

Your Diocese

Alive in Christ

The Magazine of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania, Orthodox Church in America Volume XIII, No. 3 Winter, 1997

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Archpastoral Letter of His Eminence, Archbishop HERMAN 1998, A Year Dedicated to Education

As we continue together our journey to the glorious celebration of the two thousandth anniversary of the Incarnation and Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we find ourselves on this Feast of the Nativity only three years away from the coming Millennium. Our five-year program of spiritual preparation for this special event in the history of humankind has already brought about efforts at Spiritual Growth and Renewed Devotion on our part.

As we usher in the coming year, 1998, we dedicate this entire year to *Continued Education* throughout our Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania. This means that our commitment — bishop, clergy and people alike — is to learn as much as we can *about* our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and grow ever closer in our personal experience of Him. In this effort we will need to humble ourselves and focus as much as we can on the Scriptures, the Fathers and all the Saints and what they have to share with us *about* and of the Incarnate Son of God, Who came into the world to save “*all who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23).

Like Humble Shepherds

In our quest to learn as much as we can about and grow ever closer to the Messiah, we would do well to turn to the pages of the Bible where the story of our Faith first begins. It is there that we find that the first teachers of the Good News were the angels, the shepherds were their first students, and the fields outside of Bethlehem were their first classroom.

It was indeed to the simple, humble and unlettered shepherds who were watching over their flocks by night, that the angel gave the Good News of the Birth of the Savior and provided the key to identifying Him amid the crowds that had come to Bethlehem for the census.

The heavenly messenger told them: “*And this shall be the sign to you: You shall find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger*” (Luke 2:12).

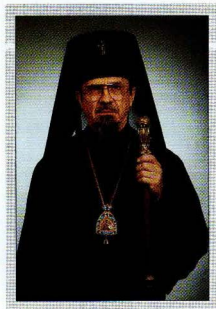
These uneducated men were given the first piece of information regarding the coming of the Messiah. What did they do? They listened and they learned . . . and they went out to find out more: “*Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger*” (Luke 1:15-17).

And then what did they do? They shared the news they had learned and the miracle they had seen with others . . . and they glorified and praised God for all that had been revealed to them. They valued greatly this gift from God of the knowledge of His Son, the Savior of the world. They wanted to learn more, to see and experience for themselves and to share with others what they had learned.

Men Willing To Learn

The greatest story ever told was first revealed not to scholars or philosophers or to the geniuses of that time, but to men who were willing to learn the truth of the Incarnation . . . men willing to seek out Christ and to rejoice in what they found and share it with others. The same would hold true when the time came to select His chosen helpers, the apostles — the Lord would go not to the great minds of the flourishing universities at Athens or Alexandria but to the simple souls of fishermen by the Sea of Galilee.

Yes indeed, the shepherds, and later the apostles like them, were open to being educated in the faith; and so we must be. No matter how long we have been Orthodox Christians, no matter how much we already know . . . there is so



much more yet to learn, yet to experience, yet to share . . . in our quest to grow ever closer to our Lord and Savior.

This being the case, we humbly dedicated this third year towards the Millennium to the continuing of our education and personal growth in the knowledge of the Lord of Heaven and earth. Commending ourselves to this sacred effort, as men willing to learn, we shall set for ourselves a number of programs in the Diocese.

A Personal Challenge

The personal challenge for each person individually — and each family together — is to read one chapter of the Holy Bible each day of the entire year 1998. The importance of an effort such as this is clearly evident from the words of our Holy Father, Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, who tells us: “If an earthly king, our emperor, wrote you a letter, would you not read it with joy? Certainly, with great rejoicing and careful attention.” But what, he asks, is our attitude towards the letter that has been addressed to us by no less than God Himself? “You have been sent a letter, not by any earthly

Continued on the next page.

Archpastoral Letter

Continued from page 1.

emperor, but by the King of Heaven. And yet you almost despise such a gift, so priceless a treasure." To open and read this letter, St. Tikhon adds, is to enter into a personal conversation face-to-face with the Living God. "Whenever you read the Gospel, Christ Himself is speaking to you. And while you read, you are praying and talking to Him."

With our Holy Father's words in mind, we recommend in this effort starting with the New Testament — right at the beginning, with the Gospel of St. Matthew — and continuing on with the other Evangelists, the Book of Acts, the Epistles of St. Paul and the other Apostles, and finally the Book of Psalms. We encourage you to use the *Orthodox Study Bible* with its notes of explanation at the bottom of each page and to consult your Spiritual Father with any questions you might have, mindful of the words of St. Peter, "*No piece of Scripture is a matter of private interpretation*" (1 Peter 1:20).

In every parish, weekly Bible study classes should be held to focus on the truths revealed to us in the Scripture about our Lord. Additional adult religious education classes should take place periodically throughout the coming year, to further familiarize our faithful with the tenets of our Faith from the writings of the Fathers and the decisions of the Councils of our Holy Orthodox Church.

Particular Programs

Lecture series are being planned in the various deaneries and at St. Tikhon's Seminary. These will feature guest theologians and professors who will give deeper insights into the Scripture, theology, patristics and ethics of our Church. Discussion groups will be encouraged to maximize the participation and the sharing — like the model given us in the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.

For our young people, there will be oratorical and essay contests which they will be able to enter. In this way, they too will be able to share their knowledge, their experiences and their perspectives on Jesus and the Faith of His Holy Church. The winning entries will be published in next year's winter issue of *Your Diocese Alive in Christ*.

One of the focuses of all these programs will be the encouragement of Vocations to the Holy Priesthood. We need not detail how important and critical a need our Holy Church is currently facing. With the help of the Holy Spirit, everything we can possibly do to encourage men to serve the Holy Church will be utilized for this noble purpose. As a herald of things to come, two articles on this very topic are presented in this present issue of *Alive in Christ*. Please read them carefully, and make every effort to pray and work for an end to our vocations crisis.

Be Encouraged To Participate

All of you, my beloved spiritual children, are encouraged to participate in this Year of Continued Education . . . encouraged by the very words of St. Luke himself in the Prologue of his Gospel, where he writes his reason for writing the account: ". . . it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account . . . that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (Luke 1:3-4).

And also by the words of St. John the Theologian who summarizes his reason for writing the Fourth Gospel: "*There are many other signs which Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in believing, you may have life in His Name*" (John 20:30-31).

May we all be inspired by the work of the Holy Evangelists, and through their prayers and intercessions, may we be led in 1998, our diocesan Year of Continued Education, to a fuller knowledge of our Lord and a richer personal relationship with Him.

With love in His Name,
+HERMAN,
Archbishop of Philadelphia
and Eastern Pennsylvania

Official

In addition to his duties as Rector of Christ the Saviour Church in Harrisburg, Archpriest Daniel Ressetar is assigned as Acting Rector of Holy Ascension Church - Lykens

Fr. Alexander Tandilashvili is assigned Priest-in-Charge of St. John the Baptist Church in Edwardsville, PA.

Ordination: Deacon Christopher Rowe - attached to Holy Trinity Church in Catasauqua

Parish Council Confirmations:

Holy Annunciation Church - Berwick

St. Nicholas Church - Bethlehem

St. John the Baptist Church - Edwardsville

Christ the Saviour Church - Harrisburg

St. Michael Church - Mount Carmel

St. Stephen Cathedral - Philadelphia

Your Diocese

Alive in Christ

Volume XIII Number 3 Winter 1997

The Official Magazine of the
Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania
Orthodox Church in America

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Cover picture:
Winter scene at St. Seraphim
shrine, St. Tikhon's Monastery

Your Diocese Alive

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Christ is Born!

Glorify Him!

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

On this day the Orthodox Church keeps a bright festival, glorifying and magnifying in spirit the most glorious Nativity of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who of His own good will did manifest Himself to the world in Bethlehem.

Great and unlimited is the joy of the Orthodox Christian in the awareness of the divine wisdom, goodness and love revealed to us and to all the world with the coming to earth of Christ the Saviour.

The Nativity of Christ has shone upon the world in the light of knowledge, bringing salvation to mankind and manifesting itself as a source of life and immortality, love and peace.

On this saving feast of the Nativity we turn our prayerful eyes towards the manger in Bethlehem, to the God-infant Christ, and our believing hearts joyfully hearken to the wonderful words of the Christmas canon in which the Holy Church calls us all to reverent amazement before the extraordinary and most strange appearance of Christ our God on earth.

Beloved in the Lord our God and Savior: Venerable Pastors, God-loving Monks and all devout Children of our Diocesan Family, with all my heart I most warmly wish you the joy of this great Feast of Christmas. Let us glorify the newborn Lord with all due splendor, with spiritual joy and pure hearts and offer to Him ardent love and thanks, "for unto us is born a young Child, the pre-eternal God."

May the Lord Jesus Christ Himself come to us and make His abode in us, to renew and sanctify us by divine grace, that we may religiously follow all the days of our lives in the ways of His eternal teaching recorded in the Gospels.



With love in Christ,

+ Herman

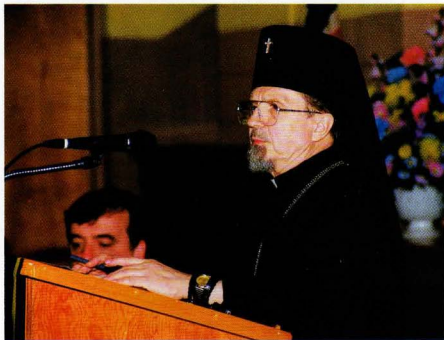
+HERMAN
Archbishop of Philadelphia
and Eastern Pennsylvania

Thirty-Fourth Diocesan Assembly

The 34th Annual Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania was convened on Saturday, October 18, 1997 at St. Michael's Orthodox Church, Old Forge, Pennsylvania. His Eminence Archbishop HERMAN concelebrated the Divine Liturgy along with Fr. John Kowalczyk, Secretary-Treasurer of the Diocese, Fr. Vladimir Fetcho, Dean of the Wilkes-Barre Deanery, Fr. Daniel Ressetar, Dean of the Frackville Deanery, Fr. Michael Lepa and Fr. David Mahaffey, host pastor. Members of St. Michael's choir and delegates joined to sing the Liturgy under the direction of Mr. Jon Black. The Assembly sessions began at 11:30 a.m. in St. Michael's Auditorium following a continental breakfast.

The Assembly was comprised of Archbishop Herman, twenty-eight clergy delegates, twenty-four lay delegates, one Alternate, one Diocesan Council member, three Observers and Mr. Stanley Stoy, CPA. Once again a packet containing the Agenda and various departmental reports were sent in advance to the delegates for study prior to the Assembly. After the approval of the Agenda, the Assembly officers were elected: Fr. Vladimir Fetcho, Clergy Vice-Chairman, Fr. David Shewczyk, Clergy Secretary, Mr. David Brzuchalski, Lay Vice-Chairman and Mrs. Marie Proch, Lay Secretary.

Archbishop Herman's report was the highlight of the morning session. He said that the present census of the Diocese shows 4,876 members, a decrease of 98 members primarily due to deaths. In light of this fact, His Eminence encouraged the delegates to work to bring in new members to the Church. He noted the closing of St. Andrew's Church in Dallas, the assignment changes of diocesan clergy and parish anniversaries of St. Nicholas Church, Philadelphia (80th),



Holy Cross Church, Williamsport (20th), St. Herman's Church, Shillington (25th) and Holy Trinity Church, Pottstown (70th). The 25th anniversaries of ordination were also noted for Fr. Paul Borick, Fr. Michael Evans and Fr. Andrew Shuga. His Eminence offered his prayerful congratulations to all. He expressed his gratitude to the parishes who showed honor and respect to their clergy in the manner in which they marked the anniversaries of the clergy.

His Eminence listed all of the major events that occurred in the life of the Diocese during the past year. The Annual Parish Council Conference held in Bethlehem was a success as were the Summer Camp and Youth Encounter held at St. Tikhon's Seminary/Monastery. The Summer Camp drew 150 campers. Another youth encounter is planned for February. The Orthodox Church in America held a Parish Ministries Conference at St. Tikhon's. The Annual Women's Retreat was well-attended but the planned Men's Retreat had to be canceled. Hopefully, the Men's Retreat will be held next year. One of the main celebrations of the 200th Anniversary of the

birth of St. Innocent was held at the Monastery. His Eminence thanked all who attended and supported these events. He noted his disappointment that more of our Diocesan faithful did not participate in the Anniversary. He said that whenever such events take place within our Diocese, our faithful should respond favorably to the invitation to come. There is nothing more important than the workings of the Church.

Archbishop Herman will meet with several visiting Hierarchs. Metropolitan Leo from the Church in Finland has already visited. Bishop Eugene of the Russian Orthodox Church will soon meet with His Eminence. Patriarch Ilia of the Church in Georgia will be present for the Memorial Day celebration in 1998. He also noted his planned attendance at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, New York City, along with members of the Holy Synod, to greet the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in October. The Orthodox Church in America is planning a Clergy Conference June 9-11 at St. Tikhon's Seminary/Monastery. He stated that a site has not yet been determined

Continued on the next page.

Diocesan Assembly

Continued from page 5.

for the next All-American Council.

His Eminence stated that since 1995, our Diocese has been preparing for the Millennium. Programs of spiritual growth, commitment and renewed devotion have been introduced in the Diocese. 1998 will be dedicated to being a year of continued education for clergy, laity and church school youth. He asked parishes to begin activities that would encourage church council members, choir members, and parishioners to participate more fully in parish life as we move towards the Millennium. He also reminded the delegates that there is to be no vacation from preaching even in the summer months. Sermons must be preached throughout the year.

St. Tikhon's Monastery continues to be readied for the Millennium celebration. New cupolas are in place, the roof has been replaced and the icons will be restored. The Monastery needs the care and concern of all of the faithful in the Orthodox Church in America. The Chapel dedicated to the memory of Metropolitan Platon still needs to be built.

The Diocesan magazine, *Alive in Christ*, continues to be successful and draws many compliments not only from Diocesan faithful but from those outside the Diocese who subscribe to it. It has been suggested by some that the magazine be made more readily available throughout the Orthodox Church in America.

Fr. Fetcho thanked the Archbishop for



Registration of delegates

his report and encouraged the delegates to take his message home with them and seriously consider his words.

The reports of the Diocesan Council Secretary, Treasurer and Auditors were all accepted as given. The Assembly then moved to consider the proposed budget for 1998 of \$132,620. There is no proposed increase in the Diocesan Assessment for 1998. After brief discussion, the proposed budget was adopted. The delegates then considered the reports of the Wilkes-Barre, Frackville and Philadel-

phia Deaneries and the various Departmental reports including Religious Education, Publications / Public Relations, Youth, Insurance and the Metropolitan Council Report. All reports were accepted as reported. The delegates then broke for lunch at approximately 12:30 p.m.

There being no other reports or resolutions to be considered, the Election of Diocesan Council Officers was held. The following were elected to the Diocesan Council: Fr. John Onofrey and Elsie Herman from the Frackville Deanery; Fr. Eugene Vansuch and Mrs. Sandra Bohlander from the Philadelphia Deanery; Fr. Joseph Martin and Mr. John Zoranski from the Wilkes-Barre Deanery. At large delegates elected were Fr. Daniel Geeza and Mrs. Marie Proch. Fr. Vladimir Fetcho and Christopher Rowe will be representatives to the Metropolitan Council.

The remainder of the Assembly was dedicated to other matters. Subjects for discussion included establishing a mission for immigrant Russians and Ukrainians in Philadelphia, liturgical life and discipline, ways to improve financial reports, publishing of notable sermons for the edification of the faithful, espe-



Delegates at work



Delegate Elsie Nierle



David Brzuchalski chairs afternoon session

cially college students, and posting useful items on the internet including our Diocesan magazine. Archbishop Herman responded to each issue. He called for liturgical and spiritual discipline in the parishes. He said that we must get to the point where the truth and canons will



Delegates review the budget

prevail so that corrections will take place and not for the clergy or faithful to act on their own and interpret for themselves. He pointed out that while the Internet can be useful, it can also be a very dangerous place where people further their own interpretations rather than the truth. He called upon both clergy and laity to volunteer articles for the Diocesan magazine as articles are sometimes difficult to gather. The clergy were also asked to find laity that desire to work for the Church in its various departments. He reminded the delegates that we still do not have enough candidates for the priesthood for our parishes. His Eminence asked everyone to look within the

parishes for workers to give of their time for the building up of the Church.

Fr. John Kowalczyk announced that Archbishop Herman will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of his consecration. The celebration is set for September 26, 1998. More details about the celebration will be forthcoming. Fr. Kowalczyk stated that we are all grateful for the stability that Archbishop Herman has provided for our Diocese.

After thanking Fr. David Mahaffey, host pastor, and the parishioners of St. Michael's parish, the Assembly was adjourned with prayer and the blessing of Archbishop Herman at 3:00 p.m.

—Priest David Shewczyk

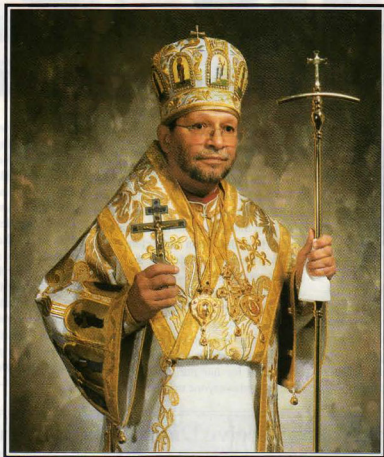
Seminarians Receive Diocesan Scholarships



Stephen Evanina, Alexei Klimitchev, Fr. John Kowalczyk, Archbishop Herman, Vladimir Kitchura, and Jason Vansuch

The Most Blessed Metropolitan THEODOSIUS

Marks Twenty Years of Spiritual Leadership and Service



✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠

*In his pastoral messages, His
Beatitude has always stressed the
need for love, real spiritual
growth, sacrifice, and obedience to
our Lord and Savior . . .*

✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠

The Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania salutes our beloved Metropolitan THEODOSIUS on the anniversary of his installation as the primate and spiritual leader of our Orthodox Church in America. Since his elevation to Metropolitan twenty years ago, he has been a leader and a shepherd for us, and an inspiration for all Orthodox Christians in America.

First serving as bishop of Alaska following his consecration to the episcopacy, our Metropolitan afterwards cared for the flock of his native and beloved

Diocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania. He traveled to Russia in 1970 to receive the Tomos of Autocephaly for the Orthodox Church in America. He was instrumental arranging the canonization of the first saintly man on American soil, our Holy Patron and Father Herman of Alaska. In Montreal on October 25, 1977, he was elected Metropolitan, succeeding Metropolitan Ireney.

The goals and direction of His Beatitude's primacy were spelled out clearly in the first statement he issued after his election and elevation. With those same principles in mind, he has steadfastly guided the Orthodox Church in America. As his words then are, if anything, even more applicable to our situation today, it is fitting to repeat them here:

"I am fully aware that I assume my new office at a time marked in the whole world by a deep spiritual and moral crisis, at a time when the perennial struggle between God and the 'Prince of this world' has reached an unprecedented intensity and is pervading the very House of God. Many, too many Christians are tempted into seeking compromise and accommodation with the spirit of this world. To this confusion, to these temptations, we, Orthodox Christians, must respond with our faithfulness to the eternal and unchanging Truth of Christ who is 'yesterday, and today and forever the same.' This is the time of renewal and spiritual mobilization, the time for 'discerning the spirits whether they are from God.'

"On this continent where, by the will of God, Orthodoxy has found a new and permanent home, [and] has ceased to appear as a marginal, if not simply a foreign, religion, the first and essential condition for our witness is the unity of the

Orthodox Church. The very word by which we dare to call ourselves Orthodox loses its credibility if we do not bring to an end our jurisdictional pluralism, if we do not integrate the rich variety of our traditions into one Church, one life, one family of Christ. The Orthodox Church in America wishes to be the servant of this unity, its tool, and also the sign and the proof that it is possible. As Primate, I shall spare no efforts in working for its fulfillment. . . .

"To remain firm in our faithfulness to Holy Orthodoxy, the faith of the Apostles, the faith of the Fathers, the universal and saving faith, to deepen our spiritual participation in the life of the Church and our stewardship within her, to oppose with courage all false doctrines whatever their worldly success and prestige, to work for unity, to serve our countries by being fully Orthodox, to measure our whole life by the Kingdom, bestowed upon us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ — such is our goal, our program, our hope and our prayer.

"I need your prayers, your help and your advice. May God, through the prayers of the blessed Elder of Alaska, St. Herman, and of the newly canonized Father among the Saints, Innocent, Evangelizer of the Aleutian Islands and Apostle of America, guide me and all of us on the holy path of faith, love and hope."

In his pastoral messages, His Beatitude has always stressed the need for love, real spiritual growth, sacrifice, and obedience to our Lord and Savior, as the best means both to achieve our salvation and to realize and further the goals of our Church as we seek to bring His light before the eyes of all men. He has not only spoken of the need for these, however; he has displayed them in his own life. His expression of love to all knows no bounds and his compassion for those in need is readily apparent. But at the same time, his keen awareness of the needs of the Church have made him a wise leader and a capable shepherd of his flock.

Overseeing the Church in the difficult times he described so well, Metropolitan Theodosius has remained steadfast to the calling of Christ and held the Ship of Faith to a steady course. God looks at the heart, and the heartfelt love of our Metropolitan has been at the source of his ministry since he became our primate. We can all take comfort in knowing that our loving, caring, and wise Metropolitan Theodosius is at the helm. May the Spirit of the Lord continue to guide our most beloved Archpastor as he leads us into the next Millennium. We continue to keep him first in our prayers, and ask his prayers and blessing. "For many years, O Master!"

*The Most Reverend Archbishop Herman and
Orthodox Christians for Life
Request the honour of your presence for
The Orthodox Witness on the Sanctity of Human Life at the
1998 March for Life*

Thursday, January 22, 1998, 11:30 A.M.

Dignitaries on the Podium at 11:45 A.M. Program Activities Start at 12:00 noon

The Ellipse, Washington, DC

(across the street from the White House)

RSVP by January 14, 1998

Orthodox Christians for Life

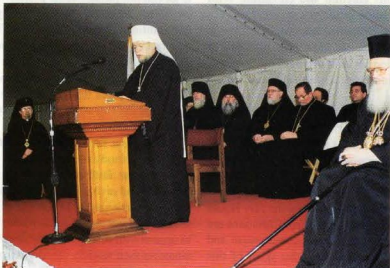
P.O. Box 805, Melville, NY 11747

(516) 271-4408

Patriarch Bartholomew Welcomed by Orthodox Church in America

Editor's note: The rector, seminarians, and faculty of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary along with a representation of clergy from the Diocese of E. Pa. were present when Patriarch Bartholomew was greeted by the O.C.A., as described in present account.

Even a cold, autumn rain could not prevent hundreds of faithful from joining His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius in welcoming the Ecumenical Patriarch to Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary on Saturday, October 25, 1997. His All-Holiness, Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecu-



Met. Theodosius welcomes Ecumenical Patriarch

menical Patriarch, included a stop at St Vladimir's Seminary in his month-long sojourn across North America. The Patriarch was there to receive the degree, Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*, from the Seminary.

In his welcome address, Metropolitan Theodosius told the large assembly that Patriarch Bartholomew "honors us by his presence, and gives his patriarchal blessing and recognition to the vision and ministry of St. Vladimir's Orthodox

Theological Seminary." On the dais the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, who also serves as President of the Seminary, was joined by the entire Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, as well as Archbishop Spyridon, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Metropolitan Joachim of Chalcedon, and other hierarchs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Archdiocese.

In the Dean's address, Fr. Thomas



Bishops assembled on historic occasion

Hopko lauded Patriarch Bartholomew's support for theological education. "We know, by his words and witness of life, that Patriarch Bartholomew steadfastly supports the work of theological education, especially graduate theological study, which insures sound education on all levels of Church life and contributes to all aspects of the Church's saving mission." The dean spoke about many dichotomies and divisions appearing in our

seminary, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius. His Beatitude then presented the doctoral cross to His All-Holiness.

In his acceptance speech, Patriarch Bartholomew expressed thanks and personal gratification to be present among the distinguished body of esteemed professors and students of the seminary. His All-Holiness thanked Fr Hopko for his wise words, which the Patriarch said "reflect the theological maturity of this

task of ascending the ladder of perfection and sanctification.

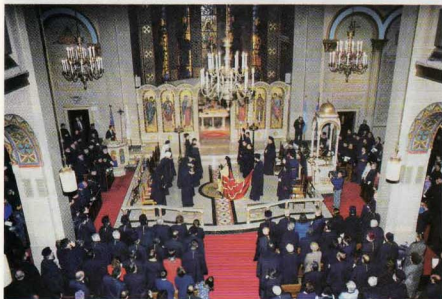
Following the degree presentation and acceptance speech, Metropolitan Theodosius responded to the address of His All-Holiness. The Metropolitan spoke of the "jurisdictional isolation" we Orthodox find ourselves in throughout North America. "While we profess our conviction that the Orthodox Church is catholic and apostolic, we live in a way which gives priority to cultural and ethnic loyalties," said the O.C.A. primate. He continued, "What we profess and confirm as our Faith is contradicted by how we live and act as a Church." The Metropolitan ended his exhortation by appealing to Patriarch Bartholomew, throughout his historic visit in America, "for a healing and visionary message which could equip us to bear witness to the Orthodox Faith with integrity, bringing a credible and consistent message to America."

His Beatitude presented His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew with the Order of Saint Innocent, Gold Class, the highest order of the Orthodox Church in America.

Metropolitan Theodosius also presented Patriarch Bartholomew with an icon and sacred relics of Saint Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow and Apostle to America. His All-Holiness expressed his personal gratitude for the holy icon, sacred relics, and for the Order of Saint Innocent. In responding to the closing remarks of the Metropolitan, Patriarch Bartholomew concluded, "Dearly Beloved Vladyko Theodosius, brother and corecbrant in Christ, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the manifestations of your genuinely fraternal love towards my humble person, and through me towards my mother Church of Constantinople . . . I thank you for your very kind words and your expectations, through which you have put a very heavy responsibility on my weak shoulders but I shall try to do my best." The audience responded with an enthusiastic and affectionate applause.

Following the formal academic convocation many faithful stood in line to receive the Patriarch's blessing as he departed the Seminary grounds.

—Archpriest Gregory Havrilak



Pan-Orthodox Vespers at Holy Trinity Cathedral, N.Y.



Combined seminary choirs sing Vespers

time which are "alien to God's gospel in Christ Jesus." He further described the Patriarch as exercising the three dimensions of episcopal office with his brother bishops, as pastor, priests, and prophet, in imitation of the Church's One Good Shepherd, High Priest, and Prophet, Jesus Christ.

The degree citation was read by Dr Paul Meyendorff, as Secretary of the Faculty. The honorary degree was then conferred upon His All Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew by the president of the

blessed country, where we perceive a living presence of great theological stature." He exalted former deans and professors who followed the spirit of the Three Hierarchs for promoting our patristic Orthodox theological tradition, naming aloud Fathers George Florovsky, Alexander Schmemmann, John Meyendorff, and Professors Nicholas Lossky and George Fedotov. As he continued his acceptance speech, the Patriarch highlighted the importance of ascetic discipline, ceaseless prayer, and the endless

Holy Cross Church, Williamsport, Completes Two Decades

Okay, so it rained . . . a lot! That's what umbrellas are for. But the rain didn't dampen the incredible spiritual experience of our Anniversary weekend, this past November 1 and 2.

Naturally, even the best-laid plans have their anxious moments. They began when the enormous 12-foot-square Pantocrator icon 'just wouldn't stick' to the ceiling the first time. Then there were delays in the delivery of the furnishings, and other obstacles. But generally speaking, everything came together nicely, by God's design.

By the time Vespers was to begin, calmness prevailed. Some seventy-five people thoroughly enjoyed the worship and song of 'an enchanted evening' — the 'song' being provided by Dana and Sue Talley, tenor and pianist from New York City and devoted Orthodox Christians. And the coffee line at the fellowship afterward slowed as folks perused the new parish photo directory while making their goodies selections. Before the last bit of veggie dip was consumed, men were tossing pew cushions up into the balcony and moving pews outside in preparation for Sunday. Archbishop HERMAN arrived late in the evening.

By the time the reading of the Hours began on Sunday, we already had a good crowd on hand, including Fr. Eli Krenitsky and Protodeacon Stephen Howanetz who would concelebrate. Ultimately, 153 shared in the glorious Liturgy. After being vested, the Archbishop blessed our new iconostas, icons, and furnishings (even standing on his tiptoes to launch some holy water toward the ceiling). Then, he prayed over our new catechumens, charging them to be vigilant in their approach to Christ and His Church against the temptations that would surely confront them. As the loving Spiritual Father, he blessed and embraced them.

The heavenly worship of the Divine



Hierarchical Liturgy at Holy Cross Church



Protodeacon Stephen Howanetz reads Gospel

Liturgy was inspiring! Largely unaware of the 'monsoon' outside, the church was filled with the warmth of the Holy Spirit. Most in attendance received the Holy Communion of Christ from the hands of our Archpastor. The singing was extraordinary. It was all 'an icon of the Church at her best' in our 'new and improved' environment.

At the conclusion of the service, Daria Kovalak was presented with the

O.C.A.'s St Peter the Aleut Junior Stewardship Award by the Archbishop, on behalf of Metropolitan THEODOSIUS.

At the Sheraton, Lenora Georges and Carol Serwint greeted 149 guests with place cards and anniversary books. The fellowship was joyful as attested to by the noise level in the ballroom. Dana and Sue Talley again performed to the delight and appreciation of all. The greetings of Fr. Vladimir Fetcho (Dean of the

Wilkes-Barre Deanery, and Gwen Bernstine, Executive Director of the United Churches of Lycoming County, were thoughtful and genuine. The reflections on life at Holy Cross through our various stages of development by Dennis Durmis, Greg Szymaniak, Lew Shatto, and Jim Williams brought many to tears — reminding us of really how much we have to be thankful for at Holy Cross! The explanation of the new icons by our iconographer Cheryl Pituch was profound. The Archbishop's address was inspired and inspiring — he basically challenged us to outgrow our church! And Elsie Skvir Nierle was speechless

as Council President Lew Shatto offered her a special tribute on behalf of the parish. The guests were dismissed after the final prayer and began to depart with lots of hugs and fond memories. It was the end of a glorious weekend . . . not quite!

Back at the church, the beehive was still buzzing. Pews were returned to their positions as their cushions 'dropped' from upstairs. Another cup of coffee was shared and the good silverware put away.

After everyone finally left for home, Fr. Dan stood alone in the empty church asking "What happened here today?" (It was a good thing that Sergius Lange captured everything on videotape for pos-

terity — the tapes are available now in our parish library).

Merely to say "Thank you" to all who were involved in the many facets of the celebration seems rather inadequate. As always, all efforts which combined to bring us such joy were deeply appreciated. The whole weekend — the culmination of so much planning and effort — was one continuous "high" for our entire community. Numerous calls and notes have already been received in response to the celebration. And the most-often heard phrase was simply "Just Beautiful!" And so it was!

Glory to God for All Things!

Life at Holy Cross Orthodox Church

As Holy Cross Church in Williamsport, Pa., observed its twentieth anniversary, a catechumen reflected on his personal journey to Orthodoxy, in this talk given at the anniversary banquet, held Nov. 20, 1997. On the same day the speaker, James O. Williams, was received into the catechumenate of the Orthodox Church by Archbishop HERMAN.

Having just received my 'driver's permit' so to speak toward becoming Orthodox, I must confess my inadequacy to add anything to this thrilling day, except to say how much better all of my days have been since my family and I first visited Holy Cross last June.

I had no prior personal contact with Orthodoxy. As a United Methodist who went to a United Church of Christ Seminary, I respected Orthodoxy from studying church history and the church fathers. In worship and preaching class the professor taught about early Christian worship. I can recall hearing him say more than once, "The Eastern Church still does this." Nobody ever asked, "Why don't we?"

I realize now that I took the first on-ramp on my road toward Orthodoxy on my first day of seminary in 1985. I can see the word on the blackboard: *evangelion*, the biblical Greek word translated "Gospel" or "Good Tidings,"

from which we get our word evangelism. The professor was asking the class, How does *evangelion* function? Does the Church get the Gospel by listening to the world, or is the Gospel something the Church already has and gives to the world? What did I know? As a conservative Central Pennsylvania Methodist, I saw no argument. The Church is called out to impact the world, not the other way around. However, the professor was not teaching a Holy Gospel received once for all, but a fluid gospel discerned from the world and accommodated to it.

I must tell you today that I feel much more evangelical about the community and the faith I experience at Holy Cross than I ever felt when I would have called myself an "Evangelical Protestant." Today people ask me if this church I go to is Biblical. I just tell them I go to the same Church as the people who wrote the New Testament.

On that Saturday night in June when we got the courage to first drop by Holy Cross, Father Dan let us take lots of pamphlets. I read them all that night and kept saying in my heart: "That's biblical; Yep, that's what I believe; Wow, now I understand!" We came to the Divine Liturgy the next day and were amazed. Though it was different from anything we ever experienced, it also felt remarkably familiar. My wife and I both had the feeling like this worship was in us somewhere just waiting to be set free. It



Archbishop Herman blesses catechumens

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Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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was the worship "in spirit and in truth" I had prayed for many times. We also could see the light of Christ in each person at Holy Cross. We have experienced a genuineness and sincere humility in the entire congregation, not just in an enlightened few.

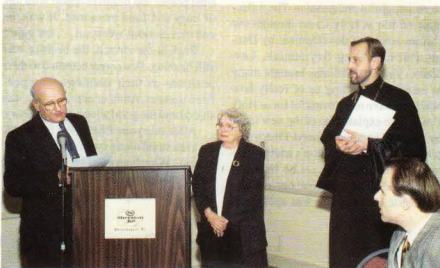
I give thanks to God for the ministry of Holy Cross and for bringing me and my family into her fellowship. I am utterly convinced that the Orthodox Church has upheld the true faith of the New Testament. She is the everblooming flower of that which was sent forth in the first Pentecost. Her worship of the Holy Trinity is the most beautiful thing on earth. Her people possess a commonality and sincerity which I had regretfully begun to think might not exist in our age. I think all this is what Jesus called "The Kingdom."

