

FROM THE BISHOP'S DESK:

Writings of Vladyka SERAPHIM of Canada



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All Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

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Introduction

As editor of Alexander Press, it gives me great pleasure to present the first volume of the writings of our beloved Shepherd, His Grace Bishop SERAPHIM. It is hoped that this collection of his words might be a blessing to the reader.

Grateful acknowledgment is made of the importance of the feature section of our *Canadian Orthodox Messenger*, "From the Bishop's Desk," from which the majority of Vladyka's words presented in the thematic section is taken. The remainder of the book is comprised almost entirely of various articles, sermons, and transcripts of addresses that Bishop SERAPHIM wrote or gave in the course of his nearly fifteen years as ruling Bishop of Canada.

This volume of the writings of His Grace is published with the hope that other ones will one day follow. Deep gratitude is extended to all who worked on this first compilation and to Mother Raphaela of the Monastery of the Holy Myrrhbearers, Otego, New York, for her invaluable formatting suggestions.

Dr. John Hadjinicolaou
Alexander Press
Holy Martyr Haralambos, 2004

Foreword

This collection of writings was compiled by the grace of God with hardly more than a single conversation with the author. *Would they really be of help to someone?* was Vladyka's brief response to the suggestion that his words be gathered. There was a blessing to proceed if it seemed useful, but it was obvious that neither suggestions nor editorial advice would be forthcoming. That was it. Humility closed the subject quickly. We must not pause over our own words, assessing their impact. There is always much to do; time is short.

Year by year, Vladyka SERAPHIM has devoted himself to his flock in Canada and we have benefited from his care. By the Lord's grace, many new missions and parishes, helps, educational initiatives and monastic communities have risen, especially in the last fifteen years. Love is being caught. Truly this growth rests upon the foundation laid by our missionaries and builders of Orthodoxy in the past. But it is combined with capable leadership in the Palestinian shepherd style: the shepherd leads where he wants his sheep to go—or tries to. It is right that this leader is known affectionately and personally across Canada as Vladyka, not as Bishop-administrator, but as loving shepherd in the way of the first bishops of the church.

Vladyka sows his words as one whose ancestors farmed the fertile Norwegian fjord lands, broadcasting seed with a firm, practised and natural hand. His words are direct and unpretentious. There is joy in his swing.

As the reader will note, the essence of the writing—love and Holy Communion—has been placed in the heart of the thematic section. The strong teleological thread of his words, as expressed in his frequent use of *in the end* has been preserved, and there are many samples of his lively humour.

Vladyka ARSENY Archives
Fair Haven

balance

The Orthodox Way is all about balance—not extremes, but balance.

It is this sense of balance for us that reflects our Hebraic inheritance of unity in a human being of body and soul, of the material and spiritual, the mutual importance of both, which influences everything about us.

We can beautifully serve the Lord liturgically, but desperately neglect Him in our neighbour. We can richly adorn the Temple of the Lord, but neglect altogether to give alms and to care for Him in the poor and needy.

Anything in the Christian life that is tilted to one side or another is out of balance and is therefore in need of correction.

Everything has to be in its place and in its order. Who is first? Who and what is first? Doing the will of the Saviour? Or paying attention to details, important as those details may be? What is important is always putting the Saviour first.

our history

Our Orthodox Church came to Canada by God's will and the cooperation of faithful people.

Those who did not know they had such a calling became founders of the Church in Canada, simply because they knew where Christ stood in their lives—first.

Here at home we are perhaps not so very remote from real saints as we may sometimes let ourselves think.

There have been outstanding men and women who have shone with the light of the love of Christ in our Canadian land. Perhaps we are simply too distracted to remember, or to see it in our midst.

That work of the past is still close in time to us, and the memory of many of these holy persons and even martyrs, is still alive. It is not yet too late. Let us strive to recover our awareness...

Let us pray that we be found even half as faithful as our ancestors, these God-loving founders.

community

all is connected

We are formed by the depth and intensity of the life-giving love of God that makes all of our relationships personal. It makes the joys and sorrows of all our fellow humans and all creation affect us as well.

All of creation is interwoven with love.

In the mystery of Communion, all is interrelated.
All is interconnected.

salt and yeast

We are still only at the very beginning of doing what we should in order to live out our life of love in Christ Jesus.

It is this work of love that enables us to become the salt and yeast as Orthodox Christians in this country, and to be life-bearers in Christ wherever we are and whatever we do.

inner unity

There is a strong connexion between inner unity and community. Inner unity with the Lord produces community. There have always been those in our midst who have helped to create community by simply being.

community

our love demands action

Remember that our Orthodoxy is not just some kind of spirituality. It is the whole of life lived according to the Gospel of the Love of Christ. It must have practical fruit.

Our love for Jesus Christ demands action. Loving Him, we must likewise love others as He loves us and them.

No matter how much we may contribute in various ways to charitable institutions and organisations, we are still obliged to do good, loving and life-giving things to the various persons the Lord sends to us, person by person.

To be available and useful to the Lord... this is what is important.

In the love of our Lord and Saviour, let us be as He tells us. He came not to be served but to serve. Such is the fundamental expression of Christian love. And it is not held high by fancy talk, by eloquent preaching or by clever teaching, unless it is demonstrated in concrete acts of love in everyday life, minute by minute.

We can't talk about loving God. We have to do something about it.

missionary vision

We are, in fact, citizens not of this world, but of the Kingdom of God. As members of the Body of Christ, we are living here to be *fishers of human beings* and as pilgrims. And, as witnesses for Christ, we bring His Light into the darkness of the fallenness of our environment.

This is our missionary imperative, our Christian responsibility: to live in love, and to reveal Christ.

a living community

Each of us is not a member of a parish as one would be of a club but instead a member of a living community, the Body of Christ. This community is united in love with other communities under the bishop, who in Christ, embodies the unity of them all.

The bishop is the father of a large family and not an administrator. The diocese and bishop can be seen to be the same thing.



at Lintula Monastery

community

the calling of our Orthodox communities

The Church, as planted in every place on the earth, becomes an integral part of each place where she lives: Eastern Europe, Canada, Korea, Indonesia, India, Greece, Finland, Sweden, or Palestine. It is her responsibility to baptise every place and every culture where God plants her. This is how *our Mother Churches* came into being...

We are Orthodox Christians who, by God's grace, have been placed here in Canada—at this time and in this specific culture—to bring souls to Christ, in Him to find their salvation. To live out and to present to others, the Orthodox Christian faith in a way which addresses our Canadian culture. We are called to baptise Canada with the Orthodox faith!

If we are looking for peace and harmony in our communities, there must be more love and mutual trust in Christ.

priorities

The major element in need of correction is our arrangement of priorities and sense of direction.

Many of us seem to be propelled in these days by one, the other, or both—intellectual pride and fear. Forgetting that our relationship of love of, in, and with God is the first priority, we have a tendency to spend too much time and energy on the intellectual aspect of theology.

We become triumphalistic and vainglorious about Orthodoxy. Or, in fear, we become legalistic and try to protect Orthodoxy from any possible distortion by applying rules. Perhaps we are proud of our lively liturgical life but fearful of what has happened elsewhere and we kill it by becoming obsessed with the fine print of a typicon.

remembering the poor

It is the person at our very door, like Lazarus, who demands our attention and loving ministry in Christ. Wherever we are and whatever we have, by God's grace and mercy, been given in life, it is our obligation in the love of Christ to remember the orphaned of the world...Always in the Gospel there is the expectation of personal contact.

The Christian must learn to look for and to see Christ in every person without making distinctions as the world does, and lovingly learn to serve and nurture that person as the good neighbour, the Samaritan, did.

Even in our interaction with so-called ordinary people, we have so much work to do, even to recover much of what once was. By this, I mean direct work with the poor and underprivileged and homeless. If we examine our own interior response to the word *charity*...it is easy enough, by making a tax-deductible donation, *to pay someone else* to look after the homeless, hungry, needy, maimed, sick, widowed and poor. Is this the way of the Gospel? No.

The general wisdom is that it is better to give alms and not to ask questions. It is really a fine line between protecting and passing judgement. Pray that the money be used according to God's will and in a non-tempting way.

renewal

Spiritual renewal can be found, I believe, only in taking up the Cross and following Christ in the communion of love. He said, *I am the Way*... (St. John 14: 6) and we must live in that Way.

If we are hoping for and asking for spiritual renewal, we cannot begin by thinking of the spirit alone. God did not make us angels, as bodiless minds. He created us human beings with both body and spirit, and we must treat ourselves and understand ourselves as one

community

whole. Our salvation involves our whole selves. We must not divide ourselves.

May the Holy Spirit refresh you.

local custom

An old monastic piece of wisdom is *don't bring your typikon to another monastery*. The fact is that each monastery has its own way of going about its life and so does each parish. If we go somewhere else, we have to be prepared ahead of time to behave according to the customs of that place whether we like their particular customs or not, because we are, after all, only visitors, and we must avoid abusing the hospitality of our brothers and sisters.

So, for instance, if my parish is one that does not concern itself about informal clothing in church on Sunday, that does not mean I should assume that it would not lead my brothers and sisters into temptation if I appear dressed quite informally in a parish I visit. The same thing goes for covering heads, and the like. What is important is to appear before the Lord with the best clothing I have, and not to concern myself with others.

pilgrimages

Tours do not allow for our meeting the Church, meeting our brothers and sisters. Tours pass one quickly around the scenery, allowing one to taste a little food and culture and then to depart.

Let us rather begin pilgrimages instead. Let us go to the holy places ...let us there meet our spiritual kinsfolk and by this meeting not only encourage them in faithfulness, but allow them to strengthen us as well.

We need their help!

daily living

a burning light

Our Father, St. Tikhon, said *the light of Orthodoxy is not lit for a small circle of people...* That is exactly the direction of the Gospel. But, my beloved, for this light to be seen and to give life, this light of Orthodox Christianity must be lit in us. It is in us that the light of Christ must be held high for all to see.

For everyone, this love of God is caught, not taught, although some teaching helps to inform, direct and refine it. This love is the all-encompassing characteristic of our relationship with Christ, just as it is that which develops our distinctive personalities and personal characteristics. This love gives strength to face every hardship, provides hope, overcomes temptation, overcomes sin and lives in Christ's freedom.

spiritual basics

A return to spiritual basics is very much in order for us all at this time in our progress in North America. Without these real basics, we will never become for this continent what I believe God has prepared for us. They are the basics of daily and regular prayer, personal and corporate; of systematic and regular, daily reading of the Scriptures; of reading commentaries on the Scriptures by various Fathers, according to our ability; of regular and serious preparation for and receiving of Holy Communion; of regular making of confession; of putting into practice what we preach; of living in love and forgiveness, and in harmony with our neighbour, even if he or she is a hostile one; and of living without condemning anyone. This return to basics is an attempt to recover and live an Orthodox and harmonious relational perspective on all of life, in relationship with our Triune God. This is radical, and this is life.

daily living

daily joy

We ought, with dear St. Seraphim of Sarov, to be able and anxious every day to say, *Christ is risen, my joy!* This is, with *Alleluia* and *Holy, Holy, Holy*, the language of the Kingdom: praise and worship of God!

fuelled by repentant love

The practical details of daily life are important, but they are empty unless they are fed by the principle of repentant love in Christ.

As Orthodox Christians, we have the great responsibility to show everyone around us, by our example, who Christ is, and how His love works for life and health of body and soul. We cannot do so unless we have learned how to love as He loves us, and to forgive as He forgives us. It comes from our depths in emergencies, and it is clear evidence of that image of God that is within us. But it has to go far beyond emergencies, into daily living.

not conformed to the world

We have to be different from the world, from the society in which we live. We can no longer be passive followers of the ever-changing fads around us, passive absorbers of advertising and sales propaganda. We must become leaders—leading others to Christ. We must be the examples of strength and purity others need and desire.

it is not easy

It is not easy to follow Christ and to reveal Him in this world. After all, He Himself said, *he who would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross, and follow me*. May the Lord who is God and has revealed Himself to us enable us to do just that.

cultural tightrope

We walk a tightrope as Orthodox Christians in our culture. We want to be Canadians and to celebrate all the Canadian holidays. How could it be otherwise if we love this land, either having been born here or having adopted it by choice? Still, we are Orthodox Christians also, and that, in itself, makes us stand out as different, and this difference is a part of our evangelical witness to those around us. It is not the difference of wagging the accusing finger, but the testimony that the Way of the Lord is better, and worth the struggle.

Reflected in today's secularism is the primarily western pre-occupation with the mind and categorisation. The result of this is the complete fragmentation of lives.

There is such a dangerous tendency in our life nowadays to live in the head, to be cerebral, and to compartmentalise. It is inevitable that we face this struggle, since it is the character of the society in which we live. We swim in this water, and it is extraordinarily difficult not to become just like water—all the more if one be a convert, and has come from that water. But this school of fish, of which we are a part, is not given to swim in this water. It is given to clean this water, and to transform this water.

Equally difficult is the personal isolation in individualism that promotes our inclination to be, in delusion, so-called *captains of our own ships and would-be saviours of our own souls*.

daily living

avoiding materialism

We have fallen into such insatiable acquisitiveness, we have contributed to the mistreatment of human beings and of the ecology of the world. Worse, we have thereby actively removed food from the table of the hungry everywhere in order to maintain our demands. This kind of awareness is particularly important, not only because it is true, but because it can help us always to ask *do I really need this?*

Once we have seen through the lies of materialism, acquisitiveness and consumerism, we can begin to acknowledge that we don't actually need everything we are told is a necessity, that we could live quite happily with much less, that we don't have to be driven by perpetual acquisition, that we are indeed not in any way *born to shop*.

We have become deeply materialistic in a negative way (although we are to be materialistic in a proper and positive way). And North America is making psychiatrists need psychiatrists because of the resulting heavy demand. The worst face of this is found in the way so-called scholars of this last century have reduced the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers to mere literature or philosophy, and then removed all that is essential to the Christian Way, because it does not otherwise fit our mould.

Truly in our Canadian comfort we have let a lot drift and fall away. But it is not too late. There is still time to appeal to the Lord to renew our hearts. May He hear our prayer and quickly do so!

being respectful

Respect for the elderly—and for those older than us in general—is almost a scarce commodity today. It was a strong characteristic of our Orthodox past, one that truly needs renewing in our day.

At the Divine Liturgy, one comes wearing respectful clothes. It is part of our offering. The principle to follow in these things is: we do not have dinner with the Queen in jeans!

simplicity

A great deal is accomplished simply by being together, praying together, eating together, and talking both formally and informally.

Simplicity does not deny technology; neither does the sense of balance. But its characteristic is that everything is kept in its proper order and place. It is a necessity of life in Christ.

We need to be with each other...it is part of expressing love, serving and learning trust.



Clergy Synaxis, 1991

daily living

an offering of love

None of us knows the far-reaching effects of the things we do as an offering of love to the Lord!

Living daily as Christians means that we carry Christ with us wherever we go and whatever we do, presenting Christ to everyone we meet. It means we bring our Lord's blessing to others, whoever they are, for all are His children. And it means that we are measured by others, and by God Himself, according to our faithfulness to Christ.

avoiding half-truths

There are many dangerous elements influencing the life and perception of modern Orthodox Christians. They are presenting themselves to us either in the form of pleasant half-truths, or as lies in disguise. One of these half-truths is romanticising the past. Especially in North America, with its short history and shorter memory, there is a tendency to believe in some sort of golden age either in the Eastern Roman Empire, popularly called Byzantine, or in Russia. In both cases there have been great bright lights, teachers of the Orthodox faith, but what is usually forgotten is that most of these great, exemplary Christian persons lived in a rather hostile environment, that St. John Chrysostom died in exile, that St. Paisii was a refugee, that St. Seraphim and the Optina elders were not so well received in their day. I believe that the bright lights came to be so because they were, in part, refined by opposition. They had to deny themselves, take up their Cross, and carry it daily (St. Luke 8:23).

People like to think that the old Roman Empire was totally Christian, or that the Russian Empire was totally Christian. It does not take much reading of history and literature to reveal a different reality. In fact, there has been no time and no place where all has been pleasant and peaceful for Orthodox Christians. We are but pilgrims here. The temptation to escape from painful reality leads many to create an imaginary golden past into which they try to retreat.

essence

Cultivating the essence of our life is the most important. What is this? It is love.

Where there is love, it brings everything else. Ask God for more love, doing everything that will enable love to develop more and more in your hearts.

People do not easily understand the Gospel at any time, in any century, in any society. The kind of selfless love that we are supposed to be trying to give in Christ is incomprehensible because everybody is used to something with strings attached. There are always strings attached, conditions and *ifs*, whereas we need to love as best we can without any conditions. That is the motivation: selfless, no-strings-attached service in love.

We are not Christians because of having agreed to some philosophical principle. We are Christians because God loves us, and we love Him. And we commit ourselves to this relationship. We will to love our Lord and Saviour, and our neighbours as ourselves, just as He loves us. And so, *commending ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God*, we all together support one another, encourage one another, nurture one another, pray for one another, and say for each and all that essential prayer, *Lord, have mercy*.

Love, then, is not so much emotion as it is work. And in our day, we Christians make this work more difficult because we tend to live far from each other.

At the heart of it, Holy Communion is about our relationship with Christ, being in love with Christ, being one with Christ, being alive in Christ. And we must always remember that the communion of selfless, life-giving love invites imitation.

The meaning of Communion can only be understood from the viewpoint of relationship: the personal relationship of a loving God

essence

with the human persons whom He has created and whom He wishes to nourish and maintain in His love, and our relationship with Him. All of this should profoundly affect every aspect of our life as we step out to meet people and events that will put our relationship with Christ to the test.

Life is begotten in love. But it doesn't stop there, for the Lord makes provision for His people, to see that His loving and personal relationship is maintained. He gives us the Divine Liturgy of His Body and His Blood in order to feed us and to maintain the unity and identity between Him and ourselves.

We must allow the Holy Spirit to work in us in order to renew and build up this relationship of love between Christ and ourselves. The way of the Orthodox Christian is not only an intellectual way; it is a way of love between us and Christ, of loving harmony with Christ. In harmony with Him, we lovingly and willingly obey His will.

Let us always bear in our hearts the admonition of our beloved St. Herman of Alaska: *From this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us love God above all and do His holy will.*

Whatever happens, we will be in Him, Who is our only Hope, the only One Who is true, the only One Who is really faithful to us.

It is the Holy Trinity Who is revealed to us—a community of Persons among Whom there is interaction and interrelationship. While this interrelationship is founded in love, it is not self-enclosed. It reaches out, creates life and invites a relationship of the Creator with the created.

Indeed, we insist on calling Christianity a religion when it is by definition not so but a movement, a Way, based on the relationship of love...

We should be encouraged to prepare ourselves soberly, and to receive of the wonderful provision that God gives us in Holy Communion. Let us truly taste and see how good the Lord is!

I have encountered many persons who lived in the manner of love-borne humility. They have been persons of every rank and order, from pious grandmother, grandfather, parent, child, mother, and father, through to monks, nuns, clergy and bishops. Humility is the foundation of everything, and makes everything possible in Christ. It makes it possible for us to respond in an inspired way to the too-rapid changes that clamour for our clear discernment in technology and moral turmoil. It makes it possible for us to learn how better to work together with the Lord, and not to be manipulators and engineers. It makes it possible for us to be patient while the Lord brings us slowly to that unity here which is necessary.

Humility is acquired through love. We can never love our Lord enough: we can never measure up to His love, to all that He has done for us.

What is required is perpetual forgiveness and patience. We cannot afford to hate anyone.

At times we receive not trickles of blessings, but torrents.

Let us always be thankful. Glory to God for all things!

May the Mother of God protect you as you follow her Son in love.

In this country there seems to be an increasing thirst for encountering Jesus Christ in the Orthodox Church. Obviously we must be able to do some very little to reveal the Lord, and He uses our meagre efforts to great advantage. However, in our sinful selfishness, we neglect a great deal of what He is constantly calling us to do - and chiefly acts of His love. We are now coming to Lent. Let us pray the Lord that He will enable us this Lent truly to repent. Let us ask Him to help us be truly fathers to our flocks, and to minister His love to His children. Let us strive to keep this Lent from being only ceremonial, but let the Lord work the work of His love in us. Let our forgiveness be real and full. Let us now in the Lenten Spring begin to live out the Beatitudes in action - the action of love touching those in need, healing the wounds, visiting the lonely. Let us this Lent let the Lord break through our own fears and faults so that we may be freed from those chains to do His will for the saving of souls and the building of His Kingdom.

With love in Christ
+ Seraphin
Bishop of Edmonton.

from a Lenten letter to clergy, February, 1990

deep within

repentance

Repentance is the daily determination to take up the Cross and follow Christ. It is making the Sign of the Cross on ourselves as we rise, and attempting with each passing day to become increasingly aware of the enabling of Christ's participation in every activity of our life.

Our ancestors knew about this, even without a theological education. They knew how to bless every activity and undertaking, and they tried to support each other in remembering to do this, even sometimes a bit roughly. For us, a necessary element of this renewal has to be found in these daily practical expressions of cultivating memory in our hearts of Christ's eternal presence.

We are all sinners in a hospital for sinners, sick in sin...our proper attitude is to be reflected in what we always say in the prayer before Communion: that *I am the first among sinners...*

Repentance is the hard part. Why? Because it means turning around from sin to righteousness. We turn from selfishness to unselfishness. We turn from rebellious independence from God to willing, loving obedience. We turn from exercising our will contrary to God's love and from a life filled with disorder, to willingly and lovingly uniting our will to His.

In repentance we may feel pain and sorrow and shed tears. But this is only a symptom of what is the essence. Repentance is a condition of the whole life, a state of being. Repentance is willingly turning away from evil, away from darkness, away from death, and turning instead to good, to light, to life.

deep within

For Orthodox Christians, the avenue of Confession offers precisely what is missing, and in the end also offers the possibility of real healing in Christ Jesus.... It is easy to see someone else's sins, but not so easy to see our own, nor to admit our own. That there might be lack of peace or harmony in any given community, family or relationship is not the fault of *someone else* alone.

It is possible for us, if we really want to be truly Orthodox Christians, to turn in repentance to the Lord more and more deeply...Let us pray for and with each other, support one another in our path of repentance...We turn from death to life.

I am the sinner.

our assurance in Christ

Our Orthodox Christian faith touches every aspect of our lives...there is nothing we do, nowhere we go, without Christ, or without His blessing and His protection. It is in drawing on this blessing that we will have strength to endure the daily struggles.

trust in God's help

We are not, in fact, in control of everything in our lives, and we alone cannot do or make everything. We need help from God.

Do not trust your feelings at any time. Test. Test. Test. To go by how you feel is not worth very much.

obedience

In harmony with Him, we lovingly and willingly obey His will. This is exactly the way of the Mother of God. In every part of her life, she said *yes* to God's will, even though it was not logical.

At the time of the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that she would bear a child. She asked how this could be. The Archangel answered not to worry: the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and everything would be all right. She accepted this and it came to be as the Archangel had said. The rest of her life was a life of obedience. Sometimes she even prepared the way for her Son, as in the marriage of Cana. She prepared His way by ordering the servants to do what He was going to ask them to do. We ourselves, like the Mother of God, should learn to be lovingly and willingly obedient to God's will.

The Orthodox Christian is called to a life of repentance: turning away from sinful self-service to doing God's will, from willful rebellion to a loving offering of obedience to Him; and from *doing my own thing* to being a good steward of His gifts and putting the needs of others before my own.

In relating to where we live, let us remember that even the Lord was born *in* Bethlehem. He was *from* Nazareth. We are called to bless the place where we are by our obedience, and by allowing our own transfiguration to develop in that place.

There is more grace than anyone knows in obedience.

deep within

battling anxiety

Some kind of disturbance comes...or there is some other kind of difficulty, and it produces anxiety in our hearts. Instead of keeping our eyes on the Lord like the Apostle Peter, we pay attention to the turmoil around and we start to sink into depression and anxiety and fear of what might happen. *I'm going to sink under all this weight of anxiety and I'm going to drown under the weight of everything!* We take our eyes off the Lord and forget what we are doing and forget Who He is to us and who we are to Him. The Lord, being merciful, usually will send someone to remind us that we should call to Him (because we are usually not as swift as the Apostle Peter to say quickly, *Lord, save me!*) When we get the reminder, then we might remember to call to Him and trust Him to pull us out of the trouble, whatever it is.

forgiveness

When we are hurt by others, intentionally or unintentionally, we must not hold a grudge, or keep remembering the pain over and over. This is the fallen way of the fallen world. We must, as we sing in the Beatitudes, pray for those who do wrong to us, and forgive them in Christ (and I do not claim that this is easy!). If we are ourselves ready to follow the Gospel path, it opens the way for others who find it difficult to begin.

It is inevitable that people get hurt. It is the recovery in Christ that is important, and the forgiveness.

prayer

For us, our work is clear—to beg of the Lord His mercy and of His Mother, compassion.

We must, as we sing in the Beatitudes, pray for those who do wrong to us...

No matter what assails you, say: *Help me, save me, Lord! Protect me, renew me in Your love!*

We all need to ask each other's prayers for support in our struggle in life to follow Christ. It is right for us to ask for prayer of our brothers and sisters.

Monastic elders often say the best prayer is *Kyrie eleison: Lord, have mercy*. This is a complete prayer of intercession.

In the lives of most of us...there are so many demands, there are not enough hours in a day to accomplish what demands attention. Even if the day were doubled, we could more than fill it. And so, what suffers primarily?...Of course, it is prayer...we try, of course, but we tend to think that if we don't do everything now, there will be trouble. And so, in forgetting the Lord, in neglecting to spend the necessary daily time with Him, in taking too much on our own shoulders, no matter how important, we finally accomplish much less, because we do not allow the Saviour to accomplish what He would in us.

As we are exhorted to fan the flame of loving desire for the Creator that is in everyone by our personal witness and service, we are also reminded, correctly, that intercessory prayer in love accomplishes wonders...

There is a sneaky way in which good intentions become slyly perverted. It is, ironically, through prayer requests. But we must be on guard when we pray for others. Curiosity about details can lead to our own downfall and bring us all too easily again to the field of gossip...we don't need to ask too many details when praying, and we don't need to compare notes with others who are praying. By

deep within

following this advice we keep away from the dark side of curiosity and again avoid this slippery access to the poison of gossip or idle talking. I have heard too many times of examples where sincere believers have slipped from compassion to curiosity and have inadvertently caused a brother or sister to fall.

Because we human beings have such a tendency to be forgetful and to be friends with sin, we delay and delay and delay. We say stupid things like: *Who am I for the Lord to bother with me? He has got better things to do than to worry about little me, so I won't disturb Him. I'll just carry on in my comfortable fear, my comfortable despair, my comfortable anxiety.* And then we say: *Why doesn't the Lord do something? Why doesn't something happen?* The Lord knows that I am in the middle of all of this so why doesn't He do something? But of course, I have not got around to asking. It is so long, so long that we delay, waiting to ask the Lord for help, to call out to Him and say: *Save me! Help me!* If we were behaving properly as Christians, we would be like the great saints and we would be where our first parents were before the fall. Our hearts would be daily and constantly reaching out to the Lord, asking Him to help us, to save us. But we try to solve the problem ourselves. We try to fix everything ourselves. We try to engineer everything ourselves instead of saying: *Help me, Lord! Save me, Lord!* What the Lord did for the Apostle Peter on the Sea of Galilee, He does and will do for you and for me. But we have to do our part. We have to ask Him.

The life of prayer has many faces.

Our focus, our attention must be upon the Lord, Who is our life. He is our centre, the very ground of our being. And prayer must be central in our lives. We get so busy and overwhelmed. Sometimes we must leave things undone, because prayer is more important.

pain

Many suffer because of stored-up pain. This, in itself, suggests the benefit of going regularly to Confession. By doing an honest interior clean-up, taking responsibility for our sins day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month we can perhaps avoid mid-life crises which result from accepting tempting lies and believing them and from hiding in fear. All this is darkness and we should be living in the Light of Jesus Christ.

In these days of self-help groups, there is an increasing awareness of the need for confession...but these self-help groups, though sometimes useful, do not take things far enough for real healing, because they are necessarily too general and all-embracing.

In an encounter with light, darkness resists the shining of this light because it uncovers hidden fear, wrongs, evil and death. But it also brings the opportunity to people for repentance, healing, righteousness and life. In the course of this encounter, there is often a resistance that can be quite painful to the one who bears the light...

What is even harder to bear for the believer is the fact that it is often a fellow Christian who somehow becomes an agent of pain; and one often makes the mistake of reacting too strongly against the person instead of understanding that sometimes, perhaps often, this person is the agent of the Lord for our correction.

It is important, indeed crucial, for us to keep our focus, our sense of direction and purpose, and our end, especially if we hope to be effective witnesses for Christ, and more particularly if we really hope for our own salvation. Therefore, we need daily repentance, together with memory of such exhortations as St. Matthew 5:10-11; I Epistle of St. Peter 3:14-15 and 4:14; and Romans 14:13.

Pray daily that you do not hurt anyone, and if you do, pray for their healing.

deep within

dealing with our pasts

The unforgiven sins of the past demand attention, and sometimes they demand it at the expense of everything else. These sins involve things that have been done to us, or which we think have been done to us, as well as the things we have done. Many of these things, because of the intensity of pain or fear at the time, may have been buried for a long time. But, like a festering wound, the pus comes to the surface sooner or later.

Have we properly repented in the past? For what we have done to others, said to them, or about them, or committed sins in thought about them, it is not too late to clean it up. Have we not completely forgiven those who have wounded us in the past (even if it is only that we perceived, however incorrectly, that we were wounded)? These are things for which it is necessary for us to *take responsibility* ourselves, as the modern psychologists say. But then what? Knowing about past sins, past wrongs, is only the beginning. What was wrong has to be righted and it is only in and with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ that this can be done.

