



## *Fire & Light*

### **St. Symeon Orthodox Church**

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**October 30, 2016**

**Hieromartyr Zenobius & his sister,  
the Martyr Zenobia (285)**

**Apostles Tertius, Mark, Justus & Artemas of the 70**

As a pilot calls on winds and  
a storm-tossed mariner looks  
homeward, so the times call on  
you to win your way to God.  
As God's athlete, be sober-  
the stake is immortality and  
eternal life.

~ St. Ignatius of Antioch (1<sup>st</sup> C)



**Many Years ! ~ Newly Illumined Alexander, Renee, & children Julia and Elena!**

**Wed. Nov. 2 6:30pm Akathist to St. John of San Francisco**

➤ **NO VESPERS – Saturday, November 5**

† "The words 'hallowed be Thy name' could well be understood in the sense that God is hallowed by our perfection. In other words, when we say 'hallowed be Thy name' to Him what we are really saying is 'Father, make us such as to deserve knowledge and understanding of how holy You are, or at least let Your holiness shine forth in the spiritual lives we lead.' And this surely happens as men 'see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven' (cf. Mt. 5:16)." ~ **St. John Cassian** (4<sup>th</sup> C)

### **THE CHURCH AND THE CROSS ~ Fr. Stephen Freeman**

I would start, as an Orthodox boy, with the fact that everyone who is Orthodox has agreed to "deny himself, take up his cross and follow Christ." The ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church, the Pillar and Ground of Truth, is found precisely in its weakness and is found there because God wants it that way. If salvation means loving my enemies like God loves His enemies, then I am far better served by my weakness than my excellence. If humility draws the Holy Spirit, then my weakness is far more useful than any excellence I may possess.

The Orthodox Church has perhaps the weakest ecclesiology of all, because it depends, moment by moment, on the love and forgiveness of each by all and of all by each. Either the Bishops of the Church love and forgive each other or the whole thing falls apart. "Brethren, let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess: Father, Son and Holy Spirit." These are the words that introduce the Creed each Sunday, and they are the words that are the bedrock of our ecclesiology.

We live in a wondrous age of the Church. Having suffered terrible blows at the hands of the Bolsheviks, we were smashed into jurisdictions (they don't really start until the 1920's), and often turned on one another in our rage. Today, the Bolshevik has been consigned "to the dustbin of history." Moscow and the Russian Church Outside of Russia have gathered at the Lord's Table together. We still have the specter of a powerful Patriarch of Constantinople bumping into a powerful Patriarch of Moscow here and there ... But in each and every case the only ecclesiology that will work, that will reveal the Church to be the Pillar and Ground of the Truth will be an ecclesiology of the Cross: mutual forgiveness and abiding love. This will be the Church's boast: that it became like Christ in all ways; or it will have no boast at all.

## ***This and That***

### **On Darwin - St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1913)**

Darwin created an entire system according to which life is a struggle for existence, a struggle for the strong against the weak, where those that are conquered are doomed to destruction. This is already the beginning of a bestial philosophy, and those who come to believe in it wouldn't think twice about killing a man, assaulting a woman, or robbing their closest friend – and they would do all this calmly, with a full recognition of their right to commit their crimes.

For half a century, the U.S. Supreme Court has systematically de-Christianized and paganized American society and declared abortion and homosexual marriage constitutional rights. Where did these unelected jurists get the right to impose their views and values upon us, and remake America in their own secularist image? Was that really the Court's role in the Constitution? - Patrick Buchanan

Solzhenitsyn writes: "Socialism of any type leads to the destruction of the human spirit." It warns of the nascent totalitarianism lurking in the heart of socialism.... It is difficult to rebut the shallow moral appeals of the socialist. These moral arguments appeal to the young because they are inexperienced. Who can be against the eradication of poverty? This ignorance is aided and abetted by the tenured class (college professors) who presume their paychecks appear as a divine right and conclude the greedy withhold the largess from others. - Fr. Johannes Jacobse