Jesus compared the Kingdom to a merchant in search of fine pearls. "Who when he found one pearl of great price, sold all that he had and bought it" (Matt. 13:46). To God's glory and in commendation of your faithfulness, I tell you I experience that Kingdom every time I touch, taste, hear, feel, or breathe this community. You have the real deal going on here, and I, for one, am gonna buy!

As a former Methodist, I will always remember the famous saying of John Wesley, when he said, "I seek that church which is truly Catholic, truly Evangelical, and truly Reformed." He apparently knew not of Orthodoxy, for she is truly Catholic and truly Evangelical, but by some miracle of the grace of God, she has never needed a Reformation.

May God's Holy Truth free us and many others to go forward as in the last twenty years, as in the past two thousand,

to proclaim and portray for the world the Blessed Kingdom of God: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



Elsie Nierle cited for her church work



Daria Kovalak receives St. Peter the Aleut Service award



Let heaven and earth today make glad, as the prophets foretold. Angels and men, let us keep spiritual feast. For God, born of a woman, has appeared in the flesh to those who sit in darkness and shadow. A cave and a manger have received Him. Shepherds proclaim the wonder; Magi from the east offer gifts in Bethlehem. Let us, then, from our unworthy lips offer praise like the angels: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace. For the Expectation of the nations has come: He has come and saved us from enslavement to the enemy.

—From the services of Christmas

“Keep Thy Mind in Hell and Despair Not”

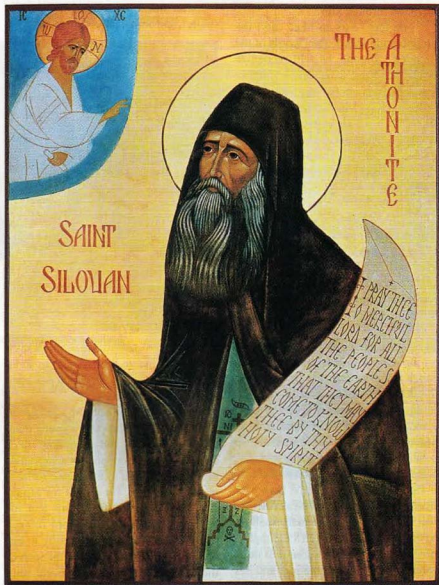
A Word of God for Our Generation

This lecture, which was delivered by Hieromonk Zacharias at the Annual Lecture Series at St. Tikhon’s Seminary, September 16, 1997, has been edited by Christopher Veniamin.

Christ is the sign of God to men of every age, and his way is the only true one which leads to the eternal Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

When the Jews erroneously asked Jesus for a “sign from heaven” (Luke 11:16), He repeatedly spoke of “the sign of Jonas the prophet” which was given to the generation of the Ninevites (Luke 11:29-30), as being the only sign of God for the world. The sign of Jonas prophetically foreshadowed Christ’s descent into the lower parts of the earth followed by His ascent above the heavens. In Christ’s person, in His life and in His example, was given the answer to all of man’s questions. He became the eternal sign of God for every age and generation. This event of His descent and ascent constitutes also the fount of every grace flowing from the Holy Spirit. A “friend” of God is one who receives this sign with faith, taking it as a model and pattern for his life: “but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15).

Moreover, as Jonas was a sign to the Ninevites, so also are the “friends” of Christ in every age a sign for their generation, according to His unfeigned promise that “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). They are the sign of God for their generation because God speaks through them and by their words they provide an answer to all the problems of their own age. They become the sign of God when, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the way



of Christ is revealed to them: descent (even unto hell), and ascent, according to the example and way which Christ showed. One cannot be holy, a friend and a disciple of the Teacher, that is to say of Christ, if one has not traversed this road to the end and “known the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:10). It is only on this condition that one may become a “light in the world” proclaiming “the word of life” (Phil. 2:15-16) for his generation. If, according to the word of

the Apostle Paul, “the saints shall judge the world” (1 Cor. 6:2), this is right simply because they first became the mouth of God the Word, and by their word gave light unto the world. Christ spoke through them and He Himself states: “the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

According to the spiritual law which we have set forth above, if the Church guided by the Holy Spirit “unto all truth”

Continued on the next page.

Keep Thy Mind in Hell

Continued from page 15.

glorified Silouan as an "apostolic and prophetic teacher," what should we seek in his person, life and word as being the characteristics of one who is a sign of God for his generation? What is the "word of life" which God revealed to our generation through him?

If one has "ears to hear" and the "mind to understand" the "words of the unlettered" Silouan, he will recognize their divine origin, despite their simplicity. He will remember the answer St. Silouan gave to Father Stratonikos' question — "How do the perfect speak?" — that "The perfect never say anything of themselves . . . They only say what the Spirit inspires them to say."¹ He will see that his words are given by the Holy Spirit and that not even one of his words is a product of human reasoning, but all his words are born of a pure heart, one which is "enlarged" (II Cor. 6:11) according to the gift of Christ. In a short talk such as this it is not possible to examine all his words, which are offered as words of God for our generation. It is enough for us to hold on to one word only, and try to go to its very depth. Then this word may by God's grace become a lens through which we can gaze fixedly at the endless horizons of the great mystery of godliness which has been revealed to us. So, today the word under consideration is the word of Christ to Silouan: "Keep thy mind in hell, and do not despair."

Time-wise, our generation is nearer to the second coming of Christ than ever before. Christ's word, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8), implies moreover that our generation finds itself in greater want and tribulation, and has need of salvation, than ever before. What are the tribulations which emphatically constitute the common and distinctive mark of our generation? We can number a few, which, according to our poor opinion, are the chief ones: pride, the darkening of the mind and its captivity by the spirit of wickedness, despair and the multitude of involuntary afflictions which accompany it, and finally, despon-

ency, the manifest lack of concern for that salvation which God offers every day to the world. This revealing word from Christ Himself, "keep thy mind in hell and do not despair," offered by St. Silouan to his contemporaries who are of like passions, provide the answer to these and many other symptoms.

After this brief introduction to the subject, and before proceeding to analyse

counted worthy to see Christ, Luke 19:2-9.)

The grace he received during his vision was great, and filled not only Silouan's soul, but even his body which, as he said, longed to suffer for Christ. This grace diminished, however, and Silouan was attacked by thoughts from the enemy. He lost that indescribable peace which he had felt with the grace



Archimandrite Zacharias leads off lecture series

it, I should like to briefly refer to some points in the Saint's life which preceded these revelatory words.

St. Silouan was born in a village in Russia in 1868. While still a young man, a series of intense and alternating states of the grace of God, and an acute sense of hell, gave birth to the desire for monasticism in him. He set out for Mount Athos at the age of twenty-six, and, after six months of even more intense struggle, he was deemed worthy to behold the living Christ before the icon of the Saviour. Although this event only lasted an instant, it had such an effect on him that from that moment his prayer embraced all the peoples of the earth. How did this happen to a simple villager, barely educated, who perhaps had never even seen a map of the world? It is because at the time of his vision of Christ, the same state of Christ Himself was transmitted to him, Who as the second Adam and the true High Priest of the New Testament carries in Himself the whole of mankind of every age. (The enlargement of Zachaeus when he was

of the vision. But it was not possible that he could accept this change in himself passively. From the lives of the saints we see that when man has known such a measure of grace, he remains inconsolable after the loss or diminution of such grace. At that moment, Silouan was ready to endure every sacrifice for the sake of re-acquiring that lost treasure. Like the Apostle who says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehending of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12), so Silouan could not have resumed a normal way of life after the vision.

Silouan went to seek help from an experienced spiritual father of the Monastery, Father Anatoly, to whom he told all that had happened to him. This spiritual father helped him by his advice, but did not hide his amazement for the young novice and said to him: "If you are like this now, what will you be by the time you are an old man!"² These words gave Silouan over to a delicate and difficult

¹ Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *Saint Silouan the Atholite*, translated by Rosemary Edmonds (Essex: Patristical and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991), p. 57.

² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

war with vainglory, something complicated and dangerous for the young novice. The desert fathers used to say that praise to our brother without discernment can deliver him into the hands of the enemy, that is to say, can make him a victim of conceited self-love.

In this way, by God's permission, Silouan was engaged in a titanic war against vainglory and pride. This episode is described by his biographer vividly and with understanding as follows: "At all events, the young and still inexperienced monk Silouan set out on the most difficult, complex, subtle battle against conceit. Pride and vainglory entail every disaster and downfall — grace departs, the heart grows cold, prayer feeble. The mind is distracted, and wrong thoughts set to work. The soul contemplating another life, the heart that has savoured the grace of the Holy Spirit, the mind that has known purity are unwilling to accept the base thoughts that attack. But how is this to be managed?"³ This is our question now.

This difficult period of alternating states and vacillations lasted fifteen years. During this time, Fr. Silouan tried every form of asceticism and way of life he could think of, which might restore him to the grace which he had known. He would sleep on a stool for only one and a half to two hours in the night, and this only in snatches of about fifteen to twenty minutes. As far as his prayer of repentance is concerned we can catch a glimpse of it from these words of Adam's Lament, in which he speaks of himself:

"Adam, father of all mankind, in paradise knew the sweetness of the love of God; and so when for his sin he was driven forth from the garden of Eden, and was widowed of the love of God, he suffered grievously and lamented with a mighty moan. And the whole desert rang with his lamentations. His soul was racked as he thought: 'I have grieved my beloved Lord.' He sorrowed less after paradise and the beauty thereof — he sorrowed that he was bereft of the love of God, which insatiably, at every instant, draws the soul to Him.

"In the same way the soul which has known God through the Holy Spirit but has afterwards lost grace experiences the

torment that Adam suffered. There is an aching and a deep regret in the soul that has grieved the beloved Lord.

"Adam pined on earth, and wept bitterly, and the earth was not pleasing to him. He was heartsick for God, and this was his cry:

"My soul wearies for the Lord, and I seek Him in tears.

"How should I not seek Him?"

forest,

"nor the singing of birds.

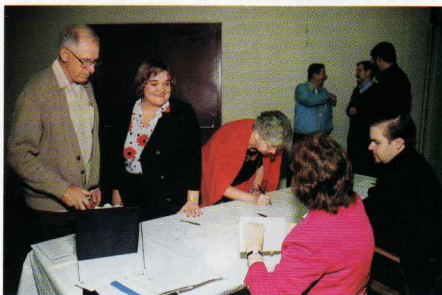
"I have no pleasure in any thing.

"My soul sorrows with a great sorrow:

"I have grieved God.

"And were the Lord to set me down in paradise again, there, too, would I sorrow and weep —

"O why did I grieve my beloved



"When I was with Him my soul was glad and at rest, and the enemy could not come nigh me."⁴

In St. John of the Ladder's wonderful description of those living in repentance in the prison outside a Monastery in Alexandria, it is clear that all who have known the Light of the grace of Christ, and then lost it, are ready to give themselves over to death at any moment in order to regain with knowledge the first grace of their calling and not be shut out of the bridal chamber of Christ. As St. John of the Ladder says, their repentance takes on the form of those lamenting over their dead (Step 5, 5).⁵ (See also the Life of St. Bessarion.)

In Adam's Lament, St. Silouan says the following:

"Adam wept:

"The desert cannot pleasure me; nor the high mountains, nor the meadow nor

God?"⁶

Living like this and passing the nights with the tormenting thought, "Why did I grieve my beloved God," and not departing from the love he felt for God at the time of the vision, he would come to the point of asking: "Where art Thou, O Lord . . . Why hast Thou forsaken me?"⁷ The Saint's biographer mentions the following explanation in the words of the Saint, "If in the beginning the Lord had not given me to know how much He loves man, I could not have survived one of those nights, and yet they were legion."⁸

I cite now the description of the last night, which is also the most dramatic of his fifteen years of martyrdom, where God intervened and gave the solution:

"It was fifteen years after the Lord had appeared to him, and Silouan was engaged in one of those nocturnal struggles with devils which so tormented

Continued on the next page.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 450.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 448.

⁵ References in the main text are made to the Greek edition of the Ladder. This corresponds to Step 5, 9, in the English translation by Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, Ladder of Divine Ascent, (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Books, 1958), p. 100.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

Keep Thy Mind in Hell

Continued from page 17.

him. No matter how he tried, he could not pray with a pure mind. At last he rose from his stool, intending to bow down and worship, when he saw a gigantic devil standing in front of the ikon, waiting to be worshipped. Meanwhile, the cell filled with evil spirits. Father Silouan sat down again, and with bowed head and aching heart he prayed.

"Lord, Thou seest that I desire to pray to Thee with a pure mind but the devils will not let me. Instruct me, what must I do to stop them hindering me?"

"And his soul heard,

"The proud always suffer from devils."

"Lord," said Silouan, "teach me what

abomination to God and man, yet the Lord so loveth me, giveth me understanding and health me, and Himself doth teach my soul humility and love, patience and obedience, and hath poured out the fullness of His mercy upon me. . . . O wonder! . . .

"As soon as the Lord lays His hand upon the soul, she becomes a new being. . . .

"Who shall describe the joy of knowing the Lord and reaching out toward Him day and night, insatiable? O how blessed and happy are we Christians!"¹¹

The Lord spoke the words in Silouan's heart, offering him the vision of hell, and amazingly, he immediately emerges possessing great knowledge and his life is restored with a wealth of grace

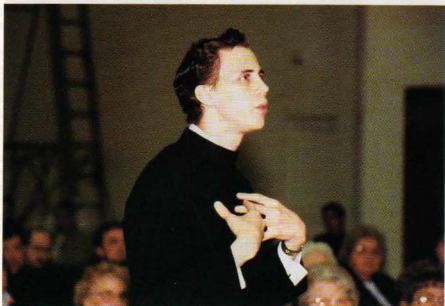
God. And the man who has come to know the Holy Spirit, and learned humility of Him, has become like to his Teacher, Jesus Christ, Son of God, and resembles Him."¹²

Why did this word of the Lord free Silouan from the fight with the enemy and add to his stature strength of spirit and stability of life?

This happened because the word of the Lord placed Silouan on the very way of the Lord Himself. By following the way of the Lord one's heart is enlarged and man becomes unapproachable to his enemies.

As we said in the beginning of the talk, the sign of Jonas represents the way the Lord walked, and the apostle says that victory came into the world by Christ's descent into hell and His ascent which followed (see Eph. 4). Hence, when the Lord proposes hell to Silouan (and through Silouan to our despairing generation), the Lord is offering him the possibility for descent, for going down. This is a spiritual journey and St. Silouan's biographer, Archimandrite Sophrony, says that "those led by the Holy Spirit do not cease condemning themselves in their journey downwards" towards Christ, Who is the head of the inverted pyramid, and Who holds all the weight of the pyramid on His shoulders, and takes away the sin of the world. Christ said once and for all time, "Ye know not what ye ask" (Mark 10:38) to those who think themselves worthy of ascent without drinking the cup of descent. As for Capernaum which arrogantly "sought after a sign" (Matt. 12:39) the Lord said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell" (Luke 10:15). However, He raised and justified the publican who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," but fulfilled Christ's law, which says, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:13 and 14).

When the Lord was praised by men for His miracles, He immediately directed his gaze prophetically to His coming cross and death, but also to His resurrection "on the third day" (Luke 13:32 and 18:33). And in doing this He gave



I must do that my soul may become humble.'

"Once more, his heart heard God's answer,

"Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not."⁹

Strange and incomprehensible is God's word to Silouan. Strange and incomprehensible moreover is Silouan's reaction to the word which he heard in his heart. "Thenceforth I began to do this, and my soul found rest in God."¹⁰ This grace realised his passing over from death to life, and rejoicing, Silouan sings a song of victory, echoing the just men of all ages:

"O the compassion of God! I am an

and of the love of God.

What is, I wonder, the mystery of God which is enclosed in the words: "Keep thy mind in hell and do not despair"? It is evident that knowledge of this mystery brought Silouan victory over the power of the enemy and a perfect likeness to his Master, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Silouan witnesses to in another part of his writings:

"He who has humbled himself has conquered the enemy. *No enemy can come near* the man who in his heart esteems himself deserving of eternal fire. No earthly thoughts find place in his soul — heart and mind, he lives entirely in

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 430-1.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 411.

us an example.

The way of the Lord stretches out, therefore, through the death on the cross to the infernal regions of hell. It is like descending into the water of Baptism: we meet Christ and put Him on and ascend reborn and with newness of life, since He has first descended into the waters and blessed them. So in like manner, when we are commanded to descend into hell, it is not in order that we may perish, but so that we may explore even there the unspeakable mystery of the divine and humble love which reaches down even to that dreadful place. It is so that we may humble ourselves unto the end before the greatness of this love, and in our turn reply with gratitude to Christ so perfectly and powerfully, that nothing and no place, not even hell, can separate us from God the Saviour.

This humble journey downwards is also the way that the Holy Church shows us. If we carefully examine her thought expressed in her prayers, we shall again see this twofold movement. Before the service of Baptism, or of the Divine Liturgy, we see the celebrant humbling himself in spirit, and descending so that he may be clothed with strength to perform the service of God, and thereby be raised on high together with the faithful whom the Spirit of the Lord has entrusted to him. Almost every significant prayer of the Church is divided into two parts. The first part is the descent of the spirit, and the second the ascent with the cry of faith trusting in the boundless mercy of our Bountiful God. To confirm this truth, it

is sufficient for one to read the prayers before Holy Communion. The life of the faithful is a life of repentance. Through repentance we have the descent in humility "beneath the strong hand of God that he may raise us in time." That wonderful teacher of the Ladder, St. John, says at the end of the chapter *On Repentance* that, "by voluntarily accepting retribution and punishment, we escape the punishment which is everlasting" (Step 5, 30).¹³

So, by descending into hell, we do nothing other than follow the Lord. This is the way of the Lord Himself. However, the way of the Lord leads to life, and for this reason we should not despair.

Having now spoken about the theological basis of the Lord's word to Silouan, "Keep thy mind in hell, and do not despair," it remains for us to explain how to carry this out in practice.

Before continuing, we should clearly stress that all the power of the mystery hidden within the word is due to the fact that the descent of the Lord into hell was voluntary and sinless, due only to his obedience and love for His Father and for the desire of salvation for fallen man. For this reason in order that our descent be blessed and bear fruit it must be voluntary and by the commandment of the Lord.

St. Silouan's experience of hell was a charismatic one — full of grace — and that is why the Lord's revealing word corresponded perfectly to his state. It is difficult for us to conceive its depth,

¹³ English translation, Step 5, 42, op. cit., p. 109.

without having had a similar experience. However, since it expresses the tradition of the Church's ascetic life, we shall try, by referring to the Holy Fathers, to go to its root, and comprehend its power — even if only in part.

Contrition and Spiritual Poverty

This word, "keep thy mind in hell and do not despair," is a commandment from the Lord with the intention that we might imitate Him in his descent, whilst at the same time trusting in His mercy and the eternal salvation which He obtained for us by His ascent. The mere disposition in us to receive this word and fulfill it in our life attracts the grace of God. Being a divine light, this grace discloses and confirms this truth: Hell is where man finds himself separated from the God of Love. It also discloses sin, injustice and spiritual poverty. This knowledge brings contrition to the soul. This contrition is a precious gift from God to man. This is the beginning of humility and it (that is, contrition) prepares a dwelling-place for God in us.

As a property of grace, this contrition gives birth to spiritual courage. St. Symeon the New Theologian says: "What is more courageous than a humble and contrite heart, which without difficulty routs the massed troops of devils and pursues them to their end?"¹⁴ This contrition is spiritual courage since it is

¹⁴ *Catechesis* of Archbishop Basil Krivozhéne, ed., Sources Chrétiennes 96 (Paris 1963), p. 244, 42-44.

Continued on the next page.

Heaven and earth are united today, for Christ is born. Today has God come upon earth, and man gone up to heaven. Today for man's sake He is seen in the flesh who by nature is invisible. Therefore let us also give glory and cry aloud to Him: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, which Your coming has bestowed upon us, O Saviour: glory to You.

—From the services of Christmas

**Upcoming Events
of the DRE**



**TEEN
RETREAT**



St. Tikhon's
Seminary



February 6, 7, 8, 1998

Keep Thy Mind in Hell

Continued from page 19.

the only state in which man, inspired by the grace of God, dares to stare at his spiritual poverty without despairing, whilst hoping that He Who revealed to him the depth of his desolation is also able to carry him across unharmed to the other bank, where God is. He achieves this through self-condemnation and the following prophetic attitude: he attributes every justice to God, whereas his face is covered with shame (see Daniel 9:7). It is for this reason that St. John of the Ladder says that spiritual courage is victory (Step 14, 32).¹⁵ It is victory because without the courage born of contrition, it is impossible for us to behold clearly our spiritual poverty. Then spiritual poverty becomes a gift, which lays the foundation for our spiritual ascent. "What is more glorious than spiritual poverty, which is the means of obtaining the kingdom of heaven?"¹⁶

Saint Silouan knew the power of this spiritual phenomenon — contrition — through Christ's word to him: "Keep thy mind in hell and do not despair." He would find it by taking refuge, as he says, in his beloved song:

"Soon I shall die, and my accursed soul will descend into the blackness of

¹⁵ English translation, Step 14, 36, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
¹⁶ *Catecheses II*, *op. cit.*, p. 244, 44-45.

hell. I shall languish alone in the sombre flames, weeping for my Lord. 'Where art Thou, O Light of my soul? Why hast Thou forsaken me? I cannot live without Thee.'"¹⁷

And in another place he says:

"Though our sins be forgiven, we must remember them and grieve over them all our lives, so as to remain contrite. I did not do this, and ceased to feel contrite, and suffered greatly from evil spirits. And I was perplexed by what was happening to me, and said to myself, 'My soul knows the Lord and His love. How is it that evil thoughts come to me?' And the Lord had pity on me, and Himself taught me the way to humble myself — 'Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not.' Thus is the enemy vanquished."¹⁸

With His word, the Lord revealed to Silouan the way to acquire contrition and humility and in this way to defeat the enemy.

(Another great teacher of spiritual science, St. Barsanuphius, says that without the pain of a contrite heart it is impossible for us to discern the thoughts which come to us.¹⁹)

We said that contrition is spiritual

¹⁷ *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, p. 46.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹⁹ See Answer no. 265 in the *Erotapokrisis* of Barsanuphius and John, Greek text, edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, reissued by B. Regopoulos (Thessalonica, 1974), p. 163.

courage and light for the soul. It leads to humility which is victory over the enemies and prepares the soul to become God's dwelling-place. It is a precious gift of grace, and is accomplished by self-condemnation, the extreme form of which is self-condemnation to hell. St. John of the Ladder verifies this when he says that the following prayer of prisoners: "We know, we know that we deserve every punishment and torment" — hell, "was able to move to contrition even the very hardness of stones" (Step 5, 5).²⁰ In another place he again says that condemning one's self to hell preserves "the mind unruined." We see, therefore, that putting into practice the words of the Lord, "Keep thy mind in hell and do not despair," bears the fruit of humility and purity of mind, which is a vital condition for freedom from passions and union with our Holy God. St. Silouan was taught this science by this word of the Lord. As he himself writes: "I began to do as the Lord taught me, and my soul was rejoiced by rest in God."²¹ In another place he says, "He who has humbled himself has conquered the enemy. *No enemy can come near the man who in his heart esteems himself deserving of eternal fire. No earthly thoughts find place in his soul — heart and mind he lives entirely in God.*"²² "But when my mind emerges from the fire, suggestions of passion gather strength again."²³

We notice with sadness that nowadays men suffer dreadfully because their mind is fragmented. Imagination, which is only one of the mind's activities, is over-indulged and dominates men's lives. It leads some to a hard heart due to pride, and others to mental illness. According to the teaching of the Gospel and all of Scripture, the mind works naturally only when it is united with the heart. Mind and heart are naturally joined together when the fire of contrition is in the heart. That is why St. Silouan recommends the following therapy for the soul: "Keep your mind in your heart and in hell. The more you humble yourself, the greater the gifts you will receive from God."²⁴

Which are the "greater gifts from

²⁰ *Cf.* English translation, Step 5, 12, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

²¹ *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, p. 431.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 411.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 497.



God”?

From the words of St. Silouan it is clear that self-condemnation to hell is not only harmless, but also becomes a fount of great gifts. As he says, it gives birth to repentance “unto the remission of sins” in the soul and brings the joy of salvation to the heart.

Moreover, the Saint witnesses that the Lord gives the Holy Spirit to those who work at condemning themselves. This should not be at all surprising, since self-condemnation to hell can only take place in a spirit of humility. The Saint writes: “I was thinking to myself, I am an abomination and deserving of every punishment; but instead of punishment the Lord gave me the Holy Spirit. O sweet is the Holy Spirit above all earthly things!”²⁵ These words of St. Silouan are in accordance with the spirit of the New Testa-



ment. The Lord tells His disciples that when they are persecuted and brought before the judges: “Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist” (Luke 21:14-15). The Lord gives this wisdom of the Holy Spirit to all who willingly place themselves before the judgment seat of God and anticipate his judgment by their voluntary self-condemnation to hell.

God does not judge twice. As the

Apostle Paul says: “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). And in another place he says, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10) — but we shall not all be condemned. It is possible, by willingly condemning one’s self even unto hell, to anticipate God’s judgment, and by this to be justified even in this life, and become a partaker of God’s word and wisdom. And this is the grace of, and betrothal with, the Holy Spirit.

Archimandrite Sophrony writes, God does not judge twice, and St. John of the Ladder says that “by voluntarily accepting retribution and punishment, we escape the punishment which is everlasting” (Step 5, 30),²⁶ and elsewhere he says, “By present shame we are delivered from future shame” (Step 4, 15).²⁷

We see the same golden thread of tradition unceasingly unfolding in the teaching of all the ascetic Fathers. Self-condemnation to hell is the most powerful means for one to be delivered from hell. It is inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit. It brings contrition, cleanses the mind, leads to humility, defeats the enemies, gives freedom from sins, and makes man a participant of the Holy Spirit. I shall pass over the words of the desert fathers which are well-known to many, and just quote a short extract from St. Gregory Palamas where he expresses the same science which we have seen in St. Silouan: “If someone really accounts himself guilty of eternal punishment, he will courageously endure not just dishonour but also harm, disease and, in fact, every kind of misfortune and ill-treatment. He who shows such patience, as though in debt and guilty, is delivered by a very light condemnation, temporary and annulled, saved from truly grievous, unbearable and unending punishment. Sometimes he may even be delivered from dangers threatening him now, because God’s kindness begins from that point, due to his patience. Someone chastised by God said, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him” (Micah 7:9).²⁸

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, Step 4, 12, p. 70.

²⁸ *Homily II, On the Lord’s Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee*, 23. Quotation taken from the *Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, edited with an introduction and notes by Christopher Veniamin, and translated by Christie Sells (forthcoming: Saint Tikhon’s Seminary Press).

When the involuntary cross of the grateful thief became voluntary by his good confession and self-condemnation, this made the thief a saint and participant in the love of Paradise — that very same day.

The three children in the fiery furnace showed their love for God to be stronger than death, rendering justice to Him, and reproaching themselves. So also the faithful in the fire of self-condemnation, bearing within them the same spirit, offer an acceptable thanksgiving to God and attract the dewy coolness of the Spirit to their hearts (St. John Chrysostom).

We have hardly said anything about the words “do and do not despair.” It is enough, however, to say the following: In the same way in which the Saint remembered the humble and boundless love of Christ which he had known at the beginning of his monastic life, and did not despair, remaining faithful to the vision, so too must the faithful remember that God freely saves by His grace, when we humble ourselves. “But we must count ourselves the worst of all men, and then the Lord by the Holy Spirit will give us to know the humility of Christ.”²⁹

We could summarise the great science of the Spirit, which we tried to describe above, with the words of St. Silouan himself:

“The Saints all said, ‘I shall suffer torments in hell’ — even though they performed great miracles. They had learned by experience that if the soul condemns herself to hell but trusts the while in God’s compassion, the strength of God enters into her, and the Holy Spirit bears witness of salvation. The soul grows humble through self-condemnation, and there is then no place in her for intrusive thoughts, and she stands before God with a pure mind.

“*This is the wisdom of the spirit.*”³⁰

As the time has passed and I must end the talk, I should just like to close the subject with the words of Saint Silouan’s disciple, Staretz Sophrony, in which he expresses the science of the Spirit, which is truly great:

Continued on page 34.

²⁹ *Saint Silouan the Athlonite*, p. 277.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 169.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 435.

²⁶ English translation, Step 5, 42, op. cit., p. 109.

"Theosis" in Saint Silouan the Athonite and Starets Sophrony of Essex

Delivered at the St. Tikhon's Annual Lecture series,
September 30, 1997

"Coming into contact with Father Sophrony was always an event of a most especial kind. His monastics, first and foremost, but also those who made up his wider spiritual family, "lived," as Father Zacharias put it, "in an abundance of the word of God."

As a young boy, I had the blessing of serving each Sunday in the altar of the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, Essex, England. One day when I was still a lad of only fifteen or sixteen years of age, following the Divine Liturgy, and whilst standing in the *Prothesis* of All Saints Church, Father Sophrony asked me why I was looking so thoughtful. Embarrassed that I was preoccupied with such mundane matters, I had to confess that school examinations were on the horizon, and that I wanted to do well in them. To my surprise, however, Father Sophrony did not belittle my worldly anxiety, but gently nodded his head, and agreed that it was indeed important to do well in examinations, and that to do so required much toil and sacrifice. But then he also added, as though to a friend, that "in this world there is nothing more difficult than to be saved."

The force of the truth of these words struck deep in my heart. We often encounter, in ourselves and in others, the attitude which suggests that Salvation is something that we can leave until later; once, that is, we have taken care of more pressing matters. Father Sophrony's perspective was quite different, however. By pointing to the incomparable difficulty of attaining to Salvation, he was clearly placing it at the very top of our list of urgent priorities. And when one pauses to consider all the great achievements of mankind, past and present, whether they be of a scientific or literary character, in the world of politics or finance or physical endeavour, Father Sophrony's words

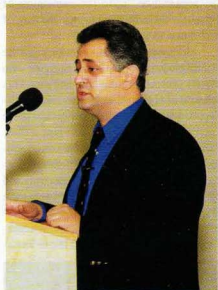
seem bold and even provocative — "a hard saying" (John 6:60) — but nevertheless fundamentally quite true.

Upon later reflection, I realized that the reason why Father Sophrony's words rang so true that day is because of the wealth of meaning which Salvation has for us in the Orthodox Church. By others, Salvation is often understood simply in terms of "deliverance from sin and its consequences and admission to heaven," in terms of escaping damnation, that is, and reaching a safe place where we can no longer be tormented by the enemy. According to the Fathers of the Church, however, Salvation is not so prosaic a matter, for it involves the "theosis" (the deification or divinization) of the entire human person in Christ; it involves, that is, becoming like unto Christ to the point of identity with Him; it involves acquiring the mind of Christ (as Saint Paul affirms in the second chapter of the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, verse sixteen), and indeed it signifies the sharing in His very Life.

In our brief and humble examination of the content and meaning of theosis or deification in Saint Silouan and Staretz Sophrony, I should like to focus on three main areas: 1. Christ as the measure of our deification, 2. Love for enemies as the measure of our likeness to Christ, and 3. Holy Relics as a witness to the love of Christ in us.

1. Christ as the Measure of Our Deification

Christ is the measure of all things, both divine and human. Since the divine Ascension, our human nature has been raised up to the right hand of God the Father. As Father Sophrony points out, in His divine Person, the Son and Word of God was of course always seated on



Dr. Christopher Veniamin

the right hand of the Father, being consubstantial with Him. The divine purpose for the human race, however, is seen in the union of our human nature to the divine Person of Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, in its being raised to the right hand of the Father.

St Paul, the great Apostle of the Word of God made flesh, identifies the divine purpose of the Incarnation with our adoption as sons of God: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:4-7).

In Christ Jesus, therefore, we encounter both true and perfect God and true and perfect man. In other words, we see in Him not only the great God and Saviour (Tit. 2:13), but also what or who we have been called to become — sons and heirs of God the Father.

St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, in refuting the heresy of the Gnostics of the second century, described the divine pur-

pose succinctly thus: “[I]f the Word is made man, it is that men might become gods.”¹ And the champion of Nicene Orthodoxy, Athanasius the Great, writing in the fourth century, reaffirms the Biblical and Irenaean position: “God became human,” he says, “that we might be made gods” (*autos gar enethropesen, ina emeis theopoiethomen*).²

“God became human that we might be made gods.” What a daring statement! But what exactly does it mean for us to become gods? Can we created mortals become uncreated and immortal? Is this not an impossibility? An impiety? Or even a blasphemy? In what, then, does our becoming gods, our deification or divinization — our theosis — consist?

As Archimandrite Sophrony explains in his spiritual autobiography, *We Shall See Him As He Is*:

“Christ manifested the perfection of the Divine image in man and the possibility for our nature of assimilating the fullness of divinization to the very extent that, after His ascension, He placed our nature ‘on the right hand of the Father.’”³

Note here that the expression “on the right hand of the Father” (*ek dexion tou Patros*) denotes nothing less than equality with the Father. Thus, since the time of the divine Ascension of Christ, our human nature has been deified in Him, and raised up to the right hand of God the Father.

Significantly, however, Arch-

¹ *Adversus Haereses* V, prf.

² *De incarnatione* LV.

³ *We Shall See Him As He Is*, translated by Rosemary Edmonds (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1988), p. 193.

imandrite Sophrony also adds the following:

“But even in Him our nature did not become one with the Essence of the Uncreated God. In Christ, incarnate Son of the Father, we contemplate God’s pre-eternal idea of man.”⁴

So, in Christ Jesus we find man’s rightful place, “on the right hand of the Father,” sharing in the divine Life; but, as with the two natures in Christ, man has been called to be united with God without mixture or confusion of any kind, that is to say, we never cease to be His creatures, since He alone is Uncreated. This fundamental distinction is of inestimable significance in Patristic theology.

