8) Power: We must never exercise any office of authority as if the power were our own as the "princes of the Gen-tiles do" but as a trust from God, remembering the words of our Lord, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" Matthew 28:18.

All of these areas, and perhaps as many more, demand our personal care as stewards, and we have said that stewardship of money is not first on the list. As with many other matters, however lesser things require the first attention. Thus, in the management of our earthly goods lies the key to our stewardship in all other areas. Perhaps this is because men tend to make idols of their posses-sions. St. Paul warns us: "Mortify therefore ... covetousness, which is idolatry" Colossians 3:5. At any rate, our Lord tells us that a man must serve either God or money, but not both (Mt. 6:24), and that where our treasure is deposited, there the true affections of our hearts will abide (Mt. 6:19-21). All of which brings us naturally to the next question.

How Should I Give? And How Much?

The question "How should I give?" is clearly answered in the Holy Scriptures. First, we must remember that our gifts will be no more accept-able to God than the grudging offering of Cain, if we do not first give ourselves to God totally (II Corinthians 8:5). Secondly, we must give out of love for God, not for the praise of men, nor for the feeling of superiority it gives us, nor for the tax benefits that accrue from a deduction under IRS regulations, nor even because we'd feel guilty if we did not give; we give only because we have a sin-cere gratitude to the Father-for His gift of His Only-Begotten Son to us. We are to free our hearts from bitterness toward our fellows ("Go first and make up with your brother, and then come and offer your gift!") We are to give with joy ("For the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." See Saint Paul's en-comium on love in 1 Corinthians 13:3). We must also, and above all, give with hearts full of love, not only for God, but with love for one another. For even if we gave everything we owned to the poor, if we did so without love, it would be as nothing.

We should, then, give prayerfully, lovingly, and quietly, having first given our very lives. Only then may we begin to give of the outward symbols of our lives to God and have it be a meaningful gift to Him.

But the Scriptures give us even more explicit directions on how and when and what we should offer. "Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His Name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord" (Deut. 12:11). Here is what Saint Paul tells us: "Upon the first day of the week [Sunday] let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath pros-pered him" (I Corinthians 16:2). In short, the tithe belongs to the parish of which we are a member, and we bring it every week and put it into the offer-ing plate at the candle counter. Thus, the prosphora that we send into the Altar for prayerful commemo-ration at the Divine Liturgy then becomes a true symbol of "the heave offering of our hand."

Who Then Should Give?

Every Christian! When should we give? *Every Sunday!* How should we give? *Willingly!* How much should we give? *At least a tenth of what the Lord has given us!*

So we can see that our giving should be regular, every Sunday, and appropriate to our income, and that it is an obligation incumbent upon everyone throughout the entire Church -not simply to those who are rich or comfortably well off. The obligation binds even the poor! Now, as to how much we ought to give, we have already demonstrated that the Old Testament standard was a tithe, 10% of one's increase. Early Christians took this a *minimum* and had all things in common, as we see in the Book of Acts. If Orthodox Christians today even approximated the tithe, the Church's finances would permit it to do immensely more good than it can at present. Current giving for the average Orthodox

Christian in the United States is one-half of one percent of what God has given him! Frankly, that's a disgrace. Twenty years ago, the average Orthodox Christian, who made a good deal less in comparison to his peers then than he does now, gave on average nearly three percent. But we have also seen that Christians are constrained by the Law of Love, not merely by the Old Covenant. A better question then would be, "How much of my income may I withhold for my own use and for my family's?" The obvious answer, of course, would be "as much as you need to fulfill your real needs as the Lord leads you, in prayer, to see those needs. If this rule -first pray for direction, then keep out what you need and give away the rest -were followed, most families in the U.S. would give well over 10% of their income a week to the Lord's Work. The Lord has been that generous to them!

I know, I know. Some of you folks out there are going to complain that I'm ignoring poor old grandmother, living on Social Security, who dutifully puts her dollar into the collection basket every Sunday. As a matter of fact, some of those on Social Security are giving considerably more than ~ those who make many times their income already. But that's hardly what's intended at all. Remember how much our Lord approved of the poor widow's mite, which was all she had, far more than he ap-proved of the rich man's gift of thousands, which was only a small portion of his wealth (Mark 12:41). The fact is simply that if Christians gave as they should there wouldn't be any poor or hungry people in our parishes -*and we wouldn't need the government to do it for us!*

Seeing, then, that the Lord Himself has made it dear how we should give of the material posses-sions with which He has trusted us, the question remains, and continues to require an individual answer from each and every one of you: "Why don't you give as the Lord has said you should? Why don't you give what the Lord has asked of you? Do you truly love the Lord? Or can you not trust Him to provide what you think you need? How strong is your faith, anyhow?"

Hang-ups and Cop-outs

Two of the more recent contributions to our vocabulary from the "Youth Culture" have been the "hang-up" and the "cop-out." Descriptive, in-deed. It would be difficult indeed to find two expressions more apt in describing the problems too many Orthodox Christians have with the Biblical command to sacrificially support the Lord's work.

We can probably best define "hang-ups" as the unconscious attitudes or prejudices which affect our behavior. "Cop-outs" are those conscious or unconscious excuses or rationalizations which we use to conceal the real motives for our acts or for our failures to act.

Now, inasmuch as God's command to worship Him with the first fruits of our increase, and to do so on a regular and appropriate basis is quite to-tally unqualified by any "ifs," "ands" or "buts" whatever, and inasmuch as it is addressed quite specifically to every Christian, not simply to the well-to-do, we must assume that anyone who fails to do any of the above (i.e., give either of the first-fruits, give appropriately, or give regularly -or any combination of the above) is either (a) not re-ally a Christian at all, or (b) is ignorant of the Lord's commands in the matter, or (c) is "hung-up" about the idea. Or (d) is "copping out" by giv-ing what may sound like a good excuse where in fact *there can be no excuse!*

Now, the answer for someone who isn't really Christian is conversion. For the ignorant, the an-swer is education, which is the entire purpose of this essay. But for the others, c and d, the only pos-sible solution is to expose the hidden things of darkness to the all-revealing Light of Christ.

We are all familiar with the questionnaire which allows one to avoid making simple "Yes" or "No" answers by checking a box marked "yes, with qualifications." God's call, however, is to total commitment, and there is no "yes, with qualifica-tions" you can give to our Lord's question, "Do -you love Me?" The answer, remember, was that "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments" (John 14:15). All of them. Not most of them. Not all but one. All of them!

Next I'll examine the problems people have with making their offerings -problems *you* have, and

you'll see that *none* of them can stand up in the Light of the Gospels and the Word of God.

