



DRINK YE ALL OF IT

## Fire & Light

### St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ October 21, 2012 ✠

St. Hilarion the Great of Gaza (371)

St. Hilarion of the Kiev Caves (1067) St. Hilarion of Meglin, Bulgaria (1164)

Sts. Bessarion of Sarai, Sophronius of Ciorara &

St. Oprea of Salistie, Martyred by the Latins in Romania (18<sup>th</sup> C)

As riches in the wicked  
are a hindrance, so  
in the good they are  
an aid to virtue.

~ St. Ambrose of Milan

✠ Today: 4:00pm - The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony:

Anna Catherine Condra and Curtis Theophan Rutherford

**\* Next Sunday, October 28: 35th Anniversary Celebration! \***

⇒ Liturgy & Banquet ~ Guest Speaker - Fr. Jacob Myers

Fr. Jacob will be bringing blessings from St. John the Wonderworker on Saturday, October 27, 4:00pm, including an Akathist to St. John at 5:00pm.

### Always Ready for a New Start

"Should we fall, we should not despair and so estrange ourselves from the Lord's love. For if He so chooses, He can deal mercifully with our weakness. Only we should not cut ourselves off from Him or feel oppressed when constrained by His commandments, nor should we lose heart when we fall short of our goal..."

"Let us always be ready to make a new start. If you fall, rise up. If you fall again, rise up again. Only do not abandon your Physician, lest you be condemned as worse than a suicide because of your despair. Wait on Him, and He will be merciful, either reforming you, or sending you trials, or through some other provision of which you are unaware."

~ St. Peter of Damascus

✠ "As a handful of sand thrown into the ocean, so are the sins of all flesh as compared with the mind of God."

✠ "Just as a strongly flowing fountain is not blocked up by a handful of earth, so the compassion of the Creator is not overcome by the wickedness of his creatures."

✠ "Someone who bears a grudge while he prays is like a person who sows in the sea and expects to reap a harvest."

~ St. Isaac the Syrian

✠ "Fire and water do not mix, neither can you mix judgment of others with the desire to repent. If a man commits a sin before you at the very moment of his death, pass no judgment, because the judgment of God is hidden from men. It has happened that men have sinned greatly in the open but have done greater deeds in secret, so that those who would disparage them have been fooled, with smoke instead of sunlight in their eyes."

St. John Climacus

## ***This and That***

### **One in Five**

One fifth of Americans now describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated, and the numbers rise to one third among people under 30. This poll, which includes the six per cent of Americans who claim to be atheist or agnostic, is an indication of a significant increase in religious indifference in just five years.

Numbers, of course, do not tell the entire story, since in recent decades it is the mainstream churches that are hemorrhaging members, while more passionate or traditional forms of Christianity are growing. Methodists and Episcopalians are down, but Pentecostals and Latin-Mass Catholics are up.

For politicized Christians, the spectacle of America going the way of all flesh must be depressing, but for more traditional Christians - Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, and serious Calvinist - it is merely a reminder that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world. Thomas Fleming

### **Pro-Life?**

As a Christian, I have little use for politicians who advocate infanticide. However, as a voter who hopes for a little fiscal sanity and knows that neither party will ever undo Roe v. Wade, I could hardly care less. Worrying about a politician's position on life questions is like worrying about what they will do to improve the air quality on Mars... The life question is not just a distraction: It is a smokescreen. Every four years, Republican candidates pander to pro-life American Christians, but they never manage to find the time to do anything about limiting, much less banning abortion.

My advice to Christian voters is to set religious questions aside weigh the issues and their interests. Neither candidate can make much of a claim to being a Christian, and anyone serious about his faith would not be in national politics. Thomas Fleming

### **Free Meals?**

Today, 47 million Americans are on food stamps at an annual cost of \$72 billion. Does it not say something alarming when one in seven Americans cannot rely upon themselves or their families for their daily bread? ... During the Chicago school strike, we learned that 86 percent of the 350,000 pupils were getting free or subsidized meals twice a day. What kind of society have we become when children in a great city cannot rely on mothers or fathers for a bowl of cereal in the morning and a brown bag with a sandwich and apple in it for lunch? Patrick Buchanan

### **From another time...**

"Continued dependence upon relief (welfare) induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fiber. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit. ... The Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief." - Franklin D. Roosevelt

