



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ July 26, 2015 ✠

St. Jakob Netsvetov,

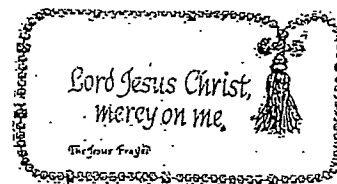
Enlightener of Alaska (1867)

Nun-Martyr Parasceva of Rome (2nd C)

St. Moses the Hungarian of the Kiev Caves (1043)

A Christian *must* struggle. The soft life makes people useless. Without labor and struggle sanctification does not come.

**St. Paisios
the Athonite**



- Inquirer's Class Tomorrow - 6:30pm
- The Dormition Fast begins next Saturday, August 1 through August 14

Our church choir did an extraordinary job at the All-American Council last Sunday! We raised \$1,500.00 in our exhibits booth. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the efforts! And thanks to Fr. Ignatius and Alexander Landar, and Subdeacon Innocent Krause for serving the Liturgy here St. Symeon's!

St. Symeon the New Theologian, From Hymns of Love, 18

✠ "Love is an unsetting sun to those who are elevated in divine things. Love is the ever-shining star for those who contain nothing more. Love is set against grief, it drives away ill will, and it completely removes satanic jealousy. Love, in the beginning, makes one melt away, and it threshes one by purification. Love chases away thoughts and humbles emotions. It teaches the hidden one to be humble, and does not allow one to be scattered nor to act randomly."

✠ "Love separates the visible world, and causes one to forget all distressing things in life. And love makes things grow, and heals thirst and freely gives strength to those who toil virtuously. Love puts out rage, and the seething heart and it does not allow one to get angry or upset. When love flees, it is pursued by those who are wounded, and it is sought with much love from the heart. But it returns and appears, and shines benevolently ... Oh gift beyond telling! For what has love not accomplished, and what is it not?"

After the word comes works...

"The Apostles preached everywhere, 'the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following' (Mk. 16:17). See that we must do our part first, and then follows God's collaboration with us. When we have acted and made a beginning, then the Lord works with us. The Lord cannot work with us if, by our own inaction, we give Him no way to do so. Consider this as well: after the word comes works, and the word is confirmed by works, just as it was with the Apostles then, when the works and the signs which followed confirmed the word. May it be also, O Christ the Word, that our words which we speak concerning virtue are confirmed by our labors and deeds. As ones perfected, may we stand by Thy side so that Thou mightest work with us in all our deeds and words. For unto Thee is due the glory of our words and deeds! Amen."

~ St. Theophylact of Bulgaria

From the Holy Fathers

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

"Man stands at the crossroads between righteousness and sin, and chooses whichever path he wishes. But after that the path he has chosen to follow, and the guides assigned to it, whether angels and saints or demons and sinners, will lead him to the end of it, even if he has no wish to go there. The good guides lead him toward God and the kingdom of heaven, the evil guides toward the devil and age long punishment. But nothing and no one is to blame for his destruction except his own free will. For God is the God of salvation, bestowing on us, along with being and well-being, the knowledge and strength that we cannot have without the grace of God. Not even the devil can destroy a man, compelling him to choose wrongly, or reducing him to impotence or enforced ignorance, or anything else: he can only suggest evil to him."

St. Seraphim of Sarov:

In spite of our sinfulness, in spite of the darkness surrounding our souls, the Grace of the Holy Spirit, conferred by Baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, still shines in our hearts with the inextinguishable light of Christ ... and when the sinner turns to the way of repentance the light smoothes away every trace of the sins committed, clothing the former sinner in the garments of incorruption, spun of the Grace of the Holy Spirit. It is this acquisition of the Holy Spirit about which I have been speaking.