Let us remember our first parents, Adam and Eve. They were not honest about their sin and, beginning to lie, they tried to shift blame and responsibility to someone else. Sound familiar? How dare we judge them, when we do no better? We have to begin to own up to what we did before it can be cleaned up properly. For many persons, especially those in the middle of life, *chickens come home to roost*, as we say.

temptation

We wage agendas on each other. We dare to judge each other's salvation, to make harshly critical comments against one another.

We accuse one another of ill-will, or even evil activity or intent. What we do not see, and do not want to see or admit, is that all of this evil, this ugliness, this sin, is exactly what is in our own hearts.

These are the very dangerous daily temptations that afflict you and me...and it is into this dark, death-dealing evil that we are going to fall and be bound if we don't pay close attention to daily repentance.

And if we do fall, we must immediately cry for help to God to pull us up again. We need, in our daily prayers, to pay closer attention to our responsibility for supporting our brothers and sisters out of their pitfalls, too. We must not behave as sharks and be bloodthirsty, or as chickens picking to death another who has fallen into injury or weakness.

Each year when we approach Great Lent, we understand that we will be in for some stresses by means of temptation. This year was certainly no exception. Everywhere it seems that the faithful who were trying earnestly to improve their focus in serving Jesus Christ, and Him only, were put to the test severely.

The tempter comes to tempt with all kinds of fears and uncertainties and by every kind of dirty trick to try to separate us, to distract us. All things that are good can be twisted or misused by us. But they can also be used to God's glory—and may that be always!

It says in the Gospels not to resist evil. It is better to run to God and say, *Abba help!* and be protected, rather than getting involved with the devil by confronting evil head-on.

Often the temptations after Great Lent are even greater than those during Lent, since after Pascha we have a habit of letting down our guard, our vigilance, our watchfulness.

deep within

persecution

Perhaps we do not have our bodies pierced with nails, but we do for the sake of Christ bear the slings and arrows daily of the unbelievers and as much to the point, the attacks of the bodiless evil powers. Because we encounter this on a daily basis all our lives for the sake of the love of Jesus Christ, it is necessary that we keep ourselves aware of who we are and to whom we belong.

overcoming despondency

One of the more difficult aspects of our lives as Orthodox Christians is that there are so many periods, some of them very long, when we seem not to be accomplishing much of anything. Often this sameness is pain and/or depression. We may even feel that we are slipping backwards under the weight. We might begin to question God in our anguish. Ironically, we can still feel all of this in the midst of an environment of relative prosperity...

How much of our life is spent in waiting and waiting, in enduring, in suffering, in struggling with various kinds of evil thoughts and doubts. And yet, how important it is for us to remember that it is in these moments of seeming inactivity that the Lord is often most active in our hearts—cleaning, repairing, putting things in order.

Although any one of us alone would certainly be tempted to despair, we must never believe we are working alone. The bishop does nothing alone, and neither does any one of us.

When we have learnt to give thanks in times of struggle, as well as in the times of great outpourings, then we shall have taken some steps towards spiritual maturity.

dealing with fear

What do we Christians have to do with fear? The Apostle James tells us perfect love casts out all fear. That is indeed what we see everywhere in the Gospels. Wherever our Saviour is, people are set free from fear. Fear is a weapon of the devil. It is a face of evil. It is not our part as Christians to be willingly embracing this darkness. Let us rather put our whole lives in the Lord's hands. He is the Giver of Life. He is the Giver of Eternal Life. In Him, it does not matter what happens, what inconveniences occur. He sees us through and makes good come out of it all.

When you see anxiety raising its head, call to the Lord to help you out of it and quickly repent of the fear.

don't forget

We are not living in an environment conducive to mindfulness. Distraction is inevitable: it is insidious, invasive. When you are distracted and scattered, call out to the Lord, *Help me!* He will save you.

Memory. Mindfulness. Recollection of the whole picture. It is not especially easy, but it is the fruit of true love in and for Christ.

While we may be tempted daily and fall daily, it is redemption that we must constantly remember, because our only hope after falling is the love of the Saviour.

It is only in imitating the Prodigal Son, remembering the love of the Father and deliberately returning home, that we may be reunited to our true home, and return to being our true selves.

Remember that your rootedness and stability are in Christ. Let us remember to give thanks to God.

deep within

on guard

There are many small ways in which the adversary uses hurt feelings, misunderstandings or misperceptions to drive wedges between persons. When one keeps the poisonous memory of such a perceived wrong or hurt alive, it can easily then break up and destroy good relationships in families and parishes. As good spiritual warriors, let us in Christ be on guard for such occasions of sin. Let us by following the way of the Gospel be sensitive to the needs of others and less concerned about ourselves. In the love of our Lord and Saviour, let us be as He who tells us that He came not to be served but to serve.

Be careful to nurture love in your heart. Be vigilant that you live always in forgiveness with everyone.

It is important to be watchful always, and to have our spiritual armour on every day.

I am no longer surprised, sad to say, how many people admit...that they believe that all thoughts originate in their own minds. They do not understand even fundamental discernment, and as a result, they have difficulty knowing who they are, and in the context have difficulty also in discerning right from wrong.

When anything negative about someone else comes to mind, say *Lord, have mercy* many times for that person.

caring

for the Church

True Christian stewardship can never be understood in terms of taxation. It is instead the free offering back to God, a token of the totality that He has given us, beginning with our very life.

The word charity comes from the Latin *caritas*, the equivalent of the Greek *agape*. Even though our present reactions make *charity* an institutional word, all of its history is based in the word *love*, indeed *selfless love*, which is the real meaning of this word.

The Church is the good earth. Each time the conditions are right, the leaves grow and the plant bears fruit. The roots go deep into the good soil and the branches reach up into eternal life.

We must do all sorts of things for the sake of others.

for each other

We strive to give time to that which we love. Mirror each other's preciousness and honour the image and likeness of God through words and actions, and do this genuinely, and with great joy. The Lord will multiply your offering.

Through the prayers and caring of Orthodox Christians, there are wonders occurring in our midst. Broken and wounded people are becoming transformed and transfigured, as the Kingdom of God is built in their hearts and in their lives. Following the example of blessed Archbishop ARSENY, we must continue to build up the Kingdom of God in the hearts of the faithful.

The Lord will send people to come to this community to encounter Christ's love and to experience healing, encouragement, hope and

caring

joy. They will feel Christ's love and will follow Christ in the same way; loving others and living in His love. The Orthodox faith is not taught, it is caught, just as love is not taught, it is caught. We want to be contagious with the love of Jesus Christ, so that the people around us will feel and be encouraged by this love, and be attracted to it.

We need to begin anew to treat each other with tender, patient, nurturing love, like delicate flowers and plants in a garden whose blossoms and fruit we want to encourage. Orthodoxy has always encouraged this, and there are many pious stories of persons who have treated the ugly, the diseased, the disadvantaged, the deformed, as beautiful flowers, as revelations of Christ.

for our children

The salvation of our children is closely bound up with our own.

Parents must...make real efforts to lead by example and to help their children, through their own love for Christ and the saints, to find this same love, to find this same strength, to find this same reason for living.

We cannot expect our children to know how to pray unless we do it constantly and with them. They cannot be expected to follow any other good example, either, unless it is reinforced and supported by the parent(s). If we expect or even hope for children to survive the boiling *shock waves of youth* (St. Theophan), the foundation must be well laid at the beginning.

Fathers and mothers...it is from you that your children will catch this love, this dedication to the Church, this readiness to do God's will. It is from you that the personal introduction to the Lord must come. To those who have any responsibility for children, be likewise living examples of the love of Jesus Christ, for you also provide the necessary introduction by your example. It is in this, and your visible example of repentance in your life that will help others find their way.

If we want to raise good, God-fearing, Christ-centered children, we are ourselves largely responsible for living out the right example of the Christian life.

It is from you that your Children will catch this love, this dedication to the Church, this readiness to do God's will. It is from you that the personal introduction to the Lord must come.

It takes prayer, determination, discipline and even something akin to a missionary attitude to live in a constructive, positive, loving, life-giving way as an Orthodox family.

Be the Lord's hand extended, and allow Him to touch His children through you. Fear not: the Lord will protect, bless and give increase!

caring

Orthodox families need to be rooted in the love of Christ. This is their source of life and strength as they stand resisting the tide of materialism, of objectification of others, and of unbelief. This rooting in the love of Christ, this nurture, needs constant attention.

In our families some form of short, daily prayer is necessary, morning and evening, with as many together as possible, even if only for a few minutes.

Daily we should be reinforcing good Orthodox Christian habits: blessing food and thanking God for it; blessing the family on departing the house; pausing briefly before the icons before travelling; blessing God on rising and retiring and before beginning to work, to play or to start any project. Daily we should be reading the Bible together too, and taking at least one meal together.



*Vladyka with children of
St. Peter the Aleut Parish, Calgary*

for the earth

We have made for ourselves an unrealistic dreamland of instant self-gratification.

We have instant foods of all sorts. We have non-biodegradable packaging on almost everything, and packaging that is often more or bigger than necessary. As human beings, we have become well known to ourselves as very effective poisoners of our environment, and of ourselves as well.

In all our instant expectations, we have forgotten patience, and in all of our interest in *things* and *goods* we have forgotten relationship. We tend to treat everything that does not breathe and have blood as something therefore inanimate, and by extension not living in any way. Slowly, this attitude creeps on to various breathing things, and even to human beings. We are even seeming to reverse the process developed in recent centuries in which human beings were supposed to respect all human beings as being equal in some way.

Historically, Orthodox societies have not tended to behave in the wasteful manner so evident in present day Western civilisation. Perhaps it is not too late for us to put on the brakes with our own dispositions and to try to recover at least some of our authentic Orthodox awareness.

For us, caring for the land, farming and gardening, is a holy way of life that seems to be ordered by God for most of us. We grow food to feed ourselves and families, and by extension to feed our neighbours, which we will remember is everyone. In cultivating the land, we reap the harvest of its fertility, but at the same time have the responsibility to return to this land what we have removed from it in the form of living organic matter.

We all have the responsibility to order our lives correctly according to God's direction, and to try to be a better example to those around us who are forgetting the correct order of priorities.

caring

In our self-imposed haste, let us ask our Lord Jesus Christ to help us put on our brakes, and to remember our priorities, and recover our sense of stewardship of creation.

The main reason I cannot give up hope comes from my very early childhood influence by a pious old man, whose love for the Lord I always admired. It was his custom frequently to repeat his favourite scriptural verse: *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever*, an extract from the Epistle to the Hebrews. Because of this constancy of love, I have hope that, regardless of the obstacles and difficulties, it is still possible to live the Christian life, even here in our modern Western society, because we are also told that *in God all things are possible*, and I have now enough times seen that this is so.

working with our hands

Handiwork, be it working with wood or thread or skein, seems almost all but forgotten in our pre-fab age. We cheat ourselves of simple joys by not keeping a hand-project going, and miss opportunities to bond with our children in these natural ways.

monasticism

The Christian way is not the way of the world. Monks, whether male or female, are persons who have decided clearly to live a life of repentance. That means turning away from self-will, to trying to do God's will and His will only. To do this monks and nuns embrace poverty in every sense of the word. They try to minimize material needs and maximize their communion with the Lord. Human beings are created to worship God above all else, and it is for this reason that prayer is the main part of the monk's life...the monk's first concern is working out his or her own salvation with fear and trembling.

Monastics are the heart and soul of church life. St. Seraphim of Sarov said, *If you save your own soul, thousands will be saved with you; and if you lose your soul, thousands will be lost with you.* We all need examples of people who are trying their best to do this very thing so that we can have the courage to do so as well.

Even if they don't pray for us by name, their struggle creates a wave which helps to pull us along as well...even if a monk or a nun has all kinds of trouble in fulfilling the Gospel, we need to see clearly and understand that they are at least engaged in the struggle to follow Christ and to reveal Him.

Men and women in the monastic life are not professional Christians; they are simply persons like us who have decided to turn their lives over to Christ Jesus our Lord in a serious and complete way. The result is that their lives singularly and together reflect, as it were, the common community life of the Acts of the Apostles. Monks, both male and female, dress alike, live alike, pray alike and serve Christ alike.

If we treat monastic life as a *profession* or *alternative life-style*, we will make a mockery of this way. It is neither of these. It is better to live in an organic food commune, or some other beneficial community such as L'Arche if that be one's attitude. But if one is to live as a monk, one must be ready to live by the Gospel, and not by the understanding of the world. It is a radical response of love.

monasticism

It will only be with the firmer establishment of monastic life in Canada that our Church will have a proper foundation and future possibility. Why? I believe that we lack a sense of direction without an active presence of monks, both male and female, as if we are functioning without our conscience. Their presence constantly reminds us of the life to which we are called: the life of repentance.



Vladyka with monks, Oratoire Ste-Anne, Sherbrooke, Qc.

time

One of the greatest gifts to each other is that of time. We strive to give time to that which we love. So, my brothers in Christ, give time to each other, and to your families.

Often, too, one can be standing at Liturgy, or some other long service, and yet not notice the length. Sometimes there is a sense of Presence, a sense of focus, and when the service ends, it seems as if it only just began. This in my mind is a taste of Kingdom time, of uniting time. I believe this is something for which to give thanks to God. We spend so much time lamenting the many farewells we must make along the way, and especially at death, that the graceful experience of time that unites us is clearly one of the fruits of the love of Christ.

To be late is to invite *iskushenie*.¹

¹ Russian for temptation.



with Father George Pokrowsky

communication

listening

Most of us suffer from a lack of peace, from a lack of connexion with the heart, from a lack of communion with the Lord. And in lacking peace, in being spun around and stirred up and tossed, to use Psalter images, we have difficulty listening.

speaking

We are not judges of anyone else, only the Lord is the Judge of All. We are all sinners, and none better than the other. So why be an ally of the evil one in attacking and bringing down a brother or sister in a weak moment? Let us rather, following Christ, do the opposite. Let us be bearers and bringers of life, repentance and renewal. Let us build up and encourage. Let us say only what is good, and what is praiseworthy. Let us measure our words, and when we do speak let our speech be pure and gentle.

Let us be merciful, even as our Heavenly Father is merciful!

May the Holy Spirit fill your heart. May He root you in love so that you will not speak out of what is in shadow, but will bring light and hope to others and speak words of light and resurrection. The waters we live in are so filled with darkness and the shadows are so complex...May you say words of light, to illumine, encourage and direct others.

silence

The principle of our Holy Fathers is that communication should always be good. Silence is preferred to gossip.

communication

the need to dialogue, East and West

Why not participate in Ecumenical dialogue? The reasons given are usually that we Orthodox will either simply be eaten up, or the Bishops will give everything away and sell us all. This is an attitude of fear and cynicism. What has this negative attitude to do with the Gospel?

The Gospel of Jesus Christ compels us toward unity in reconciliation. Our participation in dialogue hopes for both unity and reconciliation, but it must be found only in the Truth, who is Jesus Christ. This therefore is the honest and true unity, and reconciliation. Regardless of statements which are excessively generous and optimistic, the process will take time and care. The separation did not come instantly and neither will reconciliation.

And so we talk. We talk, so that we can hope to begin to understand each other. We talk, so that we can overcome the past mistakes of falling into the passions of hatred and retribution. We talk, so that we can begin in all honesty and without fear to discuss seriously and openly what separates us, and to find the honest and true ways according to the will of God that can bring us again to true unity in Christ. The very least we could do is to come to a better understanding. The very best would be to achieve true healing.

repentant reconciliation

In our attempt to discern God's will for our Church, let us focus on unity in the love of Christ. This is not just the distant hope of jurisdictional unity in North America. It is also the much more necessary and immediate unity of repentant reconciliation expressed in the love of brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ for each other and for all our neighbours.

dealing with slander

Not all of us are being killed, but many of us suffer slander, as well as various sorts of gossip and twisted talk. These give great pain to the heart. If we do not find the way to forgive our perpetrators, our bitterness becomes a distorting and deadly poison in our hearts that will kill our very selves as persons. This is why the Saviour calls us in the Our Father and in the Beatitudes to forgive—yes, even as He told the Apostles, to seventy times seven, and more.

How do we accomplish this? How do we pray for our enemies? Archimandrite Sophrony, of blessed memory, gives the solution: *Kyrie Eleison, Gospodi Pomilui, Duomne Milueste, Seigneur Aie Pitie, Lord, have mercy.* This simple prayer...covers everything.

avoiding gossip

Gossip involves the poisonous process of probing with speculation into a person's motives and character, transforming these speculations into supposed facts, spreading them in a kind of conversation which generally adds creative details, and often results in the demolition of another person's character, reputation, family, career, etc. This process knocks a person down, and then viciously kicks him or her. No wonder gossip has been compared to murder. The person's life itself may not be taken, but the means of livelihood, or the family context itself may be removed. I don't think any of us has lived past twenty years of age and not seen this in action. And this is all deadly territory for Christians. It is the direct evil opposite of the Christian Way.

The Lord Himself tells us that it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles, but what comes out of the mouth—from the heart. This is why we need to remember that homespun advice we learn as children. If we saw the film, *Bambi*, Thumper, the rabbit, is advised by his mother, *if you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all.* The grammar needs improvement but the message is accurate.

communication

Christians must always be concerned about how we speak about other persons, and above all about how we speak about the Lord. Not only is this crucial because it is a reflection of our love for Christ and other persons, but it is crucial because as Orthodox Christians we are measured by others, some truly searching for the truth.

As both St John Climacus and Staretz Anthony of Optina have said, when we are observing the faults of others and talking and criticising, we do the work of the devil. We have to watch out for enmity and judgement in ourselves, guarding against a critical spirit. *What are the sins of others to us, the staretz says, when we are up to our ears in endless sins?* Citing the Psalter, he encourages us to ask God to set a guard before our mouth, to turn our hearts away from evil thoughts. And if we see a fault in another, we ought to pray.

internet behaviour

We say that we believe that God created everything good, and so it is. We also understand that we believe that the turmoil in creation is connected with our sin, and so it is. Although I say this with a certain reluctance, I suppose we have produced in computers something with capability for good. Moreover, an opportunity for very rapid communication has also been developed with the creation of the Internet. But just as in everything else, so it is with computers, and especially with the Internet, there is always the possibility of behaviour that can separate us from each other and God through sin.

The tempter is always looking for new opportunities to get in and mess around. Communication is important, but one must be very careful to be sensitive, responsible and serious in writing in a medium where everyone and anyone, and especially discussion groups, have access to what is written. This medium is not like writing letters, and it is certainly not like face-to-face conversation.

One must be careful to avoid the temptation to gossip on the Internet. Falling into gossip in this medium has already caused a lot of people pain, inconvenience, heartache and in some cases, irreparable damage. There is also...a certain pressure and responsibility in

e-mail because of its immediacy. Time to reflect is reduced, and sometimes a too swift reaction can be a temptation in itself. In fact, what might still be more dangerous is that there are so many people who instinctively react to whatever is in print as if it were fact and truth by virtue of its being in print.

languages

The study of languages is never a waste. It builds discipline, memory and can even be an aid to humility. Just think how many saints have made use of their knowledge of languages for God's glory! On our continent alone we have so many good Alaskan examples. The best time to learn a language is as a child, but we shouldn't let mere adulthood deter us.

music

Music is, itself, a beautiful language.

humour

Humour is a gift—as Father Sophrony wrote, a gift of God, given to us to help endure pain. Looking soberly on the lighter side can diffuse so many would-be tensions. True humour has a great deal to do with freedom from fear; true humour is never derisive.



finding concrete solutions to Diocesan problems

sainthood

As a result of our living in love with Jesus Christ, our lives are supposed to be transfigured with the love of Jesus Christ. We are supposed to be transformed into pure, God-loving persons. Such a transfiguration is possible when we love Jesus Christ, when we live in Him and when we put Him first in our lives. It is possible that we could come back to having the heart of Adam and Eve before the Fall.

Adam and Eve before the Fall had pure hearts that did not have to ask anything about God's will or debate about it. Their hearts were listening to God in love and they instinctively did what God's will was for them.

Many saints in our Church's history have come to this also in the course of their lives. It does not usually come early in life; it usually comes later. But they come to such a point that their communion in love with Christ is so open and so unblocked by selfishness, so unblocked by sin, that they are like Adam and Eve before the Fall, instinctively doing God's will and acting and speaking as He wills. They don't have to think about it. Their hearts tell them right away, and they do and say according to God's will.

James, the brother of the Lord, has been made a martyr by those who like to say that being *the brother of the Lord*, the Theotokos had children after she gave birth to Christ. This has always been incomprehensible to Orthodox. From the beginning, the Orthodox faithful have believed that the Mother of God was Ever-Virgin because she gave birth as a virgin. It was therefore incomprehensible that she would have other children in the normal way once having given birth to God the Word. She gave herself to the service of God in purity and love. This is why we venerate her to this very day.

Why, then, is James called *Christ's brother*? In short, brotherhood and sisterhood is not confined to the immediate blood family in Oriental Semitic (Hebrew) thought, but means all your close relatives.

sainthood

So first cousins can be called *brothers* and *sisters* in popular everyday terms. That is exactly who James was to Jesus Christ. He was a brother, as in first cousin.

The important thing in all of this is to be like these people. James was the leader of the Jerusalem community from the very beginning as its apostle and bishop, and at the centre of the early apostolic community. All of these people were people who loved God. God perfected them and they became His instruments for good. The same thing is true for you and me. He wants you and me to be His instruments for good.

When a person becomes holy, it is a reality that others can fairly readily recognise by the grace of God. There is the warmth of recognition of the presence and activity of holiness. The reflection of Christ is evident in a very clear way, and others are, in the Holy Spirit, able to sense this and to respond to it. The response is one of thanksgiving and request for intercession in a way that is deeper than what is usual among believers.

We were created to be, and are called to be holy (1st Epistle of St. Peter 1:15-16). To be holy requires daily monitoring of our hearts, and daily turning away from sin and turning toward righteousness.

priesthood

leading

The priest goes ahead of his flock, giving them the example to follow. He does not just drive them from behind, saying, *do this, do that*. Going on ahead, he is in the front line of attack.

feeding

The priest feeds his flock. He feeds them with Heavenly Bread which is the Lord, Who comes to us in this, the most important of all sacraments in order to feed us, strengthen us, unite us to Himself. The priest baptises, hears confessions, but he feeds his flock with the Lord, leading them to the heavenly Kingdom in which the Lord will be our food for all eternity. The priest leads his people to that unending nourishment. Christ said to the Samaritan woman, *whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up into everlasting life* (St. John 4: 14)

attentiveness

The priest must watch over all his actions and be attentive. A scientist said that the batting of the wings of a butterfly in the Amazon jungle or in the bamboo forests of China affects the weather of the whole world. Everything we do affects everyone else—for good or for bad. As St. Seraphim said: *keep your soul in peace and around you a thousand will be saved*.

witness and encouragement

When we go to the sacrament of Confession, we make the confession to our Lord Himself. The priest standing beside us is our witness, as the service says. He is also an encouragement, because he represents all our brothers and sisters, who, together with him, are also sinners in the same mess, and in the same need for reconciliation with the Lord and each other.

the mystery of God's love

Often enough, sinner though the priest may be, the Lord will use him to speak straight to our hearts, straight to our needs, and to touch us with love through his words, even if he is totally unaware of it. This is part of the mystery of God's love for us.

to a priest and matushka

Let there be no secrets between you, except Confession. Let all be clear and transparent. You are a ministerial team. The enemy will attack you: *divide and conquer* is his motto. As the wife of the priest, yours is a big part—in supporting your husband, in praying for him.

summary of advice

Starets Anthony gives some good advice:

When you rise and when you retire, let your first and last thoughts be to God. Greet Him. Bless yourself with the sign of the Cross. Many a Slav will say, *Good morning, Bozhinka*, which means, *Good morning, dearest God*. Bow down and give thanks to God for everything. Get your mind and heart in gear, set on a good path by asking God to help you do today what is best. Starets Anthony says that no one shall complete the path to heaven, save he who begins each day well.

Try to keep a prayerful disposition, with actual prayer wherever possible through the day, and know that the Lord is with you, along with the heavenly host. Don't let yourself fall into wasteful idleness. Pray. Read the Bible, or the lives of saints. Help someone.

Try to watch your thoughts, and learn the positive aspects of silence. Beware of idle chatter, and try not to be excessive in laughing and most especially in derisive, so-called humour. Don't quarrel, don't envy, be modest in eating.

Be a servant of all. Remember the inevitability of death, and keep your heart to the Lord. Love His creatures, humans, all animals, everything. And finally, take each day as it is, one step at a time, putting everything in God's hands, just as He taught us.

in the end

God's love creates life. His love takes concrete, tangible form. He is insistent and persistent. He follows the creature throughout life and seeks to give life in union with Himself, even to those who insistently and persistently reject His love.

Let us work together for the sake of the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Church is the Lord's, and He has always kept the gates of Hades away, and He always will. It is not for us to protect, it is for Him. It is not for us to save, it is for Him. It is for us to love, to be obedient, to serve and to live in the Way. May our Saviour Jesus Christ enable us always to look to Him, and to be found in Him.

Let us, loving God more than anything else, shine with Resurrection Light and Life and glorify God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Be transparent in His love.

All will be well in the end.



FIRST BLESSING

Enthronement Response

*Enthroned Bishop of Ottawa and Canada,
October 27-28, 1990*

In his farewell address to the Church in North America, our father among the saints, the Blessed TIKHON of Moscow, Enlightener of North America, said: *It is evident that the Lord God helped us.*²

In response to the election of the faithful of Canada, and of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, and in direct response to the paternal love, support and admonitions of our beloved Father, His Beatitude Metropolitan THEODOSIUS, I find this simple, profound statement burns into the very heart of my being as I stand before you today. In response to these demonstrations of God's will acting, I now dare to make those very words of St. Tikhon my own: *It is evident that the Lord God helped us!*...That this Archdiocese exists today, that it continues to live in attempted fidelity to the saving Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that by the mercy of God this Archdiocese has come to this moment, should be ample evidence that *it is evident that the Lord God helped us.*

The life of the Archdiocese of Canada has been far from easy. It has been one knowing want, dissension, strife and discouragement. It has suffered polemics and division from within and without over the years, and has been at the mercy of all sorts of foreign catastrophes, misunderstandings and upheavals.

It is with great thankfulness for the help of the Lord God, for the mercy and saving love of the Lord God that is so freely given to me, to my brothers and sisters, to our whole Archdiocese, that I undertake the task of being the ruling Bishop of Ottawa and Canada. By this time I should not be unaware of the work to be done. Our Father, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS has, by the inspiration of the Lord, broken me in over the last three years by making me his Administrator. I believe I know something of the immense work

² 7 March 1907, New York

needed to bring Canada fully to Christ. But I am equally aware of the immense, immeasurable Grace that we as an Orthodox people have known in Canada: the Grace given to the Faithful—those known and unknown, those who from generation to generation have been faithful to Jesus Christ, and who have brought us to this historic day by their prayers, tears, love, and repentance.

It is true that in our history there has been a great deal of suffering and deprivation. If ever there was a tree thoroughly pruned, that is us! But it has been a history filled with brilliant lights as well. We cannot forget the long pastorate of Archbishop ARSENY, who as archimandrite and bishop preached and taught from his centre in Winnipeg, and became known as another Chrysostom. We cannot forget the priests who laboured in Christ's vineyard, often near starvation among hungry people. There have been very many bishops, priests, deacons, lay people, who have steadfastly clung to Jesus Christ and have declared His love by their lives. And I do not want us to forget the struggles of the families of all those priests and faithful who shared not only the hardships but also the experience of God's love in action.

As you can see, and most of you know well, my beloved, our past has been difficult, and I really do not expect that the present or future will be much easier. And yet, in the face of such a prospect, it is important not to be overwhelmed. Although any one of us alone would certainly be tempted to despair, we must never believe we are working alone. The bishop does nothing alone, and neither does any one of us.

This ministry of building up the Body of Christ is our work. We do it all together. It is true that the fallen world is not too friendly to us. It was not too friendly to Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that there are many huge obstacles for us. The powers of darkness attempted to extinguish the Light of Christ. But it is this same Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is our life; it is He who will accomplish His will in us and the work by the Grace of the Holy Spirit which otherwise seems so impossible. It is in Jesus Christ that we find the resources necessary—like the five loaves and two fishes of the Gospel—to feed, to care for, to clothe, to heal, to love, and to make known the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ in this land.

Our Father, St. Tikhon, said *the light of Orthodoxy is not lit for a small circle of people*. How often have we been told the opposite by one source or another in Canada during our lives? *The light of Christ is not lit for a small circle of people but for all people*, for all our land, for all of our world. That is exactly the direction of the Gospel. But, my beloved, for this light to be seen and to give life, this light of Orthodox Christianity must be lit in us. It is in us that the light of Christ must be held high for all to see. And it is not held high by fancy talk, by eloquent preaching, by clever teaching, unless it is demonstrated in concrete acts of love in everyday life, minute by minute.

St. Tikhon once again reminds us today. *It is our obligation to share our spiritual treasures, our truth, our light and our joy with those who have not these gifts. And this duty lies not only on pastors and missionaries but on lay people, for the Church of Christ, in the wise comparison of St. Paul, is a body and in the life of the body every member takes part.*

Our holy father and founder of the Church in Canada also tells us that taking part in the *life of the body* and the work of sharing our treasures requires three specific areas of effort. First, personal missionary effort in the society in which we live. Second, monetary support for the Church and for the service to the *needs of the saints* (the Faithful). (Yes, the saints do speak of monetary needs in the Church!) Third, prayer to the Lord that He might establish and increase the Church, and He might teach the Word of Truth, and reveal to those who know not Christ, the Gospel of righteousness.

And so, my beloved, this is your, my, our work. It is the Lord's work, and it is that which enables you, me, us to say *it is evident that the Lord God helped us*, along with our holy Father Tikhon.

