



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **September 1, 2013** ✠

The Church New Year

St. Symeon the Stylite (459)

and his Mother, St. Martha (428)

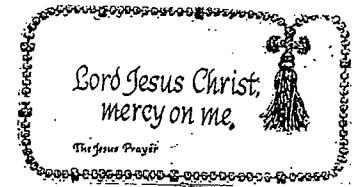
Righteous Joshua (1400 B.C.)

A Heart for God

No matter how good the catechesis, each person must have a heart for God. Each person has to learn from the resources available, reading the Scripture first above all. Not always listening to the mind of the world.

- Michael Baumann

Orthodox commentator



- ⇒ **Inquirer's Class – Tuesday, September 3, 6:30pm**
- ⇒ **Note: Next Sunday is the Feast of the Nativity of Theotokos (Sept. 8)**
- ⇒ **Please keep up with your Building Fund Pledges**

Thought for the New Church Year

The Church and Me ~ *The Church has always been there for me...*

Before I was born, the Church was here, nurtured by the blood of the Martyrs and with the tears of the faithful. After I was born, the Church was here for my Baptism, Chrismation and first Holy Communion. Growing up, the Church was again here, teaching me and caring for me with the love of a Mother. Later, leaving home, for all the world like a prodigal child, I found a home in the Church. Marrying, I found a blessing in the Church.

Becoming a parent, I found a gift in the Church and an inheritance to leave my child. In my hour of grief at the loss of a loved one, the Church was there to comfort me. Looking back, I found family in the Church and I have hope in looking ahead and beyond life. Wherever I have been, the Church has always been there. Looking back, I realize that if the Church was not always present for me, it was because I had departed the Church. I may not always been there for the Church....but the Church has always been here for me.

Now is the time for each of us to make the commitment to always be there for the Church, by worshiping each Sunday and Feastday; by committing our whole life to Christ our God; by offering our time, talent and treasure. If you have departed from Christ and His Church, now is the time to come back, worship, thank Him for your many blessings, enjoy the abundant life now that He offers to us and finally, inherit the eternal life He has prepared for us.

Fr. Dean Gigicos, Biloxi, MS

Put up a little Fight

✠ "Before a man gives way to his passions, even if his thoughts mount an assault against him, he is always a free man in his own city and he has God as an ally. If, therefore, he humbles himself before God and bears the yoke of his trial and affliction with thanksgiving, and puts up a little fight, the help of God will deliver him. But if he flees labor and goes after bodily pleasures, then he is necessarily led into the land of the Egyptians and without wishing it becomes their slave." **St. Dorotheos of Gaza**

A Spiritual Death

✠ "The person who cannot endure for Christ's sake a physical death... should at least be willing to endure death spiritually. Then he will be a martyr... in that he does not submit to the demons that assail him, or to their purposes, but conquers them, as did the holy martyrs and the holy fathers. The first were bodily martyrs, the latter spiritual martyrs. By forcing oneself slightly, one defeats the enemy; through slight negligence one is filled with darkness and destroyed."

St. Peter of Damascus (The Philokalia Vol. 3)

Elder Sophrony of Essex and Other Faiths

- There is a great difference between East and West. A Westerner who is baptized Orthodox for many years will be within the Orthodox Church under the guidance of an experienced Spiritual Father to obtain a pure Orthodox phronema (culture) and ethos.

Until then, he cannot and must not play the teacher to people who have Orthodox bones, who were born and raised as Orthodox.

That is why there cannot be a "Union of Churches". With discussion an acquaintance can be made that can help the "political", without harming Orthodoxy. But the "union of Churches" is difficult, if not impossible. Those who speak of "union of Churches" do not know the mindset of the heterodox nor the height of Orthodoxy. Some of the heterodox hate the Orthodox. Proof is that if some Westerner becomes a Buddhist or Marxist, his household does not extract him from the family, but if he becomes Orthodox, then they extract him. If this mindset did not exist, then many Westerners would become Orthodox.

- I do not want, at least now, the "Union of Churches", because the Romans (Latins) will not change, and the Orthodox will not be corrupted.