### **On Common Prayer ~ Fr. Sergei Sveshnikov**

Since the times of the Early Church, Christians have been very discriminate about their prayer and in whose company they choose to pray. Already in the Apostolic Canons (Canon 65, for example), a document arguably dating back to the end of the second century, both lay people and clergy are prohibited from praying with heretics under the threat of excommunication. Apostolic Canon 45 mandates: "Let any Bishop, or Presbyter, or Deacon that merely joins in prayer with heretics be suspended..." Similarly, Canon 33 of the Council of Laodicea (ca. 363-364 A.D.) says that "one must not join in prayer with heretics and schismatics." Yet common prayer is one of the central goals of the contemporary ecumenical movement, including the ecumenical dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. Seemingly in defiance of the ancient canons, Catholic and Orthodox hierarchs have routinely joined each other in prayer, to the joy of the proponents of such practices and to the dismay of opponents.

... There is another point of view: if prayer is viewed not simply as locution or interlocution, but as an experience that is transformative for the devotee, even as a way or a mode of life, then it becomes easier to understand why those who doubt each other's orthodoxy are so cautious about praying together. It is not the risk of accidentally addressing the "wrong" god that becomes central to warnings against praying with heretics, but the risk of being influenced by a way and a mode of life with which one may disagree, in other words, it is the risk to one's spiritual health. †

"The World is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-Christian mentality. The experiment will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide." - T. S. Eliot

Emory University English professor Mark Bauerlein writes in his book "The Dumbest Generation": Tradition "serves a crucial moral and intellectual function. ... People who read Thucydides and Caesar on war, and Seneca and Ovid on love, are less inclined to construe passing fads as durable outlooks, to fall into the maelstrom of celebrity culture, to presume that the circumstances of their own life are worth a Web page." - Walter Williams

## **Much Talk About Love (Part 1)**

**~ A Conversation with "Fr. Maximus" (Metropolitan Athanasios of Cyprus) on love with author Kyriacos Markides and some friends in the book *Inner River* (pps. 262-277)**

"There is much talk about love these days. All human beings yearn for it," Fr. Maximos commented. He paused for a moment and, in a humorous tone, continued. "Love and peace are fashionable topics of conversation nowadays."

"They're both in short supply," Lavros quipped.

"People have turned love and peace into slogans. But let it be so," Fr. Maximos added. "It's good to be preoccupied with such meanings, even as slogans. Let's say it is a step forward, even when we contemplate love in the abstract."

"However, love as it is taught by Christ and as the Ecclesia (Church) understands it through the experiences of the holy elders and apostles is not a simple sentiment. It does not have the same meaning as saying, 'I love so and so,' or 'I love my friends' or my students or my wife, my children, or even 'I love the whole world.' These are human sentiments that are, of course, manifestations of an integral part of our deepest nature."

"We are made for love," Lavros noted.

"Yes, but not only are we made for love. We are love! It is so because God is love. John the theologian unambiguously states this in the Gospel: 'Beloved, let us love one another,' he says, 'for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love' [1 John 4:7-8]. Therefore we are love because we are icons of God. A human being through Grace has what God has in His very essence."

"It is important to clarify something here," Fr. Maximos continued. "God is love, but love is not God."

"I don't see the difference," Lavros stated.

"There's a huge difference. For us God is the Person who is love. Love, however, is not a person. In worldly ways of understanding, love often becomes a form of idolatry. It becomes God. We say, for example, 'Love is everything. Love is above everything else.'"

"Well, isn't it?" I asked.

"Of course it is. But we forget that it is God Who is love and not the other way around."

"This could be confusing," Emily interjected.

"Look. What a human being really searches for is God. It is in God and in his or her relationship with God that a person will find real joy and real peace and all those things described by St. Paul as the fruits of the Holy Spirit, including love. When we are graced by the fruits of the Spirit, we feel complete. We lack nothing. But it is important to remember that what we truly search for in our lives is God and not the fruits of the Spirit."

"It's easy for someone to assume that there is no difference," said Stephanos, who like Erato had been mostly quiet.