St. Symeon the New Theologian (*The Discourses*):

"Unbelievers, those who believe with difficulty, or believe in part, are those who do not show their faith through works. Apart from works the demons also believe (James. 2:19) and confess Christ to be God and Master. 'We know who you are' (Mk. 1:24), they say, 'You are the Son of God' (Mt. 8:29), and elsewhere, 'These men are servants of the Most High God' (Acts 16:17). Yet such faith will not benefit the demons, nor even humans. This faith is of no use, for it is dead?"

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HOMILY ~ About today's day and tomorrow's day...

"Boast not of tomorrow, for you know not what any day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1).

Brethren, let us not boast of that which is not in our power. The Lord has placed the times and the years under His power and He disposes of them. Only God Himself alone knows whether tomorrow's day will number us among the living or the dead. Some have died on the eve of their marriage; again, others have descended into the grave on the eve of their coronation with a royal diadem. Therefore, let no one say that tomorrow will be for me the happiest day of my life; tomorrow, I enter into marriage! Or, tomorrow I will be crowned with a royal diadem! Or, tomorrow I am going to a great feast! Or, tomorrow a great gain is coming to me! O, let no one speak of the happiness of tomorrow's day. Behold, yet this night your soul may depart your body and tomorrow you will find yourself surrounded by black demons in the tollhouses [Mitarstvo]! And yet, even this night, a man can be separated from his relatives and friends, from wealth and honor, from the sun and the stars and find himself in a totally unknown company, in an unseen place and at an unexpected judgment.

Instead of boasting of tomorrow's day, it would be better to pray to God to "Give us this day our daily bread." Perhaps today's day may be our last day on earth. That is why it is better to spend this day in repentance for all our past days on earth rather than vainly fantasizing about tomorrow's day, about the day which perhaps will not dawn for us. Vain fantasizing about tomorrow's day cannot bring us any good, but repentance for one day with tears can save us from eternal fire.

O righteous Lord, burn up the insane vanity that is in us! - **St. Nikolai of Serbia** (+1956)

Woman as a Symbol of Christ by St. Nikolai Velimirovich

Our Lord described Himself as a woman because women are more careful than men in looking after property, in keeping the house in order and in receiving guests.

The Ten Drachmas: The Lord in the Guise of a Woman

Can you believe that Christ the Savior portrayed Himself in the guise of a woman in two of His parables? One is that of the woman who took three measures of flour and made dough. But first let us speak of the other one where the Lord tells us about the woman who had ten drachmas and lost one. These are the most mysterious of all the Savior's parables. As the parable of the lost drachma is short, we quote it in full.

Or what woman, having ten drachmas, if she loses one, does not light a candle and sweep the house and look diligently till she finds it? And after she has found it, she calls in her friends and neighbors and says, Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma that I lost (Luke 15:8-9).

At first glance this parable seems so simple, or even naive, that it does not impress the reader of the Gospel. In fact, however, the mystery of the universe is revealed in this simple parable.

If we take it literally, it evokes bewilderment. The woman lost only one drachma. Even ten drachmas do not represent a great sum; in fact, a woman who has only ten drachmas must be very poor indeed. Let us assume, first of all, that the finding of the lost drachma meant a great gain for her. Yet it still presents a paradox, for how is it that if she is such a poor woman she lights lamps, sweeps the house and calls in all her friends and neighbors to share her joy. And all because of one drachma! Such a waste of time-lighting a candle and setting the house in order first of all! Furthermore, if she invites her neighbors she is obliged, according to Eastern custom, to offer them something to eat and drink, no small expense for a poor woman. To fail to do so would be to ignore an unalterable custom.

Another important point to note is that she did not invite only one woman to whom she might have offered sweets, which would not have involved great expense. But she invited many friends and neighbors, and even if she entertained them modestly the expense would far exceed the value of the drachma she had found. Why then should she seek the drachma so diligently and rejoice at finding it, only to lose it again in another way? If we try to understand this parable in its literal sense, it does not fit into the frame of everyday life, but leaves the impression of something exaggerated and incomprehensible. So let us try to discover its mystical or hidden meaning.