For a Muslim to become a Christian, he must wait until he receives great Grace, so that he is prepared to be martyred for Christ. If he does not receive this Grace, let him wait.

- Someone passed sequentially through Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and black magic. In all these religions at the same time he did magic. As soon as he became Orthodox, he wanted to practice along with this magic, but he was unable to do it. From this he realized that magic is the foundation of all religions and that religions are dead, their leaders are dead, but Christ is the living God.

- For many years exorcisms must be read for those who came from doing magic. This is what the early Church did.

- Buddhism has some truths, but it has one human truth, which reaches to "zero", that is, with concentration-meditation man reaches the non-being from which we came from. It is an existential suicide. Christ leads us to theosis, to communion with the Triune God.

- Some say that Buddhism has nothing to do with demonism. However, those who speak thus know Buddhism only from books and speak theoretically. Action is different.

- Some say that meditation brings them a certain peace. Externally this appears good, but these people are possessed by conceit and this results in carnal warfare. Even if they leave Buddhism, they again have carnal warfare. This shows the satanism of this method.

- There is a difference between Buddhist and Orthodox asceticism. In Buddhism they try to make a disclaimer and they reach nirvana. They confuse a reflection with mystical vision. They see created light with their mind. This was best done with Plotinus, in Neo-Platonism. The Fathers know this, and we can call it the "cloud of unknowing", but they went beyond this and reached the vision of the uncreated Light. Then they experience that the Light comes from a Person and not from an idea, and they feel a personal relationship with God and, at the same time, there develops a great love for God and the whole world until martyrdom and "self-hatred".

DO NO HARM – Thoughts on Preparing Children for Confession

- Fr. Alexei Uminsky

I. WHAT IS SIN?

Sometimes a very young child comes to Confession, and when talking with him about sins he looks at the priest and does not understand what he is talking about. Then the priest asks "Have you ever been ashamed?" "Yes," the child answers and begins to tell him when he was ashamed: when he did not listen to his mother, when he took something without permission. Then the priest tells him, "Here, this is sin—if your conscience suggests to you that you did something bad." Shame is the very first indicator of sinfulness, for adults, as well as children.

But it is not only bad deeds that cloud a child's life. At times bad thoughts disturb children more than bad deeds. Children become horrified that these thoughts get into their heads. They say to their friend or relative, "Someone is making me say bad words, and I don't want to do this." This is a very important moment. Parents must definitely use it for start of a conversation with the children. Adults must say to them, "You know, you have to talk about this at Confession. This is the evil one wanting to turn your will to his side. If you don't fight against it (if you don't pray or make the sign of the Cross), it can overcome you." If a child talks with parents about bad thoughts, it means he trusts his parents; it means he is not locked up in himself. You have to help such a child right away to understand that he and sin are different things, that evil thoughts are not his thoughts and should not be as his own. "This is not mine. I am not afraid of these thoughts. I can conquer them." This is how you have to teach the child to think.

Many children talk with adults about bad thoughts. Dreams and them at the time of prayer, and if they try to talk to talk about it with their parents, this is the most convenient time to put into weapons of spiritual battle: the sign of the Cross, prayer, Confession. When a child starts to pray he sees how through prayer evil thoughts go away. If the thoughts do not go away, he can use force, he can pray longer, and he'll still be victorious. **The very possibility of conquering sin is very important for the child.** To be aware of his victory means to be aware of his power over sin, to feel the help of God. When this happens, a person grows spiritually.

2. ARE CHILDREN WITHOUT SIN?

From the time that a child has not yet learned to tell the difference between good and evil, he has definite inclinations toward evil, because man is not born without sin. The darkness of our sinful nature burdens us. Ancestral sin is remitted at Baptism, but the consequences of sin remain, and we must correct them by our personal will. **From the beginning man by nature is good and blessed because God created him good and aspiring to blessedness; he is in the image and likeness of God.** But the Apostle Paul says, For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do (Rom. 7: 19). The child is born as

the "old man"; he is in no condition to carry on spiritual warfare by himself. Therefore he conducts it together with the parents.