And now, as we step forward together in Christ, as we together set our hand to the plough, let us also once again recall the instruction of our first elder and missionary, St. Herman the Elder and Wonderworker of Alaska. It is he who with others planted the Holy Cross in North America, and it is he, who, by his prayers also helps us now as we lift It high here in Canada. It is he who says to you and to me, *from this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us love God above all and do His holy will.*



Unity Series

These addresses were presented by Vladyka SERAPHIM at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Montréal during Great Lent, 1988. Unity with God was the first theme, followed by Unity within Self and Unity with Family. Unity with Race and Nation concluded the series.

They are transcripts of audio recordings. As such, the original conversational style has been kept.

The Orthodox Theological Institute (OTI) began under the initiative of Father John Tkachuk at the Sign of the Theotokos Parish, Montréal. This forum became a yearly tradition of Canadian Orthodoxy providing nearly twenty years of valuable theological instruction and blessings.

1. Unity with God

This particular topic, ever since I had to begin thinking about it, has caused me a great deal of difficulty. It is all very simple to talk about unity, and to think about unity, in the four aspects that we are considering over these two days or so. But the fact is that, although we Orthodox Christians are always talking about union with God and using terms such as *theosis*, and praying for unity with each other, every Orthodox Christian seems to have difficulty with this topic. Because where do we find unity with God, when it comes down to it? Where do we find it? Where do we find unity with each other? Where are we going to see it? Where are we going to find it?

And the difficulty boils down in the end to this famous anecdote (I'm not sure if it is an anecdote, actually it could be possible, but let's say an anecdote) about this certain Orthodox Christian who was cast away on a desert island. And when he was finally retrieved ten years later on this island, his *savers* found that he had built two churches there. And when asked why there were two churches on the island, he said: *This one I go to. This one I don't go to!*

And that is pretty much where we are in our whole encounter with the subject of unity. The fact is that we have great difficulty with unity because we are such friends with sin. And as long as we are such friends with sin, we are going to have difficulty with the subject of unity. We have this problem with unity in these days, we have this difficulty with sin, because we live in a society that does not even recognise the existence of sin—so how are we to address the subject of unity with God, with each other or anything, when we are going to ignore the fundamental cause of its not being there, which is sin? We pretend sin does not exist. We turn it into objects of psychoanalysis. We turn it into *problems*. But as a certain previous speaker at this session has said, whose name does not have to be mentioned, but whose wisdom is always shared among us, *people don't have problems; they have sins*. It's high time we faced the fact that we don't have problems in our lives, we have sins.

In life things can happen to us that are hard. Really difficult things that leave us having to forgive, but it is tough to do so. Instead, we lean to other attitudes of the heart—an attitude of revenge, of anger, of even hatred. You know what I mean. We end up having to deal with sin as we seek to overcome these attitudes. And I think that is what we need to be paying attention to, from the top to the bottom of our lives.

What is it that separates, that causes disunity? Sin, pure and simple.

If we are going to focus on unity with God, we don't need to be talking about it. You don't need me to be standing here, none of us need me to be standing here, talking about it, because the Orthodox Christian approach to things is not to blab about them forever, but to do something about it.

I must say I really caught it not long ago for referring to this particular illustration in a sermon, but I am going to risk it again. And that is the famous musical to which we all must have gone at one time, either in its film or stage version, *My Fair Lady*, in which Eliza Doolittle gets fed up with the poetry of her young suitor and says in the end—*stop talking about love, show me that you love me. Do something about it. Don't quote poetry outside my window for hours on end. Don't sing me songs. Show me that you love me.*

The fact is that's what the Lord wants from us. So we protest that we love Him, so we say, *I come to Church on Sunday, doesn't that show something?* Well, actually it doesn't. Not by itself it doesn't. We can't talk about loving God. We have to do something about it. And as long as there is disunity, we are showing we really don't love God very much. We like to talk about it, but we are not prepared to face it where it hurts, this question of unity.

And once again, here is our unwillingness to face what is really at the crux of unity—unity with God, unity in the Church, unity in ourselves, unity with each other, unity in the family, unity in the Diocese. As long as we are not prepared to face what is at the root of it all, as long as we are not prepared to sacrifice our pride, as long as we are not prepared to admit to sin, as long as we are not prepared to step out bravely in faith and actually live this love, well, it's nice window dressing in the meantime...

When we meet holy people from Mount Athos, for example, or from Egypt or elsewhere, we are meeting people who do something. They are people who are actually living the unity. They are actually doing what is necessary. The shocking and painful thing is that they are no different from you or from me. Each one of them is a human being, and each one of them is doing what we are supposed to do too, because the Lord called us to be holy as He is holy...

What the Lord wants from us is not a lot of talking. He wants us to know Him. He wants us to be like couples who have been married fifty or sixty years (I am speaking more or less idealistically now, although I have seen it practised), who love each other and know each other, not perfectly because even couples who have been married fifty or sixty years still say they find surprising things out about each other. But they know each other and love each other well enough that they don't have to go talking their heads off. They don't have to go proving their love all the time, because they have already done it, and just by sitting next to each other, and being with each other, they are demonstrating their love for each other. They have deepened their love for each other already enough, so that they can even think alike and can even anticipate each other, so who needs to talk? That's what He wants from us.

He wants us to enjoy being in His presence. He does not want a lot of words out of us. And our monastic holy fathers have said exactly that: the Lord does not want words from us. He wants us to sit in silence with Him and enjoy being in His presence. He wants to give us His love and He wants us to be filled with this love. He does not want us to meditate on it, to speculate on it, to philosophise on it. He just wants us to *be* it. He wants us to *be* in His love.

At least that is how it seems to me married couples are, after many years. I remember seeing one couple who had been married for sixty-five years. They were both in their nineties, and they were kind of like teenagers. They used to sit on benches and hold hands and giggle. They didn't talk a lot; they sometimes argued of course, but they didn't talk a lot. They teased and they were just like children actually, because they had gotten past a lot of the junk of life, and they were just plain enjoying each other's company. And I think at the best of times, for you and for me, our experience of the Lord is

rather like that. It's the joy of being in His presence, without having to explain it, to talk about it, to analyse it, just as we don't have to analyse our relationships with each other...

This unity, then, is something that really rests at the foundation of everything that we are. This unity, which we find in the Holy Trinity, in Christ, in the Church, penetrates every aspect of our life and it binds everything together in the Love which gives life to all.

Some groups may call themselves *Unity*, believe in certain principles of unity, consider in the framework of the global village the unity of humanity, meditate on the harmonious unity of the universe, or ruminate on the philosophical idea of unity in one or more of its categories. Perhaps one might even go so far as to try to put a political face on unity: Orthodox Christians might even do a little of one or another of some of the above, but in the end, what must distinguish us is that we must live it. Even if we are fallen and building two churches on our desert island. Even if we argue with each other until we are blue in the face, we still must live unity if we are Orthodox Christians.

Our first consideration is concerned with unity with God. And on this subject alone we are encountering the memory of St. Gregory Palamas on this Second Sunday of Lent and we could spend all of our time in prayerful consideration, instead of dwelling on any other aspects of the matter of unity. We really could. Lent itself begins with the subject of unity. In the Old Testament readings, Genesis, we see God out of His love creating everything that is, culminating in man. God, out of His love, sets man in the garden in Paradise. God, Who has already revealed Himself as a community of persons, with the words, *We, let us make...and our*, this God also makes man a community of persons: complementary and mutually fulfilling. Male and female. He makes man, and this human community to be in unity and community with God, Who is Very Community.

God is a loving community of persons, united in total, selfless *agape* love. He created man to be alive, living and life-giving in the same way: created to be one in selfless love with God, in community with God. And we see that in being given the authority to name all

creatures, man is to be the agent with the Lord God of harmony and unity with all that is created.

You see? You don't need me to be standing here talking...because everything is self-explanatory. In Genesis we are plainly told what is the result of the misuse and misappropriation of this love. When this love gets focused on itself and on self-interest as opposed to the other, the other including God, man and creation—when love turns in on itself, it instantly ceases to be love. And in fact, most of what we hear called love in society these days, does not bear any resemblance to what love really is.

Love, as we understand it in modern society, is self-indulgence. Just plain self-indulgence. Hedonism. That's the word. Life, living and the giving of life, and creating, all of those cease in this atmosphere. Death takes over. Separation becomes the norm. Alienation. Alienation from God. Alienation from each other. Alienation from creation. In Genesis, this breakdown results immediately in the breaking of that face-to-face communion with God, which was in the beginning. And self-interest becomes jealousy and that becomes murder. Just like that! Step by step, very quickly. That's what my grandmother meant when she said, *the line between love and hatred is very fine.*

The animals with whom man lived in harmony while in perfect, loving communion with God now became sacrificial substitutes, a sin offering, as well as becoming man's food. Instead of giving names to the animals, instead of living in harmony with the animals, and instead of the animals being sharers in the Kingdom, and all of that with us, taking their place in the overall picture of Creation—we broke it! We began to eat the animals, which the Lord in the end in the book of Acts says, is not a sin. The Lord does not demand that we be vegetarian, even now. But it is, nevertheless, a tragedy that the animals had to become our substitute. When we see the High Priest putting his hand on the head of the scapegoat, and the sins of the people being transferred in that laying on of hands to the scapegoat and the goat going out into the wilderness, that is a far, far cry from a loving, life-giving relationship. A far cry.

Last week I was interested to hear Father Paul Lazor reflecting on this very thing. Father Paul has a new dog because poor, old Pushok finally met her end at the age of fourteen. And now he has a sheltie called Laska, and this little sweetheart of a dog was very much anxious to try to share my coffee. Well, Father Paul was saying he finds it very interesting how these little animals live in the same house with us, share our food, share our love. And when we become violent, aggressive and nasty in our sinful behaviour, they don't say anything; they sit there and take it. It is interesting what kind of a relationship we can still have with animals.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not in the Animal Rights business and I'm not like some people who consider that animals are human beings. Animals are animals. They don't have human souls. Animals are animals. But the Lord nevertheless calls us to be in a loving, life-giving, creative relationship with everything that is: animals, plants, everything—the atmosphere, everything. And we have to remember, this is the living out of our love. This is what He wants from us.

The reversal of unity leads us to the position of causing the extinction, either directly or indirectly, of creatures rather than of giving life to them. That is a fact. You don't need me to be here to tell you that. You can hear that in the news all the time, too. But the extinction of all of these creatures obviously comes from what? Yes, exactly. Sin.

We don't need to be ripping down all the rain forests; we just need to use the land that we have sensibly, wisely, like good stewards. But we don't and even here in our own country, where we have plenty of good land, we rape it. The Lord doesn't want us to do that to the land. He wants us to be constructive. To know the land and to be in harmony with it, so it can bear fruit. But the land cannot bear fruit because of what is wrong in our hearts. What are we trying to get out of the land? Maximum production and great profit! And we don't care what happens to the land. So the south of Saskatchewan turns into a dust bowl. And the south of Alberta does, too. Sometimes, Manitoba does as well. Maybe Ontario will be a dustbowl someday, too. Who knows?

Our sin, our selfishness, brings death not only to us, but to everything around us. And it produces a terrible pessimism in some people. A pessimism that I encounter too often. A pessimism that leads to

despair. And a pessimism that, in itself, is terribly sinful. A pessimism that does not see any possibility of repentance.

Life and the giving of life are no more the norm in all of this. And slaughter, as we hear every day, takes its place. Slaughter not only of animals but also of each other. And of course, in our rebellion and our separation, we take everything else down with us.

When we are being saved, we help open the way to salvation to countless others. Sadly, by other choices we help open the way to damnation for countless others as well. Our unity with God, our salvation, our *theosis*, out of experience of God, is to be found only in Jesus Christ. Only in this unity in Jesus Christ can be found also unity with all other creatures of God.

The fact is that when it comes to finding unity with God it does not take great struggles, but it takes enough struggle. It doesn't take systems; it doesn't take philosophy, it doesn't require great intellectual power, because if it did, all those *mental defectives* whom we treat as saints would be left out in the cold. But what it does take is responding in kind. The Lord in His love for us continues to reach out to us and He asks of us to reach out and take His hand. He asks of us a simple response.

In the end, you don't need me to stand here talking to you. In fact, it would be a lot better talking about unity with God with one of these people from the desert in Egypt or from the Holy Mountain. Or we need some really lovely *babushka* who has lived her whole life in the Lord. We need a *γιαγιά*. A grandmother like those in London, Ontario, who love to celebrate Pascha, and in whom the light of Christ shines on Pascha as they sing *Khristos Anesti*, waving their candles. That's really the kind of person we need to talk to us about such things. And they would talk a lot less long.



2. Unity Within Self

Unity within oneself is something that we all struggle with and strive for in our lives. Some people don't succeed very well at unity within oneself because of various circumstances in their lives. They become several of themselves: multiple personalities. Life is very difficult for some people and their ways of coping with the pain and horror of life is to become quite a few of themselves...

Yesterday, I was saying that we find unity in our encounter with God. Unity with God—that is what we are supposed to have, what we all tend towards in our lives. And we search for it one way or another. Some search for it philosophically. That search, in the end, I think is relatively dead-ended.

I remember in my *extreme youth*, when I was at University. In those days we were studying philosophy and I was very much discouraged because we discovered there is not one philosophical system that does not have a loophole in it! And sooner or later, someone is going to find it, and that is going to be it for that philosophical system. Well, I began to wonder why I was studying philosophy at all?

In the end, I discovered, philosophy helps to explain things. It helps a great deal in explaining a lot of things. But no one philosophical system by itself is sufficient upon which to build any kind of a foundation. You cannot build too many buildings on any one philosophy, because sooner or later, somebody's going to pull a brick out from the bottom and the whole thing will fall down.

But it is still a useful tool. It's a useful tool for explaining our encounter. For believers philosophy is helpful in this way.

Each age has its philosophy, its particularly favourite philosophy, although most of these philosophies, I have discovered, are somehow reworked versions of things that people have thought up before. Just like all the modern heresies that we are encountering nowadays are somehow reworked old heresies. It just goes to show that a favorite memory from Father Alexander Schmemmann's lectures, when he

talked about the un-inventiveness of the devil and how boring the same old sins are, applies just the same to these heresies. These heresies are dressed up re-workings of old junk. In the end, they are just as boring as the same old boring sins that the devil keeps trying to manufacture to distract us.

If we are going to find unity in ourselves the only place we are going to find this inner unity is in the encounter with God. We are not going to find inner unity anywhere else. Now as Father John was explaining to us earlier about the philosophy of Plotinus and the philosophies of many other people, in fact, in these systems one finds oneself becoming less oneself the more one encounters another or the other. And in Buddhism, too (and Buddhism is really a philosophy), one doesn't become oneself...when one is becoming perfect one becomes nothing. One becomes nobody. Plotinus was not even innovative in thinking that way. In encountering the other and encountering God, so you might think, you become so absorbed into the other that you don't really have any more distinct existence. You do not have any individuality. You don't even have any essence of yourself any more.

That's kind of what it's like to be an adolescent...being an adolescent you don't know yourself very well and you keep thinking of yourself as being like this or that person and you try to emulate all kinds of other people. And you get all tangled up and lost in the emulation of these various people. In the end, you don't know who you are at all. At least that is how it happened to me. In the end the answer did not lie in trying to be like any of these other people with clay feet (and they all had clay feet because they were sinners just like me and they were very good at disillusioning me, too). Imitating them was of no real benefit because it just ended up in the same dead-end.

So what was I going to do? The only place to try to find myself was to encounter God. To allow myself to encounter the Lord...If I can ever hope to be myself, then the only way I am going to do it is to find myself in God...In the end, in Christ I can only be myself. My real self. I mean I can be my fake self. I can be my front self. That's all right, but it's not really me. It's me with window-dressing on. But that is the way of the world. That is not the way of Christ. So I can't allow myself too long to put up the window-dressing...If there is going

to be any good in this bishop, or in this monk Seraphim, then this goodness has to be the Lord's goodness; it has to be His love.

If you really want to understand what I am trying to say about self-awareness, then you have to listen to other people than me, because I don't think that I am very good at talking about *being oneself* in the real sense.

There are people who are themselves. Maybe they don't know it either ...I don't know if the people who are themselves really know they are themselves. I think that Archimandrite Simforian, whom I knew in Valamo, was really himself; he really was. And I think probably Archimandrite Vasily was really himself, too. Both of these men were taken up in the Lord; they were really united with the Lord. And there are others...Father Alexander Schmemmann was such a person. He was really integrated and he knew himself. He was solid...He was one of these people who was really united to Christ. What he was speaking was the same thing as what he did. With a man such as that you can get into concrete examples, which I like better than allegory.

He created community around him. And those who went to St. Vladimir's during his time experienced the result of his inner unity with the Lord by the community that was produced. He became father to everybody. All looked up to him as a father.

Lots of people disagreed with him, but that didn't stop them from loving him. And of course, we can have disagreements even with the holiest people. You can have knock-down, drag-out arguments with even the holiest of people. Differences of opinion have nothing to do with being holy. Not much. It is how we cope with these differences of opinion. In fact, in the record of our history we can see how some very holy people argued very violently with each other. Even Paul and Barnabas argued fiercely with each other and they are both holy people. Disagreements are one thing, but unity in the Lord is another.

Allegorically speaking (and again I say, I don't like allegory but it can sometimes be useful)...allegorically, one can look at the writings of C.S. Lewis for some help in terms of understanding the difference between personality united to God and personality disunited. He

says in the book, *The Great Divorce* (which doesn't have to do with marriage; it has to do with the separation between good and evil, union with God and rebellion against God), Lewis is saying that persons who are in rebellion against God are only at best, shadows of their real selves. And by contrast, those who are in union with God are ultra-real. Ultra-real.

And so, we have the way of the world to look at in terms of self-discovery. There is the way of the world, with all of its glory, with which we are surrounded. And one sees all of the difficulties one has in life and somehow to have to live with them.

The traditional Christian attitude toward passions is to do something about them. To direct them correctly. To straighten them out if they are out of control, which they usually are. We do something about our passions. We focus them. We bring them into the correct stream through ascetic effort.

The way of the world is to say, well, *so you're lumbered with these passions*, except the way of the world doesn't even call them passions; they are sort of *fundamental drives*. You just live with them; you accept them; that's the way you are. And so we have people in society who are carried away by all kinds of passions, and they don't do anything about it, and they cause all sorts of havoc in society by allowing their passions to play on themselves and other people. These are not people at unity with themselves. These are people who are broken.

The society in which we live does not encourage unity within self and it doesn't matter whether it's Canadian society, American society or European society. Any society—any human society—is about the same. In ordinary society, apart from unity with the Lord, we are caught up in all kinds of activities.

We fill our time with the doing of things because we can't stand to be alone with ourselves. We can't stand to be alone with the Lord. We are afraid of it all. And because we are bound up with all kinds of fears, and insecurities that come with fear, and all of which comes from separation from the Lord, our lives are very scattered, disunited and disorganized. So we become very productive. And our society particularly loves productivity. We allow ourselves to be convinced, along with our society, that we are no good unless we produce.

That means that a particular monk sitting on Sviatogorsk is useless because he doesn't produce much? He used to produce candles. But he doesn't even produce them anymore! And yet this hermit sitting on the top of Sviatogorsk is doing what he is supposed to be doing, as a hermit. He is doing the work of the Lord, he is doing what is needed, the one thing necessary: he is praying. He is not making a show of being a hermit, he is not going around dressed up in funny stuff and parading around all over the world and saying, *what a great guru am I*. He is offering himself to the Lord, and doing what the Lord wants him to do. Right there. Right now. So the Lord doesn't want him to make candles anymore, or at least, it seems not. The Lord is waiting for someone else to take up the candle business for him. He is trying to live as the Lord is calling him to live: to do the one thing needful, to follow the Lord, giving up everything else to do that.

And although the Lord does not call each of us to be a hermit, sitting on Sviatogorsk or any other Gorsk (although for some of us maybe He will) most of us are called to do *that one thing needful* in the middle of a big city. So how are we going to be our real selves, be at one with ourselves, be at one with the Lord, and still not have so many things to do that we can hardly stand to get up in the morning?

Because that is the way most of us really are. Our lives are so full of activity, so full of doing things that we can hardly stand to face the day. There are so many things we have to do that day! When do we have any time for listening to the Lord? When do we have time to encounter ourselves? Because we are afraid of ourselves; we are afraid of the Lord; we are afraid of grappling with our sins; we are afraid of what the Lord might ask of us.

The separation between word and action in our society—words being one thing and action not necessarily being the same thing—is the fundamental icon of our society's brokenness. We all know we live in a compartmentalised society. So people feel free to have a *religious part* of their lives. They go to church on Sunday, maybe, and the rest of the time their lives don't bear any resemblance to what they heard, or should have heard, in church on Sunday. And they go out and do whatever they feel like doing the rest of the time. Not only are their lives compartmentalised, religious here and all the rest there, but all

the rest is also broken up into *family time* and *office time*, *private time* and *TV time*, and *entertainment time*...all these things are little boxes that are not connected. They are not interrelated.

The devil's favourite tactic is always to divide and conquer, to break up. And this is exactly what happens in a society that is not united with the Lord. Our society isn't. Our society only manages to tolerate those who are trying to be united with the Lord. But the values of our society...much as we love it, are not the values of the Gospel; they are not the values of the Kingdom of God. And we have to face that. And we have to face the fact that we are called to be icons—images—examples of what it is like to be at one with the Lord and at one with ourselves.

If we allow ourselves to be taken up in fear and allow ourselves to be broken down with all kinds of fears and wondering who I really am and wondering if these passions that afflict me are really me, then there is nothing much of me that is really present or visible to anybody else. And then all that anybody else can see of me is some kind of shadow; the me-ness is really lacking. I am like, then, in my brokenness, in my scatteredness, in my self-centered concentration on how insecure I am, and how fearful I am, and how much I really don't know who I am, and I don't really understand me and nobody else does either—as much as I am like that, and in that condition—then I am like that fellow in the book, *The Great Divorce*. He is in the grey town and after having gotten on the bus and having gotten to this lovely place at the top of this immense cliff, he discovers that when he walks on the grass, the grass goes through his feet; and when he tries to pick up an apple in this place, his hand slips through the apple. There is about that much realness about me, then, and there is about that much of me that is really there.

But when I become integrated in the Lord, when I seek the Lord, when I am united with the Lord, then I begin to find myself. The fundamental of the awareness of things is that I really become myself only when I know the Lord and am known by Him. It's in this relationship with the Lord that all of these fears and insecurities drop away and I really begin to discover who I am. Because I am not *me* in isolation from everyone else. I am me in *relationship with* the

Lord. I do not discover who I am based on the opinions of all kinds of people around me. One hopes one gets past that adolescent insecurity. Because, if this were the case, that monk would never be on Sviatogorsk; Father Alexander Schmemmann would likely have never written anything or said anything; and the Orthodox Church in America would not be what it is now, by any means.

We find ourselves in relationship, in community with the Lord. That is what Archimandrite Simforian did and how he became such a revered man. None of you know him and that is a great pity, because if you go to Finland, you discover all kinds of people that did know him and love him profoundly. And they loved him profoundly because he loved the Lord profoundly. And if people love Father Alexander profoundly, it's because of his love for the Lord. Or if they love anyone else profoundly—Matthew the Poor, Archimandrite Vasilios, Father Emilianos, Père Placide—there are all kinds of people to whom people look with love and respect. And we do this not just to the monastic giants, either, because there are lay people in our midst who are shining examples of this integration and this love. There are *babushki* and *dyledushki* around, we just have to look around and see people who are integrated, who love the Lord and who are only interested in being found in the Lord. And we respond to these people because simply they love the Lord and the Lord loves them, and it shows.

I read not long ago, in Tolstoy's short stories, about some monks on an island in the White Sea who were visited by a bishop. You know this story, don't you? And these monks had forgotten all the essentials of prayer, at least in the bishop's opinion. They couldn't even remember the words to *Our Father*. He recognised that there was something good about them; certainly the bishop was able to recognise that—he could see it in these men, but he figured they lacked so much in proper form and the prayer they did know was kind of weird...that they had better, at least, remember the fundamentals. So he taught them the fundamentals. And when he was sailing away, at length, there they came running over the water, to ask him what the words were again, as they were already getting them a little messed up. Thereby they taught the bishop a very profound lesson, the lesson being that we are not interested so much in demanding appearances of people but we are interested in looking

into the heart to see if the person is *really real*, if the person is really integrated, if the person is really at unity with himself or herself.

The fools for Christ for which Russia has been so famous, are people who have been completely integrated, completely one, completely at unity with the Lord and themselves. But their outward behavior is completely bizzare. Really bizzare. I mean, eating sausage on Good Friday in front of the church is not normal behaviour. And in our society if people behaved like this, walked around in army boots and rags, they wouldn't make it in Canadian society. In Alberta we would say they'd go to Ponoka quickly...

We are not going to *find ourselves*, we are not going to be one with ourselves unless we are in love with the Lord. And until we learn how to fall in love with the Lord, we are not going to be able to love ourselves. And we can't love ourselves as we are properly supposed to love ourselves until we have begun to develop this relationship with the Lord. We are not going to find proper self-love as we find it in human society, as we find it in Canada, in the United States, in the Soviet Union, anywhere. Because human society apart from the Lord is founded on self-service, not proper self-love, not love at all. Fake love. Pride, in the end. And as much as I look at myself in pride, well, I get what I deserve. I get a mirage. I get a very nice picture, but it is not real. It is abstract. And that *me*, self-indulgent, self-centered, self-serving is abstract. Inasmuch as I show that *me* to you, you do not see the *real me* at all. Because if there is any *me* at all, it is only *the me* that is in communion with the Lord. And all the rest, as I said before, is window-dressing...

If I become the real me, I become like the lady that the man in *The Great Divorce* encountered. The lady whose footstep shook the earth on which she walked. The lady, who walking along, was perceived by this man to be so real that he had never seen such reality before in his life. Reality that exuded light and joy. That's what we are supposed to be looking for, in terms of realness.

The fact is, that contrary to the ideas of some people, human beings, when they get married to each other...and live together for many years, although they may begin to look a lot like each other (some people say) and behave similarly, and even think similarly sometimes

(and as much as they know each other so well a lot of things are not necessary to be said), in their proper loving of each other, they enable each other to become more and more unique, more and more really themselves.

Marriage is not, in other words, a dissolving of oneself, but finding oneself in and together with the other person, with whom one is living a complementary life. And in giving oneself to the other, one finds oneself. One doesn't become empty and void. One becomes more full of this selfless love. That is how our lives are to be lived. We find ourselves in giving ourselves.

As much as we are closed in ourselves and protecting ourselves in fear and sheltering ourselves from the outside, we shrivel. Because the love of God is intended to circulate. It's like Social Credit money. Do you remember Social Credit Funny Money? The fundamental of Social Credit money was that the money had no value unless it was in circulation. And that is how it is with God's love. Unless it is circulated, it cannot be renewed and what there is of it, goes stale. Our attitude in life has to be open. It has to be open so that we can give. Love is not taking; it's giving. And the more we give, the more we can receive to give. And the more this giving so that we can receive attitude exists in us, the more we can really be ourselves. Because the more we do this, the more we are found in God, the more He is active in us. Love is not a static thing. It can't be. If love is static, then people couldn't manage to live together even as long as a year.

Love has to continue to be exercised, to grow. It has to continue to suffer too, because love is a vulnerable attitude. With this openness to give and to receive in replenishment of love, one is also vulnerable. One is vulnerable to receive all kinds of negative behaviour—negative testing behaviour. But it is not life-threatening, at least in terms of our understanding of life.

We can only really find ourselves in this circulating love: love that continues to affirm others, to do good to others. Read 1 Corinthians, chapters 13 and 14, to find out what love is really like. It is profoundly active in a passive way...it is active because it is constantly giving, but it is passive because it is also able to receive constantly. This is the kind of love with which the Lord gives life.

Anything else is a fake. Anything else is not life-giving, it is life-taking and killing. Self-love separated from God in a self-serving way is not even a reasonable facsimile. Loving our enemies is the test of this love and the test of true self-integration and true interior unity. It is the ability to love those people whom we are not already conditioned to love, in contrast to being a mama or a papa or some kind of relative or some kind of club member...although even in clubs you do not have to love other members. But we are called to be so much at one with the Lord that we are to love those who are profoundly against us. We do not hate those who are profoundly against us, we love them...

The Lord in His love wishes to unite all of His creatures to Himself. His love brings unity and His love brings life. And that is what He wants to work in and through us as well: unity, life and strength. He has been talking to us ever since the beginning, since we first rebelled. He has been reaching out to us, as we hear, week after week in the liturgy of St. Basil during Lent. We hear how God has been reaching out to us from the beginning, in His love for us, to reunite us to Himself. We hear how He has been sending prophets, teachers, saints, holy ones of all sorts to bring us back to Him, to reunite us to Himself, to pull us out of the dirt into which we have gotten ourselves. He has been reaching out to us ever since we fell. And He continues to reach out to us, asking us to take His hand, to be united with Him so that we can really be ourselves, instead of wandering around broken and hunting for some meaning in life, in all of this darkness, brokenness and senselessness. He doesn't want us to have to go around searching for this meaning, this reality and purpose in being, because He gives it to us freely.

He gives it to us. He doesn't want us to look and look and look, and concoct something out of our own minds. He doesn't want us to have to go through the trouble of finding some scheme. He just wants us to accept what He has to give us.