"Let me clarify. Our real objective is not joy, or peace, or self-control, or love, or any other fruit mentioned by Paul. Our objective is God. Everything else is a consequence of our relationship with God. Do you follow?"

"To reach God I must exercise self-control and temperance."

Fr. Maximos continued. "I must put in enormous effort to learn how to truly love. I must struggle for equanimity. When I unite with God, all these qualities that I formerly had to relentlessly work to acquire come effortlessly. They are now natural by-products of my relationship with God."

"For example, there will be times when you become angry or upset. What is important is to struggle so that you don't allow anger to control you or dominate you. You must struggle not to let wickedness, hatred, agitation, and the like strangle you and push you in a direction to do or say things that are unbecoming of you, things that you don't want, that are the opposite of love. Let's say this personal struggle is an instrument, a step that will lead us to God."

"So again, when we meet God, that which we could previously attain only after valiant effort emerges naturally, without any effort. In this God-realized state, we do not habitually allow anger or malice to enter our hearts. We don't get agitated, we don't get angry, we don't get upset. All such states wither away. They belong to our past."

"But as you mentioned earlier, at the highest state of our spiritual development we may get angry without falling into sin," I said.

"Exactly. We can mobilize the powers of our soul naturally. That is, when we reach God, we have mastery over the gift of anger, which God planted in our heart for us to resist evil. As we said before, anger is very important in its natural state. It is a God-given power of the soul. But anger must never be mixed with egotistical passions. It must not be used against fellow human beings but rather against the temptation that threatens to cut us off from God. In short, anger must never undermine love. The only legitimate anger is the type that could help us establish ourselves in Truth and cement our relationship with God. It is the kind of anger that should be directed only against our destructive passions."

"But couldn't someone assume that the inability to experience anger may in fact be a sign of apathy and indifference?" Emily asked.

"This is a total misunderstanding of what is meant here. I should marshal all the powers of my soul to free myself from lowly passions. And that includes not only anger but love as well."

"Love!?"

"Definitely love. Let me explain. Love is the grandest power of the soul. That is why we must channel it properly; free from egotism."

"I assumed all along that love, by definition, is free from egotistical passions," I interjected.

"Not necessarily. Love can get severely distorted if energized while under the dominance of lowly passions."

"How so?"

{to be continued}

## THE MODEL OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PRAYER

By St. Philaret the Confessor, Metropolitan of New York (+1985).



For Orthodox Christians, the model of prayer is, of course, the "Our Father" (the "Lord's Prayer"). If we look at its composition and content, we see that, externally, it is divided into three parts: invocation, seven petitions, and a glorification. In its inner content, it can be divided into three common parts: the main one, which encompasses an invocation and the first three petitions; the petition about daily bread; and, three

petitions about our personal sins.

What is the foremost thing about which a Christian must pray? About that goal for which we must strive most of all: the Kingdom of God and His Truth. We see that this is the first part of the prayer. In appealing to God as the Heavenly Father, an Orthodox Christian testifies that our true fatherland is not on earth, but in heaven. *Our abode is in the heavens*, the Apostle firmly says.

In this appeal to the Father, an Orthodox Christian prays that God's name be hallowed, both in the personal life of each of us and in human history. It is especially hallowed when we Orthodox Christians, through the example of our own lives, lead unbelievers to glorify the name of our Heavenly Father. Further, we pray that the Kingdom of God be manifested on earth.

Observing life, we see in it a constant struggle between two principles: light and darkness, truth and falsehood, good and evil. When we see this, we cannot but pray that there will be a victory of light over darkness and that there will be a triumph of God's Kingdom—the kingdom of Truth and Good.

In the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God's will be fulfilled in man's life in the same way that it is fulfilled in the Heavenly world. The Christian conscience is aware and firmly convinces us that not only is it our duty, but it is real wisdom and the truth of life to submit to God's will. The Heavenly Father knows what is beneficial and necessary for each one of us, and through His infinite love and goodness, wishes us good and salvation even more than we desire it for ourselves. Therefore, Apostle Peter says, *Cast all your cares on Him; for He cares for you.* (1Pet 5:7).

The fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer is the only one which deals with bodily needs. We also turn to God and ask for all that is necessary for bodily life.

The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer concerns forgiveness of sins. In this petition, as elsewhere in His teaching, our Saviour makes it clear that an indispensable precondition of our receiving forgiveness of sins from God is our own forgiveness of our neighbors. But how often this petition is spoken falsely! We read, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*, while in reality, we neither forgive nor forget, but are offended and conceal vexation in our heart, and even a desire for revenge. Therefore, each time a Christian repeats this petition, he must consider whether he has forgiven his enemies and offenders. If not, how can he expect forgiveness from God for himself?

The two last petitions, the sixth and seventh ones, speak of one thing: the causes of sin. At first we ask that its embryos be removed from us, that is, that we be delivered from enticements and temptations, and then that we be delivered from the evil one, that is, from the root of all sins, Satan. People usually fear external misfortunes: failures, illnesses, poverty, etc. Christianity teaches us to be more fearful for our immortal soul. *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot harm the soul*, our Lord said, *but rather fear the one who can destroy the body and the soul...* Concerning external misfortunes, particularly trials and persecutions endured for the Faith, our Lord said to those who suffer them, *Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in the heavens.*

It is not external misfortunes and poverty that the Orthodox Christian must fear, but rather he must fear his own sins and falls. Everyone knows how much we become accustomed to sinning, literally sinning at each step and at each moment of our life. Sin is a violation of the Truth of God's Law, and the result of sin is suffering and grief. The Lord's Prayer instills in our hearts a great aversion to these spiritual evils, so that while humbly confessing our weakness and inclination toward sin, we ask God to preserve us from falling into sins and to deliver us from the evil master of sin—the devil.

At the end of these seven petitions, there has been added a solemn glorification of God's power, authority and glory.<sup>(†)</sup> This glorification of God's grandeur contains a filial expression of unwavering and clear conviction that everything we ask for will be given to us from the love of the Heavenly Father: for His is *the kingdom and the power and the glory, unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer is not the only prayer of glorification, however. There are prayers which are purely and simply glorifications, such as *Praise the name of the Lord* or *Holy, Holy, Holy...* We do not use them as often, but they are representative of the endings of our prayers, especially in the Divine Services. Prayers of glorification must be seen as

especially elevated, for in them, we express Christian love for God and bow before the Most High.

The third aspect of prayer is thanksgiving. Quite understandably, a Christian who loves God and knows of His love, mercy and benefits cannot but experience feelings of thanksgiving in his heart. The most important prayer of thanksgiving is the most important Divine Service—the Holy Liturgy. Its main part, referred to as the *Thanksgiving (Eucharistic) Canon* begins with the words, *We thank the Lord...* And the pure, bloodless sacrifice, a sacrifice of truth, a sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ which is given us in the Holy Communion, is fulfilled by Christ Himself, by His Grace and almighty power, and it is only received by us, with a devotion of thankful love. This is why in the most important moments of the Liturgy, the priest solemnly exclaims, *Thine Own of Thine Own, we offer to Thee, in behalf of all and for all*, while the faithful respond with the hymn of thanksgiving, *We hymn Thee, we praise Thee, we give thanks to Thee, O our God...*

† † †

[\*]The words, *For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory...* are not part of the Lord's prayer as such, but a liturgical response to it, included by the Evangelist. The fact that it appears in the Gospel shows how old the Liturgy is.



**P**ray as often as possible. Try to feel compunction and to weep, and you will see how much you will be relieved from thoughts and grief.

**P**rayer is a conversation of man with God. He who prays with a broken and humbled spirit is filled with divine gifts and blessings—that is, with joy, peace, comfort, illumination, and consolation—and he, too, becomes blessed. Prayer is a doubled-edged sword that slays despair, saves from danger, assuages grief, and so on. Prayer is a preventative medicine for all diseases of soul and body.

**B**e extremely careful with your imagination. Do not accept any image, because it will become an idol that you will worship. A wandering mind is a shameless bird and paints the most grotesque images: it enters into the depths of our neighbor's conscience and depicts his secret and hidden things. Immediately destroy the image with the prayer as soon as it begins to form. The more you delay, the more you will toil and suffer later.

