

SELECTED SERMONS 52 SERMONS BY ST. JOHN OF SHANGHAI & SAN FRANCISCO, THE WON

by St. John Maximovitch

A collection of fifty-two sermons by Saint John Maximovitch, the beloved Orthodox bishop of Shanghai and San Francisco, covering the liturgical year with pastoral messages including reflections on the parable of the prodigal son and warnings about worldly temptations.

52 Chapters

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01. Zacchaeus

Before Lent

Zacchaeus.

Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:1-10). Who was Zacchaeus? He was a leader of the publicans —“the chief among publicans.” The customary comparison between the humble publican and the proud Pharisee often blocks the true meaning of these two images in our minds. However, to understand the Gospel correctly, one must picture them clearly. The Pharisees were truly righteous men. If on our lips the name “Pharisee” sounds as condemnation, in the days of Christ and during the first decades of Christianity this was not so. On the contrary, the Apostle Paul triumphantly confesses before the Jews, “I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6). And then, to Christians, to his spiritual children, he writes, “I am of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee” (Php 3:5). And besides the holy Apostle Paul, many Pharisees became Christians: Joseph, Nicodemus, Gamaliel. Pharisees (in ancient Hebrew “perusim,” in Aramaic, “ferisim,” which means “other” — the separated, the different) were zealots of the law of God. They “rested upon the law”; in other words, thought on it constantly, loved it, strove to keep it exactly, preached and interpreted it. And the reason for the Lord’s accusation against the Pharisees is found in that the Lord warns them that their entire labor, their truly virtuous endeavors, are made worthless in the eyes of God, are turned into nothing and they obtain condemnation from the Lord and not blessings, despite their superiority and the righteous deeds they performed, because of their proud self-exaltation, and above all, their judgment of their neighbors, of which the Pharisee of the parable gives a clear example, saying, “Lord, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men” (Luke 18:11).

On the other hand, the publicans were truly sinners, who broke the fundamental commandments of the Lord. Publicans collected taxes from the Hebrews for the Romans. One must remember that the Jews, well conscious of their special position of being divinely chosen, gloried in the fact that they were “Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man” (John 8:33). And now, as a result of well-known historical circumstances, they found themselves under submission; subjects

to a proud, coarse, “iron” race of pagan Romans. And the yoke of this submission was being pulled tighter and tighter and was beginning to be felt more and more. The most tangible and obvious sign of the submission and subjugation of the Jews to the Romans was the payment of every imaginable tax and tribute by the Jews to their conquerors. For the Jews, as for all ancient people, paying tribute was mainly a symbol of subjugation. And the Romans, not at all abashed before a conquered people, roughly and decisively demanded of them both customary and additional taxes. Of course the Jews paid with hatred and disgust. Not in vain, desiring to compromise the Lord in the eyes of His people, did the Sadducees ask Him, “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?” (Matthew 22:17). They knew that if Christ would say that one should not give tribute to Caesar, it would be easy to accuse Him before the Romans, and if He would say that tribute should be paid, He would hopelessly compromise Himself in the eyes of the people. While the Romans ruled the Jews by means of local kings, such as Herod, Archelaus, Agrippa, and others, the subjugation to Rome, and especially the inescapability of paying taxes, was softened somewhat for the Jews in that they were directly subject and paid tribute to their kings, and only indirectly subject and tributary to Rome. But just immediately before the beginning of Christ the Savior’s preaching, there was a change in the system of governing the Jews. The general census connected with the birth of Christ was the first step towards the establishment of an individual tax upon all Roman subjects in that area. In A.D. 6 or 7, after the displacement of Archelaus, when a personal tax was introduced upon all the residents of Palestine, the Jews responded with the revolts of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Jews of Galilee (see Acts 5:37). And only with great difficulty was the High Priest Jazarus able to calm the people. Instead of local kings, Roman procurators were appointed as the rulers of Judea and the neighboring provinces. Then, for a more successful levying of taxes by the Romans, the institution of the publicans was introduced, which had existed in Rome since ancient times. But while in Rome and throughout Italy publicans were recruited from an esteemed warrior class, in Judea the Romans were forced to engage publicans from the moral outcasts, from among Jews that agreed to go over to work for them and force their brothers to pay tribute. The acceptance of such a position was bound up with a most profound moral fall. It was bound not only with national, but, above all, religious betrayal: to become a tool for the subjugation of the divinely chosen people by coarse pagans, one had to deny the hopes of Israel, everything holy to it, its dreams, and — what is more — since the Romans did not take into account the spiritual tribulation of their agents, upon accepting his position a publican had to swear a pagan oath of fidelity to the emperor, and bring pagan sacrifices to his spirit (the genius of the emperor). Of course the publicans served not only Rome’s interests, levying taxes upon their own country men, but pursuing their own greedy goals and becoming wealthy at the expense of their subjugated brothers, they made the yoke of Roman oppression felt even more, and still more difficult to bear. This is who the publicans were. This is why they were surrounded by justifiable hatred and scorn; as betrayers of their people, having betrayed not only their people but a divinely-chosen one, God’s tool in the world, the only people through which rebirth and salvation could come to mankind. Everything said above pertains to Zacchaeus in the highest degree, because he was not a run-of-the-mill publican, but a chief among publicans — an architelonis. Without a doubt he had done everything: brought pagan sacrifices and sworn a pagan oath, mercilessly forced taxes from his brothers, increasing them to his own advantage. And he became, as the Gospel witnesses, a rich man. Of course Zacchaeus understood clearly that the hopes of Israel were lost to him. Everything foretold by the prophets, beloved from childhood, that

at which every believing Old Testament soul trembled joyfully, was not for him. He was a traitor, a betrayer, a cast-off. He had no part in Israel. And now rumors reached him that the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah announced by the prophets, has already appeared in the world, and together with a small group of disciples is walking the fields of Galilee and Judea, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and working great miracles. Joyous hopes are ignited with trembling in believing hearts. How will Zacchaeus react to this? For him personally, the coming of the Messiah is a catastrophe. The rule of Rome must come to an end, and the triumphant Israel will, of course, take revenge for the losses suffered because of him, for the offences and oppressions that were his fault. But even if this is not so, for the Messiah, as the prophet witnessed, comes as a righteous one, bringing salvation as a meek one (cf. Zechariah 9:9), the triumph of the Messiah must bring to him, to Zacchaeus, only the greatest shame and the loss of all the wealth and of the position he acquired at the frightening price of his treachery before God, his own people, and all the hopes of Israel. But maybe this is not so just yet. Perhaps the new preacher is not really the Messiah. Not everyone believes in Him. The greatest foes of the publicans and of him, Zacchaeus himself, the Pharisees and Sadducees, do not believe in Him. Perhaps all this is just the idle talk of the populace. Then one can calmly continue living as one has until now. But Zacchaeus does not want to be confirmed in such thoughts. He wants to see Jesus, to know, to really know, Who is He? And Zacchaeus wants the preacher passing by truly to be Christ the Messiah. He wants to say with the prophet, "O, if Thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down!" (Isaiah 64:1); let this be so, even if it results in a ruinous catastrophe for him, Zacchaeus. In his soul, it seems, there are depths that even he has not sensed until now; there is in him a burning, flaming, consuming, completely selfless love for the "Expectation of the nations," for the image of the humble Messiah described by the prophets, who "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4). And at the arrival of an opportunity to see Him, Zacchaeus does not think of himself. In the triumph of the Messiah, for him personally, for Zacchaeus, there is catastrophe and ruin. But he does not think of this. He wants to glimpse, at least from the corner of his eye, Him of Whom Moses and the prophets foretold. And now Christ passes by. He is surrounded by the crowd. Zacchaeus cannot see Him, as he is short of stature. But the thirst, the completely unselfish, selfless to the utmost, thirst of Zacchaeus to see Christ at least from afar, is so limitless, so unsurpassable, that he, a wealthy man, burdened by his position, an officer of the Roman Empire, amid an unfriendly crowd that hates and scorns him, not paying attention to anything, swallowed up only by the burning desire to see Christ, breaks all convention for this, all outward decorum, and climbs a tree — a sycamore, growing along the path. And the eyes of a great sinner — a leader of traitors and betrayers — meets the eyes of the Holy One of Israel, Christ the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus sees that which is incomprehensible to a disinterested or unfriendly glance. Selflessly loving the image of the Messiah, Zacchaeus could immediately recognize in the passing Galilean Teacher, Christ the Lord; and the Lord, filled with Divine and human love, saw this in Zacchaeus, peering at him from the branches of the sycamore, the depths of the soul that were unknown, until now, even to Zacchaeus himself. The Lord saw that the burning love for the Holy One of Israel, in the heart of this traitor, not at all blemished by any sort of self-interest, could revive and renew him. The Divine voice sounded, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5). And moral rebirth, salvation, and renewal came to Zacchaeus and his entire house. The Son of Man truly came to seek and to save the lost. O Lord, O Lord, we too, as Zacchaeus once, have betrayed Thee and Thy work, have deprived ourselves of our part in Israel, have be-

trayed our hope! But, if even to our shame and those like us, let Thy kingdom come! Even if, as we deserve according to our sins, Thy coming will bring us ruin and condemnation, come, O Lord, come quickly! But grant us, at least from afar, to see the triumph of Thy righteousness, even if we cannot be participants in it. And have mercy on us beyond hope, as once Thou didst have mercy on Zacchaeus! St. Clement of Rome tells us that Zacchaeus, as a result, became a companion of the holy Apostle Peter, and, together with the holy First-Among-the-Apostles, preached in Rome, where during Nero's reign he accepted a martyr's death for Christ. In a Christian manner, with the greatest good he repaid the Romans for the greatest evil perpetrated upon him by them. To the proud capital of the Romans that had once tempted and subjugated him, forcing him to deny all that was holy to his soul, he came, liberated and reborn by the grace of our Lord Who loveth mankind; and brought Rome not curses, but the good news, giving his very life for it.

