

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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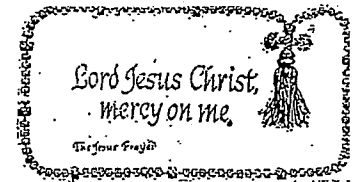
✠ **September 21, 2014** ✠

Leavetaking of the Elevation of the Life-Giving Cross

Apostle Quadratus of the 70

God immediately forgives everything to those who ask forgiveness in a spirit of humility and contrition and who ceaselessly invoke His holy name. As the Psalmist says, "Confess to the Lord and call upon His holy name" (Ps. 105).
~ *St. Gregory of Sinai*

- ⇒ **Annual Parish Meeting Today**
- **Tues. Sept 23 6:30pm Inquirer's Class**
- **Wed. Sept. 24 6:30pm Choir Rehearsal**



⇒ **This Saturday, September 27 – Landscaping Workday! 6:00am till...**

Bring your own tools ~ Please confirm if you plan to help! - Lunch is provided.

> **NO VESPERS Saturday**

The Cross, Preserver of the Universe

St. John of San Francisco, 1947

In the Prophet Ezekiel (9:6), it is said that when the Angel of the Lord was sent to punish and destroy the sinning people, it was told him not to strike those on whom the "mark" had been made. In the original text this mark is called "tau," the Hebrew letter corresponding to the letter "T," which is how in ancient times the cross was made, which then was an instrument of punishment.

So, even then, it was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise, by many other events in the Old Testament the power of the Cross was indicated. Moses, who held his arms raised in the form of a cross during the battle, gave victory to the Israelites over the Amalekites. He also, dividing the Red Sea by a blow of his rod and by a transverse blow uniting the waters again, saved Israel from Pharaoh, who drowned in the water, while Israel crossed over on the dry bottom (Exodus, ch. 14, 17).

Through the laying on of his hands in the form of a cross on his grandsons, Jacob gave a blessing to his descendents, foretelling at the same time their future until the coming of the "expectation of the nations" (Genesis, ch. 48).

By the Cross, the Son of God, having become man and accomplished our salvation. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross (Phil. 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Savior with them as it were embraced the world, and by His blood shed on it, like a king with red ink, He signed the forgiveness of the human race.

The Cross of the Lord was the instrument by which He saved the world after the fall into sin. Through the Cross, He descended with His soul into hell, to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the Cross Christ opened the doors of paradise which had been closed after our

first ancestors had been banished from it. The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world. Then it was filled with life-giving power. By the Cross on Golgotha the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31) and an end was put to his authority. The weapon by which he was crushed became the sign of Christ's victory.

The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, because the kingdom of hell was destroyed by the Cross. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross.

The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons.

When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished.

When there appeared to St. Symeon the Stylite, who was standing on his pillar, what seemed to be a chariot to carry him to heaven, the Saint, before mounting it, crossed himself and it disappeared. The enemy, who had hoped to cast down the ascetic from the height of his pillar, was put to shame.

One cannot enumerate all the various incidents of the manifestation of the power of the Cross. Invisibly and unceasingly, Divine grace that gushes from it saves the world.

The sign of the Cross is made at all the Mysteries and prayers of the Church. With the making of the sign of the Cross over the bread and wine, they become the Body and Blood of Christ. With the immersion of the Cross the waters are sanctified. The sign of the Cross looses us from sins. "When we are guarded by the Cross, we oppose the enemy, without fearing his nets and barking." Just as the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim barred the entrance into paradise of old, so the Cross now acts invisibly in the world, guarding it from perdition.

The Cross is the unconquerable weapon of pious kings in the battle with enemies. Through the apparition of the Cross in the sky, the dominion of Emperor Constantine was confirmed and an end was put to the persecution against the Church. The apparition of the Cross in the sky in Jerusalem in the days of Constantius the Arian proclaimed the victory of Orthodoxy. By the power of the Cross of the Lord, Christian kings will continue to reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness (St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on II Thess. 2:6-7).