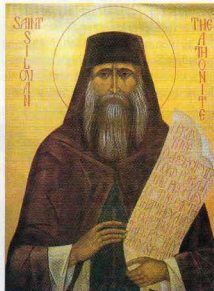
Nevertheless, in the union of our human nature to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, we also see what in theological terminology is called the *communicatio idiomatum*, that is, the exchange of natural properties belonging to each of Christ’s two natures. This may also be described in terms of the interpenetration of the natural energy of each of the two natures in Christ in the other.

As a simple illustration of this we have the Gospel narrative of the Transfiguration in Luke 9:28, where we first see Christ praying, performing, that is, an act which is proper to His human but not to His divine nature; while moments later, we find His humanity sharing in, indeed resplendent with, His divine glory, which is proper only to the divine nature. Saint Cyril of Alexandria de-

scribes the scene in this way:

“The blessed disciples slept for a short while, as Christ gave Himself to prayer. For He voluntarily fulfilled His human obligations (*ta anthropina*). Later, on waking they became beholders (*theoroi*) of His most holy and wonderful change.”⁵

Staretz Sophrony points out that the union of the human nature in Christ is of course hypostatic or prosopic, that is to say, that Christ is a divine Person, the



Person of the Son and Word of God; but, it is equally important to note that the union of the two natures in Christ is also energetic.⁶ The significance of this energetic interpenetration of the divine and human natures in each other is of paramount importance for us human beings

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Homiliae diversae IV in transfigurationem* (Patrologia Graeca 77:1013B); cf. *Ad Nestorium* 12; *anathema 4* (Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum I, 1, 141), where the concept of the *communicatio idiomatum* is formulated in a succinct manner. The reality of the hypostatic union and the *communicatio idiomatum* in Christ can be discerned in the fact that Christ conversed with the people sometimes *oikonomikos*, as man, and sometimes with divine authority (*mei exousias tes theopropous*), as God. *Ad Successum episcopum Diochaeasense* 17:16 (ACO I, 1, 6:153). As a result of the *communicatio idiomatum*, it is also permissible to say that the Son of God was born, cf. *Contra Nestorium* 2 (ACO I, 1, 6:18-21), and *Ad Nestorium* 6.3 (1:35), and died, cf. *ibid.*, 4.5 (2:7-28) and 12; *anathema* 12(42); *Contra Nestorium* 5, 7 (6:101-3; 105-6). See also *De adoratione in spiritu et veritate* 10 (PG 68:655C) and cf. *Thesaurus de Trinitate* 32 (PG 75:560C), where Cyril maintains that the human nature of Christ possessed essential *idiomata* of God, while at the same time remaining distinct from His divinity, cf. also *De recta fide ad Arcadium et Marimum* 177 (ACO I, 1:5:107-8). For further details see my “The Transfiguration of Christ in Greek Patristic Literature: From Irenaeus of Lyons to Gregory Palamas” (Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1991), pp. 134-135.

⁶ *Ascellicium and Contemplation* [in Greek], translated by Hieromonk Zacharias (Tolleshunt Knights, Essex: Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1996), p. 152.

Continued on the next page.

"Theosis" in Saint Silouan and Father Sophrony

Continued from page 23.

in that it forms the basis of our own union with God, which is also energetic and not essential or hypostatic. In other words, it proves to us that the example of Christ is also realizable, also attainable, by us human persons, and that theosis to the point of divine perfection, far from being optional, is in fact an obligation. It is in this sense that Staretz Sophrony understands the exhortation: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Father Sophrony also highlights another mystery concerning the Life of Christ on earth as a model and pattern

before His glorious Ascension, owing to the asymmetry of His natures. Following His Ascension, and the sitting of Christ the Son of Man on the right hand of God the Father, we have the new vision of the Christ-Man as equal to God, not of course according to His nature, but according to His energy.

Father Sophrony cautiously notes, however, that this does not refer to Christ's hypostatic "aspect," for the pre-eternal and uncreated Word remained such even after His Incarnation. Nevertheless, in the human "aspect" of His union and existence, we find once again the model and pattern for our own Life in Christ, for, as Staretz Sophrony puts it:

"Christ is the unshakable foundation

And for this reason, Father Sophrony adds that "if we confess His full and perfect theosis, it behoves us also to hope for the same degree of theosis for the saints in the age to come."⁹

The fundamental theological concern behind all that we have said so far is soteriological, that is to say, it concerns our Salvation in a most fundamental way. Why? Because of the simple fact that we cannot live with Christ if we are not like Him in all respects. As the great hierophant John the Theologian and Evangelist proclaims:

"We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

"We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." So, if we wish to be eternally with Christ, we must become like Him; and this process of becoming Christlike, this purification, invariably involves repentance — a fundamental change in our whole way of life, in our very "mode of being."

Saint Symeon the New Theologian, in his *Hymn* no. 44 reiterates this point in the following way:

"The Master is in no way envious of mortal men that they should appear equal to Him by divine grace, neither does He deem His servants unworthy to be like unto Him, but rather does He delight and rejoice to see us who were made men such as to become by grace what He is by nature. And He is so beneficent that He wills us to become even as He is. For if we be not as He is, exactly like unto Him in every way, how could we be united to Him? How could we dwell in Him, as He said, without being like unto Him, and how could He dwell in us, if we be not as He is?"⁹

And again concerning the awesomeness of our inheritance, the great Paul, in *Romans*, writes the following:

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time



for our own Life in Christ. This is revealed in the fact that even with the human nature of Christ we may observe a certain growth or dynamism, or, as Holy Scripture puts it, a certain "increase": "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Thus, before all things had been fulfilled, even after the hypostatic union of human nature to the divine Person of the Word — even after His assumption of our humanity into His divine Person — even Christ, in His human aspect, appears as increasing in perfection. Hence, He also undergoes temptations (Luke 4:1-13, Hebr. 2:18); and even reached the point of agony (Luke 22:44). This, as Father Sophrony remarks, is due principally to a certain division which may be observed in Christ

and the ultimate criterion for the anthropological teaching of the Church. Whatever we confess concerning the humanity of Christ is also an indication of the eternal divine plan for man in general. The fact that in the Christ-Man His hypostasis is God, in no way diminishes the possibility for us humans to follow His example (cf. John 13:15),⁷ after which 'in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren' (Hebr. 2:17).

"If it is true that Christ is the 'Son of Man,' consubstantial with us, then it follows that everything that He accomplished in His earthly life must likewise be possible for the rest of the 'sons of men.'"

⁷ For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

⁸ For all of the above, see: *Asceticism and Contemplation*, pp. 138-139.

⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:16-18).

Father Sophrony also makes another very interesting and important observation concerning the example given by Christ and our own theosis or deification. He points to the fact that even though the deification of Christ's human nature was, as Saint John Damascene says, effected from the very moment in which He assumed our nature, nevertheless Christ as Man shied away from anything which might give the impression of *auto-theosis*, that is to say, self-deification or self-divinization. This is why we see the action of the Holy Spirit underlined at His Holy Birth: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee . . . therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35); also, the Holy Spirit descends upon Christ at His Baptism in the Jordan (Matt. 3:15); and concerning the Resurrection, the Scriptures speak thus: "God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory" (1 Pet. 1:21); and finally, Christ Himself, teaching us the way of humility and how always to ascribe glory to Our Heavenly Father, says: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true" (John 5:31-32).

The same movement may be ob-

served in the Divine Liturgy. The Words of Institution — "Take eat, this is my body," "Drink of this all of you, this is my blood" — *by themselves* are not regarded as sufficient to effect the consecration of the Holy Gifts; they must be accompanied by the *Epiklesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, precisely in order to avoid any notion of self-deification, to avoid, that is, giving the impression that simply by speaking the words which Christ spoke, *we are able* to transform the Holy Gifts into the precious Body and Blood of Christ. (Of course, at the heart of this movement lies the truth that the action of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is always *one and the same*: the Three Divine Hypostases always act together, always act in unison, which is an expression of Their consubstantiality.) Thus, it behoves us to beseech God the Father to send down the Holy Spirit, by Whose power the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is effected.¹⁰

2. Love for Enemies as the Measure of Our Likeness to Christ

Now although Saint Silouan himself, as far as I am aware, does not actually use the term theosis, the deification of the human person in Christ is certainly a golden thread which may be traced

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

throughout his writings. For Saint Silouan, the fundamental criterion by which a person may measure his or her likeness to Christ is love for one's enemies (cf. Matt. 5:43-45). As he says:

"Christ prayed for them that were crucifying him: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). Stephen the Martyr prayed for those who stoned him, that the Lord 'lay not this sin to their charge' (Acts 7:60). And we, if we wish to preserve grace, must pray for our enemies."

Herein lies the mystery of the divine "mode of being." God's very way of life: humility. Humility on the ascetic plane, explains Father Sophrony, is manifested as regarding one's self as the worst of all sinners, while on the theological plane, humility is revealed as love, which is given freely and completely.¹¹ Saint Silouan, who was himself possessed of this divine love, humbly warns us to be watchful:

"If you do not feel pity for the sinner destined to suffer the pains of hellfire, it means that the grace of the Holy Spirit is not in you, but an evil spirit. While you are still alive, therefore, strive by repentance to free yourself from this spirit."¹²

The struggle for Christlike love for one's enemies and humility, and against pride, is a very great one indeed; and that is why the saints, the true imitators of Christ and sharers in His love, are great indeed. Saint Silouan writes:

"I am a sorry wretch, as the Lord knows, but my pleasure is to humble my soul and love my neighbour, though he may have given me offence. At all times I beseech the Lord Who is merciful to grant that *I may love my enemies*; and by the grace of God I have experienced what the love of God is, and what it is to love my neighbour; and day and night I pray the Lord for love, and the Lord gives me tears to weep for the whole world. But if I find fault with any man, or look on him with an unkind eye, my tears will dry up, and my soul sink into despondency. Yet do I begin again to entreat forgiveness of the Lord, and the Lord in

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹² Saint Silouan the Athonite, translated by Rosemary Edmonds (Tollleshunt Knights, Essex: Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991), p. 352.

Continued on the next page.



"Theosis" in Saint Silouan and Father Sophrony

Continued from page 25.

His mercy forgives me, a sinner."

"Brethren," Saint Silouan continues: "Before the face of my God I write: Humble your hearts, and while yet on this earth you will see the mercy of the Lord, and know your Heavenly Creator, and your souls will never have their fill of love."¹³

So, we see that the love of Christ fills the very being of His saints.

3. Holy Relics as a Witness to the Love of Christ in Us

But whither does this all-embracing Christlike love lead? The answer for

is a perfect man, and if he preserves this grace, his body is sanctified and his bones will make holy relics."¹⁴

There are, described in this passage, four stages of love, the fourth and highest of which is that which is attested to by the penetration of Divine Grace into the body, into the very marrow of a persons being. And this is identified by Saint Silouan as the highest state of perfection, the highest state of holiness. "He who feels grace in both soul and body is a perfect man, and if he preserves this grace, his body is sanctified and his bones will make holy relics."

As with Christ's voluntary death, in which it was not possible for the Body of the Logos of Life to see corruption, and which was thus raised together with

man, not truly a human person or hypostasis, without his body. For this reason, even great saints patiently await the Second and Glorious Coming of Christ, when by Grace they will become united once more with their bodies. There will not be a Judgment for them; for they have already been judged — by holy self-condemnation. The Second Coming of Christ, then, will be for them the moment of their full realization as persons, and thus the inauguration of their full and perfect participation in the Life in Christ, which is at one and the same time the Life of the Most Holy Trinity.

The sole exception to this, of course, is the Mother of God, the Theotokos (whose Feast of the Holy Protection we celebrate tomorrow, October 1), who, as the Mother of Life, even after death, could not be held by the grave, but, like her Son, "passed over into life." She, therefore, even now, as a fully realized human hypostasis, enjoys the blessed Life to which we have all been called.

In our first section, we noted an important passage in Saint Paul, from his *Epistle to the Romans*, concerning sonship, suffering and the final glory. Please allow me to repeat it once more:

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:16-18).

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," that is, in our adoption as sons, in our Salvation, in our theosis in Christ. That is why Saint Gregory Palamas affirms that "except for sin nothing in this life, even death itself, is really evil, even if it causes suffering."¹⁷ Speaking of the torments that the martyrs were willing to endure, Saint Gregory explains that "the martyrs made the violent death which others afflicted on them into something magnificent, a source of life, glory and the eternal heavenly kingdom, because they exploited it in a good way that pleased



Saint Silouan is a simple one:

"Love of God takes various forms. The man who wrestles with wrong thoughts loves God according to his measure. He who struggles against sin, and asks God to give him strength not to sin, but yet falls into sin again because of his infirmity, and sorrows and repents — he possesses grace in the depths of his soul and mind, but his passions are not yet overcome. But the man who has conquered his passions now knows no conflict: all his concern is to watch himself in all things lest he fall into sin. Grace, great and perceptible, is his. But he who feels grace in both soul and body

His human soul on the third day,¹⁵ so too will it be with the bodies of those saints which have known great grace in this life, and who have been able to preserve it.¹⁶ They too, even after death, are not separated from the grace and love of God, neither in soul nor in body, and hence their bodies are revealed as holy relics.

Here we are confronted with an overwhelming mystery: that man is not truly

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 438-439.

¹⁵ Cf. the tropation: "In the tomb according to the flesh, As God in hell with the soul, in paradise with the thief, And on the throne with the Father and the Spirit. Wast thou, O Christ, omnipresent, incircumscribable." Translation taken from the *Orthodox Liturgy of the Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, Essex* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 63.

¹⁶ Cf. Saint Gregory Palamas' Homily XVI, *On Holy Saturday*, 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 362-363.

God."¹⁸

Christ's word is charged with His divine energy, life and power; so too are His divine actions and His Life on earth as Man. When we fill ourselves with His words, and strive earnestly to live according to His command and example, to love even our enemies as He did—as He does—so too do we, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, enter into the sphere of Life which is contained in them. There is, as Father Zacharias puts it, "an exchange of lives" which takes place. We thus become, in our souls and in our bodies, "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) through union with His flesh, His humanity—sharers, that is, in the very divine Life of Christ Himself, which is at the same time the Life of the Most Holy Trinity.

We are saved not as individuals but as persons, as members of the Body of Christ, of which Christ is the Head. We are united with Him—and through Him, with the other members of His Body.

Notice the following words from Father Sophrony's *We Shall See Him As He Is*:

"Through His incarnation the everlasting Logos of the Father gives us to partake of His Blood and His Flesh in order thereby to pour into our veins His eternal Life, that we may become His children, flesh of His Flesh, bone of His Bone (cf. John 6:53-57)."¹⁹

In Holy Relics, therefore, we do not see dead bones—far from it. In Holy Relics we see the result of communion with the Lord, the result of sharing the very Life of the Most High God (cf. Rom. 9:5)—communion with Him who is Self-Life, Life Itself (*autozoe*). United with Christ, then, though we pass through "the valley of the shadow of death" (Ps. 23:4), we pass from death to Eternal Life. This is the point at which the created meets the uncreated, the point at which earth meets "heaven face to face," and the point at which we created, mortal human beings are transfigured by Him into Divine Life.

Thus are the perfect. Thus are the saints. Thus are they whose very bones have preserved grace to the end. Holy

Relics are the earthly remains of those who have been taught by none other than Christ Himself to love their enemies even unto death, the death of the Cross, which is His glory, and which by grace becomes their glory too. Love for enemies is not a moral injunction, it is the fundamental criterion for the Christian way of life. This is Salvation. Yea, this is theosis.

Truly, then, "in this world there is nothing more difficult than to be saved." But as we begin to perceive Salvation as theosis, so too do the dry bones seen by the Prophet Ezekiel begin to receive Life:

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O

Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live. . . . And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live: and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord" (Ezek. 37:1-14).

"[I] shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

—Christopher Veniamin

Why are you filled with wonder, O Mary? Why are you amazed at what has come to pass in you? "Because I have given birth in time to the timeless Son, yet understand not how I conceived Him. I have not known man; how then shall I bear a child? Who has ever seen a birth without seed?" But, as it is written, "Where God so wills, the order of nature is overcome." Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem of Judah.



—From the services of Christmas

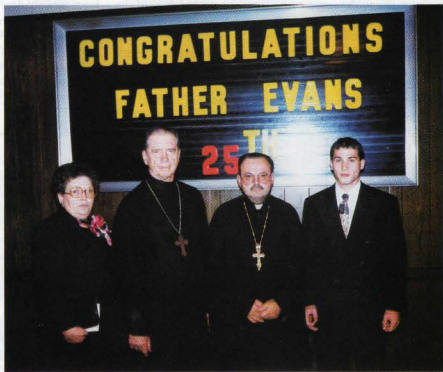
¹⁸ Ibid. Quotations taken from the forthcoming *Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, edited with an introduction and notes by Christopher Veniamin, and translated by Christine Sletta (Saint Tikhon's Seminary Press).

¹⁹ Op. cit., pp. 192-193.

Silver Anniversary Celebration of Archpriest Michael H. Evans

*"And he ordained twelve, that they should be with
him, and that he might send them forth to preach"*

— Mark 3:14



On Sunday, October 19, 1997, St. Michael's parish in Mt. Carmel, Pa. observed the twenty-fifth anniversary of Archpriest Michael H. Evans's priesthood. A Divine Liturgy was celebrated at St. Michael's by Archpriest Daniel D. Ressetar, the dean and Fr. Michael, pastor. The responses were sung by the parish choir under the direction of Peter Yastishak.

Fr. Michael was born in Pittsburgh on October 3, 1947. He graduated from Bishop Boyle High School in Homestead, Pa., and in 1972 from St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary. In 1983 he received an M.S. in Religious Education from Maryland College, Scranton, Pa. On Sunday, October 22, 1972, Deacon Michael H. Evans was ordained to the Holy Priesthood at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Mayfield, Pa., by His Eminence Archbishop KIPRIAN, Fr. Michael's first assignment was to St. Vladimir's Orthodox Church, Lopez, Pa. His later assignments included St. Basil's Church, Simpson, Pa., St. Mary's (Assumption) Church, St. Clair, Pa., and St.

Michael's Church, Mt. Carmel, Pa.

This year marks the twenty-fifth year not only of Fr. Michael's priesthood but also of his and Matushka Sonya's marriage. Father Mike, as he is called by most people, was married to Sonya (Horek) at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Edwardsville, Pa., on Sunday, Sept. 17, 1972. They have a son, Michael Evans who is a sophomore at Lebanon Valley College of Pennsylvania in Annville.

A testimonial dinner was held at Lazarski's in Mt. Carmel following services. Frackville Deanery clergymen, Matushki, family members, parishioners, and friends expressed their sincere best wishes, and remarked how quickly time

has passed since Fr. Michael first entered St. Tikhon's Seminary. Over 150 people were present for the festivities. The clergy present for the banquet were Archpriests Daniel D. Ressetar (Dean), Paul Borick, Theodore Orzolek, David Moriak, Paul Ropitsky, and Daniel Troyan, and Priest George C. Jensen, a friend of Fr. Michael's. Mr. Stanley Zbicki, President of the Parish Council

made the introductions of guests, clergy, toasts, and introductions.

Fr. Ressetar pointed out that it was his father, the late Mitred Archpriest Dimitri Ressetar who led Fr. Michael around the holy altar during his ordination to the holy priesthood at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Mayfield, Pa., twenty-five years ago. Fr. Michael admired Fr. Dimitri very much during his Seminary years, and still continues to remember him and the spiritual guidance he provided. While Fr. Michael was Pastor of St. Basil's in Simpson, he continued to visit Fr. Dimitri in Olyphant during his retirement years at his home.

Fr. Ressetar spoke and focused his

discourse on the holy priesthood, noting that the pastor is the father of the parish, just as the matushka serves a function as a mother. The entire entity of the family structure is represented in the Orthodox Church; this carries over to each family unit within the parish. For this reason the pastor is called "spiritual father."

In Fr. Michael's acknowledgements, he made mention of gifted teachers such as the late Archbishop Kiprian, Archpriest Vladimir Borichevsky, and the many hieromonks and monks who served and taught at St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary and Monastery in South Canaan. Many of these teachers are still with us today, such as His Eminence, our Diocesan Archbishop Herman, and professors, as well as others, who taught and guided Fr. Michael by their wisdom and spiritual example throughout his seminary life. They continue to be pillars for all of us today, clergy and laity!

Archbishop Herman was not able to attend the celebration today due to a prior engagement. Vladyka assured Father Michael that his thoughts and prayer's are with him and his family today. His Eminence was present when Fr. Michael entered St. Tikhon's Seminary thirty years ago. He was a celebrant at his ordination and marriage, and was his mentor then and during parish assignments over the years. Fr. Michael pointed out that during all of this Archbishop Herman has shown himself to be a prime example of an image of Christ, providing him with a solid foundation upon which to build his priesthood.

Fr. Michael thanked his parents, grandparents, and aunts for their influence when he first entered St. Tikhon's Seminary over thirty years ago. "I left home with the understanding that my desire is to follow Christ, and if this was not my calling and vocation in life I would return to search a different career. My family in Pittsburgh supported me in this decision, and helped me at every step of the way, and continue to do so. This was my decision alone, and I followed that increasing desire within me."

Fr. Michael related what motivated him to become a priest, and how he came to know of St. Tikhon's Seminary when he visited the holy grounds for a Memorial Day weekend pilgrimage years ago.

Fr. Michael recalled that three clergy who decided to enter St. Tikhon's Seminary were pilgrims together that day, coming on the same bus from St. Gregory's Church in Homestead, Pa. The two other men also continue to serve the Church — they are Archpriest Michael Hatrak, in Minersville, Pa., and Protodeacon Joseph Balkunova in Pittsburgh.

As Fr. Michael pointed out, today is not just his day of celebration, but a day dedicated to all those who helped him grow and develop in the Holy Priesthood of our Lord. God furnished Fr. Michael with brother clergy who instilled in him



Well-wishers greet Fr. Michael

a knowledge of the importance of prayer, to know that one must continually call upon God for His help no matter how difficult the spiritual struggle may be.

Many of these clergy have gone on to serve in others areas. Among them are the Archpriests George Pawlush, John Kuchta, and Joseph Martin. Fr. Michael also was benefited by the spiritual examples of the many clergy who served his home parish of St. Michael's Church in Pittsburgh, such as the late Archpriest Stachy Borichevsky as well as many others. These clergy taught that the path to God is prayer, our conversation with God.

Fr. Michael offered a reflection on various writings by Archbishop Herman

about the pastor as a man of prayer, saying that this should be a persistent desire, one that we should all follow. A pastor who doesn't pray is like clouds without rain, blown along and taken by the wind, and serves no purpose; doing no good, he simply prevents the beneficial rays of the sun from reaching the earth. The pastor must be experienced in prayer. Fr. Michael remembered these words, and said that St. Tikhon's Seminary taught us always to be prudent in prayer, and not to anger God with our careless, unworthy fulfillment of His work. He observed also, "I've have always strived to maintain that same joy in my Priesthood that I experienced on that very day of Ordination."

Fr. Michael was awarded the Jeweled Cross by Archbishop Herman this very year on Sunday, April 6, 1997. He also thanked the parish, the banquet committee, the choir, and parishioners for making this day possible — a day, as he called it, "attested by love"! And he added, "Today is dedicated not to me only, but to all of you. I would have to mention all the people I came in contact with these many years, and to do so the list would be voluminous!"

Representative Robert Belfanti presented Fr. Michael will a Citation from the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in honor of this day.

May you be blessed, Fr. Michael, and Matushka Sonya, with many years of continued service in our Lord's Vineyard. Congratulations and Many Blessed Years.

—Michael Evans (son)

*May the Blessing of Christmas
Bring Peace and Joy to the clergy
and faithful of our Diocese
and to the patrons
of our publication
throughout the New Year.*

*The Editorial Staff
of
Your Diocese
Alive in Christ*

Interview with Metropolitan Leo of Helsinki

Editor's note: During a recent visit to the U.S., Metropolitan LEO of Helsinki, Finland, visited St. Tikhon's Seminary and Monastery. He was interviewed by Your Diocese Alive in Christ.

Can you give us a short history of the development of your church in Finland?

At the beginning of this century the Finnish Orthodox was part of the Russian empire, and in 1918 the Senate of Finland recognized the position of the Finnish Orthodox Church. Patriarch (Saint) Tikhon of Russia acknowledged the autonomy of our Church only in 1921. Since 1923 we have been under the Ecumenical throne of Constantinople.

World War II caused serious damage to the small and young Orthodox Church in our country. In spite of all the troubles, the number of parishes and churches rose, and more attention and resources were given to basic religious education in schools. Church arts and music became more popular and Orthodoxy in Finland started to experience an upswing.

In our day, the Orthodox Church in Finland is small, but growing all the time, it is occupies an assured place in Finnish culture. Our Church has the position of the second state church,¹ and in addition to the divine services that are celebrated, there are various kinds of very active organizations and societies within the Church. Missionary work is carried out in Kenya and ecumenical work is considered to be important as well. Orthodox theology can be studied in the city of Joensuu, where there is an Orthodox

¹There are two state churches in Finland: the Lutheran Church, which is the larger of the two, and the Orthodox Church. Approximately 1.5% of the population belong to the Orthodox Church, which numbers about 60,000.



Archbishop Herman welcomes Metropolitan Leo

course of study within the University. . .

Our Church has the position of the second state church, and in addition to the divine services that are celebrated, there are various kinds of very active organizations and societies within the Church.

Can you tell us something about your biography?

Before the year 1996 when I was elected Metropolitan of Helsinki, I worked for seventeen years as the bishop of Oulu in northern Finland. During that

time the spiritual life and people of the diocese became very familiar to me. The distances between the northern parishes are very great; therefore, I spent a lot of my time traveling in the different parts of the diocese. I came to know a lot about the North, which is a pure and pristine region of Finland.

What are your impressions of your trip to St. Tikhon's Seminary and Monastery?

When I arrived at St. Tikhon's Monastery and visited the Seminary next door to it I had the same feeling as in the North: autumn colors were very bright, the hilly landscape was beautiful, with the hunting season in progress. I visited the Monastery and Seminary on the day when the anniversary of the founders of the monastery was celebrated. Many of the Monastery's supporters and benefactors were present. We visited the library and also went to the grave of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann.

At St. Michael's in Jermyn I was also

received very warmly with great hospitality. . . . The same atmosphere that I had sensed after arriving in Pennsylvania was very much present here as well.

How would you describe the importance of monasticism in general and the Valamo monastery in particular in the life of the Church of Finland today?

In the same way that St. Tikhon's Monastery is significant for the Orthodox Church in America and the people in it, so also are the New and Old Valaamo Monasteries and the Lintula Women's Monastery for Finnish Orthodoxy. With the help of these spiritual centers, it has been possible to spread the Orthodox Faith here in the North. In a way, these monasteries have acted as the presence of the Orthodox world amidst the materialistic reality. Other important historical centers have been Novgorod, Staraya Ladoga, and Olonets.

What can you tell us about the friendship between the Finnish Church and the Orthodox Church in America?

The seminaries and theological institutes in America have had a very positive and strong influence on the spiritual life of the Finnish Orthodox Church. Many Finnish Orthodox students and

researchers have studied in them and even more people from us have visited them. . . . Orthodox literature from the United States is very widely used in universities and other institutes where Orthodox theology is taught in Finland. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's works are very much appreciated there, for instance, just as Archbishop Paul's works are well-known in the United States.

St. Herman of Alaska has had a major role in connecting the East with the Western hemisphere. He left the Valaamo monastery on Lake Ladoga [within the former borders of Finland] at the end of the 18th century to do mission work. He was canonized in 1970, an event for which our Archbishop Paul was present together with then Bishop Theodosius of Alaska. St. Herman of Alaska is a saint for the whole Orthodox world, but has a special position in the hearts of the American and Finnish Orthodox peoples.

St. Alexander Hotovitsky is one of the saints of our own times. He served as the pastor of parishes in New York, Helsinki, and Moscow and was able, in a way, to connect these very different cities, with the different cultures and people.

Born in the town of Pielavesi June 4, 1948, Metropolitan LEO graduated from the Orthodox Seminary in Kuopio in 1972. Ordained priest in 1973, he was made the first vicar bishop of the Finn-

ish Church in 1979, when he became Metropolitan of Oulu. He received an M.Th. (Master of Theology) from Joensuu Univ. in 1995 and became Metropolitan of Helsinki the following year.



Fr. Paul Borick

The Very Reverend Archpriest Paul Borick fell asleep in the Lord on December 14, 1997. He was taken ill following Sunday Divine Liturgy at his parish, St. Mary's in Coaldale, Pa.

Archpriest Paul was born in Sayre, Pa., a son of the late Steven and Eva (Nadiak) Borick. He was the husband of Irene (Orinick) Borick. They were married for 27 years. Father graduated from St. Tikhon's Seminary in South Canaan, Pa. He was ordained to the Priesthood by the late Archbishop KIPRIAN on March 4, 1972 at St. Tikhon's Monastery Church.

Father Paul served the parishes of St. Nicholas Church, Philadelphia, from May 1972 to July 1975; St. Michael's Church, St. Clair from July 1975 to Sept. 1982; and St. Mary's Church, Coaldale, since Sept. 1982, serving the parish for the past fifteen years.

Father Paul was much beloved by his parishioners, his family, his brother priests, and by all the rest of his diocesan family. May his memory be eternal! *Vichnaya pamyat!*



Veneration of cross following Vespers

A Saintly Serbian Family

The Lives of Saints Stephen the Despot and Angelina

December 10 (also October 9 and July 30)



Saint Stephen was the son of Despot¹ George Brankovich and Queen Irene, who ruled Serbia as a vassal state of the Ottoman Turks from 1427 to 1456. This Despot George did much for the protection and strengthening of the Church in this time of persecution under the Turks, and he gave his two sons and one daughter a strong Christian upbringing — which helped them to endure with patience their sufferings at the hands of the Turks.

Saint Stephen lived for a time at the court of the Ottoman Sultan, Murad II, with his sister Mara, who had been forced to become the second wife of the sultan.² He and his brother Grgur were both blinded at Jedrene by the Turks.

Though blind, Stephen began to reign over the Serbs in 1458. Almost at once, however, he was forced to flee to Albania. There he was befriended by the Orthodox prince of Albania, George Skenderbeg (also known as Aranit). This prince invited Stephen to live in his home, and cared for him with Christian love.

Prince Aranit had a daughter named Angelina. She “grew up in the spirit of the Gospel teaching, and her life was devoted to prayer and charity.”³ While helping her father to care for the young, blind prince, “Saint Angelina grew to love the suffering prince very deeply. Their hearts were alike, and both loved the Gospel and the Church of Christ with their whole souls.”⁴

In 1460 they were married. Together they shared the hardships of exile, living not only in Albania and Serbia, but also in Italy.

Saints Stephen and Angelina had two sons, George and Jovan (John), and a daughter whom they named Maria for the Most Holy Theotokos. These children they brought up in a truly Christian manner.

Stephen died while his family still was living in exile in Italy. Angelina and the children fell into complete poverty, but were finally helped by the King of Hungary to move to the Serbian town of Kupinovo.

Angelina took with her the relics of her husband, which were incorrupt. They became the source of many healings. Thus, because he had borne the many tragic sufferings of his life without complaint, God granted him to become the source of blessings to others after his death. Today his relics are preserved in the monastery of Krusedol, founded by his son, George (who took the name Maxim in monasticism).

Though she was poor, Saint Angelina “devoted her whole life and all the money she could raise to feeding the poor, widows and orphans and those in exile.”⁵ She became known as “Mother Angelina,” and “mother of the poor.” Later in her life Angelina entered the monastic life, where, “By her asceticism and love for neighbour, the blessed princess purified her soul and became filled with the Holy Spirit.”⁶

Near the end of her life, with the help of Tsar Basil of Russia, she built a beautiful monastery for women named after the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple.

She fell asleep in the Lord on July 30, 1510. Her wonderworking relics are preserved in the same monastery as her husband’s. The relics of their saintly sons are also found there. She continues to be one of the most beloved Saints of Serbia.

In 1486, their eldest son, Prince George, began ruling as the Despot of the Serbs in Kupinovo, in the region of Srem (north of the Sava River), which was then under the protection of King Matthew of Hungary. In the next year King Matthew offered his daughter in marriage to Despot George, under the condition that George become Roman Catholic. He refused, since he would not consider forsaking the Orthodox Faith.

After ten years of wise and benevolent rule, during which he gave much help to the Serbs suffering under the Turks south of the Sava River, he left his throne to his younger brother, Prince John, and became a monk. After five years at the Manasia Monastery in Serbia, he took up the life of a hermit in Wallachia, a province of Romania, in order to escape from the harassment of the Turks.

Very shortly, his holiness, compassion, and wisdom became known to the people of that region, who begged the Church to ordain him as a priest. This happened in 1502, and in 1507 he was elected as Archbishop of Wallachia. He served in this capacity for five years. During this time, with a clear pan-Orthodox vision, he did much to unify in Holy Orthodoxy the Romanians, Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians living in Wallachia.

In 1512 he left his archepiscopal throne and retired to the Krusedol Monastery back in Srem. Here he died in

¹ “Despot” is the Serbian title for ruling prince, and does not carry the modern connotation of a tyrannical oppressor.

² This sultan was the father and predecessor of Sultan Mehmet II, the conqueror of Constantinople in 1453.

³ Fr. Lev Puhalo, *Lives of Saints for Young People* (Chilliwack, B. C.: Synaxis Press, 1976), vol. 3, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

1516. He was canonized as a Saint by the Serbian Church in 1522.

The younger son of Saints Stephen and Angelina, Prince John, served as Despot of the Serbs in Srem from 1496 until his death in 1502. He is also recognized as a Saint in the Serbian Church.

