



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **September 22, 2013** ✠

Hieromartyr Phocas, Bishop of Sinope (117)

Holy Prophet Jonah (8th B.C.)

St. Cosmas of Zographou, Mt. Athos (1323)

Blessed Paraskeva, Fool-for-Christ of Diveyevo Monastery (1915)

Do not be ashamed to enter
the Church (to confess).

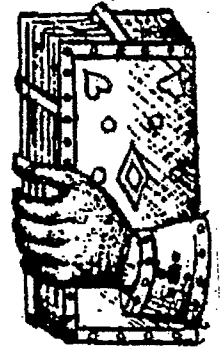
Be ashamed when you sin
but not when you repent.

~ St. John Chrysostom

⇒ **Inquirer's Class – Tuesday, September 24, 6:30pm - Church Tour**

Contentment Comes From Within ...by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

"If we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that" (1 Timothy 6:8).



The Apostles of God taught others that which they themselves fulfilled in their own lives. When they had food and clothing they were content. Even when it occurred that they had neither food nor clothing they were content. For their contentment did not emanate from the outside but emanated from within. Their contentment was not so cheap as the contentment of an animal, but costly, more costly and more rare. Internal contentment, the contentment of peace and love of God in the heart, that is the contentment of greater men - that was the apostolic contentment.

In great battles, generals are dressed and fed as ordinary soldiers and they do not seek contentment in food nor in clothes but in victory. Victory is the primary principle of contentment of those who battle. Brethren, Christians are constantly in battle, in battle for the victory of the spirit over the material, in battle for conquest of the higher over the lower, man over beast. Is it not, therefore, absurd to engage in battle and not to worry about victory but to concern oneself with external decorations and ornaments? Is it not foolish to give to one's enemies the marks of identification? Our invisible enemy [Satan] rejoices at our vanity and supports us in every vain thought. The invisible enemy occupies us with every possible unreasonable pettiness and idleness only to impose upon our minds the heavy forgetfulness relative to that for which we are here on earth. The invisible enemy [Satan] presents to us the worthless as important, the irrelevant as essential and that which is detrimental as beneficial only in order to achieve victory and to destroy us forever.

O Lord, Holy, Mighty and Immortal, Who created us from the mud and breathed a living soul into mud, do not allow, O Lord, that the mud overwhelms! Help our spirit that it always be stronger than the earth.

✠ ✠ ✠

Love can do all things, and if it ceases to be generous and sharing it is not longer love.

St. Gregory Dialogos (604)

It is love that asks, that seeks, that knocks, that finds, and that is faithful to what it finds.

St. Augustine (430)

To all the believers God grants remission of sins until the Day of Resurrection, if they repent with all their hearts.

The Shepherd of Hermas (1st C)

On the Causes of the Russian Revolution Archbishop Averky of Syracuse (+1976)

A great many different ideas, more or less weighty and plausible, have been and continue to be expressed on the causes which led to the terrible, bloody catastrophe which befell our motherland Russia in 1917. Usually and most frequently causes of an economic and political character are presented for consideration, and people think that it all is satisfactorily and completely explained by them. But for us, Russian believers, there cannot be the slightest doubt that these causes, if they existed in fact, were only secondary, derivative, attendant causes, but certainly not the chief, the fundamental, nor the basic ones.

The chief cause of all the woes which befall a man and deprive him of peace and prosperity is his departure from the Single Source of life and well-being, our Creator, Provider, and Savior, God, and his flouting of the Divine laws and rules, which are man's only salvation. This is what was written by the great teacher of all Christian Russia, Bishop Theophan the Recluse, in the 60's of the last century:

"Do you know how gloomy my thoughts are? And not without good reason. I meet people who call themselves Orthodox, but who in spirit are followers of Voltaire, naturalists, Lutherans, and all sorts of free-thinkers. They have studied all the sciences in our higher schools. They are neither stupid nor evil, but in regard to the faith and the Church they are worthless. Their fathers and mothers were pious; the damage was done during the time of their education outside their parents' home. The memory of their childhood and of the spirit of their parents still keeps them within certain boundaries. What will their children be like? And what will keep them within the proper boundaries? I conclude from this that in one, at the most two, generations, our Orthodoxy will wither." (Letters on the Christian Life, p.78)

A Moral Revolution

Glasnost enabled the Russian to see that Homo Sovieticus was both a "symbol of a spiritual crisis and its epitome." The Soviet Man forgot how to work, was driven by envy, sloth, lying, and stealing, driven to drink, both humiliated and humiliator. The virtue necessary for stability and progress was methodically and mercilessly ground out of almost everyone. Despair left the soul and the nation bare.

