



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ February 28, 2016 ✠

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

St. Basil the Confessor (747)

I have become enslaved to every evil in my wretchedness, bowing down before the demons that provoke the passions.

Through heedlessness

I have lost possession

of myself, O Savior!

Take pity on me as I flee

to Thy many mercies for

refuge, O Heavenly Father!

Many Years! Newly Illumined George, Tamara, Nicole & Alexandra Zannis!

➤ **Next Sunday is Meatfare Sunday – Meatfare Dinner after Liturgy**

✠ Great Lent Begins Monday, March 14 ✠

✠ Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete: First week - March 14 – 17

✠ Friday, March 18 – First Presanctified Liturgy {All evening services - 6:30pm}

Wisdom from St. John of Kronstadt:

✠ "How do we maintain connection with the spiritual world, with the heavenly Church? By calling upon them in prayer, by keeping the Feasts instituted in their honor, and by the Church services. How do we maintain connection with the departed? By means of prayers for them, especially when united with the offering of the bloodless sacrifice. How do we maintain union with living Christians and all men? Again, by means of prayers for them all in God's Temple and even at home."

✠ "In the Church especially is accomplished the mystery of cleansing from sins. Reverence, therefore, the place where your soul is cleansed from all impurities, where you are reconciled to God, where you receive the true life of the Spirit."

✠ "The enemy of our salvation is the devil, and knowing all the saving power of our union with God through faith, the Church, and God's grace, he strives with all the means he has to tear asunder our bond with God by sin, by carnal passions, and by attachments to the world. It is necessary for all to hold tightly to the union with God and the Church, keeping the commandments of the Lord.

From the Lenten Triodion:

The wealth of blessings which Thou gavest me, O Heavenly Father

I have wrongfully wasted, becoming the slave of strangers!

Therefore I cry aloud to Thee:

Father, I have sinned against Thee!

Receive me like the Prodigal of old, and open Thine arms to me!

St. John Cassian "the Romanian" (+435) – Remembered February 29

There is always more to learn in our Orthodox Faith. Recently it came to our attention that St. John Cassian, an important fourth century Church Father whom we customarily call "the Roman," was actually *Romanian*! He is listed in the ranks of the Romanian Saints in "The Romanian Patericon," by Fr. Ioanichie Balan (The Prologue of Ochrid has him born in Rome). The area of Romania known as Dobrogea or Dacia Pontica, at the mouth of the Danube River along the Black Sea coast, was Christianized from as early as the third century. St. John Cassian was born in this region in 360, forty miles northwest of the modern day city of Constanta.

His parents were pious and wealthy Christians. They gave their son an excellent Christian education, training him in the study of Greek and Latin and in the reading of Holy Scripture, in an exalted spiritual life of prayer, asceticism, virginity, and zeal for divine things. He studied in local schools and in nearby monasteries. As he learned Greek, he read the Holy Fathers of the second to fourth centuries which were circulating in that northeastern corner of the Roman Empire.

According to his own testimony, St. John "even from childhood lived among monks, whose exhortations he heard and whose example he saw." In his region there existed a strong monastic movement with many monasteries and dozens, perhaps, hundreds of Christ-loving hermits, "in whose breast blossomed the monastic rule, the habitation of the life of virginity and a particularly severe asceticism...whose manner of life is completely worthy of admiration" (as described by St. Epiphanius of Cyprus).

Seeing the holiness, zeal for God, and ascetic labors of the monks of his homeland, St. John Cassian decided from his tender youth to take up the good yoke of Christ, becoming a monk in one of the monasteries of the diocese of Tomis, where his relative and life-long companion, Germanus, was already laboring (Germanus is a saint of the Romanian Church also).

Desiring to worship at the Holy Places and especially at the Life-giving Sepulchre of Christ, St. John Cassian left for Jerusalem in 380, when he was only 20 years old. His sister and friend St. Germanus accompanied him. Here the two monks settled at a monastery in Bethlehem near the cave where Christ was born.

