



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **November 13, 2011** ✠

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

St. John Chrysostom

Archbishop of Constantinople (470)

**Become a good manager
of those things given
you by God.**

~ St. John Chrysostom

- ✠ **New Inquirer's Class – Tuesday, November 15 ~ 6:30pm to 8:00pm**
- ✠ **Advent – The Nativity Fast begins Tuesday, November 15**
- ✠ **Wed. Nov. 16 6:30pm Akathist to the Most Holy Theotokos**

Church Finances:

Monthly Budgeted Need: \$18,500.00

September Income- \$16,964.85

October Income- \$19,565.22

Two-Month Deficit- (\$465.97)

Sept. & Oct. Building Fund:

\$ 6,071.25 Collected

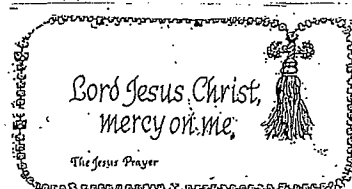
The Bread of Life

✠ Christ is the Bread of Life, therefore let us lay aside our care about other bread. The God Who gives us the Body and Blood of His Son for our food and drink will likewise give us natural bread. He Who clothes our soul in Christ will likewise give us material clothing. He Who chooses to dwell in us will not deprive us of a perishable dwelling.

St. John of Kronstadt

Soul – Benefitting Sayings

1. Guide me, O Lord, in my spiritual struggle, so that I may avoid every excess.
2. Grant me, O Lord, strength to resist the temptations, patience to suffer, firmness to persist.
3. The believer distinguishes in every part of nature and in every detail of his life, the fingerprints of God.
4. I have no other hope or refuge than you, my God.
5. Blessed are all who walk with knowledge the correct path of Christian Faith.
6. Support me, O my God, with the grace of the Holy Spirit.
7. Faith is not only a virtue, it is a sacred gallery, out of which come all virtues.



8. He to whom the Eternal Word speaks is delivered of doubts.
9. It is a great mistake to want to serve God as it pleases us, and not as He demands.
10. Accept gratefully the small gifts of divine grace, to be granted to receive greater ones.
11. The whole life of Jesus Christ was a cross and a martyrdom and yet we seek rest and JOY.
12. It is not possible to enjoy absolute freedom if you don't completely deny yourself.
13. Why do you hesitate to carry the cross which will bring you to the Kingdom of heaven?
14. The knowledge which God imparts to the soul is much higher than the knowledge which man obtains by studying.
15. Hasten to the highway of faith to reach the palaces of heaven.
16. The world examines only the external characteristics of man, whereas grace examines his inner dispositions.
17. Almost always the consolation from external things is purposeless and is an obstacle to the internal consolation which God gives.
18. Tears are the pearls which affliction fishes, being sunk in the depth of the heart.
19. Moral cross-eyedness? The one eye seeks advantage and the other, God.
20. Our soul lives eternally and is one and unique. So we ought to save it in every way.
21. Heavenly joy is for the victors, and wretchedness is for the indecisive and cowardly.
22. Those who are enslaved to their desires pollute their conscience and lose God's grace.
23. Every hope won't be lost if things don't go as you wish.
24. Only the pure heart can give fruits of a good life.
25. Truly prudent is he who "considers all things trash in order to gain Christ."
26. A good deed at the appropriate moment is a good deed unto eternity.
27. No inheritance is so valuable as honesty.

28. Virtue is the cause of prosperity, and there is no virtue whatsoever without a struggle.
29. In the spiritual life people are tried like gold in the furnace.
30. Nothing is more beautiful than the light of truth.

31. Have a close friendship only with God and His Angels and avoid many acquaintances.
32. The more a person deadens himself, the more he begins to live for God.

33. There is no harsher struggle than one's attempt to subject himself to himself.

34. Just as the birds hunt ripe fruits, so slanderers hunt those people who have virtue and value.
35. Love is unreachable in power, a good above all goods.
36. Love never looks for its own advantage, because advantage and love don't blend.

37. Oh! If one had even just a spark of true love, he would see all worldly things full of vanity.

38. The wisest thing we can do is to look towards obtaining the Kingdom of heaven, scorning worldly things.
39. Many times evil triumphs--but it never wins.
40. Don't superficially judge the words and deeds of others.