Who is the woman? And why is it a woman and not a man, when a man is more likely to lose money in the ordinary routine of life? Whose house is it that she sweeps and fills with light? Who are her friends and neighbors? If we look for the spiritual instead of the literal meaning of the parable we shall find the answers to those questions. The Lord said, Seek and ye shall find.

The woman represents Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God. The ten drachmas are His. It is He Who has lost one of them and sets out to look for it. The drachmas are not coins of gold or silver. According to Orthodox theologians, the number ten represents fullness. The nine unlost drachmas are the nine orders of angels. The number of angels is beyond the grasp of mortals, for it exceeds our power of calculation. The lost drachma represents mankind in its entirety. Therefore Christ the Savior came down from heaven to earth, to His house, and lit a candle, the light of the knowledge of Himself. He cleaned out the house - that is, He purified the world of diabolic impurity - and found the lost drachma, erring and lost humanity. Then He called his friends and neighbors (after His glorious

flour or unleavened biscuits that lie on the earth, but they are leavened bread that has risen.

According to the Bible, unleavened bread was the bread of slaves while leavened bread was for free men, God's children. So for that reason the Orthodox Church uses leavened bread at Holy Communion. The process of leavening began on that first Trinity Sunday or Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven onto the Apostles. From that day forth, this process has continued down to the present day, and it will continue till the end of time when all will be leavened. This, then, is the historical interpretation of the enigmatic parable about the woman baker.

The second interpretation is psychological and personal, and concerns the three main faculties or powers of the human soul: intellect, heart and will, or, in other words, the power to think, the power to feel and the power to act. These are the three unseen measures of the soul of the inner man. These three powers either remain totally unleavened, like the bread of slaves, or they are leavened with the leaven of malice and hypocrisy. Therefore, Christ told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy, because that is the worldly and human leaven, which weakens all the powers of the soul and leaves it crippled and sick. But Christ the Savior brought to earth

a new leaven to raise the powers of the soul. Those who receive this new heavenly leaven through Baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity are called the sons and daughters of God, the heirs of the eternal Kingdom. They will not die, for even when they leave the body, they will be alive and will live forever. This heavenly leaven fills them with the light of reason, the warmth of divine love and the glory of good works. All three powers of the soul grow together in harmony, and ascend to heaven, to perfection. As the Lord said, Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Woman has been taken as paragon and not man, and Christ has compared Himself to a woman baker, because woman as wife and mother prepares bread for the family in a loving manner, whereas the man baker bakes bread to sell for gain. **Everything that Christ has done for mankind was done out of pure love, and therefore He compares Himself to a woman baker.** This is the second interpretation, but both interpretations of this parable are correct. The historical and the psychological meaning derived from this simple parable is like a branching oak that grows out of an acorn, for it is truly majestic in its historical breadth and profound in its psychological depth.

{Reprinted from *Orthodox Life*, 1951, Nos. 5 and 6
~ Source: <http://www.pravmir.com>}

On Prayer of the Nous and Heart ~ Elder Ephraim

Persist in the (Jesus) Prayer; do not think that great things are achieved so easily. You will labor; you will sweat---and God will see your labor and humility, and then He will easily bestow upon you the gift of prayer.

The more you say the Prayer, the more you will bring joy to me---primarily to God---and the more you will alleviate your souls. You must help each other in this sense: when you say the prayer out loud, and someone else is not saying it and his mind is wandering elsewhere, as soon as he hears the others saying it, he wakes up from his daydreaming. Then his conscience reproves him because he is not saying the prayer, too, but is just sitting there, letting his mind wander. So he also begins to say the prayer, and thus the sayings are fulfilled: "A brother helped by a brother is like a strong city," (Prov. 18:19) and, "bear one another's burdens." (Gal. 6:2).