After over five years of spiritual labors in Bethlehem, St. John was inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit to visit the monasteries and hermitages of Egypt, the fatherland of Christian monasticism, together with St. Germanus. For more than seven years, these two Romanian monks sought out the holy monks, elders, anchorites and teachers of the Egyptian desert. Much like St. John of Sinai (Climacos) who would come after them in the seventh century, the good soldiers of Christ went like bees from place to place, from one hesychast elder to another, collecting from each the nectar of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. They learned from them the art of spiritual labor, perfecting themselves in holiness, prayer and humility. Here St. John wrote his celebrated work in 24 books called the *Conferences with the Fathers*, in which like a good journalist for the Church, he interviewed and received counsel and instruction from the great fathers of the Nile Valley, Scetis, Tabenna, Mt. Nitria, Raithu and Mt. Sinai.

Around the year 400, because of the disturbances of the Nestorian heretics led by Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria, Sts. John and Germanus went to Constantinople to meet St. John Chrysostom, whom they had heard about and greatly loved. Seeing the holiness of St. John Cassian's life and his deep theological education, the great Patriarch and teacher of the whole world ordained him a deacon and accepted him as a disciple. St. John Cassian lived with the great Chrysostom for five years, learning from him many profitable teachings.

The exiling of St. John Chrysostom from his throne by the Emperor Arcadius in 404, provoked St. John Cassian to leave for Rome to take up the defense of the Chrysostom before Pope Innocent I. Then hearing of the death of their good father and pastor in exile in Armenia in 407, and being disgusted with the injustice committed by the Emperor, St. John Cassian and Germanus never again returned to the East. Instead they went west and settled at Marseilles in southern Gaul, where he founded two monasteries, one for monks and the other for nuns. He was ordained a priest and became abbot of both, modeling these communities according to the guidelines of Sts. Pachomios and Basil the Great, as he had learned it in the East. Thus he organized the first monasticism in the West according to the rules of the great monasteries of the East. He devoted the years of his old age to writing. Besides the *Conferences*, he wrote *The Institutes*, a classic primer in teaching the basics of the monastic common life; *On The Healing of the Eight Principal Sins* and also *On the Incarnation of the Lord, Against Nestorius* (commissioned from him by St. Leo the Great). The eight deadly sins, which St. John calls "thoughts of evil" are gluttony, incontinence, love of money, anger, despondency, sloth, vainglory and pride. After 60 years of faithful monastic labor, St. Cassian ended his earthly life in peace at his monastery in Marseilles in 435. He left many disciples. Today, his sacred relics lie in his monastery of St. Victor, available for veneration. ✠ ✠ ✠

Curing the Sickness of Pharisaism (Part 2)

"He who keeps justifying himself will never repent; and that person who always justifies himself - either externally or internally - will never learn."

Transcript of a tape-recorded homily by
Metropolitan Athanasius of Limassol, Cyprus

I don't know what to say... someone may dip his spoon into another dish and this could be the cause of an argument - a cause for a huge quarrel with another person, just because he dipped his spoon earlier on into another dish... You can see how ridiculous these things are and how the demons make fun of us, as well as they who are outside the Church. **And when they do approach us, instead of seeing the people of the Church transformed into Jesus Christ, into sweet-natured people and mature people - well balanced, fulfilled people - full of harmony inside them, unfortunately, with all those passions of ours and all that sourness, they will inevitably say: "What? And become like one of them? I'd rather not!"**

You, who are a churchgoer, tell me how the Church has benefited you. As we said yesterday you went to the pilgrimage sites, you saw the fathers, you saw the holy relics, you saw the Holy Mountain, the Holy Mother Icon at Tinos Island - all those places that we went to, and returned. What was the end benefit of all those things? Was our heart transformed? Did we become humbler people? Did we become more sweet-natured? Did we become meeker people in our homes, our families, our monastery? Or at our place of work? **That is what counts.** If we did not achieve those things, at least let us become humbler... from within our repentance...let us become humbler... If we didn't manage that either, then we are worthy of many tears - we are to be pitied. Because unfortunately, Time flies, and we are counting years....