Saint Stephen is commemorated on October 9, and his beloved wife, Saint Angelina, on July 30. They are also commemorated with their son Saint John Brancovich, who was another married Saint of the Church, on December 10. And the fourth member of this saintly family to be canonized as a Saint — Saint Maxim, Archbishop of Wallachia — is commemorated on January 18.

O Saints Stephen, Angelina, Maxim, and John, pray to God for us!

Kontakion, Tone 3
(for Saint Stephen, October 9)

Come everybody, let us praise Stephen and hymn him through pious songs, for he is comparable in honor to apostles and martyrs, and he inherited the blessedness of the venerable and righteous. He engulfs us all with the pleasant aroma of his relics, and he supplicates the Lord for our souls.

Kontakion, Tone 8
(for Saint Angelina, July 30)

Longing to be worthy of the heavenly life, you gave up willingly the earthly food, and you distributed your wealth to the poor, for you were given heavenly riches. Even after your death you enlighten us, and you perform miracles, O all-laudable Angelina. We, therefore, honor your saintly passing away by singing: "Rejoice, O all-laudable mother."

—David and Mary Ford

The above is a revised and expanded version of the Life of Saints Stephen the Despot and Angelina in Marriage As a Path to Holiness: Lives of Married Saints, by David and Mary Ford (St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1994)



The Unfinished Icon



Nadia and Ruth had been pals ever since they were little. In fact, their mothers and grandmothers had been friends for years. You rarely saw Nadia without Ruth, for they lived only two houses apart on the same street.

Both Nadia and Ruth had been baptized and chrismated by Father Matthew twelve years ago. Coming soon was the celebration of Father Matthew's fiftieth anniversary as a priest. Everyone was excited about this wonderful occasion and great preparations were being made for all the festivities. The Bishop and even the Metropolitan were coming for the special banquet. Everyone who had been baptized by Father Matthew was asked to send him greetings, or to do something for him. All wanted to make this a never-to-be-forgotten event.

Since they had been small Nadia and Ruth had learned to do needlepoint. Nadia's grandmother had spent hours teaching them how to do intricate designs. So it was only natural that they should decide to make something for Father Matthew's gift — a pair of deli-

cate needlepoint icons! Nadia chose to do the one of the Theotokos and Christ, while Ruth would do the icon of Christ alone. Many months before the celebration they had started on the difficult project.

By the time they were nearly finished with the icons, spring had come and both girls were eager to get out and enjoy the lovely outdoors, after the long winter. Many afternoons they would wander to the woods to look for violets, new ferns, and even baby rabbits.

One afternoon, Nadia's grandmother reminded the girls that Father Matthew's celebration was only two weeks away and asked how their work was coming. Both assured her that they were soon finished, and continued to play with some newly-born kittens.

That night Ruth's mother asked to see her project and Ruth realized she still had much to do. So the next afternoon when she refused to go with Nadia to look for the young goslings on the lake, saying she was going home to work on her icon.

Continued on the next page.

The Unfinished Icon

Continued from page 33.

Nadia became annoyed, and said there was plenty of time as she dashed off to the lake.

All that week Ruth worked hard and by Saturday evening had the project completed. It did look lovely and her mother surprised her by giving her two gold frames, one for her icon and one for Nadia's. Wrapped in its bright gift paper with a big gold bow, Ruth felt relieved and eagerly awaited the joyous day.

Sunday afternoon she took the other frame to Nadia and asked about her icon. Nadia seemed peeved that she was concerned about it and even acted a bit mad when Ruth told her that hers was finished.

That week Nadia worked some on her project — but always seemed to have extra time to go to the lake, or park, or pool.

At last the big day came! Ruth and her family arrived early for the Liturgy and carried their gifts for Father Matthew to the special table in the church hall. Ruth was amazed to see all the beautiful decorations and the mounting pile of gifts and cards. Quickly placing hers carefully with the others, she joined her parents in the church. Watching for Nadia, she was worried when she saw Nadia's family come in without her.

As soon as she had venerated the Cross and greeted the Metropolitan, the Bishop and Father Matthew, Ruth rushed to find Nadia. She was nowhere to be seen.

At last spying her little brother, Ruth ran up to him and demanded, "Pete, where's Nadia?"

"Oh, that old slowpoke! She's still at home working on her icon. She got mad at Mom and Dad last night when they made her go to bed at midnight. She was trying to finish her project. Sure was getting to look messy too. So she's pouting at home now. Her own fault — she always waits till the last minute and then tries to rush things through. But guess the minutes ran out this time."

Ruth felt like crying as she thought of her friend, but she knew Pete was right; Nadia had put things off too long this time!

One of Jesus' parables tells a similar story of young ladies who were waiting for a party to begin and didn't have enough oil to keep their lamps burning while they waited. Not able to get extra oil from their friends, these careless girls had to go to the store for it. Of course, they were late and missed the celebration.

We must learn to work and complete our responsibilities at the right time. Others can't do things for us — our parents won't always be around to clean our rooms, straighten out our messes. One day Jesus will come and meet each one of us. He will see if we are ready to greet Him, what we have done to prepare for His coming.

A big word — *procrastinate* — means putting off until tomorrow what should be done today! Don't learn that word — don't develop that habit. Work steadily each day so that you will be able to greet Jesus anytime.

READ FROM YOUR BIBLE: Matthew 25:1-13

Theme verse: "Those who were ready went in with him . . . and the door was closed" (Matt. 25:10, TEV).

Something to think about and talk over with your family:

Why should we not procrastinate?

What might happen if one is always late?

When did Jesus say He would see us again?

What should we do to be ready to greet Him?

PRAYER

O Lord Jesus Christ, we know You want us to be with You forever. Help us not to put off learning about You, praying to You, worshipping You until it is too late. We want to love You, honor You, serve You from our early life. Amen.

The above was written by Matushka Isabel Anderson, and was taken from her book Building to Last: Stories for Orthodox families to Read Together in their Daily Prayer Time, published by St. Tikhon's Seminary Press.

Keep Thy Mind in Hell

Continued from page 21.

"We must overcome all earthly suffering by immersing ourselves in even more profound suffering. 'Keep thy mind in hell.' We must condemn ourselves to hell as unworthy of God but we must 'despair not'.

"This ascetic effort will lead to victory over the world. It will bring us to the 'kingdom which cannot be moved.'

"Is there a limit to this noble science on earth? We have the answer in Christ Who 'conquered death by death.'

"Blessed be the Name of the Lord from this day forth and for ever more."†1

†1 We Shall See Him As He Is, translated by Rosemary Edmonds (Tollershurst Knights, Essex: Patriarchal and Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1988), p. 94.



Vocations Encounter April 10-11, 1998

The COMMUNITY OF ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY invites you to be our guest for the 1998 VOCATIONS ENCOUNTER. Please complete this form and mail it to the Seminary before March 20, 1998, to ensure accommodations for the weekend. There will be no fee or obligation on your part. A letter of confirmation and directions to the Seminary will be forwarded to you as soon as we receive this form. We look forward to hearing from you!

Telephone: (717) 937-4411

Name

Address

Telephone

Anticipated time and date of arrival

Please address all correspondence to:

Office of Admissions
St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological
Seminary
South Canaan, PA 18459

Daily Devotions

JANUARY

1. Col. 2:8-12 (Circumcision) Luke 2:20-31,40-52 (Circumcision)
2. Heb. 7:18-35 Mark 12:1-12
3. 1 Tim. 3:14-4:5 (Sat. Before) Matt. 3:1-11 (Saturday Before Theophany)
4. 2 Tim. 4:5-8 (Sun. Before) Mark 1:1-8 (Sunday Before Theophany)
5. 1 Cor. 9:19-27 Luke 3:1-18
6. Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7 (Theophany) Matt. 3:13-17 (Theophany)
7. Acts 19:1-8 (Forerunner) John 1:29-34 (Forerunner)
8. Heb. 10:35-11:7 Mark 12:38-44
9. Heb. 11:8,11-16 Mark 13:1-8
10. Eph. 6:10-17 (Sat. After) Matt. 4:1-11 (Saturday After Theophany)
11. Eph. 4:7-18 (Sun. After) Matt. 4:12-17 (Sunday After Theophany)
12. Heb. 11:17-23,27-31 Mark 9:42-10:1
13. Heb. 12:25-26; 13:22-25 Mark 10:2-12
14. James 1:1-18 Mark 10:11-16
15. James 1:19-27 Mark 10:17-27
16. James 2:1-13 Mark 10:23-32
17. Col. 1:3-6 Luke 16:10-15
18. 1 Tim. 1:15-17 Luke 18:18-27
19. James 2:14-26 Mark 10:46-52
20. James 3:1-10 Mark 11:11-23
21. James 3:11-4:6 Mark 11:23-26
22. James 4:7-5:9 Mark 11:27-33
23. 1 Pet. 1:1-2,10-12; 2:6-10 Mark 12:1-12
24. 1 Thess. 5:14-23 Luke 17:3-10
25. 1 Tim. 4:9-15 Luke 18:35-43
26. 1 Pet. 2:21-3:9 Mark 12:13-17
27. 1 Pet. 3:10-22 Mark 13:18-27
28. 1 Pet. 4:1-11 Mark 12:28-37
29. 1 Pet. 4:12-5:5 Mark 12:38-44
30. 2 Pet. 1:1-10 Mark 13:1-8
31. 2 Tim. 2:11-19 Luke 18:2-8

FEBRUARY

1. 1 Tim. 4:9-15 Luke 19:1-10
2. Heb. 7:7-17 (Meeting) Luke 2:22-40 (Meeting)
3. 1 Pet. 3:10-22 Mark 12:18-27
4. 1 Pet. 4:1-11 Mark 12:28-37
5. 1 Pet. 4:12-5:5 Mark 12:38-44
6. 2 Pet. 1:1-10 Mark 13:1-8
7. 2 Tim. 2:11-19 Luke 18:2-8
8. 2 Tim. 3:10-15 Luke 18:10-14
9. 2 Pet. 1:20-2:9 Mark 13:9-13
10. 2 Pet. 2:9-22 Mark 13:14-23
11. 2 Pet. 3:1-18 Mark 13:24-31
12. 1 John 1:8-2:6 Mark 13:31-14:2
13. 1 John 2:7-17 Mark 14:3-9
14. 2 Tim. 3:1-9 Luke 20:46-21:4
15. 1 Cor. 6:12-20 Luke 15:11-32
16. 1 John 2:18-3:10 Mark 11:1-11
17. 1 John 3:11-20 Mark 14:10-42
18. 1 John 3:21-4:6 Mark 14:43-15:1
19. 1 John 4:20-5:21 Mark 15:1-15
20. 2 John 1:1-13 Mark 15:22-25,33-41
21. 1 Cor. 10:23-28 Luke 21:8-9,25-27,33-36
22. 1 Cor. 8:8-9:2 Matt. 25:31-36
23. 3 John 1:1-15 Luke 19:29-40, 22:7-39
24. Jude 1:1-10 Luke 22:39-42,45-23:1
25. Joel 2:12-26 Joel 3:12-21
26. Jude 1:11-25 Luke 23:2-34,44-56
27. Zechariah 8:7-17 Zechariah 8:19-23
28. Rom. 14:19-26 Matt. 6:1-13

MARCH

1. Rom. 13:11-14:4 Matt. 6:14-21
2. Genesis 1:1-13 Proverbs 1:1-20
3. Genesis 1:14-23 Proverbs 1:20-33
4. Genesis 1:24-2:3 Proverbs 2:1-22
5. Genesis 2:4-19 Proverbs 3:1-18
6. Genesis 2:20-3:20 Proverbs 3:19-34
7. Heb. 1:1-12 Mark 2:23-3:5
8. Heb. 11:24-5,32-12:2 John 1:43-51
9. Genesis 3:21-4:7 Proverbs 3:34-4:22
10. Genesis 4:8-15 Proverbs 5:1-15
11. Genesis 4:16-26 Proverbs 5:15-6:4
12. Genesis 5:1-24 Proverbs 6:3-20
13. Genesis 5:32-6:8 Proverbs 6:20-7:1
14. Heb. 3:12-16 Mark 1:35-44
15. Heb. 1:10-2:3 Mark 2:1-12
16. Genesis 6:9-22 Proverbs 8:1-21
17. Genesis 7:1-5 Proverbs 8:32-9:11
18. Genesis 7:6-9 Proverbs 9:12-18
19. Genesis 7:11-8:3 Proverbs 10:1-22
20. Genesis 8:4-22 Proverbs 10:31-11:2
21. Heb. 10:32-38 Mark 2:14-17
22. Heb. 4:14-5:6 Mark 8:34-9:1
23. Genesis 8:21-9:7 Proverbs 11:19-12:6
24. Genesis 9:8-17 Proverbs 12:8-22
25. Heb. 2:11-18 (Annunciation) Luke 1:24-38 (Annunciation)
26. Genesis 10:32-11:9 Proverbs 13:19-14:6
27. Genesis 12:1-7 Proverbs 14:15-26
28. Heb. 6:9-12 Mark 7:31-37
29. Heb. 6:13-20 Mark 9:17-31
30. Genesis 13:12-18 Proverbs 14:27-15:4
31. Genesis 15:1-15 Proverbs 15:7-19

APRIL

1. Genesis 17:1-9 Proverbs 15:20-16:9
2. Genesis 18:20-33 Proverbs 16:17-17:17
3. Genesis 22:1-18 Proverbs 17:17-18:5
4. Heb. 9:24-28 Mark 8:27-31
5. Heb. 9:11-14 Mark 10:32-45
6. Genesis 27:1-42 Proverbs 19:16-25
7. Genesis 31:3-16 Proverbs 21:3-21
8. Genesis 43:26-32; 45:1-16 Proverbs 21:23-22:4
9. Genesis 46:1-7 Proverbs 23:15-24:4
10. Genesis 49:33-50:26 Proverbs 31:8-31
11. Heb. 12:28-13:8 John 11:1-45
12. Phil. 4:4-9 (Palm Sunday) John 12:1-18 (Palm Sunday)
13. Exodus 1:1-20 Job 1:1-12
14. Exodus 2:5-10 Job 1:13-22
15. Exodus 2:11-22 Job 2:1-10
16. Exodus 19:10-19 Job 38:1-23; 42:1-5
17. Exodus 33:11-23 Job 42:12-16
18. Rom. 6:3-11 Matt. 28:1-20
19. Acts 1:1-8 (PASCHA) John 1:1-17 (PASCHA)
20. Acts 1:12-17,21-26 John 1:18-28
21. Acts 2:14-21 Luke 24:12-35
22. Acts 2:22-36 John 1:35-51
23. Acts 2:38-43 John 3:1-15
24. Acts 3:1-8 John 2:12-22
25. Acts 3:11-16 John 3:22-33
26. Acts 5:12-20 John 20:19-31
27. Acts 3:19-26 John 2:1-11
28. Acts 4:1-10 John 3:16-21
29. Acts 4:13-22 John 5:17-24
30. Acts 4:23-31 John 5:24-30



“My People and My Beloved”

First Sermon of Bishop (Saint) Tikhon to his North American Flock

Translator's note: In 1998, the Orthodox Church in North America will celebrate the centennial of the arrival on this continent of our Father among the Saints, Bishop Tikhon (Bellavin), later the first Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church of the new era. The present sermon was preached by Patriarch Saint Tikhon, who is the Confessor of Orthodoxy and Enlightener of North America, in the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity upon his arrival in San Francisco on Dec. 23, 1898.¹

At this my first coming to you, beloved brethren, I recall the words which once were said by the Lord through the prophet Hosea: *I will say to those called “Not my people,” “You are my people”; I will call “Beloved” the one called “Not my loved one”* (Hos. 2: 23). By these words were meant the gentiles, which signified that when many in Israel, the Divinely-chosen people of God, did not know Christ, then the Lord revealed Himself to those who did not inquire of Him (Rom. 10:20; Isaiah 65:1), and called the gentiles into His Church.

In accordance with the ineffable mercy of God, the gentiles who inhabited Alaska and the Aleutian Islands were called into

¹ Originally published in Russian in *The American Orthodox Herald*, No. 2 (1899), pp. 50-51.

the Church; they were catechized and enlightened by the light of Christ's faith by monks of Valaamo, who first sowed here the seeds of the proclamation of the Gospel. After them their holy task was continued by their successors, the Aleutian pastors and archpastors, and among these especially by archpriest Ioann Veniaminov (later Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow) and my predecessor, Bishop Nicholas, who was a man mighty in word and deed. By the will of God, I, too, in my unworthiness was called to apostolic service here, and so now I too will say to those called "Not my people," "You are my people"; I will call "Beloved" the one called "Not my loved one." Until now we had been strangers to each other, and did not know each other. Henceforth the Lord Himself is placing us into a bond of closeness, into a mutual relationship of bishop with his flock and flock with her bishop. In the writings of the Holy Fathers, this relationship is equated with one that exists in marriage: the bishop is seen as the bridegroom, and the flock as his bride. And even as the husband loves his wife to the extent that he abandons his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, becomes of one family with her, and begins living with her, so too the bishop must begin to love his flock. So, too, even as the wife submits to her husband, the flock should submit to her bishop. Understanding in this way my relationship to those I am to shepherd, and being betrothed to the Aleutian flock, I have left my beloved country, my elderly mother, my kinsfolk and acquaintances dear to my heart, and traveled to a far-away country, to a people unknown to me, in order that from henceforth you may become *my people and my beloved*. From henceforth my thoughts and concerns are directed to you and your welfare, from henceforth to your service I dedicate my strength and talents. I come to you, brethren, with love, and I ask that you also accept me with love. My love will find its expression in my concern and preoccupation with you, with service to you; while your love should be expressed in obedience to me, in your trust and assistance.

My request for assistance I address, first of all, to my closest assistants, the

pastors of the Aleutian church. I am entering this country for the first time, knowing it very little; while you have been laboring here for a long time, you have started earlier than I. Many of you have already made this country your

Brethren, edify each other: admonish the disorderly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the infirm, be patient unto all; see that no one may render evil for evil to any one, but always pursue ye that which is good both to one another and to all (1 Thess. 5:14-15).

home, some have even been born here. My hope is that in my forthcoming service to you, you will be able to be of great service to me in your knowledge of this land and its people, and through your experience become, indeed, *co-laborers*, men of counsel and reason.

I ask for assistance and cooperation not only from the pastors, but also from my entire beloved flock. The Church of Christ is likened by the holy apostle Paul to a body, while a body has not one member, but many (1 Cor. 12: 14). These have

not one and the same function (Rom. 12:4), but each its own: the eye its own, and the arm its own. Each member is necessary and cannot be without the other, they all have concern for each other, and there is no division in the body (1 Cor 12: 25-26). So you also, my brethren, *are the body of Christ, and members in particular* (v. 27). And unto every one of you is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4: 7), unto the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministration, for a building up of the body of the Christ (v. 12) And for this purpose continue with true love to grow into Him to Whom belongs the whole body, which is built up of and joined through the supply of every joint, according to the working in the measure of each single part, receiving increase for the building up of itself in love (v. 15-16). It was yet St. John Chrysostom who said, "Don't put everything on the priests: for you can do much yourselves, you know each other better than we do." And for this reason, brethren, *edify each other: admonish the disorderly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the infirm, be patient unto all; see that no one may render evil for evil to any one, but always pursue ye that which is good both to one another and to all (1 Thess. 5:14-15). May the God of all grace, who did call you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, Himself make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you; To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.* (1 Peter 5:10-11).

—translated by
Archpriest Alexander Golubov.

Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting 27th ANNUAL CAMPOREE

ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY SOUTH CANAAN, PA

MAY 1-3, 1998

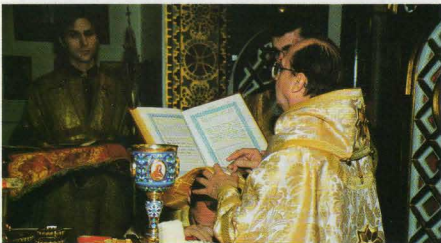
For more information contact: Larry R. Sherman, 1035 Quincy Ave., Scranton, PA 18510-1121; or phone: 717 342-2263. Or Ronald A. J. Allegrucci, 656 Blakely St. Dunmore, PA 18510; or phone 717 961-0182

Called to Serve

It is said that a person is "called" to serve the Lord. A person doesn't, in a vacuum, choose to serve God at His Holy altar or through any other vocation in the Church. Although a person's own will and the approval of the community are important factors in defining a vocation, the invitation comes from our Almighty Lord. He chooses who shall serve Him. That is the strict definition of a "calling." In some people, those who are perhaps more sensitive to the voice of the Lord, that call is a strong, steady voice unwavering in its intensity and direction. In others this call may not be as clear, or more likely, may not be heard because the "noise" of the world is obscuring the message. When that person who has denied the existence of the call finds that he cannot resist the call any longer, what does he do? One way that a man can serve at His Holy Altar and in the Christian community in general is as a permanent deacon through the Late Vocations Program as administered by the Central Office of the Orthodox Church in America.

Recently, I received the sacred mystery of Holy Ordination to the office of deacon. My ordination took place in the church of the Holy Trinity in Catasauqua, Pa. on Sunday, November 30, 1997. After three years of classes through the Extension Program at St. Tikhon's Seminary, I then, completed the O.C.A.'s Late Vocations Program.

All the effort that went into that day was fulfilled in an instant: all the plans, all the preparation, all the prayer. I had put in a number of years studying and getting ready, but was it enough? A couple weeks before the ordination, a priest asked me, "Are you ready?" I remember that my answer was silence, and then an uncertain, "I think so." Did all that sufficiently prepare me for one of the biggest steps of my life? The day came and Archbishop HERMAN laid his hands upon my head and I have set off along a path which leads in a direction with which I am unfamiliar, but which I



Christopher Rowe being ordained deacon

am certain is a correct one.

Like many others, I had never been a member of a parish that counted a deacon among its clergy. Over time, I learned more about the role that deacons play in the Church. The deacons were always "the right hand" of the Bishop. Their function was, and still is, to assist the bishop — and on the parish level, the priest — in the work of the Church. A deacon may assist in the ministries of charity, caring for the sick, missionary and educational work, working with various groups — including the youth or elderly, social welfare projects and various assignments as directed by the bishop or priest. Above all though, the deacon's greatest ministry is the liturgical one. He not only assists, but truly concelebrates with the bishop and priest during the celebrations of the Divine Services. There is not a single service in the Orthodox Church that is composed without a deacon as concelebrant. The deacon censes, chants the litanies, reads the Holy Gospel and preaches, elevates the Holy Gifts and may distribute Holy Communion. After the Divine Liturgy, the deacon consumes the remaining Body and Blood of our Lord. Since he belongs to one of the major ranks of the clergy, he also receives Holy Communion in the sanctuary with the bishop and priest.

The diaconate is the basic level of the higher priestly orders, the bishop having the fullness of the priestly power,

followed then by the priest and then the deacon. The deacon's place is within the threefold Orthodox Priesthood, a rank in its own right. The diaconate lacks the fullness of the priesthood, yet it lacks nothing of importance in the angelic service of God at His Holy Altar. The diaconate is an important ministry that is absent in many of our Orthodox Churches here in America. The deacon serves a community, regardless of its age, in a special and unique manner. Many of us have seen deacons only rarely and because of that we are not experiencing the fullness of Orthodox liturgical worship.

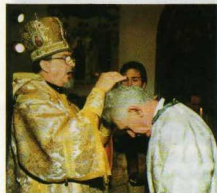
Several years ago, His Eminence, Archbishop Herman, envisioned and set before us a six-year program that would strengthen our diocese and lead us more closely to the Lord on the two thousandth anniversary of His birth and beyond into the twenty-first century. The program focused on a different aspect of our Church life each year. The goal of the program was that with renewed emphasis on these areas, we would all be more fully prepared to meet the challenges that our Church faces. This year has been designated as a year of "Renewed Devotion." Archbishop HERMAN has asked all of us to refocus our lives and to orient ourselves towards that which will bring us rich rewards, a renewed devotion to our Lord. Certainly one thing that we can all do is to immerse ourselves

more completely in the rich liturgical life of the Church.

Another way of enriching our faith is through education. We all have a need to learn more about our Church. That education could come through parish adult education programs or through more formalized educational opportunities. It was through my desire to learn more about Orthodoxy that I came to be on this path to ordination.

My journey started a number of years ago. I enrolled in St. Tikhon's Extension Program and started taking classes in January 1993. I started with the intention of taking a few classes to learn more about Orthodoxy in a more formalized setting. I really had no plans to go much beyond a class or two. I was baptized into the faith as an infant, but I had a feeling that there was much I didn't understand; there seemed to be much that I couldn't explain. I found myself answering questions by saying, "Well I don't know, it was just always done that way." The answers seemed to be at St. Tikhon's.

In this year of Renewed Devotion it seems good to review the Extension Program, and what a truly valuable resource our Seminary is. The program is administered by Father Leo Poore at St.



Tonsuring Michael Brusko a Reader

Tikhon's. The classes are given by St. Tikhon's teaching staff. The classes cover a number of introductory level subjects including the New Testament and the Old Testament, liturgics, doctrine and theology, and history. The Extension program is open to all. The classes run from October through March; one semester each school year. The classes for me were preparation for the Late Vocations program, but the work can prepare a person for any type of service to the

Church.

The Late Vocations Program was established by the Orthodox Church in America to assist men who are called to a vocation in the Church, yet cannot at-



Deacon Christopher with his family and pastor

tend a seminary full-time. It offers men an opportunity to serve the Church in the role of a permanent diaconate. Late Vocations candidates are required to be thirty-five years old or older, mature and in a stable family situation. Anyone who wants to be considered for the program must first receive the blessing of his parish priest and then of his bishop. All candidates are encouraged to attend seminary for some time — at least for a semester or two.

The program is administered either in the local diocese or through the Central Church office in Syosset, N.Y. The program through the O.C.A. requires the candidate to write a series of six study papers on a variety of topics. The qualification program could also be administered locally through a diocesan program. As an example, the Diocese of the Midwest has formalized classes where groups meet regularly for several years. The final steps for everyone are to pass the Standard Late Vocations Exam, be approved by the O.C.A.'s Board of Theological Education, and then to receive the blessing of the Lesser Synod of Bishops.

When you look back over time and try to determine how you got to where you are now, you look back at a series of factors. In my case, probably the great-

est single thing that led me to believe that this could happen, was the example set by a man I knew when I was growing up. This man was someone who gave totally of himself to the Church. He led our Sunday School program. He went

through a similar Late Vocations program in the Greek Archdiocese. He was eventually ordained a deacon and then a priest. Father Joseph now serves a parish in Madison, Wis. He has proved to many people over the years that it is possible to balance the requirements of a professional life with that of your family and the Church. The example that he set was one that made a large impression on me. You never know how others see you. Just by living a Christian life and following the path that the Lord has set out for, you may influence others around you to do the same.

"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). According to scripture, the qualifications for deacons are few: they must have a good reputation, be full of the Holy Spirit and be full of wisdom. It would seem that if you were to write a want ad in the newspaper, there would be quite a number of men who could ably apply for the position. There may be some who should listen more closely to that quiet voice. Undoubtedly, there are worthy men who could complete the educational requirements and fill the ranks of the permanent diaconate in our parishes. As Archbishop HERMAN said, we need to set an example for each other

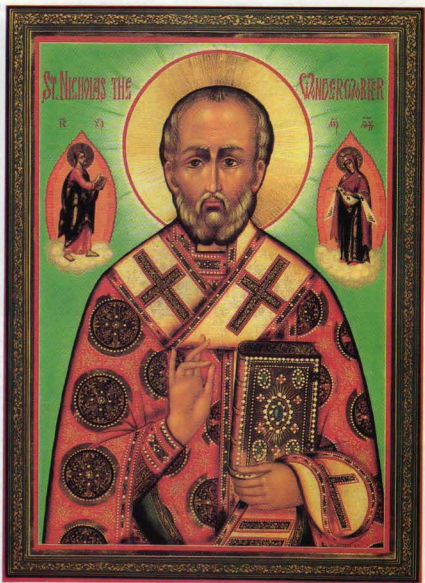
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Saint Nicholas, the Most Popular Saint

Almost all Christian people know at least something about Saint Nicholas, whose feast day the Church celebrates on December 6. There are many tales regarding the saint, his life and the miracles he performed both while he was alive and after his death. Most of these stories are much more than just pious legends; however, they may have altered considerably through the centuries as each nationality varied the stories and perhaps added little additional sequences to fit a particular situation. There is the most famous story concerning our saint that is so well known in all Christian countries throughout the world that it is without doubt based on a true occurrence. The story tells us about the saint's generosity and love for others. It is, of course, the one about his secretly delivering small gifts of gold in order to provide a dowry for three daughters of a formerly wealthy businessman so that at they could marry rather than fall into sin. It was only on the last visit that the girl's father discovered who was providing his family with the gold.

There are many other stories of how the saint saved sailors during storms at sea and appeared to children who were lost or kidnapped and helped them to return to their parents. One such incident tells us about a certain young Basil, son of a peasant, who lived along the coast not far from Myra. Arabs from Crete captured him one day while the Vesper Service for Saint Nicholas was taking place in the church of Saint Nicholas. The Emir decided to make Basil his personal cupbearer. His parents were so upset that the following year Basil's mother refused to celebrate the saint's feast till her husband begged her to go to the church. While they were talking, they heard a noise in the yard, and going out to investigate, they saw their son wearing Arab dress and awakening from a sleep. When he was fully awake, he told them how he was suddenly snatched away from his abductors by Saint Nicholas and brought back to his home.

Because of these many miracles, not



to mention the countless numbers of healings that are attributed to him, Saint Nicholas has not been forgotten during the years that separate us from when he actually lived and was archbishop in fourth-century Myra. He has remained a very personal saint — a bishop, who even though removed from us the living, continues to act through the Church and to aid those who seek his help. At present, there are over two thousand churches, hospitals, and monasteries that have him as their patron. He is also regarded as the patron saint of lawyers, sailors, fishermen, bakers, prisoners, and even brigades. Besides this, the Church

dedicates every Thursday to his memory along with the Apostles.

Originally it was on his feast of December 6 that people exchanged gifts in remembrance of his gift to the merchant's three daughters, but as Christmas grew in popularity and the time of its preparation lengthened, the custom of exchanging gifts was transferred to that day and was gradually accepted throughout most of the Christian world by the Middle Ages. The idea of connecting Saint Nicholas with Christ's birth became popular at this time, by using a Saint Nicholas figure as the gift-bearer. Each country and each national-

ity has its own characterization of Saint Nicholas. There is Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, and we have Santa Claus in our country.

It is worth noting that the custom of popularizing saints is not frequently encountered in countries with an Orthodox background and culture. The reasons for this are because the Church closely guards the memory of her saints, mainly by the observance of feastdays with a service composed particularly for the saint, and in the service, Orthodox Christians, as the Church, pray to the saint asking for his intercession, honor his holy memory, and recall the life he lived in Christ as an example and path for us. The Church also gives us icons of the saints to venerate. We bow before them and we kiss the image of the saint, praying to its heavenly counterpart and prototype.

Relics are another way of honoring the saints. By treating the bodies of holy men and women with honor, we acknowledge them as vessels of the grace and glory of Christ. It is little wonder, then, that this attitude would not give rise to a familiarization of the holy ones (i.e., saints, for "saint" means "holy") along with the legends and fictionalizing that easily follow, such as happened in 15th-century England and Germany. It seems that at that time Saint Nicholas was not only the gift-giver and rewarder of good children, but he was also the punisher of those who had misbehaved during the past year. Eventually the punishing aspect overshadowed the generous one and Saint Nicholas was characterized as a crotchety, bearded tormentor of naughty children, often seen stealing children away from the parents in a big sack. What a switch this was from the savior of lost children!

Icons of Saint Nicholas are so common in all the churches and in many Orthodox homes that they are easily recognized. Some of them depict the saint in connection with one or more of his miracles, but many of them are of the saint alone. Either style, he always appears with a high, noble forehead, and a bare head surrounded by a crown of white hair and an equally white beard. From the shoulders, the omophoron can be seen meeting in the front and hang-

ing down the chest as a sign he is a bishop. He holds the gospel with his left hand and raises his right hand in blessing.

Historically what has come down to us about Saint Nicholas is scant. He was definitely the bishop of Myra in Lycia in the fourth century. Lycia is a part of Asia Minor and lies on the coast of the Aegean Sea. In the saint's time, this area was important both politically and ecclesiastically. It was first evangelized by

Saint Nicholas continues to occupy a very special place in the hearts of all the Orthodox people, just as his icon continues to gaze from many an iconostasis. Perhaps the reasons for his popularity can best be seen in the words of the Troparion to Saint Nicholas. The words of this troparion describe so well, and so succinctly, the qualities of a true father in Christ, that the troparion is used as the general troparion for a saint who is a bishop:

"The reality of your deeds showed you to your flock as a rule of faith, a model of meekness, and a teacher of abstinence. Therefore you won the heights by humility and riches by poverty. O Hierarch, Father Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved."

Saint Paul and by the time Saint Nicholas was bishop, the entire land was Christian. Converts to Christianity did so at the risk of their lives since these were times of terrible persecution for the Church under the emperors Diocletian and Licinius, until the Emperor St. Constantine made Christianity the state religion in A.D. 324. The life of Saint Nicholas bridged the time from savage persecution to the peace and flourishing of the Church. This peace lasted for several hundred years until in the seventh and eighth centuries, Saracens ravaged the coast, frequently attacking the seaport of Myra. After them, Arab pirates terrorized the area. Finally, the Turks in 1071 occupied the city as they advanced along the coast, extending their boundaries. The Christian inhabitants, who had

often prayed before the tomb of their beloved bishop, fled to the hills outside the city in fear of the invader, leaving the saint's relics behind in the tomb.