02. The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Before Lent The Parable of the Prodigal Son. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. (Luke 15:11-32). The parable of the Prodigal Son is a most instructive lesson for youth. We see in the prodigal son the true character of flighty youth: light-minded, thoughtless, thirsting for independence; in short, everything that usually distinguishes the majority of youths. The younger son grew up in his parents' house. On reaching adolescence, he already began to imagine that life at home was too restrictive. It seemed unpleasant to him to live under his father's rule and his mother's watchful eye. He wanted to imitate his comrades, who had given themselves up to the pleasures of the world. "I am the heir of a rich estate. Would it not be better," he reasoned, "if I received my inheritance now? I could manage my wealth differently than my father does." Thus the light-minded youth was carried away by the deceitful glitter of the world's pleasures and decided to throw off the yoke of obedience and to depart from his parents' home.

Are not many inspired by similar impulses today, and, while they may not leave their parents' home, do they not depart from the home of their Heavenly Father, that is, from obedience to the Holy Church? The yoke of Christ seems difficult for immature minds, and His commandments burdensome. They think that it is not really necessary to keep that which God and His Holy Church command us. To them it seems possible to serve God and the world at the same time. They say, "We are already strong enough to withstand destructive temptations and seductions. We can hold onto the truth and sound teachings by ourselves. Allow us to perfect our minds through acquiring many kinds of knowledge. Let us strengthen our wills ourselves amid temptations and seductions. Through experience our senses will become convinced of the vileness of vice!" Are such desires any better than the ill-considered request of the younger son to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me?" And so, a light-minded youth ceases to heed the commandments and admonitions of the Holy Church. He ceases to study the Word of God and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and listens intently to the sophistries of those who are falsely-called teachers, and in these pursuits he kills the best hours of his life. He goes to church less frequently or stands there inattentively, distracted. He does not find the opportunity to devote himself to piety and to exercise himself in the virtues, because he spends so much time attending shows, public entertainments, etc. In a word, with each day he gives himself up more and more to the world, and, finally, he goes off to "a far country." What is the result of such an estrangement from the Holy Church? It is the same as the result of the prodigal son's leaving his parents' house. Light-minded youths very quickly waste their excellent energies and talents of soul and body, ruining for time and eternity all the good they have done. Meanwhile, there appears "a mighty famine in that land": emptiness and dissatisfaction — the inevitable result of wild pleasures. A thirst for enjoyments appears, which intensifies with the gratifying of wanton passions, and finally becomes insatiable. It often happens that the unfortunate lover of the world, in order to gratify his passions, resorts to base and shameful pursuits, which do not bring him to his senses like the prodigal son and do not return him to the path of salvation, but complete his ruin, both temporal and eternal!

03. On Repentance

Before Lent On Repentance.

Open to me the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life!

Repentance is expressed by the Greek word, metanoia. In the literal sense, this means a change of mind. In other words, repentance is a change of one's disposition, one's way of thinking; a change of one's inner self. Repentance is a reconsideration of one's views, an alteration of one's life.

How can this come about? In the same way that a dark room into which a man enters is illumined by the rays of the sun. Looking around the room in the dark, he can make out certain things, but there is a great deal he does not see and does not even suspect is there. Many things are perceived quite differently from what they actually are. He has to move carefully, not knowing what obstacles he might encounter. When, however, the room becomes bright, he can see things clearly and move about freely. The same thing happens in spiritual life. When we are immersed in sins, and our mind is occupied solely with worldly cares, we do not notice the state of our soul. We are indifferent to who we are inwardly, and we persist along a false path without being aware of it. But then a ray of God's Light penetrates our soul. And what filth we see in ourselves! How much untruth, how much falsehood! How hideous many of our actions prove to be, which we fancied to be so wonderful. And it becomes clear to us which is the true path. If we then recognize our spiritual nothingness, our sinfulness, and earnestly desire our amendment — we are near to salvation. From the depths of our soul we shall cry out to God: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy according to Thy Great mercy!" "Forgive me and save me!" "Grant me to see my own faults and not to judge my brother!" As Great Lent begins, let us hasten to forgive each other all hurts and offenses. May we always hear the words of the Gospel for Forgiveness Sunday: If ye forgive men their debts, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their debts, neither will your Father forgive your debts (Matthew 6:14-15).

04. The Dread Judgment

Before Lent The Dread Judgment.

Today Is The Sunday of the Dread Judgment, and it is natural for us to speak of the Dread Judgment and of the signs of the end of the world. No one knows that day; only God the Father knows; but the signs of its approach are given in the Gospel and in the Revelation [Apocalypse] of the holy Apostle John the Theologian. Revelation speaks of the events at the end of the world and of the Dread Judgment principally in images and in a concealed manner; but the Holy Fathers have explained it, and there is an authentic Church tradition that speaks to us both about the signs of the approach of the end of the world and about the Dread Judgment.

Before the end of life on earth there will be confusion, wars, civil strife, famine, and earthquakes. Men will suffer from fear; they will expire from the expectation of calamities. There will be no life, no joy of life, but a tormenting state of falling away from life. There will be a falling away not only from life, but from faith as well: when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth? [Luke 18:8] Men will become proud and ungrateful, denying the Divine Law: together with a falling away from life there will be also a dearth of moral life. There will be an exhaustion of good, and a growth of evil. The holy Apostle John the Theologian, in his divinely-inspired work, the Revelation, also speaks of this time. He himself says that he "was in the Spirit," which means that the Holy Spirit Himself was in him when the fate of the Church and the world was revealed to him in various images, and that is why it is God's Revelation. He represents the fate of the Church in the image of a woman who, in those times, hides in the wilderness: she does not show herself in public life, just as in Russia today. Those forces that are preparing the appearance of Antichrist will have a leading significance in public life. Antichrist will be a man and not the devil incarnate. "Ann" is a word meaning "old," or it means "in place of" or "against." That man wants to be in place of Christ, to occupy His place and possess that which Christ ought to possess. He wants to possess the same attraction and authority over the whole world. And he will receive that authority before his own destruction and that of the whole world. He will have a helper, a Magus, who, by the power of false miracles, will fulfill his will and kill those that do not recognize the authority of Antichrist. Before the destruction of Antichrist, two righteous men will appear who will denounce him. The Magus will kill them and their bodies will lie unburied for three days, and Antichrist and all his servants will rejoice exceedingly. Then suddenly, those righteous men will resurrect, and the whole army of Antichrist will be in confusion and horror, and the Antichrist himself will suddenly fall dead, slain by the power of the Spirit. But what is known about this man, Antichrist? His precise ancestry is unknown. His father is completely unknown, while his mother is a defiled, pretended virgin. He will be a Jew from the tribe of Dan. There is an indication of this, in that Jacob, when dying, said that [Dan], in his posterity, would be a serpent by the way.. .biting the heel of the horse (and the rider shall fall backward) [Genesis 49:17]. This is a figurative indication that he will act with craftiness and evil. In Revelation, John the Theologian speaks of the salvation of the sons of Israel, that before the end of the world a multitude of Jews will be converted to Christ; but the tribe of Dan is not included in the enumeration of the tribes that are saved. Antichrist will be very