By Elder Ephraim of Philotheou  
From "Counsels from the Holy Mountain"

## IN HIS SERVICE...

*From the sermon of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd (new martyr) at his consecration as bishop on March 15, 1909. According to KGB archives, Metropolitan Joseph was shot with Metropolitan Cyril in Chimkent on November 7, 1937, on the eve of the Feast of the Holy Archangel Michael.*



**I**n this unique, exceptionally significant, and most sacred moment of my life, when the call of our Lord—*follow me*—has touched even my extreme unworthiness, both joy and trembling, both blessedness and suffering embrace my lowly soul. Before my mental gaze stand the choirs of holy apostles, the ranks of great hierarchs, the builders and disseminators of Orthodox Faith and Christ's Church on earth... From the simple to the highly-educated, from the greatly infirm to those strong and rich in the powers of soul—they have all offered and placed their life and all their strength on the altar of Christ's love, have given themselves as food to that sacred Fire of Christ by which the whole universe blazes in Grace.

For me, too, to touch this Grace-giving Fire; for me, too, to offer my feeble powers—or rather infirmities—to the altar of the Universal Church; for me, too, to place my life in the furnace of the Flame of Christ, to hear the Lord's call to serve such a great work of God and receive the possibility of answering this call with the labor of the highest Apostolic expression of love and devotion to the Sweetest Heavenly Hierarch.

Oh, how many grounds there are in this for joy! How sufficient this is to fill one with a feeling of unutterable heartfelt consolation and tender feeling! Yet, the source of such joy and consolation at the same time represents for me a source as well of an oppressive fear, of apprehensions, of heartfelt trouble and suffering. The beauty of the Apostles' feat, the beauty of the highest expression of love and devotion to the Savior, of the highest service of the Church of God on earth appear to my gaze not as mere words, but as true deeds, as the most living reality, outside all embellishments of thought and word.

And what labors, what ascetic feats, what sufferings has this reality not given us as an example, instruction, and fortification! Behold the bloody wounds on the bodies of the absolute prisoners of Christ's love, wounds lifted up with a meek prayer for their torturers upon their lips and with the shining of an unearthly joy in their faces! Behold all the horrors of persecution, torments, tortures—every kind and every endurance of death by means of which hell has attempted to unbalance the emissaries of the Crucified One, only deepening thereby its own defeat and disgrace!

## **The Holy Fathers on Thoughts (III)**

† He who wants to do something and cannot is, in the eyes of God who sees our hearts, as though he has done it. This should be understood as being so in relation to good and evil alike.

**St. Mark the Ascetic**

† If Moses had not received from God the rod of power, he would not have become god to pharaoh and would not have punished both him and Egypt. In the same way the mind, if it does not wield in its hand the power of prayer, will be unable to conquer sin and the powers of the enemy.

**St. Gregory of Sinai**

† If Moses was forbidden to approach the earthly burning bush until he had loosed his sandals from off his feet (Exodus 3:5), how can you not cast away from yourself every passionate thought when you wish to see Him, Who is above all feeling and thought, and to converse with Him?

**St Nilus of Mt Sinai, "153 Texts on Prayer"**

† If you wish to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth, always urge yourself to rise above sensory things and to cling with hope to God alone. Thus compelling yourself to turn inwards, you will meet principalities and powers, which wage war against you by suggestions in thoughts. If you overcome them by prayer and remain in good hope, you will receive Divine grace, which will free you from the wrath to come.

**St. Mark the Ascetic**

† If, then, you wish to behold and commune with Him who is beyond sense-perception and beyond concept, you must free yourself from every impassioned thought.

**Evagrius the Solitary, "On Prayer"**

† Just as it is impossible to cross the sea without a boat, so it is impossible to repulse the provocation of an evil thought without invoking Jesus Christ

**St. Hesychios, On Watchfulness And Holiness**

† Keep your mind from malicious thoughts of your neighbors, knowing that such thoughts are hurled by diabolical power, to keep your mind from your own sins and from seeking God.