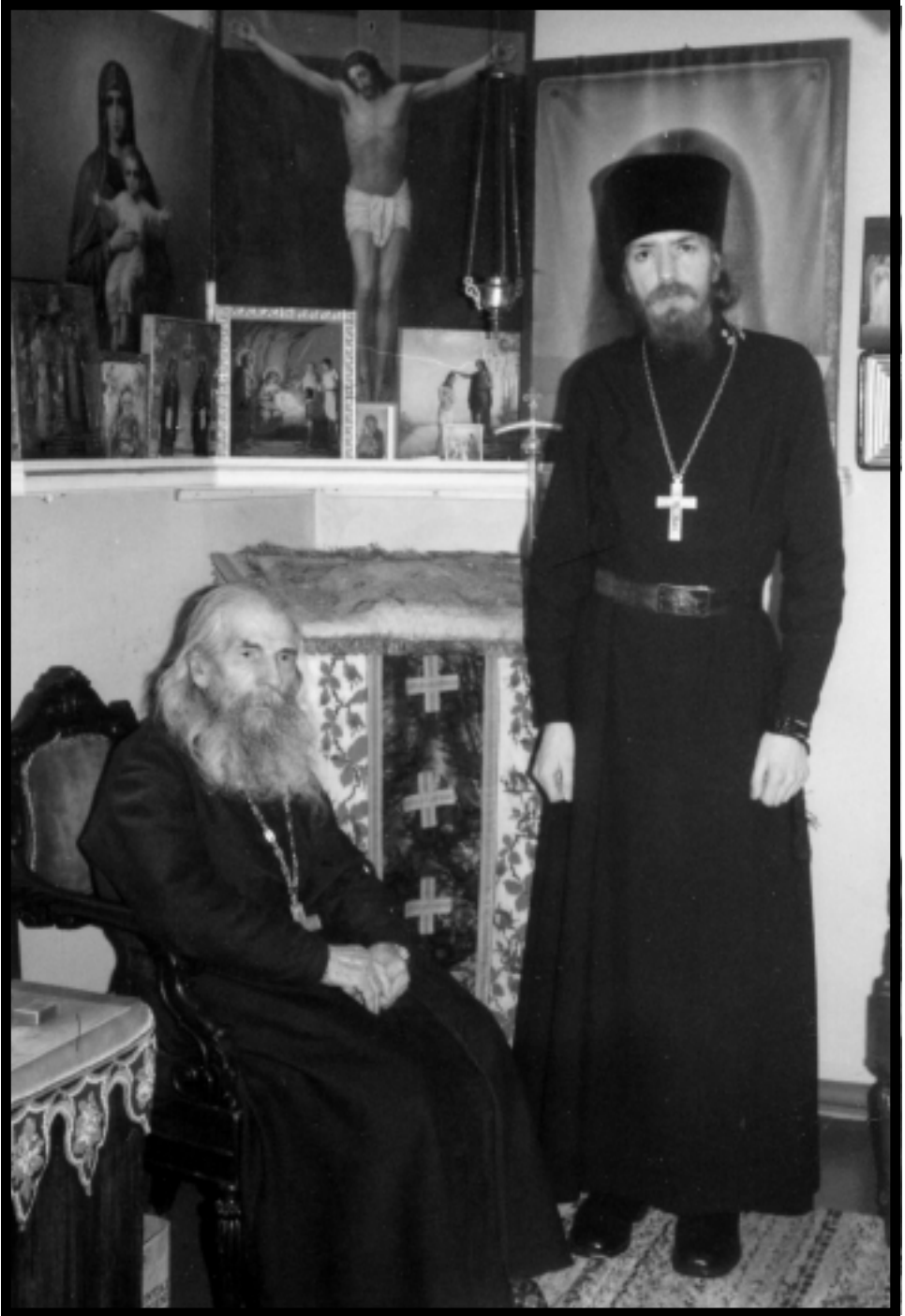
Now for some Scriptural references for further study: 2 Chronicles 7: 14; Psalms 34: 18; 51: 17; 95: 8; Proverbs 28: 14; 29: 21; Isaiah 22: 12; 55: 7; 66: 2; Ezek. 18: 21 and 31; Hosiah 14: 2; Joel 2: 13; St. Matthew 3: 2; St. Luke 13: 3; Acts: 3: 19; 8: 22; 17: 30; Romans 2: 5; 2 Cor. 7: 10; and Hebrews 3: 13.

Real finding of selves consists in living a life of repentance. The life of repentance simply means the life of turning to the Lord, and turning away from anything that is against the Lord, living a life that is toward Him. And so, we are going to have the example of some of the people that repented. The references are 1 Kings: 21: 27; 2 Kings 22: 19; Ezra 10: 1; Job: 42: 1-6; Jonah 3: 6-9; St. Mark 14: 72; Acts 8: 1-3; 9: 1-22. And if we don't repent: Genesis 19: 1-29; 1 Samuel 2: 12 to 4: 17; 1 Samuel 13 to 31; 2 Kings 1: 16-17; 2 Kings 9; and 2 Kings 17.

Our favorite examples of repentance, at least in my Orthodox experience, are: St. Luke 15: 21; St. Luke 18: 13; and St. Luke 23: 40-43. Unity with God is reflected in the repentance of these three examples: the Prodigal Son (and this parable, by the way, is not about the prodigal son nearly so much as it is about the love of the father who is waiting for the prodigal son), the Tax-collector and the *Rasboynik*, the wise thief.

Maybe we don't have to go to the pigpens of the world before we turn to our loving Father. But we must think about some key questions. Do we turn to our loving Father? Do we turn from the darkness to the light? Are we like those examples that we so much love? Do we really live Pascha?

These are vital questions in relation to unity with God and unity within self that we, as Orthodox Christians, have to ask ourselves. And we must ask them of ourselves every day.



*Archimandrite Simforian and Igumen Panteleimon of
Valamo Monastery, 1978*

3. Unity in the Family

The family in its Eucharistic connections is what I would like to talk about, not about the family as a fundamental sociological unit, or other definitions of the family. The fact is that as individuals or families, our whole life works itself out in the Eucharist. And the Eucharist, itself, is reflected in our family life, in such matters as what we are doing when we sit down at table and eat.

Everybody knows that the family is the small Church and the Papa is supposed to be like the priest, somehow. And when we are gathered around the table, our partaking of physical food and also the fellowship around that table are supposed to be understood by us as an extension of what happens in the church. What happens in the church is extended into the family and what happens in our own families is also related to the Church. It is circular.

When we are in church at the Divine Liturgy we find ourselves in unity with the Lord. We find ourselves in unity with our bishop. We find ourselves in unity with each other. And when we hear about giving the kiss of peace and being reconciled, it is that same giving of the kiss of peace and being reconciled that is supposed to be happening in the family. And the kind of selfless love that we are learning in church with one another, we also practise in the family. Or at least we're supposed to.

It is not possible in family life to survive without forgiveness, for instance. If we live in a family and hold grudges, the family is not going to last long. If we don't give nurturing love in the family, the family is not going to last long. It will grow up warped and twisted, if this kind of selfless, nurturing love is not given.

Neither should there, according to our tradition, be any kind of conflict or significant difference between life in the whole assembly of the faithful and life in the family. So we sing at home troparia and learn our fundamental prayers at home, and all kinds of things about what we believe at home. Nurturing in the family is directly connected with what happens in the Church.

What is the distinctive and unique function of the Church—that which the Church does and which nobody and nothing else can do? What function does the local parish fulfill, which cannot be fulfilled by a voluntary community centre, a youth association or an old people's club? What human needs does the priest meet, which cannot be met, perhaps with greater professional expertise, by the social worker, the marriage counselor, the child care officer or the psychiatrist?

We reply: *The Church is here to preach the Gospel of Christ*, to announce the good news of the Son of God, crucified and risen. Such answer is true but incomplete. For our task as Christians is more than to preach and announce; we are here not merely to say but to do. *To do what?* 'The tradition which I handed on to you came to me from the Lord Himself, that the Lord Jesus on the night of His arrest, took bread and after giving thanks to God, broke it and said, *'this is my body, which is for you, do this as a memorial of me.'* Not say this but do this. The tradition which St. Paul and the other apostles received from Christ and which they, in turn, have handed on to the Church, consists not in words but in action, the action of the Eucharist, and what Charles Williams used to term, *the operation of the Mass*. Primarily and fundamentally, Holy Tradition is the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist that all the various expressions of Tradition find their source and their *Sitz im Leben*. Here is the lifegiving fountain from which everything else springs.⁴

The tradition, by the way, is the action of the Eucharist, because the tradition is Jesus Christ. We are not talking about tradition in terms of quaint customs that we, strange Oriental types, have developed over the years in the eastern half of the Byzantine Empire, under the influence of certain Semitic trends and customs, and not to mention, Byzantine history. We are talking about Jesus Christ and it is that tradition we have and maintain. It is not how many *poklons* we can do; it is not how many times we make the sign of the cross during the Divine Liturgy; it is not how many times we kiss all the icons in the Church. It is the tradition of Jesus Christ.

This then is what the Church is here for; this is its distinctive and unique function—to eat the bread of the Eucharist and

⁴ Ware, Archimandrite Kallistos, *Communion and Intercommunion* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1980), pp. 4-7.

to drink from the common cup *until the Lord comes again*. The Church is, in its essence, Eucharistic. It is a society founded on the action of the Eucharist, an organism that lives and breathes the Liturgy, that fulfills itself visibly in time and space through the continuing celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is the Eucharist that holds the Church in unity. When the Church offers the Eucharist, then and only then does it become truly what it is. In Iulia de Beausobre's words, the Church is a Eucharistic place of meeting around *the rock of the altar*.

Fixed vividly in my memory is a conversation that I had with a Russian priest in the centre of Moscow during August, 1976. *Our sufferings*, he said to me, *have brought us back to the essentials. Now as never before, we understand that the Church exists in and for the Eucharist. So much else has been taken away from us but the celebration of the Liturgy remains; and in this one thing, we have everything.*⁵

His words made me think of the story of the origins of Russian Christianity. When the envoys of Prince Vladimir arrived at Constantinople to inquire about the Christian faith, the Greeks did not offer any verbal explanation but took them to the Church of the Holy Wisdom to experience the liturgy. It was the action of the Eucharist that converted them.

The Eucharistic essence of the Church is indicated by the fact that the other sacraments such as baptism or marriage were originally performed as part of the celebration of the Eucharist. As a reminder of this ancient practice, even now, the Orthodox services of baptism and marriage begin with the initial blessing specifically associated with the Eucharist. *Blessed is the Kingdom*. In the Orthodox Marriage Office today, the couple drinks from a cup of wine. In earlier times before drinking from this common cup, they would first receive Communion together. Fortunately, it is now becoming more frequent in the Orthodox church to celebrate marriage as part of the liturgy according to the ancient pattern.

Fortunately also, the sacrament of ordination to the episcopate, priesthood and diaconate has never ceased to be performed invariably as part of the Eucharist. This is of fundamental importance for any right understanding of, for example, the episcopal office itself. The bishop is a Eucharistic person.

⁵ Ibid.

His primary ministry is to preside over the Divine Liturgy, and all his other functions as teacher and administrator are to be interpreted in terms of his role as celebrant at the Eucharist. The bishop's *cathedra* is not be regarded as the throne of a ruler or of a judge, or as a professor's chair; all such models are misleading. His *cathedra* is the seat that he uses as Eucharistic president. By the same token, an *ex-cathedra* pronouncement is not an arbitrary or arrogant statement, based on appeal to authority, but the kind of thing that a bishop says when talking pastorally to his flock during the Eucharist. Trouble starts as soon as the bishop himself, or others around him, cease to view him in a Eucharistic context and start to think of him as a prelate, prince or bureaucrat.⁶

The same thing goes in a family; what you see in the Church is the same thing that should be reflected in the family. If you get clergy who behave as autocrats, tyrants, prelates and princes (or sometimes they might even think of themselves as God) well, that is going to pass on to family life somehow, because the example that is given to the family of the family at the holy table is distorted. We are taught that the whole community of the faithful is to function on the basis of loving service. That's what our tradition as reflected here teaches us.

The whole of the community of the faithful is to function as a function of holy service, and so fathers and mothers lovingly serve their children, don't they? That much I know. And the children lovingly serve the parents. Well, there are defects in the plan, but nevertheless, that's the example that we're supposed to be following. I mean, there are defects in our relationships with each other in the Eucharistic community; it breaks down. We know what the example is, we know what we are supposed to do; we know we are supposed to love and serve each other. It would work all right if it weren't for sin. And so would the other programme that has been set to us since Apostolic times: the idea of lovingly caring for and nurturing each other, fathers loving and nurturing the mothers, and vice versa, the mothers loving and nurturing the papas. And then unto the children—parents are being exhorted not to despise their children...

⁶ Ibid.

And the children are encouraged to respect their parents no matter how intolerant they may seem to be sometimes. But that is the plan that we're supposed to be trying to follow. We're sinners and we mess it up royally sometimes...but that is what we are supposed to be repenting towards. The Eucharist is bigger than we think, you know. We think in our Western compartmentalised way that, just as I said earlier, the Eucharist is something we do occasionally when we have to, and we bring comfortable shoes for the purpose. But what effect does this standing in the Church have on us? This standing in the Kingdom. All those wonderful things that Father Alexander talks about when he talks about the Eucharist. (And if you haven't got the book yet, you better get it.⁷ It is grand. Read, mark and inwardly digest that book.)

All of the great things that he says about the Eucharist we mess up because we are sinners, and he recognised that, too, as any serious believer must. But that doesn't mean we give up just because there are wrinkles. Because we sin doesn't mean it is all destroyed and it cannot succeed. Eucharistic community does succeed and it does have its effect even though it is made up of a bunch of sinners. But even from the earliest times our Fathers have been saying that life in the Church is not for the saints—the ones who are perfect, righteous and just already. It is for us who are sinners. It is the hospital for us sinners. It is where we get better little by little, sometimes rather painfully. But we do get healed of our diseases as we turn to the Lord in this hospital, little by little.

To paraphrase Bishop Kallistos: there is a double invocation; the celebrant prays to God, *send down Your Holy Spirit on us and these gifts set forth here*. The people standing around the holy table and the gifts lying on it are *both* consecrated together so that *each* might become the Body of Christ.

What happens in the Eucharist is really profound and stunning. Not only do the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, but we, all together, also become the Body of Christ. In the Eucharist we are really ourselves. All together, we become ourselves, standing in the Kingdom at the Lord's table. And of course, the reason the

⁷ Schmemann, Fr. Alexander, *The Eucharist: Sacrament of the Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 1988.

Divine Liturgy takes so long and why we should be much more patient with it than we are, is because we are standing in the Lord's Kingdom; we are standing at the Lord's table. We are out of time. We come and we start to worship the Lord, we start to be united with him, we start to be ourselves, and this action takes as long as it is necessary. But in our western, really, really western, sore-footed, back-achy tradition, we like to put time limits on the Divine Liturgy and push it through and deform it a bit, so that it fits our roast-in-the-oven timer, and well, we reap the benefits of that pushiness because we forget how to enjoy being with each other in the Lord.

It is high time we woke up to what is right.

People who love each other don't really pay too much attention to the clock when they are in each other's presence. People who love each other are prepared to enjoy each other's presence. And that is part of what loving is about, enjoying each other's company, enjoying being with each other. And if we really love the Lord, we're going to enjoy being in His presence. And if we really love each other in the Lord, we are going to learn how to enjoy being in each other's presence, too, being with each other like the brothers and sisters that we are in the Lord, gathered around His table, waiting for Him to feed us. And He feeds us, of course, not only with Himself, but with each other in a kind of a way, because we are also nourished with His love through each other.

The Church can only find its unity in the Eucharist. And the family can only find its unity in the Eucharist. The family is one of those fundamental images that come to us through the Gospel. To describe what the Church is like... we are the family of God, we are sons and daughters of the Lord, of God; we are heirs of the Kingdom. These are profound realities, profound statements of who we are and what we are about. And usually we fail miserably about taking these statements seriously, partly because we can't believe it can be really true and partly because we are afraid of what might come next as the result of being a son and heir of the Kingdom. We know we want to be. We know we really belong there, but we are afraid of what the Lord might ask of us. He might ask us to do all kinds of things. He might ask us to be one of those fools. Although I don't think the Lord will ask too much in

North America for people to be fools for Christ, because He knows they are going to get locked up, most likely.

As a Eucharistic organism the Church realises (makes real) and maintains its unity through the act of the Holy Communion. It is the Eucharist that creates the oneness of the Church. Unity is to be understood not in juridical but in Eucharistic terms....⁸

This is really radical stuff, this living in relationship to the Lord...it is unpredictable and the Holy Spirit goes where He wills, and am I prepared to say *yes* to whatever He will ask of me? To forgive unforgivable people, to love people who are disease-ridden?

Unity is to be understood in Eucharistic terms. It is not imposed from above by some hierarchy, or administrative centre endowed with supreme power of jurisdiction. It is created from within by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.⁹

What can I say that he is not saying? This is what St. Paul affirms, exactly, that the bread which we break is a communion with the Body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that though there are many of us we form a single body because we all share in the one loaf. For ecclesiology there is no Biblical text more decisive than this: between Communion in the one Eucharistic loaf and membership in the one Body of Christ, St. Paul is asserting not just an analogy, but a causal connection. Because we eat from the one loaf, *therefore* we are made one Body in Christ. Expounding on this text, Professor George Galides of Thessalonica University remarks:

Communion makes us, according to Paul, one body, the Body of Christ. And this Body of Christ is the Church. Consequently participating in the Body of Christ, that is in the Church, and partaking of the Body of Christ through the Eucharist are two ways of saying the same thing. Thus the Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church itself; it is through this sacrament that the Church realises itself, that the Body of Christ is built and held together.¹⁰

⁸ Ware, *ibid.*

⁹ Ware, *ibid.*

¹⁰ Ware, *ibid.*

The family, to be its real self, has to be finding its life in the Eucharistic assembly. Papas can only be priest-like papas that mean anything at all if the family is participating in the Divine Liturgy and the family together is receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, and if the family is the Body of Christ as it is together assembled in the Church. And if we stand in Church (this is what we inherited and what we have ignored a lot, until more recent years)...if we are standing in Church and we are not receiving Communion, if we are not participating in the Body and Blood of Christ, then we are not in the family; we are not in the Church. We are not part of that life-giving community. For us, voluntarily, to stand in the church and not participate, is a horrific, horrendous thing, so much so that one of our early canons says if anyone dares to stand in the Church at the Eucharistic assembly and then not receive Communion, he is turning his back on Christ...and that person is therefore, *anathema*.

Our ancestors were convinced of the seriousness of participating in the Body and Blood of Christ, of just how profound that participation is and what its effects are, what it really means. You and I are icons of Christ, but we can't be icons of Christ if we are not participating in Christ. The Liturgy is not any kind of a show; it is Life. And if someone is out of communion with this Life, it has to be for disastrous, really serious reasons. Not because I am feeling grumpy today, because if I am feeling grumpy today, participating in the Lord Himself is going to cure the grumpiness. But if I am out of sorts and standing in the Divine Liturgy and allow myself to be ex-communicated from the Body and Blood of Christ for such a trivial reason (and it does happen sometimes that people are led down such a garden path), I starve my soul. I turn my back on the very medicine that will correct what is wrong in my heart.

This idea of the Eucharist being the sacrament of the Church, the Eucharist making real the Church, can be seen, for example, from what is perhaps the oldest Eucharistic text we possess: the Eucharistic prayer in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. The prayer, perhaps, has in mind the Syrian uplands with wheat growing on the hillsides instead of forests. *As this broken bread was scattered over the mountains and was then brought together and became one, so may Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom.*

That is what the prayer says. Precisely the same link between the oneness of the Eucharistic loaf and the oneness of the Church is affirmed here as in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. The interdependence of Eucharist and Church is the dominant theme throughout the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch. *Be careful to have only one Eucharist*, he says as he writes to the Philadelphians (the old Philadelphia not Pennsylvania!), *for there is one Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one Cup for union with His Blood, one altar just as there is one bishop with the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants*. The repetition of the word *one* shows very clearly how Ignatius envisions church unity: *one Eucharist, one Flesh, one Cup, one altar, one bishop*.

We preserve this ideal to this day; nothing has changed. Except for sin. The unity of the Church is manifest as a specific and objective reality at each local celebration of the Eucharist when the faithful, gathered around the bishop, *epeto avto* (*in the same place*, a favorite phrase of Ignatius) receive Communion in the *one* Christ, from the *one* Loaf and the *one* Chalice.

There is an integral relation in Ignatius' mind between the shared Communion in Christ's Body and Blood and the unity of the local Church gathered around the bishop. And the family is somehow supposed to be an image, an icon, a continuation, a participation in this unity. And so, the Eucharistic community reaches out in love to the world, and ministers to the needs of the world and preaches Christ and brings Christ, not just preaching it in terms of so many words dropping out of the mouths of preachers, but actually as living icons, preaching by action as much as by anything else.

The family also opens its arms in love. Another one of these stories by Tolstoy comes to mind. I was reading it not long ago. It's about these two pilgrims; one is a rich fellow and one a poor peasant. And they set out on a pilgrimage after a bunch of postponing and debating on when they could actually leave to go to the Holy Land. Then on the way they get separated, and the rich fellow goes on to the Holy Land and the poor fellow stays behind in this one little village. The village was in one part of Ukraine that had been decimated by famine.

The reason he stopped in the first place was because he had been looking for water with which to fill his canteen, because he was thirsty,

and he stopped in at this little hovel that was falling in. There was a fellow lying on the ground outside, and he was moaning and groaning. Then the visitor went into the house, and people were lying around ready to die in the same way. So what did he do? He *did* for them. He did whatever was necessary for them. With what food he had, he nursed them back to health. With what money he had, he bought them provisions and restored the family. And then he went home to his own family.

He treated this family, this starving family, in the same way as he had been treating his own family, as Tolstoy shows us at the beginning of the story. He treated them like his own. And, of course, he ran out of all of his money because he spent all of his money on this family, getting them a horse and a cart and a scythe and planting the crops for them. And once he had nursed them back to health, there was nothing left with which to go to the Holy Land. So he went home.

While the rich fellow was in the Holy Land, at all the holy places, he kept seeing his chum, his poor friend, in first place. In the Holy Sepulchre, he was there at the time when the Holy Fire came; he was at the front everywhere. In Nazareth, in Bethlehem, he was always at the front, but he could never catch him.

On his way home, he stopped in at a particular house. He was passing through the village where he had lost his friend in the first place and he thought he would try to pick up his trail...and when he was walking past this house, which was in good repair now, a little girl who had been on the verge of dying came out and said, *Grandfather, grandfather, come and spend the night with us!* And when he went in to spend the night with this family, he heard what his friend had done for them. And they explained that he had so healed them and done so much for them out of loving service that they were doing exactly the same thing for any pilgrim that came by. They went out of their way to look after and serve anyone who was walking past.

Well, to put it short, the rich fellow went back to his family, which was in ruins, because he was an autocrat in his own family and his son was lazy, because he had spoiled him...He expected him to be able to take care of everything automatically when he went away, but his premonitions were correct and everything was in shambles.

Whereas the old peasant who had been so poor and had so lovingly served his family, when he came back everything was better than when he left. Everything was prospering, and this old man was gathered to his family with joy and love...

Our families are supposed to be lovingly ministering to people round about. Mothers and fathers are to be loving each other and serving their children, and the children lovingly serving the parents, as far as they are able. And the family, as a whole, is to share this love in concrete ways with neighbours, with strangers, with friends, with enemies. To work out the Christian faith in concrete ways.

The family, itself, is an icon of the large Eucharistic assembly, and all together are icons of Christ. We all are expected to bring Christ to each other. And in our concrete working out of love, acting this love, living this love in our everyday life, we draw people—searching souls, hungry souls, people who are damaged, broken, ruined by life. We are to draw them to the Lord by our love.

It is not only in Tolstoy's stories that we see this occurring. I have seen it in a lot of families already—the practice of this loving, serving, Christ-delivering service. We can all do it. *We can all do it.* Because it is in the family that we learn how to love and forgive. We have to live every day with each other, with all of our warts, with all of our grunts, with all of our snoring, all of our squeezing the toothpaste the wrong way, with all of our leaving the lights on and leaving the doors open, or shutting the doors too loudly, with all of our not making our beds, with all of our little sins, some of them big, we have to live with each other, day by day, and cope with it.

We have to learn how to forgive in this real testing ground. But learning how to live with each other is a concrete practice of this kind of selfless love, because sometimes we can really hate each other in the family; we really can. In some families where there is no understanding of the love, hate really does come to the front. Intolerance. Bitterness. But we are called not to behave in this way. Sin or no sin, we are called to forgive each other...the resolution comes because, fundamentally, we learn how to love each other. We learn that forgiveness is an essential part of loving and letting people blow off steam. And that not taking it too seriously is part of this loving.

This is one of the reasons why Orthodox Christians are so *un-understandable* to people outside, because we can argue and scream at each other something fierce and we can still be good friends at the end. The argument may be a heated debate, but it is not hatred. It does not mean that we break communion with each other; it just means we have a difference of opinion.

Communities get along wonderfully, as long as you don't move the furniture. It's small things. In big things, we have one hundred percent agreement. But move the furniture, change the brand of incense, don't use pure beeswax candles one time...We agree about the fundamentals, but where the chairs are, whether we have pews, or electric lights even, can be a big issue and we can argue heatedly about these things. But in the end, we still forgive each other and we still talk to each other and it doesn't excommunicate us from each other. That's why we have the Kiss of Peace to straighten it out...And let's do something about that holy water. Let's use it, don't just admire it in the fridge.

The unity that we are talking about we experience in the Eucharist. There is room for the restoration (in a proper, orderly way) of all the faithful—instead of just the clergy—all the faithful giving each other the Kiss of Peace before Communion. It would go a long way to help make sure we are, in fact, reconciled with each other.

In Finland, after people have come to Holy Communion, they gather in a great mass following their *zapiwki* and their *antidoran*. They stand around and kiss each other. They give each other the Kiss of Peace, right there and then. I think that is a really good custom. It's a shade of what St. John Chrysostom has told us. He told us that after we have received Communion, Christ is so profoundly and really present in us that we ought to make prostrations in front of each other, to venerate the presence of Christ in each other.

We have to have, in the Church, concrete ways to remind ourselves that we have to be reconciled. The Kiss of Peace is one of them. It is sometimes easy to come to the Chalice and pretend that I am making my *own* Communion, and I am communing with my Lord, and this is *between the Lord and me*. But if we have to kiss each other before doing it, it helps to put the brakes on that heresy, because it is not

my Communion and *my business between my Lord and myself*. It is about all of us together, eating and drinking in the Lord, feeding on His love, being reconciled with Him and with each other, being made one with each other.

Just as in all monastic communities that are properly functioning, it is Forgiveness Sunday for monks every night; so in families that are properly functioning there is daily forgiveness. Monks have to do that, you know. At the end of Compline they have to make prostrations to each other. They have to get blessed by the Abbot at the end of it all. Then they can go to bed, after they have reconciled with each other. That kind of behaviour at home would help a lot. We should be a lot quicker to make a prostration in front of each other. Only our pride gets in the way. We must work at it in our families.

We must work at forgiveness in our families by living out love, by practising it in concrete ways. We do it here in the believing community: we kiss each other and hug each other and it means something. It is not just a formality. It better not be.

We embrace each other in the Paschal style. We call each other brothers and sisters because we are brothers and sisters. We love and forgive each other as brothers and sisters. And by doing this we form just that kind of soil that will nurture all of the sick and broken plants—the human lives around us. And as we ourselves are being healed in Christ, we open the door for others to be the same. And the family finds itself and grows, in this unity with the Lord, in this unity with His love.

4. Unity with Nation and Race

This topic, unity with nation and race, is a very dangerous subject to talk about. Extremely dangerous, because when we talk about unity with nation and race, we touch on people's insecurities in terms of really knowing who they are. Today we live in a time when all kinds of adopted people are very busy looking for their real parents. The parents who have adopted them and loved them are OK, but they want to know about blood. They want to know about their blood ancestry, which in itself is not bad, I suppose.

We also have religions that are fascinated by genealogy, to the point of having historical records hermetically sealed in caverns under the mountains. And you can find out by perusing these baptismal and other kinds of civil records, where you come from, who your ancestors really were, and that you actually did have horse thieves and pirates in your ancestry, perhaps—or worse—Vikings!

If one is looking for a sense of who one is, a sense of solidarity with one's roots and one is looking for it only in terms of one's physical origin, what will one find? When one looks at one's genealogy one does uncover, in one's family history, quite an assortment of people. In my family ancestry, they've mostly been farmers in Norway and some kind of tradespeople and ship captains in Scotland. But that doesn't mean they were anything perfect in any way. And if you go far enough back in my family, you uncover these very Vikings, you know. They're there!

The farm where my family is has been there for over a thousand years; there have been people living in that fjord for over a thousand years. It's those people who used to go and do naughty things to the English and the Irish and the Scots, not to mention the French. Their relatives becoming part of the Varangian Guard in Constantinople didn't save them either; it didn't do that much good.

To focus on the topic fully: *what difference does it make, then, if I am Chinese or Lichtensteinian? What difference does it really make?*

In the end, it doesn't make any difference; in fact, it doesn't amount to a hill of beans! Again, for the sake of illustration, I could wave the Norwegian flag and say, the *Norwegians do have some saving grace*, apart from Vikingness, because St. Olaf, we know, was first Christianised in England and when he tried to bring Christianity to Norway, he was kicked out by all the pagans. And where did he run away? To Rus'! He went to Rus'! But not only did he go to Rus', he came back and succeeded in Christianising Norway, at last, by beating them into submission. He followed the footsteps of St. Vladimir, you know. And it was only a hundred years later, not even a hundred years. He brought Christianity successfully to Norway. And what did he bring with him? Rus' priests. Centuries of history passed; Norway is now a Lutheran nation...Grieg is wonderful and there are many fine things...but all of this does not save Norway...