In the confusion that followed the Turkish conquest of Asia Minor, Saint Nicholas's relics remained undisturbed in the cathedral. Slowly, the faithful moved back into Myra and once again prayed to the saint, who relics had given off a fragrant, healing oil after his entombment. Then in 1087, some merchants and sailors along with two priests from Bari, Italy, went from Antioch to Myra and stole the relics from the Church after forcing the monks who were guarding the church to show them the tomb. The thieves successfully carried the relics back to Italy and placed them in a monastery church until a new church could be built to house them, since they insisted that they would only consent to leave them permanently in a new building. At last, on October 1, 1089, the church dedicated to Saint Nicholas was completed and his remains were laid in the crypt.

Today Myra is a sad remnant of the past glorious seacoast community. Archaeologists, rather than pilgrims, are now the most frequent visitors to the area of Lycia in the province of Antalya, Turkey.

The old church where Saint Nicholas was once buried is now itself underground, having been covered by the shifting, spongy soil. A new church stands on top of the site of the original one. The area has visibly changed; the land and the church are no longer visible and even the holy relics lie in a different land, but Orthodox Christians take consolation in the fact that Saint Nicholas is still united with them through the Church as they sing:

"O chosen vessel and man of God, heir of the Kingdom, ceaselessly pray to the Lord for our souls." For it is through the Church that we are united with him and he is united with us.

—An Orthodox monk

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An Introduction to the Lives of the Married Saints

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Editor's note: This talk was presented at the third annual Women's Retreat at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

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In order to have a proper understanding of Saints' Lives, it is most helpful to have an idea of what it is like to be in the presence of a saint. I never get tired of rereading the following description by Archimandrite Vasileios, an abbot on Mt. Athos, of what a saint is like. Of course, saints are not all alike; indeed, they are very different in terms of externals — culture, social background, the time periods in which they lived, and even personality. Although his description is about one specific holy person, nevertheless it gives a very vivid sense to me of what it is like to be in the presence of someone who is very holy. He says that a saint is one who:

“... is at peace in himself in such a

way as to be peace for ... his brethren. . . he pours out strength and comfort. In his presence one feels boundless peace and security. Near him everything is filled with light. Uncertainties vanish; one begins to love Christ, and to love life. . . He has a treasure of inexpressible joy hidden in an earthen vessel . . . And this joy overflows and spreads all around him, filling his surroundings with its fragrance. . . His presence or the memory of him, the feeling that he is near, or simply that he exists, of itself conveys something other, something uncreated, tranquil. . . It is something which renews man, calms his nerves, extinguishes his anger, enlightens his mind, gives wings to his hope and prepares him

for a struggle that gives quiet and peace to a whole people. . . this light which shines out from [him] . . . helps everyone to find his own true self. It helps everyone to love his own life, leading him forward in the light which knows no evening. . . He does not frighten men with his ascetic exploits, but brings them peace by sharing with them the love of God in which he lives night and day. . . He does not interfere harshly. He does not impose himself . . . he shows you how your true self should function according to its nature. He leaves you free.”¹

¹ Archimandrite Vasileios, *Hymn of Entry*, trans. Elizabeth Biere (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), pp. 126-130.



This kind of life-giving, transfigured life in Christ is, of course, what we are all called to, and it is important to keep this reality of holiness in mind when we read the Saints' Lives. For these Lives are each a living witness to the great love, joy, peace and other gifts of the Spirit that the Saints not only have but also are able to share with those around them.

What is appropriate for us to expect to get out of the Lives of the Saints — when we read or hear about them? St. John Climacus (in the 7th century) talks about this, saying first of all that it “is most unreasonable” to be depressed, or despair about yourself, when you read about how extraordinarily virtuous the Saints were — and are. We should never let ourselves feel weighed down, thinking “what they did is so far from anything I am able to do — I am hopeless, I can't even begin to live a holy life,” etc. This is obviously most unhelpful! As St. John goes on to indicate, this results from an improper way of reading the Lives — from a misunderstanding of what we are to get out of these Lives, and from forgetting that, as the Saints always emphasize themselves, they were enabled to do everything only by God's grace. For he says that “on the contrary, they [the Saints' Lives] supremely teach you one of two things: either they rouse you to emulation by their holy courage, or they lead you by way of thrice holy *humility to deep self-contempt* [i.e., remorse for one's sinfulness] and realization of your inherent weakness.”²

Why does he say it is good for us to realize our “inherent weakness”? For one thing, so that we realize our complete dependence on God and His mercy, and our need to strive all the more in our spiritual life.

So as we talk about these Saints today, let us all try to have one or both of these responses — to be inspired to emulate them, and/or to be led by their exceptional efforts and virtues to realize our own weaknesses, and how far we have yet to go on the spiritual path. Thus may we take a step further on the path of humility — which is often considered the greatest virtue, along with love.

We should notice, though, that St.

² St. John of the Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Fr. Lazarus Moore (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1978), Step 26, 126, p. 161 (my emphasis).

John Climacus does not say we should try to emulate the specifics, the *exact details* of their lives. Sometimes people mistakenly hope to find a kind of “one size fits all” spiritual program in the Lives of the Saints. With such an idea in mind, I may think that if a certain saint prayed this many hours, or did so many prostrations a day, or never ate meat, or gave away all his or her money, etc. — then I must start doing all these exact same things if I want to be holy, too.

Or some may think the opposite: “Well, if you have to pray that many hours, and do that many prostrations, and give away all your money, etc., there's no way I could ever become a saint, so why should I bother trying?!” Obviously, both of these views are mistaken.

Each person is unique and has a unique path in his or her own spiritual life. So we don't read or listen to these Lives in order to work out the precise details of our own spiritual lives, but rather, to be inspired by their lives to find our own way — through God's grace, and with the help of our confessors and the many other helps the Church offers us.

Thus when we look at the married Saints' Lives in order to be inspired, we should look more for *general principles* of spiritual life — things that are important for every person in every time — and seek to apply to our own lives — with God's grace, and hopefully with spiritual direction from a confessor or spiritual father. We should look for general ways that we as married people can learn to open our hearts more and more to “cooperate with God,” to fulfill His purposes in our lives — ways that we can learn to help make our lives as married people a true witness, or *martyria*, to Christ. The Orthodox marriage service presupposes this, with its emphasis on martyr saints and on the marriage crowns which are, in part, crowns of martyrdom.

Now in this talk we will specifically explore just two principles of godly married life, primarily by looking at how they are lived out in the lives of two very different holy women — one, a canonized saint from 16th century Russia, St. Julianna Lazarevskaya; the other, a holy Native Alaskan woman from late 20th century America — Matushka Olga

Arsramqu Michael. It seems especially fitting to speak of her today, since this is St. Herman of Alaska's day, and a miraculous healing took place in Mat. Olga's life through St. Herman's intercessions.

Externally, the lives of these two women were very different. Not only did they live in such different times (the 16th and 20th centuries) and places (Russia and Alaska), but St. Julianna was from a wealthy family, of the lesser nobility, and thus she had a lifestyle with many material comforts, many servants for the hard cleaning, etc.; while Mat. Olga was from a much poorer and humbler background, having to do all her own hard physical work such as carrying water from the village well to use to scrub floors, doing laundry by hand, etc.

However, there are some interesting similarities between the two women, even on an external level. Both had many children — St. Julianna gave birth to thirteen children, seven of whom lived to adulthood; and Mat. Olga had six children who lived to be adults. Both had husbands whose work required them to travel and be away from home for long periods of time — St. Julianna's husband was sometimes away for more than a year at a time in his service to the Tsar; while Mat. Olga's husband had to serve twelve parishes in various parts of Alaska, so he often had to be away visiting them. Also, both women were excellent seamstresses and used this talent in similar ways, as we will see shortly. Both were highly regarded by a large number of people as being exceptionally pious — even holy — during their lifetimes (we'll look at some of the reasons soon); and both had miracles happen at their deaths.

St. Julianna foreknew the time of her passing from this life, and called her spiritual father to bring her holy communion on the day of her death. She also called all her family, servants, and those in the nearby village to be with her by her deathbed, “where her son says that ‘she taught them about love, about prayer, about almsgiving, and other virtuous works.’ She kissed all the people who were present, and offering them peace and forgiveness, she lay down,

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made the sign of the cross three times, wound her prayer beads around her hand, and spoke her last words — “Glory to God for all” [these also were St. John Chrysostom’s last words], and, “Into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Amen.”

“Then she gave up her soul into the hands of God, whom she had loved since she was a young child; and at that moment everyone saw a golden crown [of light] around her head, ‘and all the house was filled with fragrance.’ Later that night she appeared to one of her servants and asked to be buried next to her husband in the other village.”³ This was one way of showing honor towards her marriage and her husband. Years later, in digging a grave for one of her sons next to hers, her son says they came upon her relics, bubbling with sweetsmelling myrrh, and that this is why he wrote down her life. Also, later on, miracles were done through her intercessions.

Mat. Olga, near the end of her life, became so ill she was bedridden. Doctors confirmed that she had terminal cancer, and that there was nothing they could do for it. Two of her daughters then went to Kodiak to offer prayers for her at St. Herman of Alaska’s relics. When they got home, she was out of bed hauling water from the well for cleaning! She remained in a normal good state for about a year, then began weakening again. Realizing that her end was near, she prepared her family, partly by teaching them how to do the many things she had always done for them, and telling them how to distribute her few material possessions. She also had her wedding dress cleaned so that she could be buried in it (an indication of how much she honored her marriage).

She died in November, a time when usually everything is already quite frozen where she lived in Alaska. But the night before her funeral, a strong southerly wind blew, bringing in a warm front that melted all the snow and ice on the rivers, so that many from neighboring villages could come by boat to her funeral — normally an impossibility at that

time of year. She was so well loved that hundreds of people came for the funeral on that “extraordinary spring-like day.” They witnessed what Fr. Michael Oleksa describes in his book, *Orthodox Alaska*:

“Upon exiting the church, the procession was joined by a flock of birds, although by that time of year, all birds have long since flown south. The birds circled overhead, and accompanied the coffin to the grave site. The usually frozen soil was easy to dig, because of the unprecedented thaw. That night, after the memorial meal, the [cold] wind began to blow again, the ground refroze, ice covered the river, winter returned. It was as if the earth itself had opened to receive this woman.”⁴

Some years after Mat. Olga’s repose, about two years ago, a woman in New York State, who was not Orthodox at the time, but had been looking for a deeper spiritual life and had some Orthodox friends and was getting to know Orthodoxy a little, had an extraordinary experience which I will briefly summarize for you. This woman had experienced some very frightening, bad things as a child. She had been abused, and needed deep healing; and she had been advised to ask the Mother of God for help. One day, as this woman was deep in prayer and definitely awake, she gradually became aware of being in the woods, even smelling “a fresh garden smell.” Then “a wave of tenderness” came over her, she said later, and she became aware of the Theotokos, who was accompanied by someone else who followed closely behind her. She said that Our Lady looked just like she does in the icons, only more “natural looking and brighter.” Then the Mother of God “stepped aside and gestured to a short, wise looking woman.” The woman asked, “Who are you?” And the Theotokos answered her: “This is St. Olga.”

Then Mat. Olga beckoned for the woman to follow her. They walked a long way until they came to a place with very few trees. Here the woman perfectly described the Alaskan tundra plains which she had never seen and had no knowledge of. She also described a kind of hut that Mother Olga took her to which ex-

actly matches the ancient houses the Alaskans built before they had contact with Europeans. Again, she had no knowledge at all of such things — which confirms the truthfulness of the vision.

Mother Olga helped her in various ways, and then she said that as they were drinking some tea in this little house, “Mother Olga gradually became the light in the room. Her face looked like there was a strong light bulb, or the sun shining under her skin. But I think the whole of her glowed; I was just so connected to her loving gaze that I didn’t pay much attention to anything else. . . . She seemed to pour tenderness into me through her eyes. This wasn’t scary, even though, at that time, I didn’t know about people who literally shone with the love of God. (It made more sense after I read about St. Seraphim.) I know now that some very deep wounds were being healed at that time. She gave me back my own life which had been stolen, a life that is now defined by the beauty and love of God for me, the restored work of His Hands.

“After some time I felt I was filled with wellness, and a sense of quiet entered my soul, as if my soul had been crying like a grief-stricken, abandoned infant and now had finally been comforted. Even now as I write to you, the miracle of the peacefulness, and also the zest for life that wellness has brought, causes me to cry with joy and awe.”

We can note here how many phrases in this account are echoed in Archimandrite Vasileios’s description of a saint — how the holy person fills others with great peace and joy, gives them back their lives, fills them with a love for life, helps them to be their true selves, etc.

After this experience, the woman who was healed asked her counselor for an icon of St. Olga. Being shown one of the Russian princess, she said that was not the right person. Eventually they figured out it must be Mat. Olga from Alaska, who is briefly described in Fr. Michael Oleksa’s book as an example of deep native Alaskan piety.⁵ When Mat. Olga’s children read the letter telling this woman’s experience — which the woman wrote to them hoping they would send her a photograph — they were

³ David and Mary Ford, *Marriage As a Path to Holiness: Lives of Married Saints* (S. Canaan, Pa.: St. Athanasius Press, 1994), p. 101.

⁴ Fr. Michael Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992), p. 205.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205.

moved to tears. And they said that not only did they smell a very sweet smelling incense kind of smell when they read the account of the vision (though there was no natural source for such a smell), but even a visitor just then walking into the house remarked about the wonderful sweet incense smell. Not surprisingly, the woman who was healed became Orthodox.⁶

There is much we can learn from these two holy women. But there are two main general principles I want to point out today — which are very clear in their lives, and really in all married saints' lives. The first is service to others, which is a crucial part of always striving to obey the Gospel commandments. It is important to keep in mind that these commandments are not just rules — like the speed limit — but they are facts about the *way reality works*, told to us by the One Who created the universe. And they are given out of love, in order to help us be truly well, whole, and full of life. They are more like a prescription for health from the only infallible Doctor. They reflect an understanding of our true selves made in the image and likeness of God, and not simply the tendencies of our fallen nature. In fact they provide us with the only path to wholeness and true health.

St. Julianna's son, who wrote her life, says that from the age of twelve, when she had to go and live with her aunt, she rarely got to go to Church, or to hear any teachings about salvation, but "she learned about the faith by diligently following the Gospel commandments."⁷ She knew that in living them we come to see the true nature of reality, and to find and fulfill our true selves.

Christ especially emphasizes to His disciples in St. John's Gospel (ch. 15) that if they love Him and want to be in communion with Him — and being in communion with Christ is the only way to be whole/holy (these words have the same root in English) — they must keep His commandments. He says in John 15:12-13, "This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this,

that a man lay down his life for his friends." This can be done by literally dying for others, as Christ, and many martyrs following Him, did. Or it can be done through serving others — giving your life in that sense. Thus it is not surprising that St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, a 19th century Russian saint, says — in agreement with many, or really all, the other saints — that the love of our neighbor is the foundation for the love of God. The two are inseparably linked. This is also crystal clear in, for example, the First Epistle of St. John (for instance, 4:20). Thus, St. Ignatius advises:

"Direct all your attention to the acquisition of love for your neighbor as the basis of your life . . . Love your neighbor according to the dictates of the commandments of the Gospel, not . . . according to the dictates and impulses of your [fallen] heart. . . . Love your neighbor in the following way: do not get angry with him and do not bear resentment or a grudge against him. Do not allow yourself to say to your neighbor any reproachful, abusive, sarcastic or caustic words. Maintain your peace with him as far as possible. Humble yourself in his presence. . . . Pay good for evil. Pray for those who cause you various offenses, wrongs, temptations, persecutions."⁸

Starets Macarius, a 19th century Russian holy elder, writes similarly to a spiritual child who has written to him about her long prayer rule and much spiritual reading. This is all very good, he says, but "remember that love of the neighbor is the first work you must strive for. And you do not even have to leave your house to find that neighbor: your husband is that neighbor; your mother is that neighbor; and so are your children."⁹

Both these holy women we are focusing on today gave their lives — not in a physical sense, but in terms of loving service to others — to their families, their neighbors, and beyond. Neither had any known grand talents or abilities, nor positions of great influence, yet both through their simple offerings deeply touched the lives of hundreds of people. I mentioned that both were excellent

seamstresses, and it is interesting that both used this talent as a main way to help others. St. Julianna, even when she was young, would sew and embroider beautiful things for widows, orphans and those who were ill. Later, as a married woman, she would secretly sell the things she made; then she would give the money to the poor, or to help churches in various ways. No one, except one trusted servant, knew about this almsgiving. She became well-known to many for her generous almsgiving during several famines in her area. She discovered how to make a delicious and nutritious bread from the bark of trees, and she and those servants who chose to stay with her during these difficult times made this bread and gave it away to anyone who came. For many people, including her own household, this was virtually the only thing they had to eat, and so this is what kept them alive.

Similarly, Matushka Olga was very good at sewing; she was especially adept at making the traditional Native Alaskan outer garments and vestments. Fr. Michael Oleska writes that "she was constantly sewing or knitting socks or fur underwear for others [as well as for her own children]. Hardly a friend or neighbor was without something Matushka had made for them. Parishes hundreds of miles away received unsolicited gifts, traditional Eskimo winter boots [which were quite valuable] to sell or raffle for their building fund. All the clergy of the deanery wore gloves or woolen socks Arsamqu had made for them."¹⁰

Of course, thankfully you don't have to be a good seamstress, or a good baker, to help others, or to become holy — no doubt many women saints were terrible seamstresses — so there is lots of hope for those women like me who can't sew. But the point is that these women used to the full the simple skills and talents they were given to help their neighbors out of love for God. And this is what can be inspiring for those who sew and for those who don't. Everyone can do something — have the energy to clean, help with a summer camp, visit the sick or shut-ins, pray for those in need. Some elders in Greece even set up a prayer

⁶ This account is taken from an unpublished report written by Fr. Michael Oleska, Dean of St. Herman's Seminary in Kodiak, Alaska; it was distributed to those gathered for the Sunday of Orthodox Vespers Service held at St. Nicholas Church, Bethlehem, Pa., in March of 1997.

⁷ Ford, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

⁸ St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *The Anas: An Offering to Contemporary Monasticism*, trans. Fr. Lazarus Moore (Jordaniville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983), pp. 61-62.

⁹ Macarius, *Starets of Optino, Russian Letters of Spiritual Direction, 1834-1860*, trans. Julia de Beauvoir (Crestwood, N.Y.: Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), p. 91.

¹⁰ Oleska, *Orthodox Alaska*, p. 203.

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schedule with their spiritual children, asking them to pray for specific people and needs. We shouldn't minimize what we have to offer, because what matters is not what particular talent or ability we have, but our willingness to use it to help others.

One of the important Gospel commandments is about almsgiving — as in Matt. 6:1 and following. Here Christ speaks about the spirit in which to give alms — not if you give alms, but “when you give alms” (my emphasis). In other words, Christ completely assumes that his disciples will practice almsgiving, and almsgiving and hospitality are two virtues particularly associated with the married Christian life. This is especially so of almsgiving, in part because presumably married people have more material goods and/or more opportunities to give to others than do the monastics. It has even been said that “almsgiving is the particular characteristic of the lives of the married Saints.”¹¹ It is interesting that St. Julianna's father, Justin, is described in her life simply as “pious and charitable,” and her mother, Stephanida, as one who “loved God and the poor.”¹² So their almsgiving was one of their most important characteristics, along with their piety.

St. John Chrysostom, in his Homily XIV on I Timothy, speaks about the importance of true Christian almsgiving and hospitality: “Observe, the hospitality here spoken of is not merely a friendly reception, but one given with zeal and alacrity, with readiness, and going about it as if one were receiving Christ Himself. . . . And if thou givest to the poor, disdain not thyself to give it, for it is not to the poor that it is given, but to Christ; and who is so wretched as to disdain to stretch out his own hand to Christ?”¹³ In fact, giving alms is one of his favorite themes in his sermons. St. John declares elsewhere that “almsgiving is the mother of love . . . greater than all miracles.”¹⁴

¹¹ Monk Moses, *Married Saints of the Church*, trans. Rysaspore-Nuns Marianna Reed and Maria Simonson (Wildwood, Cal.: St. Xenia Skete, 1991), p. vii.

¹² Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹³ St. John Chrysostom, Homily XIV on I Timothy, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), first series, vol. XIII, pp. 454-455.

¹⁴ St. John Chrysostom, Homily VI on Titus, NPNF 1, vol. XIII, p. 542.

In general, he describes it as the greatest art, as leading us to heaven, as cleansing our sins! On one occasion, he made the very practical point that if you don't feed Christ in this life, at least you could leave him something in your will!¹⁵ — by leaving money, etc., to those in need, or to the Church to give to those in need, or for other worthy projects.

The Saints also emphasize that it is important to give alms in the right spirit — gladly, “with eagerness according to your ability, of deliberate choice, giving as freely as if you were receiving.”¹⁶ This is really important, especially for women or men who tend to be “overgivers” in an *unhealthy* way. If we give in the right spirit, this brings us closer to Christ and we feel enriched, while “overgiving” can lead to bitterness, resentfulness, and other negative, destructive passions. If you have this temptation, it may be important to say “no” at times, and to try to do what you can really do wholeheartedly and gladly. Still, it is important to give — even if it is very little — and to pray that God will increase what you can give gladly.

Sergei Fudel (of twentieth century Russia), in his wonderful book *Light in the Darkness*, makes these helpful remarks: “For Christians the feat (*podvig*) of living is unavoidably linked to some kind of suffering within the measure of their strength. [However,] the suffering of Christians is similar to birth pains; it is a painful process, [but one] bringing the sufferer to a joyful end (John 16:21).”

“This is a test of our Christianity: are we giving birth to that child of joy? For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so in comfort too” (2 Cor. 1:5).

“It is always a dangerous symptom when we begin to complain, when we become embittered and grumble at every pretext. If not joyful, we should be at least good-humored; and if not good-humored, we should at least have a sense of humor in regard to our troubles, temptations and battles.”¹⁷

Many have pointed out that by giv-

¹⁵ St. John Chrysostom, Homily XVIII on Romans, NPNF 1, vol. XI, p. 485.

¹⁶ St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Discourses and Sayings*, trans. Eric P. Wheeler (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1977), p. 208.

¹⁷ Sergei Fudel, *Light in the Darkness*, trans. Sophia Koulomzin (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), p. 73.

ing alms, we actually **receive more benefit** than the person who receives the alms, because it is of so much help spiritually to give. One early writing (The Shepherd of Hermas, second century) even compares the rich to vines being held up by the prayers of the poor who are like oak trees.¹⁸ An excellent practice, also recommended in The Shepherd of Hermas and throughout the Tradition, is to eat cheaper food during the fasting seasons, figure out the difference between what you would normally have spent on food (for the week or month) and the cost of the cheaper fasting foods, and give this difference to the poor, or to those in need — and of course give more if you can.¹⁹ This is very good to do during the major fasts such as the Advent Fast which is coming up. Christ also completely assumes that His disciples will fast. In the commandments He gives concerning fasting — also in Matt. 6 — Christ says: “When you fast” (my emphasis), not if you fast, indicating that it is not an option we can choose or reject, depending on our mood.

Many Saints emphasize that for our fast to be a proper one, one approved by God, it must involve much more than merely refraining from certain foods. We should try to refrain from seeing, hearing, speaking, etc., anything but good. St. John Chrysostom asks, “What does it profit us if we abstain from birds and fishes, and yet bite and devour our brethren?” — i.e., by backbiting and saying bad things about them.²⁰ And again, the Saints stress that we should especially practice almsgiving while we are fasting. St. John Chrysostom even goes so far as to say that if you don't give alms when you fast, you are not really fasting at all!²¹

The second important general principle we can learn from the lives of St. Julianna and Mat. Olga is that while on the one hand their lives were full of self-sacrifice for others — a kind of voluntary martyrdom, giving of themselves,

¹⁸ The Pastor of Hermas, trans. F. Crombie, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. St. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), vol. II, p. 32; also in Fr. Jack Sparks, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978), pp. 207-208.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 34; Sparks, p. 213.

²⁰ Homily III Concerning the Statutes, NPNF 1, vol. IX, p. 359 (modified translation).

²¹ Homily LXXVII on St. Matthew, NPNF 1, vol. X, p. 468.

their time, and talents in many ways — on the other hand, they were also very careful to cleanse and nurture their own souls. It is crucial that each of us find the balance between these two things — self-sacrifice for others, and nurturing one's own soul — while we endeavor to do both. We must find what truly nourishes and builds us up and make that a priority in our lives. Even Christ took time out away from others for private prayer.

So, how did these two holy women nurture their souls? What we see commonly in the married Saints' Lives is that in addition to attending Church, and participating in the sacraments of confession and communion when possible, striving to obey the Gospel commandments, receiving advice from those more experienced in the spiritual life when possible, reading Scripture and Saints' Lives, etc. — we see that they nurtured their own souls especially through prayer. And evidently they understood that all of life can be a liturgical act, a sort of prayer, if everything is done in the proper spirit. As Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 200) expresses it, those who are married and living in the world "should confess the Lord in [their] . . . whole life, possessing piety in the soul, and extending self-control [sophron] to the body."²² And in more recent times, a well-known holy elder "was asked by a married man: 'How can I, living in the world, dwell in the presence of God?' The Elder answered: 'Do everything as one cooperating in God's work.'²³

Now let's look a little more at prayer. Of course, prayer must play a central role in our lives if we wish to grow spiritually — to nurture our own souls — since it is one of our basic means of communion with, as well as communication with, God. St. Julianna's son describes something of her very intense, personal prayer life. He says:

"From childhood the blessed Julianna had been accustomed to pray to God for a long time every evening and to make a hundred or more prostrations and only then give rise to sleep; similarly on rising from sleep every morning she would

pray much to God; she showed her husband to do the same, for, as the great apostle Paul said, 'There is no knowing whether thou, the wife, wilt save thy husband' (cf. I Cor 7:16); he says the same to the husband too."²⁴

Starets Macarius of Optina, in a letter to one of his spiritual children, brings another important point to our attention: "The joint prayer of husband and wife is a great force. That may be one of the reasons why the enemy [the Devil] is trying to get both of you to break this excellent habit. This may be one more temptation which God permits so that

The joint prayer of husband and wife is a great force.

you should learn to overcome it, and come out of the testing stronger than before! Remember that, under all circumstances, humility is your surest weapon."²⁵ For those who are married, many recommend praying together daily as a couple (if only for two minutes each day!), and as a family, as well as having one's own private prayer time.

St. Gregory Palamas (14th century Greece), who saw the exceptional gifts of prayer which his father (a layman) had, says: "let no one think, my brother Christians, that it is the duty only of priests and monks to pray without ceasing, and not of laymen. No, no! It is the duty of all of us Christians to remain always in prayer." He then quotes St. Paul (I Thess. 5:17 — "Pray without ceasing"); the prophet David (Psalm 15:8, LXX — "I foresaw the Lord always before my face"); and St. Gregory the Theologian (who "teaches all Christians to say God's name in prayer more often than to breathe").²⁶ Of course, all the Saints realize and teach that such unceasing prayer is ultimately a gift, which one generally must be prepared over a long period of time to receive. It is a gift that is not easily attained, but only after much effort and out of fervent love for God.

²² Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²³ Starets Macarius, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

²⁴ E. Kadlubovsky and G.E.H. Palmer, eds. *Early Fathers from the Philokalia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p. 412; cf. Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

Most of us are probably in a place where we need some reminders of what little steps we can take to start going up this ladder of unceasing prayer! So I will give a few we have found helpful. In our own time, a contemporary elder on Mt. Athos was once asked by a professor: "How can we lay people pray the Jesus prayer? We haven't got the time." 'Don't say you haven't got the time,' the elder replied. 'What is required is the proper disposition. Take, for example, when you get up in the morning: say "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me"; when you wash, the same; when you sit down for breakfast, the same; when you get into your car to go to work, the same. Do you really not have time?'"²⁷ The emphasis is on doing a little bit, that which you really can do. It is very realistic.

—Dr. Mary Ford
To be continued

²⁷ Hieromonk Alexander (Goltzin), *The Living Witness of the Holy Mountain (S. Caucasus, Pa.)*: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1996), p. 148 (slightly adapted).

Called to Serve

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in a renewed devotion to the Lord. In my life, Father Joseph showed me that this is possible. Let your light shine and let your life be an example to others; let others know that all is possible when you put your trust in the Lord.

I want to thank Archbishop HERMAN who inspired me and set me correctly on this path. I will always be grateful that he has given me the opportunity to serve the Lord and His Holy Church through this great calling. I want to thank my family, especially my wife, Matushka Mary Ann, who was tremendously patient and understanding throughout, especially when I would spend weeks writing papers. I want to thank Father Pavel Soucek who also inspired me through his years of experience, his understanding and his love. And I want to thank my parish, my family at Holy Trinity, for always supporting and encouraging me. My prayer is that I will be able to give back all the love that you have given to me and my family over the years, plus some.

—Deacon Christopher Rowe

²² Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*. II. xxiii, ANF, vol. II, p. 378.

²³ Sr. Magdalen, *Children in the Church Today*, (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), p. 13.

Commentary on the First Epistle of Saint John the Theologian

by Saint Justin (Popovich)

Conclusion - Part IX



These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (5:13)

The most important thing is to know that to believe in Christ signifies having life eternal. This is the first and principal knowledge for each Christian: I believe and for this I have eternal life. I have life eternal because I believe. From this knowledge are born absence of fear and confession of faith as well as receptiveness to every sacrifice for Christ and the capacity to bear and to suffer joyously for Christ. It is this knowledge which becomes the principal guide, and even the highest guiding and moral principle for Christians. It is this knowledge which furnishes the norm and the rule in all and in all things. The Christian knows and feels that his supreme preoccupation is to fan in himself the flame of *eternal life* with every feeling, with every thought, with every gesture and with every act — and for him, this constitutes an unremitting feat. He ceaselessly feels the evangelic virtues, he constantly transforms himself into an ever-new, yet ever more new man, ever-better and yet ever more better. His eyes are ceaselessly fixed upon the One who founded and fulfilled our faith, upon the Lord Jesus and upon the saints who with zeal work to follow Him (cf. Hebrews 12:1-4). It is then that we have ever in sight this

watchword, this rule of evangelic combat: "Fight the good fight, lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art also called" (I Timothy 6:12). You are a Christian — your vocation is to acquire *eternal life*, to fight day and night for eternal life; for this, you must bear every torment, every burden, every exploit with joy: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Corinthians 4:17), to us who gaze upon eternity and live eternity — for this is our principal goal: *life eternal* (cf. II Corinthians 4:18).

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. (5:14)

Man's true freedom lies in the freedom of God. This means that when it is found entirely in this freedom of God, then it is truly infinite, salutary, and to-

tally beneficial. Its limits are: "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt . . . Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39,42). But what is God's will towards us men? — it is that by faith in the Son of God we might acquire eternal life. This divine will is completely and perfectly expressed in the God-man Christ, in His Gospel and in His plan of salvation (Ephesians 1:9-10), and this is why our freedom lies in this: that we *pray* to ask for that which is of Christ and of the Gospel — and we will receive it from God. For to *pray* God so as to ask for that which is not evangelic, expecting Him to gratify us, would not be an act of freedom — it would be impudence, a blind obedience to sin. Ultimately, this would mean that we are seeking to make of God our collaborator in sin, that we are seeking to drag Him along in our love of sin. The reason why many of our prayers are not fulfilled by the Lord, our all-blessed and omniscient Lord, is that they are not *according to his will*. The condition for Him to fulfill our requests is that they be *according to his will*. One could lay down this rule: ask that which is according to God's will and you will receive it. Now, it is that which flows from the Gospel that is according to God's will, and it is thus that life and movement in the limitless Good of God, are secured for man's freedom; a life and movement in the limitless Truth of God, in the limitless Righteousness of God — in a word: in all the divine infinities. This is the most perfect and

sweetest way. All the rest is, directly or indirectly, slavery to the demon, to sin and to death, to the devil and to evil.

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. (5:15)

We know that He hears us, and we know it by experience: our prayers acceptable to God are our most conscious and most solid conviction — for therein is neither hesitation, nor ambiguity, nor doubt. “The man who doubts must not imagine that he will receive any thing from God” (cf. James 1:6-7). We fulfill the will of God and it is for this that He fulfills ours; behold the evangelic rule: fulfill the will of God so that He might fulfill your will. What God desires for you and for others, do you desire it for yourself and for the others, and be assured that God will fulfill each of the petitions which you will have made in prayer. And that which God desires from you and from others, He has told us in the Gospel: if you life by the Gospel, the Lord will fulfill your wishes.

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. (5:16)

What is evangelic is to have a desire for the salvation of everyone and to work in this direction; this is the desire of Christ for everyone, but it must also be our own desire; this means to desire neither sin nor that which is of sin for anyone, but always to desire the Good and all that leads to the Good; to desire neither death nor that which is mortal for anyone, but always to desire immortality and that which is immortal; to desire neither the devil nor that which is of the devil for anyone, but always to desire Christ and all that is of Christ. Those men who love sin desire death for themselves; if someone has been smitten without return with his sins, he has already killed himself, he has already committed his

suicide; if someone desires another to sin, he desires death for him — for sin is born of death (James 1:15). There are two types of sin: *sin not unto death and sin unto death. Sin which is not unto death* is that sin of which man repents. Every sin introduces into the soul a beginning of death; through repentance, man banishes sin from himself, chases away death, resurrects his soul from the dead.

Repentance is not only a second baptism, it is also the first resurrection — for it is the resurrection of the soul from among the dead. Repentance shatters the sepulcher of the soul, kills spiritual death and introduces man into eternal life. Whatever may be the sin of a man, let him repent and he will rise from among the dead: “He was dead and is now alive; he was lost and is now found” (Luke 16:24). Hence every sin for which one repents is a *sin not unto death* — even were one to commit it “seven times a day,” if “seven times a day” the one who committed the sin came to say: “I repent” (Luke:17:3-4). But every sin without repentance is a *sin unto death*, that is to say that every sin towards which and in which man remains consciously, voluntarily and obstinately, provokes the death of the soul.