The "Money" Hang-up

Most people, including most of the Orthodox Christians I know, have very peculiar feelings about money, which they do not, for the most part, really understand. They have been deceived by Satan in much the same way as Satan deceived our First Parents, just as he did Cain, and the Children of Israel in the Wilderness when "they exchanged their glory for the statue of a calf of gold that eats hay." Money is a little bit like a sacrament, in the sense that, just as sacraments are outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace, money is an outward sign of our lives and our labors. So, if people are hung up about the nature of their lives, they must necessarily be hung up about "their" money, too. If they are hung up about their money, on the other hand, it is an absolute certainty that they are quite wrong about the nature of their lives as well.

To some, money is power. When they have lots of money and the things it buys, they feel superior, powerful -important. "Money talks," goes the old saying, and the promises it whispers can be a cruel, and misleading mockery of the Gospel's message. Some try to buy love and affection with their money but, having failed to have first given themselves to the Lord, who alone is the Source of Love, they are either unable to give or receive love -they can only have the outward ap-pearances of it, never the reality. Since they cannot buy the reality of love from God, the only thing they can now do with their money is try to buy, to own, other people. And even when they appear to succeed at this, they succeed in appearance only, to the destruction of that which they most wish to possess -the love of these people; people will not love a slavemaster!

Some seem to believe they can even buy Eternal Life, either through medicine and expensive treatments, or through imposing monuments to their own importance -big buildings, streets named after them, statues raised in their honor. Sometimes they establish large and famous trusts to extend their influence into future generations -as though God could not provide for those gen-erations without them. Like the fools of old, they seem to say "We have made an arrangement with Death, and an agreement with the Grave." Our Lord has already spoken of and to such as these: "He who seeks to save his life will lose it."

Some even try to bribe God. I cannot tell you how often I've been told by people seeking favors from me as pastor that they can find a priest to do it for them, however wrong. All they have to do is offer enough money. I've always suggested they go and try to find one. They never do. For some things, there isn't enough money in the entire world to pay for the kinds of things these people want. Then there are the ones who give -often generously, but very selectively, and with much show and publicity -sometimes to the Church, sometimes to charities. But these invariably insist that their "generosity" be made known, somehow. Either by printing it in an annual statement, or with a public announcement in the bulletin -somehow, they demand recognition for having done what was already their duty to have done. Like the Israelites of Elijah's day, they "go around limping with two opinions," and because such a person has already failed to give himself or herself totally to God, tragedy awaits him. Sooner or later. "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth. On that very day all his plans perish" (Ps. 146:4). "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Matthew 16:26)?

"I Can't Afford to Give!"

This person has an apparent dilemma. He may know that God has commanded him to give regularly, sacrificially and proportionately, of everything he possesses. On the other hand, his needs (as he feels them) consume all his income -often more than he makes. A real Christian solution to this dilemma is to reevaluate those "needs" and see which ones are really necessary, and which are really luxuries. Cigarettes, alcohol, second automobiles, weekly visits to the beauty parlor, daily visits to the local bar, Bingo games, lottery tickets, candy, assorted "goodies" -none of these things have anything at all essential to do with Christian life.

There are, of course, unusual cases, in which an individual truly has nothing left after necessities provided for himself and for those dependent upon

him. He should then offer, like the trusting Widow of the gospel, his token "mite" and trust that by God's grace he will "reap abundantly." Besides, it is for the sake of such as these that the rest of us are commanded to be diligent in our giving -that from the abundance given us, others may not do without. Indeed, even the rare person who can make only a "token" offering, if he has first given himself to the Lord, will find ways to con-tribute to the work of the Lord in ways which are sometimes far more constructive than money itself. He can labor in God's Temple, work for the relief and comfort of the sick and lonely, and fi-nally, when there is nothing left to give, offer his own prayers and sufferings as prayers and petitions of incense before the face of God for the sins of all mankind.

Usually, however, when people say "I can't afford to give," what they really mean is "I can't afford to give, without giving something up." Or, "I am not willing to suffer the disruption to my plans and lifestyle which true Christian giving would require." Like the seed cast among the thorns, they may want to live the Faith, but be-cause they are afraid to give themselves totally to the Lord, they "are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8: 14).

With the rich young man "who went away sad," these people, hearing Christ's invitation to abandon everything and follow Him, go away full of sorrow.

Some will sincerely ask, "OK, but what dif-fer-ence does my little offering make?" To the world, perhaps not much. To the Lord, and surely to you, it is all the difference in the world! Our Lord showed us the answer to that one when he took five little loaves of bread offered sincerely by a poor little boy, and with them fed five thousand hungry people. He still feeds us the very precious Mysteries of His own Body and Blood with a few pennies worth of homemade bread and a little bit of inexpensive wine. Even a small gift, in the hand of the righteous, is better than the offerings of princes. Who can say how many hungry mouths have been fed, how many cathedrals to the glory of God, how many souls brought to Eternal Life, through the devoutly offered pennies of the humble and blessed poor? More than all the riches of the powerful, I suspect.

How much more, then, ought we, the twentieth century inhabitants of the richest nation in the history, of the world, almost all of whom, includ-ing those we call "poor" live better than the kings of our Lord's own day lived (and the "well-off" in many other parts of the world), how much more then ought we be grateful, and give generously to the Lord from the substance He has given us?

"I'll Give Later -When I'm Established!"

St. Augustine used to pray, before his conversion, "Make me chaste, Lord, but not yet." There is and always has been much of that sentiment around. It is no more valid than the previous two. This is the one most often affected by the young and middle-aged people who are often, because of that very fact, best able to carry the burden of the Lord's work. For these folks, commitment (usually in their marriages and careers as well) is something they always plan to make ... sometime "soon." Sadly, experience shows that most of these will go to their graves either still procrastinating or no longer even bothering to make excuses. The latter is far and away more common. They live as though life in this world is the important thing -and everlasting life just an afterthought.

Like the men who told Our Lord they would follow Him -but let me just do this one thing first ... they say: Sure, Lord, I'll follow You! Just wait till I (finish my schooling) (establish my family) (build my home) (raise my kids) (peak my career) (get my kids through college) (take care of my retirement) (pick one)." Our Lord told us of just one such a man who did awake -in Hell, to the realization that he had thought Just a little too long about his own comforts. But by then, it was too late, and there was already a "great gulf" fixed between himself and Father Abraham (Luke 16:19-31). Again, our Lord told of another man, who, like so many all of us know, devoted all his energy and concern toward building security for himself. He found his life cut short at the very moment he thought he had succeeded. To him, the Father said, "Thou fool! This night shall thy soul be required of thee" (Luke

12:20) and of him our Lord says, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

"But I Give In Other Ways!"