### ***Did they really boo God?!***

The Democratic leadership, understanding the price they were going to have to pay for their party's militant atheists, orchestrated the reinsertion of God and Jerusalem--though the rank-and-file did their party little good when they booed the proposal. *They actually booed God!*

### **Watched**

The technology exists for a detailed, unblinking, unforgetting watchfulness of the entire population beyond anything imagined, or perhaps imaginable, a few decades ago... People speak of the onrush of the police state. I think that many do not understand how fast it comes, or how thorough it will be. Fred Reed

## PRAY FOR THE REPOSED!

*Hieromartyr John of Riga, from Orthodox Life, Vol. 42, No. 6 (Nov.-Dec., 1992), pp. 29-32.*

The death of people who are close and dear to us is one of the most difficult trials sent to us by the Lord God during this temporary life. There are no tears more bitter than the tears of a mother for the beloved child of her heart who goes to the grave before his time. What sorrow can we compare to the sorrow of widows and orphans? Nonetheless, our Lord and Saviour turns to these people, the most unfortunate ones in the eyes of the world, saying respectfully, *Do not weep!* The Apostle Paul commands these sorrowing ones, saying, *Do not sorrow!*

What does all this mean? Of course, it does not mean that we should forget those dear loved ones of ours who have departed, that we should cast them out of our hearts. No. We should love them after their death just as we loved them in life. However, we should not sorrow over their death. Death does not separate us who are Christians from communion in love with those who are dear to us. The Lord Himself has given us the very grace-filled means needed to have communion with them.

The first among these means is prayer. Prayer is the best means for spiritual communion among people who are still alive. The Apostle Paul beseeched the believers to pray continually for him in order that the Lord would grant him strength and power to preach. Likewise, St. Paul prayed for others that the Lord would confirm them in the Faith and in a Christian life. There is no doubt that the prayers of believers strengthened the Apostle and that his prayers strengthened them.

We find an amazing example of the power and action of mutual prayer in the Acts of the Apostles. While St. Peter was in prison sleeping between two guards, *prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him* (Acts 12:5). What was the result of this prayer? During that very night, the Angel of the Lord appeared in the prison, awoke the sleeping Apostle, and led him out of prison.

The power and action of prayer for the souls of the departed is even greater than prayer for the living. There is no greater comfort than prayer and no greater joy than joy in the Lord for those who are separated from their bodies. It is unjust, as some think, to assume that the needs of our departed brethren are unknown to us. However, this is not true. The spiritual needs of the dead are the same as the spiritual needs of the living. The dead need the mercy and goodness of the Heavenly Father, forgiveness and remission

of sins, grace-filled help from God in the fulfillment of all good desires, and the peace and ease of the heart and conscience. These things are most important both for the living and the dead. *Give rest, O Lord, to the souls of Thy departed servants* is the continual prayer and best intention of our Mother Church for the souls of Her departed. We should also beseech the Lord with this intention for the departed souls of our own loved ones.

It could be that some soul bound himself with earthly attachments, with earthly cares, and could not be free of them after death. Earthly thoughts about home and cares, about acquiring things, might still tug at this soul, torture him, and not allow him the freedom to strive with heart and soul towards God. We should pray that the Lord will grant rest to such a soul in the quiet harbor of His Kingdom. We should pray that the Lord will destroy and burn up in the fire of His Grace the memory of his earthly cares. We should pray that the Lord will warm this soul with love and with the desire for eternal treasure, that the Lord will give rest to this soul in the sweetest hope of eternal blessedness.

Perhaps, having confessed at the hour of death, some soul did so quickly, in a confused manner. This soul might have forgotten something because of troubled feelings, and he now grieves over this. Perhaps, this soul did not have time to offer God true repentance, to fully cleanse his sins by tears of compunction. Perhaps, the awareness of unconfessed and unforgiven sins tear and torture this soul. Pray for this soul who is suffering. Pray that the Lord God might comfort him with the protection of His inextinguishable mercy. Pray that this soul might receive, albeit at this late hour, remission of sins because of his sincere remorse.

Who can enumerate all those bonds with which our soul might bind itself in this lifetime and by which it might remain bound for eternity. One might have been envious of his neighbor in the depths of one's soul and bound himself thus. Another person might have mocked the weakness of the Lord, worthy of Hell. Another person might have lied and as a result became the son of the father of lies. *If Thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, O Lord, who shall stand?* Therefore, no matter how holy a man's life might be, no one can be sure that he will pass into the next world completely reconciled with God. No man can say that the prayerful intercessions of those brethren who are left alive are unnecessary for him.