41. Bring to God your life and then your life will bring you to God.

42. Do you wish to learn something which will benefit you? Prefer to live unknown and to be considered unimportant.
43. Ugliness of body can never make a beautiful soul ugly.

44. It is worth it for one to die for the truth Who is Christ.
45. Beauty pleases the eyes, kindness the heart. The first is an adornment, the second a treasure.

46. It is not difficult to scorn human consolation when you have divine consolation.
47. The more the soul's gaze and disposition are pure, the less one is disturbed by storms.

48. The intellect is the whole area which inside it can make a Paradise out of a Hades and from Paradise, a Hades.
49. The prideful and insatiable person never finds calmness, whereas the humble and abstemious person lives in absolute peace.
50. He who does not seek everywhere and always God and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but affliction and pain.
51. Truly great is he who loves selflessly.
52. Whatever God does for us, or allows to happen for us, is for our salvation.
53. Perfection of man is comprised of offering himself with all his heart to the divine will.
54. A virtuous life and a pure conscience rest the heart and inspire great trust.
55. When you take, hands fill up. When you give, the heart fills up.
56. We are wealthy only for whatever we give and poor for whatever we deny.
57. God never sends his servants on a mission. He always goes with them.
58. The peace of Christ is found in humility, obedience and patience.
59. Every peace and happiness in this world depends on our unreserved self-offering to God.
60. Everyone desires peace; nevertheless not everyone seeks that which gives real peace, humility.
61. The humble person always enjoys everlasting peace.
62. The peace you seek in external things will not last, if the true support, God, is missing from your heart.
63. You will find the real peace of your heart by resisting your passions and not giving in to them.
64. The wisdom of God has a very low door. To enter into it, you must bow your head.
65. There is an eloquence in silence which is more piercing than the tongue.

(Translated from the Greek magazine "Orthodoxos Philotheos Martyria," Vol. 70-71. by Fr. Nicholas Palis.)

Nativity Fast Message of +Archbishop Dmitri

2006

In His love for man God chooses the method, time and place for revealing His will. This is true for each of us personally, having 'eyes to see and ears to hear.' This has been the case with regard to the life and history of the Church. It is true with regard overall to our Lord's saving dispensation. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, reminds us that from the beginning God made Himself known through creation itself (1:19-20). In days of old, within the specific context of His plan of salvation, God spoke to Moses as to a friend and conferred the Law upon him. In addition the inspired Prophets declared God's will to the Israelites. All of these things, however, pointed to — were preparing the way for — a greater revelation of God through the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ: "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

The Messiah came to make God's will known as fully as is possible for men to receive it. He appeared "to give knowledge of salvation unto (God's) people... to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide (their) feet into the way of peace" (Isaiah 9:2, Luke 1:77,79). This light is the radiance of the Nativity Season, "the light of Christ which illumines all."

As I look around the Diocese, I am pleased with the efforts of many to insure that the light of Christ's Gospel shines in the South, that God's word and will are preached. Their dedication is evident by the existence of almost seventy parishes, missions, mission stations and monasteries in the Diocese. Each was founded by God's grace and the sacrificial efforts of original and current members. We are further encouraged by increasing census figures, year after year. Since 1998 the Diocese has increased its membership by over sixty percent. The energy and enthusiasm evident in our clergy and communities presently is reminiscent of that which characterized the Diocese almost thirty years ago. It is coupled, however, with a maturity gained from three decades of missionary endeavor pointing the way to future development.

From the general reference to our history one can surmise that growth, and consequently change, are not new experiences for members of the Diocese. Furthermore, these thoughts are shared at what appears to be a time of significant changes for the OCA and Churches in the South. As is known the Orthodox Church in America, administratively, is in a state of major reorganization. This has presented challenges to clergy and laity in recent months. In the face of this specific situation I do not counsel others to ignore the reality of that which confronts us. I do, however, continue to advise the faithful to pray and to keep their gaze upon Christ without Whom even the best of intentions and efforts can quickly degenerate into something other than a holy work. We must use wisely the days given us to discern God's will and presence revealed in present circumstances. While "getting our house in order" we must not lose sight of the sacred work of teaching and baptizing to which we have been called.