Restricted gifts for special purposes (i.e., icons, vestments, gifts-in-kind, labor, materials, time, skill, whatever) and work on special parish charitable and fund-raising projects are all good and important ways to serve the Lord's Kingdom. Nevertheless, one must recognize as well, that one may not substitute this kind of giving for the monetary gift which is commanded. These kinds of gifts are to be offered either in addition to, or in lieu of inability to provide the first.

Even so, the fact remains: *the regular, systematic, Sunday by Sunday giving of at least a tithe {tenth) of the first-fruits of our increase to the Lord is the kind of giving that God Himself has commanded.* That kind of giving enables us to be spiritually responsible in our giving. It permits the Church to budget its resources, and by allowing it to budget, instead of forcing it to hold back in fear that next week the income will be less, allows it to exercise good stewardship in the disposition of what is given.

Finally, it allows us the grace of prayerfully en-tering into that Covenant with the Lord which is a covenant for eternity. When we have Faith and Trust and take the Lord into our day to day lives as a partner, then we become privileged to see how He works to bring good to us -in all things, in-cluding the things that give us the least pleasure.

"Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, ana His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

Only when we give our total commitment, when we give our entire life to the Lord, can we sing with David:

This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes! (Ps. 118:23).

RESPONSES

Since I began to advocate tithing more than ten years ago, I have had a good deal of response (or feedback, if you will). I find it utterly fascinat-ing that so many have considered it as "too idealis-tic," by which they mean, I gather, that however correct are the conclusions drawn in the article, there is no way anybody will be convinced to give that kind of money. That had occurred to me, even as I was writing it. Oddly, though, that same standard seems not to apply to sins of other categories.

For example, nobody has suggested that we cease to preach against the sin of stealing on the premise that one is not going to stop theft occurring anyhow. Nor has anyone suggested that we quit preaching against murder, abortion, rape, fornication, adultery or any of the other manifold sins of which human beings are guilty simply be-cause it was foreseeable that one would fail to dissuade everyone from doing it.

It's odd that it should *only* occur when money was involved, almost as though money and morality are not intrinsically linked and intertwined in the Plan of God. Nonsense. As I have shown, they *are* intimately linked, and your very salvation will depend upon how you react to possessions and money, how you deal with them, how you administer them. Heaven and hell hinge upon this, among other things. But we need only to fail in one are to lose the Kingdom of Heaven. It does not require a failure in every area, just one. And this is probably going to prove the most common one of all.

The prime duty of every bishop and priest is clear and simple. It was given by Christ Himself, shortly before His Ascension into heaven. “Go ye therefore, and reach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28: 19-20). Everything else, everything else, is absolutely peripheral. We are not to pretty things up to make things more palatable, nor make things darker than they are. We are to preach whatsoever He has preached and commanded that we, in His footsteps, preach as well, however unpopular.

This the Church has always done. This She shall continue to do. We, ourselves, will have to make the ultimate decision as to whether or not to obey the Lord, and provide Him with that which is His due -that, or be prepared to accept His Just Judgment upon us for having willingly and knowingly chosen to have done otherwise.

HIEROCONFESSOR THEODOSIUS OF MINVODY

Schema-Igumen Theodosius (Kakshin) was born on May 3/16. 1841 in Perm province, in a poor peasant family. He wrote about his early years: "In studying Sacred History and catechism, I learned that there are Angels, who guard us, and demons, who want our destruction. I don't know how or why, but the thought came to me to test whether this was true. So, sitting on the porch of our house, while my parents were resting after lunch, it occurred to me to put this thought of mine into action. I got up from the porch and headed for the backyard.

"Listen, devil,' I cried aloud, 'if you can do anything, then convince me. Bring a good thing rope to the barn for me. If you this, then I'll go into the cowshed and hang myself there on that rope. Won't my friends be surprised then they see me hanging from the crossbeam!... Well, devil, do you hear me? Do as I say!'

"At this time, there was no in the entire yard. The day was hot and clear. Clouds floated across the horizon. Having said these words, I walked towards the barn, the door of which was shut. On the way to the barn, another thought entered my mind: to hang myself, I thought is very unpleasant; it would be better to jump into the well in the backyard. This well was very deep, and the water in it was clear and cool. It belonged to a neighbor, an archpriest, and whoever wanted drew water from it. It had been dug between the two yards by one of the walls…

"And so, I went to the barn. Opening the door, I saw to my amazement an almost full coil of new, slender hemp rope. I took it and, passing by the cow shed, I went to the well. I bent over and looked down. Deep, deep down I saw a sparkle of its cold water. Then another thought came to me, as if someone were speaking to me: when I jump in there and drown, then my friends and many others too will be puzzled: how and why did I drown in the well? I involuntarily smiled in answer to these thoughts and said:

"No, devil it's better if I hang myself. Then my friends will come and be amazed to see me hanging in a noose!' yes, that was much better.

"Undoing the coil of new hemp rope, I made a noose and tied up the other end… All that remained was to stick my neck in the noose, and my life would have ended… Suddenly I quailed and burst out laughing loudly and gleefully: 'you put it on yourself, accursed one,' I exclaimed 'and I'll pull you up myself.'

"At that very moment a blinding bolt of lightning flashed from the clouds in the sky and there was a thunderclap the like of which I never heard again in my entire life. I was petrified, and with all my strength I bolted out of the cowshed and ran home. After the thunderclap, the rain poured down in buckets…

On Good Order in Church

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. There are diversifies of activities, but it is the same God who works in all." (1 Cor. 12: 4-6)

Saint Paul, in speaking to the Church in Corinth, could well have been speaking to us in 20th century America. We are all, collectively, the body of Christ, and each one has his own gifts and talents.

A catch phrase which has been used in recent years is "liturgical participation. Oh yes, everyone *has* to participate in *everything*! You can't sing? That doesn't matter, sing anyway! Don't know the words well. here's a book so you can follow along. What do you mean, 'the service is in English and I understand what is being said,'? You have to participate, so put away that prayer rope and take this book!

Along with congregation singing has come congregtional *reading* in the effort to get everyone to "participate"; however one of the great problems with everyone holding a book and reading along is that lay people are often saying/whispering along the parts of the service which belong specifically to the priest: "for Thine is the Kingdom ..." No one who is bound with the desires..." etcs. This is very plainly wrong! The clergy fulfill a role in a service, and the laity a variety of other roles.