Moral crises are healed by repentance. In Greek, repentance (metanoia) means "a turning or change of the mind;" literally a new way of seeing...the call to repentance was made years earlier. In 1975, *From Under the Rubble*, a book by Alexander Solzhenitsyn and six other dissidents (all living in Russia at the time) was published that outlined with uncanny accuracy the steps necessary for the Russian restoration.

Glasnost, like every modern revolution, "was about reclaiming and extending human dignity ... " At first it imposed on the Russian leadership a new definition of socialism (Gorbachev sought to meld the newfound freedom with socialist ideas) and foreign affairs. As time went on however, it became increasingly clear that the great collectivist experiment needed to be scrapped altogether. New ideas emerged that proclaimed that the quality of domestic and foreign policy were indissolubly dependent on the moral health of the citizenry. Universal values were to be recovered and implemented. A new democracy had to be crafted that was "based on deep-rooted morality and conscience."

Leon Aron's masterful work (referenced below) may also contain a prophetic warning. Russia repudiated the materialist ideas that eroded the barriers against the tyranny while the nations of the West are embracing them. **If Russia's history proves moral renewal breaks the shackles of darkness, then our moral corruption may be blinding us to an enslavement coming our way.**

~ **Fr. Johannes Jacobse:** A review of Leon Aron's book, *Roads to the Temple, Memory, Ideas, and Ideals in the Making of the Russian Revolution, 1987-1991*

The Historical Background of the Martyrdom of ST. PETER THE ALEUT

by Marina D. Ilyin

The holy martyr Peter Tchounagnak was an Aleut Indian converted to Orthodoxy in the late 18th or early 19th century by Russian Orthodox missionaries. He departed this life in San Francisco, California, on Sept. 8, 1815, martyred for refusing to become Roman Catholic at the hands of Padre Abella at Dolores Mission. Little or no public interest was accorded him until quite recently. How is it that he has attracted the public's attention, and why so late? When the Russian Orthodox Church began to compile information on the first missionaries sent to Alaska, and particularly when considering the canonization of St. Herman of Alaska, an account by one of Peter's fellow prisoners was found among the notes of St. Herman's devoted spiritual son, Simeon Yanovsky (who was later to become Schema-monk Sergei), which relates the Aleut martyr's death.¹ Yanovsky, in turn, told Father Herman in 1819, at St. Paul's Harbor on Kodiak Island, later relating their conversation in writing as follows:²

"Once I told him how the Spaniards in California had taken fourteen of our Aleuts captive, and how the Jesuits had tortured one Aleut to death, trying to force them all to accept the Catholic faith, to which the Aleuts did by no means consent, answering: 'We are Christians, we have been baptized,' showing them the crosses on their necks. But the Jesuits retorted: 'No, you are heretics and schismatics, and if you do not agree to accept the Catholic faith, we will torture you to death.' And they left them in the prison until evening, two to a cell, to think it over. In the evening they came with lanterns and lighted candles and began again trying to persuade them to accept the Catholic faith. But the Aleuts, permeated with Divine grace, firmly and decisively answered that they were Christians and would not change their faith. Then these fanatics began to torture them: at first one, with the other as witness. At first they cut off one joint of his toes, one toe at a time, then the next joint; he endured everything and kept on saying: 'I am a Christian, and will not change my faith.' Then they cut off one joint from each of his fingers, then the next joint; then they chopped off his hands, then his feet — the blood flowed. But the martyr endured to the end and repeated unchangingly this one phrase. He died from loss of blood."

The next day they wanted to torture others, but that same night an order came from Monterey that all the captive Russian Aleuts be sent at once under guard to Monterey; and so on the next day all, except the deceased, were sent off. This was told to me by an Aleut who was an eyewitness, a comrade of the martyred one; he later escaped captivity by fleeing. Upon hearing this I reported it to the Central Administration in St. Petersburg.

