



God is with us!
Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **January 5, 2014** ✠

The Sunday before Theophany

Prefeast of Theophany

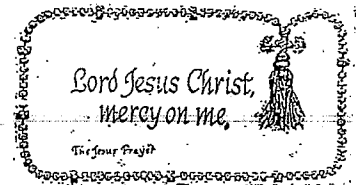
Prophet Micah (9th B.C.)

Hieromartyr Theopemptus of Nicomedia (303)

St. Syncretica of Alexandria (460)

Christ is Born! Christ is Baptized!

Together let us sing
the praises of Him Who is
beyond understanding:
In the flesh, He was made
poor and came to Baptism
thus working our restoration!
For He is God, rich in mercy!
Let us magnify His
condescension, crying aloud
with thankful hearts:
Glory to Thine Epiphany,
O Christ!



- ✠ Today ~ Great Blessing of Water at the end of the Divine Liturgy
- ✠ Tomorrow, January 6 10:00am ~ Divine Liturgy ~ **Feast of Holy Theophany**
⇒ Great Blessing of Water after Liturgy
- ✠ Tues. January 7, 10:00am ~ Old Calendar Nativity Divine Liturgy

Holy Water

A GREAT HOLY THING is close to us throughout our life, and it is Holy Water (agiasma in Greek). Sanctified water is an image of God's grace; it cleanses the faithful of spiritual defilements, it sanctifies and it strengthens them in their struggle for salvation in God.

At the very beginning we are plunged therein in Baptism, when in the reception of this mysterion we are immersed three times in the font, which is filled with holy water. In the mysterion of Baptism, the holy water washes away the sinful impurity of a person, it renews and regenerates him into a new life in Christ.

Holy water plays an indispensable part in the consecration of churches and all those things which are used in the Divine services, and also in the blessing of homes, buildings and other things. We are sprinkled with holy water in church processions, and during molebens (intercessory prayer services).

On the day of Theophany every Orthodox Christian takes home a bottle of holy water, carefully keeping it as one of the greatest of holy things, and prayerfully partaking of the holy water when he is ill or in times of infirmity.

"Holy water," as wrote the hierarch Dimitri of Kherson, "has the power to sanctify the souls and the bodies of all who make use of it." When taken with faith and with prayer, it is able to cure our physical ailments. After hearing the confessions of pilgrims, the Venerable Seraphim of Sarov always gave them a sip from a cup of holy Theophany water.

The Venerable Ambrose of Optina sent a bottle of holy water to one who was fatally ill, and to the amazement of the doctors his incurable sickness disappeared.

The Elder, hieroschemamonk Seraphim of Vyritsa always advised that one sprinkle products and food itself with Jordan (i.e., Theophany) water, which, in his words, "sanctifies everything." When someone was extremely ill, the Elder Seraphim blessed them to partake of a spoonful of holy water

on every hour. The Elder said that there was no medicine more powerful than holy water or sanctified oil - none at all.

The order of the Blessing of Waters, which is celebrated on the Feast of Theophany, is called Great on account of the special solemnity of the rite, and it commemorates the Baptism of the Lord, in which event the Church not only recognizes the sacramental washing away of sins, but the actual sanctification of the nature of the waters themselves through the immersion within them of God in the flesh.

The Great Blessing of the Waters is performed twice - on the day of Theophany itself and also on the evening before, the Eve of Theophany. Some believers mistakenly assume that the waters which are blessed on these two days are different. But actually, only one rite is used in the blessing both on the Eve and on the day of the Feast of the Baptism itself.

Even St. John Chrysostom says that the Theophany holy water remains for many years without deteriorating; it stays fresh, pure and portable, as if at this very moment it had poured forth from a living spring. This is a miracle of the Grace of God, which each one of us can observe even now!

According to the Church's understanding, agiasma is not simply water with a spiritual significance, but it is a new being, a spiritual-physical being, an interconnection between Heaven and earth, between Grace and materiality, and one which is extremely close.

This is why, according to the rules of the Church, the Great Agiasma is regarded as but a degree lower than Holy Communion. In those instances, when because of the sins they have committed, the members of the Church are submitted to an *epitimia* (penance) and forbidden to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, a common stipulation given with the rule is: "Only you may drink agiasma."

Theophany water is a holy thing, which every Orthodox Christians should have in the home. It should be kept carefully in the holy corner near the icons.