When asked how many years he had lived on the Holy Mountain, the Elder Paisios used to say: *"I came here the same year as my neighbor's mule."* (His neighbor, old Zitos, had a mule - and you know how every cell on Mount Athos has an animal, a mule, for carrying their things. That animal has a long life span; you don't buy a mule every day - they are too expensive). *"Well, the year that I came here, to the Holy Mountain, my neighbor purchased his mule in the same year. We have the same number of years on the Holy Mountain, and yet that poor beast remained a mule, but then so did I. I didn't change at all."*

So, we quite often say *"I've been here for forty years"* - and we priests and monks tend to say these words: *"I have been in the monastery for forty years"*. But what you don't realize is that those years are not in your favor. God will say to you **"Forty years, and you still haven't managed to become something? You are still angry after forty years, you still censure, you still contradict, you still resist, you still don't submit? You've had forty years, and you still haven't learnt the alphabet - the first thing - about monastic life, about Christian life? What am I supposed to do with your years? What am I to do with you, if you have spent fifty years with confessions and you can't respond to another person with a kind word? What use are all these things to me?"**

These all weigh against us. And I am saying all these things, firstly about myself. Because they apply to me first... And because I know these things from myself, that is why I'm telling you about them (and why you must think I'm saying them to each one of you). People think that I'm referring to them, but it is not you I'm referring to. It is firstly about me that I mentioned these things... about me first....

We need to say these things to at least humble ourselves; to keep our mouth shut, as all those egotistic and other displays unfortunately ridicule us and make us look foolish in the presence of the Lord. If we humble ourselves and cease to have grand ideas about ourselves, maybe then can a person begin to correct himself gradually through repentance - which is born out of humility. A person who doesn't strive to justify himself truly repents. **He who keeps justifying himself will never repent; and that person who always justifies himself - either externally or internally - will never learn what repentance means.** That is why we should always examine ourselves. "*Test yourselves, brothers*" the Apostle says. **Test yourself, to see if there is a love of God inside you.** And not so much that, but more so if we are living within the realm of repentance, so that God can cure our existence - **so that this kind of association with the Church can heal us, and so that we can become people who have been cured of their passions and their sins.**

Many ask how we can reach that point. How do we get there? Well, when we leave ourselves in the hands of the good physician - God; when we leave ourselves trustingly in God's hands; because when we are in various circumstances, in difficulties, **God knows what is best for each one of us and will lead us along those paths that will slowly, slowly, slowly over the years perfect us - they will perfect us...** All we need to do is give ourselves to God with trust, the way we give our trust to a doctor, or - say - the captain of a ship. We show trust. He leads us, and we don't worry about the destination and when we will arrive, because we know that the one steering the ship is mindful, vigilant, and he knows the way and is careful. {to be continued}

Drive Away Evil Thoughts

✕ My child, see to it that you drive away the evil thoughts which the devil urges you to consent to---especially thoughts of hatred towards the brethren you should pay no attention to, because he aims to steal from you the greatest virtue: love. And if he achieves this, he has completely won your soul. Once we have lost love---God, that is, for God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him (1Jn.4:16)---then what is there left to save us?

My child, do not listen at all to these thoughts of hatred towards the brethren, but drive them away immediately, and start praying the prayer, or tell Satan, "The more you bring me thoughts of hatred, devil, the more I will love my brethren. For I have an order from my Christ not only to love them, but even to sacrifice myself for them, just as Christ sacrificed Himself for me, the wretch." And at once embrace the things about them that annoy you, and say, "Just look how much I love them, O envious Satan! I will die for them!" By doing this, God sees your good intentions and the method you are using to conquer the devil, and He will come at once to your aid to deliver you. ~ **Elder Ephraim**

The Process of Becoming. . . "The day will come when we shall stand before God and be judged, but as long as our pilgrimage continues, as long as we live in the process of becoming, as long as there is ahead of us this road that leads to the full measure of the stature of Christ which is our vocation, judgment must not be pronounced by ourselves." + **Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh (London)**