3. ABOUT PARENTAL SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

The first habits of spiritual struggle are placed in a person by his parents. Parents explain to their children what is good and what is bad, how to act and how not to act, how to pray correctly, and how to fast. By their own spiritual experience they lead their children. In other words, they fulfill that spiritual direction which adults seek from a spiritual guide. The father and mother explain to the child what sin is, teach him to confess, tell him what the conscience is, and what the fear of God is.

For example, everything written by Abba Dorotheus of Gaza for adults can be retold also to children, even to the smallest children. This remarkable book of soul-profiting teaching is necessary for any teaching professional and, of course, for parents. There are chapters of instruction such as: "That One Must Not Lie," "On Not Judging One's Neighbor," "On the Conscience," "On Humble-mindedness." All this is contained in the process of upbringing. These spiritual understandings must be taught to the child by the parents at the earliest age. This is spiritual direction. If the mother and father themselves live a spiritual life and understand well what Abba Dorotheus has left them, then they will be able to pass it along to their children.

Sometimes parents do not know the answer to some complicated question, but after all, such things also happen in pastoral practice. If the priest does not know the answer to the question of his spiritual child, he says, "Let's pray together, and I'll ask a more experienced person how to help you." Parents act in the same way when they cannot answer correctly. There is nothing to be ashamed of here. This is all the more true when a person of higher spiritual life, to whom your family listens, stands over you and your child. Your personal reverent attitude to clergy also fosters in the child a feeling of humility and reverence before holy things, before the priestly rank. {to be continued}

Fr. Alexei Uminsky, a Russian priest – Excerpt from his book, Children's Confession, How to Help Your Child, reprinted in Orthodox Word, No. 251, 2006

Two brethren went to an elder who lived alone in Scetis. And the first one said, "Father, I have learned all of the Old and New Testaments by heart." The Elder said to him, "You have filled the air with words." The other one said, "I have copied out the Old and New Testaments and have them in my cell." And to this one, the old man replied, "You have filled your window with parchment.

But do you not know Him who said, 'The Kingdom of God is not in words, but in power?' And again, 'Not those who hear the Law will be justified before God but those who carry it out.'" They asked him, therefore, what was the way of salvation, and he said to them, "The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and humility with patience."

~ A word from the Desert

Post v. Putin — Whose Side Are You On?

By Patrick J. Buchanan, Aug 13, 2013

The culture war has gone global. And the divisions are not only between, but within nations.

“Suddenly, homosexuality is against the law,” wailed Jay Leno. “I mean, this seems like Germany. Let’s round up the Jews. Let’s round up the gays. ... I mean, it starts like that.”

Leno was speaking of Vladimir Putin’s Russia. Obama eagerly agreed:

“I have no patience for countries that treat gays or lesbians ... in ways that intimidate them or are harmful to them. ... Nobody is more offended than me by some of the antigay and lesbian legislation that you’ve been seeing in Russia.”

Leno and Obama were referring to a new Russian law prohibiting “homosexual propaganda.” Moscow is also warning foreigners, including visitors to the winter Olympics in Sochi, that propagandizing for gay rights can get them two weeks in detention. No kiss-ins allowed.

“Medieval,” howled The Washington Post. “Mr. Putin’s war” on gays and lesbians is “part and parcel of his lapse into xenophobia, religious chauvinism and general intolerance.”

Monday’s New York Times has a front-page story — “Gays in Russia Find No Haven, Despite Support From the West” — featuring photos of roughed-up protesters.

Our moral and cultural elites have put Putin on notice: Get in step with us on homosexual rights — or we may just boycott your Sochi (Olympic) games.

What this reveals is the distance America has traveled, morally and culturally, in a few short years, and our amnesia about who we Americans once were, and what it is we once believed.

Only yesterday, homosexual sodomy, which Thomas Jefferson said should be treated like rape, was outlawed in many states and same-sex marriage was regarded as an absurdity.