God has given a multitude of divers talents to everyone. These talents/gifts are distinct, but equal when offered back to Him for His glory. We all *must* offer our distinct gifts to the Church, while not trying to force ourselves or pretend to have talents which God has not given us. Those who have the gift of teaching should do so (with the blessing of the priest) in the Church school; those who can sing should lift their voices to God; those who are administrators can help with the parish administration, etc., but it is time we have the humility to recognize that each person cannot do everything!

A few years ago, when speaking to a group of people on this topic, we asked everyone in the room to name one function which a member of the parish can serve. The very first answer was, "someone who comes into church, takes their place for the service and prays."

With the insistence on "participation" we have forgotten that the primary reason we come to church is to pray! It is the responsibility of each member of the congregation to pray and to *enable others to pray*. If the person next to you is trying to pray while you screech off-tune in their ear, you are neither using your gifts wisely nor allowing that person to pray.

The services are meant to be beautiful. The Divine Liturgy is a reflection of the heavenly Liturgy, of the angels themselves glorifying God. It is majestic and awe-inspiring, lifting the soul to heaven. It is not a campfire sing-along. When the emissaries of St. Vladimir told him of the Divine Liturgy at Aghia Sophia in Constantinople, they said that they did not know if they were in heaven or on earth. They did not say, "Wow! It was great the way everyone read and sang along!",

God has given everyone a gift which can and must be used to the glory of His holy Name. The person who sings beautifully in the choir adorns the church as much as the person who vacuums the rug; the altar boys in their robes and carrying their candles are as essential as the little girls who place flowers near the icons. The diversity of gifts' makes the parish a beautiful garden of many flowers offered to God.

Saint Paul says that the body is not one member, but many; not one big foot, but many parts. If you are a "foot" carrying the word of God, then do so. If you are a "hand" laboring for the adornment and cleanliness of the temple, then be that hand. If you are a "mind" taking care of administrative needs, then use that. If you are a "heart" welcoming newcomers and visiting the sick, then extend that warmth. When all these gifts and talents are put to use in any parish, regardless of how small it is, the 'body' is whole and healthy.

Above all, let your soul and the souls of those around you reach out to God in prayer, for this is a gift which everyone has. Should everyone' "participate" in the services? Of course they should! But we also need to recognize that some forms of participation are open and visible/audible to all, while others are known only to God. The services are a movement, crying out, but the movement is often unseen since it is of the soul and the crying out is very often silently in the heart.

"O Lord, I Have Loved The Beauty of Thy House"*

How We Should Conduct Ourselves in Church

By Fr. John Whiteford & Matushka Olympia Sibley

I once overheard a Russian American layman having a talk with some altar boys after a service. This man had spent his life in the Church, had obviously done his own tour of duty in the altar, and his comments have stayed with me ever since. He pointed out to them that they should remember that when they were serving, they were images of the angels, and that when the people looked at them they should be spiritually uplifted. He then went on to speak in very practical terms about how they should be thoughtful in their service, should pay attention, look straight ahead, stand still, etc. Anyone who has attended Orthodox services very long has probably also seen the opposite dynamic at work. An altar boy who is fidgeting, picking his nose, or making faces at people in the congregation not only fails to add to the service, but obviously distracts and detracts from it.

What is perhaps less obvious is that it is not only the servers who can add or detract from the solemnity and beauty of the services – this is true of all of us. People talking during the services, a man casually leaning against a wall as he chews gum, a boy wearing bright neon Nikes that light up with his every step, a grandmother making overly demonstrative prostrations at inappropriate times during the service, or a young woman wearing a miniskirt can all be as distracting as a nose-picking altar boy. In fact, when we sing the words of the Cherubic hymn during the liturgy, we affirm that we all "mystically represent the Cherubim" every bit as much as do the clergy and the altar servers.

As representatives of the Cherubim, we should strive to participate in the services in such a way as to fully express our devotion to God, and to add to the beauty of the service out of love for our fellow believers, and out of concern that we encourage each other to worship and love God more deeply.

We should not be concerned with our outward actions only. It is certainly true that one can behave in an outwardly pious way, and yet remain a hypocrite. However, it is also true that one cannot be outwardly impious while still remaining inwardly pious. We should strive for both, because both are needed. Inward piety adds a depth of meaning to our outward acts, and outward actions can promote heartfelt worship.

The culture we live in constantly tells us how much more we deserve, and that we should measure the worth of everything in terms of what we "get out of it". This is now the way most people look at Church. People come to Church, and expect that the Church should meet their needs. People expect the service to both entertain and uplift them. In contrast, Orthodox services are (or at least can and should be) beautiful even in the eyes of unbelievers, but they are clearly hard. They are often long, and standing for a long time is not something most people expect from Church. Granted, they might stand for an hour in line to get on one ride at Disneyland, or for an entire concert, or for a lengthy conversation with someone in the Church parking lot, but they expect comfort and ease in Church. But the services of the Church are not a service for the people who attend them – they are a service to God. The Greek word for worship,

“Leitourgia” (from whence we derive the word “Liturgy”) means “work” or “service,” and thus service (as a servant serves his master) to God. It’s not all about me. It’s about God, and it’s about those around us.

St. Paul teaches us that in the context of the worship of the Church, all things should “be done decently and in order” (1st Corinthians 14:40). This is not because the Church delights in heaping meaningless rules upon us, but because our love for each other requires that we all help each other as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Every Orthodox custom and practice has a purpose: some guard us from causing others to stumble, some guard us from stumbling ourselves, and some simply provide tangible ways for us to express our love for God. Our willingness to submit to the Tradition and discipline of the Church is an essential part of being an Orthodox Christian. We know from reading the Scriptures that we should be humble, and obedient… but we often bristle when it comes to actually exercising those virtues. We must understand that this unwillingness to submit to the Church or to each other is a sign of that we have more work to do, if indeed we wish to follow Him who submitted to spitting, scourging, thorns, the nails, the spear, and to death upon the Cross.

Entering the Church

When we enter into a Church, we should first of all make the sign of the Cross three times with bows from the waist (not full prostrations). The prayers that one says while doing this vary a little. Some simply say the prayer of the Publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner” with each bow. A more elaborate form is given in the prayer book:

"Thou hast created me, O Lord, have mercy."

"God be merciful to me a sinner."

"Countless times have I sinned, O Lord, forgive me.

The prayer book further admonishes us:

“Then, having bowed to the right and the left (to the people on both sides of the Church), one stands in one's place and listens to the psalms and prayers read in church….”**

It is also customary to venerate the icons and light candles after entering the Church, and to venerate them again before leaving.

One should not linger near the entrance of the Church, because this makes it difficult for others to enter. Also, visitors often feel a certain sense of discomfort when they enter an unfamiliar Church, and so tend to stay close to the back of the Church or near the walls. Those who are regular parishioners (who do not need to sit along the walls due to some infirmity) should be mindful of this, and move forward and to the center of the Church to make room.

