
ORTHODOX LIFE



Vol. 58, No. 3
May—June, 2007

Published bimonthly by the Brotherhood of Saint Job of Pochaev at Holy Trinity Monastery,
Jordanville, New York 13361-0036 U.S.A.

Under the jurisdiction of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

MANAGING EDITOR: Archimandrite Luke.

EDITORIAL AND PRODUCTION STAFF: Archimandrite George, Rassaphor-monk Laurence,
Reader Andrew Podymow.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$18.00 for 1 year; \$30.00 for 2 years; \$45.00 for 3 years. Group subscription
rates available upon request.

NOTE: Those who subscribe to *Православная Русь* and *Православная Жизнь*, for the sum of \$40.00
for one year, and would also like to subscribe to *Orthodox Life*, need only pay an additional
\$12.00 for one year of *Orthodox Life*. Please note that *Orthodox Life* and *Православная Жизнь*
are different magazines, with different editorial content.

MULTIPLE ORDERS: Multiple orders (2 or more copies to the same address) are \$12.00 per year, per
copy.

Our patrons are kindly requested to supply all information pertinent to any change of address that
may take place, thus helping us keep costs down.

ORTHODOX LIFE - E(USPS 412-300, ISSN 0030-5820) is published bimonthly for \$18.00 per year by
Holy Trinity Monastery, P.O. Box 36, Jordanville, NY 13361-0036. Periodical postage paid at
Jordanville, NY.

E-Mail Address: Orthlife@telenet.net

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Holy Trinity Monastery,
P.O. Box 36, Jordanville, NY 13361-0036.



Contents

Act of Canonical Communion 2

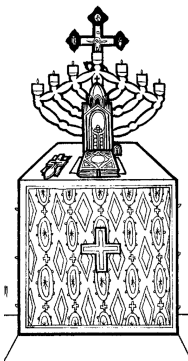
The Jesus Prayer and Life Beyond the Grave..... 12

An Amazing Healing..... 15

Ecumenism..... 23

Explanation of the Epistles of St. John the Theologian 38

Translation of the Relics of St. Dionysius 45



ACT OF CANONICAL COMMUNION

MAY 17, 2007

*The Act of Canonical Communion is Signed and the
First Joint Celebration of Divine Liturgy by the Primates
of the Two Parts of the Russian Orthodox Church Takes
Place in Christ the Saviour Cathedral*

On May 17, 2007, the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, the Act of Canonical Communion between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate was signed. The ceremony of the re-establishment of the fullness of communion within one Local Russian Orthodox Church was attended by President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation, along with other government officials.

From early morning, a multitude of Orthodox Christians of Moscow and pilgrims of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia began streaming to the church.

During the Proskomedie, the First Hierarch of the Church Abroad arrived. His Eminence was greeted by the Secretary of the Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on talks with the Moscow Patriarchate, Protopriest Alexander Lebedeff, and the Secretary of the Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate on talks with the Church Abroad, Protopriest Nikolai Balashov. Clergymen of the Moscow Patriarchate emerged from one of the deacon's doors to greet His Eminence, and an equal number of clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia from the other side. Venerating the altar-table cross, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus blessed the clerics and worshippers with it, and then entered the altar.

Greeting His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia



The gathering of Bishops, priests, laity of the Feast of Ascension, witnessing the historic signing of the Act of Canonical communion.

were the archpastors of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and members of the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate, plus Archbishop Innokenty of Korsun and Archbishop Evgeny of Verey, members of the Moscow Patriarchate's Commission, who all emerged together through the Royal Doors wearing white vestments.

As the bells of Christ the Saviour Cathedral pealed overhead, His Holiness was greeted by the Dean of the Central Deanery of Moscow, Protopriest Vladimir Divakov, and Senior Priest of Christ the Saviour Cathedral, Protopriest Mikhail Ryazantsev.

Donning the mantle, His Holiness blessed the bishops and clergymen with the cross, after which he ascended the cathedra in the middle of the church. As His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II entered the church, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus of Eastern America and New York proceeded to the cathedra. Standing on the north and south sides respectively were the bishops and clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate.

After the troparia, sung in turn by the unified choir of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and by Holy Trinity-St. Sergius



Patriarch Alexei II and Metropolitan Laurus sign the Act of Canonical Communion

Lavra Choir, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia read a special prayer which included the words: "As Thou didst lift Thy prayers to Thy Heavenly Father for Thy disciples, that they all be as one, gaze now with Thy merciful eyes upon Thy people who have sinned and disobeyed Thy will, bless now our good intention and the unification of the Church to Thy Glory; create this Thyself, remove all church temptations and divisions. Having given to us Thy law to love Thee, our God, and our neighbor, deliver us from all insult and disruption, may brotherly love reign among the children of our Church, in the Homeland and in the diaspora. Grant that we may now enter Thy temple and offer Thy bloodless sacrifice, that we may be unified in one body through communion with Thy Life-creating Body and Thy Honorable Blood and bring praise with all our hearts to Thine ineffable love for mankind."

Then the Secretaries of both Church Commissions, Mitred Protopriest Alexander Lebedeff and Protopriest Nikolai Balashov, read the texts of the decrees of the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate and of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on the confirmation of the Act of Canonical Communion. The text of the Act itself was read from the ambo by Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin.

The Act was then signed on the ambo of Christ the Saviour Cathedral. His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia and His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus of Eastern America and New York put

their signatures under this historic document. Then, with the words "Christ is among us! Now and forever," they kissed each other three times.

Archdeacon Andrei Mazur intoned "Many Years" to Patriarch Alexy and the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate, to His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and its Synod of Bishops.

Another "Many Years" was intoned by Archdeacon Eugene Burbelo of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia: "To the God-preserved nation of Russia and her children in the Homeland and in the diaspora, and to all Orthodox Christians—Many Years!"

Then Patriarch Alexy and Metropolitan Laurus exchanged greetings: "Joy fills our hearts," said His Holiness "An historic event has taken place, which we have awaited for many years. The unity of the Church is restored. This ceremony is precious for the Church, as she gathers her children together, it is precious for our entire people. Church division is being overcome, overcome also is the conflict within society, inherited from the days of the revolution. The Church is being strengthened, our Homeland, too, is being reborn."

Then His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus spoke, saying in part: "Your Holiness! Your Excellency! Eminent archpastors, beloved in the Lord fathers and children of the Russian Orthodox Church!

"The first word that Christ said to His followers after He rose from



"Christ is in our midst...He is and ever shall be!"



Small Entrance during Liturgy of the Feast of Ascension

the dead was 'Rejoice.' The second word that the Lord said to His disciples after the Resurrection was 'peace be unto you.' And so, on this holiday, we hear these greetings from the Ascended Lord, who granted us the joy of unity and blessed us with His peace. I congratulate all of you with this great joy!

"First of all, I bring thanks to the great Chief Pastor, our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave us the strength to perform this great deed. On behalf of my fellow-travelers and on my own behalf, I personally express to Your Holiness and Your Excellency the profound gratitude that fills our hearts and souls for the loving invitation to visit you, for your brotherly benevolence and hospitality, and I raise my prayers to the Altar of the All-Highest, that He send His omnipotent help and heavenly blessing to your zealous labors for the glory of the Holy Church of Christ and our Russian people.

"On this blessed day and in this blessed hour of our spiritual communion, I want to express the hope that the brotherly bonds between both parts of the Russian Orthodox Church would constructively develop and deepen our unity and joint service to God and the Russian people, in the Homeland and in the diaspora. Amen."

His Holiness then addressed the Chief of State of the Russian



Communion during Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Ascension.

Federation, noting his participation in the work of re-establishing unity within the Local Russian Orthodox Church. His Holiness reminded everyone that a few years ago, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, during a visit to New York, met with His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus and the members of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. "In you they saw a person dedicated to Russia, an Orthodox Christian who serves his people," said the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In memory of this event, His Holiness gave the President a triptych representing the Life-Giving Trinity, the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God and the Icon of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.

The Russian President then addressed those present. He said that the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion is an epochal event not only in the history of the Church but in the life of society in general. This event places an end to the division of the Church in the Homeland and abroad.

After the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion, a solemn Divine Liturgy began, at the end of which His Holiness and His Eminence exchanged greetings.

After Liturgy followed the opening of an exhibition on the recent history of the Russian Orthodox Church, the New Martyrs and Confessors of

Russia and the discussions on reconciliation that led to the restoration of brotherly communion and the unity of the Local Russian Orthodox Church. A meal then followed.

That evening, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus met with the participants of the Church History Conferences held in 2001 and 2002, and others who helped in the great work of the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church.

*Address Given By His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus
At the End of Divine Liturgy at Christ the Saviour
Cathedral*

*YOUR HOLINESS! BELOVED ARCHPASTORS, PASTORS AND CHILDREN OF
THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH!*

By the Will of the Almighty God, the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and also by heeding the call of the Christian heart and accepting the kind invitation of Your Holiness, I now have the opportunity to find myself within the blessed borders of Russia and to bow before her great holy sites.

Today, on the feast of the Ascension of the Lord, we jointly celebrated Divine Liturgy in this rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. Today, through His Ascension, the Lord, after an 80-year division beginning in 1927, calls upon us to begin a new era, to raise our mind to the heavens, and rid ourselves of the earthly snares of the past, heeding His promise: "I am with you until the end of time." The restoration of this church shall be the symbol of the restoration of a sovereign Russia, and its great consecration on the feast day of the Transfiguration of the Lord in 2000 shall symbolize the spiritual transfiguration of her people.

In this church, on November 5, 1917, after a 217-year interruption, the election of St. Tikhon, Patriarch-Confessor of All Russia, was held, as the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, a figure representing podvig and courage. One of the candidates to the patriarchate was the first Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of blessed memory, then Archbishop of Volhynia, and the order of the election and installation of the Patriarch was composed by a commission headed by our second Primate,



Copy of the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, gifted by Metropolitan Laurus to Patriarch Alexei II.

Metropolitan Anastassy (Gribanovsky) of blessed memory, then Archbishop of Kishenev.