~ *Counsels from the Holy Mountain*

Saint Jacob Netsvetov

ENLIGHTENER OF THE PEOPLES OF ALASKA

And He said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

—2 Cor. 12:9

Our righteous Father Jacob was born of pious parents in 1802 on Atka Island, Alaska. His father, Yegor Vasil'evich Netsvetov was a Russian from Tobolsk. His mother, Maria Alekseevna, was an Aleut from Atka island. Yegor and Maria had four children who survived infancy; Jacob was the first born, followed by Osip (Joseph), Elena, and Antony. Yegor and Maria were devoted to their children and, though of meager means, did all they could to provide them with the education which would help them in this life as well as in the life to come. Osip and Antony were eventually able to study at the St. Petersburg Naval Academy in Russia, becoming a naval officer and a ship-builder, respectively. Their sister, Elena, married a successful and respected clerk for the Russian-American Company. But Jacob yearned for a different kind of success, a success that the world might consider failure for "the righteous live forever, their reward is with the Lord" (Wis. Sol. 5:15). And so, when the family moved to Irkutsk in 1823, Jacob enrolled in the Irkutsk Theological Seminary and placed all his hope in Christ by seeking first the Kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33).

Jacob was tonsured as a Subdeacon on October 1, 1825. He married a Russian woman (perhaps also a Creole) named Anna Simeonovna, and in 1826 graduated from the Seminary with certificates in history and theology. On October 31, 1826, he was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and assigned to serve the altar of the Holy Trinity-St. Peter Church in Irkutsk. Two years later, on March 4, 1828, Archbishop Michael, who had earlier ordained Father John Veniaminov (St. Innocent), elevated the godly deacon Jacob to the Holy Priesthood. This, however, was no ordinary ordination. As if he were a new Patrick, hearing the mystical call of his distant flock, Father Jacob yearned to return to his native Alaska. And the all-good God, who "satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness" (Ps. 107:9) heard the prayer of his servant. Archbishop Michael provided Father Jacob with two antimensia: one for the new Church which would be dedicated to the glory of God in honor of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in Atka, and one to be used for missionary activity. On May 1, 1828 a molieben for travellers was served, and Father Jacob, his father, Yegor, (now tonsured as reader for the Atka Church), and his matushka, Anna, set out for Alaska.

Who can tell of the perils and trials associated with such a journey? Travel in those days was never easy, either overland or over the waves of the sea. Nevertheless, aided by prayer and confidence in God's providence, the Netsvetov family arrived safely in Atka over a year later, on June 15, 1829.

The new assignment for the newly-ordained Father Jacob would also prove to be quite a challenge. The Atka "parish" comprised a territory stretching for nearly 2,000 miles and included Am-

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chitka, Attu, Copper, Bering, and the Kurile Islands. But this did not deter the godly young priest, for when he was clothed in the garments of the priesthood, he was found to be "clad with zeal as a cloak" (Is. 59:17), and so he threw himself wholly into his sacred ministry. His deep love for God and for his flock was evident in everything that he did. Both in Atka and in the distant villages and settlements which he visited, Father Jacob offered himself as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). Having "no worry about his life" (Mt. 6:25 ff.), the holy one endured manifold tortures of cold, wet, wind, illness, hunger and exhaustion, for to him life was Christ (Philip. 1:21). Showing himself as a "rule of faith," his example brought his people to a deep commitment to their own salvation. Being fully bi-lingual and bi-cultural, Father Jacob was uniquely blessed by God to care for the souls of his fellow Alaskans.

When he arrived in Atka, the Church of St. Nicholas had not yet been built. So, with his own hands Father Jacob constructed a large tent (Acts 18:3) in which he conducted the services. For Father Jacob the services of the Church were life: life for his people and life for himself. It was in the worship of God that he found both strength and joy. Later he would transport this tent with him on his missionary journeys, and like Moses in the wilderness, the grace of God was found wherever this tent was taken (Num. 4:1 ff; 10:17 ff).

When his first six months had ended (end of 1829), Father Jacob recorded that he had baptized 16, chrismated 442, married 53 couples, and buried 8.