The "sign of the Son of Man" (Matt. 24:30), that is, the Cross, will appear in the sky in order to proclaim the end of the present world and the coming of the eternal Kingdom of the Son of God. Then all the tribes of the earth shall weep, because they loved the present age and its lusts, but all who have endured persecution for righteousness and called on the name of the Lord shall rejoice and be glad. The Cross then will save all who conquered temptations, from eternal perdition by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed afar Christ.

However, those who hated the Cross of the Lord and did not engrave the Cross in their soul will perish forever. For "the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons" (Octoechos: Exapostilarion, Monday Matins).

~ *Shanghai - Exaltation of the Cross, 1947*

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Dialogue between an Elder and an Atheist: A Compelling Case for Christianity



One morning, the **Elder Epiphanius Theodoropoulos (+1991)** was in a conversation with 2-3 visitors at his home. One of them was an ideological atheist and a communist. Suddenly, someone from outside came rushing in, and informed them that the city of Athens had been flooded with photographs of Mao Tse Tung, with the inscription "Glory to the great Mao". It was the day that the Chinese dictator had died.

Elder: That's the way things are, my child. Atheists do not exist. Only idolaters exist, who take down Christ from His throne and in His place they enthrone their own idols. We say: "Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit". They say: "Glory to the great Mao". You pick and choose which one you prefer.

Atheist: You also take your drug, dear father. The only difference is, that you call it Christ, others call it Allah, or Buddha, etc.

Elder: My child, Christ is not a drug. Christ is the Creator of the entire universe. He who governs everything wisely, from the multitudes of infinite galaxies, down to the minutest particles of the microcosm. He has given life to all of us. He is the One who brought you into this world and has bestowed you with so much freedom, that you can actually doubt Him, and even deny Him.

Atheist: Dear father, it is your right to believe in all of those things. But that doesn't mean they are true. Do you have any proof?

Elder: You think all of this is just a fairy tale, don't you?

Atheist: Of course.

Elder: Do you have any proof that it is a fairy tale? Can you prove that what I believe is false?

Atheist:

Elder: You didn't reply, because you don't have any proof either. Which means, you believe they are fairy tales. I spoke to you of believing, when I referred to God; you, however, although rejecting my belief, essentially believe in your faithlessness, since you cannot back it up with proofs either. However, I must tell you that my belief is not something "out of the blue". There are certain supernatural events, upon which it is founded.

Atheist: Just a minute! Since we are talking about believing, what would you say to Muslims or Buddhists for example? Because they also talk about believing. And they too have high moral standards. Why is your belief better than theirs?

Elder: So the criterion of truth is supposedly judged by this question of yours? Because the truth is most certainly one; truths cannot be many in number. The thing is, who is the possessor of the truth? That is the major question. Hence, it is not a matter of a better or worse belief. It is a matter of the only true belief.

I agree, that other beliefs also have moral teachings. Naturally, Christianity's moral teachings are incomparably superior. But, we do not believe in Christ because of His moral teachings. Or for His

prompting to "Love one another", or for His sermons on peace and justice, freedom and equality. We believe in Christ, because His presence on earth was accompanied by supernatural events, which was a sign that He is God.

Atheist: Look, I also admit that Christ was an important philosopher and a great revolutionary, but let's not make Him a God now.

Elder: My dear child! All the great disbelievers in history stumbled by that detail. The fishbone that stuck in their throat, which they just couldn't swallow, was exactly that: That Christ is also God.

Many of them were willing to say to God: "Don't tell anyone that You are God incarnate. Just say that You're an ordinary human, and we shall be more than ready to deify You. Why do You want to be an incarnate God, and not a deified human? We are willing to glorify You, to proclaim You as the greatest among men, the holiest, the most ethical, the noblest, the unsurpassable, the one and only, the irrepeatable. Isn't that enough for You?"

The chief of the chorus of deniers, Ernest Renan, shouts out the following with regard to Christ: "For tens of thousands of years, the world shall be uplifted through You", and "You are the cornerstone of mankind; if one were to wrench Your name away from this world, it would be like shattering its foundations" and "the aeons shall proclaim that amongst the sons of men, never was there born anyone that could surpass You". But this is where Renan and those like him stop. Their very next phrase is: "But a God, You are not!"