Impossibility Theory, an Advance over Mere Indeterminacy

Fred Reed, February 4, 2016

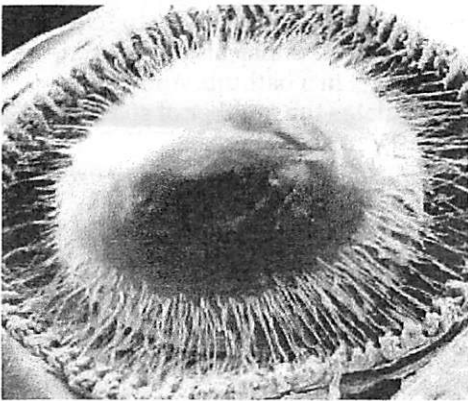
Previously I have proved that life cannot have evolved. Today I will prove that life cannot exist.

Let us begin with Samuel Johnson's response when asked whether we have free will. He replied that all theory holds that we do not, all experience that we do. A similar paradox occurs in the realm of Impossibility Theory. Many things occur in biology that all science says are possible, while all common sense says that they are not.

Consider the development of a barely-existent zygote into seven pounds of puzzled and alarmed baby. ("Where the ___ is *this*?") Anyone familiar with Murphy's Law knows that it isn't possible. Half an hour with a textbook of embryology will confirm this judgement. It is a case of phenomenal complexity following phenomenal complexity building on phenomenal complexity with, almost always, no errors of consequence.

The resulting little science project enters wherever we are with a squall, the ductus arteriosus closes, the nursing instinct kicks in, and the interloper eventually grows into, God help us, a teenager (arguably the only flaw in the process).

Those with better sense than to read physiology may not grasp the wild improbability that this will work. Start with the cell. The likelihood that it will function is that of winning seven Irish Sweepstakes in a row. The chemical machinery, the mechanics—endoplasmic reticula, ribosomes, various flavors of RNA, and all dozens of such things functioning sufficiently flawlessly to continue in existence, rococo chemicals going about their business without gumming each other up.



Suspensory ligaments, connecting the lens of the eye to the ciliary body. Do you really believe these delicate ropes can form perfectly all by themselves? If so, I figure somebody must have put something in your drugs.

Common sense says that it can't work. The sciences say that it can, and the fact that it does lends a certain weight to their argument. Each step in this impossible process can be shown to follow the laws of chemistry and physics. It all works. There is no need for spirits or poltergeists to explain it. Except that it obviously can't happen. Sez me, Something Else has to be involved. You tell me what, and we will split the Nobel money.

Here we run into one of those paradoxes that no one looks at because it would have dire consequences for how we think about things. Everything that happens in our heads as we think, or think we think, can similarly be shown ineluctably to follow the laws of chemistry and physics, meaning that we *have* to think what we think we think because it is predetermined. Back to Dr. Johnson.

A useful trait of the human mind, one that keeps us from going mad, is that is that if we see something enough times we begin to believe that it makes sense. This is not just the basis of quantum physics but of most of life. Women have babies all the time. It almost always works fine. Therefore it must make sense.

Again, physiology. Consider how the bones of our little bundle of joy turn into those of a middle linebacker in college. For a very small, short hollow bone to grow into a large, long hollow bone, unlikely things have to happen. Osteoclasts inside the cavity have to eat away the bone to make a larger cavity. Osteoblasts outside have to lay down more bone. They do this in precise coordination, which is impossible because they are on opposite sides of the cavity. Look at the skeleton of an adult. The bones are smooth, and flawlessly formed. The bone also has to grow in length. The mechanism of the articulation also has to grow, and do it exactly right. All of this works perfectly, which is impossible.

Think about the ear: Tympanum-malleus-incus-stapes-cochlea. Incoming sounds vibrates the eardrum which jiggles one little bone that jiggles another that jiggles a third that jiggles the cochlea which figures out what is going on

sonically. This works for vaguely 20 Hz to 20 kHz in young females. Dogs and cats have greater ranges. In people it functions with little impairment for seventy years.

While this does not seem at all likely, it does fit nicely into the dominant paradigm of crossword puzzle and tinker toy. This holds that the universe is like a gigantic crossword. Some parts we have filled in. Others we have-not figured out yet, but we know that it is only a matter of time until we have it all. Nothing is inherently unknowable. We can fill in the whole puzzle.