For the soul, death is nothing other than separation from God, a deprivation of God — a deprivation of all His divine gifts and of all His divine energies. This is the good news that the Holy Theologian announces to us: *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. Let him pray and he shall give him life:* a man has committed a sin, and for this reason he is dead, he has put himself to death, he has killed himself — if we pray, we can give him repentance, and from repentance the resurrection of the dead: life. Thus is it that repentance and prayer represent victory over death, through which the dead resurrect. This is what happens to each of us, when we pray sincerely, when we repent sincerely.

But for the *sin that is unto death . . . he shall not pray for it. Why? Because this man, by his being, by his entire soul,*

by his whole conscience, by his whole will, has entered into sin and dwells in it, consciously and willingly. He does not wish to renounce it, he does not wish to hate it — it is already “another death,” the one from which one does not resurrect. For such a man, God does not desire, nor does He impose, repentance by force; He does not desire it, He does not will it — and He cannot do such because He is the God of love, and it is by love that He defies, that He lives and exists. It is by love that God created man with freedom in the image of God. If, by force, He imposed His will, His Gospel, His salvation, His Kingdom and Himself, He would annihilate the free will of man — and man would cease to be a man; he would be only an automaton, a machine, a robot. Now God, because He is love, could not do this because it is not in the nature of love: if He did it, it would no longer be love — and in ceasing to be love, God would cease to be God. This is the reason why the Holy Initiate in the mysteries recommends to us not to *pray for the sin which is unto death*. Thus, he gives us divine instruction concerning what one must and what one must not ask of God.

All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. (5:17)

What is unrighteousness? We cannot know this if we do not know what righteousness is. The human race would never have been able to know, in a clear, definite, and exact way, what righteousness is, had not this “divine righteousness” itself been revealed in the person of the God-man, Christ. In Him we have beheld true and complete righteousness, and from Him we have learned what righteousness is. What, then, is righteousness? It is the God-man Christ, and His Gospel. And unrighteousness? It is all that He is not and all that is not of Him; it is all that is not His Gospel and all that is not of His Gospel. This is why faith in Christ is a “ministration of righteousness” (II Corinthians 3:9) and a ministration for righteousness. He who does not serve righteousness serves unrighteousness. Just as all unrighteousness is sin, so also is all sin

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unrighteousness. He who commits unrighteousness is necessarily a sinner, and inversely, the sinner is necessarily a doer of unrighteousness. Only a life according to the Gospel can transform the doer of unrighteousness into a righteous man. It is only with Christ and in Christ that man can himself also become the "righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21). Only the one who — through faith — "is born of Him," only this one, "does righteousness" (I John 2:29). And "the one who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (I John 3:7).

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. (5:18)

We know — this is the glad tiding of the Holy Theologian — *that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* Through the holy mysteries and the holy virtues, the holy divine energies overflow among Christians who are born of God, who keep themselves from sin and do not sin — *and the wicked one toucheth them not* — for he can touch them only through sin. He takes hold of a man through sin, he enters into man through sin, he enslaves man through sin — because sin is a force that emanates from the wicked one, from evil; this is why this force is wicked, diabolical, cunning. Through each sin, the devil instills in man a little of himself, a little of his spirit, little by little, he smuggles himself in. This is why the Christian always remains vigilant against sin: *he keepeth himself.* And while keeping himself from sin, he keeps himself from the scouts behind which advances the leader of the armies of evil himself, and all his black armies with him. How does he *keep himself?* — He keeps himself by the evangelic virtues, by living in them both by day and by night, because it is only in this manner that he can keep himself from dangers in the frightening and unceasing battle "against the principalities, against the dominions, against the

against the rulers of the darkness of this world and against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12) All these warriors of evil, together with their leaders, flee before the holy and divine virtues: *the wicked one touches not the army of Christ. The man who sins not is the one who is born of God and who keeps himself.* One thing comes from God and another from man: to be born of God is a gift of God — but a gift which remains in man only if he keeps himself from sin by living in the holiness of the holy mysteries and the holy virtues.

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. (5:19)

We know that we are of God: this is the permanent knowledge of Christians. All that makes us Christians, that is to say, makes us true men, comes of God. In all things we take our origin from God. Christians know from whence they come, where they are found, and whither they are going; they alone know the true path of the human being — from his beginning to his end. They know that they are of God, they live by God and for God; and they live thus by the Eternal and for the Eternal, they live of life eternal. Because all that is in them is of God, they discern and see clearly the borders between what is of God and what is not of God, between Good and Evil, between righteousness and unrighteousness, between truth and lies, between life and death — between God and the devil. This is why they have the vision and the knowledge of God; this is why they see and know that *the whole world lieth in wickedness [under the dominion of the evil one].* It lieth because sins have struck it down and it does not desire, nor does it want, to lift itself up. It is in this world that Christians live, but it is through the holy forces of the other world that they live therein, keeping themselves from evil and from sin. *The whole world lieth under the dominion of the evil one:* it is drowning in evil, impregnated with evil, submerged under evil. And this world is constituted by men who have voluntarily submitted themselves to sin and to vice.

The feat, the angelic feat, of Chris-

tians stems from this: that the world wherein they live *lieth under the dominion of the evil one* — that is, of hell — and they are victorious over the evil one who reigns over the world without allowing themselves to be transformed into demons. And again: *by the world,* we understand here the divine creation, the earth, men, and all that is on the earth. All this *world* raised up by God has been submerged by the evil one, struck down by the evil one, who oppresses it — under whom it *lies,* as when illness oppresses a very sick man. Therein lies the greatest of torments for the divine creation, and this is why ceaselessly "she groaneth and travaileth" (Romans 8:21), awaiting "the revelation of the sons of God," of those who have freed themselves from the slavery of sin, of evil, of the fall, of death, and of the devil (Romans 8:19-20). Now, the "sons of God" are the Christians: through God they have freed themselves from evil and from sin, and with all their strength they are working to free the world from evil and from the sin which reigns over it and enslaves it.

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. (5:20-21)

In this verse is summed up the entire Gospel of the holy Apostle and the entire proclamation of his glad tidings: *the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding,* and through Him *we have known the true God.* He has given us the strength by which we have become His own, by which we dwell in Him and by which we are in Him with all our being: *in the true God* — and through Him, in eternal life. For He is at once *true God and eternal life.* *We are in Jesus Christ:* this is the true answer of Christians to the question: where are you and where do you find yourselves? — even though we live in a world which *lieth under the dominion of the evil one,* *we are in Jesus Christ* — in the true God and in life eternal. If He had not given us *understand-*

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Freedom and Authority in Christian Ethics

Christian ethics is directly connected with human freedom in two ways: firstly — by *presupposing* human freedom, and secondly — by *leading* the human being to freedom.

It is of course self-evident that the human freedom which is presupposed and the freedom to which ethics leads exist on different levels. To be more precise, one could say that they are two different things. The freedom which Christian ethics presupposes is limited and relative, while the freedom to which ethics leads is absolute and unlimited.

The human being is free. Indeed one remains human for as long as one is free. This freedom, however, is a created freedom of relative choices and not the uncreated freedom of absolute self-determination. It is a freedom which is realized in relation to some external authority. Yet, as long as the relation to authority is maintained, there can be no true freedom.

External authority has, by its very nature, a commanding character. Indeed it is necessary where there is lack of maturity or distortion. The distorted or immature human being cannot progress towards freedom without some form of authority. Yet authority, for its part, cannot be maintained unless it exercises some form of power or external pressure.

Christian ethics presupposes the freedom to choose between good and evil. The immature or alienated human being will make a correct choice in relation to a religious authority. In this way, religion becomes a means of restricting freedom, even if this restriction has a positive or therapeutic quality for human beings.

Christianity, however, places freedom before restriction. And so, Christian life is orientated towards freedom: "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters," writes the Apostle Paul.¹ The orientation towards freedom incurs

casting aside of every external authority.

Christian ethics does not look for a compromise between slavery and freedom, but rather for a transposition from slavery to freedom. Of course, this transposition is neither easy nor simple. It is not even possible as human achievement. Yet, this does not justify any overlooking of the final goal of Christian ethics which is freedom without any external authority. Indeed it must be confessed that Christian ethics often seems repulsive because it appears to ignore or refute its very purpose, namely, freedom. This phenomenon, however, does not arise from the nature of ethics, but from its falsification, or bad representation.

The freedom of the human being in the world presupposes freedom from the necessity of the world. Only by way of freeing oneself from worldly necessity and from the acquisition of one's sovereign place in the world can a human being live freely in the world. How free can one be when one is determined by cosmic necessity? How free can one feel when one is being irrevocably wasted in time and is finally dumped into space?

"The one who is afraid of death," observes St. John Chrysostom, "is a slave, and can undergo anything in order not die."² Only the person who does not fear death is able to live and feel free. People, however, fear death because they are slaves of death. It is beyond their capabilities to free themselves from death and from the fear of death.

Death brings to humanity a tragic brokenness. An eloquent formulation of this truth is found in the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans: "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate... For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me... For I de-

light in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"³

Death makes man a 'lover of self' and egocentric. It separates him from God and from his neighbor. It restricts one within himself. Human freedom is not possible without emancipation from one's self. This is, in any case, how freedom from the world is achieved.

Man's freedom from himself and from the world is achieved through his entry into God's freedom, which is the only absolute freedom. God's freedom is absolute because it specifies by itself the manner of its existence independently of any dependence, necessity or restriction. It is the uncreated freedom which creates out of nothing. The quest for true freedom apart from the freedom of God is condemned from the outset to failure. For this reason, the attachment to any form of freedom which is not connected with the freedom of God will inevitably lead to disappointment.

A kind of freedom which is especially promoted in our times is *political* freedom. Indeed for many, the concept of freedom is almost *identified* with political freedom. The struggles and sacrifices which are made in order to win and maintain freedom of this kind show the importance that is placed upon it.

The Church has never denied the value and importance of political freedom. Her position towards it is much more radical than that of any political or social ideology. Besides, all political and social ideologies which appeared after the spread of Christianity, and especially in our times, were influenced directly or indirectly by the Christian understand-

³ Rom. 7:15-24.

¹ Gal. 5:13

² Homily on the Letter to the Hebrews 4, 4; PG63, A1.

Freedom and Authority

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ing of freedom, even though they were not able to penetrate into its real depths. This is not a paradox, especially when one considers that the Church herself in her institutional form avoids approaching Christian freedom in its real depth and true dimensions.

The human being cannot bear the weight of true freedom. One very easily moderates it or betrays it. One prefers a limited freedom or even surrender to servitude without conditions, so as to feel calm and safe. The Grand Inquisitor in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* bases himself on this very point when he says: "We will convince people that they will only be truly free when they sell their freedom to us... We will even allow them to sin because they are weak, and they will love us for this like little children." It is upon such specifications, that worldly freedom — particularly political freedom — is constructed.

According to Christian teaching, political freedom is first of all freedom from the state itself. In the pre-Christian world, people were subservient to the city or to the state. The Church on the other hand placed man in a direct relationship with God and proclaimed the freedom of his conscience. The refusal of the Christian martyrs to worship Caesar, was at the same time a way of claiming freedom of conscience. Other kinds of freedom which people subsequently laid claim to began essentially with freedom of conscience, which was cultivated within the realm of religious life.

Furthermore, political freedom finds expression through the possibility of choosing the structure and bearers of state power — a possibility which normally degenerates into a tragic irony. One need only consider the degradation of democracy from being a direct representation of the people to being a party autocracy and a leader's 'dictatorship'. In this way the meaning of freedom is falsified and denied.

Political freedom is never a final goal for the faithful: "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help."⁴ The acceptance of political freedom as a final goal inevitably leads to

the 'absolutization' of political power and to the recognition of the state as the highest authority. In this way, however, the human being is destroyed as a person, as well as is his freedom.

True freedom cannot be transformed into a *regime* of this world; it is experienced through the transfiguration and *transcendence* of this world, since it belongs inherently to the Kingdom of God. At the same time, this freedom is offered within the *context* of the world, because the Kingdom of God is present in the world through the Church.

The freedom offered by the Church is not political. Yet without this freedom, even political freedom is not possible in its true sense. The freedom of the Church, with its transcendent perspective, constitutes a substantial obstacle for the self-destruction of political freedom. The attachment of the Church to freedom which has no political interests or ties whatsoever, is a great contribution to political freedom.

The relation of Christian freedom to worldly freedom is not simple. Christian freedom is offered to the world, but the world does not always accept it. Christian freedom is proclaimed by Christians, but in many cases they themselves do not experience it or comprehend it correctly. Indeed it is often presented as being a form of merciless slavery in practice and even in theory. And there is no slavery more merciless than that which is imposed in the name of an all-powerful God, who is often presented as a force in the world which oppressively determines everything. Yet Christ does not impose any external authority. No one and nothing in the world has the right to impose their will onto a human being or to enforce a particular choice, either in time or in eternity.⁵

For the true Christian, there is no external authority. The journey that leads to the condition in which there is no external authority is not only human, but *divine* and human. Human beings can only be perfected in relation to God in whose image they were made.

The human being is the created repetition of the uncreated Creator. Human freedom is not different from the free-

dom of God. The only difference with respect to divine freedom is that human freedom does not exist in its own essence, but in its *participation* in divine freedom. This is why the existence of human freedom presupposes communion with God: "He formed the human person free in the beginning and a ruler of self, keeping only the command of the Law, rich in the pleasure of paradise... Freedom and wealth were the keeping of the command alone; true poverty and slavery are the transgression of it."⁶

The keeping of the commandments of God is identified with the maintenance of communion with Him. And the transgression of the commandments of God involves a break in communion with Him. With the transgression of the commandments, humanity breaks communion with God and is subjected to decay and death. Man loses the grace of the Holy Spirit which is the source of freedom and becomes enslaved to objective authorities. God is no longer seen as a loving Father because man constructs gods who have control over him. This is how the various religions were created. Religions always contain a form of slavery, because God or the gods are treated as external authorities. At the same time, however, religions can offer the greatest possibilities for freedom within the world, because they transpose the highest reference point of humankind to a transcendent level and therefore leave a broader framework of freedom on a worldly plane.

Christianity is not a religion. It is not a human search for God. It is a revelation. It is a revelation of God towards humanity. This revelation occurs in the form of the perfect human being — Christ. Of course Christianity also has a religious dimension. This, however, is secondary. It is the movement of response given to the revelation in Christ. The essence of Christianity is the revelation in Christ. And the essence of the revelation in Christ is the Resurrection, the liberation from the power of death.

Christianity does not rely on the search for God, but on God's revelation to — and indwelling in — the human being. God becomes man and makes man God. Christianity does not promote ex-

⁴ Cf. Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him As He Is* (Essex, England: Slavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1986), p. 201.

⁶ St. Gregory the Theologian, *Hom.* 14, 25; PG35, 892A.

ternal authorities, but extends an invitation to a spiritual rebirth: "If one is not born of water and the Spirit, it is not possible to enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."⁷

This does not mean that Christianity excludes all authorities. They also have a pedagogical value. The role of Canon Law is understood in this way. Christianity is not antinomian. It does not abolish the law, but it goes beyond it. To be more precise, it abolishes it *by* going beyond it. "For I say unto you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."⁸

When man relies on an external authority, he is crushed and humiliated. Even the Law of God, as an external authority, crushes man and renders death. The justification of death is the condemnation of freedom. It is the ultimate justification of authority. Yet Christ did not come in order to establish a new authority, but rather to free the human being from every kind of dependency. He did not come to teach a new morality within a world of corruption and death, but to bring life and abundance thereof: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."⁹ Thus Christ replaces authority with authentic freedom. He transfers the human being from the level of Adam's to the level of His own freedom — the freedom of the Spirit: "... and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."¹⁰

Participation in this gift of Christ takes place already in this life, but it is fulfilled in the age to come. The freedom of the Holy Spirit is thus already offered in this life, yet *fulfilled* in the life to come. The present life cannot contain the magnitude of absolute freedom: "For there is no perfect freedom in this imperfect age."¹¹ Here there is only a foretaste of true freedom. This is really a foretaste of the kingdom of God. The complete revelation of the kingdom of God will also be a complete revelation of true freedom.

The freedom of God transcends time

⁷ Jn. 3:5-6.

⁸ Mt. 5:20.

⁹ Jn. 10:10.

¹⁰ 1st Cor. 3:17.

¹¹ St. Isaac the Syrian, *The Ascetical Homilies* 52, trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston, 1984), p. 262.

and space. However, man achieves freedom *within* time and space. Space and time are offered to man as the potential for participation in the freedom of God. Man's decisions made within time and space are decisions which cultivate or annul his participation in absolute freedom.

Man's regeneration in Christ is a universal regeneration within the perspective of true freedom. Since true freedom is the only absolute freedom, true human freedom cannot be dependent on any authority. Neither can it be dependent upon divine authority, as is the case with religion. The religious dimension of Christianity should not allow us to forget the nature of the Church, which is the Body of Christ — a communion of deification.

Christian ethics gives consideration to the degrees of spiritual perfection of the faithful, which correspond to the degrees of their progress in freedom. So it is that there are the slaves, the hired and the free. The slaves keep the commands of God out of fear, while the hired servants do so in the hope of gaining a reward. Finally, the free ones keep the commands of God not out of fear and ulterior motives, but out of love and naturally.¹² They keep them because they express their regenerated existence and conscience.

Regeneration in Christ is a 'conforming' to the Son of God. He is the only path of human freedom. "Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."¹³ This is why human freedom has its foundations in faith in Christ, not only in the sense of accepting His divinity, but also in the sense of accepting completely His will.

True freedom cannot depend on the individual will of a corruptible and mortal human being, who is the victim of his own will. Man believes he is free when he satisfies his passions and desires. Yet true freedom presupposes a release from the passions and lowly desires. This is achieved with the abolition of one's individual will. As long as the individual will of corruptible and mortal human beings survives, the power of decay and death remains. It is such power that

¹² Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *Christian Ethics*, 1995 (4th ed.), pp. 216-217 (in Greek).

¹³ Jn. 8:36.

dominates human persons and turns them against themselves.

In this 'un-free' condition, one normally compromises himself with a superficial freedom which is fulfilled when external desires are satisfied without any obstacle. Essentially, however, one is only free when he is able to desire that which he truly wants, or in other words, when there is unity between desire and inward will. The restoration of such unity is not possible without the removal of the division which is caused in people by the reign of death. It is not possible without the conquering of death.

Freedom in Christ transcends any concept of power or external authority. Freedom is not defined by objective descriptions, but is perceived by the spiritual senses. This freedom is not limited by the emancipation of people from any power or external authority, but rather it involves the release from every desire to dominate others or to impose their will upon them. Whoever dominates others is not free. It could even be said that the degree of domination that is imposed on others reveals in fact the extent of the *lack* of freedom on the part of the one who exerts domination. Conversely, the degree of freedom which one *has* is shown in the amount of freedom which that person 'gives'. Tyrants are the most prominent slaves.

Freedom presupposes a release from the deception into which man has fallen. Release from this deception presupposes its verification and renouncement. Yet in order for one to recognize deception and renounce it, one must be humbled. Humility is a presupposition for freedom, just as it is for the keeping of the word of God. The journey towards freedom is carried out with humility and an attachment to the word of God: "If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free."¹⁴ Man longs for the truth. He has the desire to know it, to conquer it and to place it under his control. The truth, however, is not conquered nor is it controlled. Truth is not an object but a person, who is known and who communes with humanity. Truth is God Himself, who is the archetype of the

¹⁴ Jn. 8:31-32.

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Freedom and Authority

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human person. Knowledge of truth is communion and union with God. It is a personal mixing with Him which renews and confirms the iconic nature of man.

Whoever recognizes the truth does not control it nor does he become controlled by it. Furthermore, he who recognizes the truth does not wish to control anything. He is instead *freed* from the bond of every power, because the truth sets him free. Truth sets man free, not the other way round. "Know the truth and the truth will set you free." Knowledge of truth is realized through discipleship in Christ — with the keeping of His commands. The commandments of Christ, which to the immature person seem like restrictive barriers, are in fact means of protecting the freedom which God gives. As St. Mark the Hermit characteristically observes, the commandments of God "guard the conditions of freedom given to us."¹⁵ The struggle to keep the commandments is a struggle for the acquisition of true freedom. More precisely, it is a struggle that makes man more receptive to the gift of freedom. Thus, progress in keeping the commandments is really progress in freedom.

The commandments, as is well known, can be summarized in the double command of love: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all of the Law and the prophets."¹⁶ This means that love and freedom go together. The struggle to keep the commandment of love is a struggle to acquire freedom, just as the experience of love is the experience of freedom.

Love is not only an ethical request, but also an ontological feature of the human person. It exists as an ethical request, in order to be revealed as an ontological feature. The human being is fulfilled as a person by loving as God loves, and when he does not see God as an object but as living within him, i.e., when he embraces the entire world, when all

Adam's race is contained in his being.¹⁷

Human freedom is restricted within the framework of this temporal life. The freedom which Christ gives has beginning nor end, because it is the fruit of divine and uncreated grace. Besides, human freedom stops at the point where the freedom of others begins. Yet the freedom of Christ stops nowhere, since it is not set against others, but rather presupposes their presence. It simultaneously belongs to everyone and to each individually. Others are the presupposition of one's own freedom. Others do not prohibit but *confirm* one's own freedom.

This kind of love is impossible for the man who lives for death. Only Christ, who overcame death, lived and made manifest this universal love. This love can only be experienced when man is freed from the slavery of death and participates in the salvation offered by Christ. This is achieved by keeping the commandments of Christ, especially the 'salvific command'¹⁸ by means of the Divine Eucharist. The Eucharist unifies man, energizes his communion with God and his neighbor, renews the world and offers true freedom.

True freedom is true unity of men with God and with their fellow human beings. It is the communion of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of God dwells and enlightens man with uncreated grace, he then communes with divine nature¹⁹ and becomes partaker of true freedom, i.e., that freedom which unifies and renews the whole creation — the true freedom of the Holy Spirit.

—Georgios I. Mantzaridis

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¹⁷ Cf. Archimandrite Sophrony, op. cit., p. 203.

¹⁸ Prayer of the Anaphora of the Divine Liturgy.

**Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!**

St. Justin Popovich

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ing, we would not have been able to know the *true God*, we would have remained ignorant of God, for only the God-man, Christ, is *true God*. He who does not see this, and does not confess this, is ignorant of God, for it is not a true God and Lord that he knows — since it is not Jesus Christ. And that this One is the *true God*, He has shown us, because not only does He have eternal life, but He Himself is *eternal life* — and He gives it to all those who believe in Him. We recognize the true God in that He Himself is eternal life and that He grants it to all His disciples.

Therein lies the most sure criterion for discerning the true God from false gods: any god that cannot give and assure eternal life for men is a lying god, and whosoever is not in a position to conquer death cannot give eternal life. The God-man is the only One who has conquered death by the Resurrection, and this is why He is *true God and eternal life*. Any other is a false god and a lying god. The recognition, the confession, the propagation of any other God than Christ is nothing more than an ignorance of God, an idolatry. Yea, an idolatry, because all idolatry creates ignorance of God — for the worship of some idol or other is the ignorance of God. From the coarsest fetishism to the most subtle symbolism, everything is the product of idolatry. Idolatry consists in worshipping as God not only stone, wood, animals, planets or statues, but also men, heroes, geniuses, inventors, ideas, passions, culture, civilization, science, philosophy, art — and all that wants to replace the true God and Lord: Jesus Christ. This is why the Son of Thunder, he who thundered forth the truth of the New Testament, concludes his marvelous glad tidings with these words: *Little children, keep yourselves from idols, keep yourselves from idolatry, keep yourselves from the ignorance of God. Amen.*

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Your Diocese
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¹⁵ To Those Who Question Baptism 4; PG65,292A.

¹⁶ Mt. 22:37-40.

A Modern-day Saint And His Disciple Saint Silouan and Father Sophrony

Editor's note: the following talk was presented Oct. 7, 1997 as part of the annual Lecture Series at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

The Register of the Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos reads: "Schema-monk Father SILOUAN. Name in the world — Simeon Ivanovich Antonov. Peasant from the province of Tambov, district of Lebedinsk, village of Shovsk. Born 1866. Arrived Athos 1892. Professed 1896. Schema 1911. Performed his duties of obedience at the mill, at Kalomar, at Old Russicon, and as steward. Died 11/24 September 1938." Such a simple entry to encapsulate the life of such a great saint!

The Saintly Life

He spent 46 years as a simple monk in a community, but during this time (in the words of Father Sophrony) "tireless inner striving gave him a personal experience of Christianity identical with that of many of the early ascetic Fathers."

Orthodox monasticism comprises three degrees — the Novitiate, during which the habit is worn though no vows have been taken; the Lesser Schema, when the postulant pronounces vows which he will renew in a slightly altered form on being invested with the Great Schema of the third and strictest rule. When an Orthodox monk is professed, he is given another name. It was in this manner, then, that the novice Brother Simeon became Father Silouan.

A *staretz* or "elder" (cf. Matthew 15:2 and Mark 7:3), he was a monk whose experience of the spiritual struggle brought wisdom and insight and the ability to guide others. He left behind him some deeply moving meditations, poetic in style and profound in their theological vision.

For the holiness of his life, his ex-



Fr. Michael Dahulich

ample of constant repentance and his spiritual legacy, he was proclaimed a saint by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1988, only fifty years after he fell asleep in the Lord.

His Conversion

The youthful Simeon had been a sinner, to be sure. He drank and caroused; he made love outside of marriage; he nearly killed someone in a brawl. But God granted him a vision to change his way of wild living. One day he dozed off and was in a light sleep, when he dreamed that he saw a snake crawl down his throat! Feeling sick with revulsion, he awoke to hear a voice saying to him, "Just as you found it loathsome to swallow a snake in your dream, so I find your ways ugly to look upon."

"Simeon saw no one. He only heard the voice, extraordinarily sweet and very beautiful; but for all its gentleness, the effect it had on him was revolutionary. He was convinced beyond doubt that he had heard the voice of the Mother of God herself," and to the end of his life he gave thanks to her for coming to lift him from his degradation.

He would say, "Now I see how sorry the Lord and His Mother are for people. Imagine — the Mother of God appear-

ing from the skies to show a young man like me his sins!" From then on, he vowed to devote his entire life to God. His goal was to live on Mount Athos, in constant repentance for his sins. Until he arrived there, his thoughts were always focused on the holy mountain and his sorrow. Even while he was in the army, his friend once reported, while all the soldiers were in the tavern, eating and drinking vodka, listening to music and enjoying themselves, Simeon's mind was "on Mount Athos and at the Last Judgment!"

Quotes From St. Silouan

From scraps of paper, on which he pencil-scratched his thoughts we have a rich collection of his quotes. They provide us with an ample example of spirituality which we can imitate: "... I know that we must always pray, and so I pray without ceasing."

One of his prayers to Heaven was: "Lord, Thou seest that I desire to pray to Thee with a pure mind but the devils will not let me. Instruct me, what must I do to stop them hindering me?" And in his soul he heard, "The proud always suffer from devils." ... "Lord, teach me what I must do that my soul may become more humble." Once more, his heart heard God's answer: "Keep thy mind in hell, and despair not."

One of his conversations provides us this understanding: Tell me, supposing you went to paradise, and there looked down and saw somebody burning in hellfire — would you feel happy?" The hermit with whom Silouan was speaking, replied: "It can't be helped. It would be their own fault." To which the *staretz* answered, "Love could not bear that. We must pray for all." Later on, the holy father would add, "Praying for people is to shed blood."

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Saint Silouan and Father Sophrony

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Rich Insight

Among St. Silouan's other notations we find the following: "What does inner silence mean? It means ceaseless prayer, with the mind dwelling in God. Father John of Kronstadt was always surrounded by people, yet he was more with God than many solitaries. I became steward in an act of obedience and because of the Abbot's blessing I can pray better at my task than I did at the Old Russicon where out of self-will I had asked to go for the sake of inner silence . . . If the soul loves and pities people, prayer cannot be interrupted."

"We believe that true freedom means not sinning, in order to love God and one's "neighbor with our whole heart and our whole strength . . . True freedom means constant dwelling in God."

"How is it possible to keep the mind pure? . . . The Holy Fathers have left us their teaching on the prayer of the mind-in-the-heart. Such prayer preserves the mind, and I see no other means of enabling one to keep God's commandments."

Some Important Distinctions

The starets' teaching makes us aware of some very valuable distinctions: "When the soul prays for the world, she knows better without newspapers how the whole earth is afflicted. She knows what people's needs are and feels pity for them . . . Newspapers don't write about people but about events, and then not the truth. They confuse the mind and, whatever you do, you won't get the truth by reading them; whereas prayer cleanses the mind and gives it a better vision of all things."

"It is one thing to believe in God, and another to know Him."

"No one can know of himself what is Divine love unless the Holy Spirit instructs him, and so we may speak of this love . . . The Lord is good and merciful but we could say naught of this love save what the Scriptures tell, unless the Holy Spirit so instructed us . . ." We can deliberate only in so far as we have experienced the grace of the Holy Spirit."

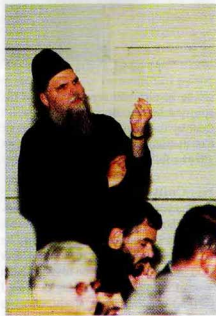
"The Saints speak of that which they have indeed seen and know. They do not speak of what they have not seen."

The Love Of The Lord

How great is God's love for us? This is what the Athonite tells us: "The Lord gave us as feeble children sung church services — we do not yet know how to pray properly but singing helps everyone when it is done in humility. But it is better still for our heart to become the temple of the Lord and our mind His altar."

"The Lord so loved His creature, that man is in the likeness of God."

"If a man sees the presence of the Holy Spirit in his brother, it means that he possesses a great measure of grace



himself; whereas if he hates his brother — it signifies that he himself is in thrall to an evil spirit."

"The Lord so loved man that He gave the Holy Spirit, and in the Holy Spirit man became like unto God. Those who do not believe this, and do not pray to the Saints, have not learned how deeply the Lord loves man and how He has exalted him."

Fathoming the Mystery

In contradiction to a Western worldview in which man thinks he can know every thing, this Eastern Father writes: "With our minds, we cannot come to

know even how the sun is made; and if we beg God to tell us how He made the sun, the answer rings in our soul, 'Humble thyself, and thou shalt know, not only the sun but the Creator of the sun.' But when the soul through the Holy Spirit knows the Lord, then from joy she forgets the whole world and ceases to fret for earthly knowledge."

"It is given to our Orthodox Church through the Holy Spirit to fathom the mysteries of God, and she is strong in the holiness of her thought and her patience."

"One cannot say that God is unjust — that there is injustice in Him — but neither can one say that He is just in our sense of the word. St. Isaac of Syria wrote, 'Do not presume to call God just, for what sort of justice is this — we sinned, yet He gave up His only-begotten Son on the cross?'"

Human Weakness

Lest anyone think that a saint realizes his sanctity, Silouan makes it clear: "At first, because of my lack of experience, I let a dissolute thought enter my heart. I went to my spiritual father and said, 'I have had a lecherous thought.' He replied, 'You must never dwell on such thoughts.' Forty-five years have gone by since then and I have never once accepted such thoughts, never once been angry with anyone, for my soul is always aware of the Lord's love and the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, and I do not dwell on affronts."

"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* . . . The man who has come to know the love of God will say to himself, 'I have not kept this commandment. Though I pray day and night, and strive to practice every virtue, still I have failed in the commandment of love towards God. At rare moments only do I arrive at God's commandment, though at all times my soul longs to abide in it.'"

"O brethren, let us forget the earth and all that therein is. The earth entices us from contemplation of the Holy Trinity, Which our minds cannot apprehend but Which the Saints in heaven behold in the Holy Spirit. We for our part, should continue praying without imaginings . . .

"When the soul in the Holy Spirit

comes to know the Lord, she never ceased to marvel at God's mercy, at His majesty and power, and the Lord Himself, of His grace, gently, like a mother with her beloved child, trains the soul to have good and humble thoughts, giving her to feel His presence and nearness, and the soul in humility contemplates the Lord and has no other thoughts."

Father Sophrony

Archimandrite Sophrony also went to Mount Athos, in 1925, and there, at the Monastery of St. Panteleimon, became a disciple of Staretz Silouan. He listened to his spiritual father's teachings and was guided by his holy life. Like him he taught, "In this world there is nothing more difficult than to be saved" because the first step in progress towards becom-



ing "like God" is "to love one's enemies." Father Sophrony took the writings of his staretz, which were penciled in laborious, unformed characters on old scraps of paper, edited them and published them in many languages. He also wrote his biography.

In Fr. Sophrony's own words: "The present writer spent some fourteen years in this same Monastery. During the Staretz' last years — from about 1931 until the day of his death (11/24 September 1938) it happened that I was the one closest to him. And now I have been urged to pen his life-story — not an easy mission for one with neither gift nor the experience of writing. Nevertheless, I have agreed, profoundly and sincerely

convinced as I am that it is my duty to make known this truly great man."

"All my attention when I was with Staretz Silouan was taken up with his spiritual person, my one aim being my own spiritual good. There was never any idea of eventually writing his biography, and I remained ignorant of so much that would normally have been of interest to the chronicler."

A Living Legacy

"In so far as I can tell, and judging from my contacts with other people, he was the one soul free from all passion whom it has been given to me to encounter on my earthly way. Now when he is no longer with us, we see him as an extraordinary sort of spiritual giant."

"When the Lord lived on earth His humble appearance in the flesh hid from people's eyes His actual Divine majesty. It was only after His Ascension and the coming down of the Holy Spirit that the Divinity of Christ became manifest to the disciples and apostles. Something similar happened to me in regard to Staretz Silouan. In his lifetime he was so simple and accessible that for all my veneration for him, my awareness of his godliness, I still was not altogether conscious of his greatness, and it is only now many years later during which I have met no one like him, that I begin belatedly to appreciate the very real greatness of the man whom God's providence led me to know so intimately."

Orthodoxy in Great Britain today is particularly blessed by the presence of a growing monastic community, with both monks and nuns, at Tolleshunt Knights, Essex (under the Ecumenical Patriarchate), founded by Archimandrite Sophrony. Here a central place is given to the Jesus Prayer. Here the monastery is widely visited by pilgrims from all over the world, seeking *theosis* . . . to live in their lives the words of Saint Paul the Apostle: "It is no longer I who live but Christ Who lives in me, and the life that I live in the flesh I live in the faith of the Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20-21).