Besides Theophany water, Orthodox Christians also often use water sanctified at molebens (the Lesser Blessing of Waters), which are served at various times throughout the year. It is appointed by the Church that this rite should be celebrated on the Day of the Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Cross (1st August) and on the day of Mid-Pentecost, when the Church recalls the words of the Savior to the Samaritan woman, which contain such a deep mystery: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

Holy Theophany water may be taken on an empty stomach with some proshora after completing one's morning rule of prayer; it should be taken with particular reverence as a holy thing. "When a person makes use of proshora and holy water," said the recluse George of Zadonsk, "then the unclean spirits do not approach him, he is sanctified body and soul, his thoughts are illumined unto the pleasing of God, and that person becomes inclined to fasting, prayer and every virtue."

A Prayer on Partaking of Proshora (Antidoron) and Holy Water

O Lord my God, may Thy gift and Thy holy water be unto the enlightenment of my mind, unto the strengthening of my spiritual and physical powers, unto the health of soul and body, unto the subjugation of the passions and of my infirmities through Thy boundless kindheartedness, and by the prayers of Thine All-immaculate Mother and of all Thy Saints. Amen.

Translated from "First Steps in Church," a publication of the Monastery of the Meeting, Moscow, 2004, from the British journal, The Shepherd, January 2005.

Thoughts for the New Year

What Mother Alexandra Might Say to Us Today

{From a talk given by Mother Christophora of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA, on the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent at a Pan-Orthodox Vespers in Campbell, OH, 2013}

All of us Orthodox Christians know that during Lent, every year we remember on the Sundays of Great Lent certain monastic Saints: St. Gregory Palamas, St. John the Ladder, and St. Mary of Egypt. When we are brought face to face with these ancient ascetical Saints of the Church, while living very busy lives now in the 21st century in the United States, we might ask ourselves, "What in the world are these monastic Saints - why are these on the calendar? Why are they still brought before us, and what are they trying to teach us?"

I thought it might be interesting tonight to look at someone of our time and actually of our place, someone who lived an ascetic life, a monastic life, as well as a married life, and visited this very church many times in her life... Many of you knew her, met her, spoke with her, took advice from her, kissed her hand, and asked her prayers. I am, of course, talking about Mother Alexandra, Princess Ileana of Romania, and foundress of our monastery in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania, and I think she has something she wants to tell us tonight.

She always admired the monastic life, and thought to fulfill her dream to become a nun herself after the children were raised. She was now in her early 50s, having survived two World Wars and deportment from her beloved country. She could not go back to Romania to be a nun, but went to France. While there, and very much enjoying her quiet monastic life, something was driving her [further], more, not to stop there, but to come back to America because she wanted to give this country a gift, a gift for taking her in and giving her a home when she was a woman without a country. She knew what a monastery would do for its area, how much a monastery blesses a church and its country and the village where it is located.

So she came to Western Pennsylvania, and started, as you know, the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Monastery in Ellwood City. It wasn't easy, and she had many struggles, even in the monastery, and even trying to begin Orthodox monastic life in a country that wasn't so interested in it, nor believed in it, or even believed it existed, but she did it and made this gift to America.

Now it is nearly 50 years since she started our monastery, and I think - I'm putting words into her mouth, but hopefully she's praying for us and inspiring these words - I think she would like to tell us at this time in our lives, in this area, three things.

Don't Be Afraid

I think she would like to say to us, first of all: Don't be afraid. Have courage. You have the Truth. You are Orthodox. You have the fullness of the faith. Why are you so timid? Why isn't the church packed? Why aren't more people knowing about Orthodoxy? Why aren't more people coming in? Why are we so timid? Don't be afraid, and as Queen Marie, her mother, said, "Life loves the brave." Let's rejoice that we have the faith. Let's not be proud of it, but let's invite others in.

I think she would also say: Don't be afraid. I also lived in tragic times - I know very well what it is for a bomb to go off. Many bombs went off in her lifetime, over her head. She knows the fear that can surround us when society seems to be crumbling, and there is nothing darker than the years of Communism which kept her own country so devastated and the Church so broken. She knows tragedy, but she also knew faith, and she faced tragedy head-on. She faced danger head-on, and she tells us: Don't be afraid. She herself suffered much pain, much physical pain in her life, all her life. She suffered emotional pain, and don't we know what that is in our time and in our place! Most of us bear emotional pain if not physical pain.

She also suffered deep hurt from her family members. For instance, even though she had a great love for her mother - they were very, very strongly bonded, spiritually, emotionally - she was kept from seeing her mother on her deathbed by her own brother, who wouldn't allow her to re-enter her country of Romania at that time when her mother was dying.