Arriving Late, or Leaving Early

We should be at Church on time for all services, but this is especially important for the Divine Liturgy, and all the more so if we are planning on receiving communion. For the Vigil, one should try to be on time, but if work or other duties make that impossible, it is better to attend

some of the Vigil rather than none of it. Likewise, if such duties make it impossible to stay until the end of the Vigil, there are several points at which one may leave that are least disruptive:

1. Immediately after vespers, but before the Six Psalms of Matins.
2. After the Six Psalms.
3. After the kissing of the Gospel and / or the anointing with blessed oil.
4. After the end of Matins, as the first hour is beginning.

For the liturgy, we should make every effort to stay until the end – and if we have communed, leaving early is particularly to be avoided except in cases of extreme necessity.

Wandering in and out of the Church during the Divine Services is inappropriate. If we must leave due to an emergency, we should do so with as little commotion as possible. It is a good idea to make sure your children have gone to the bathroom before entering the church. When reentering the Church we should be careful to not do so during the more important moments of the service, such as during the entrances, the Epistle and Gospel readings, the Creed, the Anaphora, the Lord's Prayer or the Communion Prayer. At such times it is best to stay in the Narthex, and wait for a less solemn moment to return to our place.

Attire in Church

We should come to Church with the profound sense that we are coming before the King of the Universe. If we were going to visit an earthly ruler, we would want to dress as best as we were able as a simple matter of respect for the person we would be seeing, and we should have at least as much reverence for God and His holy temple.

Clothing should also be modest – which means one's clothes should actually cover one adequately. A good rule of thumb is that we should be attired such that we would be able to make full prostrations without embarrassing ourselves or those around us. We should not wear clothes that attract undue attention to ourselves, either because they are flashy, gaudy, or because they are immodest (see 1st Timothy 2:9-10).

According to the teachings of St. Paul the Apostle, women should cover their heads in Church, and men should not (see 1st Corinthians 11).

It should be noted, however, that it is not up to individuals in the parish to enforce a dress code. People should concern themselves with their own behavior, and that of their families. In situations in which something needs to be said, the priest, the warden, or the senior sister will be the one to do so.

Standing in Church

The normal posture of Orthodox worship is to stand during the services. Pews are found in many Churches in America, but this is not the traditional practice of the Orthodox Church. There are traditionally benches along the sides of the walls of the Church for people to sit who need to – particularly the elderly, and the infirm. Those who are able to should graciously give up their seats when they see an elderly or infirm person who needs to sit, or a visitor who is

unaccustomed to standing. There are certain times when one should definitely be standing, unless they are unable to do so: as a rule, whenever the Royal Doors are opened, during the Six Psalms at Matins (at which time one should be particularly still), during the Gospel reading, the Anaphora (when the Eucharist is consecrated), and during the "Our Father". At these same solemn points of the service, we should refrain from lighting candles, venerating the icons, or moving about unnecessarily.

If one must sit, one should not cross ones legs while doing so. Particularly for those Orthodox from "the old country", this is considered to be very disrespectful. Whistling in the Church, at any time, is considered to be extremely disrespectful to Russians.

During the service, we should not fold our arms, lean against the walls, or stick our hands in our pockets. These postures signify a casual attitude that is not conducive to right worship.

On Sundays we do not kneel or make prostrations, except when making prostrations before the Cross on those occasions when the Cross is brought out for veneration.

When Receiving Holy Communion

Communing is a matter that should be treated with the utmost seriousness, and should neither be taken lightly by carelessly communing, or by avoiding confession and communion for prolonged periods of time, unless this is due to a penance (in which case regular confession should continue).

Proper preparation for communion requires all of the following elements: recent confession, the blessing of the priest to commune, keeping the fast, praying the pre-communion prayers from the Prayer Book, and abstaining entirely from food and drink from the midnight prior to communion.

One should wipe off lipstick or lip balm before communing or venerating an icon, the Gospel, or the cross. These can damage icons or wooden crosses, and can be difficult to clean off from metallic items.

Parents should ensure that the faces (and noses) of their smaller children have been wiped prior to their approaching the chalice.

Do not make the sign of the Cross when approaching the chalice, because it has happened that this has resulted in knocking the chalice, and spilling the Holy Mysteries, which is a very serious matter. Instead, one should approach the Chalice with ones arms crossed (with ones right hand on ones left shoulder, and ones left arm covering ones right arm, and touching ones right shoulder).

After communing, one should wipe ones mouth with the communion cloth, and kiss the Holy Chalice, but refrain from kissing the priest's hand or the icons, until after one has had the zapifka (the hot water and wine, and prosphora that is on the table off to side of the Church).

Children in Church

The Scriptures teach us that children are a blessing from the Lord. A parish without children is a parish that is dying. We want to encourage families with children to come to our parish, and we also want to help parents with their children. Even the best behaved children are going to make some noise, and we have to accept this part of having a growing parish. If one sees parents having difficulty keeping their children under control, one should offer help, rather than just criticism. Parents with children should also do their part to maintain an atmosphere conducive to prayer in the Church, and to teach their children how to behave reverently in the house of God.

Prosphora

Prosphora is holy bread, and should be treated as such. It should be eaten only when one has fasted from midnight, and one should be careful not to drop crumbs on the floor. With children, this presents some difficulty, because we don't want to deprive children of the blessing of this bread, but children also tend to be less careful with it. Parents should teach their children to handle prosphora appropriately, and smaller children should be given smaller portions. Very small children should probably just be fed a small amount by their parents.

Kissing the Cross

At the end of the Liturgy, when approaching the Cross, one should first make the sign of the Cross, then kiss the Cross, and finally the priest's hand.

Post Communion Prayers

After the kissing of the Cross, the post communion prayers are read. These prayers can also be said privately, but those who have communed are encouraged to stay for these prayers of thanksgiving for the blessing of having been allowed to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. In the Gospels, Christ healed ten lepers, but only one came back to thank him. We should ensure that we either stay for the reading of these prayers immediately after the liturgy, or say them privately as soon as otherwise possible, lest we be guilty of ingratitude to God.

Trapeza and Fellowship After the Liturgy

Having a communal meal after the liturgy is an ancient practice that goes back to the time of the Apostles, and is mentioned in several places in the New Testament, where it is spoken of as the "agape meal" or "love feast". This meal and the fellowship that goes with it, is an extension of the liturgy, and so all who can stay should do so. We live in a part of the country in which we encounter few Orthodox Christians outside of the context of Church, and so we need to endeavor to strengthen our relationships with one another. The parish is an extended family, and we should work to make our ties with each other strong, so that we may encourage one another to live for Christ, in a world in which that is increasingly difficult to do.