In those fateful days of October 1917, when voting on the restoration of the patriarchate began at the All-Russian Local Church Council, a revolution struck the nation and militant atheists seized control of the government, as a result of which the Church in the homeland was subjected to unprecedented persecutions, and millions of believers along with their pastor found themselves exiled abroad. Ties with the Church in the Homeland were torn for many decades and now, with God's help, restoring prayerful-Eucharistic communion, we can joyfully exclaim as our forefathers had done at one time: *Not to us, but to Thy Name be glory.*

I express the deepest gratitude to Your Holiness for the touching words of welcome you expressed to me and my fellow-travelers. I also address with thanks those who have gathered under the vaults of this splendid temple and by their presence, through their fervent and warm prayers, created a solemn and festive environment for the Eminent Archpastors, pastors and all the children of the Russian Orthodox Church, and greet them with the words of church blessing: "Peace be unto you all!" The Holy Church, during every service, frequently blesses us in this way. The peace she offers us is the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, this is the power and work of the Holy Spirit. The acquisition of the peace of Christ in the Christian life is equated with such good works as faith and love. Faith is the foundation of Christian life, love is its pin-

nacle. And since our Christian path is a path from faith to love, then over its entire course, it must be illuminated and warmed by the light of the peace of Christ. I am deeply gladdened that "The Lord granteth strength to His people and blessed mankind with His peace." May this peace be "with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Ephesians 6:24). Amen.

As a symbol of our thanks for your warm hospitality and in memory of today's great and historic event, we ask that you accept from us this gift: a copy of the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, Protectress of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

The Official Delegation Headed by Metropolitan Laurus, the Unified Choir and Pilgrims of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad Participate in the Great Consecration of a New Church in Butovo

On May 19, 2007, the birthday of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus and his fellow-travellers participated in the great consecration of a new church of the Resurrection of Christ and the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia in Butovo, on the outskirts of Moscow. Singing during Divine Liturgy, in addition to the Sretensky Monastery men's choir, was the unified choir of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia under the direction of Peter Fekula. At the end of divine services, His Eminence turned to His Holiness Patriarch Alexy and all those in attendance with the following greeting:

"Your Holiness! Beloved-in-the-Lord archpastors, pastors and children of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia!

"Today is both a sorrowful and joyful day. Sorrowful because this place was a place of the suffering and death of a multitude of faithful children of the Church, yet joyful, because the Holy Church now makes eternal their memory by this memorial temple of God. Their struggles now bind us with stronger spiritual ties.

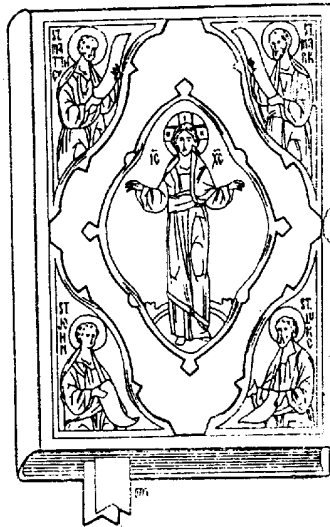
"As you know, upon the consecration of every church, a relic of a martyr is placed into the altar table. Here, the earth was thoroughly soaked with the blood of the martyrs and sown with their bones, and it shall be as an altar table to Christ our God. Long ago, a prophet said of the persecutors of the Church of Christ and of God's People: 'I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.'

"May their memory be wiped from the hearts of men, and the Church of Christ established on the Russian land for ages and ages! Amen.

"In memory of today's joint praising of the memory of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, we ask that you accept from us for this newly-consecrated church a gift: an icon of St. John of Shanghai with a portion of his holy relics. Vladyka John held sacred the memory of the New Martyrs, and by his efforts, the Memorial Church in Brussels was built, dedicated to the Righteous Royal Passion-bearers and all the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia."

All text and photos from www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws



THE JESUS PRAYER AND LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE

In one of the convents of St. Petersburg, in the beginning of the twentieth century, there lived the nun Tatiana. From the vision described by her, it seems that she was not very spiritually advanced. Therefore, the event described was spiritually instructive for her, and for later generations it became an authoritative witness of the importance of the Jesus Prayer.

Once early in the morning, during the break after the matins service, around 5:00 AM, Tatiana was in her cell. This was a time for a brief rest before the next service. She had just fallen asleep when she was visited by a mysterious vision. As if awake, it seemed that she was preparing to go to the church of St. Nicholas in St. Petersburg. She was dressed in full monastic garb. In order to arrive on time, she climbed into some kind of carriage, and at that moment she suddenly seemed to be in the heavens, on a gloomy plain. She was seized by a feeling of fear and helplessness. She saw a multitude of people, whose faces were dark and depressed. After a moment of silence, Tatiana asked them, "Why are you in such despair?" They answered, "Because death came upon us suddenly, just like it did with you."

Tatiana then understood that she was among the dead, and she was seized with great fear.

At that moment her Guardian Angel approached her, shining with an unearthly light, and ordered her to follow him. He showed her the toll-houses, at which a soul is judged, after it departs from the body, for its sinful actions while on earth. He also led her to the place of eternal torments. One of the places there was filled with the souls of deceased men and women, adults and children. They told Tatiana that their souls would remain in that place until the Last Judgment. Tatiana looked at them with sympathy and then asked, "What do you do here? Do you pray to God? Do you see your Creator?"

With anguish they answered her, "Unfortunately, we cannot see God, nor can we pray to Him. For our spiritual negligence and laziness during our earthly life, we now remain in anguish and sorrow. And even though we did not commit any serious sins, we were indifferent to the requirements of the Gospel and the commandments of Christ. It seemed to us that the requirement to pray unceasingly (I Thess. 5:17), i.e., to say the Jesus Prayer, did not pertain to us. Now we see that it also pertains to laymen. With the help of the Jesus Prayer we should have acquired the grace of the Holy Spirit and united with Christ. Our purified hearts should have become temples of God, when in fact they were breeding grounds for decaying lusts. Just as the body cannot live without air, so also our soul cannot be born for eternal life without prayer." Hearing this, the Nun Tatiana made the sign of the cross. After a pause, they added: "We are condemned to eternal torments. Our pleas do not reach God. Only our Orthodox brethren living on earth can help us by fervently praying for our souls."

Then Tatiana's guide said to her, "Although you are a nun, you deserve similar punishment, for during your life you neglected the Jesus Prayer. You are not a bride of Christ. Your heart is possessed by the cares of the transitory world."

"Ach!" Tatiana cried out. "Within me I feel horrible torment, as if my soul is on fire. Oh, how I wish I could die and be taken up immediately to heaven, avoiding these horrible toll-houses!"

"Only the saints die that way," answered the Angel, "the saints who for their entire life kept in their heart the Jesus Prayer and the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only they ascend directly to Paradise, for their souls became a paradise while on earth. Where the Lord God is—there is Paradise. Know that if a person trains himself to say the Jesus Prayer continually, when his hour of death comes, Christ Himself will take his soul and it will abide with Him forever. Likewise, prayer to the Most Holy Theotokos will incline Her to be our Intercessor before Life Eternal. In whatever condition death finds a person, thus will he be judged. Whoever dies with the name of Jesus Christ on his lips, will be with Him in His Kingdom. Whoever carries all the cares of his life on his shoulders, not hoping in God, him the Lord God will not help. Now I will show you the place of torment for careless monks and nuns."

Then Tatiana saw groups of monastics, their sins which were not cleansed away through repentance, and their eternal sufferings and torments. In departing from Tatiana, the Guardian Angel ordered her to write down and describe everything she saw to those living on earth for their correction and salvation.

As soon as Tatiana awakened, she crossed herself with the words of the Jesus Prayer and said with relief, "Glory be to God, it was only a

dream!"

She had only just said these words when her soul appeared again next to her guide—her Guardian Angel, who began to lecture her, saying, "Don't think that this was just a dream. Your soul was actually on the other side of life. In order for you to be convinced of this, you will now be sent to the place where you deserve for twenty days."

Tatiana fell at his feet in despair, and with tears she fervently began to implore her Angel to forgive her weak faith and grant her time for repentance. The Angel asked God to forgive her sin and allow her to return to earth, under the condition that she fulfill the task assigned to her. Upon awakening the second time, the nun went directly to the Abbess of her convent, and in the presence of all the sisters she related what she had seen and heard.

The truth of her vision she confirmed by the correction of her way of life, and she became a zealous and pious nun. At every opportunity she shared what she experienced in the after-life.

Whoever believes in the truth of this vision and uses this knowledge in his life, will not lose anything, but will only benefit. For one thing is for sure—at some time we will all die.

Translated by Archimandrite George



AN AMAZING, MIRACULOUS HEALING OF DEPRESSION

Through a Photograph of the Miraculous Myrrh- Streaming Iveron Icon

It is with a certain amount of hesitancy and trepidation that I write and submit this article, fearing, first of all, that I will inadequately relate this remarkable and true account, and secondly, questioning whether the account will be properly understood and believed by those who read it.

In April of 1993, I had the wonderful privilege of seeing the miraculous myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon of Montreal for the first time. Jose had brought the Icon to the Russian Orthodox Church in Hamilton, Ontario one evening, where there was a small group of about forty or fifty parishioners that had gathered for the Akathist. Having known about the Iveron Icon for a number of years, it was with great excitement and anticipation that I waited amongst the faithful for its arrival, reflecting upon the fact that I was soon to have the blessed and good fortune of seeing and venerating this God-given treasure, like so many had done before me. I was also thinking about some of the fascinating descriptions I had read earlier concerning the extraordinary miracles that had already occurred through this wonderworking image. Except for once—nothing supernatural or miraculous had ever occurred in my life; at least, nothing that I could remember.

When Jose had finally arrived with the icon, it was carefully and reverently placed in the center of the church, and it was then that the Akathist hymn to the Iveron Mother of God began. Even from a distance, the beautifully fragrant myrrh was quite noticeable, and a great consolation to all those who were present. When the akathist was finished, everyone venerated the Icon and received a small piece of cotton that contained some of the preciously scented myrrh. After I, too, approached the Icon, I took the liberty of taking a number of pictures of it, and then simply stood near it, praying and marveling at its incredible beauty. After some time

had passed, Jose approached me and began speaking to me. He impressed me as a wonderfully pious, gentle, and humble man.

After about a week or so, I had my film developed and was especially pleased with one of the photographs; so much so, that I decided to have it enlarged to measure exactly 18 by 20 inches, and framed with a gold colored metal and glass frame. The icon was then placed in the sanctuary of our church and blessed after it remained there for the traditional and customary forty days. Having brought the newly blessed icon home, I placed it in my bedroom where I had a number of other icons that made up my prayer corner, and it was in this bedroom that I spent much of my time reading and in prayer.

By mid-summer of that year, I felt a change coming over me. This change, however, wasn't something that was new to me. I had experienced this feeling before. In spite of all my efforts to avoid and ignore what was surely coming, I knew that I was lapsing back into an enormously serious problem with clinical depression that I had already battled—with respite—for eight difficult years. Only those who have suffered with chronic clinical depression can understand what a person and soul with this frightening and debilitating illness actually goes through. Medical professionals tell us that the problem stems from a complicated imbalance of chemicals in the brain, which can be treated—with remarkable results—by the use of certain medications. The Holy Fathers teach us that it is a spiritual illness that is demonically influenced and has much to do with the state and condition of one's soul.