intelligent and gifted with the ability to deal with people. He will be charming and affectionate. The philosopher Vladimir Soloviev worked extensively on this subject in order to present the advent and the personality of Antichrist. He made careful use of all relevant materials, not only Patristic, but also Muslim, and produced a very striking picture. Before the advent of Antichrist, his appearance is already being prepared in the world. "The mystery is already at work" [cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:7], and the forces preparing his appearance struggle above all against lawful royal authority. The holy Apostle Paul says that Antichrist cannot appear until "he that restrains" is removed. John Chrysostom explains that "he that restrains" is the lawful, godly authority. Such an authority struggles with evil. The "mystery" working in the world does not want this; it does not want an authority that wars against evil; on the contrary, it wants an authority of iniquity, and when it succeeds in bringing this about, then nothing will stand in the way of the coming of Antichrist. He will be not only intelligent and charming: he will be compassionate, he will be charitable and do good, for the sake of consolidating his power. And when he will have strengthened it sufficiently, so that the whole world acknowledges him, then he will show his real face. He will choose Jerusalem as his capital, because it was here that the Saviour revealed His Divine teaching and His Person, and the whole world was called to the blessedness of goodness and salvation. But the world did not accept Christ and crucified Him in Jerusalem; while under Antichrist, Jerusalem will become the capital of the world that has recognized the authority of Antichrist. Once having attained the summit of power, Antichrist will demand that men acknowledge his attainment as something to which no other earthly power and no other man could possibly attain, and he will demand that men bow down to him as to a superior being, a god. Soloviev describes well the character of his activity as Supreme Ruler. He will do what pleases men, on the condition that they recognize his Supreme Authority. He will let the Church function, and allow her to hold Divine services, he will promise to build magnificent temples — provided he is recognized as the "Supreme Being" and that he is worshipped. He will have a personal hatred for Christ. He will live by this hatred and will rejoice at seeing men apostatize from Christ and the Church. There will be a mass falling away from the faith; even many bishops will betray the faith, justifying themselves by pointing to the splendid position of the Church. A search for compromise will be the characteristic disposition of men. Straightforwardness of confession will vanish. Men will cleverly justify their fall, and an endearing evil will support such a general disposition. Men will grow accustomed to apostasy from the truth and to the sweetness of compromise and sin. Antichrist will allow men everything, if only they "fall down and worship him." This is not something new. The Roman emperors were similarly prepared to grant the Christians freedom, if only they recognized [the emperor's] divinity and divine supreme authority; they martyred Christians only because they professed: "Worship God Alone and serve Him Alone." The whole world will submit to him, and then he will reveal his hatred for Christ and Christianity. Saint John the Theologian says that all who worship him will have a mark on their forehead and right hand. It is not clear whether this will be an actual mark on the body, or if this is a figurative expression of the fact that men will acknowledge in their minds the necessity of worshipping Antichrist, as well as submit their wills to him. And when the whole world manifests such a complete submission — of both will and conscience — , then the two righteous men [already] mentioned will appear and will fearlessly preach the faith and expose Antichrist. Holy Scripture says that before the coming of the Saviour two "lamps," will appear, two "burning olive trees," "two righteous men." Antichrist will kill them by the power of the Magus. Who are these men? According to Church tradition, these are the two

righteous who never tasted of death: the Prophet Elias and the Prophet Enoch. There is a prophecy that these saints, who had not tasted of death, will taste it for three days; but after three days they will resurrect. Their death will be a great joy for Antichrist and his servants. Their rising three days later will bring them unspeakable horror, terror and confusion. And then will come the end of the world. The Apostle Peter says that the first world was created out of water and perished by water. "Out of water" is also an image of the chaos of the physical mass, while "perished by water" is [an image] of the Rood. And now the world is reserved unto fire.....The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:7-10). All the elements will melt. This present world will perish in a single instant. In an instant everything will change. And the sign of the Son of God will appear, that is, the sign of the Cross. The whole world, having willingly submitted to Antichrist, "will break out in lamentation," Everything is finished. Antichrist is slain. The end of his kingdom, the end of the war with Christ. The end, and accountability for one's whole life, an account to the True God. Then, from the mountains of Palestine, the Ark of the Covenant will appear. The Prophet Jeremiah hid the Ark and the Holy Fire in a deep well. When they took water from that well, it burst into flame. But the Ark itself they did not find. When we look at life today, those able to see, see that everything foretold about the end of the world is being fulfilled. Who then is this man — Antichrist? Saint John the Theologian figuratively gives him the name 666; but all attempts to understand this designation have been futile. The life of the contemporary world gives us a fairly clear understanding of the possibility of the world burning up, when all the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Atomic fission gives us that understanding. The end of the world does not signify its annihilation, but its transformation. Everything will be changed, suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye. The dead will resurrect in new bodies — their own, but renewed — just as the Saviour arose in His Body, and on it were the traces of the wounds from the nails and the spear; but it possessed new properties, and in this respect it was a new body. It is unclear whether this will be an altogether new body or that with which man was created. And the Lord will appear on the clouds with glory. How will we see Him? With our spiritual eyes. Even now, at death, righteous people see that which other people around them do not see. The trumpets will sound, loud and powerful. They will trumpet in men's souls, in their conscience. Everything in the human conscience will become clear. The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the Dread Judgment, relates how the Ancient of Days, the judge, is on His throne, and before Him is a river of fire. Fire is a purifying element. Fire scorches sin, it burns it up, and woe also burns it up; if sin has become natural to a man, then it burns up the man himself as well. That fire will flare up inside a man: on seeing the Cross, some will rejoice, while others will fall into despair, confusion, terror. In this way, men will immediately be separated. In the Gospel narrative, some stand to the right of the Judge, some to the left — their inner consciousness separated them. The very state of a man's soul casts him to one side or the other, to the right or to the left. The more consciously and persistently a man strives toward God in his life, the greater will be his joy when he hears the words: "Come unto Me, ye blessed"; and conversely, those same words will call forth the fire of horror and torment on those who did not want Him, who fled or fought or blasphemed Him during their life. The Dread Judgment knows no witnesses or charge-sheets. Everything is recorded in men's souls, and these records, these "books" are open. Everything becomes clear to all and to oneself, and the state of a man's soul assigns him to the right or to the left. Some go to joy, others to horror. When the "books" are open, it will become clear to all that the roots of all vices are in man's soul. Here is a drunkard, a fornicator; some may think that when the body dies the sin dies as well. No; the

inclination was in the soul, and to the soul the sin was sweet. And if [the soul] has not repented of that sin and has not become free of it, it will come to the Dread Judgment with the same desire for the sweetness of sin and will never satisfy its desire. In it will be the suffering of hatred and malice. This is the state of hell. The “fiery Gehenna” is the inner fire; this is the flame of vice, the flame of weakness and malice; and there will be [the] wailing and gnashing of teeth of impotent malice.

05. The Last Judgement

Before Lent The Last Judgement. The day of the Last Judgement! That day no one knows — only God the Father knows — but its signs are given in the Gospel and in the Apocalypse of the holy Apostle John the Theologian. Revelation speaks of the events at the end of the world and of the Last Judgement primarily in images and in a veiled manner. However, the Holy Fathers have explained these images, and there is an authentic Church tradition that speaks clearly concerning the signs of the approach of the end, and concerning the Last Judgement. Before the end of life on earth there will be agitation, wars, civil war, hunger, earthquakes... Men will suffer from fear, will die from expectation of calamity. There will be no life, no joy of life but a tormented state of falling away from life. Nevertheless there will be a falling away not only from life, but from faith also, and "when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Men will become proud, ungrateful, rejecting Divine law. Together with the falling away from life will be a weakening of moral life. There will be an exhaustion of good and an increase of evil.

Of these times, the holy Apostle John the Theologian speaks in his God-inspired work, the Apocalypse. He says that he "was in the Spirit" when he wrote it; this means that the Holy Spirit Himself was in him, when under the form of various images, the fate of the Church and the world was opened to him, and so this is a Divine Revelation. The Apocalypse represents the fate of the Church in the image of a woman who hides herself in the wilderness: she does not show herself in public life, as today in Russia. In public life, forces that prepare the possibility for the appearance of Antichrist will play the leading role. Antichrist will be a man, and not the devil incarnate. "Anti" means "old," and it also signifies "in place of" or "against." Antichrist is a man who desires to be in place of Christ, to occupy His place and possess what Christ should possess. He desires to possess the attraction of Christ and authority over the whole world. Moreover, Antichrist will receive that authority before his destruction and the destruction of the world. What is known of this man — Antichrist? His precise ancestry is unknown: his father is completely unknown, and his mother a foul pretended virgin. He will be a Jew of the tribe of Dan. He will be very intelligent and endowed with skill in handling people. He will be fascinating and kind. The philosopher Vladimir Soloviev worked a long time at presenting the advent and person of Antichrist. He carefully made use of all material on this question, not only Patristic, but also Moslem, and he worked out a brilliant picture. Before the advent of Antichrist, there was a preparation in the world, the possibility of his appearance. The mystery of iniquity doth already work (2 Thessalonians 2:7). The forces preparing for his appearance fight above all against the lawful Imperial authority. The holy Apostle Paul says that Antichrist cannot be manifested until what withholdest is taken away (2 Thessalonians 2:6-7). St. John Chrysostom explains that the "withholding one" is the lawful pious authority: such an authority fights with evil. For this reason the "mystery," already at work in the world, fights with this authority; it desires a lawless authority. When the "mystery" decisively achieves that authority, nothing will hinder the appearance of Antichrist any longer. Fascinating, intelligent, kind, he will be merciful — he will act with mercy and goodness; but not for the sake of mercy and goodness, but for the strengthening of his own authority. When he will have