Final Thoughts

There was a time when it would have been completely unnecessary to have spelled out most if not all of what is written here, because people living in an Orthodox culture lived and breathed their faith, and even those who were not particularly pious were surrounded by Orthodox piety

to such an extent that even they knew how conduct themselves properly in Church. We, however, live in a culture which emphasizes rights, comfort, instant gratification, and self-expression to an extent which is inimical to the Orthodox ethos of sacrifice, struggle, asceticism, and self-denial. In addition to this, we are experiencing that "hardness of hearts," that "coldness" that the scriptures and the fathers predicted would be the hallmarks of the latter days.

If we understood what it means that when we go to church we are in the presence of the very God who created the world and everything in it, and of Jesus Christ who took on and still wears our human flesh so he can be with us and save us, and the Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophets and who preserves and leads the Church in all Truth, we would take care to be standing whenever the curtain between us and the high place is opened—let alone when the Gospel is being read, we are being censed, or the mysteries are brought out to us. It would literally feel wrong to sit at these times. We would be sure that we and our families arrive at Church on time (we are the bride of Christ, and should hurry to be in the presence of our bridegroom), and in good order.

If we loved God and one another correctly, we would nonetheless need instruction on the proper way to behave in church (just as children who love their parents must be taught how to behave), but none of these matters would be controversial. One is not rude, careless, or self-centered in the presence of those one loves. Therefore, one is not rude, careless, or self-centered in Church. The reason we believe that the disorder evident in many of our churches is evidence of lack of love, rather than a simple lack of instruction, is the response of many people to instruction. Instead of giving thanks for the instruction and humbly obeying the guidelines passed down to us from the scriptures and the fathers, some become "offended," justifying themselves and attacking the character of whomever "dared" to attempt to instruct them. We also fear that this lack of love is becoming a problem in Church because it is a problem in many of our homes, and that we cannot practice self-discipline in Church because we do not practice it anywhere else. Our children refuse to obey instructions we give them in Church because we let them get away with refusing to obey instructions we give them at home. Church services are something "to get through" just like daily prayers are at home (if we even do them at home).

Finally, a note on the issue of "authenticity" or of "being genuine." Some of us have been seduced into endorsing the fallacious notion that if we do anything without really feeling like doing it, we are being hypocrites. The consequences of subscription to this belief are soul-destroying. It should be obvious that whatever it is within us that doesn't feel like praying, or dressing modestly, or standing attentively, or refraining from chatting during the services, is not something to which we should submit. If we are truly cooperating with God in working out our own salvation, we will act rightly regardless of any caprice of our emotions. The problem is not that feelings are bad, but that they're unreliable. If we experience joy or peace in the presence of God, that is clearly a good thing. If we don't, we don't—but that is no justification for disobedience. We don't always feel love for our spouses or our children, but we must nonetheless choose to act on the fact of our love for them, regardless of our feelings. Feelings are the caboose of the train – they come along at the end, but they only follow when we act on what we believe, and do what we know we should.

Endnotes

* Psalms 25:8 (LXX)
** Prayer Book. 4th ed. Rev. (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1996)388.

Sent to me by Fr. John Whiteford, pastor of St. Jonah of Manchuria Orthodox Church in Houston, TX. Matushka Olympia Sibley is the wife of Fr. Cassian, pastor of Theotokos of the Life-Giving Spring Russian Orthodox Mission in Bryan/College Station, TX. Posted 6/27/06.

Orthodox Worship - Preparation, Participation, and "Etiquette"

Saints Peter and Paul Bulletin, May 18, 2003

Preparing the Heart

The time spent prior to attending Church Services will have an effect on your ability to experience God's presence through the Liturgy and prayers of the Church. Whenever possible, one should begin to quiet one's heart in preparation for arrival at Church.

This is particularly the case for the Divine Liturgy. It is good to put away worldly concerns, and to come a bit early instead of "rushing" to Church. For families with children this is particularly difficult, but children can be taught about the importance of quieting down and preparing their own hearts before Church. The Jesus Prayer, for instance, may be said by the individual or family in the car on the way to services.

Arrival: Better Sooner Than Later

The Ninth Apostolic Canon forbids us to arrive late at the Divine Liturgy or to leave before the end of services. The Canon states that those who do are a cause of "confusion" or scandal to others. Unless one has a specific reason to do so, it is inappropriate to stand outside the Nave (main body) of the Church Temple, or to move about the Narthex (except in certain situations, i.e. small children who may be creating a disturbance, etc.).

Entering the Church Temple

Arriving early to Church allows time for lighting candles and veneration of icons, as well as the "warming" of the heart for prayer. When entering the Church, cross yourself in prayer, bow and venerate the icons at the entrance. In order not to distract others from prayer or to show a lack of reverence, do not enter or leave the Temple during:

- The Epistle or Gospel reading;
- During the sermon (homily);
- During the Great Entrance;
- During the Anaphora and Consecration of the Holy Gifts at the Divine Liturgy;
- On all occasions when the Priest turns toward the people.

Conduct in the Church Temple

All should be done in a spirit of reverence and worship with the sense that one is standing in the Presence of the Lord, the Angels and the Saints. It is therefore not appropriate to chew gum, talk unnecessarily during services, or unnecessarily distract others. One *should*, however, feel very much at "home" in the Temple, moving when appropriate for the sake of veneration and worship, attending to the needs of children, and welcoming and assisting guests to experience Orthodox worship.

Standing and Sitting in the Church Temple

As attested to by the Scriptures, early Church Fathers, and ongoing Tradition of the Church, standing is the posture of prayer both in Church and at home. Sitting in a casual position, crossing the legs, etc. are postures of passive observance or disinterest rather than active participation, and do not reflect the most desirable reverence for the Person of Christ Himself who is present in worship. Pews were only introduced into some Protestant churches beginning in the 15th century, and only in some

Orthodox parishes (primarily in America) in the 20th century. Standing is particularly appropriate at the Divine Liturgy since it is always a joyful celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is true even more so on the Lord's Day, Sunday. Sitting is always understandable for the elderly, those who are ill or handicapped, and for small children, according to their ability and strength. Sitting and "resting" in Church is allowed, however, at appropriate times, which include Old Testament readings, Psalmody, and other periods of long readings. Anyone who is able should stand at the following times:

- A Great Censing of the Temple
- During the Gospel and Epistle Readings
- At the Small and Great Entrances
- During the Anaphora and Consecration of the Gifts at Divine Liturgy
- When the Priest faces the people (e.g. at the giving of the Peace)
- In general when the Priest comes out of the altar

(Generally, outside of the Divine Liturgy, when the "royal doors" of the altar are opened, one should stand, as a high point in the service is about to take place)

Making the Sign of the Cross

One may trace the sign of the cross upon oneself with reverence whenever inspired to do so. However, there are specific times when Orthodox Christians typically sign themselves:

- At the beginning and end of services;
- Upon entering and departing from the Church Temple;
- At every mention of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit);
- During the Trisagion (thrice-holy) prayers or hymn; and
- At any prayerful invocation or blessing of God.