The other half of this understanding is that everything can be explained mechanistically. If we can show that something occurs through a series of reactions, we have explained it entirely. This is beguiling, and redolent of nineteenth-century simplism. But...is it even plausible?

The following *simplified* description of the biochemical functioning of the retina is from **Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution** by Michael Behe. The book, which I recommend, is accessible to the intelligent laymen, for whom it is written. The author includes the following technoglop on the biochemistry of the retina to give a flavor of the complexity of things. The sensible reader will skip most of it.

When light first strikes the retina a photon interacts with a molecule called 11-cis-retinal, which rearranges within picoseconds to trans-retinal. (A picosecond is about the time it takes light to travel the breadth of a single human hair.) The change in the shape of the retinal molecule forces a change in the shape of the protein, rhodopsin, to which the retinal is tightly bound. The protein's metamorphosis alters its behavior. Now called metarhodopsin II, the protein sticks to another protein, called transducin. Before bumping into metarhodopsin II, transducin had tightly bound a small molecule called GDP. But when transducin interacts with metarhodopsin II, the GDP falls off, and a molecule called GTP binds to transducin. (GTP is closely related to, but critically different from, GDP.)

GTP-transducin-metarhodopsin II now binds to a protein called phosphodiesterase, located in the inner membrane of the cell. When attached to metarhodopsin II and its entourage, the phosphodiesterase acquires the chemical ability to "cut" a molecule called cGMP (a chemical relative of both GDP and GTP). Initially there are a lot of cGMP molecules in the cell, but the phosphodiesterase lowers its concentration, just as a pulled plug lowers the water level in a bathtub. Another membrane protein that binds cGMP is called an ion channel. *It acts as a gateway* that regulates the number of sodium ions in the cell. Normally the ion channel allows sodium ions to flow into the cell, while a separate protein actively pumps them out again. The dual action of the ion channel and pump keeps the level of sodium ions in the cell within a narrow range. When the amount of cGMP is reduced because of cleavage by the phosphodiesterase, the ion channel closes, causing the cellular concentration of positively charged sodium ions to be reduced. This causes an imbalance of charge across the cell membrane that, finally, causes a current to be transmitted down the optic nerve to the brain. The result, when interpreted by the brain, is vision. If the reactions mentioned above were the only ones that operated in the cell, the supply of 11-cis-retinal, cGMP, and sodium ions would quickly be depleted. Something has to turn off the proteins that were turned on and restore the cell to its original state. Several mechanisms do this. First, in the dark the ion channel (in addition to sodium ions) also lets calcium ions into the cell. The calcium is pumped back out by a different protein so that a constant calcium concentration is maintained. When cGMP levels fall, shutting down the ion channel, calcium ion concentration decreases, too. The phosphodiesterase enzyme, which destroys cGMP, slows down at lower calcium concentration. Second, a protein called guanylate cyclase begins to resynthesize cGMP when calcium levels start to fall. Third, while all of this is going on, metarhodopsin II is chemically modified by an enzyme called rhodopsin kinase. The modified rhodopsin then binds to a protein known as arrestin, which prevents the rhodopsin from activating more transducin. So the cell contains mechanisms to limit the amplified signal started by a single photon. Trans-retinal eventually falls off of rhodopsin and must be reconverted to 11-cis-retinal and again bound by rhodopsin to get back to the starting point for another visual cycle. To accomplish this, trans-retinal is first chemically modified by an enzyme to trans-retinol—a form containing two more hydrogen atoms. A second enzyme then converts the molecule to 11-cis-retinol. Finally, a third enzyme removes the previously added hydrogen atoms to form 11-cis-retinal, a cycle is complete.

The biochemistry is way over my head, but the complexity is clear. The idea that this came about by accident requires powers of belief beyond mine, and the idea that it functions flawlessly for seventy years is more so. Ask a biochemist whether he can construct this system in the laboratory. Ask him whether he can construct *any* system of similar complexity that will work, maintaining itself, for seventy years.