strengthened it to the point where the whole world acknowledges him, then he will reveal his face. For his capital, he will choose Jerusalem, because it was here that the Savior revealed His Divine teaching and His person. It was here that the entire world was called to the blessedness of goodness and salvation. The world did not acknowledge Christ and crucified Him in Jerusalem; whereas, the whole world will acknowledge the Antichrist's authority and Jerusalem will become the capital of the world. Having attained the pinnacle of authority, Antichrist will demand the acknowledgement that he has attained what no earthly power had ever attained or could attain and then demand the worship of himself as a higher being, as a god. V. Soloviev describes the character of his activity well, as "Supreme Ruler." He will do what is pleasing to all — on the condition of being recognized as Supreme Authority. He will allow the Church to exist, permit her Divine services, promise to build magnificent churches.... on the condition, that all recognize him as "Supreme Being" and worship him. Antichrist will have a personal hatred for Christ; he will see Him as a rival and look upon Him as a personal enemy. He will live by this hatred and rejoice in men's apostasy from Christ. Under Antichrist, there will be an immense falling away from the faith. Many bishops will change in faith and in justification will point to the brilliant situation of the Church. The search for compromise will be the characteristic disposition of men. Straight-forwardness of confession will disappear. Men will cleverly justify their fall, and gracious evil will support such a general disposition. There will be the habit of apostasy from truth and the sweetness of compromise and sin in men. Antichrist will allow men everything, as long as they "fall down and worship him"; and the whole world will submit to him. Then there will appear the two righteous men, who will fearlessly preach the faith and accuse Antichrist. According to Church tradition, they are the two Prophets of the Old Testament, Elijah and Enoch, who did not taste of death, but will taste it now for three days, and in three days they must rise. Their death will call forth the great rejoicing of Antichrist and his servants. Their resurrection will plunge them into great confusion and terror. Then, the end of the world will come. The Apostle Peter said that the first world was made out of water — an image of the primordial chaos, and perished by water — in the Flood. Now the world is reserved unto fire. The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:5-7; 2 Peter 3:10). All the elements will ignite. This present world will perish in a single instant. In an instant all will be changed. Moreover, the Sign of the Son of God, the Sign of the Cross, will appear. The whole world, having willingly submitted to Antichrist, will weep. Everything is finished forever: Antichrist killed, the end of his kingdom of warfare with Christ, the end, and one is held accountable; one must answer to the true God. "The end of the world" signifies not the annihilation of the world, but its transformation. Everything will be transformed suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye. The dead will rise in new bodies: their own, but renewed, just as the Savior rose in His own body and traces of wounds from the nails and spear were on it, yet it possessed new faculties, and in this sense it was a new body. It is not clear whether this new body will be the same as Adam was made, or whether it will be an entirely new body. Afterward, the Lord will appear in glory on the clouds. Trumpets will sound, loud, with power! They will sound in the soul and conscience! All will become clear to the human conscience. The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the Last Judgement, relates how the Ancient of Days, the Judge sits on His throne, and before Him is a fiery stream (Daniel 7:9-10). Fire is a purifying element; it burns sin. Woe to a man if sin has become a part of his nature: then the fire will burn the man, himself. This fire will be kindled within man: seeing the Cross, some will rejoice, but others will fall into confusion, terror and despair. Thus, men will be divided instantly. The very state of a man's soul casts him to one

side or the other, to right or to left. The more consciously and persistently man strives toward God in his life, the greater will be his joy when he hears: "Come unto Me, ye blessed." Conversely: the same words will call the fire of horror and torture to those who did not desire Him, who fled and fought or blasphemed Him during their lifetime! The Last Judgement knows of no witnesses or written protocols! Everything is inscribed in the souls of men and these records, these "books," are opened at the Judgement. Everything becomes clear to all and to oneself. Moreover, some will go to joy, while others — to horror. When "the books are opened," it will become clear that the roots of all vices lie in the human soul. Here is a drunkard or a lecher: when the body has died, some may think that sin is dead too. No! There was an inclination to sin in the soul, and that sin was sweet to the soul, and if the soul has not repented and has not freed itself of the sin, it will come to the Last Judgement with the same desire for sin. It will never satisfy that desire and in that soul there will be the suffering of hatred. It will accuse everyone and everything in its tortured condition; it will hate everyone and everything. "There will be gnashing of teeth" of powerless malice and the unquenchable fire of hatred. A "fiery gehenna" — such is the inner fire. "There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Such is the state of hell.

06. Cheese Fare Sunday, 1956

Before Lent Cheese-Fare Sunday, 1956,

The Sunday of the Dread Judgment.

Today is the Sunday of the Dread Judgment, and so it is natural for us to speak of the Dread Judgment and the signs of the end of the world. No one knows that day: only God knows it, but the signs of its approach are given in the Gospels and the Revelations (Apocalypse) of St. John the Theologian. For the most part, Revelations speaks symbolically and cryptically of the events of the end of the world and of the Dread Judgment, but the Holy Fathers have explained them, and there is the pure authentic tradition of the Church that also tells us the signs of the approach of the end of the world and the Dread Judgment. Before the end of life on earth there will be confusion, wars, civil strife, hunger, and earthquakes. People will suffer from fear; their hearts will fail from awaiting disasters. There will be neither spiritual life nor the joy of being alive, but a tortuous state of falling away from life. The falling away will not be from spiritual life only, but also from faith. The Son of Man, when He comes — will He find faith on the earth? People will become proud and ungrateful, refuting the Law of God. Together with a falling away from spiritual life there will also be a diminishing of moral life. Good will be exhausted and evil will grow. It is about this time that the holy Apostle John the Theologian speaks in his divinely-inspired work, the Apocalypse. He himself says that he was “in the spirit” — meaning that the Holy Spirit Itself was in him — when the fate of the Church and the world was revealed to him in various symbols. That is why this is a Divine Revelation. He presents the fate of the Church in the image of a woman who hides in the wilderness during these times. She is not obvious in life. This is happening now in Russia.

In worldly life, those forces preparing for the appearance of the Antichrist will be of primary significance. The Antichrist will be a man, not the devil incarnate. “Anti” is a word meaning “old,” or “instead of,” or “against.” That man will want to exist instead of Christ, to take His place and to have that which is Christ’s. He will want to have the same kind of influence and power over the entire world. Indeed, he will obtain that power before he perishes and the entire world perishes. He will have a helper, a magus, who will do his will through the power of false miracles, and kill those that do not recognize the power of the Antichrist. Before the destruction of the Antichrist, two righteous men will appear to condemn him. The magus will kill them, and for three days their bodies will lie unburied, and the Antichrist and his servants will rejoice to the utmost. Then suddenly these righteous men will be resurrected, and the entire army of the Antichrist will suddenly fall down dead, killed by the force of the Holy Spirit. But what is known about the person of the Antichrist? His exact origin is unknown. His father is completely unknown and his mother a vile, false virgin. He will be a Jew from the tribe of Dan. The indication of this is that Jacob, when dying, prophesied about the future heirs of his children, and concerning Dan, he said that among his heirs “shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path that biteth the horses’ heels so that his rider shall fall backwards.” This symbolizes that the Antichrist shall act through cleverness and evil. In Revelation, St. John the Theologian speaks of the salvation of the sons of Israel, saying