Was that America we grew up in really like Nazi Germany?

In the Catholic schools this writer attended, pornography — let alone homosexual propaganda — would get one expelled. Was this really just like Kristallnacht?

When the Socialist regime of Francois Hollande enacted a law endorsing same-sex marriage, a million Frenchmen marched in protest in Paris. Is America on Hollande’s side, or the side of the protesters?

When the ultra-Orthodox haredim of Jerusalem denounce the annual gay pride parade in the Holy City, whose side is America on?

The Post weeps for the “young women of the persecuted rock band who engaged in half-naked obscene acts on the high altar (*in front of the Iconostasis*) of Moscow’s most sacred cathedral (*Christ the Savior*).

Had these women crayoned swastikas on the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., would the Post have been so sympathetic?

Putin suggested the ladies try the same stunt in Mecca.

In our late Mideast wars, America has fought for secularist democracy. Yet Christians have suffered horribly, with the murder of priests, the burning of churches, terrorism and wholesale flight.

According to LifeSiteNews, Putin, meeting with Orthodox Christian leaders, urged the world to come together to stop these violent persecutions.

“Especially in the Middle East and North Africa ... the rights of religious minorities are infringed, especially Christians and Orthodox Christians. ... This pressing problem should be a subject of close attention for the entire international community.”

Urging America and the West to join with Russia in saving Syria’s Christians, Orthodox Patriarch Kirill said their expulsion from Syria would be a “catastrophe” for civilization.

Has The New York Times ever exhibited a fraction of the concern for persecuted Christians it daily exhibits for harassed homosexuals? What did the Post mean by “religious chauvinism”?

Putin is trying to re-establish the Orthodox Church as the moral compass of the nation it had been for 1,000 years before Russia fell captive to the atheistic and pagan ideology of Marxism.

“The adoption of Christianity,” declared Putin, “became a turning point in the fate of our fatherland, made it an inseparable part of the Christian civilization and helped turn it into one of the largest world powers.”

The Mass Exodus of Christians from the Muslim World

Raymond Ibrahim

A mass exodus of Christians is currently underway. Millions of Christians are being displaced from one end of the Islamic world to the other. We are reliving the true history of how the Islamic world, much of which prior to the Islamic conquests was almost entirely Christian, came into being.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recently said: “The flight of Christians out of the region is unprecedented and it’s increasing year by year.” In our lifetime alone “Christians might disappear altogether from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Egypt.”

Ongoing reports from the Islamic world certainly support this conclusion: Iraq was the earliest indicator of the fate awaiting Christians once Islamic forces are liberated from the grip of dictators. In 2003, Iraq’s Christian population was at least one million. Today fewer than 400,000 remain the result of an anti-Christian campaign that began with the U.S. occupation of Iraq, when countless Christian churches were bombed and countless Christians killed, including by crucifixion and beheading. The 2010 Baghdad church attack, which saw nearly 60 Christian worshippers slaughtered, was the tip of a decade-long iceberg.

Now, as the U.S. supports the jihad on Syria’s secular president Assad, the same pattern has come to Syria: entire regions and towns where Christians lived for centuries before Islam came into being have now been emptied, as the opposition targets Christians for kidnapping, plundering, and beheadings, all in compliance with mosque calls telling the populace that it’s a “sacred duty” to drive Christians away.

In October 2012 the last Christian in the city of Homs—which had a Christian population of some 80,000 before jihadis came—was murdered. One teenage Syrian girl said: “We left because they were trying to kill us... because we were Christians.... Those who were our neighbors turned against us. At the end, when we ran away, we went through balconies. We did not even dare go out on the street in front of our house.”.

In Egypt, some 100,000 Christian Copts have fled their homeland soon after the “Arab Spring.” In September 2012, the Sinai’s small Christian community was attacked and evicted by Al Qaeda linked Muslims, Reuters reported. But even before that, the Coptic Orthodox Church lamented the “repeated incidents of displacement of Copts from their homes, whether by force or threat.