Let Us Bow Our Heads

It is customary to bow the head or bow from the waist at certain moments during liturgical worship. The sign of the cross is not typically made at these times.

- When the Priest exclaims, "Peace be to all";
- At the Exclamation, "Bow your heads unto the Lord;"
- When the Priest blesses the faithful with his hand;
- When the Priest censes the people;
- When the Priest bows toward the people during the services; and
- During the Great Entrance (in reverence for the Holy Gifts).

Let Us Lift Up Our Hearts

It customary in *some* parishes to lift the hands in prayer during:

- The "Our Father"; and
- The Anaphora when the Priest exclaims, "Let us lift us our hearts."

Small and Large Prostrations

Other bodily gestures used in Orthodox worship include the small bow, or *metania,* (a bow from the waist with the hand extending toward the ground), and large bow, *or prostration* (a full bow, kneeling and place the head to the ground). It is customary to make one, or more often three metania before venerating an icon, relic or other holy thing. They may also be made at times (for instance before the reading of the Gospel) during the Divine Liturgy. Prostrations are made more often during fasting seasons, especially the penitential season of Great Lent (for instance with the "Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian"). Prostrations, however, may also be made before venerating icons, or at the Lord's prayer, and other times at weekday services (see below). The Scriptures are full of references to prostrations as a form of both veneration (of holy people or things) and worship of God.

In order to allow us to enter into the joy and victory of the Resurrection (by which God has made us to "stand upright,") the Church canons forbid penitential acts of prostration on Sundays and the fifty days between Pascha and Pentecost. Small bows (metania) may be made and, in some places or parishes, kneeling (out of a sense of awe and worship) is practiced on Sundays at the Great Entrance or during the consecration of the Holy Gifts. This canon is not to be taken merely as a legalistic rule, but expresses the spirit of the Lord's Day, which is always a celebration and participation of Christ's Death and Resurrection, through which we have received forgiveness of sins. Unless one is under a penance of some duration, it is assumed that Sacrament of Confession and prayer of absolution would have been received, if necessary, on Sunday morning before Divine Liturgy. The idea is that by the time one comes to Divine Liturgy, he/she should have taken care of the acts of repentance and reconciliation necessary to stand before the Risen Lord with a pure conscience, having received the remission of sins. The spirit of the canon seeks to remind us in a bodily way to exult in the Risen Christ through whom we "have *access* by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). Its purpose is to maintain the integrity of the Lord's Day, reserving the work of repentance for weekdays in preparation for Sundays.

Receiving Holy Communion

Although no one should come to the Divine Liturgy late, if one does come as late as after the reading of the Gospel, he or she should not receive Holy Communion. In order to receive Holy Communion a person must:

- Be Baptized (or Chrismated) into the canonical Orthodox Church.*
- Be prepared by prayer, repentance (and recent Confession), and fasting from at least 12 midnight the night before from food, drink, and smoking.*
- Attend Vespers on a regular basis (unless otherwise stated by your pastor).*
- Seek to be reconciled with fellow Orthodox Christians, particularly of the community.*

By Fr. Michael Gillis

Money in the Church

Money. Why does the Church talk about it so much? Shouldn't we focus on spiritual things instead?

Well, there are two answers to these questions. The first answer is that the Church is both a divine and a human institution. As such, the Church -like any group, club, or organization -needs money to pay its bills and its staff. The Church in North America has no source of income except the donations of its members. If the members do not support the Church, it will go bankrupt.

But the second answer is more important: Christians give to the Church because giving is one of the main ways we show by our actions that we are indeed Christians.

A short look at the New Testament confirms this fact. For example, more than half of Jesus' parables in the Gospels mention money. There are the widow's two cents and the stewards' talents; the rich man and Lazarus; the servant forgiven a great debt; and the woman with ten coins, to name a few. In addition, Jesus discusses such money matters as paying taxes, counting costs, and storing treasures. Then there is the rest of the New Testament. In Acts 4-5, giving money is one of the ways the Holy Spirit (not man, but God) distinguishes between true and false believers. Moreover, in most of St. Paul's letters, he mentions giving generously. It is St. Paul who quotes Jesus as saying, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

God speaks so much about money because money is the stuff of which material life is made. In this world, our spiritual life has no form of its own. Our spiritual life is revealed by what we do with our material life. Someone may say, "Love is more important than money." These words sound noble and are easy to say. But their proof is not in the words, but in how he spends his money -especially in relation to the ones that he says he loves. A man is either deceived or lying if he says that he loves his family, but spends his money on his own pleasures while his family lacks adequate food and clothing. If we cannot deceive our families by empty words, how can we deceive God?

Everyone cannot give the same amount. Some are richer, some poorer. This is why God has established a fair plan of giving so that the burden is spread out evenly. This plan is called tithing. Tithing means that you give ten percent -ten percent of a lot or ten percent of a little-and it is one of the most spiritual things a person can do. In fact, I think many people pray harder when they write out their tithe check than they sometimes do in church. Tithing requires faith -faith that God will make up the difference, faith that the Mother of God will intercede for our needs, faith that God sees our sacrifice and knows our needs. However, along with tithing comes one of the greatest promises in the Bible:

> "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
> That there may be food in My house,
> And try Me now in this,"
> Says the Lord of hosts,
> "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
> And pour out for you such blessing
> That there will not be room enough to receive it.
> And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,
> So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,
> Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:10-11)

This is the only place in the Bible in which God invites us to "try" something to see if He will or will not keep His promise. God invites us to try tithing to see if He will do two things. First, God promises to bless us, both materially and spiritually. Second, and this one is the most exciting, God promises to rebuke the "devourer" or the destroyer (Satan) on our behalf. That is, God will rebuke whoever or whatever attacks our business and investments or destroys our hard work.

Jesus Himself makes this promise:
"Give, and it will be given to you:
Good measure, pressed down, shaken together,
And running over will be put into your bosom."