What good does it do for us to wave our national and racial flags? What it serves to do is to separate us. We do not find unity in placing emphasis on our national and racial differences. And yet, the political attempts to overcome these deficiencies don't work. Because, as much as in the United States they emphasise the melting pot culture, the Americanisation of everyone who comes, they still argue with each other about who's best. They really do. And we in this country argue a lot about who's best. What language we speak, what colour our skin is, whether we have blue eyes and blonde hair...or whether we have black hair and brown eyes. Arguing about trivial things like that is very divisive. It doesn't serve any purpose. What it does tell us is that we have not learned any lessons over the years...

Let us take an Old Testament example: the Jewish people. He chose them, He called them, in order to have a personal relationship with them. To what end? Not to save the Jewish race but to make the Jewish race a priestly, prophetic people, which would make them able, willing and ready to speak about this relationship with the one God Who loves His children. Did they do it? No, they didn't. Instead of having judges, they insisted on having kings.

They were tired of being different; being different brings some persecution. We all know that being different brings some persecution. They wanted and insisted emphatically that they wanted to be just like everyone else.

Instead of taking the separation to which God called them, as meaning being pure from the pagan practices and the idolatrous behaviour of the nations around them so that they could give a lesson in the right way to live, they said, *we're better than you, our God is All-Powerful*. Did they learn the lessons that were taught in the Old Testament time after time, when the Lord refused to go with them to battle because they were unfaithful? No! They kept expecting over and over and over again, that God was automatic...And in the end, they became so exclusive, that we find rather harsh encounters between these most exclusive types, the Pharisees, and our Lord, when He accuses them of being *concrete of heart*. And yet in the Prophets we hear time after time, the Lord saying, *I want to give you a heart of flesh; I want to live in you; I want to put my spirit in you*. Did they take it? No, they didn't.

How are we any different? How are we any different now? The Lord has called us, not to be citizens of Canada or any other nation on the earth. He has called us to be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. And if we are not citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven first before anything else, our citizenship in any country on earth is of little meaning.

The fact is that being a citizen of many earthly nations is of little lasting value anyway, because our borders shift. They do. Greece didn't exist for about 400 years while the Turks occupied it and it wasn't even Greece before that because it was the Byzantine Empire. Norway didn't exist for the most part of the past 1,000 years; it was always part of Denmark or Sweden...but what is the big deal in the end?...The border of Poland is one of the most shifting borders on earth, and it's not their fault...It goes like this in earthly politics; it's always like this. The borders of China, the borders of Russia expand and shrink; the borders of all of our countries are shifting.

The Lord is calling us, the way He called the Jews. He's calling us not to have a national identity. He's not calling us to be proud of being Montréalers or Ottawans or Saskatonians. He's calling us to be residents of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city which is the City of the Mother of God, the city that does not have shifting borders, the city which is permanent.

He is calling us to be members of His body, sons and daughters and heirs in His kingdom. He is calling us to live in our earthly countries as members of the Kingdom of Heaven, as pilgrims. If we live in our nations, wherever we happen to live, with the attitude of being a pilgrim, we have a much better hope of being of some use to that nation in which we live. We can contribute much more positively to that nation in which we live because we are not bound up by fear, as all of our nations are bound up. We are free; we are living in love. We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and whether it is Trudeau or Mulroney who is Prime Minister, it doesn't make so much difference.

It's a very touchy subject to talk about unity in the context of nation and race, because our unity with our ancestors, or relatives or friends, wherever we are, can only be real, can only have lasting effect, it can only be positive and fruitful, when we are first citizens of the Kingdom.

The *twinkling of the eye* with which the world ends, we have already experienced today at the Divine Liturgy. We were living in the middle of that twinkling of the eye. Right in the middle of that split second we were living and while we were standing in the Kingdom today, everything did change and everything was made new. And the Lord is asking us to take that newness with us and to bless the world with that newness, that everlasting newness of the Kingdom.

We are in the Church, the New Israel. And it is our call, as it was their call, to bless the earth with the love of God, to bring healing to the nations, by our prayers to heal the strife that tears people apart in national, racial struggles. And I go so far as to say, it is probably largely because we do not very seriously do our job in prayer that the world is in such chaos now.

We would rather fight with ourselves and argue among ourselves than take up the weapons of the Gospel and do something about it. When the Lord gave us prayers asking for peaceful times, freedom from civil war and strife, it was not formality. It was not empty words He gave us, because if we remember, our tradition properly *equates* word and action. He expects us to pray seriously these prayers and if we're praying for the healing of the nation, for the healing of the weather, for the healing of the moral condition of humanity, for the

healing of all of the destruction we are wreaking on the earth, the Lord will act.

He is asking us seriously to undertake this prayer and enable Him to act. The Lord has been trying to teach us for four or five or more thousand years that He does not wish to act unilaterally.

And if there is anything we have to learn about our relationship with the Lord, it is that it requires patience. It requires patience because the Lord Himself is patient. He waits for us. He waits for us, and as soon as we say *yes*, we have to have our running shoes on because He's off and running with us. But He waits. He doesn't come with a club and split us down the middle, trying to catch our attention, although sometimes we get a swift kick in the pants.

The Lord does not wish to intervene unilaterally. What He wants us to do is to live and act His love with Him and when we, together, with one voice, one heart, one mind pray for the healing of strife, for the healing of the weather, for the healing of the nations, for the healing of the whole earth, the Lord will act.

So, in the end, I can't say too much about unity in race, because unity in being Chinese can really only be found in Christ. Unity in being Peruvian can only be achieved in being united in Christ. And being a Canadian, the same way.

One cannot say that there is unity because of colour of skin. The colour of skin does not save; it does not bring love. Sin is in every one of us—nation and race. The only hope we can have for unity at all is to find our own unity with Christ and our unity with each other in Christ, in the Kingdom, in the Church.

When we have found that, we can begin to bless our nations and races. We can begin to bless them; we can begin to bless Norway with its trolls and Vikings...we can begin to bless Canada with its bilingual, poly-lingual, multi-racial problems. We can begin to bring healing to all of those native people who have been destroyed by our culture until now. We can bless this earth, our countries, our nations, our races, our relatives and friends and bring that healing and *real self-identity* that the Lord has prepared for all of us. But nothing will

happen until we have found the real and lasting and perpetual unity, which is in Christ.

As Ernest C. Manning used to say on the radio, and maybe he still does—it is our job to bring Christ to the nations.⁷ We don't have to have the *Back to the Bible Hour* to do it. But we have to bring Christ to the nations, and we can only do it by being firmly united to Christ.



Sharing *kolach* during tour of Alberta rural parishes, 2001

⁷Ernest C. Manning (1908 -1996) was the premier of the province of Alberta, 1943-1968, and a very longstanding radio evangelist.

Holy Communion and the Orthodox Believer

Based on two papers on Holy Communion in the Orthodox Church presented by His Grace at the scholarly lecture series, Windows to the East, held at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan in February, 1995.

It might strike some as odd that this consideration of an *Orthodox Theological Consideration of Holy Communion* begins with theological considerations. It really cannot be otherwise, because a theological foundation is necessary in order to understand how the Orthodox properly approach Holy Communion, or even how the Orthodox behave, which is often seen as a mystery in itself.

I am going to refer, in the course of my reflections, to some sayings of the Fathers of the Church. These Fathers are persons whose sayings, sermons, answers to questions and treatises help to shape our understanding of Holy Communion and all other aspects of our Orthodox life.

Some of the Fathers are early, especially the ones we generally recognise as the greater authorities, like St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, and St. John of Damascus. Others of the early Church Fathers are desert-types. There are also Church Fathers that are more recent. And here I will add that, although we may almost automatically assume that this term *Fathers* applies only to the period of the Cappadocians, for instance, and is limited to persons of that historical period, in fact, the term applies to significant persons in all ages, even to the present. In the same way as the age of miracles is not passed, so is the time of the Fathers not passed. And to keep you on your toes, some of the Fathers are Mothers!

Another important basic factor for us to note is that if one is looking in indexes for references regarding Holy Communion or Eucharist in the patristic writings, they are surprisingly limited. This is for a good reason: never in the history of the Orthodox Church has this

matter been considered in isolation from the totality of Orthodox Christian life and experience. It is part of a completely interdependent and interrelated whole; it cannot be precipitated out for independent study and isolated analysis.

A concrete example of what I mean can be found in the introduction to a book I have just now read, *Holy Women of Russia*. The author, Brenda Meehan, says:

I have had great difficulty writing this book, and I am convinced now that it is because the women I am writing about—vibrant, spiritually intense women — didn't like the way I was originally telling their story, making it part of a dry, scholarly analysis of the rise of women's religious communities in nineteenth-century Russia. It had been my intention to analyze in tidy chapters various aspects of these communities, including their origins, statistical profiles of their founders, the economic resources and institutional structures of the communities, the socioeconomic characteristics of the members and their cultural significance in pre-revolutionary Russia, but these women jumped up from the pages, refusing to be neatly contained within my chapters and within a framework that stressed the socio-historical at the expense of the spiritual.

In this context, I hasten to add to her words: *and at the expense of the personal*. The word spiritual can be taken today in a distanced, isolated, detached way. But the word *personal* demands relationship. Relationship on the level of being itself, that is what is involved in our perception of the meaning of communion.

As a last introductory comment, I will reminisce a little, as is commensurate with my now advancing age. It is about thirty years ago that I first came to Saskatoon, on a midwinter trip with the University of Alberta Mixed Chorus, and I must say that visit was a truly chilling February experience, compensated for by Saskatoon hospitality. In those days, following the ordinary course of student life in between lengthy reflections on the meaning of life in various coffee shops, I was taking some courses in philosophy and studying, among other things, metaphysics. We followed the course of St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* and we reviewed the proofs for the existence of God. Although the whole experience was taxing, I

have been happy for it, because those arguments have proved quite helpful in many a discussion with searching hearts since then.

But there is the catch that St. Thomas himself understood, and that was pointed out by our very patient professor: the leap of faith. Through the blessing of Irish humour, we were taught that although one may rationally achieve a logical acceptance of God's existence, that in itself is not enough. The leap of faith has to occur before what is called *belief* can be achieved. Belief is illustrated as being like confidence or trust—such as that confidence or trust in a chair or table to hold up one's weight when sitting or leaning on it. (Mind you, in Orthodox circles, don't let yourself be caught sitting on a table! There is special respect for tables, for a particular reason.) Anyway, it is the leap of faith that enables one to have this confidence or trust in God's existence. And beyond that lies relationship.

Philosophy is a useful tool, but it is not theology, and the topic at hand is an Orthodox theological understanding of Holy Communion. If we are treating the word *theology* as if it were some kind of philosophy, we will have trouble in understanding the Orthodox perspective. It is necessary to take another moment to remember what theology is. Theology, of course, means words about God, speaking about God. But it does not mean that we take a set, any set, of propositions about God and then begin to debate them, or even to adjust them according to our liking.

Theology is the result of an experience of God. It is not just the result of my experience of God. It is the result of our experience of God, and not just the result of our experience, here and now, or of just us in Saskatoon, but the communal experience of those who have encountered Him. Most pointedly, Orthodox theology reflects the Orthodox, Christian, shared-in-communion experience of God for the past two thousand years and even more.

A theologian is not someone who necessarily knows a lot about God—about history, councils, debates, arguments, ecclesiology, soteriology. Biblical tradition, translations, hermeneutics and so forth. And most of all, a theologian is not someone who is an original! A theologian is a person who has had experience of God and who, following the exhortation of 1 Peter 3:15, is prepared *to make a defence to anyone*

who calls you to account for the hope that is in you. And the authentication of this experience and this defence is found in its conformity to the shared experience of Orthodox Christians at all times and in all places.

In other words, and to quote the favorite Biblical passage of a holy Lutheran man, who repeated it many times to me in my youth: *Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever* (Hebrews 13: 8). And even this understanding of the stability of the Godhead is not something new, since we see it as God reveals Himself to Moses first at Mount Sinai in Exodus 3: 6: *I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*

With this theological foundation in place, we can begin to discuss the foundation of our Orthodox perception of Holy Communion and the results of it. And I would like to start by pointing out one of the most striking differences between the East and the West in its Christian experience. The Orthodox in the so-called East have always given Holy Communion to infants, in fact from the moment of baptism. In the West, for many hundreds of years, this has been withdrawn until a variously-timed *age of discretion*, that reflected the long-held requirement that a person must know and understand what is being received.

For the Orthodox, there is not and has never been such a requirement. There is no distinction made in ability to reason, to perceive what is happening, for we have given, do give and will give Holy Communion not only to infants, but to those incapable for various reasons of having any intellectual ability to comprehend anything, and to those in comas, and so forth. On the other hand, among these very Orthodox, there are still many who do not receive and have not frequently received Holy Communion, and this on the basis of the very acute awareness of the poisonous effects of sin.

Every day, near the beginning of Matins, we sing as a refrain: *The Lord is God and has revealed Himself to us! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!* In this phrase is found the foundation of the Orthodox theological approach, and the fundamentals of our understanding of Holy Communion. And while we are at this point, I will add that here we find our real roots: in our Semitic, Judaic,

Middle-Eastern background interpreted through Hellenism. From the very beginning, on the initiative of the One who is the Source of all Being, the Creator reveals Himself to the created. We see it in the beginning in Genesis. However, we may choose to take the details; the foundation of Genesis can be found in God's revealing Himself to mankind, His creation. He walks and talks with mankind before the Fall, and yes, even after it.

But there is an interesting detail for us to notice also in the Creation narrative, a detail that is not there for nothing. In Genesis 1:26 we read: *Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...'* It is repeated again in chapter 11, verse 7 of Genesis, as God interrupts the handiwork of our pride: *Come, let us go down and there confuse their language...And then a little farther along, in chapter 18, we have the well-known appearance of God by the oaks of Mamre. Here, we have the Lord repeatedly speaking in the singular, but visibly presented in the form of three men or angels during the encounter with Abraham, and then in the form of two angels for the encounter with Lot in Genesis 19.*

God reveals Himself as a Community of Being, not only in language but also in visible form both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the latter, it is most particularly so at the moment of the baptism of our Lord, when, as we hear in the Gospel according to St. Mark (1: 10-11):

And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, *You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.*

And more: God reveals Himself not in a mere abstract community of being, but in a Community of Persons with whom there is interaction and interrelationship. But this interaction and interrelationship, which St. Augustine and all the Fathers admit is founded in love, is not self-enclosed. It reaches out. It creates life and invites the created into a relationship with the Creator. The life of the Holy Trinity begets life in love and then maintains a similarly loving and personal relationship with the created. So God reveals Himself to us, and as the Lord, intends that this revelation should bring about *relationship*.

That *relationship* is in fact, communion. And that communion is the communion of love: the communion of life-giving love that invites imitation. Human beings will imitate the selfless, life-giving love of God, in obedience motivated by this very love.

And so it is for this reason that we rehearse the great moments of this revelation at more important liturgical moments. In the Anaphora of St. Basil the Great, for instance, we participate in this repetition of the historical revelation, as also in baptism and at the Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany. God reveals Himself to us in creation, at Mamre, at the Red Sea, at Sinai, in the Judges and the Prophets, in holy persons in all ages, and then in culmination in the incarnation of our Lord, God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Word of God Who takes flesh, and in the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

What this all comes down to is that in celebrating the Divine Liturgy, we bring into the present moment all the past saving acts of the Holy Trinity. And it does not stop there. We bring not only the past saving acts of the Lord into it but also future acts, including a commemoration of the Second Coming. The reason why we are celebrating all these past, present and future events is because we participate in them and we have a personal relationship with them. And this personal relationship with the Holy Trinity and all the saving acts of history is not, as one might think, a mere facet of our existence, something we do as just a part of all the rest of what we are. This personal relationship is enacted on the level of our very being. It is the substance, the foundation of who we are; for who we really are as persons can only be discovered in the perfection of the relationship with the One Who created us.

The more deeply we are identified with God—the living out of His love, the imitation of Him—the more we are really ourselves, because we are more approximately what God created us to be. The more we insist on a life of our own choosing, and neglect our communion with God in living our life, the more distorted we become from what we should be and become parodies of our true selves.

When we are speaking of these matters, it must be said that if one is going to try to understand the Orthodox theology of Holy Communion, one must take continually into consideration the

Mystery of the Body of Christ as described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 and following. And at the same time, the very purpose of the Eucharistic assembly must be recalled, as Father Alexander Schmemmann points out at the beginning of his book. *The Eucharist*, quoting the Apostle Paul in his disciplinary comments in 1 Corinthians 11:18-34:

When you assemble as a church... writes the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. For him, as for all of early Christianity, these words refer not to a temple, but to the very nature and purpose of the gathering. As is well known, the very word *church—ekklesia*—means a *gathering* or *an assembly*, and to *assemble as a church* meant, in the minds of the early Christians, to constitute a gathering whose purpose is to reveal, to realise, the Church. This gathering is eucharistic—its end and fulfillment lies in its being the setting wherein the *Lord's Supper* is accomplished, wherein the eucharistic *breaking of bread* takes place...thus, from the very beginning, we can see an obvious, undoubted triunity of the assembly, the eucharist, and the Church, to which the whole early tradition of the Church, following St. Paul, unanimously testifies.

We believe that, for the sake of love, for the sake of enabling us to be restored to the personal communion with God which we ourselves had rejected and broken, the Word of God took flesh, lived, died at our hands, rose again destroying the power of Hades, and ascended into heaven. He left us the Divine Liturgy of His Body and Blood in order to feed us, and to maintain and increase the unity and identity between ourselves and Himself.

In the light of these facts and all that has been presented already, here is what is written about Holy Communion by some of our Fathers. St. John Chrysostom says in his Homily 24 on 1 Corinthians 10:

...O blessed Paul...do you give the title of *cup of blessing* to that fearful and most tremendous cup? *Yes*, he says, and the expression is no mean title. For when I call it *blessing*, I mean thanksgiving, and when I call it *thanksgiving*, I unfurl all the treasures of God's goodness and call to mind those mighty gifts...I am giving Him thanks for having delivered the whole race of mankind from error. Being far off, He made them near, so when they had no hope, and were without God in the world, He constituted them His own brethren and fellow heirs.

So when we approach, giving thanks for these and all such things...we communicate not only by participating and partaking, but also by being united...

For what is the bread? The Body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The Body of Christ: not many bodies, but one body—so we are conjoined with each other and with Christ...” For the multitude of those who believed,” says the text, “were of one heart and soul.” (Acts 4:32)...He brought in, as one may say, another sort of dough and leaven, His own flesh—by nature indeed the same, but free from sin and full of life—and He gave to all to partake of it so we might be blended with life and eternity by means of this table.

I will add here parenthetically that St. John, when he uses the word *blending*, is not suggesting a wadding-together of us or a blending of us into some sort of indistinct life. He is saying that while being united to life, the Source of Life, that is, God, we still remain the particular persons, the unique creations that we are. And again St. John Chrysostom says in Homily 3 on Ephesians 1:

Look, I entreat: a royal table is set before you, angels minister at the table, the King Himself is there, and do you stand gaping? Are your garments defiled, and yet you make no account of it? —Or are you clean? Then fall down and partake... You have sung hymns with the rest; you have declared yourself to be of the number of those who are worthy by not departing with those who are unworthy. Why stay and yet not partake of the table? I am unworthy, you will say. Then are you also unworthy of the communion you have had in prayers. For it is not by means of the offerings only, but also by means of those canticles, that the Spirit descends all around...So I may not then be the means of increasing your condemnation, I entreat you, not to forbear coming, but to render yourselves worthy both of being present, and of approaching....and what then is our hope of salvation? We cannot lay blame on our weakness; we cannot lay it on our nature. It is indolence and nothing else that renders us unworthy.

And again St. John Chrysostom says in Homilies 29 and 30 on 2 Corinthians 13:

We are the temple of Christ; we kiss the porch and entrance of the temple when we kiss each other. And through these

gates and doors Christ both has entered into us and does enter, whensoever we communicate. You who partake of the mysteries, understand what I say: for it is in no common manner that your lips are honoured when they receive the Lord's Body. It is chiefly for this reason that we kiss.

St. Cyprian of Carthage says in his commentary on *Our Father*:

Give us this day our daily bread. These words may be taken either spiritually or literally, because in the divine plan, both readings are helpful for your salvation. The bread of life is Christ; now this is not everyone's bread but it is ours. We call this *our bread* because Christ is the bread of those who partake of His Body. And we ask that this bread be given us daily, lest we, who live in Christ and receive the Eucharist every day as the food of salvation, be separated from His Body by some grave sin that keeps us from communion and so deprives us of our heavenly bread.

In his lectures on the Sacraments, St. Cyril of Jerusalem says:

With fullest assurance, let us partake of the Body and Blood of Christ for in the figure of Bread is given to you His Body, and in the figure of wine His Blood, that you, by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, might be made of the same body and blood with Him. For thus we come to bear Christ in us...thus it is, according to blessed Peter, we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

Christ on a certain occasion discoursing with the Jews said, *Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you* (St. John 6:53) ...Contemplate therefore, the bread and the wine not as bare elements, for they are, according to the Lord's declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ.... Let faith establish you.

St. Hesychius of Jerusalem says, in his texts on *Sobriety and Prayer*:

Whenever we unworthy ones are thought worthy to be admitted, with fear and dread, to the Divine and undefiled Mysteries of Christ, our God and King, then let us all the more show forth sobriety, watchfulness of mind and strict attention, so that our sins and our small and great uncleanness may be destroyed by the Divine Fire, that is the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For when it enters into us, it straightaway drives from our heart the spirits of wickedness, and it does away with our sins of the past, and the mind is left empty of the restless importunities of evil thoughts. If, after this, we guard our mind strictly, and stand in the gate of our heart, each time we are again counted worthy, the holy Sacred Divine Body will more and more brighten the mind and make it shine like a star...

In his *Ethical Chapters*, St. Simeon the New Theologian says:

Just as Eve was taken from the flesh and bones of Adam so the two formed one flesh, so Christ, in giving Himself to us in communion, gives us His own flesh and bones. This is indeed what He gives us to eat. Through communion He makes us one with Himself.

All those who believe in Christ become akin to Him in the Spirit of God, and form a single body...United to Him spiritually in this manner, each of us will form a single spirit with Him, and likewise one body, since we corporally eat His Body and drink His Blood...One I say, not according to the person but to the nature of the Deity and the humanity: according to the divine nature, since we, too, become god through adoption...Before all ages, [God] has predetermined that those who believe in Him and are baptised in His name (the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit), and eat the sinless Flesh of His Son, and drink His precious Blood, would be justified by this, that is, glorified and would become partakers of life eternal...

If you want to know whether I am speaking the truth, become a saint by practicing the commandments of God, and then partake of the Holy Mysteries. Then you will understand the full import of this statement.

In *The Life in Christ*, St. Nicholas (Cabasilas) writes:

But when Christ dwells in us, what else is needed, or what benefit escapes us? When we dwell in Christ, what else will we desire?...What good thing is lacking for those who are in such a state? What have they to do with wickedness who have entered such brightness? What evil can withstand so great an abundance of good? What evil thing can continue to be present or enter from without when Christ is so evidently with us, and completely penetrates and surrounds us? The Eucharist, alone

of the sacred rites, supplies perfection to the other Mysteries...So perfect is this Mystery, so far does it excel every other sacred rite, that it leads to the very summit of good things. Here also is the final goal of every human endeavour. For in it we obtain God Himself, and God is united with us in the most perfect union; for what attachment can be more complete than to become one spirit with God?

But because of our selfishness we back away from our call to perfect communion. We satisfy ourselves with limited, cheap, even dark substitutes and alternatives. This is summarized by St. Nikolai (Velimirovich), in his *Prayers by the Lake*, who says:

[My soul], repent of your yearnings for this world and all that is in this world. For the world is the graveyard of your ancestors, which is gaping and waiting for you. Just a little longer, and you will be ancestors, and will yearn to hear the word *repentance*, but will not hear it.

Pontius Pilate asked our Lord, *What is truth?* He asked the wrong question, for truth is not a *what*, but a *Who*. Very often, in trying to understand the Mysteries of God, we get caught in the same kind of bind by asking the wrong questions. And if we dare to think that we can ever fully understand the Mysteries of God, and most particularly the Mystery of the Eucharist, we will do nothing but ask the wrong questions.

Hopefully, we are beginning to see that in the Orthodox understanding of the Mystery of Communion, everything is interrelated. Everything and everybody is connected to and influencing, and influenced by everybody and everything else. So much is this so, that if we are asked, *how many sacraments are there?* Our answer will be *God knows*. It is one or numberless. All of what we commonly distinguish as separate sacraments are, in fact, linked tightly to each other, all knit together so as to be inseparable, albeit distinct acts. And since, every time God confers grace upon us, we perceive this event to be a sacrament (including the holy kissing that St. John Chrysostom described), the sacraments are multitudinous. It is all a reflection of the life of the Holy Trinity, and we are back where we began.

It is the bishop as the chief celebrant of every Eucharistic Liturgy in his diocese, who in his person focuses the perpetuation of the Tradition of Christ, the true belief in the Holy Trinity. At his consecration, he is asked the following:

METROPOLITAN: AND HOW DO YOU BELIEVE?

(And the future bishop recites the Symbol of Faith:)

FUTURE BISHOP:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father, and through whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became Man; and He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life who proceeds from the Father; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the prophets; in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church;

I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

This is the Nicene Creed which we daily reaffirm, and which we confess from our baptisms. The presiding bishop blesses him with the Grace of the Holy Trinity.

Then, to clarify, the bishop-to-be is asked to speak in more detail about his Trinitarian and Christological faith. *(And the future bishop reads aloud the Second Confession of Faith as follows:)*

FUTURE BISHOP:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible; Who is without beginning, unbegotten and without cause, but is Himself the natural beginning and cause of the Son and of the Spirit.

I believe in His only-begotten Son, without change and without time begotten of the Father, being of one essence with Him, by Whom all things were made.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the same Father, Who with Him is glorified as co-eternal and co-enthroned, being of one essence with Him, of equal glory, and the Author of creation. I believe that the only-begotten Word, one of that same super-essential and life-giving Trinity, came down from heaven for us and for our salvation. He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became Man; that is, He became perfect man, yet remained God, in no manner was His divine essence changed by His participation in the flesh, nor was He transmuted into anything else. Without change He assumed man's nature, in which He suffered and died, although in His divine nature He was free from all suffering. On the third day, He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and He sits at the right hand of God the Father.

Furthermore, I believe and proclaim that Christ is one and the same in two natures after His incarnation, preserving those things which were in them and from them. Therefore, I also adore two wills, in that each nature retains its own will and its own action.

I believe those traditions and teachings of the one catholic and apostolic Church which have been received from God and men of God. I reverence, but not in the way of worship, the icons of Christ Himself and of the all-pure Birthgiver of God, and of all the saints, holy and worthy of reverence. The honour that I address to them, I direct to their originals. I reject and deny those who think and teach otherwise as persons ill-advised. I confess truly and sincerely our sovereign Lady, Mary, the Birthgiver of God, as having given birth in the flesh to one of the Trinity, Christ our God. May the same Birthgiver of God be my helper, protector, and defender, all the days of my life.

Amen.

This is the foundation of what Orthodox Christians at all times and in all places believe. And further, it is this foundation of faith that permeates the whole of our life. It participates in our assembly as the Church. It undergirds our appearing as the Body of Christ. It penetrates our thanksgiving and our offering of self and the whole of our being. It mingles with our commemoration of the living, the dead, the saints, the saving acts of God, our participation in Holy Communion. It profoundly affects every aspect of our life as we step out to meet people and events that will put our relationship with Christ to the test.

For it is about our relationship with Christ, being in love with Christ, being one with Christ, being found in Christ, being alive in Christ, that this is all about. It is, as these great phrases from the Divine Liturgy indicate: *Your own, of Your own, we offer to You, on behalf of all, and for all.* This all is not just us standing here, but for All: everyone and everything.

And again, when we come to the end of our commemoration of the departed and the living, we remember our bishop, asking that the Lord will protect him in all things, and enable him *rightly to define the word of Your truth.* And the faithful respond, *and everyone and everything,* revealing the interdependent unity of the faithful and the bishop, and the assembly and all of creation.

Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy

To further our understanding of the sacrament of Holy Communion we must also turn to practical and historical considerations regarding Eucharistic participation in the Church. First, let us look at Holy Communion as it is documented in the Early Church. The Canons of the Holy Apostles, while they are not exactly that, derive from the experience of the Early Church; sub-Apostolic times can also be accepted. And the point must be made that the influence of the Canons on the Church's interior life remains to the present day.

Canons 8 and 9 relating to Holy Communion state:

Canon 8:

If any bishop, presbyter or deacon, or anyone on the sacerdotal list, when the offering is made, does not partake of it, let him declare the cause; and if it be a reasonable one, let him be excused; but if he does not declare it, let him be excommunicated as being a cause of offence to the people, and occasioning a suspicion against the offerer, as if he had not made the offering properly.

Canon 9:

All the faithful who come in and hear the Scriptures, but do not stay for prayers and the Holy Communion, are to be excommunicated, as causing disorder in the Church.

The above sentiments were reiterated in Canon 2 of the Synod at Antioch in Syria in 341 A.D. What the quoting of these canons reveals is not that the Early Church liked to excommunicate people, but rather that a great deal of importance was placed on total participation in the Eucharistic Offering, particularly on the Lord's Day. At this point it is necessary to say that excommunication as mentioned here does not in any way imply a permanent condition. In the Early Church, and in the Orthodox Church until now, if anyone is excommunicated for whatever reason, it is considered as a temporary medicinal treatment for a spiritual malady.

In Apostolic times, we have evidence that people might have received Holy Communion every day. In addition, there was the strong sense of need to receive the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, every Sunday. It is well known that in those days, if anyone was absent from the Liturgy without good excuse for three Sundays, the person would be excommunicated for treating the Sacrament lightly, and would remain in such a state until there would be repentance.