Be that as it may, and whether or not it was merely coincidental, my bouts with depression began very close to the same time that I became seriously involved with the Church. This involvement included a regular prayer rule, my attendance at all the divine services, a great deal of spiritual reading, and a growing love and fascination with Orthodoxy that my spiritual father said was God's way of pulling me closer to Him.

As summer passed and the fall was quickly setting in, my depression grew increasingly worse. The only way I know of describing the unprecedented agony with any amount of accuracy is to simply say that it is a profound sorrow that is nothing short of an true foretaste of hell. At this point, it was even becoming difficult to manage the smallest and simplest tasks, and I was now spending more and more time in my room, desperately trying to sleep as the only way to avoiding and escaping this ominous and unrelenting pain.

Several months earlier, however, I began noticing something a bit peculiar about my new Iveron icon. Often times, in the early evening and late hours of the night, I would distinctly hear a slight "cracking-like" sound (similar to the sound that a small branch or dry twig makes when broken) that I was sure was coming from the icon, but would always dis-

miss as just a noise, like many other noises, that can often be heard in a home during the quiet hours of the night. As time went by, this continued to happen, but now, each time it did, it would immediately draw my attention away from whatever I had been reading or thinking about, and would almost compel me to ask myself the nagging and persistent question: "Why does that cracking-like sound keep coming from the icon?"

It wasn't until once in November, well after midnight, that something a little more sobering occurred. While I was lying in bed, helplessly dealing with a turmoil of anxious thoughts and unable to fall asleep or relax in any way, the icon suddenly "cracked" so hard, that I immediately felt chills throughout my entire body, and was so struck by what had just happened, that I quickly sat up, slowly crossed myself, and softly whispered, "Most Holy Theotokos, save me!" I then just sat there, and simply stared at the icon in the dark, amazed at what had just taken place. I had never experienced or even read about something like this before, but was now absolutely certain that there was definitely something significant and mystical about the cracking-like sound that was often coming from the icon. Nevertheless, fearing the skepticism of others, I kept all these things to myself.

It was now January of the following year when my depression finally began to lift, and it was so good to feel well again after the great agony and torment I had to suffer and endure for nearly six months. Now my interests, especially my love for reading, returned once again, and it was such a pleasure and delight to be able to read the many wonderful Orthodox books, journals, and articles that I had collected over the years.

One day, quite by chance, so to speak, I was at a friend's home when I found an old copy of "The Orthodox Word," published by the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood of Platina, California. As I began looking through that particular issue, I came across an article about the Holy Great Martyr and Wonderworker Menas of Egypt that I thought might be interesting to read. As I came closer to the very end of the article, I read the following about a miraculous icon of St. Menas in Boston that totally astonished and amazed me:

Many times the icon would knock—a phenomenon often associated with icons among devout Greeks. This usually happened when the lamp would go out, or when the family was to receive news or a letter. (The icon is still heard to knock on various occasions in the monastery where it is now kept.)

A little further on I read:

Even in Detroit, the icon continued to knock many times, and this was witnessed by many, including a child who used

to visit the pilgrim-grandmother. (Aug.-Sept. 1967, Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 127)

Never before had I heard of such a “phenomenon,” yet this was exactly what was happening to the copy of the Iveron Icon that I had in my room, except that instead of hearing a mysterious “knock,” I was often hearing a mysterious “crack.” Moreover, as if this discovery alone was not enough to make more than an incredible impression on me, I found yet another striking similarity between the two miraculous Icons: St. Menas is commemorated on November 11/24, the very same day that the Iveron Icon of Montreal began to stream myrrh, and the very same day that the Iveron Icon and this miracle is commemorated by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. I always found it interesting to read about wonderworking icons and their related miracles, but this discovery and account left me so overwhelmed, that I then truly felt and believed that it was now safe to say that I actually had a copy of the miraculous myrrh-streaming Iveron Icon that had itself become miraculous in a truly mystical way. “Oh, but Lord,” I would think to myself, “who would believe my report?”

Summer had again arrived, but unlike the previous summer, things were relatively well with me, yet it was not to be so for very long. It was now in September that I again felt the impending doom of melancholy, and it was literally a repeat of all the previous agonizing episodes that I had already suffered and gone through. My thought process was slowing down; I was losing a great amount of energy; my enthusiasm for all the things that I usually enjoyed and loved doing diminished considerably; and my eating and sleeping patterns were becoming disrupted. I knew full well that it was only a matter of time before I would again be experiencing and battling an all-out war with this vicious and brutal illness. It had returned once more, adamantly refusing to depart or allow me any measure of peace.

The following account is unquestionably one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life, and is, in many ways, so difficult to believe and comprehend, that if I hadn’t experienced it personally and firsthand, I’m quite sure that I wouldn’t be able to fully understand or grasp such an amazing miracle.

It was a cold evening in November 1994 when I reluctantly began to read my evening prayers. I use the term “reluctantly” because when suffering from clinical depression, as I’ve explained earlier, a person’s will and resolve literally become paralyzed, to the point of even the most mundane and simplest of tasks of everyday life becoming unimaginably hard to accomplish. It was, therefore, with the greatest pain and effort that I began reading my prayers, reminding myself how critically impor-

tant and mystically powerful prayer is, and how much I had to persevere in order to receive help or mercy from God. Yet I had no strength; I was too sick; I was too weak; and I was far too overwhelmed with sorrow and despair and the desire to stop praying. Nevertheless, I stood at the foot of my bed and began to recite the Prayer to the Venerable Cross. As I did, however, it seemed as though the more I prayed, the more depressed I became.

At this point, the pain and struggle proved too much for me, and I had lost the little strength that I had. Halfway through the prayer, I decided that I had to stop, but at that very moment—something wondrous occurred: the Iveron icon suddenly “cracked,” and at that very moment that it did—the depression was gone! The depression had left! There was no more pain! My health was fully restored! I stood rooted in absolute, utter disbelief! How—in less than a second—could a deep, serious, and debilitating depression, that tormented and troubled me for nearly three months—be healed in an instant, as though it had never been? I was stunned at what had just taken place. The relief was enormous, but at the same time, it left me somewhat shaken. I was sure that the Mother of God was truly present.

Somehow managing to finish my prayer rule, I sat down and stared at the icon with unusual wonder, asking myself repeatedly: How could this be possible? How could the depression and heaviness have left so quickly? How could I have been healed of such a hellish and frightening ailment in such an extraordinary and unexpected way? Who would ever believe that this actually occurred to me since I had no way of proving it?



The Iveron Icon of the Theotokos of Montreal

I was a miserable, broken, hopeless wretch, yet I was instantly and amazingly restored to perfect health through a photographic reproduction of a miracle-working icon. All of this served to reaffirm my faith and belief in all the miracles worked through the Iveron Icon that I had read about so eagerly. How could I ever again doubt that with God and through prayers and intercessions of His Holy and Most Pure Mother, all things are truly possible? I cannot describe the comfort and ease that I felt afterwards. It was far beyond anything I could ever have hoped for. From darkness to light, and from sorrow to joy. Indeed, all things are possible with God.

I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the Most Holy Mother of God. Perhaps by sharing this unique and miraculous experience with others, many will be convinced not to lose heart in whatever difficulties, pains, or hardships they may have to face in life.

All of us, without exception, have crosses to bear. For some reason, some bear crosses that are much heavier than others. St. John Chrysostom wrote that no one is free of suffering, even if one were to strive without end. As Orthodox Christians, however, we should always have in mind that the infinite wisdom of God orders and arranges the life of every individual, knowing exactly what is needed and beneficial for each one of us, and even when facing a tumult of adversities, regardless of how troublesome they may be, we can always find shelter and aid through the grace and protection of the Most Holy Mother of God.

St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco assured us that the Most Holy Theotokos sees every tear, hears every groan, and listens to every entreaty directed to Her. St. John of Kronstadt taught that when we are about to pray to the Holy Virgin, we should be freed from any doubt that we depart from Her without having received help. When the desert-dweller Photina was brought to the brink of despair through a fierce struggle with diabolical thoughts, she begged the Heavenly Queen to take her from this life. After an immense war with the troubling, demonic assaults, the Mother of God appeared to her and spoke to her through the depths of her soul, saying: "Don't be afraid of anything; place your hope in me." Immediately, the darkness that engulfed her soul dissipated and left her heart filled with joy. And the venerable and much loved St. Seraphim of Sarov said that the Mother of God is an invincible and insistent intercessor even for the most desperate sinner. It is impossible, he said, for a demon to destroy a man as long as the man himself has recourse to the help of the Most Holy Mother of God.

Needless to say, the wonderworking Iveron Icon will always be a marvelous reminder of the remarkable miracle that took place in my life. I will always have a great love and veneration for it as a sure testimony of my own healing.

To all those who suffer infirmities or troubles of any kind, I sympa-

thize wholeheartedly. Naturally, many things are much easier said than done, but I would encourage all of you to never lose hope. It has been proven time and again throughout the history of the Church that those who patiently trust in the Mother of God will never be disappointed. With Her there is mercy; with Her there is love; and with Her there is great optimism and joy.

*No matter what sorrow might befall you,
No matter what sickness might strike you,
No matter how unbearable your family life might be,
Or how unstable your position at work—
In all these circumstances
Turn to the Queen of Heaven,
And with tears beg Her to help,
And She, our Sovereign Lady, will hear you
And help you in everything.
Remember that for Her there is nothing impossible.*

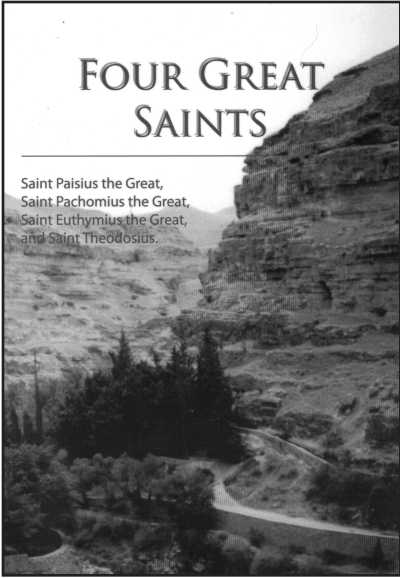
The Testament of Abbess Rufina of Harbin (+1943)

Reader George Pejnovic



NEW BOOK!