And those poor wretches cannot perceive that all of these things constitute an indescribable tragedy! Their dilemma is inevitably relentless: Either Christ is an incarnate God, in which case, He is indeed, and only then, the most ethical, the holiest and noblest personage of mankind, or, He is not an incarnate God, in which case, He cannot possibly be any of these. In fact, if Christ is not God, then we are talking about the most horrible, the most atrocious and the most despicable existence in the history of mankind.

Atheist: What did you just say?

Elder: Exactly what you heard! It may be a weighty statement, but it is absolutely true. And I will tell you why.

Let me ask: What did all the truly great men say about themselves, or what opinion did they have of themselves?

The "wisest of all men", Socrates, proclaimed that "I came to know one thing: that I know nothing".

All the important men in the Old and New Testament, from Abraham and Moses, through to John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul, characterized themselves as "earth and ashes", "wretches", "monstrosities", etc.

But, strangely enough, Jesus' attitude is quite the opposite! And I say strangely enough, because it would have been natural and logical for Him to have a similar attitude. In fact, being far superior and surpassing all others, He should have had an even lower and humbler opinion of Himself.[2] Ethically more perfect than any other, He should have surpassed everyone and anyone in self-reproach and humility, from the moment of the world's creation to the end of time.

But, the exact opposite is observed!

{to be continued}



Christian Environmentalism and the Temptation of Faux Asceticism

By Fr. Michael Butler and Prof. Andrew Morriss

It is important to clarify the Church's teaching on asceticism because many voices in the environmental movement encourage a kind of ascetical lifestyle in the name of "ethical consumption." Orthodox writers on the environment are not immune to the temptation of putting the ascetical tradition of the Church in the service of another agenda. For example, the conclusion of the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection, held in Crete in 1991, states: "Humanity needs a simpler way of life, a renewed asceticism, for the sake of creation."

Many Orthodox writers call on asceticism—fasting in particular—to reduce consumption. Deacon Dr. John Chryssavgis, the theological advisor to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on environmental issues, has noted that, "In his now classic article entitled 'The Roots of our Ecological Crisis,' Lynn White already suspected—although he did not elaborate on—the truth behind asceticism." Furthermore, Orthodox theologian Elizabeth Theokritoff has pointed out the beneficial effects of Orthodox fasting discipline (which includes abstaining from sexual relations) on population control. Given the temptation to which many have succumbed, a few words on the proper role of asceticism are in order.

Asceticism comes from the Greek *askēsis*, which simply means "exercise." Asceticism, therefore, is simply spiritual exercise undertaken for the health of the soul. Here, we must be careful to set aside

popular caricatures of asceticism as either a kind of masochistic, self-flagellated misery or a kind of Gnostic attitude which exalts lofty spiritual things over crass material things. (This latter view is often associated with those environmentalists who have constructed a religion of nature worship.) With regard to this caricature of asceticism, Romanian Orthodox theologian Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae noted:

According to the current use of the word, asceticism has a negative connotation. It means a negative holding back, a negative restraint, or a negative effort. This is because the sinful tendencies of our nature, the habitual things that lead to its death, have come to be considered as the positive side of life. Ascetical striving, though negative in appearance, confronts the negative element in human nature with the intent to eliminate it by permanent opposition.

Viewed in proper balance, asceticism is a positive, life-affirming attitude and set of practices that seeks human freedom by overcoming the passions—the sinful and disordered habits and attitudes that poison our relationships, primarily with God but also with ourselves, our neighbor, and the world. These passions are the "seven deadly sins" of classical spirituality that enslave the heart, cloud the reason, poison relationships, and in general lead to the disintegration and corruption of the soul, and by extension, to the misery of the world caused by corrupted people

acting in corrupted ways.

Much could be said about asceticism and the passions, but for our purposes, we might say that to be ascetic is to learn to live rightly on the earth with God, our neighbor, and creation. With regard to our relationships, our ascetic stance before God is one of humility and obedience. Before our neighbor, as the Gospel puts it, we seek to be the last, not the first; humbled, not exalted; the servant, not the master. (Mark 10:13). Before creation, Greek Orthodox theologian Metropolitan John Zizioulas tells us, "Man dies as to his claim to be God in creation, and instead recognizes God as its Lord." In each case, we are brought to a new relationship with the other; in the case of our relationship to creation, an ascetical stance clearly alters the demands we make on the material world, both what we ask of it and how much we ask. In this respect, Orthodoxy's call to ascetic striving for the sake of one's salvation is in line with free market principles of voluntary activity and lifestyle choices.