Eucharistic participation did not and does not carry the sense of simply receiving Holy Communion. Reception as such is part of the whole and cannot be understood without the whole. In Early Church times, even receiving Holy Communion as a sick person unable to attend the liturgy was taken seriously as a part of the whole. It was customary for a presbyter, or more often a deacon, to take Holy Communion to

the sick immediately after the celebration of the Sunday liturgy. In fact, this is to this day standard practice among Egyptians who, for the sake of safety, do not keep Communion in reserve.

Now you might be ready to ask: part of the whole what? The first answer is: part of the whole Divine Liturgy. But this cannot be the complete answer, because the Divine Liturgy is not an end in itself, or isolated in any way. We see in the Divine Liturgy the greatest example of inclusiveness. It makes present all the saving acts of God. It makes us partakers of the Divine Nature. It includes and affects all the faithful, past, present and future. It realises the Body of Christ in the fullest sense of the term. It encompasses and enables the renewal of all creation. It puts us in the Kingdom of Heaven, in the paradise of God. It makes visible what was quoted from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians earlier (1 Corinthians 11:18-33): *When you assemble as a Church*, the coming together of believers in unity, in order and in love for the receiving of the Body and Blood of Christ in a worthy manner.

All of this may sound fine in theory, one might say, but for the Orthodox Christian, there is no sense of abstraction or disconnection with so-called practical reality in all of this. It must be understood that there is no division between what we believe and what we do: to use an expression in vogue these days, Orthodoxy is inseparable from Orthopraxy.

So the whole life of an Orthodox Christian is expected to be focused on the Eucharist, both preparing for it and working from it. As St. John of Kronstadt, an early twentieth century saint, says in his work, *My Life in Christ*:

Both public and private prayer are necessary in order that we may lead a truly Christ-like life, and the life of the Spirit should not become extinct in us. It is indispensable that we should attend divine services in Church with faith, zeal and understanding just as it is indispensable to provide a lamp with fuel or power if it is to burn and not go out.

and,

What does the Holy Church instill in us by putting into our mouths during prayer, both at home and in Church, prayers addressed not by a single person, but by all together? She instills in us constant mutual love, in order that we should always love one another as our own selves in order that, imitating God in three Persons, constituting the highest unity, we should ourselves be one formed of many. *That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us* (St. John 17:21).

Common prayer on the part of all teaches us also to share the things of earth with others, to share our needs, so that in this life also we may have all things in common and as one—that is, that mutual love should be evident in everything, and that each of us should use his ability for the good of others, not hiding his talent in the ground, that he should not be selfish and idle....

and,

By means of its divine service, the Orthodox Church educates us for heavenly citizenship...by giving *unto us all things that belong unto life and godliness* (2nd Epistle of St. Peter 1:3). Therefore it is urgently necessary for us intelligently, reverently and willingly to assist at the divine services of the Church, particularly on festivals, and to make use of the sacraments of Penitence and Holy Communion. But those who withdraw themselves from the services of the Church become victims of their vices, and are lost.

and,

If the Lord gives us Himself in His divine mysteries every day, ought we not absolutely to give freely, for nothing, perishable goods, such as money, food, drink, clothes to those who ask them of us? And how can we be angered with those who eat our bread for nothing, when we ourselves partake freely of the priceless and immortal food of the Body and Blood of the Lord?

The utter centrality in and necessity to the life of the Orthodox Christian of the Divine Liturgy and *ipso facto* the receiving of Holy Communion, is thoroughly underlined in what St. John has said. Not only does it unite us to Christ and to each other, it enables the

Christ-like, selfless, loving life that is the expression of this union, which we hear described by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter two.

It also reveals and makes present the fact, as the same Apostle says in his letter to the Philippians, chapter 3, that our citizenship is in Heaven. Of course, this is not to say that every Orthodox Christian is always aware or conscious of all of this all of the time. Far from it. But the Orthodox Christian, aware of his or her sins, will nevertheless sense much of this, almost by instinct.

As St. Augustine of Hippo says in his commentary on the Psalms:

Many, it is true, approach the altar you see here, unworthily, and God permits His sacraments to be profaned for a time. Nevertheless, my brethren, will the heavenly Jerusalem resemble these visible walls? By no means; you may enter with the wicked into the walls of this church, you will not enter with the wicked into Abraham's bosom. Have no fear therefore: wash your hands clean.

Not only is Holy Communion the object of our life in Christ and the end of our life, it is also the means to that end. It is that spiritual food by which we are enabled to hope to come into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Once again, St. Basil the Great sets before us the proper standard, and at the same time reveals the practice of the fourth-century Church (quoted from his Letter No. 93):

Daily Communion and participation in the Holy Body and Blood of Christ is a good, helpful practice. He (that is, the Lord) clearly says, *The man who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life*. Who doubts that to partake of life continually is really to have a life of abundance? For myself, I communicate four times a week, on the Lord's Day, on Wednesday, on Friday and Saturday, and on the other days if there is a commemoration of a martyr. If in times of persecution, individuals, under this compulsion, give themselves communion with their own hands, without the presence of a priest or minister, this raises no difficulty. In fact, there is no need to point this out, since long-established custom has sanctioned the practice under pressure of circumstances. All the hermits in the desert, when there is no

priest, keep the communion at home and give it to themselves. And in Alexandria and Egypt it is the general rule for each member of the laity to keep the communion at his own house.

And I quote from Letter No. 53 of St. Cyprian of Carthage, whom I cited earlier:

As the Eucharist is appointed for this very purpose, that it may be a safeguard to the receivers, it is needful that we may arm those whom we wish to be safe against the adversary with the protection of the Lord's abundance. For how do we teach or provoke them to shed their blood in confession of His name, if we deny to those who are about to enter into warfare, the Blood of Christ? Or how do we make them firm for the cup of martyrdom if we do not first admit them to drink, in the Church, the cup of the Lord by the right of Communion?

We see here, first in St. Basil, the very strong sense of the utter importance and centrality of receiving Holy Communion very often, even every day. And we see, too, that in some places the laity could have the Holy Communion at home for daily reception. At the same time, we see that St. Cyprian has exactly the same attitude toward its value, its necessity for the life of the Christian, whether it be in a time of persecution or not.

But he gives hints in his language, as did St. John Chrysostom in a previous quotation, that not everyone of the faithful was so prepared. There have always been those who have fallen prey to sin and are tempted to take the receiving of Holy Communion and, by extension, their participation in the community of the faithful, lightly.

We see the Apostle Paul rebuking those in Corinth who abused the sacramental feast by turning it into a picnic. We see St. John Chrysostom complaining that some are partaking of the Sacrament without proper reverence or regard. And we have yet another quotation from St. Martyrius, a Syriac Father of the early seventh century, in the *Book of Perfection*:

I shudder to mention something else that is the most dreadful thing of all done by people who show their contempt: at the dread moment which makes even the rebel demons shake, I mean at the awesome point when the Divine Mysteries are

consummated, when angels and archangels hover around the Altar in fear and trembling, as Christ is sacrificed and the Spirit hovers, many of these people will, on occasion wander about outside, or...will come in according to their whim and stand there showing their contempt by yawning as though at their excessive burden, being tired of standing up. At that moment when the priest is making this great supplication on their behalf, deep sleep gets the better of them, so slack are they; at this moment which causes even the dead to awaken, here are these people, fully alive and supposedly running after perfection, nevertheless sunk in sleep or wandering about expectantly for when they can quickly leave their place of confinement; for the Jerusalem of light and life is like a prison to these people—the place where Father, Son and Spirit dwell, where spiritual beings and the bands of saints together give praise and glory before God in holy fashion (Hebrews 12:28).

Again we see the awe with which the sacrament of Holy Communion was and is held, and the sinful response of some. There has been a tendency to find blame for this attitude in the fact that pagans had been admitted to the Church in large numbers in the fourth century. There is blame laid at their feet in the decreasing numbers frequently receiving Holy Communion, particularly from about the seventh and eighth centuries.

There are some who like to suggest, as I have sometimes done myself, that the allegorical interpretation of the Divine Liturgy, as being in its actions a re-enactment of the life of Christ by the priest, betrays an influence of pagan mystery religions; that the movement into allegory has also served to distance the celebration of the Eucharist from the people.

There are also some who like to say that because of pagan penetration, and to protect the Mysteries from profanation, there was discouragement to receive Holy Communion frequently and thus it became less and less frequent. At the present, I think I see rather the continuous dark thread of sin throughout. I think I see that, in the light of the Lord's saying, *many are called but few are chosen* (St. Matthew 22:14) there are some throughout all of Christian history who deeply love the Lord and want to be pleasing to Him and to be like Him and to obey Him and therefore to feed on Him. But there are others who, when they are confronted by the brightness of the

glory of the love of God in Christ, recoil in pain and rebellion. Thus they shy away from receiving the Divine Food necessary for the Life in Christ.

Let us examine the quotation from St. Martyrius just cited. He condemns all disrespectful wandering around and late-arriving. And what characterises many of our modern Orthodox Christians? For what do they even gain the admiration of some? For exactly this inattentive wandering about and this disrespectful late-arriving and early-departing from the holy place of worship. So much is this so, that we ourselves think we can allow ourselves to be disrespectfully casual. In our barbaric boorishness, we think it is acceptable to come late to the Lord's Banquet, to wander around, in and out, not to eat anything and to head off early. I can imagine the reaction we would get if we did this at a banquet of the Queen or the Lieutenant-Governor! And is the Lord any less than they?

When the Orthodox are hearing the readings from the Holy Scriptures, from the Gospels or from the Epistles, and when the Orthodox are celebrating feasts of the Lord, all of this is done and heard in the present. What is spoken by any of the Apostles, or recounted in the Acts, is taken to be spoken by us, here and now, in the present. The proper response is not: *oh, those naughty Corinthians*, or *oh, those Thessalonians*, or whoever! It is, rather, that we hear the Apostle addressing our sin or exhorting us to zealous, active faithfulness. The letters are written to us who stand there hearing the words. That is why we call the Epistles *the Apostle*.

It is the same with readings from the Gospels. We who hear the words participate in the events, in the works of the Lord. We hear the Lord Himself speak to us in the here and now. And in Holy Week, when we reread all the events of the Passion, we are not just hearing about them and kind of remembering them; we are participating in the very events. We are with the Lord in everything, both acclaiming and betraying Him (yes, betraying Him, since we are all sinners, and every sin is a betrayal, and we could all be Judas), and we are at the Last Supper with Him, and condemning Him, and by the Cross, and at the Tomb, and at the Resurrection. And then we are with the Apostles during the forty glorious days of Pascha, and at the Ascension, and with the Mother of God and the Apostles at the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

And we are present at other kinds of events, too. We are at the Nativity; we are at the Baptism. We are at the Presentation, the Annunciation, the Transfiguration and the Dormition. Look at how we are praying. On the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, in pre-Lent, we identify ourselves with the Prodigal: *I have recklessly forgotten Your glory, O Father...And now I cry to You as the Prodigal: 'I have sinned before You, O merciful Father...'*

On the day of the Entrance of the Lord to Jerusalem, we are saying to Him: *Like the children with palms of victory, we cry to you, O Vanquisher of Death: 'Hosanna in the highest...'*

On Great and Holy Thursday, we pray to the Lord: *Of Your mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant...and we identify with the repentant thief. And on the Day of the Resurrection, we do not say that on this day Christ rose, but rather, is risen, in the present tense. Thus the Resurrectional Tropar declares in song: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tomb bestowing life.*

Our identification with events continues on past the Paschal cycle. It shows itself in such feast days as the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple: *Today is the prelude of the good will of God...the Virgin appears in the temple of God...let us rejoice and sing to her...*

And on the day of the Lord's Nativity, we sing: *Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One...And at the Baptism, we sing: Today You have appeared to the universe, and Your light, O Lord, has shone on us... And at the Annunciation, we sing: Today is the beginning of our salvation...*

All of this shows concretely how we understand the telescoping, the compression of time, much in the way the Exodus is celebrated at the Passover. It also reveals that in celebrating the Eucharist, we encompass not only God's saving acts in all of history, but also every act and event of our daily life. And what separates us from this perfection? Sin and rebellious pride.

In all of this, I could have gone on at length about the exterior details of how we have adjusted our manner of serving the Divine Liturgy, and how the receiving of Holy Communion has likewise adjusted to

cultures, circumstances and so forth. But if we are truly to understand any of the adjustments, which are readily available in all sorts of books in English and even more in French, it all has to be seen in the context of how the more there are changes, the more things remain the same. From the Council of Carthage (256 A.D.), Lobosus, Bishop of Vaga, says: *In the Gospel the Lord says, 'I am the truth.'* He said not, *'I am the custom.'* Therefore, the truth being manifest, let custom yield to truth.

Regardless of how much we progress technologically, we human beings are in fact no different from our forbears, for good or ill. In our time, there are zealous faithful, who diligently fulfill the will of God. There are also those who are bound in sin, and there are those who betray. Indeed, it can be very ugly, but bad as it be, we should remember God's word to Elijah at Horeb. *Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him* (I Kings 19:18). And in the midst of all, it is still through the Divine Liturgy, through the receiving of Holy Communion, that our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is indeed *the same, yesterday, today and forever*, unites us to Himself, feeds us, enables us to live in Him and enables us to serve each other in Him. It is He Who brings unity to the whole of our life, and indeed to the whole cosmos!

When the Orthodox do anything, it is understood that God's blessing and participation must be invited into it. And so we make the sign of the cross on bread before cutting it. It is, after all, not simply bread from the supermarket we are eating here. The bread is connected to the Bread of Life.

We certainly do not sit on tables. Why? Because the home is the *small church*, and the table in it is like the Holy Table in the Temple. We treat the table with the same respect as we do our eating at it. And St. Martyrius, from the source already cited, speaks to us again: Indeed, anyone who has enjoyed the good things of an ordinary meal ought to render thanks for this enjoyment, otherwise he will be reckoned as animal-like and lacking in discernment. As one of the saints said, *a table from which the praise of God does not ascend is no different from an animal sty*, and it is not the table that is reckoned to be like a sty, but rather the person eating from it resembles an animal, owing to his lack of thanksgiving.

One of the characteristics of Orthodox Christians, one that makes us sometimes appear foolish or naive, is the readiness to take the Gospel, most particularly, quite personally and even literally. For example, when someone is struck by St. Paul's exhortation to the Philippians to *pray unceasingly*, it is taken as a personal admonition by God—a personal call via the Apostle and the person seeks to do so. Another might be struck by the Lord's admonition to *sell what you have, and give it to the poor, and follow Me*, and proceed to do so.

Messages of repentance in personal encounters are abundant. They are the fruit of the experience and expectation of communion. It does not matter whether the person is a simple, uneducated person or a really well-educated scholar. For instance, a person such as St. John Chrysostom knows well about the literary criticism of Scriptural texts, but that does not in any way conflict with or inhibit the same Scripture's ability to convey God's personal communication with and call to us, each and all.

Radical obedience, our behaviour might be called. We tend, as the Gospel directs, to put our relationship with Christ into concrete practice. Out of love, we try to serve persons. Hospitality, for which the Orthodox are known, comes from our loving desire to serve Christ, Who comes to us in all visitors.

Sometimes they are angels, like the guests of Abraham and Sarah. Care for neighbours, friends, the poor and the needy is likewise springing up from the love of Christ. Tender care for and communication with our environment are the *ecological expressions* of this same loving relationship. As God in His saving love for us takes flesh for our salvation, so for the salvation of the world, we reveal, we carry Christ in our flesh. We concretely and materially bring our being in love with Christ into every part of living.

In closing, I bring to you two final quotations on Holy Communion and the relationship of love it entails. The first quotation is taken from *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*:

When the father saw us, he was filled with joy, and embraced us, and offered a prayer for us. Then, after washing our feet with his own hands, he turned to spiritual teaching, for he

was well-versed in Scriptures, having received this charism from God. He expounded many key passages in the Scripture for us, and having taught the Orthodox faith, invited us to participate in the Eucharist. For it is a custom among the great ascetics not to give food to the flesh before providing spiritual nourishment for the soul, that is, the Communion of Christ. When we had communicated and given thanks to God, he invited us to a meal.

The second quotation is an extract from St. Maximus the Confessor's "Centuries of Love," taken from *Drinking from the Hidden Fountain: A Patristic Breviary*.

Do all you can to love everyone. If you are not yet able to, at the very least don't hate anyone. Yet you won't even manage this if you have not reached detachment from the things of this world. You must love everyone with all your soul, hoping, however, only in God and honouring Him with all your heart. The friends of this world are not loved by all, but neither do they love all.

Christ's friends persevere in their love right to the end. The friends of this world persevere only so long as they do not find themselves in disagreement over worldly matters. A faithful friend is an effective protector. When things are going well, he gives you good advice and shows you his sympathy in practical ways. When things are going badly, he defends you unselfishly and he is a deeply committed ally.

Many people have said many things about love. But if you are looking for it, you will find it only in the followers of Christ. Only they have true Love as their teacher is Love. This is the Love about which it is written: *If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, but have not love, I am nothing* (1 Corinthians 13:2). *Whoever has love has God, because God is Love* (1 John 4:16).

For further study, I would like to recommend to you Bishop Kallistos' book, *The Orthodox Church*, in which he outlines this whole *theology of communion* as being based on the understanding and teaching of the sub-Apostolic Bishop and Martyr, Ignatius of Antioch. As he tells us, what he says is not new, or an invention, but merely a passing-on of what he had already received, just as the Apostle Paul had done.

How does one draw a conclusion on so deep, so pertinent, so alive a topic as Holy Communion? Perhaps only with some thoughts from our perspective—the effects that this life-giving Mystery should have upon our lives, for we cannot participate in the Holy Communion of our Lord God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and then go about life as if nothing happened.

By the sacrament of Holy Communion we are changed. We are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are in the world but not of it. We must, whether we live as Orthodox Christians in the first, fourth, fifteenth, twentieth or thirtieth centuries, live out, in the very practical ways that St. Maximus described, the reality of God's love for us, of the redeeming and saving acts of our salvation wrought by the Word of God, Who took flesh for us, for mankind, and for our salvation.

Sermons

Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit -

As we begin the Sunday of the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, we are beginning our serious preparation for Great Lent. The Publican and the Pharisee are given to us to remind us of what must come first in our lives, how truly to be as Christians.

Thus the Lord says that there was a Pharisee who observed the Law very carefully. There was also a Publican. Do you know what a Publican was? He was a tax collector. A tax collector in those days was not like today's Canada Customs and Revenue agent, who operates according to very strict rules. It was not like that in the Roman Empire. The emperor in Rome had many tax collectors, and he said to them: *I need this amount of money; get it to me!* The tax collectors then went to everyone and extracted from them that amount of money, in one way or the other. The people were very careful to hide their money and goods as much as possible so that when the tax collector came, he would not be able to get everything. The tax collectors had no restrictions placed on them. They took as much as they wanted. For example, if they were nasty, they could take all the cows, and it very often happened like that.

Last week we saw another tax collector called Zaccheus. When he repented of his behaviour and turned to Christ, he not only gave one-half of everything he had to the poor, but he also gave back four times as much as he had taken from everybody. Can you imagine how wealthy this man was? Can you imagine how much he had taken from people and still had money left over? He was not only an expert tax-collecting thief, but he was also a very responsible developer of his goods and belongings, even though he had gotten them wrongly. This kind of a man changed his way and turned to Christ.

In today's parable, the Publican standing in the temple knew what kind of a person he was. That's why he said, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. The Pharisee, who was a careful observer of the Law, standing up in front of everybody, showing himself very obviously to be a perfect observer of the Law, seeing the Publican, said: *Thank God I'm not like that!*

The Lord makes clear to us who was saved. The Publican who was repentant was saved. Even though the Pharisee was a strict and careful observer of the Law, his heart was full of pride. His heart was full of himself, not of God. By parading his right observances to everybody around him, he was inflating himself and his pride, saying, *See what a good man I am. See what a good observer of the Law I am!* What the Lord wants from us is not a careful observance of the Law, although it is a good thing to obey His commandments. He wants us to obey Him out of love, not out of fear or pride.

Zaccheus repented. He began to observe the Law and do what was right out of love. At that time, the Law was the only way given in order to live life rightly according to God's will. In fact, the Law is all about love. If we look at the book of Exodus and the Ten Commandments (the Law), we can see that it is the same thing that the Saviour says to us in the Gospel. That is, love God first. All the rest is about loving God in the right way, by loving human beings and showing that love to other human beings.

If people are in love with God, if our hearts are filled with love for God, we will fulfill the Law naturally. We will naturally have the love of God in our hearts. We will not make idols. We will honour the Sabbath day. We will honour our parents. We will not murder, lie or covet. We will do these commandments naturally out of love. That's what the Lord wants from us. He wants us to love Him. That's what being a Christian is all about. It is about deepening our love for Jesus Christ, getting to know Him better and better, and showing this love by loving each other.

This community is growing. How is it growing? By Christians learning to love each other, to trust each other, to work together in love. Other people see this love and feel safe to come into our midst.

In the world, there is nothing but deception and lies. People live in fear about one thing or the other. As we live our Christian lives, we spend a lot of time asking the Lord to take that fear away from us. Fear poisons our lives as we live in the world. And as that fear is taken away from us by God, we become more our real selves. The more we know Jesus Christ and the more we love Him, the more we can tell the difference between truth and lies.

We can see the truth about ourselves much more, and we can see the lies about ourselves, too. A lot of people suffer agony about themselves, because they have accepted lies about themselves. These lies come from the devil and from the way they have been mistreated by other human beings. They don't know the truth about themselves.

That's what living in a Christian community develops because of the love of Jesus Christ. Deepening our love of Jesus Christ heals our spirit and enables us to become truly ourselves—in Jesus Christ. It enables a community of believers to become a place where people can find healing in their hearts and souls, and find out the truth about themselves. They will find out that they are not so bad, that they are healable and repairable; in other words, that there is hope. Then they can witness together because of this love so that others in turn can find themselves and find a place amongst us in due course.

I have already heard how this community has been developing just like this. This means that the Lord is preparing this small community (small right now) to become an important witness in this city. We must make sure that there are no divisions among us and that we resist the devil. Rather, knowing the truth about the love of Jesus Christ, we should live in forgiveness of one another all the time, praying for each other all the time, so God will strengthen, heal, renew and perfect us in due course.

Once the foundation of love is solidly laid, the Lord will send more people. This has been the case everywhere in this country. But the foundation of love has to come first. The sooner this foundation is laid, the sooner the Lord will send others to participate in this foundation of love.

Please persevere in this, and let this coming Great Lent be a time for you all to deepen your love for the Saviour and deepen your love for each other. Clean the house of your heart and your soul of whatever dirt is lying around, so that when you come to Pascha you will be able to rejoice with great joy, having made some progress in love and in repentance in the Lord. You will thus come to Pascha a little bit closer to the Lord and little bit more loving of the Saviour, all of you personally and together.

God grant you to be like the Publican. Repent, but repent of your sins knowing that God loves you, that He will heal you, and, as He promised, He will always be with you.

Don't be shy to speak about Him when He gives you a clear sign to your heart to offer somebody a word of encouragement, hope and love. In so doing, you will glorify Him, our Saviour (your Saviour) to Whom, together with the Father and the life-giving Spirit be glory now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

St. Vladimir's Orthodox Mission, Halifax
24 February/ 9 March 2002

Love Your Enemies (St. Luke 6: 24 - 38)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit -

The society in which we live is a society that wants to have its cake and eat it, too; that is the old saying we are taught when we are young. Our society wants both to eat the cake and keep it. Why is this? Because of a loss of direction, a loss of purpose. The only purpose our society seems to have is to satisfy every imaginable passion and desire. Our society is like a spoiled child. *No* has never been said to that child, and every time there is an obstacle that child throws a terrific tantrum. That is what we have become.

Take, for instance, the fact that in our society in North America crime is rampant. And people lament that there is no order, and things are going to pieces everywhere. At the same time, this very society at every opportunity lambastes Christianity, which is at the foundation of North American culture.

In these days it is not “*in*” to be a Christian. In these days if you are a Christian then you are out of it; you don’t fit in, you’re fanatical, and yes, they say you are a hypocrite. So what? We are all hypocrites. Who is so honest as not to be a hypocrite? Who is so righteous as not to be a hypocrite? It is hard to find such a person. Greek philosophers went around looking for honest people and did not find them. No one finds them. Why? Because we are all enmeshed with sin.

North American society wants to deny the existence of sin. So our society is full of crime and we have uprooted the source of righteousness in our society. And we so cry and lament. We recognise that in our society we have done bad things to each other. *Oh, but that’s not sin and it’s not my fault either. Somebody was bad to me and so even if I steal your purse, take your life, rip your eyes out or destroy your reputation, I can’t help it.*

And so we give people in society, the ammunition to say it is everyone else’s fault except mine that I do bad things—that I misbehave, that I steal, that I kill, that I do horrible things, that I lie, cheat. *It is somebody else’s fault, not mine.*

Our society in the face of all of this becomes very defensive. We don't want people abusing us in various ways. We don't want to be the object of theft, rape, murder, pillaging and looting. We want to be protected. And so what do we do?

We really do not lead people into repentance any more, because repentance doesn't exist in our society any more. We punish. Because we are afraid, we enact legislation. When people do bad things we put them behind bars and then let them out again in a couple of months. All of this is nonsensical and irrational, if we pay attention to it.

We want order, but we rebel against order. We want morality, but we rebel against morals. We want joy and happiness in life, but we uproot that very source of joy and happiness. We want people to be good to each other, but we make ourselves so afraid of each other that we do not dare to be good to each other, in case we get sued. (And that's coming to our country, too.)

Day by day we fall deeper and deeper, subtly, into this crazy mire. And our own Christian foundation, our *Orthodox Christian* foundation gets eroded and eroded because the society in which we live is so full of pressure and so persuasive, it is very hard to keep up.

The Lord has very clear things to say to you and to me about this. The fact is that things have not changed. We think that here in almost the 21st century, we are so modern, so up to date, far ahead of anyone before us. But the fact is that what we have done is conveniently to forget all about history. We like to think everything was naively rosy before or primitively stupid. People didn't know how to live until now.

The fact is that all those primitive people knew how to live. And where they are still alive in the world and where they have been left more or less alone to themselves, they do know how to live. We don't. The Lord says to you and to me, *Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your consolation* with your big houses, your "electric everything" and every imaginable comfort and you got it on the backs of the poor around the world. Maybe we do not get it on the backs of the poor right next door, but we have surely extracted it off the backs of those overseas. And because we are so

comfy and cosy now, we cannot expect to be so comfy and cosy after this life.

Woe to you who are full now for you will be hungry, and probably we will find ourselves hungry in this life. As a result of the unleashing of deadly passions around the world, societies which have been relatively stable and self-sufficient, are ripped apart and people are dying of starvation on land that could perfectly well sustain them and meet every need. But because they are filled with such hatred, and killing each other and stealing from each other, nobody except the most evil have enough to eat.

Woe to you who are laughing now for you will mourn and weep. And this one that runs our society: Woe to you when all speak well of you for this is what your ancestors did to the false prophets. And what happened to the false prophets? They went down with the society they were pretending was all right, but it was dead.

We live in a society that is full of hatred and fear and self-interest. And what does our Lord say to you and me? The opposite. *Don't kill or put in prison your enemies. Love them. Don't sue and put in prison those who do bad things to you. Pray for those who abuse you. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Love your enemies.* How far are you going to get with these things in society these days?

In fact, what the Lord says next, people laugh at us about. He says, *if anyone strikes you on the cheek give the other one to be struck also, and more, if anyone takes your coat away from you, let him take your shirt, too.*

And here is another good one: *Give to everyone who begs from you. We're told now, don't give to anybody who begs because they might use it to buy a drink.* On the other hand, Bishop Gregory of Alaska reminded me about this last year..Talking about this, he said, *I do what my father said and my uncle also: if the person asks something from you, then he must need it. And who am I to ask what he needs it for?*

OK, so I'll give him something. If I start to say, I am not going to give, then I am judging him. *Maybe you are taking me for a ride. But the Lord says if you are taking me for a ride, then, I should pray for you that God will help you get over that disease that makes you take me for a ride.* So

maybe I am going to give something to the person begging on the street, but I don't simply give; I give with God's blessing, and if this person is misusing that gift then with that blessing comes God's kind of ruler on the knuckles. The conscience will prick that person (if there is any crack) when we give to these people who are begging, and if there is any possibility of good coming from it, some good will come.

Here's what is even harder to take. *Give to everyone who begs from you and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.* And His next words are ones that some make fun of and twist around, because they cannot stand the truth. The Lord says *do to others what you would have them do to you.* There is no person with any kind of real sanity, half-sanity, quarter-sanity, eighth-sanity who says, *go ahead and beat me up; I don't care; I just love it.*

No, people want to be loved. They want people to care about them, pay attention to them, to respect them as creations of Christ. And that's why the Lord says *do to others what you would have others do to you.* Because we want people to love us, to care for us. We cannot wait for them to do it first. We have to do it. And why we? Because we have, as we will sing a little while later, *seen the true light; we have received the heavenly Spirit.* We have been filled with the love of Jesus Christ. We have to be the example.

This is what the Apostle was saying to us this morning. The world thinks, in its cynicism and hatred of Christ, that it is the weak and flabby way to go, to be a Christian. I do not blame them in a sense because some people who call themselves Christians have namby-pambied themselves into a lump of stale Jello. This is a distortion of the love of Christ.

The love that Jesus Christ is talking about has nothing to do with warm, fuzzy, gutless, shapeless, formless feeling. It has to do with raw courage, acts of the will, determination, love with no strings attached, willingness to suffer even unto death for the sake of Christ. That is not wishy-washy, fuzzy emotionalism; that is life-giving, no-strings-attached love.