FROM HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY BOOKSTORE



Four Great Saints

Although a small book, it is one of great spiritual wealth. Recounting the lives of four early pillars of the Christian Church, it teaches us many lessons of living a holy life by the examples of Sts. Paisius the Great, Pachomius the Great, Euthymius the Great, and Theodosius. Translated into English by Leo Papadopoulos, a frequent contributor to *Orthodox Life*.

160 pp., softcover.....\$12.00, plus S&H

HOLY TRINITY MONASTERY BOOKSTORE

PO BOX 36

JORDANVILLE, NY

13361

Fax: 315-858-0505

ECUMENISM

Introduction

The Orthodox Church is, by its very nature, catholic and obviously ecumenical (universal). It welcomes with open arms all peoples, of all races and all times, and invites them all to come. Christ, who is the head, addresses the world throughout all time: *Come to Me all of you*, while at the same time sending out His apostles to teach the Gospel of salvation *to all nations*.

This component and inherent feature of the Church, ecumenicity or universality, is today being contested by two movements which express the spirit of the age: Ecumenism and Globalism.

Globalism is promoted by powerful socio-political forces and projects the model of a single united humanity, while Ecumenism is active in the religious sector, attempting to realize the vision of a united Christianity and aiming ultimately at one universal religion, a “pan-religion.”

In this paper, we will attempt to provide an outline of the Ecumenical movement, of which the Orthodox Church is a participant, since, for most of the Church its nature and work remains unknown and certain developments within ecumenical circles have raised fears and provoked concerns.

It may sound strange, but it is a fact that Ecumenism today is threatening the ‘ecumenical nature’ of our Church, as it falls all the more into compromising and syncretistic tactics which contradict the basic principles of our Orthodox Faith. We must not forget; correct faith is the first and foremost prerequisite for the salvation of mankind, according to the divinely-inspired patristic declaration: “Whoever wishes to be saved is first of all obliged to keep the catholic [entire] faith; if he does not keep this faith safe and unblemished, without hesitation, he will be eternally lost” (The Symbol of Faith of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria).

Thus, if the salvific message of Orthodoxy is obscured and lost among the alluring messages of the heterodox and non-Christian religions, for the sake of a utopian, ecumenistic vision, then the hope of the world will also have been lost.

Ecumenism

Ecumenism is a movement which declares that it has as its purpose the unity of the divided Christian world (Orthodox, Papists, Protestants and others). The idea of unity stirs every sensitive Christian soul and corresponds to its innermost longing. This idea is also appropriated by Ecumenism. However, Ecumenism's unifying vision, a vision above all spiritual, is based mainly upon human endeavors and not on the action of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit alone Who can, upon encountering human repentance and humility, make this vision a reality.

Contemporary Ecumenism

The roots of contemporary ecumenism are found in nineteenth century Protestantism. At that time some Christian confessions, faced with an exodus of their members due to an increase in religious indifference and organized anti-religious movements, were compelled to rally together and co-operate.

Their unifying activity took on an organized form as the Ecumenical Movement in the twentieth century, and specifically in 1948, with the establishment in Amsterdam of the World Council of Churches, which has its headquarters in Geneva.

It is important to note that the World Council of Churches (WCC) would never have been able to assume an ecumenical character, but would have remained merely an inter-protestant affair, had not been for the participation of certain local Orthodox Churches. The Roman Catholics, at first, refused to participate. Later, however, without becoming an organic member of the WCC, they also entered the Ecumenical Movement. With the relative decree at the Second Vatican Council (1964) they inaugurated their own particular version of ecumenism which aims at the union of all Christians under the authority of the pope.

Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement

It must be acknowledged that the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople provided an important boost to the creation of the Ecumenical Movement. This was the case especially with the

Proclamation of 1920 which, as it turned out, became the basis and "Great Charter" of Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement.

This Proclamation was quite unprecedented in the history of the Church since, for the first time, an official Orthodox text characterized all heterodox communities of the West as 'Churches', as "being a part of the household of Christ and *fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ*" (Eph. 3:6). In this way it subverted and overthrew Orthodox ecclesiology. So as to avoid referring to earlier periods, it suffices to remember that only a few years earlier (in 1895), in one its encyclicals, the same Patriarchate placed Papism outside the Church because it introduced heretical teachings and innovations. Thus, it likewise called upon Western Christians to return to the One Church, that is, to Orthodoxy.

The Proclamation of 1920, having as its prototype the international League of Nations, proposed the creation of an association and fellowship between the churches with the primary aims being (a) a re-examination of dogmatic differences with a mollifying character, (b) the acceptance of a uniform calendar (the partial application of which brought about, unfortunately, an inter-Orthodox calendar division), and (c) the convocation of pan-Christian conferences.

Except for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, nearly all of the Orthodox Churches gradually asked to be accepted, and eventually were accepted, as members of the W.C.C. Some, however, were later compelled to retreat and to withdraw since, on the one hand, they observed with disappointment the Ecumenical Movement's degeneration, and, on the other, they were pressured by intense anti-ecumenical reactions of their flock. One could very well ask: "How is it possible for Orthodoxy to be a 'member' of 'something,' at the same time that she is herself the 'whole,' the Body of Christ, and calls all to become His members?"

The presence, in any case, of Orthodox Churches at W.C.C. gatherings was, due to the way in which they were assembled and functioned, always tenuous, ineffective, and decorative. The decisions of the W.C.C. were molded exclusively by the overwhelming majority of the Protestant vote. Of course, until 1961, at the General Assemblies the Orthodox submitted separate statements – some of which constitute historic confessions of faith – as representatives of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

With regard to the ecumenistic overtures of Vatican II, the Orthodox response was positive, with the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras as chief spokesman. The Patriarch met Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem (1964), carried out together with him the mutual lifting of the anathemas from the Schism of 1054, and encouraged the "dialogue of love," and thus promoting the aims of the Second Vatican Council.

The Theoretical "Overtures" of Ecumenism

Ecumenism, in order to realize its aims, is obliged to reconsider or even overlook certain basic principles of Orthodoxy. It promotes the idea of an 'Extended' or 'Broad Church,' according to which the Church is one and consists of Christians of every Confession from the moment in which they were baptized. In this way, all Christian Confessions are amongst themselves 'Sister Churches.'

Within this same spirit is found the idea of the 'Universal visible Church.' That is, a Church which exists 'invisibly' and consists of all Christians, which, through the various mutual union efforts, will appear in its visible dimension.

These views were shaped and influenced by the Protestant "branch theory," according to which the Church is a 'tree' with its 'branches' being all the Christian confessions, each one of which holds only a part of the truth.

We should also add the theory of 'the two lungs' which was developed between Orthodox ecumenists and Papists. According to this theory, Orthodoxy and Papism are the two lungs with which the Church breathes. For the Church to start breathing again properly, the two lungs must synchronize their breathing.

Finally, among the methods which Ecumenism uses for the rapprochement of Christians, there is included 'dogmatic minimalism.' This is an attempt to reduce the dogmas down to the most necessary, the bare minimum, in order to leap over the differences between the confessions. The result, however, is to overlook the dogmas, to downgrade and minimize their importance. "Let the Christians unite," they say, "and the theologians will discuss the dogmas later"! With the method of dogmatic minimalism it may indeed be quite easy for Christians to unite. Yet, can such 'Christians' be Orthodox, that is, truly Christians?

The Orthodox Understanding of the Church

According to Orthodox ecclesiology, Church and Orthodoxy are one and the same. The Church is undoubtedly Orthodox, and Orthodoxy is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Body of Christ. Because Christ is one, the Church is therefore also one. That is why division in the Church is inconceivable. There can be only a separation from the Church. That is, at specific historical moments, the heretics and the schismatics cut themselves off from the Church and thus cease being

members of the Church.

The Church possesses the fullness of the truth, not merely an abstract truth, but a way of life which saves man from death and makes him "God by grace." On the contrary, a heresy is a whole or partial rejection of the truth, a tearing into pieces of truth, which then takes upon itself the character and pathology of an ideology. It separates man from the way of being which God imparted to His Church, and it kills him spiritually.

Furthermore, the dogmas which encapsulate the transcendental truths of our faith are not abstract ideas and intellectual ideas originating in the mind, nor, much more, are they a result of medieval obscurantism or theological scholasticism. They express, rather, the experience and life of the Church. Hence, when there exists a difference in dogma, there likewise definitely exists a difference in the way of life. Whoever, then, undervalues the *akrivia* (exactitude) of faith cannot live the fullness of life in Christ.

The Christian must accept all that Christ has revealed. Not a 'minimum,' but the whole. For, in the entirety and wholeness of the faith are preserved the catholicity and the orthodoxy of the Church.

This explains the struggles unto blood of the Holy Fathers to safeguard the faith of the Church, as well as their concern for the phrasing – under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit – of the 'terms' of the Oecumenical Councils. These 'terms' are nothing other than the 'termination points,' the borders of truth, so that the faithful can discern the Church, as Orthodox, from heresy.

The heterodox, by rejecting the fullness of the truth, separated themselves from the Church. This, then, is why they are heretics. They therefore lack the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, and their 'Mysteries' are invalid. Consequently, the baptism they perform cannot admit them into the Church of Christ.

The 68th Canon of the Holy Apostles states: (Free Translation) "Those who have been baptized or ordained by heretics cannot be either faithful Christians or clergymen." Saint Nicodemus the Athonite adds: "The baptism of all the heretics is impious and blasphemous and has no communion whatsoever with that of the Orthodox."

What, however, do the Orthodox ecumenists tell us?

One Orthodox hierarch has proclaimed that "the Holy Spirit is at work in every Christian baptism" and the rebaptism by Orthodox of baptized heterodox Christians is inspired by "narrow-mindedness, fanaticism and bigotry... [It] is an injustice committed against Christian baptism, and eventually a blasphemy against God's Holy Spirit."

Another hierarchy, speaking to the heterodox, stated: "We are all members of Christ, [the] one and only body, one and unique 'new creation,' given that our common baptism has freed us from death."

The ecumenist ecclesiology was likewise officially expressed thus: "We are obliged to be ready to search for and to recognize the presence of the Church outside our own canonical limits, with which we identify the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."

Yet, there are those who are even bolder, who envision the re-founding of the Church through the unification of all Christians. One Orthodox hierarchy maintains that "we have need of a new Christianity which will be based entirely upon new perceptions and terms. We cannot teach the type of religion which was handed down us to the next generations."

The dialogues of the past

Ecumenism, in order to promote its plans, uses a variety of means. The most basic means is that of dialogue.

No one is ignorant of the fact that the Orthodox Church by its very nature is open to dialogue. God is always in dialogue with man, and the Saints of the Church never refused dialectical communication with the world.