Was not the repentance of St. Ephraim the Syrian sincere and deep? Even he, sensing that his end was near, besought



*Blessed*, she said, *art thou who didst believe*. (Lk 1:56). And she abode with her three months. Now in such an interval of time it is not that faith is being sought for, but kindness which is being shown. And this was after that the child, *leaping in his mother's womb*, had saluted the mother of the Lord, attaining to reason before birth.

And then, in the many subsequent wonders, when the barren bore a son, the virgin conceived, the dumb spake, the wise men worshipped, Simeon waited, the stars gave notice. Mary, who was moved by the angel's entrance, was unmoved by the miracles. *Mary*, it is said, *kept all these things in her heart*. (Lk 2:19). Though she was the mother of the Lord, yet she desired to learn the precepts of the Lord, and she who brought forth God, yet desired to know God.

And then, how she also went every year to Jerusalem at the solemn day of the Passover and went with Joseph. Everywhere modesty is the companion of her singular virtues in the Virgin. This, without which virginity cannot exist; it must be the inseparable companion of virginity. And so Mary did not go even to the temple without the guardianship of her modesty.

This is the likeness of virginity. For Mary was such that her example alone is a lesson for all. Let us conclude then that whoever desires its reward for herself may imitate the pattern. How many kinds of virtues shine forth in one Virgin! The secret of modesty, the banner of faith, the service of devotion, the Virgin within the house, the companion for the ministry, the mother at the temple.

Oh! How many virgins shall she meet, how many shall she embrace and bring to the Lord, and say: *She has been faithful to her espousal, to my Son; she has kept her bridal couch with spotless modesty*. How shall the Lord Himself commend them to His Father, repeating again those words of His: *Holy Father, these are they whom I have kept for Thee, on whom the Son of Man leant His head and rested; I ask that where I am there they may be with Me*. (Jn 17:24). And if they ought to benefit not themselves only, who lived not for themselves alone, one virgin may redeem her parents, another her brothers. *Holy Father, the world hath not known Me, but these have known Me, and have willed not to know the world*. (Jn 17:25).

What a procession shall that be, what joy of applauding angels when she is found worthy of dwelling in heaven who lived on earth a heavenly life! *Then too Mary*, (in Hebrew Miriam) *taking her timbrel*, shall stir up the choirs of virgins, singing to the Lord because they have passed through the sea of this world without suffering from the waves of this world (Ex 15:20). Then each shall rejoice, saying: *I will go to the altar of God; to God Who maketh my youth glad*. (Pss 42:4); and, *I will offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay my vows unto the Most High*. (Pss 49:14).

Nor would I hesitate to admit you to the altars of God, whose souls I would without hesitation call altars, on which Christ is daily offered for the redemption of the body. For if

the virgin's body be a temple of God, what is her soul, which, the ashes, as it were, of the body being shaken off, once more uncovered by the hand of the Eternal Priest, exhales the vapor of the divine fire.

Blessed are the virgins, who emit a fragrance through divine grace as gardens do through flowers, temples through religion, altars through the priest.



*If precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints* (Pss 116:15), and *the memory of the just is praised* (Prov 10:7), how much more fitting is it for us to celebrate with highest honors the memory of the ever-virgin Mother of God, the Holy of Holies, through whom the saints receive their hallowing? That is exactly what we are doing by commemorating her holy passing away, through which, having been made *a little lower than the angels* (Pss 8:5), she rose incomparably higher than the Angels, Archangels, and all the heavenly powers above them, because of her nearness to the God of all, and the marvels written of old which were accomplished in her.

**St. Gregory Palamas**

*If artists who make statues and paint portraits of kings are held in high esteem, will not God bless ten thousand times more those who reveal and beautify His royal image?* For man is the image of God. When we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving, to be generous, to love their neighbor, to regard this present age as nothing, we install virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them; for all of these are attributes of God. This, then, is our task: to educate both ourselves and our children in godliness; otherwise what answer will we have before Christ's judgment seat? Let us be greatly concerned for our wives and our children, and for ourselves as well. The good God Himself will bring this work to perfection, so that all of us may be counted worthy of the blessings He has promised.