She knew how to forgive. She knew how to suffer. She was even mocked and ridiculed in starting our monastery. She looked like a crazy woman. She bought a property of 100 acres. There was not a building. There was not a room. There was not a roof. Just this. What does a princess know about building a monastery, and what can she do? She wasn't afraid. She was courageous. "Life loves the brave." And she did it. And she wasn't discouraged because it didn't go so well or so easily in those beginning years. But all of us know that. Nothing is easy in the beginning.

Everything God wants us to do: Do we really want to do this, or is this just a nice idea? So the Lord waits. You want to do it? Then you have to work for it. And she did.

Join Together

I think the second thing she would say, now that she's gotten us a little more brave, she would say to us: Join together. Christ said, "[Where] two or three are gathered in My name, I am in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). Pray for one another. Work together. Don't criticize each other. Sure, we're different, even within Orthodoxy we're different, but that's so beautiful. That's not wrong. It just shows that the Lord has a great variety in all His creation. Look outside at the trees this evening. Every tree is a little different; every leaf is a little different; and every one of us is a little different. So is our expression of Orthodoxy. We have the fullness of the faith in Orthodoxy, all the teachings of the Saints, and we can express it differently. We have to not look down on each other or each other's ways, not criticize but join together. Don't compete, don't be jealous, but respect each other.

By the time she founded our monastery 50 years ago, the idea of one Orthodox Church in this nation was very strong, and the idea of everyone coming together in a pan-Orthodox manner had great hope. She founded our monastery, thank God, with that tone, with that mission, with that focus, that we would be pan-Orthodox, and we always have been. I thank God, because if we were a Romanian Orthodox monastery, there wouldn't be any of us there, because none of us are Romanian. She knew she didn't need to start a Romanian monastery. She knew she needed to start a monastery for Americans, and insisted services be in English from day one, and that everyone would be welcomed. She welcomed all the clergy, and we still continue to do that and have the blessing to do that, and how blessed we are, too, because we don't have to rely on a very small group of clergy to serve us.

I think she would also say to us, as we look at other Christians: Don't be afraid of them, either. As Christianity - I'm not talking about just Orthodox Christianity - becomes smaller, suppressed, even fought against in our nation and in our culture, it's time for us to join together with other Christians. I remember growing up at a time when Catholic friends of mine were not allowed, by their church, to attend an Orthodox service, unless it was a funeral. This is really true and happened in our own lifetime. Now, thank God, they don't have that kind of restriction.

I think we as Orthodox recognize we have the truth, we have the fullness, but let's embrace our Christian brothers and sisters because we cannot tear down Christianity from within by competing. We can respect them. They have a portion of the truth. We can teach them the fullness and love them, because our nation needs more Christians joined together rather than more and more divisions. I think that's a little change since Mother started our monastery, but I really think it's necessary. We live in a post-Christian society, and we must respect all Christians and join and work with them and understand and share what we have with them.

Be Fruitful

The third thing I think she would say to us is: Be fruitful. Be fruitful and multiply. Labor and work. She was a lady who knew how to work. You can read a book called *Royal Monastic* that describes her whole life, and you won't believe you are reading a book about one person, she did so many things. You're sure that when you read that, it must be three or four people you're reading about. She only lived to be 82, so there's a lot that she did: started a monastery, a hospital, and all kinds of other things.

Do what you can. Use the gifts that God gave to you, and multiply them. Build on those gifts. Do what you can, each of you, in your own place, where you're planted, where God put you. Probably He will not ask you to go to Romania and start a monastery, but He is asking you to do something. She had great courage, and she would take the smallest talent and develop it. She painted icons. She carved. She did embroidery. Near the end of her life, just months before she died - we didn't know she was dying, that close to death - Communism fell, and the American news broke the story of how many children were suffering in orphanages from AIDS. She mustered up all the strength she had to make a trip halfway across the world to go back to Romania because she wanted to help those children in the orphanages. She was one of the foundresses of the Christiana Society, which was to help those orphans suffering from AIDS. I don't think she knew much about AIDS. I don't think she knew much about starting an orphanage, but she was going to go there and do something.

I think she would tell us: Don't stand still. Don't be stagnant. Don't slip backwards, and slip into oblivion. You've got something to do. God has given you some talent, whatever it is - to read, to cook, to sing, to invite others to your house, to make a nice garden where people can find the peace of God, whatever it is - do it, and multiply in your families, your parishes, and your monasteries. I think most of our churches in western Pennsylvania are beautiful, but they're rather empty nowadays. Well, there are many reasons for that. Economics, certainly; lots of young people moved away, but we have a lot fewer children. Because we're so convinced that everything has to be in its proper place, we're afraid to have more than 1.2 children.