The Saints, having self-awareness of their communion with God, try through dialogue to impart the experience of the truth they lived. For the Saints, the truth wasn't an object of research. They didn't seek it, they didn't negotiate it; they merely offered it. If the dialogue didn't lead the heterodox to the rejection of their mistaken belief and acceptance of orthodox faith, they did not continue it.

Saint Mark of Ephesus dialogued with the Papists at the Council of Ferrara-Florence for two years (1438-1439). When, however, he saw their haughtiness, their intransigence and their persistence in error, he cut off all relations with them, to the point of exhorting the Orthodox faithful "to avoid the Papists as one avoids a snake."

A theological dialogue was also begun between the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah II Tranos and the Protestant theologians of Tübingen (1579). When he ascertained that the dialogue was fruitless, he ended it. The Patriarch wrote: "Please release us from these cares. Therefore, going about your own ways, if you like, you may write to us, but no longer concerning dogmas."

The dialogues of Ecumenism

Contemporary ecumenical dialogues differ radically from the dialogues of the Saints, because they are conducted on the basis of the prin-

ciples of an extended Church and on dogmatic minimalism. For this reason they are unOrthodox and fruitless. The proof of this is that in the almost 100 years that the talks have been held they have not offered anything of value to the unity of the Christian world. On the contrary, they have succeeded in dividing the Orthodox!

The main aspects of the pathology of contemporary dialogues are the following:

A. Lack of Orthodox confession.

In the dialogues certain Orthodox representatives do not express the unshakeable belief of the Orthodox Church, that it is, in fact, the one and only Church of Christ on earth. They, likewise, do not put forward the holy tradition and spiritual experience of Orthodoxy, which differ from the traditions and experiences of western Christianity. Only such a confessing stance would be able to vouchsafe and make productive and fruitful the Orthodox presence at the dialogues.

B. Lack of sincerity.

The lack of Orthodox witness, in combination with the demonstrated insincerity of the heterodox, makes the inter-Christian dialogue even more difficult and ineffective. On account of this, many times either mutual superficial compromises or equivocal language and terminology are employed, so as to cover up the differences.

If, in the first place, the Roman Catholics were sincere they should proclaim with frankness in ecumenical circles that which they emphasize to their own faithful – their non-negotiable attachment to the primacy of the pope and his infallibility. This of course would reveal clearly how they envision the unity of Christians: not as a unity of faith, but rather as a subjection of all under papal supremacy. In addition to this, the finding would be confirmed that the institution of the papacy on the one hand comprises the most tragic distortion of the Gospel and, on the other hand, uses dialogues purely for the sake of its own expansionist policies.

The chief expression of this insincerity of the Papists is found in their maintaining and strengthening of the Unia. This is a perfidious and subversive institution which Papism used and continues to use as a unifying model, despite all the strong objections of the Orthodox and despite the fact that today it (the Unia) comprises the primary obstacle to the bilateral talks.

If, on the other hand, the multifarious Protestant groups were honest, they should state outright that they are no longer willing to compromise their fundamental protestant principles and that (in fact) there are other reasons that force them into dialogue. This is, in any case, what is revealed by the deterioration of their 'churches' (ordination of women,

same-sex marriages, etc)

C. Over-emphasis on Love.

Because dishonesty and self-serving motives have poisoned the dialogues, which have been reduced to endless and fruitless theological debates, a turn of events was attempted. The dialogues were now called "dialogues of love", both for effect, and to side-step the hurdle of dogmatic contentions. "Love comes first," they emphasize. "Love compels us to unite, even if there are dogmatic differences."

For this reason, their method in the dialogues of today is for there not to be any discussion of things that divide, but only of those things that unite, so as to facilitate a false sense of unity and shared faith. In the Oecumenical Synods of the past, however, the Fathers always discussed precisely that which divided. The same happens today in any dialogue between two parties with differences: They discuss the issues which separate them – that is, indeed, the whole point of the dialogue – and not those issues that unite.

For us Orthodox, Love and Truth are notions inseparable. A dialogue of love without truth is false and unnatural. Whereas, a dialogue of love "in truth" means: Conversing with the heterodox out of love, to point out their errors and how they can be led to the truth. If I truly love them, I must tell them the truth, however difficult or painful this might be.

D. The Obscuring of Orthodox Criteria.

Within the pathology of the dialogues there also belongs the deadening of Orthodox theological criteria, and this has arisen due to the cultivation of an "ecumenical courtesy," of personal relationships and friendships amongst heterodox theologians. The faith is no longer considered the truth which saves, but the whole of a series of theoretical truths which allows for compromises.

The Orthodox ecumenists claim: "We are merely discussing, we are not changing our faith!" Of course dialogue, as a 'loving approach' to the other, is pleasing to God. The ecumenist dialogue, however, as it is carried out today, is not a meeting in truth, but rather a "mutual recognition." This means that we recognise the heterodox communities as Churches; that we concede that their dogmatic differences comprise "legitimate expressions" of the same faith. By doing this, however, we fall into the trap of dogmatic syncretism: we place on an equal footing the truth and delusion; we equate light with darkness.

E. Joint Prayer.

With the deadening of their theological criteria, it is quite natural that Orthodox ecumenists would participate, without reticence, in common

shows of worship with the heterodox and in joint prayer, which take place regularly at inter-Christian meetings. They know that within this common ecumenical spirituality the right psychological climate is created which is necessary for promotion of union efforts.

However, the Holy Canons of the Church strictly forbid us to pray with the heterodox, for the heterodox do not share the Orthodox faith. They believe in a different, distorted Christ. On this account Saint John Damascene calls them unbelievers: "Whoever does not believe according to the tradition of the Catholic [Whole] Church is an unbeliever."

Praying with the heterodox, then, is forbidden because it professes belief and participation in the faith of the other person praying and it gives the other the false impression that he is not in error or delusion and therefore has no need of turning to the truth.

F. Intercommunion.

If the Holy Canons forbid praying together with the heterodox, they even more strongly forbid our participation in the heterodox 'Sacraments.' Even on this point, however, we Orthodox have not been consistent.

The Second Vatican Council, within the framework of the ecumenistic "overtures" which it made, proposed intercommunion with the Orthodox: the Papists would be able to commune at Orthodox churches and the Orthodox at papist churches. In this way, both the Papists and the Orthodox Ecumenists believe that the union of Papism and Orthodoxy will gradually happen *de facto*, despite all of their dogmatic differences.

If, for the Papists, this position is justified from their perception of the Church and the Sacraments (created grace, etc), for us Orthodox it is illogical and unacceptable. Our Church never regarded the Holy Eucharist as the means to accomplish unification, but always as its seal and crown.

Moreover, the common Chalice presupposes a common faith. This means, in other words, that if an Orthodox Christian communes in a papist church, he accepts the papist faith.

Cooperation in practical affairs

Another means for the achievement of the aims of Ecumenism is inter-Christian cooperation in practical matters. Ecumenists maintain that the various contemporary problems (social, ethical, environmental and others) oblige us to unite.

The Church, certainly, has shown and always shows great sensitivity towards all human problems. However, to work together with the heretics in order to find a solution to these problems poses the following disadvantages:

a) The voice of Orthodoxy, when it is intermixed with other Christian voices, loses its lucidity and is unable to communicate to contemporary man its own unique way of life, which is theanthropocentric (God-man centered) in contrast to the anthropocentric (man-centered) way of life of the heterodox.

b) The Church succumbs to the temptation of secularization, using in its social welfare work the same worldly practices of the other confessions, at the expense of its message of salvation. What modern man has most need of, however, is not the improvement of life based on a worldly Christianity, even if this could expunge all social wounds, but rather his liberation from sin and his theosis (deification) within the true Body of Christ, the Orthodox Church.

c) The Orthodox faithful, seeing their own ecclesiastical shepherds cooperating with the heterodox, are given the mistaken impression that the heterodox also belong to the Church of Christ, despite their dogmatic differences.

Exchange of visits

It has become, over the last few years, ecumenistic policy for the various confessions to exchange official visits, and for these visits to be carried out by high-ranking clerics. They often include laudatory addresses, kisses, exchange of gifts, dining together, praying together, joint announcements, and other gestures of friendliness.

In particular, from 1969 onward, mutual participation of Orthodox and Roman Catholic in the annual thronal feasts in Rome and Constantinople has become the rule. These gatherings, unfortunately, cannot be characterized as a mere formality or ceremonial gesture. The ecumenists themselves confess that, with these joint celebrations and their reciprocal recognition, a certain kind of ecclesiastical communion is experienced.

Our faithful flock, however, as it watches these visits via the media, experiences an unpleasant surprise. It is scandalized, embittered, dumbfounded and confused, and given to doubt and questioning as it hears its shepherds speak, on the one hand, with a most orthodox and patristic tongue, and on the other hand, watches them move among the heterodox with the demeanor of a diplomat.

The inter-religious evolution of Ecumenism

A deep crisis regarding a sense of direction appeared quite early in the Ecumenical Movement; a crisis which initially forced it to turn to addressing the socio-political problems of the people, abandoning theol-

ogy as the road to union, and later lead it to open itself up to non-Christian religions. In the Ecumenical Movement it is generally accepted that all religions comprise various paths to salvation, along with Christianity, and that the Holy Spirit is active and works in them also. Its slogan is the "new age" axiom: "Believe what you want, only don't claim exclusivity on the truth and the road to salvation."

It convenes, therefore, inter-religious meetings, which are not merely scientific conferences as their organizers contend, but assemblies confessing unity with belief in the one God as their foundation. For this reason they often include joint displays of worship in which Orthodox, heterodox and non-Christians pray together. The Triune God of the Orthodox, the true and self-revealed God is not, however, the same "God" of the heterodox and of the other religions; that is, some imagined "God" who was created and is perpetuated by the religious need of fallen man.

Unfortunately, this inter-religious overture is also shared by Orthodox ecumenist hierarchs, who express opinions like the following:

"The Ecumenical Movement, although it does have a Christian beginning, must now become a movement of all religions...All religions serve God and man. There is only one God..."

"Deep down, a church or a mosque aspires to the same spiritual dignification of man."

"Islam, in the Koran, talks of Christ, of the Mother of God, and we should also talk about Mohammed with the same courage and boldness. We should look at its history and see what it has to offer; (we should look at) its preaching of the one God and the lives of its followers, who are followers of the one God..."

"Roman Catholics and Orthodox, Protestants and Jews, Muslims and Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists, the time has come to bring about, all of us together, the promotion of the spiritual principles of Ecumenism...We are all united in the spirit of the one God."

The main objective of the inter-religious meetings is the creation of contact points between religions so that a united resistance to social and international problems might be facilitated. This aim is at times exploited by powerful world leaders, who enlist the help of religions in order to promote their unlawful self-interests. This was clearly manifest after

September 11, 2001, when a number of inter-religious assemblies were carried out "on command."