When I finished relating this to Father Herman, he asked me: 'And what was the name of the martyred Aleut?' I answered, 'Peter, but I don't remember his last name.' Then he got up and stood before the icons, piously crossed himself and pronounced these words: 'Holy New Martyr Peter, pray to God for us!'"

The only other information given about Peter was Yanovsky's introduction:³

ST. PETER THE ALEUT

"The Russian-American Company founded *Fort Ross*, not far from San Francisco, in 1812. There climate and soil favored agriculture, stock raising, a vegetable garden, and the like; all this was to be of use to the Company. This required manual labor. Some Russians and Aleuts, coming from northern regions to work, were settled there. But the new colony of Russians, being situated at the border of California, which then belonged to Spain, aroused suspicion in the Spaniards concerning the aims of the Russian-American Company. Fearing that the Russians meant to take possession of the town of San Francisco, the Spanish government began to demand that they abandon Fort Ross, and it began to cause various unpleasant incidents. Finally in 1815 the Spanish arrested some twenty or thirty Russian Orthodox Aleuts. Some of those arrested were held in San Francisco, while others were deported to other places. They were forced to labor and were badly treated. It is unknown how fourteen Russian Orthodox Aleuts ended up in prison in San Francisco and for some reason fell into the hands of Jesuits."

Despite its brevity and sketchiness, both as proof of Father Herman's merits as a missionary and to inform Orthodox Christians about the first Orthodox martyr on American soil, this account was translated from the Russian and reprinted in Vol. III, No. 3 (14) (June-July, 1967) of *The Orthodox Word*. Thereafter, Peter's fame and veneration grew so rapidly that when his cultus spread beyond the boundary of private prayer into public worship, he was added to the list of candidates awaiting solemn glorification.

Why did he die so

tragically? Possibly the answer lies in Spanish attitudes towards foreigners classified as heretics, the general pattern of missionary work carried out among Indians by California's Spanish missionaries, and the atmosphere at Francisco de Asis Mission itself. The missionary techniques employed in Spanish California must also be explained by Spanish attitudes toward Indians of all types. They were generally viewed as pathetic, savage, primitive and barbarous people incapable of any intelligence above that of children and so were treated with paternal condescension.²⁶ The basic tactics of the Spanish Franciscans' missionary work can be described as follows:

By gifts of trinkets, food and clothing they attracted the simple people, whose timidity they overcame by making a display of the friendliness of other Indians they had brought along for that purpose. When necessary, even a double portion of food was offered to those willing to accept the little understood but apparently harmless rite of conversion. And surely the soft-voiced kindly padre would do no harm by speaking strange words while sprinkling a few drops of water on the heads of their wondering children... In return for the favors, the gullible natives gave vent to their gratitude by joining in the construction of the settlement... Only after the rude chapel, barracks, and dwellings became enclosed within a stockade did it dawn on the trusting natives that they had built themselves a prison, walled and guarded. Once a convert, always a convert, even though the confinement was mitigated by the benevolence of their captors... In time, the poor natives discovered there was no legal escape from their new homes, for every enterprising runaway was caught and severely punished.²⁷

Each time a mission was built, so was a presidio, or fort, to billet three to five soldiers to catch runaways and protect the padres, whose only protection, other than a cross and breviary, was a deerskin mantle, scant protection from flying arrows.²⁸ Unaccustomed to "civilized" life which demanded continual work, many mission Indians longed for their past of free nomadic hunting and fishing, while others simply longed for their families. After several months, many Indians grew fretful and thin, gazing constantly with sadness toward their homes which

were visible in the distance.²⁹ Those who could be trusted were permitted to return to visit their tribes for a short while once each year, but due to a high escape rate few were granted this permission. Usually the only change in their daily environment occurred when they worked at the pueblos or presidios nearby, work for which they were not paid, since the "fathers took it for the benefit of the community, so it was said, although we do not know what part of these products reached the community."³⁰

Of the Indians that did escape, most were recaptured in short order and punished. On account of the enmities between the different tribes, fugitives were never given refuge in any other tribe but their own, and thus it was not easy for them to resist for long the armed soldiers who pursued them, knowing exactly where to find them.³¹