that before the end of the world many Jews will be converted to Christ, but in the list of tribes that are saved, there is no mention of the tribe of Dan. The Antichrist will be very clever and gifted, with a certain ability to deal with people. He will be charming and gentle. The appearance of the Antichrist is already being prepared before his coming: "The mystery doth already work ..." First of all, the forces preparing for his coming fight against lawful monarchical rule. The holy Apostle Paul says that the Antichrist cannot appear until "the one who restraineth" is put aside. John Chrysostom explains that the "one who restraineth" refers to a lawful, pious regime. Such a power struggles with evil. "The mystery" working in the world does not want this, does not want the struggle against evil by the power of a pious ruler — quite the opposite. It wants the rule of lawlessness, and when it achieves this, nothing more will stop the appearance of the Antichrist. He will not only be clever and charming, he will be merciful and do works of charity for the sake of bolstering his control. And when he strengthens his control to the point where the entire world recognizes him, then he will reveal his face. He will choose Jerusalem because it was precisely there that the Saviour revealed His Divine teaching and His Person, and the whole world was called to the blessedness of virtue and salvation. But the world did not accept Christ and crucified Him in Jerusalem, and during the Antichrist's reign Jerusalem will become the capital of the world that has accepted his rule. Reaching the summit of power, the Antichrist will demand people acknowledge that he has achieved what no earthly power and no one else has been able to do, and will demand worship of himself as an exalted being — a god. He will do only what pleases people, under the condition that they recognize him as the Supreme Power. He will provide opportunities for Church life, allow her to hold services, and promise that wonderful temples will be built, provided that he be recognized as "Supreme Being" and worshipped. He will have a personal hatred for Christ. He will thrive on this hatred and will rejoice in people's apostasy from Christ and the Church. There will be a mass falling away from the faith, during which many bishops will betray the faith, and point to the wonderful position of the Church as justification. A search for compromise will be the characteristic state of the people's faith. Directness of confession will vanish. People will subtly justify their fall, and solicitous evil will support such a general state of mind. People will grow used to apostatizing from the truth and will be accustomed to the sweetness of compromise and sin. The Antichrist will allow people anything as long as they, falling down before him, worship him. This will not be a new attitude toward people: the Roman Caesars were also prepared to grant Christians freedom if they would recognize the emperor's divinity and supreme divine power. They martyred Christians only because they confessed: "One God do we worship, and Him alone do we serve." The whole world will be conquered by him, and he will then reveal his hatred for Christ and Christianity. How will we see? With spiritual sight. Even now, righteous people see at death that which other people around them do not see. The trumpets will sound in souls and consciences. Everything will become clear in the human conscience. The Prophet Daniel, speaking of the Dread Judgment, tells of the Ancient of Days upon His throne, and before Him a river of fire. Fire is a purifying element. Fire burns sin; sin also is burned up by sorrow. If sin has become part of a man, it burns the man himself. Then fire will flare up inside man. Seeing the Cross, some will rejoice and others will fall into despair, confusion, horror. Thus people will be separated instantly. In the Gospel narrative, some stand on the right hand, others on the left hand of the Judge — they are separated by their inner consciousness. The very state of a person's soul casts him to one or the other side, to the right or to the left. However much more consciously and diligently a person strove toward God in his life, so much the greater his joy when

he hears the words: "Come, ye blessed." And on the other hand, the same words will kindle a fire of horror and suffering in those that did not desire Him, or avoided or fought or mocked Him in their lives. The Dread Judgment knows no witness or court records. Everything is inscribed in the souls of men, and these inscriptions, these "books," will be opened. Everything will become clear to all and to oneself; the state of a person's soul sends him to the right or the left. Some will go to the place of rejoicing, others to the place of horror. When the books have been opened it will become clear to all that the root of all transgressions is in a man's soul. Consider a drunkard or a fornicator: when the body dies, some think the sin, too, has died. No — the inclination to sin was in the soul, and to the soul the sin was sweet. And if the soul has not repented of this sin, has not freed itself of it, it will come to the Dread Judgment with the same desire for the sweetness of sin and "never sate this desire." There will be the suffering of hatred and wrath in this soul. This is the state of hell. "The fiery Gehenna" — this is the inner fire, the fire of weakness and anger, and here will be the wailing and the gnashing of teeth of powerless wrath.

07. Before Lent

Before Lent

Before Lent The doors of repentance are opening, Great Lent is beginning. Every year Great Lent is repeated, and each time it brings us great benefit if we spend it as we should. It is a preparation for the life to come and, more immediately, a preparation for the Bright Resurrection.

Just as a stairway is built into a tall building in order to enable one, by climbing the steps, to easily reach the top, so too, the various days in the year serve as steps for our spiritual ascent. This is especially true of the days of Great Lent and Holy Pascha. By means of Great Lent we cleanse ourselves of the filth of sin, and at Holy Pascha we experience the blessedness of Christ's Kingdom that is to come. In climbing a high mountain, one tries to eliminate all unnecessary weight. The less a person carries, the easier it is for him to climb and the higher he is able to climb. So, too, in order to ascend spiritually, it is necessary first of all to free oneself from the weight of sin. This weight is lifted from us through repentance, provided that we banish from ourselves all enmity and forgive each person whom we consider to be at fault before us. Once cleansed and forgiven by God, we then greet the Bright Resurrection of Christ. And what a priceless gift of God we receive, at the culmination of our lenten struggle. We already hear about this in the first hymns of the daily lenten stichera: "Our food shall be the Lamb of God, on the holy and radiant night of His Awakening: the Victim offered for us, given in communion to the disciples on the evening of the Mystery." (Aposticha sticheron, Sunday of the Last Judgment). Communing of the Body and Blood of the Risen Christ, unto life eternal — this is the aim of the holy Quadragesima [Forty Days]. Not only on Pascha do we commune, but during Lent also. On Pascha those people should commune who have fasted, confessed and received the Holy Mysteries during Great Lent. Just before Pascha itself there is little opportunity for a proper and thorough confession; the priests are very busy and most of the time occupied with the Passion services. Rather one must prepare ahead of time. Each time one receives the Mysteries of Christ, one is united with Christ Himself; each time it is a soul-saving act. Why, then, is such significance attached to receiving Holy Communion on the night of Holy Pascha, and why are we all called to do so? Then, especially, we are given to experience the Kingdom of Christ. Then, especially, we are illumined with the Eternal Light and strengthened for the spiritual ascent. This is an irreplaceable gift of Christ, an incomparable good. Let no one deprive himself of this joy and, instead of receiving Holy Communion on Pascha night, hasten to eat meat and other foods. Communing of the Holy Mysteries on that night prepares us for the banquet in the eternal Kingdom of God.

08. Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1954

Lent Sunday of Orthodoxy.

(March 7-20, 1954)

Great Lent — all of its services are united by the idea of preparing for Holy Pascha, to meet the risen Christ with a clean heart. Why do we prepare in this manner? What is Pascha? Pascha is a taste of the joy of paradise! What is this joy? It is that we see God and His glory! The Church loves the glory of the Lord! When she celebrates the Feast of Orthodoxy, she keeps the festival of the day of the reestablishment of the veneration of icons. An icon is simply a reminder of Christ the God-Man on earth. Icons of the saints are reminders of all those who followed Christ, who were faithful and devoted to Him, and burned with love for Him. The veneration of the holy icons is the veneration of the glory of the Lord. He Who rejoices in the glory of God and in everything that reminds him of it in this life will also rejoice in the age to come. He who in this life strove toward God will rush to Him joyfully when he hears the words, “Come unto Me, ye blessed...” at the dread judgment. All those who do not know how to rejoice in the glory of God, in whom the divine realm and its laws call forth a state of unhappiness, who love gloom or semi-gloom, who do not love the light, will not answer to the call of “Come unto Me.” They will shrink back in indignation, unhappiness, in jealousy and anger, from the humble and the meek who will go toward the light, from God Himself, Whom they will begin to blame for being in their state. They will even shrink from themselves, though they will not want to admit their guilt. Such a state is true suffering. Hades is not a place, no, but a state of the soul. It begins here on earth. Just so, paradise begins in the soul of a man here in the earthly life. Here we already have contact with the divine, on the day of the Bright Resurrection and when we worthily receive Holy Communion. It is necessary to prepare for confession: All of a splinter must be removed, for if there is any left, infection will begin. It is necessary to pray for repentance and for the joy of purification, so that a ray of light will touch our soul and it will come to love the light... It is necessary to pray to meet the Risen Christ with a clean heart, to taste of the joy of the kingdom of heaven at least in the smallest degree.

09. The Sunday of Orthodoxy

Lent The Sunday of Orthodoxy.

“In the midst of two thieves, Thy Cross was found to be a balance of justice; for the one was borne down to hades by the weight of his blasphemy; the other was raised up from his sins to the knowledge of theology.

O Christ our God, glory be to Thee.”

(Hymn on the Glory of Ninth Hour for Great Lent) This is what is said about the Cross of the Lord. A balance of justice was found between two thieves. Pilate erected three crosses on Golgotha — two thieves and one Life-giver. But only the Cross of the Saviour provided salvation for all mankind, that Cross which stood in the center; it is a weapon of peace, an invincible victory — victory over the devil and victory over death. As for the two remaining crosses, one was soul-saving for the one who hung on it, while the other was for the second thief a ladder to hades.