Archbishop Dmitri {continued}:

More specifically I would ask parishioners and Church leaders, both clergy and laity, to take this time of the Nativity Fast to assess the overall life of their respective communities while preparing for the Feast of Christ's Birth. Knowing the task placed before us to call 'all men to salvation and to the knowledge of the Truth,' what are we doing, or not doing, as Orthodox to remain faithful to our Commission? What are our parish schedules like, relative to liturgical services, education classes and outreach events? Is there more that we can be doing in these areas? Are we challenging our parishioners spiritually? Are we providing them with concrete tasks and goals relative to Church growth and evangelism? What type of community facilities do we have? Do they reflect a traditional style of Orthodox architecture and are they conducive to growth? Are communities with temporary rental quarters developing plans for permanent parish-owned structures? Do our parishes have money budgeted each year for charitable work? Are they paying their tithes and assessments? I would like for the faithful to spend their limited time, energy and resources focusing on these issues as much as possible so that the work of Christ may progress as rapidly as possible.

Again, history demonstrates that most of our communities have put forth effort in these areas and have achieved results. But more can certainly be accomplished. A turning point has been reached not only by the OCA's national administration, but by the Diocese as well, in light of which we should begin to expect more from ourselves and our respective parishes.

In the DOS we have gained experience and knowledge over the years that seasoned clergy and laity are putting to good use. A new generation of Orthodox is emerging whose zeal for the Faith and eagerness to serve are inspiring. The Church's youthful leaders seem undaunted by sometimes difficult challenges and ready to learn from veterans of "the good fight." As far as evangelism is concerned they do not ask "why," as much as they question, "why not?" This new spirit, combined with insights of experienced faithful, has helped to raise the bar of expectations here in the South.

Next year will inaugurate the celebration of thirty years since the Diocese of the South was established, and although we can rejoice in the almost seventy institutions with which we have been blessed, that number could just as easily be one hundred.

As I mentioned in the beginning, God chooses the method, time and place for revealing His will. The current situation in the South is certainly a clear expression of His will for further growth and development. Again, please take this time of the Fast to prepare diligently for the Lord's Birth, discerning the kind of wholehearted response that such a gift requires from us personally and from our parishes.

'May our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven,' always now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

From *The Dawn*, Fall 2006



Some Thoughts on Marriage - Fr. Lawrence Farley

Unlike classical Protestantism, Orthodoxy sees the world as shot through with divine grace. All persons, Christian or secular, partake of the divine image, all receive life from God (He is, after all, the only source), and all human acts of kindness, Christian or secular, reflect and gladden God's heart. The Reformed tradition asserted the contrary, and said that everything outside of the Church was tainted and sinful. "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit," saith the Protestant Thirty-Nine Articles, "are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ...We doubt not but they have the nature of sin." This is the dour voice of classical Reformation Protestantism. It is not the song of the Fathers or of the Orthodox. Obviously there is a line between the Church and the World, between this fallen age and the Kingdom. But even in this age we find God's grace enlivening, brightening and leading all that He has created. That is why, for instance, we bless the rivers and lakes of the world at Theophany.

The pre-Nicene Church, for all its struggles with a persecuting State, did not fall into the error of a Manichean pessimism about the world God created. It still confessed with the Seraphim that "the whole earth is full of His glory" (Is. 6:3). The State possessed a kind of divine authority from God for the restraining of evil and the prevention of social chaos. The institutions of this age (many of which were regulated by the State, such as marriage) partook of the reflected glory that God generously imparts to all that He has made.

Thus, a Christian in today's secular and pluralistic society will recognize not two but three possibilities for public union of persons: Christian marriage, celebrated in the Church by a priest; marriage in the world, as was celebrated and lived by all cultures and ages even before the coming of Christ; and civil unions properly speaking, which do not conform to the timeless and universal understanding of marriage, but for which the State wishes to make provision in terms of "tax and inheritance purposes".

The question is: what is the essence of marriage, and why should the State care about it?