**St. John Chrysostom**

*Faith is the key of God's treasury. She dwells in simple, kind, loving hearts. All things are possible to him that believeth*. (Mk 9:23). Faith is a spiritual mouth, the more freely it opens the greater the stream by which the Divine springs enter into it; let this mouth freely open, as your bodily one does; do not let your lips be compressed by doubt and unbelief: if you compress them by doubt and unbelief, the treasury of God's blessings will be closed to you. The more openly, the more heartily you believe in God's omnipotence, the more bountifully will God's heart be opened to you. *What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*. (Mk 11:24).

**St. John of Kronstadt**

## Who is Mentally Ill? From Fr. Benedict Crawford's Blog, *Seeking the Kingdom*

**[Almost] everyone is mentally ill according to the Patristic meaning of mental illness.** You do not have to be schizophrenic in order to be mentally ill. The definition of mental illness from a Patristic point of view is that **people are mentally ill when the noetic energy they have inside them is not functioning properly.** In other words, being mentally ill means your *nous* is full of thoughts [*logismoi*], not only bad thoughts, but good thoughts as well.

... In other words, according to the Church Fathers, **anyone whose soul has not been purified from the passions and who has not reached the state of illumination through the grace of the Holy Spirit is mentally ill**, but not in the psychiatric sense. For a psychiatrist, being mentally ill is something else. It means suffering from psychosis or being schizophrenic. For Orthodoxy, however, if you have not been purified of the passions and have not reached a state of illumination, are you normal or abnormal? That is the question.

Who is considered a normal [*i.e., spiritually healthy*] Orthodox Christian in the Patristic tradition? If you want to see this clearly, read the service of Holy Baptism, read the service of Holy Chrism that is held at the Patriarchate of Constantinople [*and in various other patriarchates*] on Holy Thursday, read the service for the consecration of Church sanctuaries. There you will see what it means to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. There you will see who is illumined.

In all of the Church services, as well as the ascetic tradition of the Church, mainly three spiritual states are mentioned: (1) the state in which the soul and body have been **purified** from the passions, (2) the state in which the human nous has been **illumined** by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and (3) the state in which the human soul and body experience **theosis** [*deification, glorification*]. For the most part, however, they speak about purification and illumination [*the first two stages*], since the Church services are expressions of reasonable [*rational, logiki*] worship.

So who is the normal Orthodox Christian? Can someone who has been baptized but not purified be considered normal? What about someone who has not yet been illumined? Or is it someone who has been purified and illumined? Naturally someone in the last category is a normal Orthodox Christian. **[In other words, the only non-mentally ill, normal, healthy Orthodox Christians are those who have attained purification (purity of heart) and illumination by the Holy Spirit.]**

So what makes a normal [*spiritually healthy*] Orthodox Christian different from the rest of the Orthodox? Is it dogma? Of course not. **[Because all Orthodox Christians share the same dogma, but not all Orthodox Christians are spiritually "normal", i.e., healthy.]**

Take the Orthodox in general. They all share the same dogma, the same tradition, the same common worship. A church sanctuary, for example, might hold three hundred Orthodox Christians. Of that number, however, only five are in a state of illumination, while the rest of them are not. The rest of them have not even the slightest idea what purification is. So this raises the question: How many among them are normal Orthodox Christians? Unfortunately, out of three hundred, only five are.

All the same, purification and illumination are specific conditions of healing that experienced and illumined spiritual fathers can recognize. So we have here clearly medical criteria [*spiritual illness or health*]. Or maybe you are not convinced that these criteria are strictly medical? Consider the fact that the *nous* is a physiological human organ that everyone has. It is not only Orthodox that have a *nous*. So do Muslims, Buddhists, and everyone else. **So all human beings have the same need for purification and illumination. And there is only one therapeutic treatment.**

Or do you think that there are many therapeutic treatments for this illness? And is it really an illness or not?

Present-day Orthodox are hard-pressed to respond to these issues, because they have become so far removed from this tradition today that they no longer think of the Orthodox Christian way of life in the context of sickness and healing. They do not consider Orthodoxy to be a curative course of treatment, even though all the prayers are perfectly clear on this point. After all Who is Christ for Orthodox Christians? Is He not repeatedly invoked in the prayers and hymns of the Church as **"the Physician of our souls and bodies"**? \

*From Patristic Theology, by Fr. John Romanides. Translated by Hieromonk Alexios (Trader). Uncut Mountain Press, 2008.*

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**It's just another day... So be it! ~ Maine Governor Paul LePage said:**

"THE LAW IS THE LAW So "if" the U.S. government determines that it is against the law for the words "under God" to be on our money, then, so be it.