In this way, however, our Church, instead of being the 'judgment' and 'check' of lawlessness, is transformed into its supporter and preserver. Our Church is confined within the earthbound outlook of the various religions and is relegated to the level of a worldly religion with a utilitarian and expedient character. At the same time, it is forced to disregard its apostolic-missionary commission since its official representatives accept that all religions comprise "God-willed roads to salvation"!

Certain Orthodox ecumenists, likewise, reach the point of talking about peace, about justice, about freedom, of love, and other par excellence spiritual qualities, in a cold, impersonal, worldly idiom. They neglect to mention that these spiritual qualities constitute fruits of the Holy Spirit, that they are divine gifts which are distributed to those who engage in spiritual struggle "in Christ Jesus," and not at inter-religious gatherings.

It should be emphasized, however, that Orthodoxy is not a religion, not even the best of religions. It is the Church: the self-revelation and manifestation of God in history. Orthodoxy is conscious of its Oecumenicity (Universality) and the Truth regarding Christ which it possesses, and this is why it is not afraid of its relationship with non-Christians. It knows, however, the limits of these relationships as these have been defined by the patristic Tradition and by its own mysteriological experience. For example, Saint Gregory Palamas, under the cruel conditions of captivity debated with the Ottoman Turks. He did not hesitate, however, – even at the risk of losing his own life – to tell the truth and to reproach their delusion and erroneous beliefs. Moreover, how did the Holy Martyrs confront the idol worshippers and the New Martyrs the Muslims? Didn't they confess the truth? Could we imagine them praying together with them? In that case we wouldn't have any martyrs!

Our Church, then, refuses to sacrifice its uniqueness on the altar of expediency, and to accept the ecumenical slogan that "in all religions, under different names, the same God is worshipped." The Orthodox Church firmly believes that man is saved only through Christ, in accordance with the apostolic dictum: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

What, finally, is Ecumenism?

After successive developments and the Ecumenical Movement's gradual moving away from its original aims, the Orthodox faithful justifiably ask themselves: Doesn't it clearly seem that the aim of Ecumenism

is not merely the unification of Christians, but the predominance of a syncretistic, worldwide religion, the leveling of everything and the transformation of the Church of Christ into a "club for religious people," in a worldly organization like the United Nations, desensitized and a-spiritual?

How is Ecumenism viewed by our traditional Orthodoxy, however?

"Ecumenism, in the way the meaning of the word has prevailed, is of course a heresy because it means a renunciation of the basic principles of the Orthodox Faith, as, for example, the acceptance of the so-called branch theory, that every church has a part of the truth and that all the churches should unite and put all the pieces of the truth on the table to form a whole. We believe that Orthodoxy is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. That's it. It's non-debatable; and subsequently, whoever professes the contrary can be called an ecumenist and therefore a heretic." (Archbishop of Athens, Christodoulos, Interview on the Church Radio, 24-5-1998)

"Ecumenism is the collective name for pseudo-Christianities, for the pseudo-Churches of Western Europe...All of these pseudo-Christianities, all of these pseudo-Churches are nothing more than one heresy after another. Their common evangelical name is the 'ultimate heresy.' Why? Because through the course of history diverse heresies have negated or distorted certain characteristics of the Theanthropos, the Lord Jesus. These European heresies remove the God-man altogether and put European man in His place." (Archimandrite Justin Popovich)

"Ecumenism is not heresy and pan-heresy, as it is usually called. It is something much worse than pan-heresy. The heresies were obvious enemies of the Church. The Church could therefore fight them and vanquish them. Ecumenism, however, is indifferent to the beliefs of the Church and to the dogmatic differences between the Churches. It is the transcendence, the pardoning, the overlooking, if not the legitimization and justification of heresy. It is an underhanded, insidious enemy and this is exactly where the mortal danger lies." (Professor Andreas Theodorou)

Reactions to the Ecumenical Movement

Today in the Orthodox world, reactions against Ecumenism and those who represent it are constantly on the rise. Many books, articles and critiques are seeing the light of publicity where, with much pain and anguish, the view is expressed that we are marching "according to plan" towards a Babylonian captivity of Orthodoxy within this heresy of many-faces and many names.

There are not a few distinguished Orthodox clerics and theologians who propose the immediate withdrawal of Orthodoxy from the

Ecumenical Movement and its conferences, because they believe that Orthodox participation in these is not just fruitless, but in many ways harmful.

Some Churches have already withdrawn from the World Council of Churches, while others have been caused to think long and hard about their own participation. This distress and uneasiness was likewise expressed at the Inter-Orthodox meeting held in Thessaloniki in 1998, where, among other things, it was confirmed that "after a whole century of Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement, and half a century's presence in the World Council of Churches..., the chasm between the Orthodox and the Protestants has grown even larger."

The participation of the faithful in the Ecumenical Movement

We know that that the criterion for Orthodoxy remains the faithful and pious people of God. No one – neither Patriarchs nor Synods – is capable of by-passing and silencing the conscience of the faithful. For this reason, "there should be no dialogue or decision made if this vigilant conscience of the Church (grace-filled clerics, laity, monastics) does not agree." (Metropolitan Ierotheos of Nafpaktou)

Ecumenist dialogues as they are practiced are supported and sustained within the circles of academic theology, and by other ecclesiastical or non-institutional organizations, which aspire to certain benefits politically, financially, internationally and publicly. They do not constitute a request of the ecclesiastical body, but are imposed both from "outside" and "above" This fact highlights an unhealthy phenomenon: the autonomy of the administrative institutions of the Orthodox Church today. The church administration is, in other words, separate from theological consideration, but also from the views, the concerns and the experience of the ecclesiastical *pleroma*.

Thus it is that the people of God do not participate actively in, nor are they informed objectively and responsibly about these dialogues. Moreover, the decisions made during these dialogues do not always carry the seal of authentic conciliarity, are not genuinely synodical, but rather are usually made by particular "professionals" of Ecumenism. One Orthodox hierarch has confessed characteristically: "The Orthodox faithful know nothing about the Ecumenical Movement...yet perhaps the Ecumenical Movement is fortunate that the Orthodox people know nothing of what goes on in Geneva!"

Our duty

We are undoubtedly living in a period of cosmic change. Events, seemingly directed, race forward at a frantic pace. Ecumenism is evolving within the destructive, leveling viewpoint of Globalism, which is being pushed by powerful economic-political organizations. No one any longer takes serious by the viewpoint that Ecumenism can offer a visible and viable solution to the problem of Christian unity.

As Orthodox Christians, we should neither retreat to our ivory-tower nor relax our vigilance. If we truly value and respect the life of people, if we truly have pain of heart for the people of the Western world who are tormented by dead end religious traditions, as well as those in Eastern world, who are caught up in demonic delusions, we have an obligation to remain devoted to our Holy Church. We must keep the traditional faith of our fathers pure and unadulterated, and live it authentically within our daily struggle for our own personal holiness and theosis. The right faith and a strict and precise life will make us capable of witnessing to Orthodoxy, but also – and why not? – unto martyrdom, if and when the times demand it.

Adherence to Orthodoxy, that is, to the genuineness of life, and perseverance in the truth that frees and saves, is not egotism, fanaticism, or intolerance. Rather, it expresses the ecumenical (universal) dimension, the love and philanthropy of the Orthodox Church. It constitutes the last possibility for a radical spiritual change in the West, but also for a way out for the East from its captivity to false gods.

*The Holy Monastery of the Paraklete
Oropos, Attica, Greece
2004*



THE EXPLANATION OF THE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN

By Archimandrite Justin Popovic

Part II

2;16

That which is meant by “world”, the Holy Theologian explains to us: *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* The world which the Holy Theologian understands as love of sin: lust, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life: the main sins and main organs of sin. Through its own love of sin, the flesh has become the center of sin, a habitation of sin, a breeding ground of sin. And the eyes? Insatiable eyes have dragged the human race into sin; and it is the eyes that drag the human race into sin the most. The eyes—are the most hungry and most voracious jackals of sin. If a man does not restrain them through chastity, renew them through affection, tame them through repentance, mollify them through compassion, they ravenously consume sins, and fill and overrun the entire soul of man. Woe to man as long as he gives his eyes to sin as *instruments of unrighteousness* (Rom. 6:13). But it is to his happiness that he can give, to God, all of his senses, even the eyes, as *instruments of righteousness* (Rom. 6:13). The third sin, which synthesizes all the sins of the world is: “the pride of life.” That is the first sin in all the worlds: the sin of Satan. The source of all sins, which always was and will forever stay as such. It can be said: pride is the ultimate sin. Every sin, through its life force, comes

from it and holds on to it. "The pride of life"—woven from countless multifarious prides, both great and small, both short-term and long term. Let us remember the primary things: the pride of glory (scientific, government, in any rank or position in general), pride of beauty, pride of wealth, pride of benevolence, pride of humility (yes! of humility), pride of charity, pride of success... There is not a virtue that pride cannot convert into a vice. The pride of prayer converts the person praying into a Pharisee, and the ascetic into a self-murderer. So, every sin, in reality, is a sin through pride, because Satan is in reality Satan through pride. If it were not for pride, sin would not exist, neither in the angelic or the human world. All of this "is not of the Father." That which is of the Father, is the Only Begotten Son of God. He is incarnate and personified humility before all of His divine perfections. In His Gospel, the beginning virtue, the ultimate virtue is humility (Matt. 5:3). Humility is the only medicine for pride and all other sins.

2;17. *And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.* The world of sinful pleasures is transient because sin is a dark power, and is the only thing that makes the human being mortal and transient. In reality, through every sin, man does the will of the creator of all sins—the devil, the will that pulls man into death and transience. Sin, first of all, ravages, overturns, perverts the intellectual organs in man: and man becomes insane and he begins to declare transient things, ideas, and passions as his deities, as his main concern, purpose and meaning of life. This is the primary source of all of man's idolatry: cultural, scientific, philosophical, artistic, political and religious.

In opposition to this stands the God-man, who shows how man overcomes all transiences and all deaths, and becomes immortal and eternal. But how does this happen? This happens by doing the will of God: "he that doeth the will of God, abideth forever." Where is the will of God expressed? It is expressed in the God-man Christ and in His Holy Gospel. By fulfilling the Gospel, man fills himself with immortality, eternal life, and becomes intransient. Who is a true immortal then? Only a true Christian.