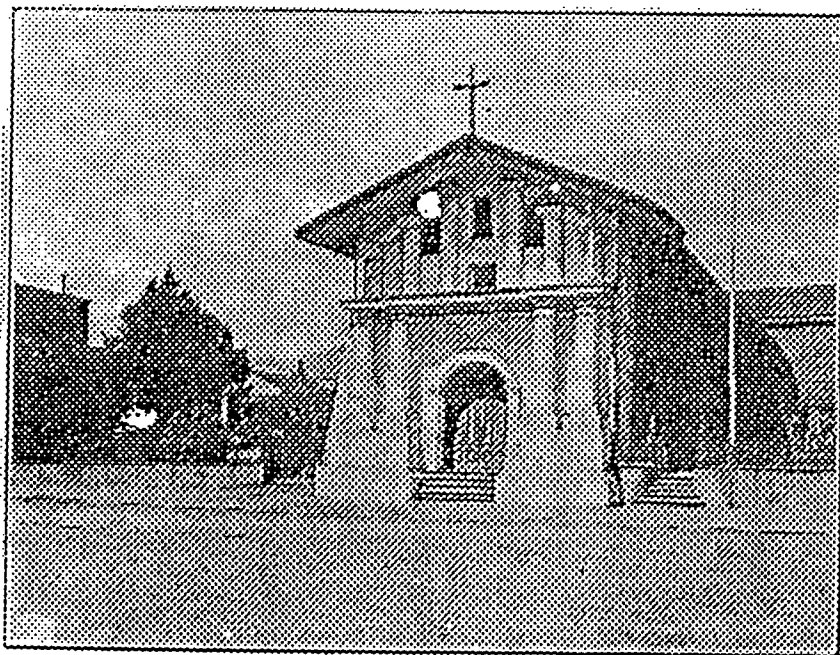
Punishments were brutally calculated to inflict smarting pain and embarrassing humiliation rather than any long-term privation or permanent injury. They consisted of working shackled, imprisonment in chains, or sitting in stocks. For grave offences or sins the condemned was tied to a cannon or post to receive twenty-five or more lashes. If the culprit pleaded for pardon, the severity of the blows might be lessened, but never the number.³² Men were punished in public as an example, while women were punished in private, so as not to excite the men to revolt. The most painful punishment of all, however, was called "a la ley de Bayone," where a musket was passed under the knees so that the feet and hands could be tied around it.³³ All such punishments were inflicted by the padres, though at times they were compelled to call upon the aid of the soldiers who acted as escorts, or the three Indian magistrates, referred to as "caciques" by the people. These magistrates, or "caciques," had no choice but to fulfill the will of their superiors blindly and passively, both when it came to administering lashes and in maintaining orderly conduct among their fellow Indians in church.³⁴ If faults were especially serious, the priest had to investigate the case,

arrest the culprit, and inform the presidio commandant of the fort who handled the case. The missions had no qualms about administering these punishments because they believed that they were acting in the Indians' best interests as "wise and prudent fathers," which to their minds implied that authority possessed by all parents to educate their children by exhorting, rebuking and chastising them when necessary. Thus they justified their guardianship over the Indians, which they felt had devolved upon them because they had baptized them.

Corporal punishments are inflicted on Indians of both sexes who neglect pious exercises, and for several sins, the punishment, of which in Europe is reserved only to divine justice, are punished with chains or the stocks. In a word... from the moment a new convert is baptized, he becomes the same as if he had pronounced eternal vows if he makes his escape for the purpose of returning to his relations in the independent villages, they cause him to be summoned to return three times; and if he refuses, they claim the authority of the governor, who sends soldiers to force him away from the midst of his family and conduct him to the missions, where he is sentenced, to receive a certain number of lashes of the whip... and this custom, against which reason so forcible objects, is mentioned because theologians have decided that baptism could not in conscience be administered to men so fickle unless the government in some measure, become responsible for their perseverance, but officiating as god-father...³⁷