And "if" that same government decides that the "Ten Commandments" are not to be used in or on a government installation, then, so be it. I say, "so be it," because I would like to be a law-abiding U.S. citizen

I say, "so be it," because I would like to think that smarter people than I are in positions to make good decisions. I would like to think that those people have the American public's best interests at heart.

BUT, he said, "YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE I'D LIKE?

**Since we can't pray to God, can't Trust in God and cannot post His Commandments in Government buildings, I don't believe Government (Federal, State and Local) and its employees should participate in Easter and Christmas celebrations which honor the God that our government is eliminating from many facets of American life.**

I'd like my mail delivered on Christmas, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Easter. After all, it's just another day.

I'd like the" U.S. Supreme Court to be in session on Christmas, Good Friday, Thanksgiving and Easter as well as Sundays." After all, it's just another day.

I'd like the Senate and the House of Representatives to not have to worry about getting home for the "Christmas Break." After all it's just another day.

I'm thinking a lot of my taxpayer dollars could be saved, if all government offices and services would work on Christmas, Good Friday and Easter. It shouldn't cost any overtime since those would be just like any other day of the week to a government that is trying to be "politically correct."

In fact....I think our government should work on Sundays (initially set aside for worshipping God) because, after all, our government says that it should be just another day . . ."

*What do you all think???? If this idea gets to enough people, maybe our elected officials will stop giving in to the "minority opinions" and begin, once again, to represent the "majority" of ALL of the American people!!*

## Life isn't *Fair*, but...



1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
4. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.
5. Pay off your credit cards every month.
6. You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.
7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
8. It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it.
9. Save for retirement starting with your first paycheck.
10. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
11. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.
12. It's OK to let your children see you cry.
13. Don't compare your life to others'. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
14. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.
15. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. But don't worry; God never blinks.
16. Life is too short for long pity parties. Get busy living, or get busy dying.
17. You can get through anything if you stay put in today.
18. A writer writes. If you want to be a writer, write.
19. It's never too late to have a happy childhood. But the second one is up to you and no one else.
20. When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.
21. Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.
22. Over prepare, then go with the flow.
23. Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.
24. The most important sex organ is the brain.
25. No one is in charge of your happiness except you.
26. Frame every so-called disaster with these words: "In five years, will this matter?"
27. Always choose life.
28. Forgive everyone everything.
29. What other people think of you is none of your business.
30. Time heals almost everything. Give time time.
31. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
32. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends will. Stay in touch.
33. Believe in miracles.
34. God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.
35. Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.
36. Growing old beats the alternative -- dying young.

37. Your children get only one childhood. Make it memorable.
38. Read the Psalms. They cover every human emotion.
39. Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere.
40. If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.
41. Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.
42. Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.
43. All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.
44. Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.
45. The best is yet to come.
46. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
47. Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.
48. If you don't ask, you don't get.
49. Yield.
50. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.



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**Following a terrible earthquake in Antioch, St. John Chrysostom spoke to the people:**

✠ "Great are the fruits of an earthquake. Behold the Man-loving Lord Who quakes the city and strengthens the soul, Who sways the foundation and strengthens the thoughts, Who shows the weakness of the city and makes the will of the people powerful! Turn your attention to His love for mankind: He sways for a while - and strengthens forever; earthquake - for two days, but the devotion should remain for all times; you were sorrowful for a short time - but strengthened forever. A mother, wanting to wean her child from of the habit of frequent crying, strongly rocks its little crib not in order to harm it, but to frighten it. Precisely, thus the Lord of all, Who holds the universe in His hands shakes it, not in order to destroy it, but rather to bring back those men to salvation who live lawlessly." Behold this is how the Holy Fathers, the pillars of the Universal Church, knew how to explain God's love for man, both assaults in the same way as good works, and misfortune the same way as fortune. Let us who are slow to give thanks to God be ashamed when He gives and quick in our murmuring toward him when He takes away.

✠ Once St. Gregory the Dialogist wrote this about the price we have to pay to acquire the Kingdom of Heaven: It has no exact price. Everyone has to give everything he has. The Apostle Peter gave his nets and received the heavenly kingdom; the widow gave two mites; whoever has a million dollars, let him give that; and whoever has nothing, let him give his freedom.

✠ If you do not feel like praying, you have to force yourself! The Holy Fathers say that prayer with force is higher than prayer unforced. You do not want to, but force yourself. The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force. (Matt. 11:12)

St. Ambrose of Optina