Once the church was constructed, Father Jacob turned his attention to the building of a school in which the children would learn to read and write both Russian and Unangan Aleut. The Russian American Company provided some of the support initially, with the students providing the remainder. This continued until 1841, when it was re-organized as a parish school and ties with the company ceased. Father Jacob proved to be a talented educator and translator whose students became distinguished Aleut leaders in the next generation.

Father Netsvetov led an active physical and intellectual life, hunting and gathering for his own subsistence needs, preparing specimens of fish and marine animals for the natural history museums of Moscow and St. Petersburg, corresponding with St. Innocent (Veniaminov) on matters of linguistics and translations. He labored over the creation of an adequate alphabet for the Unangan-Aleut language, and the translation of the Holy Scriptures and other appropriate literature into that language. St. Innocent praised the young pastor for his holiness of life, his teaching, and for continuing this work of translating which he, himself, had begun earlier among the native peoples. After fifteen years of service, Father Jacob was awarded the Nabedrennik, Kamilavka, and Gold Cross. Later, he would be made Archpriest and receive the Order of St. Anna.

These ecclesiastical awards do not tell of the personal sufferings of this warrior for Christ. In March of 1836, his precious wife, Anna, died of cancer; his home burned to the ground in July of 1836; and his dear father, Yegor, died of an undetermined illness in 1837. Who can utter the depth of sorrow felt by this God-pleaser? Yet he lifted up his voice with that ancient sufferer and cried, "shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept adversity? In all this he did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). In his journal Father Jacob attributed all to "the Will of Him whose Providence and Will are inscrutable and whose actions toward men are incomprehensible." He patiently endured hardships and sufferings like the Holy Apostle Paul. He saw in these misfortunes not a victory by the hater of men's souls (i.e. the devil) but a call from God to even greater spiritual struggles. With this in mind, Father Jacob petitioned his ruling bishop to return to Irkutsk in order to enter

the monastic life. A year later, word reached him that permission was granted contingent upon the arrival of a replacement. None ever came. Instead, Bishop Innocent soon came to Atka and asked Father Jacob to accompany him on a voyage by ship to Kamchatka. Who can know the heavenly discourse enjoyed by these two lovers of Christ as they traveled over the waves? This, however, is clear, the holy archpastor was able to accomplish three things in Father Netsvetov: firstly, he applied the healing salve of the Spirit with words of comfort; secondly, he dissuaded Father Jacob from entering the monastery; and thirdly, he revealed to the godly priest the true plan of the Savior for his life, that he "might preach (Christ) among the Gentiles" (Gal. 1:16) deep in the Alaskan interior. Father Jacob continued to serve his far-flung flock of the Atka parish until December 30, 1844. A new zeal had taken hold of him, and it was then that St. Innocent appointed him to head the new Kvikhpak Mission in order to bring the light of Christ to the people of the Yukon. Here, aided by two young Creole assistants, Innokentii Shayashnikov and Konstantin Lukin, together with his young nephew, Vasilii Netsvetov, Father Jacob "settled" in the wilderness of Alaska.

He learned new languages, embraced new peoples and cultures, devised another alphabet, built another church and Orthodox community, and for the next twenty years, until his health and eyesight failed, continued to be an evangelical beacon of the grace of God in southwestern Alaska.

Establishing his headquarters in the Yup'ik Eskimo village of Ikogmiute (today's 'Russian Mission') he traveled to native settlements hundreds of miles up and down Alaska's longest river (the Yukon) as well as the Kuskokwim River region. At the insistence of Indian leaders, he traveled as far as the middle of the Innoko River baptizing hundreds of Indians from various, and often formerly hostile, tribes. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). He built the first Christian temple in this region, and dedicated it to the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. Here Father Jacob, in spite of failing health, joyfully celebrated the Church's cycle of services, including all of the services prescribed for Holy Week and Pascha.