The Goal of Everyone

Anyone who draws the conclusion that the central teaching of Saint Silouan

and, in fact, the whole Orthodox Church — *theosis* — deification and union with God — the transfiguration of the body and cosmic regeneration — is remote from the actual experience of ordinary Christians, has entirely misunderstood the Orthodox teaching.

Deification, "becoming like God" is not something reserved for a few select initiates, but something intended for all alike. The Orthodox Church believes that it is the normal goal for every Christian without exception. Certainly we shall only be fully deified on the Last Day, but for each of us the process of divinization must begin here and now in the present life. It is true that in this present life very few indeed attain full mystical union with God. But every true Christian tries to love God and to fulfill His commandments; and so long as we sincerely seek to do that, then however weak our attempts may be and however often we may fall, we are already in some degree deified.

The fact that a person is being deified does not mean that he or she ceases to be conscious of sin. On the contrary, deification always presupposes a *continued act of repentance*. A saint may be well advanced in the way of holiness, yet he or she does not therefore cease to employ the words of the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner." Saint Silouan used to say to himself, "Keep thy mind in hell and despair not." Other Orthodox saints have repeated the words, "All will be saved, and I alone will be condemned." Orthodox theology is a both a theology of glory and of transfiguration, but also a theology of penitence.

Nothing Extraordinary

There is nothing esoteric or extraordinary about the methods which we must follow in order to be deified. If someone asks, "How can I become like God?" the answer "is very simple." In the words of Bishop Kallistos (Ware), ". . . go to Church, receive the Sacraments regularly, pray to God 'in spirit and in truth,' read the Gospels, follow the commandments. The last of these items — 'follow the commandments' — must never be forgotten." Orthodoxy firmly rejects

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Saint Silouan and Father Sophrony

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any kind of mysticism that seeks to dispense with moral rules.

Theosis is not a solitary but a "social" process. Deification means "following the commandments", and these commandments were briefly described by Christ as love of God and love of neighbor. The two forms of love are inseparable. A person can love his neighbor as himself only if he loves God above all; and a person cannot love God if he does not love his fellow man. (1 John 4:20). Thus there is nothing selfish about theosis; for only if he loves his neighbor can a person be deified. "From our neighbor is life, and from our neighbor is death," said St. Anthony of Egypt. "If we win our neighbor we win God, but if we cause our neighbor to stumble we sin against Christ."

Human beings, made in the image of the Trinity, can only realize the divine likeness if they live a common life such as the Blessed Trinity lives; as the three Persons of the God head "dwell" in one another, so we must "dwell" in our fellow human beings, living not for ourselves alone, but for others. "If it were possible for me to find a leper," said one of the Desert Fathers, Agatho, "and to give him my body and to take his, I would gladly do it. For this is perfect love." Such is the true nature of theosis.

Love of God and for our fellow human beings must be practical. Orthodoxy rejects all forms of quietism, all types of love which do not issue in action. Deification, while it includes the heights of mystical experience, has also a very prosaic and down-to-earth aspect. When we think of deification, we must not only think of the hesychasts praying in silence and of St. Seraphim of Sarov with his face transfigured, but we must also think of St. Basil caring for the sick in the hospital at Caesarea, of St. John the Almsgiver helping the poor at Alexandria, of St. Sergius in his filthy clothing, working as a peasant in the kitchen garden to provide the guests of the monastery with food. *These are not two different ways, but one.*

Finally, *theosis presupposes life in the*

Church, life in the Holy Mysteries. Theosis, according to the likeness of the Trinity, involves a common life, and it is only within the fellowship of the Church that this common life of coherence can be properly realized. The Church and her Mysteries are the means appointed by the Lord whereby we may acquire the deifying Holy Spirit and be transformed into the divine likeness.

The Questions Remain

How can the average American relate to the lives of Staretz Silouan and Father Sophrony from atop Mount Athos or in the cloister of the Monastery?

How can we live the life of a spiritual saint in a world that is so dominated by materialism?

How can we strive towards theosis when we are faced by temptations from the world and its demons and dragged down by and down to the level of the world and its values, or rather, the lack thereof?

Things To Remember

In answering these questions, we must always remember:

1. Staretz Silouan and Father Sophrony were human beings like you and me, "working out their own salvation" (Philippians 2:12).

2. Their standards are our standards. There are *not two sets of commandments* or two sets of morality. We are all called to be holy. There is only a difference in degree.

3. Like me, Staretz Silouan had been a sinner. But as we all ought to, he considered himself "first" of all sinners and repented.

4. So too, Father Sophrony was a sinner — for a time, he doubted the truths of the faith; he lived outside of the Church and her Mysteries. He was a non-practicing, nonbeliever who considered himself "first" of all sinners.

5. Like we need to, Brother Simeon readily made a confession of his sins; he heard the saving words of forgiveness from his spiritual father: "You have confessed your sins before God. Know now that they have all been forgiven . . . Now we will make a fresh start . . . Go in peace, and rejoice that the Lord has led you to this haven of salvation."

But, Brother Simeon went to the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon and started on a new ascetic life. We cannot go to the Monastery; so what are we to do?

Bring The Monastery Home

It is true that we cannot all join the Monastery, leave our families, our jobs and our responsibilities in the world. But, we can take the Monastery, its goals and ideals, its purity of faith, and the very spiritual experience of it, into our homes . . . into our daily lives.

Every day — a day of prayer, several times each day — with the community, the whole family, praying together — not just for ourselves, but everyone, even our enemies.

Every Sunday and holyday — a day of liturgical worship — receiving Holy Communion together as a family — having received Holy Confession the night before.

Every day, but at least Sunday and each feastday — a day of reading from the Scripture — perhaps at table like in the Monastery, or in the living room —



together, the whole family, hearing the Word of God, and then discussing it under divine guidance.

Every day, as individuals and as the community of the family — living the commandments, summed up in love of God and love of neighbor — in all that we do, we ask, “What would Jesus want me to do or say or think; how would He want me to be?”

And, finally, when we each of us “misses the mark” or “falls short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), we repent anew of our sins, asking the forgiveness of all our family members in the flesh and in the faith, and ourselves forgiving others, even our enemies. The humility of which St. Silouan speaks, can begin to be found by reading sincerely the Prayers before Holy Communion.

Every Room is a Church

Every room in our home is like the inside of the Monastery:

1. In the family room is our icon corner, where we pray together and read the Scripture together as a community in Christ.

2. In our living room, there is no music or television program, book or magazine, friend or neighbor or visitor and their behavior — that is not compatible with Christ and His teachings.

3. In our kitchen, the same rules for eating and drinking in moderation, and fasting according to the guidelines of the Church, are followed as they are in the monastery.

4. In every bedroom, we practice the virtue of chastity — in marriage as in the celibate life — as in the Monastery, although not in the same degree.

5. In the office, we practice the same honesty in finances, in dealing with people and possessions, as the monks do in the monastery.

6. In the closets and basements of our lives, we clean out the “rubbish” and the “dark secrets” regularly and thoroughly — as in the Monastery — through the mystery of holy confession.

7. In every room of our home, we live as the hymn of the Nativity beckons us: “God is with us!” And each day over the ways of the world we choose with Joshua: “Choose today whom you will serve. As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Real-Life Examples

There are real examples of everyday, ordinary people that prove such a

lifestyle is not only possible but also in actuality attainable. I remember being at a funeral only a few weeks ago at which there were seven priests, a deacon, a subdeacon and a reader together. The person we were praying for and eulogizing was not rich or famous, powerful or influential. She was modest in income, simple in lifestyle, humble in person . . . but great in the eyes of God.

Her name was Anna, and her great love was to come to these very grounds, where she worked, cooking and cleaning for archbishops, bishops, priests, monastics and seminarians. I came to know her as her spiritual father for the past twelve years — she had no TV or radio, newspaper or magazines. When I visited her she was reading either her prayerbook or the Bible, listening to a Russian choir or the Bicentennial chorus, and always praying. In her house, every room had an icon corner, and her bedroom looked like a miniature church. Where did this get her? She became an inspiration to her family — among her children, nieces and nephews and grandchildren — were all those clerics (except the parish pastor and myself) and several matushki. After being diagnosed with cancer, she died quite soon, at home and peacefully, with little suffering — but surrounded by her family, so many of whom are priests. What a beautiful death for a woman who lived a simple, saintly life.

Earlier this year, I witnessed what I call “the making of a saint.” My very dear friend Pani Jeannette had been diagnosed with leukemia. After a valiant battle of several months, she came from the hospital to stay for a time at my house, before going to her own home. There in my rectory, as she lay enduring incredible pain and suffering, I came to feel the most humanly helpless I have ever felt in my life. There was nothing I could do for her — to ease her pain or soothe her suffering or allay her anguish.

Amid her weakened body, though, she found strength — spiritual and physical as well — in the Lord, Who was only a prayer away. Each day and night for the last weeks of her life she prayed with her husband Fr. David. Together they read from the Bible and the lives of the Saints. From his priesthood she partook of the precious Body and Blood of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ and received the anointing of holy unction, both on a daily basis. In essence Pani

Jeannette united every breath of her suffering to Christ. And one Wednesday evening during Lent, after Fr. David had given his wife the Holy Mysteries from the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, in that brief moment that it took him to take the chalice back over to the church, Pani fell asleep in the Lord, encircled in the love of her parents. Such an incredible end to such an incredible life.

Finally, there is the story of little Joshua, the son of my Deacon Peter and his wife Marnie — whose medical condition has baffled doctors after doctors, some of whom said he would never walk or talk. And yet where has he demonstrated publicly his first steps, made his first melodies of song or smiled in laughter in response to others? It is in his parish church, his spiritual home, that he smiles in laughter when his dad takes petitions in the Liturgy or preaches a sermon; that he sings “his own song” of praise to the Lord with the rest of the congregation singing; that he walks “on his own” to receive with a smile and a song the Holy Eucharist — the very Lord Who humbled Himself to become in the form of human flesh “a little Child.”

It is in the Presence of the Lord, in the midst of the Body of Christ, that all the hopes and cheers for Joshua are multiplied by people of faith who truly love him, and see in him the words of Jesus’ Gospel come true, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for of such is the Kingdom of God” (Luke 18:16). Is it possible to find examples of people who epitomize “becoming like God”? Even though the words of Father Sophrony are true, “In this world there is nothing more difficult than to be saved,” we must also remember we have the teaching of Jesus, in response to His disciples’ question, “Then who can be saved?” To this our Lord said, “*With God all things are possible*” (Luke 18:27).

Forgiving One’s Enemies

In previous lectures on the life of St. Silouan, we heard repeated that the true test of our salvation really lies in truly loving our brother and truly forgiving one’s enemies as Christ Himself did. Last week we heard a poignant expression of how difficult that is. In response I should like to share with you a story on the importance — no, the necessity — of forgiveness of one’s enemies. It comes to us from the *Kievan Caves Patericon*. It is the story of the Holy and Righteous

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Saint Silouan and Father Sophrony

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Titus the Presbyter, whose feastday is commemorated on February 27.

The *Patericon* chronicles the story in these words: "The person who is filled with anger can see only anger in God, but that world of God which exceeds the limits of the mind is revealed to those who have peace in their heart and soul. The Lord clearly demonstrated this through His servant, Blessed Titus (Tito) the presbyter. St. Titus, a monk in the Caves Monastery, was honored with the priestly rank, and he passed a life worthy of the joy of the saints.

"This blessed one had a spiritual brother, a hierodeacon by the name of Evagry. St. Titus bore a strong and unhypocritical love for the deacon. Their harmonious and sincere love was a source of inspiration for everyone.

"The enemy of mankind, because of his hatred of all good, worked long and hard to sow tares among this wheat, and he succeeded in raising up anger and bitterness between these two friends. He darkened them with such hatred that if the one approached while censuring the church, the other would turn and walk away from the incense, or if he failed to walk away, the one censuring walked past without censuring him. They remained in this spiritual darkness for a long time and even dared to serve and to bear the Holy Gifts and take Communion in this state. The brethren constantly begged them to become reconciled, but they did not even want to hear of it.

"At length, Father Titus became critically ill. Realizing that he was near death, he began to weep over his sins and sent for Fr. Evagry, with the words, 'Forgive me, brother, for the Lord's sake, for having offended you with my anger.'

"Not only did the deacon refuse to forgive the presbyter, but he even began to curse him with cruel words. The brethren saw that Fr. Titus was approaching his last breath and they dragged Fr. Evagry by force to the dying monk's cell to make amends with him. When the deacon was brought in, the ill priest immediately drew himself from his bed and fell at the feet of his former friend, tearfully beseeching: 'Forgive me, Father, and bless!'

"Father Evagry, however, showed himself to be so unmerciful and inhuman

that he tore himself away from the brethren and loudly declared to everyone present: 'I will never reconcile with him, neither in this age nor in the future one.'

"Scarcely had he said these words when he fell to the floor. The brothers tried to raise him up, but they saw that he was lifeless and they could not bend his arms, nor even close his lips and eyes. Fr. Titus, on the other hand, rose to his feet completely well."

Terror fell upon everyone at the sight of this sudden dreadful death accompanied by such a miraculous healing.

A Miraculous Healing

"Terror fell upon everyone at the sight of this sudden dreadful death accompanied by such a miraculous healing. The brethren began to ask the now healthy Fr. Titus what this meant. The saint related in detail what had happened and what had been revealed to him, saying: 'When I was ill, still ensnared in anger, I saw angels shrinking back from me and weeping over the ruin of my soul. The demons, however, were rejoicing over my anger. Because of this, I begged you to go to the brother and ask him to forgive me. When you brought him to me and I bowed to him, he turned away from me and I saw an unmerciful herald standing nearby, holding a fiery spear with which he struck the unforgiving man, who then fell dead. The same angel gave me his hand and raised me to health.'

"The fearful brethren wept over Father Evagry and his woeful death and buried him, his eyes and lips still open, his arms stretched out. After all this, the brethren began to vigilantly guard themselves against anger, forgiving one another of any offense or quarrel (Colossians 3:16) and because of this special revelation, they vividly remembered the words of the Lord, 'Everyone who continues in anger with his brother or harbors malice against him shall be unable to escape judgment' (Matthew 5:22).

"Saint Titus himself, seeing that as a

result of seeking peace with his brother he found peace with God, began to reject the thought of anger. He rooted it out and acquired in its place a never-ending love in God for all the brethren (Colossians 3:14). The perfect peace of this righteous struggler was of such a nature that it clearly reflected the promise of the Apostle, "God's Kingdom is not food and drink, but truth and peace." Through this peace, St. Titus was made worthy of a heavenly repose. His relics rest in the caves.

"Through the prayers of the holy saint, may we too become worthy of forgiveness and free from anger, and receive peace from Christ our Saviour; for He is the God of love and peace (I Corinthians 13:11). Amen!"

Christ's True Disciple

We have another such example to follow in our spiritual life — an excerpt from "How to Be Christ's True Disciple," contained in *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven*, written by Saint Innocent (Veniaminov), the Apostle to America (published by Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, N.Y., 1994).

Saint Innocent tells us: "Jesus Christ loved everyone, and did every kind of good to all. So we too should love our neighbors and, as far as possible, do good to them either by deed, or word, or thought.

"Jesus Christ forgave His enemies all that they did to Him, and over and above that did them every kind of good and prayed for their salvation. So too we should forgive our enemies, repay with good the evil done us, and bless those who curse and abuse us, with full faith and hope in God, the most just and all-seeing Judge, without Whose will not even a hair of our head will be lost. By bearing wrongs without complaint, without revenge and with love, you will act as a true Christian.

"Jesus Christ, being meek and humble in heart, never sought out desired praise from others. So too we should never boast or pride ourselves on anything at all, or seek praise from others. For instance, if you do good to others, if you give alms, if you live more piously than others, or if you are more intelli-

gent than your fellows, do not be proud of it either before men or to yourself, because all that you have that is good and praiseworthy is not yours but the gift of God — only sins and weaknesses are your own, and all the rest is God's.

"To follow Jesus Christ means also to obey the word of Jesus Christ. Therefore we must listen to, believe and practice all that Jesus Christ has said in the Gospel and through His Apostles, and we must do all this without artifice or temporization but in simplicity of heart. He who listens and attends to the word of Jesus Christ may be called His disciple, but he who listens to and carries out His word and will with simplicity of heart and with perfect devotion is His true, beloved disciple.

"And so, that is what it means to deny oneself, to take up one's cross and follow Christ. That is the true nature and straight way into the Kingdom of Heaven. And that is the way by which Jesus Christ Himself lived on earth, and by which we Christians must go. There never was and never will be any other way."

The Ultimate Questions

Even though we may not be glorified and proclaimed Saints, officially by the Church, like Staretz Silouan was, the ultimate goal of every Orthodox Christian is deification — *theosis* — to become like God.

We know from the words of Father Sophrony, "In this world there is nothing more difficult than to be saved."

Can we do it? YES, with God's grace, we can. After all, we know of those who have . . . and we know the way they did it . . . It's nothing new.

Will we do it? I pray that each of us, inspired by the lives of St. Silouan and Fr. Sophrony, will follow their examples . . .

Must we do it? YES, it is a matter of life and death . . . our life and our death . . . our eternal life and our eternal death.

Through the prayers of Saint Silouan and Father Sophrony, Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on us and save us!

To Him be the glory, unto ages of ages. Amen!

—Archpriest Michael G. Dahulich

Christ is Born!

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James Jr. & Ann Marie Schraeder
Amanda Schraeder
Kristin Schraeder
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Michael Kardash
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Christ is Born!

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Leo & Mary Howell And Sons
Suzanna Hretz
Daniel Nicholas Hretz
Xenia Sophia Hretz

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Kip & Sherri Fedetz, Andrew & Alex
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Sue Cressman
Kathy Baker
Edward & Holly Bachert, Zachery, Nathaniel & Madeline

Sarah & Carol Bacon
Andrew Fedetz, Altar Boy
Michael Gaston, Altar Boy

Zachery Brusko, Altar Boy
Samuel Rowe, Altar Boy
Lucy Wasco

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John King

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Anna Maholic
Marie Maholic
Pauline Maholic

John Maholic
Michael Maholic
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John & Irene Paschuck
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Ted, Susan & Emma Sidoriak

Olga Sidoriak
Paul & Helen Sheers
Ann Stanta

Glory Him!

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Martha D. Teno
Nicholas & Martha Teno
Anna Wargo
Elizabeth Pick Warcholak
Olga Weiss
Martha Woytowich
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Samuel Babich
Vera Hatcher
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Mrs. Nanette Hare
Mrs. & Mr. Charles Sarosi
Mary Collien
Ann Wilson
Tilly Frantz
St. Nicholas Church Choir
Jean Pabst
Alex Greskovich
Mike Sarosi
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Aristotelis Sideris
Anna Evangelou
Mr. & Mrs. Andy Toroney

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Dundaff
Fr. Dionysius & Matushka Swencki & Family
Mary Allen
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Anderline & Jesse
Catherine Coneck
Eugenia Congdon
Greg Congdon
Mary Ann Congdon
Louise & Henry Gosh
Anne Janusz
Peter Kowalsky
Mr. & Mrs. David Krenitsky & Elizabeth
In memory of Thomas & Mary Mikolaichuk
Kay & Ed Owens
George & Delores Sheypuk & Daughters
Joseph W. Shipsky
Mary Stepanaitis
Ann Wolfe & Ronald Wolfe
Peter & Mary Woytowich
Donald Zablotzki
Patricia Zimowski
Michael Zuk

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Edwardsville
Martha Gingo
George Grabousky
Helen Moncovich
Tillie Panco
Wanda Wanko
Jean Kutzer
Michael Kolinschok
Julia Capp
Sandra Williams
Lorraine Niedjaco
Anna Pengrin
Mary Pengrin-Sal
Lydia & James Lynch
Mary Catherine & James Lynch
Henry & Angelo Sal

Michael Skopic
Mary Nickett
Ann Slavinski
Helen Lutson
Joanne & Joseph Olejnick
Marie & Peter Souchnick
Elizabeth Durko
Anna B. Dutko
In memory of Elizabeth J. Berdy
In memory of John & Androna Berdy
Helen Sharock
Eva Kopko
Julia Sitar

HOLY ASCENSION ORTHODOX CHURCH

Frackville
Very Rev. Paul & Matushka Ropitsky
Michael Ropitsky
Anna Bendinsky
Nicholas & Margaret Tatusko
Anna Dudash
Anna Jordan
Laurel Polinsky
Michael Onuskanich
Michael & Ana Dikun
John & Margaret Nestor
Anna Andrusichen
Olga Williams
John & Sophie Pellock
Carole Sagan
Mary Diffenderfer
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Malinchok
Mary Torick
Barbara Eximitas
Patrick & Vera Kleman
Mrs. Eva Cuttie
Jean & Frank Holowaty
Larissa Holowaty
Mr. & Mrs. John Semanchick
Myron & Helen Polanchyck
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Fletcher
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Trynosky
De. Paul Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Bricker
Mr. & Mrs. Shawn Kane & Family
Drs. Robert & Mary Lou Bricker & Family
Mrs. Sophie Charin
Mr. & Mrs. John Malinchok
Michael Kasmer
Stephen Dura
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Swoboda
Michael Dyszel
Anna, Val, Renee Eippert
Olga Chrusch
Sergius Chrusch
Mary & William Keysock
David Gregory & Daniel Keysock
Peter & Marie Weremedic

Michael, Roseann, Michael, Jr. & Elizabeth Weremedic
James, Lisa & Jimmy Weremedic
Peter Weremedic, Jr.
Olga Chuma
Mary Zokuskie
Theresa Basara
Olga & Jim Hreshko
Catherine Motz
Sandra & Jack Morrash & Sons

ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA ORTHODOX CHURCH

Gradyville
Very Rev. And Matushka John J. Perich
Reader George & Anastasia Plisko
Francis & Doris Plasha

Paul & Juliann Whittington & Son
Taisia & Alexandra Perich
John & Sonya Perich
John & Mollie Smarsh
Mr. & Mrs. George Taylor & Sons
William & Jeanne Sokurenko
Matushka Mary Podoronko
Olga Fishney
Matushka Susanna Fishney
Reader Oleg & Genervieve Dudkin
John Krowzow
Mary & Bill Kessler
Clair Brown
Joan Godun
John Pusey
Serge & Svetlana Taptykoff
John & Karen Willcox
Anna C. Woodring
Andrew & Mary Anne Toroney, Jr.
Don & LuAnn Motel
Genie Horsky

Lydia & Gregory Kuzmenchuk
John, Dena & Amanda Prokop
Alexis, Elizabeth, Modeline * Robert Campbell
Marta, Kevin, Zack & Dan Grewell
Larissa, Danielle & George Pahomov
Daria, Tony Natalya & Michael Tatasciore
George & Christel Krugovoy
Rubercheck Family
St. Herman Sunday School
Reader Gregory & Sharon Hubiak
Kathy & Alexander Hubiak
Alex & Peg Hendrick
Millie Sokol
Mary Sebastian
Tamara Baboncovy
Mary Ellen Brown
Helen Youshock
Barry Kolvek
Debora Stanton
Nita Harris Siciliano
Margaret K. Stafford
Alexander T. Godun
Child Family
Vlaerie Bonar
Stephen M. Sissons

CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

Harnsburg

Archpriest Daniel And Theodora Ressetar
Archpriest Michael G. and Olga Kovac
Subdeacon Richard And Shirley Hathaway
Antonio Ken Barbu
Mr. and Mrs. S. Barbu
Daniel and Donna Bretz
Mr. John R. Barnes
Dan, Patti, Michael and Andrew Bromley
George, Grayson, Gage Cvijic
Mr. John Caba, Jr.
Bob Droid
Mrs. Mary Dotsey
Mr. And Mrs. John J. Dotsey
Lorie And Gary Diclemiente
Paul And Patricia Drobot
Tusha Dembach
Suzanna Demchak
Mr. And Mrs. Jos H Fetsko
Mr And Mrs Andrew Fedetz
Mr And Mrs Ron Hancher, Jr.
Mr And Mrs Ron Hancher, Sr.
Bethann And David Hancher
Andrea Hancher
Paul And Maryann Hadginske And Family
Carl And Deb Hisiro And Family
George And Marilou Klipa
Mr And Mrs George Kaznosky
Evelyn And George Krempasky

Christ is Born!

Mr And Mrs John Kachur
Mariyunn& Jihm Antonio & Family
Alysha And Kristina Kachur
Tessie Kuchta

Bill And Anna Kuchta
Mrs. Sue B. Mandell
Dave and Cheryl Martin And Family
Ellen & Roger Miller
Mrs. Marryann Skasko Mawhinney

Gloria Maliniak
Mr and Mrs Jon Minarich
Mr And Mrs Eugene Minarich
Mr And Mrs Adam Mallick
Timothy McMahon
Mr And Mrs Dave Nesko

Dr. And Mrs. Joseph Norato & Family
Mr And Mrs John Osuch And Family
Evelyn Onufer And Mother Mary
Mr And Mrs Stephen Pawlak

Nicholas Pestrock
Betty and Paul Pellegrini
Mr And Mrs Gregory Ressetar
Nicholas Ressetar
Sophia And Dimitri Ressetar

Alexander Ressetar

Joseph Russian
Nicholas & Barbara Somple & Family
Bill and Irene Sumple

Sysak Family
Schilling Family
Russell and Shirley Sass
Mr And Mrs Nick Sutovich
Mr And Mrs Mark Sutovich
Mr And Mrs Kevin Suioivich
John, Natalie, Nicholas Schilling
Seraphim Messner
Helen Tanusko

Jane Talleff
Leo and Marlene Washburn
Sandy, And Rich Wood
Marianne And Steve Wood
Millie And Sue Wolfe
Helen Yannonne

Mr And Mrs Michael L. Yancheff
Teklai Zerzegi
Michael And Janice Zuro
Nicholas Zuro

ST. VLADIMIR'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

Lopez
Hieromonk Michael (Their)
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Vanderpool
David Vanderpool
Helen Fullerton
Rosalie Burke
Mary Kravitz
Dave & Jane Kravitz
Helen Dennis
Emily Andrewlavage
Peter Kochmarsky
Paul & Sandy St. Germain

Vera Gulich
Michael & Patricia Gulich
Mary Saxe
Olga Rodka
Robert Rodka

Andrew & Catherine Matychak
Mary Christini
Stephanie Neuffer
Elizabeth Caccia

William & Cora Enright & Sons
Edward & Jack Enright
Mrs. Nickolas Kachmarsky
Rosemary Kachmarsky
Robert Tesse
Tillie Opishinski

HOLY ASCENSION CHURCH

Lykens
Margaret Carl
John & Nancy Coles
John & Chris Coles
Olga Hrinida
Anna Mahoney
John & Harry Mehalok
William & Susan Pinkerton
Dr. & Mrs. Alexander Pianovich
Dr. & Mrs. Paul A. Pianovich
Alex & Stephen Pianovich
Ann Sovich
Nicholas Sovich, Jr.

John R. & Judy Sweikert
John N. Swelkert
Michael Leslho
Joe & Patti Welsh
Kathleen Welch
Katherine Zimmerman

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

McAdoo
Very Rev. Theodore Orzolek
Anna Fanelli
Melania Polli
Helen Osuch
Michael Zabitchuck
Michael Kurtz, Sr.
Irene Yaworsky
Mary Stronko
Pearl Elko
Maryann Graino
William Tezecker
Sam Kurtz, Sr.

Michael & Jan Kurtz & Son
Shophie Shuman
Julie Forte

Greg & Cathy Kurtz & Children
Peter Kurtz
Paul Smerkonich
Anna Lee Davsovich
Joe & Linda Kurtz & Son
Michael R. Kurtz

SS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

Minersville
Fr. Michael & Matushka Hatrak
Matthew & Brenda Hatrak
Natalie Hatrak
Anna Wyslutzky
Mary Wartella
Olga Kirdauskas
James & Anna Antonio
Luke & Theresa Oakill
Susie Frew

Andrea Frew
David Studlack & Family
JoAnn Brinich
Ralph & Kathy Brinich
Jennifer & Adam Frantz

Rick, Lynda, Lauren & Ricky Hutton
Elsie Herman
Madeline Bonchalk
John Bonchalk

Harry, Peggy, Dave & Janine Oakill
Stablum Family
Rogers Family
Michelle & Russ Charowsky

ST. MICHAEL'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

Mt. Carmel
V. Rev. Michael Evans & Family
Anna Gondal
Mary Moroz
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Yonkovig
Anna Panikarchuck
George Panikarchuck
Mr. & Mrs. Bernie Malkoski
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Chudovich
Chris Buchkarik

Helen Sorocka
Marie Cuff
Olga & Paul Padovich
Olga Bertoski
Helen Timpko
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Yastishak
Mr. & Mrs. George Bortnichak
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Alekseyko
John & Theresa Pochekaino
Anna & Delores Wislock
Bill & Gerri Wislock
Deanna Ciocco

Mary Brelsin
Mr. & Mrs. Walter Sebasovich
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Tosca
Catherine Shafchick
Julia Bushick
Olga Thomas
Bob & Marie Kuchta
Mary Shields
Mrs. Florence Bubernak
Julia Barnes

Anna (Kowalchick) Grinovich
Mary Zelusky
Jean & Chris Mathias
Cosy Melnick
Mary Kandrot
Mrs. Mary Homicz
Mildred & Ben Trefsgar
Evert Family

Mr. & Mrs. Paul Tomcavage
Zackery Peek
Stephanie Peek
Mr. Peter Yastishak
Pearl Winnick
Valentina Wood
Victoria Wood

Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Zhicki
Mr. & Mrs. Ernie Hill
Mr. Leon Markovich
Margaret Olaf
Katherine Hardnock
Dorethy Beckus

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Nanticoke
Fr. Stephen & Matushka Karaffa
Olga Carvey
John Phianich
Paul & Olga Sulewski
John & Theresa Kios
Mary Mislevitch & Family
Mary Hunchar

Mike & Pearlie Zupko
Joseph Paprta
Joey & Jillian Paprta
Jay & Marge Sokol
Mary Zupko
Warho Family
Mary & Joe Paprati
George & Christine Ceislaak
James & Mary Ann Oram
Zachary Breck
Susan & James Breck

Dorothy Speary

ST. MICHAEL'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

Old Forge

Father David & Matushka Karen Mahaffey

Nikolas, Michael, Seth & Kyra Mahaffey

Mary Adamaki

Tillie Augustine

David, Kate, Alexa & Adam Barsigian

Jacob & Margaret Barsigian

John and Sandra Barsigian

Anthony Bellenzoni, Sr.

Anthony, Suzie, Sierra & Carla Bellenzoni

Jon, Anna Marie & Sarah Black

Helen Choniat

William & Sandra Condon

The Elko Family

Dennis & Maria Emily

Cushman & Ermolovich Families

Nicholas Ermolovich, Esq.

Walter & Anne Marie Ermolovich

Neal & Ann Freeman

Mrs. Nicholas Halchak

Harrison Hubiak

Mr. & Mrs. Alex Jadic

David Jadic

Michael & Margaret Jadic

Mr. & Mrs. Al Krentsyk

Helen B. Krentsyk

Gregory Krevko

Juliana Kuzmack

Nick Lezinsky

Luke Ludwig

Tina Ludwig

Joseph & Ann Marie Macjowsky

Helen Percy

Ann Peregrin

Lovie Peregrin

Anna I. Pregonm

Mr. & Mrs. Walter Pregonm

William & Mary Pregonm

Mr. & Mrs. Steve Polanchuk

Theresa & Helen Polanchuk

Mr. & Mrs. Al Pritchyk

Mr. & Mrs. John Pritchyk

George & Marilyn Serniak

Stephen Christopher Serniak

Stephen & Ingrid Semiak

Charles, Marie & Mark Sigman

Michael & Jeremy Sokol

Pauline Spitko & Michael Spitko, Jr.

Paul, Martha & Paul Andrew Tuvitch

Ann Tynpak

Mildred Wozniak

Anna Zupko

ALL SAINTS ORTHODOX CHURCH

Olyphant

In memory of Bishop Peter

Rev. & Mrs. Nicholas Wyslonsky & Sons

Rev. & Mrs. Michael Chanda

All Saints Senior "R," Club

All Saints Junior "R," Club

All Saints Heritage Shop

John & Florence Boyko

Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Bonczar

Cassie, Larry, & Michael Bonczar

David & Mary Brzuchalski

Nicholas & Alexis Brzuchalski

Helen Bryer

Stephania Butchko

Joseph Dzwonczyk

Michael & Judy Evansvitch

Mary Jane & Tanya Gilbert

Johanna, Joan & Janet Gima

Elmer & Betty Genorotti

Irene Glowatz

Olga Grancy

Glory Him!