Two thieves hung on crosses next to the Lord Jesus Christ; one never stopped reviling Him; the other began by reviling but then came to his senses and, becoming aware of his sins, cried out to the Lord: Remember me, O Lord, when Thou contest into Thy Kingdom! And the Lord replied, This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise! So it was that through the Cross, through suffering, the wise thief came to believe in the crucified Christ; he believed, as it is said, “to the knowledge of theology.” But when the Lord forgave him his sins, he recognized Him to be the Very Son of God; he understood that the Man hanging in disgrace and dishonor was the glorious King of Glory; he understood that He, Who at that moment appeared weak and powerless, was the Very omnipotent Creator and Ruler of the entire universe. Through repentance, through humility, the thief who hung on the right side came to understanding; the eyes of his mind, the eyes of his soul were opened. Christ abased Himself more than all men, He abased Himself in order to wipe out, to annihilate the sin of Adam’s pride. So too, the thief, humbly acknowledging his sins, asked the Lord’s forgiveness, and through this the Lord appeared to him in all His glory. But that other thief, hanging on the left, constantly mocked Him; he mocked Him because he realized that he was a sinner, that he was a criminal, that he had violated the laws of both man and God, but he did not want to repent, he did not want to humble himself, and he reviled those very laws which he had transgressed; he reviled the Lawgiver Himself, Who had given the laws of nature, Who had endowed men with a conscience, according to which they write their own human laws, although they do not always agree with it; and he continued reviling Him until his soul went down to hades. Here are two paths placed before man. Before us lies the Life-creating Cross of the Lord. The Lord said, If any man will come after Me, let him. . . take up his cross and follow Me. Follow where? At first through sufferings, just as Christ also suffered; then he will also enter with Christ into the Eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ sits on His throne. There is no other path except to follow the Lord. The thief who hung on the right recognized Him to be God and, in his soul, followed after Him. He could not, of course, become miraculously transformed, and this was not necessary; he followed Christ in his soul, recognizing Him to be God Who had

humbled Himself for the sake of saving mankind. The thief humbled himself likewise, acknowledged his transgressions, and went with Christ into Paradise. Before us lie the paths of the two thieves. Which path shall we take? Mankind has always taken one or the other path. The Cross of the Lord was to the Jews a stumblingblock; to the Greeks — that is, to the pagans — it was foolishness: how could anyone bow down before an instrument of humiliation, an instrument of torture? They did not understand that by means of this instrument the Lord saved all of mankind from the dominion of the devil, from the dominion of sin, from eternal perdition. For the Jews also, the Cross of the Lord was an offense; they wanted to see their messiah as a king of glory, as an earthly king who would exalt the Jewish race. The Cross on which Christ was crucified was for them a stumblingblock; Christ's crucifixion was perceived as an offense, as something senseless, and yet, as the holy Apostle Paul tells us, this stumblingblock unto the Jews, this foolishness unto the Greeks is for us Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). What for some spelled perdition, for others became a source of salvation. The Cross of the Lord separates men into two parts. We see that some believed in Christ, while others stumbled at that stumblingstone (Romans 9:32) and persecuted Christ's Church, the Body of Christ, whose Head is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Church of Christ is the Body of Christ; He Himself is its Head, and with His Divine Body and Blood He nourishes the faithful, He nourishes the children of His Church, making us one with Himself. And we should be one with Christ, bodily and spiritually. We unite ourselves with Christ in body through Divine Communion; spiritually we must also join with Him and eagerly follow His commandments. We all sin, but some sin and repent, while others mock the laws which they violate. So it was in ancient times, when Arius and other heretics repudiated the dogmas of the Holy Church. And then the faithful often suffered. They suffered when there were impious rulers who sent them into banishment. Saint Athanasius the Great spent twenty of his forty-seven years as a hierarch in exile. And other hierarchs suffered similarly for the truth, as did many of the faithful. But within the purity of Orthodoxy they found salvation and opened the gates of eternal life, the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. There were times when the unbelievers triumphed, when they trampled the Church of Christ; but then came their demise, and their souls were sent — not to the Kingdom of Heaven but into everlasting torments in the nethermost depths, just as Christ once sent to hades the soul of Herod and others who had sought His life. We have before us the path of salvation, or the path of perdition. Even to some Christians the Cross proved a stumblingblock during the iconoclast period, when they began to persecute holy icons, when they began to defame other sacred objects, including the Cross of the Lord. And these were those who called themselves "right-believing," who considered themselves to be Orthodox. The iconoclast heresy prevailed for a hundred and fifty years before it was finally eradicated. On the day of the Triumph of Orthodoxy we celebrate Christ's victory over iconoclasm and over all demons. The Cross of the Lord separated believers from unbelievers, those who followed the path of salvation from those who followed the path of perdition. Today's iconoclasts — Protestants and others who reject holy icons — likewise reject the Cross of the Lord. They allow pretty pictures of various biblical events to hang in their homes, but they repudiate the veneration of icons, which remind us that salvation is attained by following a difficult path, a narrow path, such as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself followed, a path of battling one's sins and vices, a path of fasting and prayer. Those who want to see Christianity only as something rosy and attractive, who think it possible to enter the blessedness of eternity without any particular effort, without forcing themselves, without warring with their passions — they deny all this. They follow the path taken by

the thief who hung on the left: they reject all the laws which the Lord Himself delivered and which He sent the Apostles to preach throughout the world; they reject those statutes and writings which are sacredly preserved by the holy Orthodox Church. And so, through the Cross some are being saved unto the knowledge of theology, the knowledge of eternal Truth, while others are being pulled down by the weight of blasphemy into the torments of hades. Such a broad path lies before us Orthodox, and here are temptations which separate believers if they desire to follow that path which Christ has indicated to them. We all sin, we all transgress Christ's commandments and the laws of the holy Church, but some acknowledge themselves to be sinners and repent of their transgressions, while others, instead, reject the very laws and do not want to submit to them; they say that these laws are out-dated, that they are no longer needed; as if we are smarter than those who gave us the Church laws, which the Lord Himself gave through His Apostles and hierarchs. Here before you are two paths: the path of the wise thief, and the path of the one who was pulled down to hades by the weight of his blasphemy. We also have here before us eternal [iconographic] creations. Some are prepared to recognize icons if they are well executed, if they are aesthetic and pleasing to the eye. Others venerate those icons in which saints are depicted in their sufferings, where their martyric exploits are reflected, their fasts and vigils; these sacred depictions portray an inner nobility rather than any external comeliness. Here, brethren, is the path of the two thieves. Some desire salvation, others desire only enjoyment in this world, and when they do not succeed in obtaining it they blaspheme those laws which are given for our salvation. Even today various divisions can spring up among us. The laws of Christ's Church are immutable; a Christian must submit to them irrespective of what others think, of how society regards these laws — whether favorably or unfavorably. Those faithful to Christ follow after Him along the path of those laws, those ordinances which the holy Church sacredly preserves. Those who desire unnecessary comforts and pleasures in this temporal world — which sooner or later will perish — these people prefer other laws, not the laws of the Church but those which allow them to live as they want, to think what they want, to place their own will above the spirit of the Church, that spirit given by the Lord God Himself; and they invite others to follow this same path. It may be, brethren, that soon you will again experience a time of turmoil, and some of you will be called to take the path of denying those sacred laws and to submit to laws established by mere human authority. Beware of such a path! Beware of the path taken by the thief on the left, for by the weight of blasphemy, by the weight of reviling Christ he went to his eternal perdition. Those who revile the laws of the Church revile Christ Himself, Who is the Head of the Church, for the laws of the Church were given by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. And the laws of local Churches are based on those same laws and canons of the Church. Let us not consider ourselves wiser than those saints and hierarchs who established the rules of the Church; let us not imagine ourselves to be great sages. Rather, let us humbly call out together with the wise thief. Remember me, O Lord, in Thy kingdom! Pray for the forgiveness of sins. If we transgress the laws of the Church, if we constantly violate them, pray that the Lord have mercy and lead us together with the wise thief into the Kingdom of Heaven. Then we will not follow the path taken by the ungodly thief, who remained ungodly to the end and descended into the nethermost depths. From which may the Lord deliver us all. Amen.

10. Sunday of Orthodoxy: the Meaning of “Anathema”

Lent Sunday of Orthodoxy: the Meaning of “Anathema.” The Greek word “anathema” consists of two words: “ana,” which is a preposition indicating movement upward and “thema,” which means a separate part of something. In military terminology, “thema” meant a detachment; in civil government “theme” meant a province. We currently use the word “theme,” derived from “thema,” to mean a specific topic of a written and intellectual work.