Finally, in 1863, the evil one, who "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8), sought one last time to get the better of the righteous one. So the devil, the father of lies, (Jn. 8:44), inspired an assistant of Father Jacob to level spurious and slanderous charges against his master. This resulted in a summons to Sitka, issued by Bishop Peter. The godly pastor was quickly cleared of all charges, but due to his ever-worsening health, he remained in Sitka for his final year serving a Tlingit chapel. He died on July 26, 1864 at the age of 60 and was buried on the 3rd day at the entry of the chapel. During his final missionary travels in the Kuskokwim/Yukon delta region, he had baptized 1,320 people - distinguishing himself as the evangelizer of the Yup'ik Eskimo and Athabascan Indian peoples.

This brief history has recounted the basic chronology of the saint's life and labors, but we must not neglect to relate his other deeds, that the light be not "hidden under a bushel" (Mt. 5:15). In 1841, Father Jacob encountered a group of women from his flock in Amlia who had fallen victim to certain demonic influences and teachings. Blaming himself for the seduction and fall of his spiritual children by the evil one, he informed the leader among them that he was going to pay them a visit. Upon arriving, he found one of the women paralyzed, semi-conscious and unable to speak. He ordered that she be removed to another house apart, and on the next day when this was accomplished, he lit the lampada before the icons of the beautiful corner, vested himself in his priestly epitrachil (stole), sprinkled holy water throughout the room, and began the first prayers of exorcism. He then left. During the night he was notified that the woman had begun to speak but incoherently. He came immediately to her and performed a second exorcism. This time, she sprang out of her bed

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and stood next to the saint, joined her prayer to his, and accompanied them with prostrations. When the prayers were finished, Father Jacob again sprinkled her with holy water and gave her the precious cross to kiss. She regained full consciousness, a state of health and true reason — that is, even the false teachings of the evil spirits had no more part in her.

Once in November of 1845, Father Jacob was preaching in the village of Kalskag, where the local chief was also the head shaman. He spoke for all of the villagers and resisted the Word of God forcefully. But the saint, calm and full of the Holy Spirit, continued to sow the seeds of right belief and piety. After many hours, the chief fell silent and finally came to believe. The villagers, in solidarity with their leader, also joyously expressed their belief in the Triune God and sought Holy Baptism.

Father Jacob was a physician of bodies as well as souls. He often cared for the sick among his flock even to his own detriment. During the winter of 1850-1851 the saint was himself ravaged with illness. Yet he cared for the sick and dispensed medicine to them every day.

Father Jacob's preaching often brought together in the Holy Faith tribes who were traditional enemies. One example from his journal reads: "Beginning in the morning, upon my invitation, all the Kol'chane and Ingalit from the Yukon and the local ones gathered at my place and I preached the word of God, concluding at noon. Everyone listened to the preaching with attention and without discussion or dissent, and in the end they all expressed faith and their wish to accept Holy Baptism, both the Kol'chane and the Ingalit (formerly traditional enemies). I made a count by families and in groups, and then in the afternoon began the baptismal service. First I baptized 50 Kol'chane and Ingalit men, the latter from the Yukon and Innoko. It was already evening when I completed the service. March 21, 1853." So it was that this apostolic man, this new Job, conducted himself during his earthly course. There are many other deeds and wonders which he performed, many known and many more known only to God. Few missionaries in history have had to endure the hardships which Father Jacob faced, yet he did so with patience and humility. His life of faith and piety are the legacy which he leaves to us, his spiritual children in America, and indeed to all Christians throughout the world. May God grant us the grace, through the prayers of our holy Father Jacob, to be worthy of his sacrifice. Amen. †

Troparion—Tone 4

O righteous Father Jacob,
Adornment of Atka and the Yukon Delta,
You offered yourself as a living sacrifice,
To bring light to a searching people.
Offspring of Russian America,
Flower of brotherly unity,
Healer of sickness and terror of demons,
O Holy Father Jacob,
Pray to Christ God that our souls may be saved.

*The above text of the life of Saint Jacob was issued by the
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during its Spring Session, March 1994.*