So I think she would tell families: Let your love bring children into the world, and if you trust in God, maybe they won't have every electronic device, every toy, but if you breathe into them the breath of God's love and teach them that, they'll have everything they need and they will find their life. I think she would tell our parishes: You've got to work together, pray together, and love each other. And our monasteries - what would she say to us? Welcome one another, welcome everyone in Christ's name, because that is why you're here. We do the prayers, we have the services, but the doors are open, and many people come, and I think she's praying many more will come. What else do we need but a special, quiet, holy place, in a very secular time?

I think she's praying because more people do come to visit the monastery; pilgrims are more and more serious about their faith. Families come, and all kinds of professional people, and everybody. People from Ellwood City come because they're drawn to "taste and see" what is there, and they come back.

Move forward

So take some risk! Join together. Move forward. This is where God planted you. Don't waste your life. Do something. Glorify God. You've got the truth. Don't be afraid. Let's get moving.

Why did she do it herself? Why did she leave that life of royalty, give it all away, found a monastery in America? I'm sure she'll be known as the foundress of women's monasticism in America, because we now have many monasteries. That wasn't true 50 years ago. She had the courage, and I think she could do all that, even though she was a princess and could have lived a quiet, retired life, I think she did it because she found the peace "that passes all understanding" (Phil 4:7).

She found the "pearl of great price" (Mt. 13:46). And you don't keep something like that to yourself. It's only good, it's only blessed, and it's only going to multiply when you share it. Her dream was to share it through a monastic community where she herself physically planted a cross. The first thing that was put in the ground in Ellwood City was a cross marking the place where the altar would be consecrated, the church would be built, and where prayers would be said, morning and night, every day, for this spiritually impoverished nation. Amen.

The complete talk can be heard on Ancient Faith Radio. Order your copy of *Royal Monastic, Princess Ileana of Romania, The Story of Mother Alexandra from St. Symeon's Bookstore.*

Response to a Young Person's Question about "Once Saved, Always Saved":

As with anything the Orthodox Church believes, it believes it because it's what Christians of the early Church believed. The idea of "once saved always saved" is rooted in Calvinism (16th Century) and the Protestant Reformation.

There are all kinds of proof texts that can show that we participate in our salvation - Philippians 2:12-13 (and further) and Ephesians 2:8-10. God works and we work. Hebrews, all through it, talks about the dangers of falling away. We have hope and confidence in our salvation due to all that Christ has done for us, but we never take it for granted.

In all the New Testament Epistles we see constant encouragements by the various Apostles for the Christians to struggle to be faithful. If they were all saved, why the need to even write such letters of encouragement? All those letters are to specific Churches - to people that were *already* Christian believers. They needed to be encouraged not to fall away, especially in the face of potential martyrdom!

Our understanding is that salvation is lifelong journey and that we always have the freedom to continue to say yes to God, or to say no and to walk away. God loves and respects us enough to give us that freedom. And we believe that is the full witness of all the Scriptures, not just certain select passages. It's even the case that in some of the passages where it speaks of one as "saved," that the Greek verb, as it was originally written, is a verb of *continuous* action - that it actually means "being saved," as in, being in the process of being saved, rather than as something final. The Greek language is more subtle than the English in several instances.

Again, your teacher's idea is common to a certain element of Protestantism - Baptism, Evangelical and others - who teach instant salvation, and it is a very new idea (and heresy) in Christian history.

- Fr. Alexander

St. John of Kronstadt:

"Your Lord is love: love Him and in Him all men, as His children in Christ. Your Lord is a fire: do not let your heart be cold but burn with faith and love. Your Lord is a light: do not walk in darkness and do not do anything in darkness of mind, without reasoning or understanding, or without faith. Your Lord is a God of mercy and bountifulness: be also a source of mercy and bountifulness to your neighbors. If you will be such, you will find salvation yourself with everlasting glory."

"Take care; do not forget, Christian; never lose hearty faith in Him Who is your invisible Life, your Peace, your Light, your Strength, your Breath; that is, in Jesus Christ."

"God the Father is Life, God the Son is Life, God the Holy Spirit is Life: the Holy Trinity is Life. Life is in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; if you deny in heart the Father you deny the life of your heart; if you deny the Son, you deny your life; if you deny the Holy Spirit, you also deny your life."