The ascetical tradition of the Orthodox Church includes many practices: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, keeping vigil, *inter alia*. They are the active part of the spiritual life, our voluntary cooperation with the grace of God. As such, it is important that we not be tempted to use the ascetical practices of the Church for ends they were not designed to serve. Thus, we need to be careful of "environmental consciousness" masquerading as authentic spiritual practice. Moreover, we must keep in mind that it is

the believer's practice of asceticism, not asceticism qua asceticism, that is important.

For example, fasting out of ecological conviction, or eating "lower on the food chain" (i.e., avoiding meat or eating a vegan diet) is spiritually useless for the Christian. Fasting is not dieting; neither is it an ecological statement. For a Christian, fasting is a spiritual discipline that is fruitful when it is joined with prayer and repentance, a discipline that is oriented toward God to effect the purification and transfiguration of the heart. What is more, for Orthodox Christians to use the ascetical discipline of fasting for any other purpose undermines its real purpose. If we do not use ascetical disciplines to grow in a right relationship with God, we will not grow in right relationships with our neighbor or with creation either.

This leads us to a deep irony that seems to be lost on those who focus on the superficial similarities between Christian asceticism and environmentalists' calls for restricting consumption: Concern for the environment that distracts us from the purification and illumination of the heart will actually hinder our ability to transfigure creation and offer it back to Christ. That is to say, concern for environmentalism is inversely proportional to our effectiveness in transfiguring the environment. At this point, we are tempted to leave off writing altogether, lest our efforts undermine the end we are trying to pursue. Having drawn attention to the danger and the temptation, however, we can proceed if we do so with caution.

In short, spiritual tools must be used for spiritual ends. We "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matt. 6:33). As Elizabeth Theokritoff reminds us in her 2010 book, *The Salvation of the World and Saving the Earth: An Orthodox Christian Approach*:

The salvation of the earth is not in our hands, either individually or as a human collective: it is the work of the Creator and Savior, and our task is to conform ourselves to him. Re-created

in the image of the new Adam, we are called to image God's love and compassion for all creation, so fulfilling his economy of salvation by growing into his likeness.

What then is the Christian to do to integrate the Church's ascetical traditions into his or her interactions with God's creation? First, we must resist the temptation

"First, we must resist the temptation to impose our asceticism on others..."

to impose our asceticism on others, as the value of the ascetical practices lie in the voluntary denial of consumption as a means of growing closer to God. Using the power of the state to compel asceticism in others would thus be counterproductive in a spiritual sense. Moreover, we must distinguish our own practice of asceticism from efforts to deny others the benefits of God-given human creativity; we cannot force asceticism onto others. For example, efforts to restrict the increasing use of energy by the world's poor are at odds both with true asceticism and with our duty to be charitable to our neighbors. Given the horrific costs of indoor air pollution caused by burning dung and similar fuels in homes by the world's poorest, building electrical power plants in poor countries should be applauded.

Second, we must also avoid shifting the costs and burdens of our own "asceticism" onto others. Lobbying for subsidies and mandates for corn-based ethanol that leads to higher food prices, at tremendous cost to the world's poor, is a particularly pernicious example of faux asceticism in which the warm feelings of doing good among the wealthy are primarily paid for by the poorest. For example, a Tufts University study estimated that U.S. corn ethanol mandates cost Mexico \$1.5 to \$3 billion

through increased food prices from 2006 to 2011. Similarly, the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy imposes tremendous costs on the poor in developing countries by denying them markets for their agricultural products through subsidies to European farmers in the name of promoting sustainable agriculture.