When they were not dealing with discipline problems, the padres' principal duties were to oversee the neophytes' morals, to instruct them in the basics of the Roman Catholic faith, as well as to civilize them by teaching them useful trades. Most men worked as laborers in the fields, but some were trained as mechanics, stonemasons, cattle, horse, and sheep herders, butchers, shoemakers and blacksmiths. Generally the women were trained as weavers, cooks and seamstresses. In addition to the regular cleaning they were under obligation to fulfill duties in various mission buildings.³⁸ Strictly enforced segregation of both sexes was maintained, and girls and widows in particular were put to work under lock and key to protect them from any sort of "mischief." Only marriage allowed a couple the freedom to live in a separate house within the mission walls or on a rancho, and to cook their own meals. All other unmarried mission inhabitants over the age of 9 or 10 ate their meals in the community kitchen. Sundays and certain prescribed holidays were the only days of rest from their appointed tasks, such rest commencing after fulfillment of the mass obligation, since no age group was exempt from church worship. The best-treated Indian boys (those either born to converts or who had been kidnapped by Spanish soldiers at an early age to be raised as houseservants) were usually the ones privileged to learn to read, sing and play musical instruments so as to keep up the interest of their newly-converted tribal peers and elders in a service that was virtually unintelligible to them.⁴⁰

While this formed the general pattern of Californian Franciscan missionary work, Peter's death must also be understood within the context of the historical atmosphere peculiar to the Mission of Francisco de Asis at which he died in 1815, for this Mission was quite different from all others in California, because it had one of the lowest records for baptisms and one of the highest for runaways. Cruelty was part of its early heritage, bequeathed by such persons as Father



The Mission of San Francisco de Asis de Los Dolores. Formally opened on Oct. 9, 1776, it was here that St. Peter the Aleut was martyred at the hands of the Latins.

Dani, Father Landeta, the useless and unbalanced Fernandez, the violently demented Antonio Horra of San Miguel, Governor Borica, and Ensign Moraga. Its reputation further suffered because epidemics took high tolls, as did venereal disease. In the face of all these problems, together with the lack of agricultural security, it is no wonder that sheer force was employed in attempts to replenish lost numbers and to hold the few it still had.⁴¹

"It is by means of their noise that they endeavor to stir the imagination of the Indians and to make men of these savages. It is, indeed, the only means of producing an effect on them. When the drums begin to beat they fall on the ground as if they were half-dead, no one dares to move; all remain stretched upon the ground without making the slightest movement until the end of the service, and even then, it is necessary to tell them several times that the mass is finished. Armed soldiers are stationed at each corner of the church. After the mass, the superior delivers a sermon in Latin to his flock."⁴²

What a contrast to Spanish ways was the Russian philosophy of missionary work and the Russian pattern of missionary activities in Alaska! Although native peoples everywhere were regarded as mere children in need of conversion, protection and guidance, Russian missionaries never extended the idea of guardianship to any legal or civil areas which would adopt people and confine them to any specific place to live, nor did they use soldiers for protection or to bring back the lapsed. If generalizations could be made, one could say that Spanish monks subscribed ideologically to "conversion by force or sword," while Russian monks subscribed ideologically to the theory of "conversion by example." In fact the precept "save your own soul first, and thousands will be saved around you" early formed the basis for all missionary activity undertaken by the Orthodox Church. This in turn kept conversion figures low, causing many people to chastise the Russian Orthodox Church in particular for "failures" in evangelizing the non-Christian world. Yet when one reflects on the fact that Siberia, the abode of wild pagan tribes, was only first crossed in 1582, it is a real credit that by 1817, approximately 70% of all people living within Russia's borders were Orthodox Christians! Primarily this was achieved by monks in search of places suitable for ascetic endeavor, who went into forests and settled near rivers and lakes, using hollow trees, mud huts, or cabins as habitations while struggling in unceasing prayer, fasting and manual labor to save their souls. In the process, the surrounding heathens were not only gradually enlightened spiritually but also in a "civilized fashion," being transformed from nomads to settlers. When conditions were favorable, these early individual habitations grew into monasteries with settlements around them which grew into towns. Under less favorable circumstances these habitations remained small churches. The monks that left the Monastery of Valaam on Lake Ladoga in Russia to convert the Aleuts and other Indian tribes in Alaska began to establish Christianity using the time-tested Russian method of incipient monastic foundations. Some went on to teach the Aleuts trades, to establish churches and schools, and to instruct them in their native language and in Russian; and although this carefully laid groundwork did not result in the foundation of monasteries, the life of these first monastic missionaries, examples of evangelical simplicity and holiness, were seeds which yielded a bountiful harvest of those converted to faith in Christ, as Peter's life bears witness.⁴³

The site of St. Peter's grave is not known, for the bodies of most Indians at Dolores Mission were cast into unmarked graves. Thus, we are deprived of his relics, unless an act of God reveals them.