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Hell: The Invasion of Love

- "As for me I say that those who are tormented in Gehenna are tormented by the invasion of love. What is there more bitter and violent than the pains of love? Those who feel **they have sinned against love** bear in themselves a damnation much heavier than the most dreaded punishments. The suffering with which sinning against love afflicts the heart is more keenly felt than any other torment. It is absurd to assume that the sinners in Gehenna are deprived of God's love."

St. Isaac of Syria, *Ascetical Homilies* 48

mon cenobitic form of life pursued by most monks. Even in earlier days, as the holy fathers write, people of this sort always seemed austere at first sight. As a result, mildness in behavior is not in their character; this probably comes about without their noticing, as a result of being isolated and somewhat antisocial. I remember something of the kind in the Life of Abba Palamon, to whom St. Pachomius (who later was destined to become great in virtue and the founder of systematic cenobitic monasticism), went as a novice.

We asked the Elder a few times about the austerity of his own regime and he responded with positive examples from the lives of the ancient fathers. Those ancient fathers were in no way unaware of the duty of loving one's neighbor, yet they gave priority to love for God and the form of their particular watchfulness in the hesychastic way of life. Since we were making our way towards the same end, he often quoted to us the words of Abba Isaac, that the essential precondition for the monk to make progress is to collect himself in one place and to fast always.

I paid more attention, however, to another point of orderliness, which though it may seem elementary, it nevertheless held great significance for our first beginnings. This was the help afforded by precise observance of the *typikon*, which we maintained wherever we were, regardless of place. By not contravening the *typikon* at all, our fervor was not decreased, nor our ardor, nor our prayer, nor our (generally) inspired state. But when it happened that we did contravene our usual rule, whether of diet or of silence or of being on our guard in general, then everything was thrown into turmoil and we had great difficulty holding onto our usual practice. After a number of mishaps, this finally became a clear lesson to us.

From time to time, in our childish naiveté (state of inexperience or unsophistication, *Ed.*) we overstepped the bounds of propriety and on one occasion we asked the Elder: "Since in character you are not strict with other people, but very sympathetic, how is it that you seem so harsh in the regime of our *typikon*, which creates an obstacle for people?" He smiled and said to us, "I never expected you to have the face to ask me that, but I'll tell you. Testing and experience have convinced me to act in this way; otherwise, I would not be able to continue what God has led me to. St. Paul says: *For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.* (1 Cor 9:17). The Elder told us of his belief that his dedication to his hesychastic regime was not fortuitous, but a vocation from on high.

As he told us, "To accept people's demands with no restrictions is the common path of the all the fathers, and this, by the grace of God, is abundant in this sacred place. Anyone can easily find a response anywhere. But our duty of serving as hesychasts in the sacred tradition of stillness is not known to

all nor attainable by all. While St. Gregory Palamas was concerning himself with stillness during his days here on Athos, he would run away and hide and dig holes in the ground, and do everything he could to achieve isolation. Whom did he receive then, or whom did he meet? It is incontrovertible proof that regulation in life is the main factor in spiritual progress. This is the purpose of the laws and commandments which have been given to human life since most ancient times, whether by God or by men."

The disturbance in the integrity of our character following the fall of our first parents called for legislation to restore equilibrium to the faculties of soul and body which had been split apart. And when are law and commandments and regulation not necessary? Answer: when man regains his personhood through divine grace and the mortal puts on immortality [*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.* (1 Cor. 15:54)]. In St. Paul's words again, whatever is mortal is swallowed up—so to speak—by life [... *that mortality might be swallowed up of life.* (2 Cor 5:4)]. Then, and then indeed, no law is laid down for the just: *The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers.* (1 Tim 1:9).



In order not to be in daily bondage to the passions and the devil, you must set yourself an object to aim at, have this object constantly in view, and endeavor to attain it, conquering all obstacles by the name of the Lord. What is this object? The Kingdom of God, the Divine palace of glory, prepared for believers from the creation of the world. But as this object can only be attained by certain means, it also is necessary to have such means at one's disposal. And what are these means? Faith, hope, and love, especially the last. Belief, hope, and love, especially love, disregarding all obstacles; love God above everything and your neighbor as yourself. If you have not sufficient strength to preserve in your heart these inestimable treasures, fall down more often at the feet of the God of Love.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you (Mt 7:7), for He Who has promised is true. Walking, sitting, lying down, conversing, or working, at every time, pray with your whole heart that faith and love may be given to you. You have not yet asked for them as you should ask - fervently and instantly - with the firm purpose of obtaining them. Say now, "I will begin to do so henceforth."