From all of which I conclude that we are more puzzled than we believe we are. These thoughts will not be well-received by those more inclined to protect the paradigm than to examine it. Oh well.

In Praise of Christian Walls

By: Srdja Trifkovic | February 22, 2016

“A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian,” Pope Francis declared on his flight back to Rome last week. ...

Had it not been for the walls, strongly built and staunchly defended, Christendom would not have survived the onslaught of Islam in its thousand-year-long period of military expansion. Two prominent examples come from the final two centuries of that period: the sieges of Vienna in 1529 and 1683. The first marked an important early check on Turkish advances, after a century of conquest in the Balkans and Central Europe. The second saved Europe and finally turned the tide. German, Hungarian, Polish, and other defenders of the walls of Vienna were Christian warriors par excellence. During the second siege the city was saved thanks to an alliance between the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Poland, which was brokered at the last minute by Pope Innocent XI. In thanksgiving for the victory at Vienna on September 12, 1683, Pope Innocent fixed that date as the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary.

Over two centuries earlier, in July 1456, some 6,000 Christian soldiers successfully defended the walls of Belgrade from Sultan Mehmed's army of 50,000. During the siege Pope Callixtus III ordered the bells of all churches to be rung every day at noon, as a call for believers to pray for Belgrade's defenders; that practice has continued to this day, even though not many people know its origins. An old Franciscan monk and preacher, John of Capistrano, played a key role in the battle and personally led a detachment of troops. For his valor and burning faith Pope Alexander canonized “the soldier priest” in 1690.

In 1565 the walls of the Grand Harbor in today's Valetta enabled 700 Knights Hospitaller, 2,000 Spanish and Italian soldiers, and 4,000 armed Maltese civilians to withstand an assault by 50,000 Turks and North African corsairs. The 70-year-old Grand Master of the Order of St. John, Jean de la Valette, commanded the garrison. “It is the great battle of the Cross and the Quran which is now to be fought,” he told his troops as the Ottoman fleet appeared on the horizon:

A formidable army of infidels are on the point of invading our Island. We, for our part, are the chosen soldiers of the Cross, and if Heaven requires the sacrifice of our lives, there can be no better occasion than this. Let us hasten then, my brothers, to the sacred altar. There we will renew our vows and retain by our Faith in the sacred sacraments, that contempt for death which alone can render us invincible.

When the arrival of a relief fleet from Italy was unexpectedly delayed, de la Valette did not lose heart. “We now know that we cannot look to others for our deliverance,” he told his Council. “It is only upon God and

our own swords that we must rely. Yet this is no reason to be disheartened . . . Our Faith and the honor of our Order are in our own hands. We shall not fail!” Valette's Christian warriors did not fail. As the battle reached its climax, they “sang Hymns, prayed, defiantly tolled their Chapel bell and prepared to meet the Lord Jesus.” The Great Siege of Malta and the Battle of Lepanto six years later marked the end of the Muslim bid for control of the Mediterranean. The Christian coalition which made that victory possible, known as the Holy League, was put together by Pope Pius V.

Besieged Christian walls occasionally became the scene of heroic last stands. In 877-78 a small Greek garrison defended Syracuse against the Saracens to the last man, even though no help could be expected after the defeat of the incoming Byzantine fleet. Emperor Constantine XI's defense of the walls of Constantinople in 1453 is another example of willingly accepted Christian martyrdom. In 1571 6,000 Venetian defenders of Famagusta succumbed to 100,000 Turks and their 150 guns after a year's siege. Their commander, Marcantonio Bragadin, was tied naked to a column and flayed alive while praying the Miserere and invoking the name of Jesus.

As we have been reminded in recent days, most of the Vatican is surrounded by walls that are 40 feet high and 12 feet thick. Enrico Maria Radaelli, a leading disciple of the late Romano Amerio, says that it would be interesting to know “what Pope Bergoglio thinks of the famous Leonine Walls, erected by his predecessor Pope St. Leo IV in 847 to defend Rome and the Pope's residence from the Saracens . . . Was Pope Leo, sainted and responsible for many a miracle during his lifetime, not ‘a good Christian?’”