2;18-29. The Holy Theologian thinks in antitheses because his observations are the deepest and his revelations are the greatest; he clearly sees those antitheses, for his Gospel is filled with them: God and the devil, Christ and the Antichrist, Truth and falsehood, righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil, life and death, virtue and sin. He sees all of them to their very roots; he sees them in every scale and proportion, he sees every thesis and antithesis in their perfections and completeness, in their absoluteness and most concrete forms. Everything is in him: vision,

revelation, trial, and experience. The Greatest Seer of Mysteries – “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is therefore the first Theologian and a real Theologian. With him and after him are two more: St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Simeon the New Theologian.

2;18. Everything against Christ’s goodness in the world arose from Satan’s evil, against His Truth—all of Satan’s lies, against His Love—all of Satan’s hate, against His God—the complete devil. Simply put, the opposition to Christ is the Antichrist. Anti-Christ instead of Christ, in place of Christ, and against Christ. Yes, the main desire and the essence of his being are to replace Christ, and to occupy His place. To achieve this, he uses any and all means. Foremost, through craftiness, disguise, and through imaginary and fake use of the Gospel: it has the appearance of piety, but has renounced its power; it has the appearance of humility, but through it conceals and hides pride. It has the appearance of benevolence, but at heart is a malefactor. It has the appearance of a lover of man but, in reality, is a murderer of man. He is all of this just so he can tempt the chosen, so he can tempt a greater number of people, all people. The Antichrist will be as some incarnation of the devil because Christ is the incarnation of God; the Antichrist will be the personification of evil, hate, lies, pride, and unrighteousness; for Christ is the embodiment of good, love, truth, humility, and righteousness. In this way, the main Antichrist will be he who will appear before the second coming of the Lord Christ, stand in God’s place and proclaim himself God (Col. 2:4). But before him – a countless number of his forerunners and countless number of antichrists. For the antichrist is anyone who wants to occupy Christ’s place, anyone who will put his truth in place of Christ’s Truth, in place of Christ’s Righteousness—his righteousness, in place of Christ’s Love—his love, in place Christ’s Goodness—his goodness, in place of Christ’s Gospel—his gospel. All the more so, the antichrist is any and every opponent of Christ: everyone who battles against the person of Christ, against Christ’s Truth, Love, Righteousness; simply put: against Christ’s Gospel = against Christ’s Church, for the Church is the incarnation of the Gospel. Yes, the incarnate Gospel, because it is the Body of Christ. The Holy Seer of Mysteries proclaims: “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that is the last time.”

2;19. Where are the antichrists from? *They went from us but are not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they are not all of us.* One becomes a Christian, and remains a Christian, only by free will. Free will is, thereby, free because it always has might and the right to choose either

good or evil, truth or falsehood, love or hate, righteousness or unrighteousness, God or the devil, Christ or the antichrist. Christians who fall away from Christ show that, even through the help of the Holy Mysteries and the holy virtues, they are neither rooted nor founded nor strengthened in Christ. They are like this not because they desired this by their own free will. True Christians are founded in Christ, they are members of His Theanthropy—the Church, they are communicants of God, *household of God* (Eph, 2,19), fellow citizens with the saints (Eph, 2,19), and *with all the saints* (Eph, 3,18), and are members of each other, members of one Body: Christ's body, even if there are many—they are one body (I Cor. 12;12): *for we, being many, are one bread, and one body* (I Cor. 10,17) that is why those who fall from Christ: *were not of us, for if they had been one of us, they would no doubt continued to be with us.*

2;20-22 *And ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things.* “Ye know all things”: God and Satan, Christ and the Antichrist, Good and evil, life and death, righteousness and unrighteousness. For you, all the main questions are solved; you do not have any hesitations, dilemmas, or doubts. You know all the paths that lead to God, as well as those that lead to the devil. Who do you know this from? *From the Holy One.* Through the Holy One, you know everything. *Unction from the Holy One*, this is the consecration the entire being of man, and starting with his organs of perception: the mind, reason, soul, and heart. If man fills himself with the holiness of the Holy One, he will arrive at the genuine and true knowledge about the Holy One, i.e., about God, and with His help, about everything else that is necessary for man's being. Only through living a holy life, only through living according to the way of the Holy One and in the Holy One, man becomes capable of receiving true knowledge about everything, which is necessary in all of man's worlds of his existence. Then, there are only Saints—the true experts of the world, of man, of God, of Truth, of Righteousness, of Life, and as well of the devil and everything that is of him. *We are not ignorant of the Devil's devices* (II Cor. 2;11), declares the Holy Apostle. Holiness protects the Saints, so that they, knowing the temptations and devices of the devil, may not be tempted. They know to the last detail the mystery of good, the mystery of evil, the mystery of truth, the mystery of untruth; with the utmost certainty and clarity they know that a relation between Light and darkness does not exist, and either between God and the devil, between Truth and untruth, between Good and evil. That is why the Holy Seer of Mysteries heralds: *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.*

2;22. Christians are Christians because they know the Truth. What is

the Truth then? The God-man Christ. What is untruth then? The devil—for *he is a liar and the father of it* (Jn, 8:44). What does his main lie consist of? In the renouncing of the God-man Christ; in asserting that Jesus is not God, that He is not the Messiah = Christ; that He is not the Saviour. Therefore, this is the same occupation of the Antichrist. The main liar in the world is the devil, and with him the Antichrist. It is understood that a liar is anyone who in some way rejects that Jesus is God, the Messiah, and the Saviour. This is the main lie in the world; and all other lies either originate from this or are on their way to become this. If all the lies were to fit into one lie, into one great lie, it would declare: Jesus of Nazareth is not God, He is not The Messiah, and He is not the Saviour. The Holy Seer of Mysteries with divine right affirms: *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.* What do the Antichrist and his entire anti-gospel consist of? They consist of the renouncing of the Trinitarian Divinity: of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

2:23. There is no God except for the Trinitarian Divinity. Whosoever does not profess that Christ is God is a heathen and an atheist. Whosoever professes Christ as God knows God and knows everything. Whosoever professes this, believes in the Trinitarian Divinity because the Lord Christ, as the Son of God, leads every one of His followers to His Heavenly Father. If they deny the Son, they at the same time also reject the Father because the Father is the Father because He has a Son. The Lord Christ through His entire life on Earth, in the most obvious manner proves that everything in Him is divine, that through all of His characteristics, He is entirely from God the Father and is entirely as the Father. The Holy Theologian proclaims: *whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.* The relationship towards Christ is defined by the relationship of man towards God. For there is no God except for Christ, neither in Heaven nor on Earth nor underneath the Earth.

2:24-25. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.* From the very beginning of the Gospel of Christ, it is the Gospel of the Holy Trinity and about the Holy Trinity. Man becomes a Christian if he accepts this Gospel; and stays a Christian if he lives by it and if he dwells in it. Through the Gospel, the Holy Trinity Itself dwells, abides, and lives in man; the Holy Trinity gives man the power to live by the Gospel. What is the life of a Christian? It is constant personal communion with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, through the help of Holy Mysteries and the holy virtues.

Establishing himself within the Holy Trinity, and establishing the Holy Trinity within himself is the unceasing grace-filled struggle of a Christian. Through such a struggle, the main purpose of man's existence in the world is achieved: eternal life. Through this, the main promise of the Lord Christ and His Gospel is fulfilled. For everything that He was, did, and taught: He was, He did, and He taught, so that He would guarantee and give eternal life. That is why the Holy Theologian proclaims: *And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.*

2;26-27. Just by living in Truth, man becomes capable of protecting himself and being able to always defend himself from all temptations that attack him. Truth protects itself; man only has to, by living it and for it, transform it into his own nature. Then the Truth will protect him and defend him forever from all falsehoods and lies. True is the word of Truth: *the Truth shall set you free* (Jn 8:32): free yourself from every sin, from every evil, and from every devil. The very Truth, if it dwells in us, teaches us truths, every truth. It teaches us through holy virtues and abides in us through the holy virtues and Holy Mysteries. There are no doubts, the Holy One lives in us through the help of the Holy Mysteries and Holy Virtues, which transform all our thoughts, feelings, and desires into holy ones. Through the saints, the Holy One teaches us everything that is necessary for piety and eternal life in this and in the other world. Holy things are learned through holiness. For through holiness man communicates with the Holy One, Who, through holiness, teaches us directly all truths. Therefore, the Holy Knower of Mysteries heralds: *But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things and is truth and is no lie and even as it hath taught you ye shall abide in him.*

2;28. Outside of Christ there is neither life nor truth. The Holy Theologian does not cease writing about the main Truth of God's Gospel: man abiding in Him and He in man is what a Christian's entire life consists of in this and in the other world. The entire truth of the New Testament is this: may the God-man be in us and we in Him. Then the Truth will be in us and we in it, Righteousness will be in us and we in it, Love will be in us and we in it, Eternity will be in us and we in it, and all of God's perfections will be in us and we in them. That is what makes us the children of God and we, as children, have boldness before the Father: *And now little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

2;29. *If you know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness, is born of Him.* Righteousness is in the Righteous One, and

Righteousness is from the Righteous One. Only the Righteous One has righteousness and knows righteousness. The Divinely Righteous One, the All-Righteous One—The Lord Christ has full righteousness and Divine Righteousness; He has and knows the Ultimate Righteousness. Whosoever abides in Him, abides in righteousness; and in whomsoever He abides, He abides with His entire Righteousness: man reveals this by his own righteousness, for out of the Righteous One, Justice and Righteousness pour forth as the light from the Sun does and as the scent from basil. Man has righteousness and knows righteousness only if he unites through the Holy Mysteries, with the Only Holy One, and is spiritually born from Him. Therefore every righteous person has a likeness of Him – the All-Righteous One: *he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous* (1 Jn 3:7).

Translated by Radomir Plavsic



TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF SAINT DIONYSIUS OF ZAKYNTHOS

Commemorated on August 24

Dionysius the holy hierarch and miracle worker was born in Zakynthos in 1546, June 21, of pious parents named Mokios and Pauline, whose wealth was no secret. He entered the Monastery in the Strophades Islands at a tender age, and was vested in the monastic schema. Later, he was appointed to Bishop of Aegina and honored that diocese for a long time. At the end he returned to his country where he spent the rest of his days and he enjoyed the rewards of peace and tranquility. When our Saint reached the end of his life, at an advanced age, he foretold his death to the brethren of the Monastery of Anaphonetria, where he spent his retirement. They were all grieved by this sad announcement, and our Saint surrendered his soul to the Creator on the 17th day of December in 1624, a day on which his memory is honored and his relic is paraded throughout the city.