Displacements began in Ameriya [62 Christian families evicted], then they stretched to Dahshur [120 Christian families evicted], and today terror and threats have reached the hearts and souls of our Coptic children in Sinai.”.

Iraq, Syria, and Egypt are part of the Arab world. But even in “black” African and “white” European nations with Muslim majorities, Christians are fleeing.

In Mali, after a 2012 Islamic coup, as many as 200,000 Christians fled. According to reports, “the church in Mali faces being eradicated,” especially in the north “where rebels want to establish an independent Islamist state and drive Christians out... there have been house to house searches for Christians who might be in hiding, churches and other Christian property have been looted or destroyed, and people tortured into revealing any Christian relatives.” At least one pastor was beheaded.

Even in European Bosnia, Christians are leaving en mass “amid mounting discrimination and Islamization.” Only 440,000 Catholics remain in the Balkan nation, half the prewar figure. Problems cited are typical: “while dozens of mosques were built in the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, no building permissions [permits] were given for Christian churches.” “Time is running out as there is a worrisome rise in radicalism,” said one authority, who further added that the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina were “persecuted for centuries” after European powers “failed to support them in their struggle against the Ottoman Empire.” (*No mention of the Orthodox who no doubt share the same plight as Catholics.*)

And so history repeats itself. One can go on and on.

In Ethiopia, after a Christian was accused of desecrating a Koran, thousands of Christians were forced to flee their homes when “Muslim extremists set fire to roughly 50 churches and dozens of Christian homes.”

To anyone following the plight of Christians under Islamic persecution, none of this is surprising. As I document in my new book, “Crucified Again: Exposing Islam’s New War on Christians,” all around the Islamic world—in nations that do not share the same race, language, culture, or economics, in nations that share only Islam—Christians are being persecuted into extinction. Such is the true face of extremist Islamic resurgence.

We need to live as Christians and if we can't do that at least we can die like Christians.

“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

~ Michael Baumann, *Internet Commentator*

FOR CONSIDERATION

On goodness, Saint Nilus of Sinai writes: "Strive, my son, always to be simple and good. Do not have one thing in your heart and another on your tongue, for that is guile and falsehood. Be truthful and not deceitful, for a lie is of the guileful one. Do not return evil for evil, but, if someone does evil to you, forgive him, that God may forgive you. If you are tormented by the thought of evil done to you, pray to God with your whole heart for that brother (the evil-doer), and you will drive the memory of the evil from you."

It is told how a young man set himself to serve a very peevish elder, simply that God would forgive him his sins. He persevered in this martyring service for twelve years, and went to God. A great spiritual elder saw the young man's soul in Paradise, where he was praying for the wicked elder: "Lord, as Thou hadst mercy on me for his sake, have mercy on him also, after Thy great goodness, for the sake of me Thy servant!" After forty days, the peevish old man breathed his last, and again the elder saw the soul of this old man, in peace in the heavenly Kingdom. How beautiful and truly wonderful was the goodness and patience of this young man!

CHECKUP FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

How many Matins and Divine Liturgies would we have if everyone would stay home when I do?

How often would the Vespers service be canceled if no one would go except when I do?

How often would the Bible class meet if others would attend only when I do?

How much Christian instruction would the children of my community receive if other parents would pay only as much attention to it as I do?

How many neighbors would be invited to services and welcomed if others would invite and welcome only as many people as I do?

How many prayers would be offered for my pastor, my neighbors, and my church if others would pray only as much as I do?

How many words of testimony would be given for Christ if others would speak out for Christ only as much as I do?

What kind of church would my church be if every member were just like me?

I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH

I believe more profoundly in the church every hour that I live. A man can make his testimony go further through the church than through any independent movements. He can make his money, his testimony, and all his work go further. He can do more constructive work through the church than any other way in the world. That is my deepest conviction. I have watched all kinds of independent movements, and my conviction steadily deepens that a Christian is doing the wisest thing possible when he links his life with the church.

— George W. Truett

**"Prayer, until our very death, will require concern on our part – a constant struggle.
(St. Barsanuphius of Optina)**