The Apostle Paul said to his disciple Timothy, what is said to all the clergy but is especially applicable to every last one of us. He said, *be*

an example to the faithful. Be an example of love. Have the guts to do what Jesus Christ said and did. Have the guts to be like the saints. Powerful. Strong. Defenders of the truth. Livers of the truth. Reveal Jesus Christ in your lives in the way you love so that by your example others will see and believe. And not just believe but become completely a part of the Way.

Our first responsibility here today, this morning, is to ask the Lord to come into our hearts more deeply, more fully, with greater power by the Grace, the inspiration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So that despite our sins, our shortcomings, our selfishness and our brokenness, others will see His love, will be touched by His love as we live our lives and come to be united with Him. And then, they, too, will have the same joy, same hope, same power and same victory that you and I have and that we participate in.

In two more weeks there is going to be in Alaska the glorification of St. Jacob Netsvetov. Yet another of the courageous saints of North America, he is the first half-Russian, half-Aleut priest to be glorified as a saint. He was not the first of the mixed-blood priests, but is the first to be a saint. He was a co-worker with St. Innocent of Alaska, and with him, translated Scripture and the liturgy into Yupik and Athabaskan languages in south-west Alaska. The legacy of this great warrior for Christ is that the Yupik and Athabaskan peoples are the most stubbornly faithful Orthodox people in all of Alaska.

And we think we have it hard now. You read the life of this man, going all over on stormy North Pacific and Bering Sea waters, freezing half to death, starving part of the time, and not even an electric *anything*. And what he accomplished in his life!

And then, just later this year two more saints will be glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church, as they were part of the original Russian mission. One priest, John Kochurov, was a great builder of the Church. If you go to Chicago and see our Cathedral, it was built in his day. This man together with Fr. Alexander Hotovitsky, also a priest brought here in the time of St. Tikhon, a co-worker with St. Tikhon, worked in the Chancery in New York City. They then went back to Russia in 1918; they went as there was an Assembly of the whole Church and they went back as representatives of the Church

of North America. And when they went back, Fr. John Kochurov became the first priest-martyr of the Revolution and Alexander Hotovitsky died in a labour camp fifteen years later.

Could you imagine the strength of such persons? To be a first martyr, like Fr. John Korchurov, and refuse to deny Jesus Christ and to die? Or to be like Fr. Alexander Hotovitsky—to serve, love and witness to Jesus Christ as a slave labourer in Siberia?



Canonisation of Frs. John Kochurov and Alexander Hotovitsky

The Lord calls you and me perhaps not to such outstanding and heavy tests of our commitment to Jesus Christ. But He says the same to you and to me, as He said to Fr. Jacob, to Fr. Alexander, to Fr. John, and to all the others. *Be an example. Reveal Christ. Show by your love to Whom you belong. And to what Kingdom you belong.*

Let us do as St. Herman, the first and foremost among North America's saints, teaches: *From this day, from this hour, from this minute let us love God above all and do His holy will.*

Holy Resurrection Parish, Saskatoon,
17th Sunday after Pentecost
2/15 October 1994

Feast of the Holy Apostles, Ss. Peter and Paul

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit -

It is not always so often that we, in our comfortable North American way of living, reflect upon the kind of life that the Apostles lived. We really don't have the consciousness of what life was like for the Apostles. It is true that both the Apostles Peter and Paul sometimes lived in decent quarters, especially in their earlier years. But when it came to the time of the preaching of the Gospel, their witnessing for Christ, they were always living in other peoples' houses as they travelled from place to place. That was especially the case with the Apostle Paul. He travelled almost everywhere in the Roman Empire for the sake of speaking about his love for the Lord Jesus Christ, trying to introduce people to Jesus Christ, trying to win them for the Kingdom of God.

Both the Apostles, Peter and Paul, suffered misunderstanding and rejection, very often rejection, because people did not want to hear about this love of Jesus Christ. Often enough it was because Jesus Christ did not fit their expectations of the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. And so, they rejected Him. With this rejection, they rejected the Apostles as well. Both of the Apostles suffered a great deal because, as we hear Paul admit, he was shipwrecked many times. This means he was floating around in water, holding on to pieces of wood.

Ships in those days were not like the ships these days, with fancy lifeboats. Just broken up pieces of wood was what kept the Apostle Paul from sinking into the Mediterranean. Many times the Apostle Paul was put in prison for the sake of his love of Jesus Christ. And as we hear time and again in the readings of the Epistles, he was beaten, sometimes very severely. Prison life in the Roman Empire days was not like it is now. There were no such things as carpets, beds and televisions. In the days of the Roman Empire there was straw, mess everywhere and often enough, chains holding the prisoner to the wall. And in the course of all of this, beatings and beatings and more beatings.

These are the kinds of things that the Apostle Paul suffered for the sake of his love for Jesus Christ. You and I are not likely in Canada to face that kind of suffering, physical suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ, although once in a while it does happen. But we very much will experience with the Apostle Paul, rejection by people who are afraid of the love of Jesus Christ.

We can be rejected because we are Orthodox Christians, because we carry the love of Jesus Christ in us and with us everywhere. Because we live and act out of love of Jesus Christ, people who do not understand it can reject us because of their fear of this love. It's funny that people are afraid of love, but that is the case. People become very much afraid of this kind of selfless, serving love which is so characteristic of Christians, especially Orthodox Christians. It is that which people run away from.

That does not stop you or me from loving the Lord Jesus Christ and it does not stop you or me from serving other people in the way of Jesus Christ. But we have to understand that the Lord said in more than one way and more than one time in the Gospel that if the world is rejecting Him Himself, it will reject you and me. So we have to expect this kind of rejection and carry on loving and praying for and serving people anyway.

What happens is that in due course the Lord overcomes the fear of other people and the rejections of other people. When we persist and persevere in loving and serving them, the Lord breaks down the barriers of fear that imprison other people and in due course they are able to come with us to love and serve the Saviour. But it takes our remembering first of all that none of us is here on this earth to be served. Every one of us is here on this earth to serve. Jesus Christ washed the feet of the Apostles. The King of the Universe, Himself, is taking care of you and me down to the numbering of the hairs of our heads. If He is serving you and me in this way, who are we not to serve in the same way always? We are not greater than our Master.



at Holy Trinity Sobor, Winnipeg, 1987

That is why it is very characteristic especially of Orthodox Christians that we are hospitable people. We welcome people as guests. We treat people who come to our home as Christ Himself. We are serving people: if they have needs, it is characteristic to look after them. Russian and Ukrainian literature is full of stories about people who are doing exactly this thing, serving other people, caring for our people. We are being true to the path of our Saviour Jesus Christ when we are behaving like this.

The Apostles Peter and Paul also are setting another very good example for us: they gave their lives completely to the Saviour. And so we should do the same. But also note, the Apostles Peter and Paul had some strong differences of opinion as to how to go about preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We can see in the writings of the Apostle Paul how strongly he disagreed with the Apostle Peter on some occasions.

The fact of this disagreement does not mean that they were enemies because they disagreed. They had different opinions. The Lord prospered the multiplication and spread of the Gospel just because of these different opinions. These two very different men preached

the Gospel in two different ways to different groups of people. They were suited to different evangelical tasks, and as a result of this, many more people were converted to the love of Jesus Christ than if they had gone about doing their preaching and serving in exactly the same way.

They had disagreements, yes. The Apostle Paul had disagreements about how to go about things with the Apostle Barnabas and Mark, too. Still, that did not mean division. Even if there was disagreement, there was always among the Apostles, reconciliation and harmony. Differences, yes, but co-operative differences.

To illustrate this, we have the death of the two Apostles Peter and Paul expressing their unity and their harmony in Jesus Christ...in the same city, the Apostle Peter was crucified upside down as he wished, and the Apostle Paul was beheaded. This characterises in a very visible way how the Lord Who is the giver of life gives so many gifts to His children, you and me; how He creates all of us uniquely and differently; and how He uses all these uniquenesses, these differences, this variety of gifts to give life to this world, to heal the broken-hearted, to heal the sick, to re-unite the separated, to bring home the lost, to give life and light where there is darkness. The Lord uses all of these gifts in us for good, to His glory and for giving life.

In a few short years this parish will be celebrating a hundred years of witness in this building, here on this corner, for the love of Jesus Christ. 1904 was not the actual beginning of this parish. This community's worshipping life is four or five years older than that. This temple was, glory be to God, consecrated by Archbishop Tikhon, now St. Tikhon.

It is such a blessing. Many people have come to the Saviour through the love of Jesus Christ in this community. The Lord is working and will continue to work in this community, showing His love and giving life.

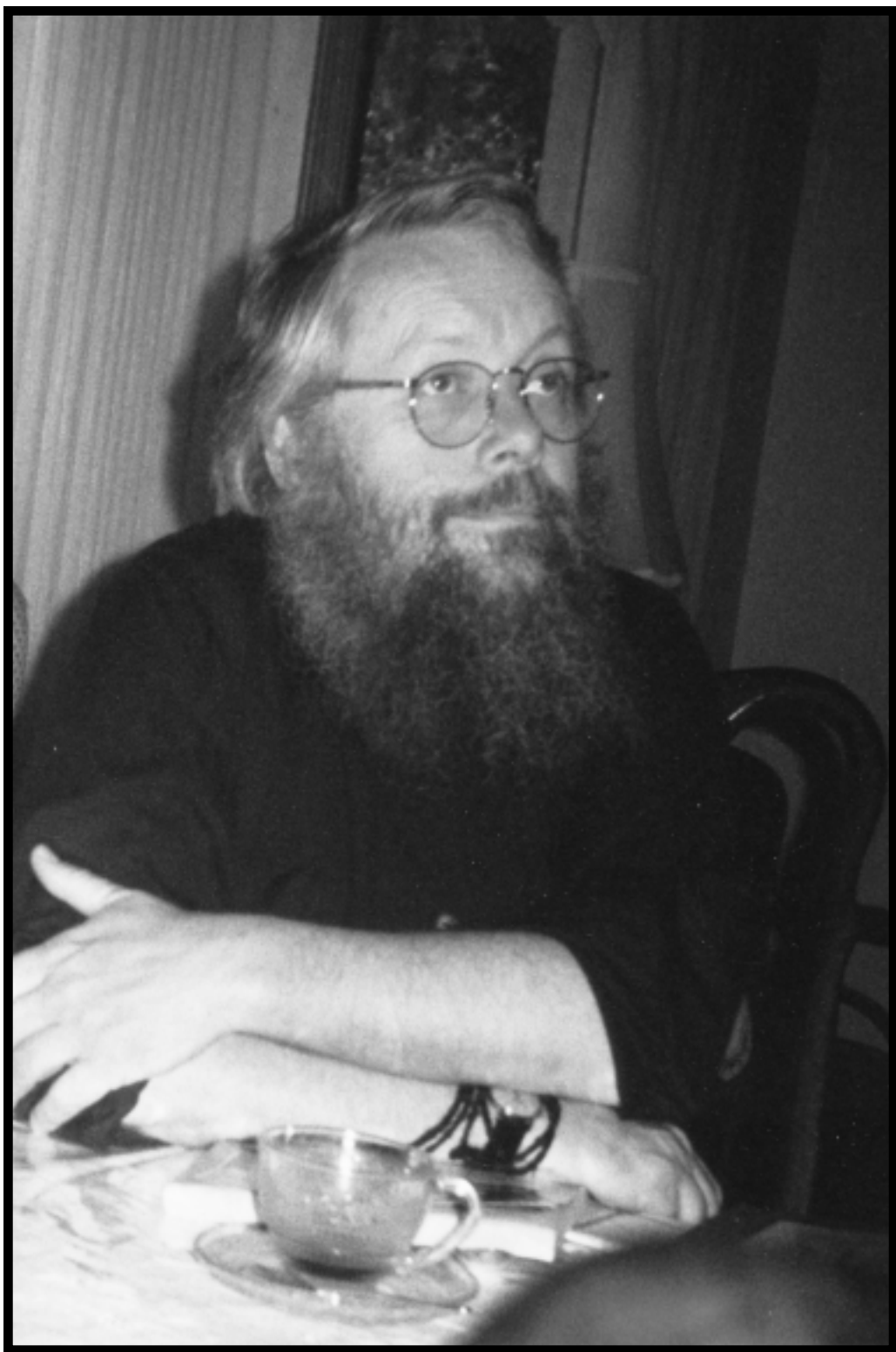
Let us ask the holy Apostles Peter and Paul to pray for us today that the Lord will give us strength to be faithful to Him until the end as they are, and to serve Him with all of our hearts that we may glorify

our Saviour, enter with these Apostles into the Kingdom, and glorify with them this same Saviour Jesus Christ together with the Father, Who is everlasting, and His all-holy good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Holy Trinity Sobor, Winnipeg
29 June/12 July 2000



Pentecost, 2002



Saskatoon, 1995

Is Bible Reading, Bible Study, Orthodox?

In these days, in some parts of our Archdiocese at least, we are seeing more often that believers gather together to study the Bible. Some of the groups are large, some are of just a few persons. Sometimes the study is used catechetically, to help prepare those converting; sometimes it is for the deepening of the faith of lifelong believers.

It is not a phenomenon to which our Orthodox world is lately accustomed. Sometimes believers fear what is apparently new. Often enough, simply because Protestants are so well known for this exercise, the practise may be accused of not being Orthodox. Some may say that it is dangerous and while studying history, theology, Christology, ecclesiology, iconography, Fathers and so forth is acceptable under certain circumstances, study of the Bible is not....

It used to be that even unbelievers knew a lot about the Bible simply as literature. Our language used to be thoroughly laced with proverbial expressions related to the Bible. No more. And so it seems to be the case in other languages as well nowadays. Everywhere there seems to have been a great emptying of language, in both oral and literary use, of any Christian (and by extension, of course Old Testament) references. What is significant is that there is such a great change in just a generation. In my childhood many people spoke on a daily basis using these very Scriptural quotations, allusions and proverbs. Now it is rare, and where they do exist, they are most often completely lost on the youth.

Our ancestors would also lament the great loss of this Scriptural base in any language. And if we draw a comparison compared to the time of the great Fathers whom we admire, whose words we love to study and quote as Orthodox, we find that their speech and writing were liberally salted with Scriptural references, allusions and ancillary proverbs. They bathed in Scripture.

Because I am deeply concerned about this slippage, even in myself, I am anxious to encourage the study of the Bible by all the faithful, and daily reading of it. I believe firmly that it is vital, an absolute necessity of life. This is so, not only for the feeding of hearts and souls of all believers, but also for forming those entering the Body of Christ. After all, if we don't know Christ thoroughly through His words, if we don't encounter Him in the Gospel and the experience of the Apostles, if we don't know about God's saving acts in human history, how can we call ourselves Christians, let alone call ourselves Orthodox?

Our ancestors, from the earliest times up to the recent past, understood the need for daily reading of the Scriptures. And particularly so with the New Testament; they did read it daily. Some would simply follow the regular course of prescribed Epistle and Gospel readings for every day. Many memorised some of the passages. Not many years ago, I met an old couple who still lived in a pioneer-style house in the country, and they told me it was their favourite evening activity. After all work was done, one would sit or recline, and the other would read aloud the Bible and they enjoyed it greatly. Clearly, they were reading at least chapters at a time, not just a few paragraphs. And they had done it all their life together, it seems. I knew another pious widow who not only read Scripture in the evening; she would also read the Fathers, their Scriptural comments and their theological works. I am that told our beloved Archimandrite Vasily of blessed memory, of St. Tikhon's, regularly had the New Testament read to him, and that once, on coming to the end of the Apocalypse, he is said to have remarked that that was very good to hear, and now why not start again.

Paul Evdokimov, in his worthy book, *Ages of the Spiritual Life*,⁸ devotes a chapter to this matter. He reminds us of the seriousness of this habit. Not only did Evagrius exhort us to awake, Bible in hand; the Council in Trullo also exhorted priests to cultivate in the faithful the greatest intimacy with the Bible. He gives us the following extract from St. John Chrysostom, which reveals to me that humans are just the same now as fifteen hundred years ago: *'I am not a monk,' some of you say...but your mistake is in believing that the reading of Scripture concerns*

⁸ Evdokimov, Paul, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1998)

only monks, because for you it is even more necessary since you are in the midst of the world. We are told that St. John encouraged the home-study of the passages of Scripture to be read in Church, to accustom children to daily reading and discussion of what is the core of their parents' lives. It is this daily exposure that makes the Scripture an organic part of our whole life, that helps to keep us aware of Christ's presence, that helps us to remember who we are and to Whom we belong and to Whom we can turn at all times. It is a saving study, a nourishing study.

Evdokimov says that this is because the reading presupposes the state of prayer which is the environment, and *which brings the words to maturity.* And so Christ Himself speaks to us as we prayerfully, daily read and reread the Sacred Scripture.

Before reading, we should customarily ask Him to reveal Himself to us, and to lay ourselves open to Him. In this way, like the Fathers, we can come to live the Bible. The elders among Romanian monks are firm in recommending to all the daily reading from the Psalter. They remind us that the devil definitely does not appreciate it, and that this is all the greater reason for us to do it.

Evdokimov adds a warning that making the Scriptures the object of simple speculative knowledge, simply studying it as mere literature, trying to reduce it only to some sort of science, is to profane the Scriptures, and to profane the Word Himself. That is not to say that there may be no careful analysis of the text. Even the Fathers applied such discernment, and so did they from earliest times. But this process must always be in the context of prayer, of being nourished in the bosom of the Church, in the tradition of the Fathers, in the heritage passed to us from Apostolic times. They and we, says Evdokimov, must see that all of the Scriptures are a *verbal icon of Christ.*

So what about group Bible study? Well, group study has its own importance, particularly in our unsupportive environment. It certainly has its catechetical application and I have myself seen good effect when participants learn about the links between passages, and between Old and New Testaments. The Scriptural texts allow links to patristic comments and even to the Councils, and the whole linkage

helps to develop the ecclesial *mind* in a person. This is particularly so, when led by a priest, deacon, or some other person with a theological education.

Sometimes, however, the faithful might gather in groups for studying the Scriptures, just for feeding the soul, perhaps even without such leadership. Especially in our environment of personal opinions, variable truth, and so-called individuality, there is great danger in personalising stray ideas. But when a group of faithful gather together, and when all read the complementary literature, and reflect on the Scriptural passages, the honest mutual reflection on the Bible helps not only to keep any one person from drifting away, but also to nourish each one with the encouragement of the experience of others. This is particularly so when the passages read lead to talking about how the Lord has blessed each one recently. All of this not only helps one deepen one's understanding of the Bible itself, it helps to keep general consciousness of the presence of the Lord in one's life more active and immediate. The group study supplements the private study, enriches it, deepens it, broadens it. It helps also to check any misinterpretations that tend to insinuate themselves into one's thinking.

I want to repeat a little from Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, from the words of the dying Starets Zosima (no doubt based on an Optina father) on the Bible. The Starets has just reflected on his love from childhood for the story of Job, and continues:

Oh, what a great book it is and how much we learn from it! What a miraculous book is the Holy Bible and what strength it gives to man! It is like a sculpted model of the world, of mankind, and of the characters of men; everything is there and it contains guidance for us for all ages. How many mysteries are solved in it, how many revealed! Every day I bless the rising sun and my heart sings to it as it did before; but now I love the sunset even more, and its long, slanting rays bring back to me quiet, touching, tender memories, dear faces, and images from my long and blessed life. Over everything here hovers the Lord's truth and justice that moves our hearts, reconciles everything and is all-forgiving.

The elder then exhorts parish priests, no matter how poor, to spend an hour a week reading Bible passages to children and to explain

from the heart. He rightly says, that when a priest shares from the depth of his heart, with tears even, the stories from the Old and New Testaments, the people, and especially children, will readily understand and receive it with the same love. What he says is simple and straightforward and correct. He emphasizes the need for this loving sharing of the love of Christ, for:

Only the masses of simple, humble people and their growing spiritual power will be able to convert the atheists, who have been uprooted from our native soil. And what good is the Word of Christ without an example? A nation is lost without the Word of God, for every human soul thirsts for His Word and for the good and the beautiful.

Joining these thoughts with his Biblical awareness that God's love permeates all creation, he relates an example he once shared with a youth, similar to those about St. Seraphim of Sarov:

Take, for instance, the fierce, formidable, frightening bear, roaming through the forest...And I went on to tell him about the bear which once came to the hut of a great saint who was seeking salvation in the forest. The saint, feeling great tenderness for the beast, came out fearlessly, gave it a loaf of bread, and said: 'There, go along now, and may Christ be with you.' And the fierce bear went obediently and meekly without hurting the saint. The boy was deeply moved by the story, because the beast had not hurt the saint and because Christ was with him, too. 'Ah,' he said, 'how wonderful it is, how everything of God's is good and beautiful!'

This is what I perceive to be the result of such an immersion in Scripture. And without this depth of Scriptural experience, our country, our nations, are lost.

Mother Alexandra Memorial Lecture:

Orthodox Christianity in North America Foundation and Future

Before I begin, I also want to add to what Vladyka KYRILL had to say about the foundress of this Monastery, Mother Alexandra. I hope her family really appreciates her contribution to our life in the Orthodox Church in America as much as we do, because as Vladyka KYRILL said, this is a real monastery...the foundation that was laid by Mother Alexandra was good, solid, Christian, firm and properly-directed. And things, even with the bumps and difficulties that always follow monastic life, have continued to go in a good direction...This is exactly because of her wise, God-loving, Christ-loving foundation.

Having been asked to speak on the foundation and future of Orthodox Christianity in North America, I am going to ask in advance for your forgiveness for the inadequacy of my words. In speaking about the foundation of Orthodoxy in North America, it is an important detail to remember that it is two hundred and ten years ago, about now, that the original missionary monks, including Ss. Herman and Juvenaly, began their trek across Russia and Siberia, towards what is now Alaska.

It is important to keep remembering a detail such as this. But it is more important to keep a remembrance of a more important foundation—that is our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself. It is because of the Saviour that the monks accepted the obedience to go. It is because of the Saviour that they undertook and persevered and endured this walk, and rough sea voyage (the North Pacific is no picnic!) for a year. It is because of the Saviour that they reached out and loved the indigenous peoples they met in the new land. And it is because of the Saviour that they began to do this in the local languages. It is also because of the Saviour that they fulfilled this obedience even in the face of death. It is also because of this Saviour, and this love that this well-laid foundation persisted until now, even with a lack of clergy to supply sacraments.

In talking about being in the face of death, it is important to recall what Father Michael Oleksa tells regarding the martyrdom of St. Juvenaly. The details of his martyrdom are handed down by the families of the people who killed him, but who are now Orthodox Christians. What happened is that St. Juvenaly, a priest-monk, was landing in Yupik territory in west Alaska, and as he was standing up in the boat, wearing his golden chain with his golden cross (as he was an Igumen), it happened that this particular phenomenon was considered by the Yupiks to be a threat. So when they came closer in the boat, the Yupiks began to shoot arrows at him. And the story, in the oral history of the Yupik, is that they thought he was a strange kind of person; it looked to the Yupiks who were shooting him that he was treating those arrows as if they were mosquitoes, he was brushing them away.

But in fact, as Fr. Michael Oleksa points out, he was not brushing away anything, he was blessing the people who were killing him! He was making the sign of the cross on them. And then he died. That's how Christians are supposed to be doing things. He was giving a concrete example of Christian life. And how the people responded even until this day, is itself an example of how things are turned by the love of Jesus Christ. It was his successors, not himself, that brought the good news in a way that they could accept. But when they accepted, did they accept! The Yupik people today, whom I have visited in Alaska, are the strongest of them all! One village, Napaskeeak, I remember visiting for a summer conference of that district of Alaska. Here you have a village of 495 people, most of them are Yupiks. Of the 495 people, 490 people are Orthodox. It's quite a different thing to go to a village that is completely Orthodox. Their whole life is just like it would be in Bulgaria, Romania or Greece. It is just so refreshing.

The original missionaries laid a firm foundation in the love of the Saviour and those who followed them did the same. And they were funded not only by the monarch but also by a missionary society of believers that cared about bringing the hope and consolation and joy of life in the love of Christ to peoples who had not yet heard. It was not just in speaking about Christ that the missionaries laboured. They were fishing for human beings, and they caught them for Christ in the net of His love. They lived among them as Christians. They

served their neighbours as Christ. They lived with them and as Ss. Herman and Innocent did in particular, they called attention to the abusive behaviour of exploiters, the Russian American Company of fur traders.

And there quickly sprang up indigenous disciples and local missionaries, like St. Jacob Netsvetov. And when we're talking about how we go about spreading the love of Jesus Christ, St. Herman did it by baking cookies. You don't have to be a possessor of some kind of technical degree in missionology, in order to be a missionary. To be a missionary you have to know how to love. St. Herman spread the love of Jesus Christ with those cookies he was baking for children. And those families that converted because of the loving ministrations of St. Herman and the cookies that he baked, are still Orthodox Christians today in Alaska and still keep an oral history in those families about who St. Herman is.

In due time the focus shifted from explicitly missionary ministries because of immigration to the USA and Canada of peoples from European and Mediterranean Orthodox places and countries. In meeting the needs of these persons it was necessary both to continue the feeding of the expanding flock with the food of Christ and to help these rational sheep to adjust to these new conditions. Regardless of any mistakes, all of this was undertaken as a result of the firm foundation of the love of Jesus Christ our Saviour, Who lived in the hearts of His servants.

It is interesting to note that it was about a century ago, that included in this feeding of sheep was a very large regrafting of many persons, both in Canada and in the USA, who returned from the Unia to Orthodoxy. We know certainly that St. Alexis Toth was the main but not the only catalyst here. In Canada it was Theodore Fuhr in central Alberta. But they were not the only converts in those days, and there's been a steady flow until now of these conversions.

Glory be to God! Our land has not, through all these years, been lacking significant holy people, both known and unknown, recognised and hidden. Not only do I rejoice in the official recognition given to so many persons, I rejoice that others are less officially but sincerely loved and remembered, including Alaska's Matushka Olga, who died

only in the 1970s. She was a knitter of socks and a feeder of hungry children; she even let people steal food from her and she knew all about it because they were hungry. There is also the founder of this monastery, Mother Alexandra. There are many others besides these two, but it is enough to point out these two.

All of this is to address the bright side of our history, up until now. There is far more than what I have said.

It is the repentance that counts. The apple does not fall far from the tree. This is a frequently repeated derogatory phrase. It does apply to most faults and weaknesses that are passed on generationally. It has a lot to do with attitude and disposition of the heart. It has a lot to do with what kind of response is given to certain temptations.

If I dislike weaknesses or a disability or a fault in a parent or some other person, and if I resent it or nurse a grudge about it, and if I hold anger or even hate because of it and if I constantly complain or gossip or criticise about it, I am almost guaranteed to do the very things I dislike. It is not for nothing I have been told that if I point my finger in accusation at someone, there are three fingers on the same hand pointing back at me. And it is very true. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. Being angry, being bitter is a way of perpetuating poison. And it is the opposite of the Gospel.

The good news of the Saviour is about forgiveness. The very words of the *Our Father* are a daily reminder of this. And the Beatitudes in their longer form clearly underline those. The Saviour goes so far as to tell us to bless those who persecute us, like St. Juvenaly did. And it also happens that if we are unhappy about how things are, and we want things to be better, we have to start with ourselves. We have to learn how to pray for, bless come to love in Christ those that have wronged us at every time and in every way.

It is only in this blessed and blessing state of forgiveness in Christ's love that we can come to know ourselves and come to know Christ's peace. All of this was very much underlined to me quite a few years ago when I paid a couple of visits to St. John the Baptist Monastery in Essex in England, where St. Siluoan is very much venerated. I had the blessing to get to meet Archimandrite Sophrony, of blessed

memory, who was certainly following in the footsteps of his spiritual father, St. Siluoan. Always—*always*—it was underlined that forgiveness is the absolute necessity, in the centre of our lives, and that we should be praying for everybody. Praying for the whole world even. That is what St. Siluoan taught, intercession for the whole world. And the monks and nuns at Essex are doing that to this day, every day. How they manage to live a hermits' life I don't know as they have so many people coming to them, but still, the foundation of their life is eremitical, and by God's grace, things happen.

It's this matter of forgiveness that we all need to pay close attention to, here and now, in North America, in preparation for our future work. This forgiveness needs to begin on a personal basis. But there are three areas of our life here in which even a more general forgiveness of present and past would do us good. Almost all of us are descended from peoples who immigrated to America because of some kind of difficulty in an ancestral land. This can breed a sense of resentment, very subtle, but it was there. You can sometimes overcompensate by liking your new homeland too much. That is not the way it is supposed to be. This can be inherited if you are not careful, growing up in that subtle environment. We want to be watchful about our attitude toward our ancestors and our ancestral history. It can poison our present relationships if we are not careful and watchful to have clean hearts before the Lord.

A hundred years ago, our Orthodox Church in North America was more or less a united family. One undivided missionary diocese looked after everyone in North America. But because of external political upheaval, this unity was lost as various Mother Churches of immigrating people tried to provide for their scattered flocks settling in North America. We have about eighty years of living in these, unnatural-for-Orthodox conditions. We live in overlapping dioceses with several bishops of the same city. This is against the canons and traditions of our Church and lets people from the outside think of us as a confused sect, or something of a tribal phenomenon. Because we are Orthodox we are forced to admit the situation is wrong but we cannot seem to bring ourselves to overcome the fragmentation. Mostly it's because we do not trust each other and have fears of each other. Remembering past wrongs, we presume in the other a secret

agenda, or a power trip. We fear being oppressed by our brothers and sisters. All this comes up, even though we feel true joy and comfort in our occasional, pan-Orthodox encounters.

How much are we living in love and forgiveness? It won't hurt us to be realistic about ourselves.