“Anathema” literally means the lifting up of something separate. In the Old Testament, this expression was used both in relation to that which was alienated due to sinfulness as well as, to that which was dedicated to God. In the New Testament, in the writings of the Apostle Paul it is used once in conjunction with “maranatha,” meaning the coming of the Lord. The combination of these words means separation until the coming of the Lord; in other words being handed over to Him (1 Corinthians 16:22). The Apostle Paul uses “anathema” in another place without the addition of “maranatha” (Galatians 1:8-9). Here “anathema” is proclaimed against the distortion of the Gospel of Christ, as it was preached by the Apostle, no matter by whom this might be committed, whether by the Apostle himself or an angel from the heavens. In this same expression there is also implied: “let the Lord Himself pass judgement,” for who else can pass judgement on the angels? St. John the Theologian in Revelation (Revelation 22:3) says that in the New Jerusalem there will not be any anathema. This can be understood in two ways: giving the word anathema both meanings: 1) there will not be any lifting up to the judgement of God, for this judgement has already been accomplished; 2) there will not be any special dedication to God, for all things will be the holy things of God, just as the light of God enlightens all (Revelation 21:23). In the acts of the Councils and the further course of the New Testament Church of Christ, the word “anathema” came to mean complete separation from the Church. “The Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes,” “let him be anathema,” “let it be anathema,” means a complete tearing away from the Church. While in cases of “separation from the communion of the Church” and other epitimia or penances laid on a person, the person remained a member of the Church, even though his participation in her grace-filled life was limited. Those given up to anathema were thus, completely torn away from her until their repentance. Realizing that she is unable to do anything for their salvation, in view of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, the earthly Church lifts them up to the judgement of God. That judgement is merciful unto repentant sinners, but fearsome for the stubborn enemies of God. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God . . . for our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 10:31; Hebrews 12:29). Anathema is not final damnation because until death, repentance is possible. “Anathema” is fearsome, but not because the Church wishes anyone evil or God seeks their damnation. They desire that all be saved. However, it is fearsome to stand before the presence of God in the state of hardened evil as nothing is hidden from Him. “It is fearsome to fall into the hands of the living God: this is a tribunal of thoughts and movements of hearts. Let no one enter tempting the unblemished faith: but in meekness and fear let us come before Christ, that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the proper time” (Stichera of the Aposticha, Palm Sunday, Vespers).

11. 3rd Sunday of Lent: the Cross Preserves...

Lent 3rd Sunday of Lent: the Cross Preserves the Universe. In the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 9:6), it is said that when the Angel of the Lord was sent to punish and destroy the sinning people, it was told him not to strike those on whom the “mark” had been made. In the original text this mark is called “tau,” the Hebrew letter corresponding to the letter “T,” which is how in ancient times the cross was made, which then was an instrument of punishment.

So, even then, it was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise, by many other events in the Old Testament the power of the Cross was indicated. Moses, who held his arms raised in the form of a cross during the battle, gave victory to the Israelites over the Amalekites. He also, dividing the Red Sea by a blow of his rod and by a transverse blow uniting the waters again, saved Israel from Pharaoh, who drowned in the water, while Israel crossed over on the dry bottom (Exodus 14:1-31, Exodus 17:1-16). Through the laying on of his hands in the form of a cross on his grandsons, Jacob gave a blessing to his descendents, foretelling at the same time their future until the coming of the “expectation of the nations” (Genesis 48:1-22). By the Cross, the Son of God, having become man and accomplished our salvation. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross (Php 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Savior with them as it were embraced the world, and by His blood shed on it, like a king with red ink, He signed the forgiveness of the human race. The Cross of the Lord was the instrument by which He saved the world after the fall into sin. Through the Cross, He descended with His soul into hell, to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the Cross Christ opened the doors of paradise which had been closed after our first ancestors had been banished from it. The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world. Then it was filled with life-giving power. By the Cross on Golgotha the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31) and an end was put to his authority. The weapon by which he was crushed became the sign of Christ’s victory. The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, because the kingdom of hell was destroyed by the Cross. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross. The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons. When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished. When there appeared to St. Symeon the Stylite, who was standing on his pillar, what seemed to be a chariot to carry him to heaven, the Saint, before mounting it, crossed himself and it disappeared. The enemy, who had hoped to cast down the ascetic from the height of his pillar, was put to shame. One cannot enumerate all the various incidents of the manifestation of the power of the Cross. Invisibly and unceasingly, Divine grace that gushes from it saves the world. The sign of the Cross is made at all the Mysteries and prayers of the Church. With the making of the sign of the Cross over the bread and wine, they become the Body and Blood of Christ. With the immersion of the Cross the waters are sanctified. The sign of the Cross looses us

from sins. "When we are guarded by the Cross, we oppose the enemy, without fearing his nets and barking." Just as the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim barred the entrance into paradise of old, so the Cross now acts invisibly in the world, guarding it from perdition. The Cross is the unconquerable weapon of pious kings in the battle with enemies. Through the apparition of the Cross in the sky, the dominion of Emperor Constantine was confirmed and an end was put to the persecution against the Church. The apparition of the Cross in the sky in Jerusalem in the days of Constantius the Arian proclaimed the victory of Orthodoxy. By the power of the Cross of the Lord, Christian kings will continue to reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness (St. John Chrysostom, Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7). The "sign of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:30), that is, the Cross, will appear in the sky in order to proclaim the end of the present world and the coming of the eternal Kingdom of the Son of God. Then all the tribes of the earth shall weep, because they loved the present age and its lusts, but all who have endured persecution for righteousness and called on the name of the Lord shall rejoice and be glad. The Cross then will save all who conquered temptations, from eternal perdition by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed afar Christ. However, those who hated the Cross of the Lord and did not engrave the Cross in their soul will perish forever. For "the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons" (Octoechos: Exapostilarion, Monday Matins).

Shanghai Exaltation of the Cross, 1947

12. Good Friday: Why the wise thief was pardoned

Lent Good Friday: Why the wise thief was pardoned. And one of the malefactors which were hanging railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou contest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise. (Luke 23:39-43) This Is How the holy Evangelist Luke relates the edifying and moving incident concerning the conversion and the Lord's pardoning of the thief who hung on the cross next to Him on Golgotha.

How did the thief deserve such mercy? What prompted such a quick and definitive response from the Lord? All the righteous figures of the Old Testament, including Saint John the Baptist, were still shut up in hades. The Lord Himself was preparing to descend into hades, not, of course, to suffer there, but to bring out the prisoners. The Lord had not yet promised anyone to lead them into the Kingdom of Heaven; even the Apostles were promised to be taken into His mansions only after He had prepared them. How is it that a thief was granted such mercy before anyone else? Why were the gates of Heaven opened so quickly for him? Let us examine the soul of the thief and the attendant circumstances. His whole life had been one of theft and crime. But evidently his conscience had not died, and in the depths of his heart something good remained. Tradition even holds that he was that very thief who, during Christ's flight into Egypt, took pity on the beautiful Baby and forbade his accomplices to kill Him, when they attacked the holy family. Did he perhaps recall the face of that Child when he looked upon the face of the One hanging next to him on the Cross? Whether or not this actually occurred, when the thief looked upon Christ his conscience was awakened. There he was hanging next to the Righteous One, next to Him Who was comely in beauty more than the sons of men (Psalms 44:2), Whose form at that time was ignoble, and inferior to that of the children of men.. ., having neither form nor comeliness (Isaiah 53:2-3). Gazing upon Him, the thief awoke as it were from a deep sleep. He saw clearly the difference between Him and himself. That One was without doubt a Righteous One, Who forgave even His tormentors and prayed for them to God, Whom He called His Father; while he was the killer of many victims, one who had shed the blood of people who had done him no harm. Gazing upon the One hanging on the Cross, he saw as in a mirror his moral downfall. All the good concealed within him was awakened and surfaced. He came to a realization of his sins, he understood that it was his own fault that had brought him to this bitter end; he had no one to blame. Like the thief crucified on Christ's left, he too had been gripped by hatred for the executioners, but this gave way to a feeling of humility and compunction. He felt fear at God's coming judgment. Sin became loathsome, dreadful. In his soul he was no longer a thief. There awakened in him feelings of love for mankind, merciful kindness. With his fear over the fate of his soul there was united a revulsion to the outrage being heaped upon the innocent Sufferer. He had undoubtedly heard about the great Teacher and Wonderworker from Nazareth. What had occurred in Judea and in Galilee was the subject of many conversations and debates throughout the country. Previously, he had paid