Third, we must resist the temptation to seek to subsidize our own consumption. If doctors are enjoined to "first, do no harm," a similar injunction applies to government policies. Providing ourselves with subsidized goods and services, such as fuels, food, and electricity, not only encourages overconsumption of those goods and services, thus leading us away from both good stewardship and opportunities to practice asceticism, but also causes damage to God's creation. The vast, federally subsidized water projects in the western United States and the World Bank's tragic record of supporting destructive "infrastructure" projects such as dams in developing countries are two examples. No less damaging is the common practice in oil-producing nations of subsidizing consumption of fossil fuels—Venezuela's 4 cents per gallon of gasoline is similarly a destructive practice. In each case, creation is sacrificed to venal goals—such as purchasing voters' support for governments—that are inconsistent with our responsibility as stewards.

Nature has a right to be transformed and uplifted, spiritualized and revived, and mankind has an obligation to serve that right, to love nature, not for our sake alone, but for its own sake, and not just for the utility that it can provide. But such a realization requires of us an attitude toward the natural world that does not preclude stewardship of the world and its resources to meet human needs but goes beyond it to the fulfillment and perfection of creation for its own sake.

This essay was adapted from Creation and the Heart of Man: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on Environmentalism (Acton Institute, 2013). The monograph is available in the Acton Book Shop at shop.acton.org.

This and That

On Evolution: "People actually become *angry* if you do not share their faith in the miraculously accidental provenance of weird segmented crawly sea-bugs with a thousand eyes that scuttled about in the Cambrian (i.e., trilobites). Why, for God's sake? Trilobites would seem to have exiguous influence on our trajectory through this vale of strangeness in which we inexplicably find ourselves. Couldn't people get upset over something else—mortgage rates, maybe?"...

I suggest that people who want to talk about evolution ought to have a reading knowledge of elementary biology, a familiarity not just with the metaphysics of Richard Dawkins but with the sweep and phenomenal complexity of life.... ~ Fred Reed

On Evolution: "Its materialism is categorical and all-inclusive, so that anything not explained by material interactions would call the whole structure into question. Since it serves many of the functions of a religion, any doubt draws the reactions usual to heresy." ~ Fred Reed

Consciousness:

_ The most potent argument against the atheist materialist gang is simply this: they cannot explain consciousness. Which is more fundamental: the objective world of matter-energy, or the subjective awareness of it? ...Which highlights the fact that consciousness lies outside the purview of science. Science is all about observing. You cannot observe consciousness, which is the observer itself. You cannot measure consciousness. - Internet comment

- There is no foreign occupying force that can tame aggrieved Muslims with voting booths, satellite TV, and feminism... Most Americans today have a hard time believing that folks in Third World countries could take their religion seriously, and even conservatives reveal their inner Marxist when they think that force-fed economic prosperity or "free elections" will do anything but fan the flames of passion for Allah.

Koran 9:29 is the singular source for the *jizya* (tax on non-Muslims). It states, Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

ISIS is "subduing" the Christians of Mosul to the delight of throngs shouting "*Allahu akbar*." This stems from pure hatred of their neighbors' beliefs, and from a canon that does not include an admonition to "love your enemies." Instead, the very next verse of the Koran states, "the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah; these are the words of their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved before; may Allah destroy them; how they are turned away!"

_ Mother Teresa, once told a Milwaukee woman offering to volunteer in India "to do good in her own hometown, to find Calcutta in Milwaukee."

I am quoting not Mother Teresa but Tom Fleming, who devotes chapter 3 of his excellent *The Morality of Everyday Life* to a critique of global philanthropy. Fleming states the problem succinctly:

"Many people who actually prefer to live in a traditional society have nonetheless come to believe that life on the human scale might be selfish and immoral. Taking care of our families, doing our jobs well, giving alms to beggars, and being loyal to our friends is not enough. We are called upon to cultivate global awareness and to accept responsibility for the entire world." Fleming proceeds to show how such "global awareness" can all too easily lead us astray, and notes that "the private efforts of charitable individuals in their own neighborhoods and cities will never attract newspaper headlines." Fleming also reminds us that Thomas Aquinas wrote that "In what concerns nature we should love our kinsmen most, . . . and we are more closely bound to provide them with the necessities of life." ~ Tom Piatek, *Chronicles*

LOVE FOR WORK

From "Family Life," by Elder Paisios the Athonite, published by the Sacred Hesychastirion of St. John the Evangelist, Souroti, Greece.