SPIRITUAL LIFE IS THE BASIC PREREQUISITE FOR A GOOD FUTURE

By Elder Paisios the Athonite, from the book "Family Life," published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece (2002), translated by Fr. Luke Hartung.



- Geronta, the girl who said to you that she is considering monasticism told me that a boy from class asked why she won't go out to the movies or out on dates with boys. What should she have answered?

- She should have said: "Not even my brother has ever asked me such questions, and now you are?"

- A few days later the boy found her outside of school—she hadn't seen him—and he went to take her arm.

She only said "hello" and immediately went inside.

- No, that's not good! In such a position she should have reacted, because as things went, she may have given him the impression that she is fine with this show of affection and now he'll do it again. The age she's at now is a little difficult and it's not good for her to keep company with boys. It is not even necessary for her to speak with them, unless perhaps they need help. If she decides to get married, when she meets a nice guy, she should tell her parents about it. They will evaluate whether the right prerequisites for starting a good family are there. For now, as she still hasn't decided which life she will follow, speaking with boys won't help; she'll just get dizzy for nothing and lose her peace. Those kids who do such things are extremely miserable souls, flighty and constantly troubled; they have no peace. Their face and eyes are wild.

The attraction of the female gender to the male—and vice versa—exists in the nature of man. But, you should tell her that it's not the time for that now; she instead needs to attend to her studies. Kids who nurture this attraction from a young age, spin like tops before the right time. Later, when the appropriate hour does come, the top is already spinning and they aren't able to be happy because they've already lived that happiness. On the other hand, those kids who are careful, rejoice all the more when the proper time comes, and until that time they have great serenity. You know those mothers who have lived purely, how peaceful they are, even though they've got heaps of worries?

I always stress that a young person before marriage should strive to live as spiritually as possible and to keep their purity intact. This ensures double health. Spiritual life is the basic prerequisite for whichever life one may follow. The world

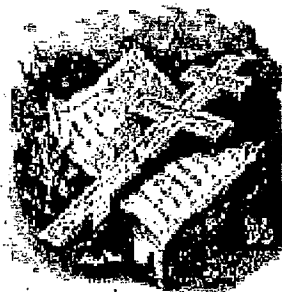
has become a field of wheat which, once the ears of grain sprouted forth, has entirely been trampled by pigs. Now all we see are weeds, mud and wheat thrown upside-down and, every once in awhile, off to the side, a lone, upright stalk.

The more spiritual work one puts into his or her adolescence the easier it will be later on, whichever life is chosen. The better one loads and prepares before the battle, the easier it will be in the midst of the war, when bullets are flying and bombs are landing all around. Until the time comes to decide, for example, if a girl will become a nun or a good mother, a pure life is essential. That's why, she must strive as much as she is able, to progress in her studies. When she guards her eyes and ears and rejects bad thoughts, she won't have far to go later.

When he meets a good girl, a young man should strive to have good thoughts; to see her as the living image of a saint. However, if he meets a girl who is a bit off track, to see her as a sister and be sorry for her, just as he'd be sorry to see his own sister fall, for we are all children of Adam.

- But today, Geronta, in the colleges, etc. there are many temptations for a young person.

- You must get connected with other spiritual people, so as to be helped and move about in a spiritual atmosphere. Let's not make things more difficult than they already are. I know a lot of kids who are in college and live in purity, by their own small effort and the great help of God.



We humans both grieve and rejoice. But grief should not overpower us, because great sorrow brings despair; which is the greatest sin—it's a lack of trust in the power of God. You have many thoughts, and they tire your mind. Say the Creed, and the Supplicatory Canon to our Panagia. Learn [this Canon] by heart ... so that your mind adheres to it and our Panagia will help you. Our Panagia, and our Lord's Cross, guard man from the many snares of the devil.

Without fail, kneel half an hour a day and pray to God. When you have great affliction, pray without ceasing—do not stop until you're aware of some relief in your soul. God beholds our persistence and faith, and sends His help. If you do not receive it, do not depart from prayer. He is compassionate, and will give it; but He also wants us to seek it from Him.

Elder Ieronymos of Aegina (+1966)