Marriage is the union of two persons who have publicly agreed to live together and care for one another for the purposes of creating family. (The fact that some married couples cannot have children is irrelevant to this definition; the historical purpose of marriage remains, even if some couples cannot fulfill it.) The children resulting from such unions are the responsibility of the parents, and can only grow in physical, psychological and emotional health if both father and mother together raise them in a healthy way, so that the children in turn learn what it means to be a man or woman, a daddy or a mommy. Usually in history, children in a family were the fruit of this co-habiting commitment between husband and wife (i.e. through sex), though of course adoption was also practiced.

This historical link between relationship and procreation is one of the things humanizing us. Creating children through pre-arranged one-time sexual unions or through government test-tube factories is recognized as less than human... Whether we find it convenient in today's culture or not, the rhyme "First comes love (or at least meeting), then comes marriage, then comes Mommy with a baby carriage" is the song and history of the world. It is what the world, at all times and in all cultures, has meant by marriage. The world has never thought of fixing or changing it, because the world has seen that it is not busted or in need of change.

Today we have more or less completely sundered the link between sex and procreation, which is why we can talk at all about such an oxymoron as homosexual marriage. But marriage, Christians and other monotheists think, was not created by society, and cannot be changed at whim by society. It was created by God for His creation as the means of fulfilling it, enriching it, and sustaining it, and as the only authentic matrix for producing and raising children. Because it was created by God to work in a certain way, we cannot change its fundamental character or purpose, or amend it, as if it were a clause in the US Constitution.



THE JESUS PRAYER AND THE 3 POWERS OF THE SOUL

Adapted from Metropolitan Hierotheos

Man according to Scripture, has been created "after the image of God" (Col. 3:10). God is Trinity, that is, one essence in three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Thus the soul, being created in the image of God, is single as well as manifold.

The soul has three parts that must be united and turned toward God. The three parts or powers of the soul are the power to know, the power to love, and the power to will. According to the Fathers, the soul was created 1) to know God, 2) to love God, and 3) to do the will of God.

In this way the commandment is fulfilled: "and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mt. 12:30). When the mind remains in God through prayer and contemplation, it kindles within the soul a strong desire and love for God, which in turn strengthens man's will to keep the Commandments. In this way the soul is itself united, and is joined to God.

However, when the mind comes to ignore God, then the soul begins to desire and love created things instead of the Creator, and the will of man becomes subject to the tyranny of the passions. In this way the soul becomes first disunited and then eventually separated from God.

Through sin, the three powers of the soul go away from God and lose unity with one another. One part of the soul, usually the mind, may want to return to God, but the other parts may not wish to. This is the state of most Christians.

Nevertheless, the unity of the soul can still be restored through the Jesus Prayer. The return to God starts with the concentration of the mind. Our aim is to detach the mind from its attraction to the surrounding objects and bring it back to God.

Since the mind has the property of increasing love and desire for that which it is concentrated on, concentration on the Name of God leads to love from Him. However, in the same way, concentration on the things of the flesh or the world lead to love from them.

Therefore, let each man attend to his thoughts, for they will lead either to his unification with God or to his spiritual fragmentation – to eternal life or to eternal torment.



GUARDING THE MIND AND THE HEART
Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain

Everyone finds calm and rest at their center. As snails find rest within their crusty shell, as octopus in their chambers, as four-footed land animals in their dens, and as birds in their nests, so also with man, whose mind has the natural attribute to be calm, to find rest and to be in peace when it enters the heart and the inner man. Man too has the body as a region and dwelling, and the heart as its own center and room for resting. St. Isaac called the heart "the house of understanding." And as the animals when troubled and frightened run to their dens to be protected, so also the mind of man, when troubled by some assault of evil thoughts or some other internal or external circumstance, runs to the heart and shouts, "My Jesus help me! My Jesus save me!" and is thus liberated. St. John Climacus said: "The name of Jesus chastises enemies" and "Let the memory of Jesus be united with your breathing and then you will know the benefit of silence." The Apostle Peter preached: "And there is salvation in no one else [except Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This is why St. Macarios also noted: "For as it is not possible for the eye to see without light and for speech to be made without a tongue, or for hearing to take place without an ear, so also it is not possible without Christ to be saved and to enter the kingdom of heaven."