—Geronda, why do so many people feel bored at work?

—Maybe they don't love their job? Or, maybe they work on the same thing continually? With some jobs, say at a factory where they make door and window frames, a laborer might do the same thing from morning till the time he leaves: glue, glue, glue. Another constantly handles windows; another, putty. They constantly do

the same monotonous work; and their boss is always watching them, not for just one or two days, either. It is always the "same old, same old," to the point of boredom. In the old days it wasn't like that though. A contractor would be given four walls from the carpenters and was expected to present the owner with a finished house and the key. He would have built the floors, the door and window frames, and would even have set the windows with putty. Afterwards he would have built spiral staircases, turned banisters; after that he would have painted, built the cupboards and the shelves, even the furniture! Even if he didn't do all of it himself, he knew how to do it. In a pinch a contractor could even put the tiles on the roof.

Today so many people are tormented because they don't love their jobs. They eagerly await the hour when they can go home. But when one has zeal for his job and is interested in what he is doing, no matter how much he works, his zeal grows. He is devoted to his job; and when it is time to leave he says, "Where did the time go?" He even forgets to eat and sleep; he forgets everything! Fasting like this, he isn't hungry; sleepless, he isn't tired, but instead rejoices that he doesn't need sleep. It's not that he suffers from hunger or lack of sleep; it's that work is like a feast day for him.

—Geronda, how is it that when two people have the same job, one can be spiritually profited from it while the other is spiritually harmed?

—It depends on how each one does his work and what is within him. If one works with humility and love, everything is bright, clean, and delightful, and he will feel refreshed. But if one allows prideful thoughts and thinks that he does his work better than others, he may feel a certain satisfaction, but this satisfaction doesn't fill his heart because his soul is not growing; he has no rest.

When a person doesn't do his work with love he grows tired. For such a one merely knowing he must climb a hill to finish a job makes him tired, because he doesn't love his work. The

one who does his job with all his heart, however, goes up and down the hill without even realizing it. A worker could dig in the sun, for example, and not get tired, as long as he does it from his heart. But if he doesn't do it from his heart, he is always stopping, loafing around and complaining. "Oh, it is so hot," he says, and so he suffers.

—Geronda, can a person become so absorbed with his career, his job, that he becomes indifferent or inconsiderate towards his family, etc.?

—He should love his job simply; he shouldn't "fall in love" with it. If he doesn't love his work, he will tire out doubly, both bodily and spiritually. Then even his bodily rest won't relax him because he will be spiritually exhausted. Spiritual exhaustion is something that overwhelms a man. When someone works with all his heart and is joyful, he is spiritually relaxed and his bodily exhaustion disappears.

You see, I know a general who still does all the jobs of his privates. How he worries about them! Like a father! Do you know what joy he feels?! Those under him also rejoice. Once he set out at midnight from Evro, headed to Larisa for the feast of Saint Achillius. He wanted to make it in time for Divine Liturgy, even though it would have been fine for him simply to go later, and be there only for the Doxology service afterwards. But he said, "I must be on time to honor the Saint." He does everything with all his heart! The gratification felt in one who does his work with *filotimo* is a good gratification. It was given by God so that His creature would not tire out. This is true rest from weariness.

—Geronda, how about our God-given, individual talent?

—Each person should increase the talent he has; for God, having given it him, expects a return. For example, the mind is powerful, but depending upon how one uses it, can be used for good or evil. Someone who is very bright—if he uses his mind properly—is able to invent things which may help the world. But if he doesn't use his mind properly he might invent a way, let's say, to rob his neighbor. People who draw cartoons in newspapers and the like are able, in only one cartoon—one sketch—to present their whole message. And if the cartoon is dealing with ecclesiastical issues and such, they are even able to present theology sufficiently. Some of them could have delved deeper into divine teachings if they would have studied theology—had they put their mind to it. That is, they could have sharpened their mind; they could have sanctified it, and thus would have helped themselves and others. But instead, many do negative work; obscene if they are obscene, ridiculous if they are ridiculous.

In other words, those with exceptional abilities will either become useful or destructive, while doubtless those who are not exceptional won't be able to do great good, but at least they also won't be able to do great harm.