**Abba Elias of Egypt**

† My brother, do not lose heart at the thoughts which attack you; for it is the beginning of the contest. Learn from a rain lake, because when it rains and the blessing of water is collected in the lake, in the beginning the water is troubled; but as time goes on it becomes more limpid. So, beloved, do not lose heart, for it is written, Streams of iniquity troubled me. And in another psalm it says, For my soul has been filled with evils, and my life has drawn near to hell. And so it says, The Lord is my help, and I shall not fear what man will do to me. Therefore whenever an evil thought enters your mind, cry out with tears to the Lord, 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner, and pardon me, O lover of mankind. Lord, take to Evil One from us'.

**St Ephraim the Syrian**

† Observe your thoughts, and beware of what you have in your heart and your spirit, knowing that the demons put ideas into you so as to corrupt your soul by making it think of that which is not right, in order to turn your spirit from the consideration of your sins and of God.

**St. Gregory of Nyssa**

† He who prays often will escape temptation; but thoughts will trouble the heart of the careless.

Prayer is the laying aside of thoughts.

~ **Evagrius the Solitary, On Prayer**

FOR CONSIDERATION:  
NOTES WRITTEN BY ST JOHN OF KRONSTADT (+1908)  
found in the library of Abbess Thaisia of Leushino (+1915)

The temple of God is a foundry, where rusty, sinful natures are melted down. It is a bath-house where filthiness of the flesh and spirit is washed away. It is a school for teaching crude and wandering souls. It is a sun that enlightens and vivifies those in darkness and deadens sins. The temple of God is a hospital in which spiritual wounds are healed. The temple of God is a sanctuary in which the uncleanness of sin is taken away and our souls and bodies are sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit and Sacramental services. The temple of God is a paradise on earth in which we are fed with immortal, incorruptible food — the Body and Blood of Christ. The temple of God is a mystical Mountain of Sinai from which the true Lawgiver, Christ our God, constantly announces to us His will. In the Church of God and the Heavenly Kingdom are mysteriously mingled all the members of the Body of Christ, both the heavenly and the earthly. . . . Here is the full Church of the first-born, for here are the forefathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, hierarchs, martyrs, the choir of monk-saints and all the righteous ones who sing and together with us glorify the only God, our Savior and Life-Giver.

"The Church of God is holy as you are holy. . . . Do you not know that you are a temple of God?"

All of you, my beloved brethren, came to this temple to repent, to throw off from yourselves the yoke of sins, to be at peace with God, reconciled with God and your conscience, to receive peace in your souls, freedom, lightness of soul, renewal, the power to lead a virtuous life. But what is sin, that darkens all of us, that fogs us up, that shames us, dooms us? This is the smiting of the devil, that evil spirit that has lost its original goodness and light through pride and resistance to God and complete, unimaginable evil. Sin is a vicious pain, a wound that covers the whole of humanity, a running wound that carries a foul smell over all mankind. It's a frightful decomposition that rots gradually, and sometimes with excessive speed, the whole of mankind. So it was in the time of Noah, of Abraham and Lot, and so it is today. It is embryonic death, threatening to turn into the outward death of souls. Against this sickness, against this plague, against this open wound, this decomposition, there is only one remedy: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and sincere repentance. The wisest people, most highly educated, strongest and greatest in the sight of the world, though having performed many great deeds could not conquer themselves - just as also contemporary, secular and intelligent people, great in the sight of the world, cannot conquer sin without faith in Christ. † † †

*"[St. Paisios responds to the question: 'What happens when a person is not at all aware of having pride?']:* Then the spiritual laws work. One becomes prideful; he falls and is humbled. He becomes prideful again, again he falls and again he is humbled. And this situation goes on for his entire life: pride - humility, pride - humility. Such humility is not a virtue. It is a result of the spiritual laws that are at work. In other words, one is humbled against his will and without any spiritual gain. A kind of stagnation occurs: one is only given the opportunity to realize that something is wrong."