St. John of Kronstadt (+1908)

REGIME AND DISORDER

Source: "Elder Joseph the Hesychast: Struggles-Experiences-Teachings."



Among the duties which the ever-memorable Elder taught us during the first days of our life under him was that of good order and keeping to a regime, while he described disorder to us in the blackest of colors. He often quoted to us the saying of St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Those who have no guidance fall like leaves*—which signifies, as he told us, the lack of any regime. He also referred

to various incidents in the lives of more recent elders and particularly the life of the Elder Theophylact from the hermitage of St. Artemios, who was renowned for his virtue and spiritual gifts.

Elder Theophylact lived his whole life as an ascetic and hesychast, keeping a strict fast; he did not even eat oil. He once accepted a disciple, the future Father Arsenios, and told him laconically—because this blessed father was temperate even in his speech—“Listen, my boy: if you are going to stay with me, I want you to have order and regime in your life, because without these you will never become a monk. Look round at our few possessions as I show them to you. There’s our jug, there’s the cup, there are the bowls, there are the rusks and so forth, as you see them. I want them always to be in those places. If you happen to make a mistake, the first time I’ll remind you of their proper location according to our rule, but I won’t tolerate it the second time. If you continue this disorder a third time, I shall ask you to take your things and go so that at the least you won’t trouble me, even if you yourself don’t want to gain at all.”

The ever-memorable Elder told us that he had heard that Elder Theophylact was a man of watchfulness, and that he often experienced visions because of the purity of his mind and his spiritual state. “Once,” he told us, “I heard that the demons seized him and took him out of his cell, during the winter period and while it was snowing. They dragged him around in the snow, practically naked, all night long till morning, and then returned him home safely. On that same day, the other fathers brought him back some of his clothes, as they had uncovered from wherever the evil spirits had flung them. Perhaps they had done so to interrupt his mind in its contemplation, as they often used to do with earlier church fathers”.

Once, it is said, a roebuck (male deer, *Ed.*) came to Elder Theophylact’s cell at night and knocked on the door. When

the Elder answered the door, it showed him its leg which was broken; the Elder bandaged it up and told it to come back in eight days, which it did, at the same hour. The Elder changed the dressing, re-bandaged the roebuck’s leg and repeated his instruction to come again in eight days’ time. When it came back the next time, the Elder saw that its leg was healed and told the roebuck not to come again, and it obeyed accordingly!

One of the main characteristics of these blessed spiritual warriors was their strictness in keeping their rule of life. We could see this also in our own Elder, and he demanded the same of us. He told us that the beginning of acquiring character and personhood lies in insistence on following an ordered and systematic way of life. By making the decision to maintain an invariable regime, man acquires resolve and bravery, something very important and essential in our life since our contest is a struggle and, indeed, a fierce one. *Be sober, be vigilant; because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* (1 Pet 5:8). The presence of the serpent thus demands that we remain vigilant, and not just that he may not injure us somewhat; he can be confronted only with bravery and strength of resolve.

There is another equally imperative reason for order in keeping to a regime: It is the changeability of man’s unstable character since the fall of Adam; and the general sinfulness which each of us carries with us also dulls our courage and resolve. Equally, our inexperience, our ignorance, the unknown form of the invisible war, and the inequality of this struggle naturally increase one’s discouragement. There is no other human factor that is such an aid to success as our firm and steady resolve and a carefully worked out regime.

Particularly characteristic in the lives of the holy fathers is their insistence on order and the *typikon* as the principal elements in their way of life. Our Elder was particularly attached to the book of St. Isaac the Syrian, which he used almost as a manual. He would recite whole chapters to us by heart, particularly those concerning order and rule in our monastic life, from introductory “action” to the contemplation even of perfection itself as far as is possible for man. I recall how many things he reminded us of from the saint’s seventh discourse, “On Order among Beginners, Their State, and What Pertains to These.” The main thing, which I still remember nowadays, is this noteworthy sentence: *Wherever you are, consider yourself less than your brethren, and their servant.*

From the beginning of his spiritual journey, our Elder had inclined towards the life of hesychasm and isolation, and it was only natural that this should dictate a generally more austere manner of living. This is of course commonplace in those who live permanently as hesychasts, whose situation and manner and the means they use are different from those of the com-