We, the Church, are the new Israel, about whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said for the Lord: *a law shall go forth from me and my justice for a light to the nations. And behold you shall call nations that you know not, and nations that knew not shall run to you because of the Lord your God and the holy one of Israel for He has glorified you. And my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. I will gather yet others to Him besides those that are already gathered.*

We have been gathered and grafted on, and it is for us to go and gather others. Since the arrival of Orthodox believers in North America, many have found Him, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, our Lord Jesus Christ. Even across language barriers in the Orthodox Church. My first experience of the Orthodox Church was in a parish that served completely in Slavonic. It was because of loving, Christ-loving people that I came along farther. And so the Lord challenges us as He did the prophet Isaiah: *whom shall I send and who will go for us?* Of course we say with the prophet, *I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*, but like the prophet, we have been purified, not with a burning coal but by baptism, chrismation and by repeated reception of Christ's Body and Blood. We cannot avoid it. Like the Apostles, we also are sent out.

In the light of my experience of church life in North America I am convinced that the missionary foundation of our Orthodox life on this continent remains our vocation from the Lord. Even though many came as exiles or refugees, and many did come and do come for economic reasons, even though many came damaged by pain, I believe we are all called now to be salt and yeast here. It is a land of extreme selfishness and confusion, with people groping for stable hope and truth. There are many who offer cheap, false substitutes, but the Lord has given us everything to supply the lack our neighbours are feeling.

In order to do all this, we need ourselves to repent. We all need to turn back to the Lord and allow Him to renew His love in our hearts. We need to let Him rule there and we need to allow Him to put the correct balance in our hearts and minds together. We need to allow Him to take painful poisons from our hearts. We need to allow Him to heal the brokenness of our lives and the brokenness of our church life. We need to allow Him to soften and open our hearts so that we may dare to show His love the way He wants it done. We need to be ready, at last, to take the Gospel seriously and to live according to it, without embarrassment. The Lord has planted us here to be for North America what the Church has been everywhere else before: the rock and foundation and source of joyful, graceful life in Christ—a transformation and a transfiguration of the way of life. He has given us a rich inheritance from many cultures already transformed and renewed by the Gospel. From this inheritance we can, by His inspiration through the Holy Spirit, find the ways to do the same here for these local cultures in North America.

The future of our Orthodox Church in North America is to baptise these cultures in Christ. Let us let Him heal and enable us. Let us say with love for Him, *here am I, send me*. As we say always at Great Compline: *for God is with us!* You and I, we are called to be missionaries in one way or another, here and now. Beginning with our families and friends, we are to cast the net of Christ's love, and to cooperate with the Lord as He brings us together into His one body, His one Church.

Holy Transfiguration Monastery
Ellwood City, Pennsylvania
Memorial Lecture, 2002

An Exchange of Gifts: Clear Communication in Love

*Presented at the Second Conference
Orientale Lumen Australasia Oceania
Sydney, Australia, July 9, 2003*

First of all, I would like to begin by giving thanks to God that we have the opportunity, as close relatives in Christ, to speak openly and honestly in the love of Jesus Christ. Although I consider myself the last person competent to address such matters, it has fallen to me, and I ask forgiveness in advance for the inadequacies of this presentation. I also ask for patience with the format of this presentation, which does not follow the more usual scholarly format. Nevertheless, I wish to underline that I perceive that the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics has been undertaken in love, and in a genuine desire to overcome past failures.

As I have studied in the past, and read about the relationship between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Church, and as I have experienced now in ten years of dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholic bishops in the USA, it seems to me that our nearness is as problematic as the matters that keep us separated. We have a similar self-perception as the Church: we seem to have a quite similar ecclesiology, Christology, Trinitarian theology and Eucharistic theology. There have been, in recent years, glory be to God, documents produced of substantial agreement on a number of these subjects, and about some specific points of difference. The similarities are great, especially when one observes the nature of the language of these more recent agreements, and the generally amicable and regular exchanges between the Vatican and the Phanar. We generally admit that we each have good qualities from which the other would benefit, should we be one, but we still do not manage to bridge this gap.

Both fear and inertia are involved, to be sure, although they are not alone. We both seem to desire to conform to the words of the Saviour's prayer in Gethsemane, that we be one in love as in the Unity of the

Trinity (St. John 17: 21), but we do not manage to accomplish it. We seem to be behaving rather like a dysfunctional couple, similar to the sort I have encountered pastorally over the years. The following is a very simplified summary of this situation.

Certainly we were one for many centuries, but as time passed, and as political and communication problems grew, not the least of them being linguistic, distance began to show itself, and differences became greater. This was the case on both sides; but in the view of the Orthodox, the West became more interested in worldly power, rather than spiritual authority, and in time tried to wield this power on the rest of the Church. The development of scholastic theology in the West, and the eventual placing of theology under obedience to philosophy, seems to have made things more distinct, more distant, and communication much more difficult.

It is true that even in the very early days, both East and West had different ways of looking at life, and responded differently; but because of historical circumstances, the development of scholasticism, and other difficulties, we neglected to pay enough attention to maintaining the priority of the unity of love in Christ, and we began to react to each other's perceived faults and insufficiencies. We began to squabble openly, and sometimes not to talk to each other for long periods of time. As it might be said, we came to attacking each other with lawyers' letters. The West even went so far as, willy-nilly, to conquer Constantinople and to take over almost the whole household by force for a time.

Even so, our actual communion was not completely broken. We actually managed somehow to maintain Communion, albeit in a minimal way, until the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks, and the disappearance of the Eastern Roman Empire. Those in the East were, thenceforth, interested mostly in simple, personal survival. There was encounter from time to time, but it was generally hostile and reactionary. A prime example is the decision in the West to baptise Greek converts, and the Greek reaction to do the same toward Roman Catholics, and all others as well. The former policy was dropped in the West, but among Greeks, and in much of the Church influenced historically by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, this policy remains in effect until this day, although it moderates in some places.

Our situation is not exactly parallel to the following, but it may be perceived also to be not so far from an anecdote I heard in my youth. An old woman appears in divorce court, before the judge. The judge asks her: *After fifty years of marriage, madam, why are you now in this court?* She replies: *Enough is enough!*

The circumstances of our history are painful and difficult. Thanks be to God, the last century opened doors for us to renew communication, and we have indeed been talking seriously. We cannot ignore the words of the Saviour, nor can we ignore the fact that our persisting in division is a betrayal of the Saviour's love.

But what are we going to do, and how will we overcome? The plain facts are that we Orthodox are not quick to move about anything at all, nor are we necessarily logical. A clear and sad illustration is our dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox. Indeed, we have always been closer to them in many ways than we have been to the Roman Catholics. There have been in the last century many years of fruitful dialogue, which resulted in a very comprehensive theological, ecclesiological and spiritual agreement. In short, it was agreed by all specialists that there is no obstacle remaining that need inhibit the return to communion after 1,500 years.

And now, years later, we are still not openly reconciled. On either side we have stubborn persons who threaten schism. We have persons who do not believe the results of the conversations, and nor do they trust those who negotiated. We have persons who are not ready to forgive and reconcile. And so, exasperated, we remain out of communion with each other. Efforts to educate and convince the skeptics continue, on both sides, but it will be some time before we can hope to see any resolution.

Dialogue is perceived to be a requirement in these days by both Orthodox and Roman Catholics. We both perceive that it is necessary to achieve unity. But we don't go far. Perhaps one can say that we both have the same self-perception, and that this is an obstacle: that is to say, we both perceive that we are the Church, the Body of Christ, which is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ. We believe that the Church is the Ark of Salvation. We believe that we inherit the Apostolic tradition for

2,000 years, and we are hierarchical in our makeup from the beginning. We are very near, yet still quite far from one another.

The first, and perhaps most difficult obstacle to our dialogue's fulfillment might be said to be the historically different dispositions between the Latin-speaking, and the Syriac, Arabic and Greek-speaking peoples. These differences may be described for instance, as the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning, and Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical approaches. The Orthodox would generally perceive themselves as being inductive reasoners in a Platonic framework, and the Roman Catholics and Protestants as deductive reasoners in an Aristotelian framework.

As an illustration of this difference, we would likely note that the Roman Catholics seem to be completely dependent upon documents and formal statements; and that the Orthodox, although such things have their place, would emphasise the importance of personal contacts and relationships in living with such documents. Generally, the Orthodox would insist that the Orthodox Way is that of balance and generally perceive that the Roman Catholics, over the centuries, have lost this balance, particularly in having lost the vertical aspect of the vertical and horizontal whole of the relationship between God and creation. This obstacle's difficulty lies in its subjective nature. But, as in other relationships, something as subjective as this often makes for the greatest difficulty in mutual understanding. As a result we can hear a person say nowadays that the Orthodox are from Venus and the Roman Catholics are from Mars, comparing this to supposed differences between men and women.

Father Alexander Schmemmann, in his *Journal*, may be found to lament that he perceives Western Christianity to have become bourgeois, and to have lost its eschatological character. He says:

Maybe poverty is the central symbol, not the economic factor of poverty, but the approach to it. The West has decided that Christianity is calling us to fight against poverty, or to replace it with relative riches, or at least economic equality, etc. The Christian appeal is quite, quite different: poverty as freedom, poverty as a sign that the heart has accepted the impossible (hence tragic) call to the Kingdom of God. I don't know. It's so difficult to express it, but I clearly feel that here is a different

perception of life, and the bourgeois state (religious, theological, spiritual, pious, cultured, etc), is blind to something essential in Christianity.⁹

On the one hand, with Schmemmann, the Orthodox would generally say that through the Eucharist in the Church, the Kingdom of God is revealed. On the other, the West would be considered to be trying to establish this Kingdom on earth. The use of the word *culture* can further illustrate the difference. In most cases in Western thinking, culture now seems to refer mostly to secondary characteristics such as opera, symphony, folk dance, food, and the like. In the East this word would likely find itself used similar to biology, for the elements of the foundation of a way of life: for instance, the way Greeks, Romanians, Serbs, Arabs, Russians, Ukrainians and others live their lives, both similarly and dissimilarly. It is perceived to be rooted in the Gospel, and how the Gospel nurtured each people's manner of living in their particular places, and in the context of their particular histories, and brought to each a unique character of life in the context of the Gospel, and in the context of the Church's feasts and fasts.

Since I mentioned balance, however, it must be said that although this inclusive and formative perception of culture is indeed the case, there are compensating difficulties. I mean that the Gospel and Church embrace the culture, and form and transform the culture to such a degree that a confusion can arise. In the mentality of more modern and ignorant persons, it can often be understood that the Church and Christianity are simply a part of, an element of the culture. Then Christianity becomes merely tribal. In meeting with the current, Western perception of culture, this can produce the mentality, indeed a pagan sense, that all missionary activity is inappropriate because *religion* is connected with the soil. So Christianity becomes a mere option, an alternative, instead of being the Ark of Salvation. The Orthodox Church over a hundred years ago condemned this sort of tribal mentality as a heresy. Nevertheless, one sees evidence of it from time to time. This tendency seems to affect us both, but the Orthodox more. It is in part the result of the typical human weakness of taking attention and trust away from the Lord.

⁹ Schmemmann Juliana (trans.), *The Journals of Father Alexander Schmemmann, 1971-1983* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), p. 122.

Every time we take our focus, trust and sense of dependency away from the Lord, we begin to make idols, as Father Schmemmann reflects in his *Journal*. Nothing has changed in human behaviour since the time of the biblical patriarchs, and before that also. And so, especially when aided by imperial or governmental support and association, the Church can become a worldly institution, very like the civil government itself. How many times have I heard to my pain the Faithful describing the Church as a thing, as if it were man-made, and quite distinct from Christ. This is a weakness for us both. The Orthodox add the tendency to substitute also a dream-world, in which some imperial era, the Roman, the Russian, or some other was the golden age, the holy time. In many parts, the nineteenth century is very popular these days.

It seems to me that, in this whole process of conversation and attempted reunion, this mutual renewal of trust in Christ, of asking His direction and obeying it, must be our primary focus. With this in mind, it is necessary still to discuss the realities of what keeps us apart, and that as honestly as possible. In speaking of an exchange of gifts in the post-modern context, we must face the fact that, although we do indeed seem to have love and respect in Christ for each other, our work towards reconciliation involves a lot of documents, and a lot of words. These span several languages and cultures as well, and at the same time, provide generous opportunity for misunderstanding.

For a real and meaningful and fruitful exchange of such gifts, there needs to be sufficient common ground, and in the case of words, sufficient common perception of words, in order to accomplish this. Indeed, I remember well in elementary philosophy courses being taught that finding a mutually agreed-upon definition of terms is of primary importance. To my mind, we have here one of the sources of our mutual difficulty in communication and understanding as described by Fr. Schmemmann in his writings. The development of these differences in use of words and ideas over many centuries puts us in a condition similar to that of France and Québec. Both peoples speak the same language. However, Québec retained much of Old French, and mingled it with Aboriginal words and English words; and at the same time, France's use of its own language developed steadily. Now five hundred years since the colonisation, Québécois

films shown in France require subtitles or dubbing in order to be understood.

I will outline my perception of some of our significant differences in terms, for the sake of convenience, not trivial pursuit. An interesting variance is the word *Byzantium* or *Byzantine*, so widely used to describe Constantinople, its empire and culture. This recently-introduced western term is not native to the East. Constantinopolitans generally refer to themselves, and are referred to by peoples throughout the East, including the Muslims, as Romans. The empire was Eastern Roman. The patriarchal title is *New Rome*.

The word *canon* in the West tends to mean *law* and is generally used together with it; whereas in the East, it refers to the temporal application of eternal truth and spiritual medicine. *Canonise* seems in the West to be used mostly in declaring the sanctity of a person; in the East it has to do with imposing a spiritual discipline as prescribed by the Holy Canons, and is used in the sense of a measure or a guide. As we see it, the West uses *sacrament*, which derives from an oath of loyalty usually to the emperor; hence it refers to an acting upon the consequences of this loyalty to Christ. In the sacrament of marriage, for instance, it is the couple who marry each other, and the Church blesses. In the West, there seem to be about seven sacraments.

In the East, we speak of *mysteries* in which God acts through grace, and in which we participate. In a marriage, the couple, in history already having registered with the state, arrive in the Temple of the Lord for the blessing of Christ on this union. And blessed they are. In the East, we say that there are at least seven mysteries, but the number is far greater, and probably not knowable. There is no distinction made between *sacrament* and *sacramental*.

In the West, it seems that *Apostolic Succession* is something which requires, in order validly to ordain (consecrate) a bishop, valid matter (a living, baptised male), valid form, valid intention, and a bishop or bishops ordained (consecrated) by other validly-ordained bishops. In the East, all of this is required, but in addition, that all concerned be in the fullness of the Apostolic Faith, and be in the communion of the visible Church. (Therefore, for instance, for the Orthodox, *Old*

Catholics, who seem to have a dubious position with Rome, would simply be not Catholics, and their bishops not bishops, because they are not in Communion with the visible Church, and they cannot be said to be in the fullness of Apostolic Faith.)

Indeed, for Orthodox, *validity* is not a term we are accustomed to use. We do not historically tend to consider the status of those outside the visible boundaries of the Church until the time of reconciliation actually comes. Then it is determined by what we can perceive *of the Church*, even on a case-by-case basis.

With regard to baptism, it seems that for the West, anyone at all, even if lacking Christian faith, may perform a recognisable baptism, if there be the correct intention; in the East, a Christian layperson may in emergency baptise, but those outside the Church may not, on the principle *nemo dat quod non habet*.

The West uses the term *penance* for an act which expiates the temporal punishment due to sin; whereas the East uses *epitimion* as a medicine for a sick soul and weakened will. *Sin*, in the West, seems to mean a violation of divine law, whereas in the East, it tends to follow the Greek meaning of missing the mark and to imply a sickness of the soul or heart. Here we seem to have mixed different concepts of God—either as lawgiver and judge, or as lover and healer. It is no surprise, in the view of history and inheritance, that the West in English translates *dikaosune* as *justice*, which refers to legal standing, and correctness, according to the law.

The East, however, translates *dikaosune* as *righteousness*, it refers to a quality of the heart and soul, and the positive relationship to God's love and holiness.

Authority in the Church, in the West, is generally treated in a juridical manner, and generally used in terms of power. Older texts refer to the power to confer a sacrament. The greatest authority is the one with the greatest power. In the East, authority is derived from a Spirit-informed consensus. The greatest must be the least. Every bishop and every Patriarch is immediately answerable to his own Holy Synod of Bishops, and to all the other Churches. All should be done in the context of the principle of conciliarity. All of this is not

to say that we Orthodox are perfectly consistent in our use of these and other terms. Especially for those who live in the West, and as well those who depend for translation upon lexica produced by the West, there is a historic tendency to use words, especially in English, according to the customary western usage, which introduces a contradiction. There is a strong tendency in the West to use the word *religion* to describe Christianity. But *religion* refers to a system and systematising that the East does not comprehend. The Orthodox still tend to keep to the New Testament mentality of Christianity's being the Way, as Christ called Himself. Father Schmemmann in his *Journal* underlines this as he writes:

What is the fatal mistake of Christian history? Is it not that logically, methodologically, one derives Christianity from religion, as the 'particular' from the 'general', which means that Christianity is reduced to religion, even when it is affirmed as fulfilment, as the accomplishment of religion. Whereas Christianity, in its essence, is not so much the fulfilment as the denial and destruction of religion, the revelation about it as the fall, as the result and the main expression of original sin...Christ did not eliminate death and suffering, but trampled them, i.e., radically changed them from within, made victory out of defeat, *converted* them.¹⁰

All of this may seem to some redundant to the topic, but it is my opinion that if we are not able to manage to speak the same language, and to understand each other to a greater degree than we seem to do at present, this exchange of gifts may be unsuccessful, or unfruitful. It has seemed to me that, time and again, in addition to the problem of definitions, the Orthodox attempt to speak to the West in scholastic terms, an environment that is foreign to their native mentality; and the result can be confusion on both sides, because we do not, in the end, really comprehend each other.

Another of the great gaps and challenges that we face is our mutual inability to cope properly with the presence of each other on the traditional territories of each other. In the more distant past, the historic territories of the patriarchates and national Churches were relatively stable, and more especially, before disunity, travel and migration were not a major difficulty. Now, in the reality of disunity,

¹⁰ Schmemmann, *ibid*, p. 202.

and especially in the past several centuries, peoples are moving very quickly.

For economic and political reasons, Orthodox believers have migrated to traditional Roman Catholic territories, and Roman Catholics to traditional Orthodox territories. In the West, Roman Catholics have had to cope with the establishment of many dioceses of the Orthodox of various heritages. In the East, besides the development of the Unia, there is the continuing establishment of Roman Catholic dioceses in new areas. So, although we both believe that the Church is visible, we are establishing structures that proclaim our disunity. Regardless, in the West, there is a tendency to find a *modus vivendi* of sorts. Often now, we find that local clergy associations and dialogues between bishops and theologians can be both amicable and fruitful. This does not appear to be happening in the East, and most particularly in Ukraine. In this land, the Orthodox and Roman Catholics are treating each other inimically, often ridiculously and shamefully. In Ternopil, the canonical Orthodox bishop finally found himself land on which to build a Cathedral, since he had been expelled from other state-owned premises. Immediately the Ukrainian Catholics built a very prominent Church nearby, and the Roman Catholics built another Church across the street. In Lviv, the Roman Catholic civic government denies the canonical Orthodox bishop any place for building a suitable cathedral, and limits him for political purposes to a building historically known as *the Russian Church*. And strangely, a former Roman Catholic Church in Lviv was recently seized by the Ukrainian Catholics.

In Pope John Paul II's 1995 Encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, he says: *love for the truth is the deepest dimension of any authentic quest for full communion between Christians*. He also quotes a passage from the Second Vatican Council:

Truth is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication, and dialogue. In the course of these, people explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth. Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that individuals are to adhere to it.

This word *truth* is a problem, too, and a further example of the Aristotelian-Platonic tension that exists between us. According to this perception, truth is something we may discover. For the Orthodox, truth begins with the words of Christ: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life...*(John 14:6). He who is the Truth reveals Himself to us, and He reveals that He is the Truth. For the Orthodox, all truth should be related to Him who is the Truth itself. In these days, this word has become so relativised that there is in general society no sense of absolute truth. This is unacceptable to the Orthodox heart and mind.

In an eventual reunion between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, a substantial concern, regardless of all other agreements, will remain for the Orthodox. This has to do, in part, with fundamental self-consciousness. We have seen the results in many countries of such a union, in the so-called Eastern Catholic Churches. As much as these bodies may appear as the Orthodox, and worship as the Orthodox, we generally find that the mentality of the clergy and monastics in particular is western, and that the approach to life and world-view has changed from that of the general Orthodox experience. The Orthodox have experienced some Eastern Catholics who are considerably Latinised, not only in their thinking, but in their practice. Should there be reconciliation, we would be concerned to be able to continue to recognise ourselves as we are. Despite this experience, it is therefore reassuring to read in this same Encyclical: *the change of heart which is the essential condition for every authentic search for unity flows from prayer and its realisation is guided by prayer; and, love for the truth is the deepest dimension of any authentic quest for full communion between Christians.* But when we read *full communion, of course, will have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit guides Christ's disciples,* we see again the possibility of this different perception of the meaning of truth, as if in this case there be an implied innovation. The Orthodox, in general, would hope not to be inventing something new, but recovering what was lost. The words, *the structures of unity which existed before the separation are a heritage of experience that guides our common path towards the re-establishment of full communion* are important, but they do not seem to say all that we would hope to hear.

In the course of the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II as he discussed his perception of the ministry of the Bishop of Rome

(paragraph 88, ff), did so in a manner to which we are accustomed, and described it in a manner about which we have continuing differences of opinion. Much of the language that is used in this section is very familiar and acceptable to the Orthodox; however, the emphasis on the centrality of Peter and the Bishop of Rome, all find excessive in some way. Collegiality is referred to, but as dependent upon the Bishop of Rome, nevertheless. For us, the Orthodox, this collegiality is properly much more general. Patriarchs and other Heads of Churches are presidents of synods of bishops. It is averred that we try to do all things together. It is generally considered that primacy, and historically the primacy of Rome, has not so much to do with its being a watch-dog or sentinel, but with being a court of last appeal, as is indeed mentioned in paragraph 95. This is effectively how New Rome serves us at the present. Through most of the time before the fracturing of Communion became final, this kind of primacy was effective; but when its exercise began to appear more regal than pastoral, mutual problems increased. The service of unity to which His Holiness refers is most desirable, but acceptable to us only if this is clearly a pastoral service. I must say, also, that it is gratifying to read further that he prays *that we may seek, together, of course, the forms in which this ministry may accomplish a service of love recognised by all concerned.*

As Father John Meyendorff and others have said repeatedly, I believe that in terms of exchanging gifts, the greatest gift to all would be the answer to this prayer. Many would aver, with Father Meyendorff, that a return of the Papacy to its earlier form of general service, as being simply First among Equals, and particularly with a view to the terms of the Council that healed the *Photian Schism*, would accomplish a great deal. However, in the words of paragraph 39 of the most recent Papal Encyclical of April 2003, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, it appears that Communion with the Pope of Rome is still considered to be universally the condition for unity. This being in Communion with the Pope of Rome as the *source* of unity in a dependent manner, or being perceived as such, remains an obstacle. Were it to be on the level of, again, first among equals, and primacy of honour, much would be improved.

We still have far to go. In this same Encyclical, there is a great deal written about which we all agree, and particularly with the use of the word *mysterium*. However, there is a certain emphasis on the making

present specifically of the saving acts of Christ, almost only with reference to the Cross and Resurrection (paragraph 14, 15). Orthodox anaphoras do not neglect this aspect, but include all saving acts from Creation until the Second Advent. Whereas the words of this encyclical seem to perceive the eschatological element as referring only to the future, the words of Eastern services perceive this future as made present in this celebration. This aspect of *a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth* is referred to in paragraph 19.

However, as Father Schmemmann would remark, the East would go much farther. In his *Journal*, and in his other comments, he insists that the Eucharistic Liturgy reveals the Kingdom in the here and now. He perceives that the West, in all its parts suffers from concentrating on history, or in rejecting history. He sees compartmentalisation and polarisation as the fruit of scholasticism. He writes:

This is the tragedy of contemporary Christianity—tragedy because ultimately the whole novelty of Christianity consisted (consists) in destroying this choice, this polarisation. This is the essence of Christianity as Eschatology. The Kingdom of God is already now among us. Christianity is a unique historical event, and Christianity is the presence of that event as the completion of all events and of history itself. And only in order that it be so, only for that, only in that, is the Church, its essence, its meaning.... Here is, for me, the whole meaning of liturgical theology. The Liturgy: the joining, revelation, actualisation of the historicity of Christianity (remembrance) and of its transcendence over that historicity (*Today, the Son of God...*) The joining of the end with the beginning, but the joining today, here.... Hence, the link of the Church with the world, the Church for the world, but as its beginning and its end, as the affirmation that the world is for the Church, since the Church is the presence of the Kingdom of God. Here is the eternal antinomy of Christianity and the essence of all contemporary discussions about Christianity. The task of theology is to be faithful to the antinomy, which disappears in the experience of the Church as Pascha: a continuous (not only historical) passage of the world to the Kingdom. All the time one must leave the world and all the time one must remain in it. The temptation of piety is to reduce Christianity to piety; the temptation of theology—to reduce it totally to historicity.¹¹

¹¹ Schmemmann, *ibid*, p. 233-234.

In Father Schmemmann's perception, and, I believe, that of the Orthodox Church in general, there is not to be reduction, but inclusion. The Eucharist includes and refers to all, always and everywhere; and the words of this Sacrifice of Praise to the Lord indicate to ourselves as to others exactly what we believe; and in the context of these words and our belief, so we live our daily lives.

We still have far to go. But this is primarily because we are so self-sufficient and full of pride. It is not that the obstacles are insurmountable. They are significant, and important in their own ways. Indeed, the Orthodox, who strongly affirm the need for unity and reconciliation, do not and cannot seek this unity at any cost. We stand now, and have always stood for fidelity to the truth, to Him who is the Truth. Orthodoxy is not just a vague description. Nevertheless, although we Orthodox may believe, teach and preach the Truth, we do not always follow through in action, and confuse not only others, but ourselves. Nevertheless, all this is still definitely resolvable in Christ.

I have referred to many of the elements, and probably soporifically, about which it is commonly known that work is required if we are ever to fulfill Christ's prayer that we be one as are He and the Father—one in unbroken, self-emptying, selfless love. It is easy enough for us to agree that we must indeed work harder on overcoming these obstacles, mindful of the subtleties of many of the details. But words are one thing, actions another. If we are to be faithful to Christ, we must find the way on both sides for our words to be matched by actions, especially since in our days words are so cheapened. The Orthodox need to find the way to come to more consistency in how we treat Roman Catholics, and especially in their reception. The Orthodox need to develop a better way of living in the reality of the present. The Orthodox need to find a better way of comprehending the scholastic inheritance and vocabulary of the West, and of addressing it in a manner not foreign to ourselves. And most importantly for the Orthodox, we must find our way to do this not through engineering and programming, but through obedience to the Gospel and faithfulness to the fullness of Tradition. And if we hope to address the Roman Catholic Church in a way that promotes reconciliation, we must be ready to be an example of Christ-like love, which is the core of this Tradition.

As Father Schmemmann writes in *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy and the West*:

Revealing the Church, her nature and her vocation, eschatology of necessity reveals the world or, better to say, the vision and understanding of it in the Christian faith. If the essential experience of the Church is that of the new creation, of a new life in a renewed world, that experience implies and posits a certain fundamental experience of the world. First of all, it implies the experience of the world as God's creation and therefore positive in its origin as well as in its essence, reflecting in its structure and being the wisdom, the glory and the beauty of the One who created it: *Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory!* There is no ontological dualism of any kind, no cosmic pessimism whatsoever in the Christian faith, which fulfils the essential biblical glorification of God in His creation. The world is good. In the second place, the eschatological experience of the Church reveals the world as the fallen world, dominated by sin, corruption and death, enslaved to the *prince of this world*. The fall, although it cannot destroy and annihilate the essential goodness of God's creation, has nevertheless alienated it from God, made it into *this world* which, because it is *flesh and blood*, pride and selfishness, is not only distinct from the Kingdom of God but actively opposed to it. Hence the essentially tragic Christian view of history, the rejection by the Christian faith of any historical optimism that would equate the world with *progress*. And finally, the ultimate experience: that of redemption, which God accomplished in the midst of His creation, within time and history, and which by redeeming man, by making him *capax Dei*, capable of the new life, is the salvation of the world. For as the world rejects, in and through man, its self-sufficiency, as it ceases to be an end in itself and thus truly dies as *this world*, it becomes that which it was created to be and has truly become in Christ: the object and means of sanctification, of man's communion with and passage to God's eternal Kingdom.¹²

Words and talking and documents are certainly necessary. But I am concerned that, forgetting such words as these, we will continue just to talk, and continue to betray Christ's love.

¹²Schmemmann, Father Alexander, *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy and the West*: (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2001), pp. 76-77.

We, both Roman Catholics and Orthodox, could profit from praying and heeding the prompting of the Holy Spirit, Who will guide us to unity through mutual repentance and forgiveness. We need to look at ourselves seriously and repent of our own weaknesses, shortcomings and betrayals. We need to pray seriously for each other. And, being faithful to Christ, and not to our own devices and inventions, we need to be prepared to embrace His love, and through this love, each other. We need to forgive each other.

Then, perhaps, in the experience of this liberating love, we might at last, listening to the Holy Spirit, be able to find the words adequate to our condition, and to find complete reconciliation. Then, perhaps, we will be able to offer that greatest exchange of gifts possible—ourselves without reserve, as does Christ to the Father, the Father to the Son, the Father to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit to the Father and to the Son.

May God grant us all the necessary love and desire to persevere until the end, to His glory.

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