When Saint Dionysius was laid to rest, his sacred relic was transferred according to his will to the Monastery of Strophades in order to be buried there. For there he was dedicated and there he was interred by the fathers in a tomb inside the Chapel of St. George, which was situated in the immediate grounds of the Monastery. Not many years later, a vision appeared to the abbot and the fathers of the Monastery telling them to exhume his relics and take them out of the tomb. The fathers obeyed the divine revelation and conducted the translation of the relics which they found in a state of perfect preservation, emitting a rare fragrance, and they deposited them in a reliquary within the narthex of the main Church of the Lord's Transfiguration. Thereafter they served as the protector of the Monastery, and a comfort to the fathers. They cured many diseases; they drove swarms of locusts into the sea and drowned them. They terminated many droughts, and in general they worked many miracles for

those who approached them in time of sorrow and need.

In the year 1716, in the month of June, when the Ottoman fleet was sailing to Kerkyra (Corfu today) in order to subdue the island, they passed by the Strophades islands. The fathers of the Monastery there hid the valuable articles in two caverns for fear of the Turks, and they hid the relics of our Saint too. However, after the shameful defeat of the Turks, thanks to the intercessions of the miracle worker Saint Spyridon, they fled in a state of panic and in their frustration, and, due to their debacle, they retreated southwards led by a bloodthirsty corsair named Mustafa. Landing on the island, they found the Monastery. They seized the abbot along with the other monks, except for four concealed monks, and by submitting them to bitter tortures they forced them to reveal the treasures of the Monastery.

Thus the barbarians plundered the Monastery and put the monks to death and departed, taking with them the icon of the Theotokos aboard their ship. The relics of Saint Dionysius were left unharmed thanks to divine providence. Four Christians aboard the vessel cut off his hands out of piety, and divided the pieces amongst themselves for their sanctification. Afterward their leader reckoned that the hands of the sacred relics had a considerable value. So he took them and when they arrived at Chios he sold them to the Bishop of Chios Agathangelos, and to a devout monk named Akakios who returned them to the Monastery of Strophades. The icon of the Holy Virgin was bought in Patmos by two monks who returned it to the Strophades.

After the barbaric fleet sailed away, the four monks came out of their hideout. When they saw what had transpired, they were shocked and appalled and despondent because they lacked even the basic food supplies. Suddenly they saw two Venetian ships that were approaching from a distance, which sent a signal that they were about to lay anchor in their bay. They managed to get on board these vessels and they arrived in Zakynthos on the 24th of August, 1716, taking back to its original home-stand the sacred relics of Saint Dionysius.

When it was announced that the relics of the Saint had been returned to Zakynthos, a great number of clergy and laity assembled, among them wealthy and poor, and they all rushed to reverence the relic. A monumental Church was built on the sandy beach, on land that belonged to the Monastery at Strophades. In that Church was deposited the sacred reliquary which to this day is honored in the name of Saint Dionysius. The translation of the holy relic is celebrated on the 24th of August. Among the many miracles, we shall mention a few in this narrative.

A certain married couple from the Peloponnesus was childless for a period of ten years. So they prayed to the Saint to grant them a child and they vowed to baptize it in his church at Zakynthos. The woman saw him

in a dream and he said to her: "What do you seek from me, o woman? God has hearkened to your entreaty, and you shall receive according to your wishes in a short while." And indeed, she conceived and gave birth to a blessed child by the intercessions of Saint Dionysius. There was great rejoicing in that family thereafter, and all the relatives glorified God and His servant Dionysius.

Five days after the child was born, all prepared to sail to Zakynthos in order to fulfill their promise. However, an unfavorable wind began to blow and the ship could not embark on its journey. Meanwhile the child took ill. This did not discourage them from their purpose, and they set sail as soon as the storm subsided. But before they reached Zakynthos at a distance of four miles, their beloved child died. And one could imagine the anguish and despair of the unfortunate parents. Their cries echoed in the wind.

The ship laid anchor in the port of Zakynthos at eventide. The following morning the good but hapless parents decided to take the child to the Saint even though it was dead. They walked all the way to the Church, carrying with them their deceased son, followed by a multitude of Christians, and laid it alongside the sacred reliquary. They wept and wailed thereafter, saying that, even though they lost the child because of their sins, they did not forget their promise. But lo, the miracle! The boy opened its eyes and cried out asking for its mother. At this sight the beholders fell on their knees and exclaimed: "Lord have mercy!" When the mother saw her son alive who lay dead before her just eighteen hours earlier, she fainted and collapsed to the earth as if dead. She came to, however, and took the boy in her arms; and they baptized him, naming him Dionysius. Then, the two parents departed with great joy and gave glory to God, proclaiming the miracle everywhere. The young Dionysius was always grateful for this and was never absent from the celebration of the Saint, always bringing candles to him and sweet-smelling incense.

In the year 1820, the 17th of December, there was a procession, and the relic of Saint Dionysius were carried through the city of Zakynthos. It was soon to pass by a town square named "All the Saints." At that time, a statue was about to be dedicated to a high commissioner named Thomas Metland. A supplication was to be read and the unveiling of the statue was to follow. That night an earthquake shook the town, and there was a hailstorm followed by a heavy rain. Due to these severe weather conditions, the procession was held up and they were forced to lay the holy relics down in the church of Phaneromene. Meanwhile the military governor at the time was a colonel named Ross. He was accompanied by an English admiral of the Royal Navy, and he entered the church, and ordered everyone to vacate the premises except for the admiral and the church council. He then knelt before the holy relics with compunction,

and at the feet of our Saint he set the golden insignia that the people of Levkas had given him as a token of appreciation for being a benevolent ruler of that island. That offering by the governor can be seen to this day on the holy relic.

A certain shoemaker by the name of Panagiotes Kalountzopoulos, of the island of Zakynthos, earned his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, and supported his family. However, the unfortunate man lost his eyesight, and at the insistence of his wife he called upon Saint Dionysius so that he might regain his sight. So he took up his icon and held it in his bosom, praying all the while and sighing from the bottom of his heart, calling for his help. On the fourteenth day of the month of December, he saw the Saint in a dream, attired as a bishop and wearing his mantia. Dionysius approached him and held him by the right hand and said to him: "Courage, my son; believe in God and grieve not. In three days you shall have your eyesight, and you shall be healed altogether. Do not reveal this to anyone until you have been restored." After he said this, he disappeared.

The blind man was roused from sleep and told of the vision to his wife. He charged her not to tell anyone about it, and asked for the icon of the Hierarch, and kissed it fervently. The following day, the seventeenth of December, when the memory of the Saint is celebrated, there was a procession of his sacred relics. The litany was approaching the house of the blind man; so he stood on the mattress, supported by his wife, and both of them knelt down, entreating and calling upon the name of Saint Dionysius. And lo Thy wonders, o Lord! The procession had not advanced more than thirty feet, and the blind man saw again. He gave praise and glory to God and His servant the miracle worker Dionysius.

At a distance from Zakynthos, a ship was caught in a violent storm at sea, and the waves were so high that they tossed the vessel about like a nutshell. Finally the ship was unable to stay afloat, and it capsized. Three sailors among the crew who were pious men managed to jump into the waters and swim. At the same time, they called upon Saint Dionysius to help them. And indeed he appeared to them and calmed the force of the wind, and led them to Zakynthos, as they stayed afloat. Their garments were soaked with water, but they went straight to the church of the Saint so that they might give thanks to their deliverer. They also asked that the sacred reliquary might be opened to them, that they might venerate the sacred relics and wet his sacred feet with their tears. The pastor in charge was not there at the time, and he had the keys. The three pious men were about to kiss the reliquary and depart. But suddenly there was a creaking sound, and the reliquary opened on its own, to the astonishment of all the beholders! They kissed his holy feet with emotion, and again the sacred reliquary closed on its own, as before. The sailors went out and declared

the glorious miracles of Saint Dionysius to everyone.

In the year 1841, the daughter of Eustratios Iatrides, a resident of Zakynthos, developed an eye infection. Medical treatment was unable to cure her condition; she became blind in June of the same year, and was bent over both at the knees and the head. The child's father had lost all hope in medical cure, and decided to appeal to Saint Dionysius on the 17th of November, when his memory of his sacred relics is celebrated. He wrapped his daughter in a sheet and brought her out onto the street where the procession was about to pass, and knelt down begging and beseeching the Saint with warm tears. The holy reliquary with the relics passed over the blind girl, and the unfortunate father wrapped the sheet around her again and brought her home where, lo, the miracle! She regained her eyesight; and not only was the disease of her eye cured, but she recovered from the bodily disability that crippled her.

John Vorphadios, who was a resident of Pochalis, was paralyzed in both legs, and stood upright with the aid of crutches. During the celebration of the Saint's memory, he managed to go to vespers with much difficulty, hoping to plead and appeal to his mercy. But his condition worsened and he could not depart, and decided to spend the night in the narthex of the Church. At night, the monks knocked on the door, but he could not rise and open the door. But he heard a mysterious voice coming out of the reliquary: "O blessed man, arise and open the door." Then he gained vigor and, leaning against the pews, he made his way to the door and opened it. The following day, after the service was over, he decided to return to his house in Pochalis with the support of his two crutches. On the way, he began to regain his bodily strength; and when he arrived on the threshold of his house, he was strong and sound.

A certain man, Nicholas Dirles, was sailing to Zakynthos on a small boat. At that time, however, he had an epileptic seizure. But as the vessel approached Zakynthos, the victim saw the Church of the Saint and called upon him for help, and was healed immediately.

An English captain laid anchor in a port of Zakynthos called Kerios. A storm had forced him to seek haven in this small port, and suddenly he saw Nicholas Koutsoukeles in a kneeling position as he prayed to Saint Dionysius. When he asked him and found out what Nicholas was doing, he said: "Is it possible that I, too, may pray to him so that we may be saved?" "Why not?" answered Nicholas. Then he prayed to the Saint and lo the miracle! The violent storm was followed by a calm sea, and the captain finally sailed to Zakynthos; he dedicated the silver lamp which hangs there to this day.

These are some of the miracles that were performed and are still being performed by the miracle worker Saint Dionysius, giving many cures to those who seek his aid and infinite mercy.

O wondrous hierarch Dionysius, whose unparalleled mercy we extol, pray to the Lord that He would safeguard all those that seek divine assistance through your intercessions. Our Lord, Who is wondrous in His Saints, as is witnessed in your short life, wherein the divine grace of God is present; may you perform miracles forever, showing mercy to those who appeal to you, and especially your countrymen, the people of Zakynthos, who are proud to have you as their protector and Saint.

By the intercessions of the Saints, o Lord, have mercy upon us!
Amen.

Translated by Leo Papadopoulos from The Great Synaxaristes, by Matthew Lagges, Publisher, Athens, 1960, Vol. VIII, pp. 398-405.