This is an awesome promise of God, and Christians for two thousand years have accepted this challenge and experienced God's blessing. However, God is not a businessman; He is our heavenly Father. God is not offering us a contract that can be manipulated. Rather, as our loving Father, He wants to teach us the principle of giving generously by faith and receiving His blessing in return. God wants to teach us to take a small risk, a small step of faith, so that we can learn that He truly is watching us and is eager to bless us in return.

Jesus Himself makes this promise: "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38). I urge you to accept Jesus' words. Take a chance, trust God. Try and see if God will not keep His promise and bless you. ❖

Junk Food for the Soul

By Archbishop Lazar (Puhalo)

Junk food is artificially flavoured and coloured, excessively sweetened and highly addictive. It is harmful to physical and mental health and its consumption interferes with or even deprives one of beneficial, healthful nourishment.

Television is an almost precise spiritual equivalent of junk food. The entire content of its programming is unedifying, unnourishing, opposed to sound mental and emotional health, and filled with value-training which is diametrically opposed to a sound and healthy society. The life styles and ideals it portrays are artificial, corrupt and undesirable. Moreover, television is highly addictive.

Even cartoons designed especially for children install uncompassionate, aggressive and violent attitudes which are definitely reflected in children's behaviour in school and at play. It has been repeatedly demonstrated, by University of British Columbia studies, and by several studies and commissions in the United State. and Europe, that television viewing imparts negative ideals and behaviour patterns to young people, and that children tend to accept the TV version of life and behaviour as acceptable norms.

In addition, television commercials, which are designed to increase and exploit every human passion, are very popular with children. It has been shown repeatedly that television advertisements have a powerful residual effect not only on the impressionable minds of children, but on adults as well. These advertisements do succeed in initiating, building, strengthening and then exploiting the passions of every sort.

If one carefully examines the moral content of television programs, including that of children's cartoons and the commercials, one will see that they are precisely the opposite of Orthodox Christian ideals. Having contemplated this, stop and compare the number of hours both adults and children spend under the influence of television with the amount of time spent in church, prayer and the reading of the Divine Scripture and other spiritually-edifying books. Thus, the heavy influence of Satan and his ideals in the lives of our children begins at ·a very early age, and in our very homes.

This problem is often compounded by the sorrowful fact that many parents who are proud of their colour television set are ashamed of the ikon of our Saviour. The television set is given a place of prominence, almost a place of honour, in our homes, while often there is no ikon corner to be found; and if there are ikons, they are hidden away out of the main room of the house, where they will not "cause any embarrassment."

Many parents who will consent to their children's spending hours glued to the television set, will not spend so much as ten minutes together with their children praying before the ikons. The Saviour and His saints are embarrassments, not entirely welcome guests, while the liturgy of the evil one, served daily on television, is given a place of singular honour in the household. Families which would never think of reading together the life of a saint or from Scripture, will eat in front of the television, just as pagans shared their feasts with their idols, and often such families even neglect to bless the food before the meal.

Later, the parents of such families will bemoan the moral and spiritual state of their offspring. How often do you read the lives of the saints to your children? How much time does your family spend together at the ikon corner in prayer? How often do your children catch sight of an ikon of the Saviour or the saints in your home? On the other hand, how much time do they spend with violent, aggressive and uncompassionate cartoons? How much time do they spend with loud, aggressive, sensual and immoral anti-heroes on television?

No one is foolish enough to suppose that a physical and mentally healthy child can be raised if his intake of junk food exceeds or even equals that of healthy, natural, beneficial food. Why would someone be so foolish as to suppose that one can raise an emotionally, mentally and spiritually healthy child on spiritual junk food?

Television, like so many of man's inventions, has been consecrated to the demon of greed and envy, and it is manipulated primarily for the purpose of increasing and exploiting every human passion. Even the occasional "decent" program is more than counterbalanced by commercials designed to feed, and to feed on, human passions.

Some people have asserted, with good reason, that it is better to have a television set in one's home, where TV watching can be controlled, than to have one's children watching television elsewhere, in uncontrolled circumstances. There is considerable truth in this. But stop and consider for yourselves whether your television set takes precedence over your ikon corner, whether TV is given a greater position in the lives of your children than is Christ. Are you feeding your children more spiritual nourishment or spiritual junk? The knowledge that parents must answer before the judge of all for the manner in which they reared their children ought to be enough to make them pause for serious consideration of this matter, even if parental resolve is too weak to do so.

(Reprinted from the Spring 2004 issue of the Canadian Orthodox Messenger, Archdiocese of Canada, OCA)

(His Eminence, the Most Reverend Lazar, author of this article, is the Former Archbishop of Ottawa, Canada.)

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. In one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Before and after Holy Communion

BEFORE RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION:

I believe, O Lord, and I confess that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who camest into the world to save sinners, of whom I am first. I believe also that this is truly Thine own pure Body, and that this is truly Thine own precious Blood. Therefore I pray Thee: have mercy upon me and forgive my transgressions both voluntary and involuntary, of word and of deed, of knowledge and of ignorance. And make me worthy to partake without condemnation of Thy most pure Mysteries, for the remission of my sins, and unto life everlasting. Amen.

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of Thy Mystery to Thine enemies, neither like Judas will I give Thee a kiss; but like the thief will I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord in Thy Kingdom.

May the communion of Thy Holy Mysteries be neither to my judgment, nor to my condemnation, O Lord, but to the healing of soul and body. Amen.

AFTER RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION:

I thank Thee, O Lord my God, for Thou hast not rejected me, a sinner, but hast made me worthy to be a partaker of Thy Holy Things. I thank Thee, for Thou hast permitted me, the unworthy, to commune of Thy most pure and Heavenly, Gifts. But, O Master Who lovest mankind, Who for our sakes didst die and rise again, and gavest us these awesome and life-creating Mysteries for the good and sanctification of our souls and bodies; let them be for the healing of our soul and body, the repelling of every adversary, the illumining of the eyes of my heart, the peace of my spiritual power, a faith unashamed, a love unfeigned, the fulfilling of wisdom, the observing of Thy commandments, the receiving of Thy divine grace, and the attaining of Thy Kingdom. Preserved by them in Thy holiness, may I always remember Thy grace and live not for myself alone, but for Thee, our Master and Benefactor. May I pass from this life in the hope of eternal life, and so attain to the everlasting rest, where the voice of those who feast is unceasing, and the gladness of those who behold the goodness of Thy countenance is unending. For Thou art the true desire and the ineffable joy of those who love Thee, O Christ our God, and all creation sings Thy praise forever. Amen.

The Jesus Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The Lord's Prayer

Pray then like this: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil *one* (Mt 6.9–13, cf. Lk 11.2–4).