The same question may be asked regarding 82 percent of Hungarians who supported tighter immigration rules after the government of Viktor Orban built a fence along the country's southern border last summer; or 40 percent of Polish voters, most of them observant Catholics, who supported the openly anti-immigrant Law and Justice Party at last October's general election; or thousands of Slovaks who attended a mass rally against immigration in Bratislava last month; or thousands of Italians, mostly Northern League supporters, who gathered for the same purpose in Rome on January 28.

In June 2007 I was received at the Vatican by Mgr. (now Cardinal) Pietro Parolin, who was at that time Undersecretary of State for Relations with States. (In August 2013 Pope Francis elevated then-Archbishop Parolin to the post of Secretary of State). As might be expected, I had to pass through several checkpoints with metal detectors and other paraphernalia of strict border security. I have no reason to doubt that the friendly but efficient Swiss guards manning those “walls” and preventing the entry of uninvited strangers were good Christians.

Honor thy father and thy mother

"How One Must Live to Be Truly Happy..."

Editor's note: Often we expect of others that which we do not do ourselves. A good example of this is that we demand respect from our children, yet in turn are disrespectful of our own parents. Yet the Fifth Commandment- "Honor thy father and thy mother" - pertains not only to little children but to adults as well. Some useful advice concerning this matter is contained in a brochure printed in Russia in 1912, entitled "How One Must Live to Be Truly Happy." Such brochures were distributed to pilgrims visiting monasteries as "missionary leaflets." Below we offer an excerpt from the aforementioned leaflet. Let us apply these wise words to our own lives:

Do you want to live in such a way that all may be well with you on earth? Do you desire longevity and good success in all things? Then hold your tongue from evil, as you are told by the Prophet David. In God's Law it is said: **"Honor thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee and that thy days may be long on earth."** Then dare not, my brother, utter a single unkind word to your parents. Rather console them in everything. Provide them not only with things necessary for life, but always speak to them with all kindness, with full deference. Do this and it will be pleasant for you to live; you will be filled with cheer and all anxiety will be far from you.

Thus, man, seek happiness not according to your flawed rationale; do not try to achieve it in your own way, but rather do this in the way that God has indicated, the way that the Prophets and Apostles, filled with wisdom, teach. Do not think that your happiness depends upon the acquisition of visible, temporal things or that you need to labor endlessly to achieve this. No! Your true treasure is so close to you, right there by the stove - it is your parents, or perhaps your feeble grandparent. Dare not consider them a burden, but rather as your genuine fortune. Recall who it was that worked so hard for you, and fed you when you were still small.

Who would carry you around on their arms when you did not even know how to crawl? Who tolerated stench from you and, for more than a year, cleansed and washed you from it? Who went sleepless for nights when you were ill and shed so many tears for you? Think about all this, my brother; and also, who was it that gave you this life? Who did God use as the tool with which to grant you numberless blessings? Is it not your only true and greatest benefactors on this earth - your parents, from whom you so often turn away from as something totally useless? Man! Fear God and honor your father and mother! Dare not inflict sorrow by your words. Honor them as if they were your king. These benefactors of yours have earned great mercy from you, if only because they granted you this life ...

And you, you regret that your parents have now departed from this life and that you had treated them so poorly. All is not lost. Things can be corrected. Let not a day go by without your prayer to God for them. Let not a Sunday go by without your offering a prayer in God's church for their blessed repose. And let not a week go by that you do not do some charitable deed for someone in need, in memory of your departed parents. During their life you were unkind to them, but you can bring them even greater good now. Pray for them continually and perform charitable works for them as often as possible. They needed you while they lived. Now they need your care for them all the more.

If your parents are still alive, most of all beware of not causing them any grief. If they tell you something for your edification with which you do not fully agree, be silent, and do not become angry with them. Better yet, say a prayer for them. Do this and you will be happy and long-lived not only in this life, but you will be able to inherit blessedness in the life to come as well. May the Lord grant you wisdom in this.

*Translated from a "Holy Trinity Missionary Leaflet" by Archpriest Gregory Naumenko,
Orthodox Life Vol. 62 NO.1*