Vera & Natalie Hoiniak
Nicholas & Marie Holowich
Mary Hoiniak
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Hunyak
In Memory of Michael Kuhar
Edward & Eleanor Krushinsky
Ann Klenko
Mike & Amelia Kuzmiak
Victor & Ann Marie Koziar
Frances Melholic
Dr. Gregory Melholic
In memory of Anna Mae Mezik
William Moskwa
Regina McAvoy
Claudia Mikulak
Joe & Nancy Mazur
Mary & Maria Oles
Thomas & Barbara Puhalla
George & Betty Perechinsky
Mr. & Mrs. John P. Puthorosly & Ashley
Mr. & Mrs. John Puthorosly
Marguerite Puthorosly
Vera & Olga Pallishiak
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Rezanka Sr.
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Rezanka Jr. & Family
Barbara Rusen
Adell Shopay
George & Joan Schlasta
Dorothy Skorupka
Joan Setzer
John & Annette Schlasta
Mary Semon
Joseph & Ann Schlasta
Jim & Donna Specht
Kyra, Chelsea & Ian Specht
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Senon & Daughters
Steve & Pat Stafursly
Ken & Dan Stafursly
Mr. & Mrs. George Scochin & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Verespy & Sons
Julia Veroshin

ST. NICHOLAS' ORTHODOX CHURCH

Olyphant
V. Rev. & Matushka Vladimir Fetcho
Very Rev. Daniel K. Donlick & Matushka
Alexandra Butchko
Michele Batchko
Julie, Rick, Jim & Jonathan Cesari
John & Josephine Chichilla
John & Michelle Chichilla
Joan & Hank Drebin
Paul & Sylvia Dreater
Ist Lt. Paul Dreater, Jr.
Tanya Dreater
Jerry & Carol Dreater
Nicole Dreater
Mike Evania
Barbara Evania
Bill & Sherri Evania
Stephen Evania
Tanya Evania
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Fetchina
Kyra Fetchina
Olga Fetchina
Tammy Fetcho
George Grabania
Marie Grabania
Michael Grabania
George & Theresa Haviyak & family
George Kopestonsky
Olga Kusnick
Anna Murawsky
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Price

Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Rebar
Dr. & Mrs. Larry R. Sherman
Jessica Slawitsky
Seth & Mrs. James Thomashefsky
Ann Thomashefsky
Mrs. Mary Youshock

ST. STEPHEN'S ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL,

Philadelphia
Fr. Daniel & Matushka Mary Geeza
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kolesnik & Family
Mr. & Mrs. John Kolesnik & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Kolesnik & Family
Olga & John Gazak
Olga Russin
Mary Gresson
Helen Plunkett
Nicholas Cronin
Anna Cebular
Lydia P. Tichy
Michael & Jenny Harb
Lorraine & Harold Kane
Ted Pischick
John S. Borick
Larry, Connie, Jon & Chris Skvir
Anna D. Simpson
Joseph C. Simpson
Mary E. Burkenback
Paul, Diane, Laura & John Federonko
Willis Lubie Dietrich
Gretz J. Fedoranko
Ron & Kathy Bisaga
Vincent, Diane, Nicholas & Kristina Zanghi
Al Silveira, Jr.
Dr. George & Pauline Engleson
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Horsky
Bob Tallick
Janice Nass
Elisabeth Gentieu
Christine Nass
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Colter & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Heinz Poesel & Family
Steve & Marge Poon
Denise, Jack, Sonia & Michael Rowe
Annette Kopistansky
Elena Grabania
Rose Neher
Judy, Jack & Jennifer Clyde
Tina & Jonathan Rhodes
John & Agnes Herbut
Reader Daniel, Thissa & David Drobish
John & Helen Szulak
Eva & Bill Wasser
Joe & Ann Herschafft
Peter & Elizabeth Hetman
Dr. Michael, Amelia, Michael & Natalie Tapytkoff
Walter & Mary Mokrinski
Peter & Martha Linski
Joseph O'Brick
John, Kate, Nicholas, Alexander & Andre Cox
Alexander & Valentina Kuzman
Mary Radick
Bill & Nina Gavula
Kathie, Michael & Matthew Gavula
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Burch
Alice Victor
Dorothy Crossan
Arnold, Katherine, Anna & Alexa Jensky
Anna & Michael Hargrave
John Kozlowski
Alice Karpiak
Mr. & Mrs. Alex Merduiszew
Olga Oprussek
Helen Davis & Mark
Catherine Paulasack
Bill Kraftician

Matushka Mary Fedoronko

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Pottstown
Fr. & Matushka Nicholas Yuschak
Tanya Macura & Family
Nettie Hart
Helen Pershinsky
Ann Meko
John & Helen Boritsky
Bill & Euphemia Romanik
Mary Rapchinski
Mr. & Mrs. Carl Ecker
Michael, Brilla, Sc.
Michelle Masteller & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Brilla & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Novak & Family
Julia Zwan
Mr. & Mrs. Ken Sekelick & Family
Michael J. Holowis
Mrs. Vera Peifer
Mr. & Mrs. David Long

ST. MARY'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

St. Clair
Ted & Jeanette Segan
Steve R. Pelak
Sam Wisnoyuk
Jim & Ruthann Kerick
Verna Papinchak
George Papinchak
Judith Julian
Leah Crush
Stella Kadings

ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA ORTHODOX CHURCH

Shillington
Rev. & Mrs. John A. Onofrey
The Parish Council
The Sunday School Teachers & Students
The Our Lady of Kazan Sisterhood
The Parish Choir
Ms. Louise Coleman
Mr. & Mrs. John Drosdak
Stephanie & Mark Drosdak
Mrs. Gloria Duty & Sons
Mr. & Mrs. Jefferson Core & Family
Bill & Rosalie Hardman
Mr. & Mrs. Terry Hojnowski
Mr. Walter Hojnowski
Mr. & Mrs. Ed Hyland
The Kawood Family
Mrs. Eva Kopera
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Koran
Dr. & Mrs. Vadim Kurjanowicz
Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Kusior
Mr. & Mrs. Fred Leer & Family
Mike & Vera Losk
Mrs. Deborah Lucas & Michael
Mrs. Irene Lapezo
John, Dana & Raymond MacKool
Michael & Janice Mallick
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Matsick & Family
Mrs. Gertrude Melniczek
Mr. & Mrs. Karl Osterburg
Mrs. Ruth M. Ruth
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Savage
Mr. Paul Savage
Mr. & Mrs. John Seman & Family
Ms. Sandra Semion
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Sichak & Family
Ms. Gloria Spikio
Catherine & Cheryl Terenich
Mr. & Mrs. Sean Vlasak & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Weinstein
Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Wawenchak & Family
Mr. John Yonchuk
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Yorick & Daughters
Hank & Anne Zerbe

Christ is Born!

ST. BASIL'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

Simpson
Rev. Leo Poore
James & Mary Anne Braun
Maria K. & Jefferson H. Braun
Olga & John Buberniak
Mary Chucek
Sam & Nadine Demianovich
Helen Dorval
Olga Gallick
Helen Hrihach
Stephen & Esther Kowalsky
Thomas & Elaine Kravetsky
Laurie, Lynn & Kimberly Kravetsky
Helen Kutch
Micahel & Theresa Luczcovitch
Julia Mazza
Anastasia Mikulak
Michael J. & Julia Mikulak
John & Mary Okorn
Walter & Marie Proch
Maria & John Proch
Walter & Mary Anne Proch
Christina M. & Elizabeth A. Proch
Dr. David & Daria Rost
JoAnn Sample
David Elliott

ST. TIKHON'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

South Canaan
His Eminence, Archbishop HERMAN
Very Rev. Daniel & Matushka Delores Donlick
Very Rev. Alexander, Matushka Elena & Alex Golubov
Very Rev. Michael Lepa
Protodeacon Keith S. Russin
Reader Gregory Hetrak
Reader Gregory Sulich
Matushka Mary Borichevsky
Matushka Dorothy Sulich
Galina Abolins
Mary Andreychik
Marge Barna
Olga Barna
Bill & Alice Boga
Emma S. Collins
Betty Figura
Mrs. David & Mary Ford & Emmelia
Daisy Geerza
Mr. & Mrs. William Hunkak
Julia Jacewicz
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald Kavalkovich
Ronald Kavalkovich, Jr.
Katherine Lazorack
Mr. & Mrs. John Minarick
John & JoAnne Paluch
Martin Paluch
Ken & Margaret Paulic
Stephanie Sklarsky
Helen Sorokanich
Joseph & Olga Telowsky
Paul Wozniak
Julia, William & Susan Zielinski

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Stroudsburg
Very Rev. Neal & Matushka Sherry Carrigan
Kathryn Pinto
Marion, & Walter Zablotsky
Joanne & Michael Kondratik
Peter & Helen Stavisky
Eve & Paul Bonisese

SS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

Union Dale

V. Rev. & Matushka Claude Vinyard

Lubov & Ronald Kilmer
Peter Hurchik
Mr. & Mrs. Walter Terry & Family
William Grunski
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Bock
Mr. & Mrs. Vladimir Demianovich
Rose M. Kennedy
Martha Dorosh

HOLY RESURRECTION CATHEDRAL

Wilkes-Barre
St. Lazarus Sacred Arts Guild
Very Rev. & Matushka Joseph Martin
Marina Martin & Elena
Dr. & Mrs. John Haber & Sons
Juliana & Jeffrey Good
Debbie Martin
Protodeacon Keith S. Russin
Deacon Sergei & Matushka Vicki Kapral
Reader David & Kathryn Kessler
Andrew Buleza
Mrs. Helen Pryor & Family
Mrs. Julia Seeger
Mrs. Ann Kotzer
Mrs. Elisabeth Romanchek
John & Doris Zoranski
Mr. & Mrs. William Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. Wendell Thoman
Mr. & Mrs. D. David Dunsavage & Family
Marguerite & Tom Czekalski
Vera & Ray Kraynanski
Matushka Eleanor Krell
John & Ana Dalsky
Alice Lastowski
Sylvester Dagan
Mary Krupak
Bernie & Esther Dancheck
Elizabeth Reese
Evelyn Suhoski
Patricia Suhoski
Mr. & Mrs. John Polinsky
Ustine & Kristen Gulczynski
Margaret Sapp
Sandra King
Edward & Evelyn Wysocki
Agnes Timchak
Mrs. Mary Omifer
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Humko
Peter & Anna Sokola
Michael & Nancy Pieck
Olga Layton
Vladimir Glowatsky
Joseph & Sophie Schmid
Mrs. Michael Telch, Sr.
Mrs. Stella Terpack
Joseph Romanich
Manusky Family
Justine & James Borino
Sandra, Julianne & Nicholas Kapelan
Joe & Julia Masciello
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Stempien
Betty Polk
Kyra Zoranski
Dolores Grabko
John & Irene Zimich

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Wilkes-Barre
Rev. & Mrs. David Shewczyk
Timothy & Nicholas Shewczyk
Father & Matushka Pawlusch
Eleanor & Theodore Soyvoda
Mary Bankos
Sue Brown
Joseph & Nan Zula
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Sichur

Glorify Him!

Peter & Theresa Pawlak
Andrew Dennis
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Gudaitis
Helen Spinicci
Mrs. Robert T. Rhodes
Jonah & Donna Goobic
Michael & Rita Goobic
Nick & Vera Goobic
Donald & Maryann Goobic
David & Deborah Mills
Helen & Peter Welgo
Ralph & Nettie Kompinski

Basil & Lydia Homnick
Canyuch & Homnick Family
Mr. & Mrs. Boris Mayher
Mr. & Mrs. William Gurka
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Lisko
Elaine Benzckowski
Mary Piznar
Anastasia & Bernard Golubiewski
Peter & Dorothy Welgus
Mary Salmay
Helen Zavada
Mr. & Mrs. John Gurka
John Pawlak

Dolores and Paul Gozick
Pearl Tutko
Mary & Stephen Krill
Marianne Krill
Mary Petro
Sam & Lydia Cross
Mr. & Mrs. Vladimir Durko
Mr. & Mrs. William Yankovich
Michael & Lisa Talpash
Mr. & Mrs. John Bromoko
J. P. & Denise Meck
Paul, Corie & Abby Meck
William Talpash, Jr.
Valerie Czabo
Stephen Lukachik
Barbara King

ST. MICHAEL'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

Wilmington, Del.
Rev. Andrew & Matushka Diehl
Jim & Anne Riley & Family
Paul, Marianne, Barbara & Julianna Newmyer
Peter & Dolores Karawulan
Marie Karawulan
Ed & Karen Hojnicki & Family
Timothy Hojnicki
Mary Gruetsky
Mary Tuneff
Sophia M. Puit
Harry & Emily Wojcik
Paul, Vera, & Matt Chalfant
Harry, Evelyn, & Jason Kutch
Peter & Elizabeth Melnik

Robert & Jean Zapora
Fr. Ken & Debby Hines & Family
William & Alice Dreyden
Olga & John Maloney
Allen & Colleen Shatley
Dr. & Mrs. Thomas S. Buchanan
James S. & Olga S. Riley
David & Christine Roberts & Family
Edward & Stephanie Hojnicki
Mr. & Mrs. Nedwin Mianich & Family
Tony Masso
Bill & Marie Herman & Family
Leon & Lisa Ciach
Helen & John Ciach

HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH

Williamsport
Fr Dan, Myra, Daria & Natalia Kovalak
Mr. & Mrs. Lew Shatto
Elsie Skvir Nierle

Phil Kundis

Michael & Carol Serwint
James Chita & Nancy Pashchuk
Catherine Theocolis
Mr. & Mrs. John Fowler
Dr. & Mrs. Minus Hiras
Peter, Lillian & Zoe Calkins
Michael & Julia Stefanik
Yvonne & Nathan Bohlander
The Shiposki Family
Paul, Christina, Pavlo, Dimitra & Sophia Beiter
Mr. & Mrs. Henry Herman
Amelia, Richard & Sergius Lange
Minas & Meni Hiras
James & Mary Chelentis
Helen Evrard, Corby & Morgaine Enfejian
John Sam Jr

ST. MARK'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

Wrightstown
V. Rev. Theodore Heckman
Rev. Deacon Gregory & Martha Moser
Reader George & Alla Nakonetschny
Peter, Sandy & Stephanie Bohlander
John Wanko
The Soder Family
The Rybny Family
Sam Mervis
Joe Swiwe
James & Monia Pitra
Janet M. Kalenish

Myron, Lynette, Stephen & Anastasia Sedor
Sharon Burkett & Doug Yates
Delores Marmaluk & Family
Nicholas, Marina & Larissa Moser
Serge, Connie & Zachary Borichevsky
Steven Nakoetschny
Vera Gambone
Elena & Nicholas Nakoetschny
Valerie Polakow

Mr. & Mrs. Michale Nakoetschny & Family
Larisa, Justin & Chryse Heckman
Sergei & Irene Arhipov
Boris & Joanne Borichevsky
Hebe Bailey

Joseph Horoschak
Peter & Vicki Kipruff
Helen Paulin
Peter, Heather, Katy & Holly Ren
Jeanette Ruano
John & Elizabeth Sherbin
Lucy & Michelle Znak
Charles Super
Badri Ergemlidze
Valerie & Stephanie Ristvey
Elizabeth Werner
Joseph Oddis
Jonah Lengel

ST. MICHAEL'S ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Fr. John and Matushka Kowalczyk, Sophia and Nicky
Fr. Gabriel and Matushka Petorak
Andrea and Jeff Baldan and Family
Debbie and Barry Bernosky and Family
Wendy and Serge Bochnovich and Family
Mary Bowen
Willard and Sue Brown and Family
Ed and Eileen Brzuchalski
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Buberniak
Valerie M. Buberniak
Patricia and Tom Cadwalader
Sandra and Kevin Carney
Jeff and Sandy Cavanaugh and Family
Randy and Sharon Cleary and Family

Denise D. Cobb and Kyle
Bob and Eileen Dance
Eva Demchak
Dolores Dreater
Kay Fedriko

Donald, Rosalie and Bill Fives
Annabelle Franchak
Barbara and Tony Franchak
Delores and Peter Frenchko
Nick and Pauline Frenchko
Joe Getzie
Nick Getzie
Peter Getzie
Sandy and Joe Gillott
Tom, Helen, and Stephanie Grancey
Bessie Guzey
John and Lucille Guzey
Andy and Dorothy Hanchak
Bill and Joan Hanchak
Julia Hanchak and Tom
Mrs. Elizabeth Hockin
Mr. and Mrs. John Hockin and John
John and Debbie Jaye and Jonathan
Olga Jaye

Mary Jubinsky and Joseph
Dorothy Kociak
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Julia Kitchura
Mary and Daniel Kitchura Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Klapatch and Sons
Henry II and Jeremi Korpusik
Mary and Henry Korpusik
Mrs. Eva Krenitsky
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Krenitsky
Irene Kupinski
Helen Lahey

Daria Lehman
Dorothy and Nick Mattise
JoAnn and Sam Mattise
Michael Mensky
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Michalczyk
Mr. and Michael Mikulak
in memory of Mrs. Alice Mosley
Mary Ann and Sam Mosley
Barbara and John Nayduch
Roxanne and Miles Neutts
Justine Orlando
Barbara Palubniak
Tillie Palubniak

Anastoinie Petarak
George, Marilyn, and Joshua Petorak
Andrew and Margaret Petrilak
Martha Pollock
Willard Puzza
Mary Rusiniak
Mary Joan Rusiniak
Martha Scopellini
John Sernak
Mary Sernak
Millie Sernak

Mr. and Mrs. Paul W. Sernak
Ron, Lorraine and Ann Sernak
Delores Serniak
Steven Serniak and Allison
Gloria Shaw
Anastasia Slout
Marilyn and Jerry Soroka and Children
John Susko
Irene Swirdovich
Chap. Col. Peter and Matushka Telencio
Damian and Stephen Telencio
Bob, Millie and Rebecca Telep
John and Yvonne Wargo and Family
Mary Wyziak and Michael
Mary Zielsinski
Betty Zrowka
Joseph and Dorothy Zrowka

Church School and the Parish

"Of all Holy works, the education of children is the most holy." These are the words of St. Theophan the Recluse on this icon. A colored copy of this icon was sent to all parents of school-age children of Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church, Harrisburg. The words on this icon should be taken very seriously by us all.

We have always tried to stress the importance of religious education for all our children. Our parish has been blessed with many children, but even in parishes where there are not that many, top priority should be given to the children's spiritual lives, whether every Sunday, rotating Saturdays or whatever works out best for that particular parish.

In our situation, the holding of church school classes before Liturgy on Sunday mornings works out best. Because so many of our parishioners travel such a distance to the church, almost everything that is accomplished regarding religious education is done on Sunday. During the children's study time, the adults are also having a class. This has been a most successful endeavor led by John Barns.

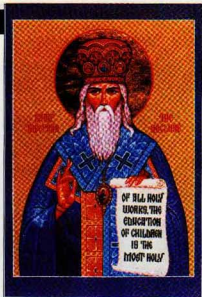
We have set up classes so that all ages are covered. The pre-school class is made up of three-year-olds who are learning of God's love, family, and friends. Four to five-year-olds comprise the kindergarten class and are currently using lessons that emphasize all the holy days and religious events through the church year. First-graders are learning that all things

in their lives come from God, while the second-graders are preparing for first confession. In the third-grade class, sharing and caring is stressed, while the fourth-graders are studying how to use and appreciate the Bible. The fifth and sixth-graders combined classes are studying the heroes of the Faith.

Those students in seventh grade are covering a variety of projects, while the eighth-twelfth grade class are having adults from the parish come in and discuss various aspects of their chosen work and how the spiritual life enters into the job and the workplace.

One of our biggest problems is regular attendance. Because so many of our parishioners are originally from other areas, many weekends are spent visiting grandma and grandpa at their hometowns. But no matter how many children are in the class on any given Sunday, the teacher is present and the lesson is taught. I once had a class where there were two children who were too old for one class and too young for another. More often than not, one child would be there and yet he was taught every Sunday. One never knows what might come from that one-on-one teaching. Every child is important.

We have done two things that were especially successful in the past. Several years ago, while we were visiting Archbishop Adam in Sanok, Poland, I asked him what is the greatest need for the chil-



dren in his diocese. He told us that it was so very difficult for the children to obtain the most basic school items such as paper, crayons, and colored pencils—the things we take for granted. That year we collected all sorts of school supplies and the response was tremendous. Several boxes were sent to Poland.

Another project was a book collection for mothers and children in a shelter for abused women. The response to this drive was overwhelming. New and used books in good condition were collected and we received a very warm note of appreciation for them.

Trying to add a bit of spark to lessons, the seventh grade class has done some innovative things. In learning of the life of St. Innocent during his two hundredth anniversary year, the class drew pictures of various events in his inspirational life, photocopied them and put them into coloring books which were then given to the younger classes in church school. And after studying church architecture and the meaning behind the arrangement



Pre-school class with Patricia Drobot, teacher



Mr. John Barns and the adult class

of domes and so forth, the students were asked to design a church. Many of the designs were unique while adhering to the basic format.

We also try to have a project for the Great Lent and for the Nativity fast. One year we put together a coloring book with a text for each of the pre-lenten Sundays and all of the Sundays leading to the Resurrection. This past Great Lent and Advent, all students were assigned projects that involved each day of the lenten season. For this Advent, five pages of ornaments were distributed with forty-three ornaments each having the date and a picture for that date. Some of the pictures and texts were drawn from phrases found in the liturgical readings for the Nativity fast. All the saints of this season were also remembered, including St. Andrew the First-called, St. Herman of Alaska, St. Nicholas, and St. Catherine the Great Martyr. Also remembered were the Nativity of Christ, the Synaxis of the Theotokos, and the commemoration of St. Stephen, the Archdeacon and First Martyr. The children were encouraged to cut out one ornament each day and put it on a tree made of green poster

board. A similar tree was put in the vestibule of the church and kept up-to-date.

The Vacation Church School during the summer has also been part of the church school program. This past year, the theme was "Saints and Animals." There are so many wonderful stories in this area, but we settled on a few, such as St. Gerasimos and the Lion, St. Innocent and the Eagle, and St. Sergius and the Beast. Last year, each child was encouraged to set up a prayer corner for his or her own bedroom; a cross, icon, and prayer rope were made.

Church school is a wonderful place to build memories for children. Each year the students make ornaments for the church Christmas tree using a religious theme. When the tree is taken down, the child takes the ornament home. A Christmas card was received from a former student with a picture of her children in front of their Christmas tree, and on the tree was one of the ornaments from many years ago. We also had a custom of making a large gingerbread cookie with an imprint of St. Nicholas. These were given out on St. Nicholas Day. One of our young men who is now in the mili-

tary came home on leave and asked if we still gave out St. Nicholas cookies. Memories!

Some children are not able to attend classes for certain reasons. They should be included in the education program by giving them the books the other children are using.

A Nativity program is held every year using many themes. One year, each class was given a saint or Holy Day of the Nativity fast to work into a segment of the program. They came up with good ideas. The troparian for these saints and holy days were given to the audience so they participated with singing during the program also.

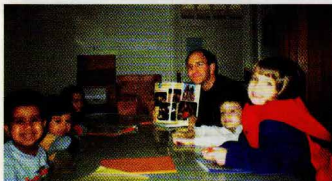
Singing is an important part of our program also, although we have so little time to work with the children before class begins. Nevertheless, the children sing a small portion of the liturgy almost every Sunday. They are encouraged, along with the congregation, to sing with the choir. Troparians are placed in the pews every Sunday for the entire church to sing, and also special hymns are distributed during the communion of the clergy. Liturgy means the work of the people and singing is part of that work. The late Archbishop John of Chicago would visit St. Michael's Church in Cleveland, Ohio, and before the Lord's Prayer, he would come out and say "Everybody sing."

We do all we can, but the primary task of spirituality in the life of the child lies with the parents. All that we do will have little meaning unless there is a spiritual life in the home. How very important this is. "Of all Holy works, the education of children is the most Holy." Remember the words of St. Theophan!

—Theodora V. Ressetar



Third graders with their teacher, Nadzia Schilling



First graders with Nicholas Sample, their teacher



Part of the third grade class with teacher, Angeia McGreevy

All in the Diocesan Family

Bethlehem

St. Nicholas Church

Basil Vansuch, son of Father and Matushka Eugene Vansuch, and Katherine Cahill were united in the Mystery of Holy Matrimony on September 28, 1997.



Coaldale

St. Mary's Orthodox Church

On September 21, His Eminence, Archbishop Herman visited our parish. Concelebrating the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with His Eminence and our Pastor were Archpriests Michael Kovach, Elias Krenitsky and Michael Lepa. Prior to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy the newly renovated interior of the church was blessed. Responses were sung by the St. Tikhon's Seminary choir who also offered musical selections at the Grand Banquet.

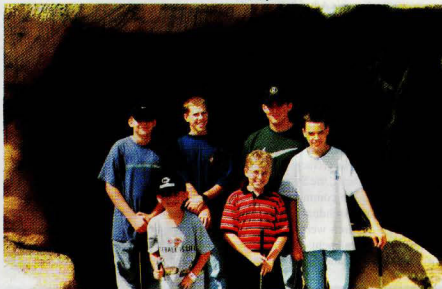
During the month of November we held a Christmas Bazaar offering many beautiful handcrafted items and the Church School went to Hershey to see the "Walt Disney's World on Ice" show. The altar servers enjoyed a day at "Family Grand-Prix" in Leesport.

Helen and George Yurchak celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on August 31.

Baptism: Katherine Olena, daughter of Nadine (Stefaniak) and Oliver Fegley on October 12.



Helen & George Yurchak on 50th anniversary



Altar servers at "Family Grand-Prix" in Leesport



Analisha & Vanessa Christman greet Archbishop Herman with flowers

Gradyville

St. Herman of Alaska Church

Parishioners joined in taking turns turning over the "new earth" to begin the hall extension project which is to be completed in time for our 25th anniversary celebration in 1998.

Baptism: Andrew Chobany, July; Paul Whittington, Jr., November, 1997.

*Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!*

Harrisburg

Christ the Savior Church

On March 8, 1998, a Pan-Orthodox observance of the Sunday of Orthodoxy will be held in our parish.

Plans are under way for the marking of the 35th anniversary of our parish which will be held on October 18, 1998 with His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius and Archbishop Herman as concelebrants.

Minersville

Saints Peter & Paul Church

Natalie Hatrak, daughter of Father and Matushka Michael Hatrak was presented the newly-created "St. Peter the Aleut Junior Steward Award" by Archbishop Herman during his Archpastoral visit.

Baptism: Sarah Comisac, daughter of Stephen and Deborah Comisac, October 12.

Marriages: Russell Charowsky, Jr. and Michelle Rogers, September 27; Matthew Hatrak and Brenda Fehr, November 9.



Natalie Hatrak receives award

The deadline for the next issue of
***Your Diocese
Alive in Christ***

is March 1, 1998

Please submit all articles (typed),
pictures, parish news, etc. . . .

to

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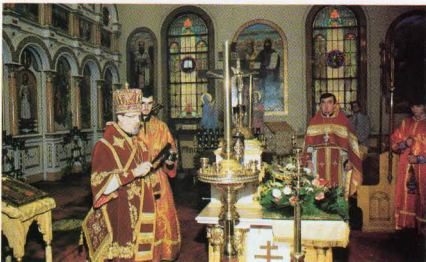
Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania
South Canaan, PA 18459



Turning over "new earth" at St. Herman's Church, Gradyville

Jermyn

St. Michael's Church



Archbishop blesses newly-refurbished candlestands at St. Michael's



Starosta Joseph Krenitsky offers greeting at annual parish dinner

Minersville - Saints Peter & Paul Church



Russell and Michelle (Rogers) Charowsky, Jr.



Matthew and Brenda (Fehr) Hatrak

Old Forge

St. Michael's Church

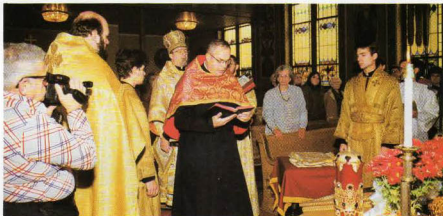
The Holy Annunciation Ladies Club and the Church School visited the Medieval Times of Lyndhurst, New Jersey in November for an afternoon of jousting and medieval food.

Baptism: Dalton Richard Ray, son of Michelle and Corey Ray, November 4.

Olyphant

All Saints Church

During the recent archpastoral visitation of Archbishop Herman, our Pastor, Father Nicholas Wyslutsky, was awarded the purple skufia and Joseph Semon was tonsured a Reader.



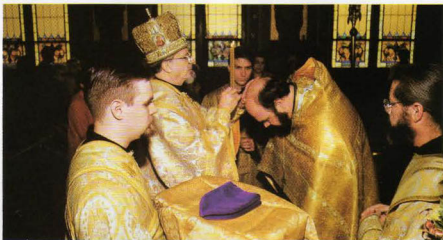
Joseph Semon tonsured Reader

Olyphant

St. Nicholas Church



Danyel Donovan presented scholarship award by Larry Sherman



Fr. Nicholas awarded skufia

For the first time ever, a daughter of the diocese was the recipient of the Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting's Annual Scholarship Award. To qualify for the award, Danyel Donovan had to achieve the highest rank of her scouting unit (the Gold award for girl scouts) and score high marks on her SAT. Danyel

belongs to the Dickson City Girl Scout unit. Her scholarship is only one of two offered by the Committee for all the Orthodox Scouts, both Boy and Girl, in the United States each year. Larry Sherman, Executive Board Member of the Scouting Committee, presented the scholarship.

Pottstown

Holy Trinity Church

On Sunday, December 7, Holy Trinity Church honored two of its surviving founders: Philip Stolar, who celebrated his 100th birthday that day, and Anna Chomnuk who is 93. Nancy Jones, the Mayor of Pottstown, was at the church to read a proclamation by her and the City Council making December 5 Philip Stolar Day. Congratulatory greetings were also received from the U. S. House of Representatives and from President and Mrs. Clinton. After the Divine Liturgy, members of the parish went to the Manor Home, where Mr. Stolar resides, and sang a molieben and carols.



Anna Chomnuk receives Holy Communion



Mayor Jones and Archpriest Nicholas Yuschak



Faithful with Philip Stolar

Philadelphia

St. Nicholas Church

His Eminence, Archbishop Herman visited St. Nicholas Parish on its Patronal Feast day.



St. Nicholas Starosta Bill Simpson greeting Archbishop



Procession to church



Archpriest John Bohush greets Archbishop Herman

Philadelphia St. Stephen's Cathedral

Two members of the Philadelphia area churches were recently honored at the Pennsylvania Voters Hall of Fame, at Neumann College, on September 16. Nina Horsky, of St. Stephen's Cathedral and Emma Burychka of Holy Assumption Church were inducted for "having voted consecutively at every November election for the last 50 years; for having demonstrated commitment to democracy; and for trusting and supporting the electoral process of the Commonwealth and the United States." They were each presented with certificates and commemorative plates and congratulated personally by State Gov. Tom Ridge and Secy. Yvette Kane.



Nina Horsky with Governor Tom Ridge



Nina Horsky and Emma Burychka

St. Clair

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church

Frackville Deanery clergy and faithful visited the parish on its patronal feast, the Dormition.



Praying before the Holy Shroud of the Theotokos

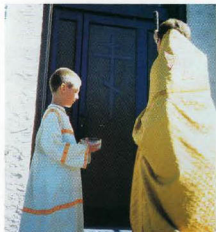


Procession offered during procession

Shillington

St. Herman of Alaska Church

In August, the faithful of St. Herman's enjoyed their annual Reading Phillie's Barbecue and Picnic, as well as a parish golf tournament and 19th Hole picnic. In October the parish family went for a seasonal hayride. Plans are under way for the 25th anniversary celebration, to be held Sept. 25-26, 1998. The parish added new large print liturgy books, with custom racks to accommodate them. Three coffee hour fund-raisers, with breakfast prepared by the Church School, were held during October for the Christmas Stockings for Russia project; \$350



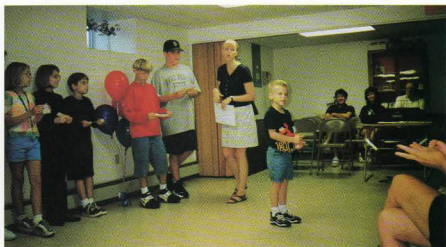
Fr. John Onofrey, helped by Andrew Wanenchak, blesses new front door

Continued on the next page.

was raised. Children of St. Herman's presented a talent show under the direction of Miss Rebecca Sichak. During the show there was also a presentation by "The Jerusalem Singers" of Allentown.



Church School members prepare breakfast



Talent show at St. Herman's

South Canaan St. Tikhon's Monastery Church

On October 12th Subdeacon Joseph O'Brien was ordained to the deaconate by Archbishop Herman. Concelebrating the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was His Eminence, Metropolitan Leo from Finland who also participated in the Founder's Day Dinner that followed. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Andrew Kavalkovich was presented the Chi Rho Cub Scout Award by Archbishop Herman.

His Grace, Bishop Evgeny, Rector of the Moscow Theological Academy, visited the Monastery and Seminary on November 7.

Following the vigil for St. Nicholas on Dec. 5, the seminarians and their families visited the Archbishop's residence for a reception.



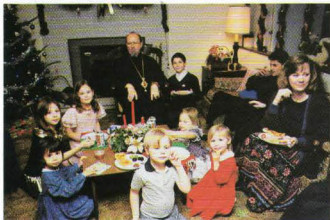
Bishop Evgeny with Archbishop Herman



Andrew Kavalkovich receives Chi Rho Award



Subdeacon Joseph O'Brien presented for ordination to the Deaconate



Children of Seminarians receive gifts from Archbishop



Fr. Gregory following tonsuring

Wilkes-Barre

Holy Trinity Church

The Church School recently collected over \$600 for the OCA's "Stockings for Russia" project. They also attended an ice show at the Hershey Arena this fall. An appreciation dinner was held for the "workers" of the parish for their many projects and fund raisers held during the year. Eighty students from the Seton Catholic High School visited with their theology teacher, Catherine Podczacki.

(Photo right above)

Fr. David Schewczyk explains meaning of icons to visitors



Williamsport

Holy Cross Church

The icon of the Pantocrator was blessed by our Pastor, Father Daniel prior to installation in time for our 20th Anniversary celebration.

Wilkes-Barre

Holy Resurrection Cathedral

The clergy and faithful of Holy Resurrection Cathedral recently honored the grandmothers and grandfathers of the parish with brunch in the cathedral parlor following the Divine Liturgy.



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Sunday February 15:

MASLENITSA: A RUSSIAN PRE-LENTEN CELEBRATION

Time: 3:00 P.M. - Banquet: Featuring a Russian-Style Menu!
Dancing and Entertainment

Co-chairpersons: V. Rev. Daniel K. Donlick and Mrs. Florence M. Boyko.
Dress: Costumes, gowns, ethnic costumes, or whatever!

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Please make checks payable to:
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Ticket Price for Banquet: Adult \$35.00, Child \$15.00
Reservations can be made for tables of ten!

Promise: Fun to be had by all!