scant attention to any of this. Now, finding himself together with Him and in the same situation, he began to understand His moral greatness. Christ's lack of malice, His all-embracing forgiveness. His prayer, astonished the thief. He understood in his heart that beside him was no ordinary man. To turn to God as to One's own father, in the hour of death, was possible only for Someone who truly knew Himself to be the Son of God. Not to waver in One's teaching about love and unconditional forgiveness, to bear the humiliation of men's slander and malice on the part of those to whom one has done good, was possible only for One who had the most intimate relationship with the source of Love, or Who was that Love. The thief recalled all the remarkable things he had heard about the One now crucified with him, and a warm feeling of faith was kindled in his heart. Yes, He was without doubt the Son of God, incarnate on earth while existing in uninterrupted communion with His Father; the Son of God, Whom the earth did not receive and Who was returning to Heaven; the Son of God, Who was able and powerful to forgive men their sins! That gave hope that the thief would escape condemnation at the Dread Judgment. If Jesus prayed to His Father for His hangmen, He would not refuse to do the same for the one crucified with Him. The thief need only turn to Him, Who now shared with him the same bitter suffering, and He would receive him into His blessedness. True, his turning to Christ with words of love and sympathy would be met with jeers on the part of the angry crowd. To acknowledge Him as a holy man and the Son of God would mean drawing upon himself the attention and anger of the Hebrew elders. Although they could not cause him greater physical agony than he already endured, it would be painful to be surrounded by malice; how much more grievous his sufferings would be when they began to revile him likewise. But what did he care now about the anger of earthly authorities, about men's taunts. As painful as it was to be abandoned by men at the threshold of death, it would be still more painful to be abandoned by God. He was nearing God's judgment, and it was God alone he need fear! In the final moments of life, he had to do whatever was still in his power to gain God's good will. Perhaps he could say something to ease His suffering even just a little, perhaps even just one of the blasphemers would be ashamed and stop slandering Him. Christ had promised to give a reward for a cup of water offered in His name; surely He would not leave him without recompense. Let those reviling Christ revile him also! This would tighten his bond with Christ! He was going to share Christ's lot here; Christ would surely remember him when He came into His glory! There, amidst the clamor of slander, blasphemy and derision, he began exhorting his companion hanging to the left of Christ to stop slandering Him. Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And then from his lips came a humble voice: Remember me, O Lord, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom (Luke 23:40-42). This was the cry of a former thief — now Christ's new disciple — who came to believe in Christ at a time when His other disciples had abandoned Him. "A thief blessed Him, while I denied Him" (Sedalion, Tone 5), Saint Peter lamented afterwards. At that time all the other Apostles likewise doubted the Lord. Even Saint John the Theologian, who had followed inseparably after his Teacher and was standing at the Cross on Golgotha, although he continued to be faithful to his beloved Jesus, even he did not then have complete faith in the Divinity of his Teacher. It was only after the Resurrection, after entering the empty tomb where lay the napkin and grave clothes which had wrapped Christ's dead Body, only then did he "see and believe" that Christ had truly risen and was indeed the Son of God. The Apostles wavered in their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, because they anticipated and desired to see in Him an earthly king, in whose kingdom they could sit at the right

and the left hand of the Lord. The thief understood that the Kingdom of Jesus of Nazareth, despised and given over to a shameful death, was not of this world. And it was precisely this Kingdom that the thief now sought: the gates of earthly life were closing after him; opening before him was eternity. He had settled his accounts with life on earth, and now he thought of life eternal. And here, at the threshold of eternity, he began to understand the vanity of earthly glory and earthly kingdoms. He recognized that greatness consists in righteousness, and in the righteous, blamelessly tortured Jesus he saw the King of Righteousness. The thief did not ask Him for glory in an earthly kingdom but for the salvation of his soul. The faith of the thief, born of his esteem for Christ's moral greatness, proved stronger than the faith of the Apostles, who, although captivated by the loftiness of Christ's teaching, based their faith to a still greater extent on the signs and wonders He wrought. Now there was no miraculous deliverance of Christ from His enemies — and the Apostles' faith was shaken. But the patience He exhibited, His absolute forgiveness, and the faith that His Heavenly Father heard Him so clearly, indicated Jesus' righteousness, His moral superiority, that one seeking spiritual and moral rebirth could not be shaken. And this is precisely what the thief, aware of the depth of his fall, craved. He did not ask to sit at the right or the left hand of Christ in His Kingdom, but, conscious of his unworthiness, he asked in humility simply that he be remembered in His Kingdom, that he be given even the lowest place. Before everyone he openly confessed the Crucified Christ as Lord, and asked of Him the mercy of forgiveness. His humble faith in Christ made him a confessor. By his own volition he was even a martyr, for he did not fear to recognize as his Lord the rejected "King of the Jews" — on Whom was concentrated the hatred of the multitude who had gathered in Jerusalem from all corners of the world for the Passover, and who, together with their elders and priests, were blaspheming Christ. The thief would not have feared even to suffer for Him. Thus, the earnest repentance of the thief gave birth to humility, and together with this turned out to be a solid foundation for a strength of faith which at that time not even Christ's closest disciples possessed. The converted thief performed a spiritual feat which not one of them was then capable of doing. Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven (Matthew 10:32). The thief confessed Christ; he confessed Him before a whole multitude who were railing at Him; he confessed Him then when no one else dared, and when even those few disciples and women who remained faithful to Him manifested their love for Him only with their bitter tears. The thief did what once the three youths in Babylon did, refusing to bow down before the golden idol which Nebuchadnezzar had set up on the plain of Dura and before which "all nations, tribes and tongues" bowed down (Daniel 3:7). The thief came to belief in the suffering Lord; confessing Him as "the hidden God," he came to know Him before anyone else, and the power of His resurrection, and participation in His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death (Php 3:10); he understood before anyone else what constitutes the Kingdom not of this world; he came to know what is truth (John 18:36-38). He was the first to comprehend the nature of Christ's Kingdom, and therefore he was the first to enter it. He was the first to see Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2), the first to preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock, to the Greeks foolishness, But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23-24). For this reason he was also first to personally experience the power and wisdom of God, the power of Christ's co-suffering and regenerating love; he was first to hear "the sound of the power of the Cross, for through it Paradise was opened." (Fourth Ode, Ascension Canon) His thorough repentance of his sins and transgressions, his profound humility, his firm faith in the

Crucified Lord Jesus Christ Who gave Himself over to suffering, and his confession, made at a time when the whole world was against Christ — these are the strands which wove the crown that adorned the head of the former thief, this is the substance of which the key was forged that opened to him the gates of Paradise! Many people sin, trusting to repent just before death; they point to the example of the wise thief. But is anyone capable of what he did? “The Lord pardoned the thief at the final hour so that no one would despair. But it was a single instance, that no one should have immoderate hope in His mercy” (Blessed Augustine). “Such was his end! What ours will be we do not know — neither do we know by what death we will die: whether it will come suddenly or with some sort of forewarning” (Saint Theodore Studite, “Lesson on the occasion of a monk’s sudden death”). Will we then be capable of a moral transformation and rise up spiritually like Christ’s “fellow traveler” “who let out a small voice and gained great faith? Will a sudden death not carry us away, deceiving our hope of repentance at the last minute?” (Saint Cyril of Alexandria, “On the Dread Judgment,” printed in *The Great Horologion*). For this reason, “sinner, do not postpone repentance, that your sins not accompany you into the other life and weigh you down with an intolerable burden” (Blessed Augustine, in *The Sunflower of Saint John of Tobolsk*, Book 4, chap. 5). May the example of the wise thief prompt us not to postpone repentance but to crucify ourselves with Christ (Galatians 2:19) and more earnestly repent, that we too might experience upon ourselves the mercy of co-suffering. (Prayer of Saint Symeon the New Theologian) They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24). Let us be zealous for our speedy and complete inner amendment, wholly giving ourselves over to the will of God and asking of Christ mercy and grace. “Do Thou, Who alone lovest mankind, grant us the repentance of the thief as we serve Thee with faith, O Christ our God, and cry to Thee: Remember us also in Thy kingdom” (verse on the Beatitudes, Tone 4). “O Lord, this very day hast Thou vouchsafed the Good Thief Paradise. By the Wood of the Cross do Thou enlighten me also and save me” (Exapostilarion, Matins of Holy Friday).

13. Christ is Risen!

Pascha Christ is Risen!

Though Thou didst descend into the grave ,O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of hell (Kontakion of Pascha)?

He Who delivered the youths from the furnace, having become man, suffers as mortal (Irmos, 7th Song of the Paschal Canon). A WONDROUS and incomprehensible manifestation! He suffers Who came down once into the Babylonian furnace and in it preserved whole the three youths who had been thrown there for their steadfast faith. When all were convinced that the flame had entirely consumed the youths, a song of praise was heard from the furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar, having come near it, beheld alive not only the three youths who had been thrown there, but also a Fourth Unknown One with them, and the visage of this Fourth One was like to the Son of God. Nebuchadnezzar understood that the power of God preserved the youths, and both earthly kings and the elements of nature were powerless before it.

However, how does He suffer now, as mortal, Who delivered the youths from death? How does He not only suffer, but also even descend to the nether regions of the earth, where the bound souls of the dead are confined? Did death indeed conquer life, and corruption vanquishes immortality? On the other hand, did God have no more power? Fear not nor be saddened, O people, but be jubilant and rejoice! The power of God is stronger than that of men (1 Corinthians 1:25). Christ suffers as mortal, but by His sufferings, mortality is clothed in a splendid garment of incorruption and immortality! The Lord descends to the nether regions of the earth in order to shatter the eternal bars. The Immortal One goes down to the grave, but by this He destroys the power of hell. The Light was hidden only for a short time, in order to shine brighter. The Mighty One went down into the depths of the earth in order to strike a blow to evil, at its root. Moreover, in three days, as Jonah from the whale, Christ rises now from the grave! Lift your heads, ye downcast, rejoice, ye sorrowful! Come together, ye who are scattered! Arise, ye fallen! Although your soul may be filled with evils and your life have drawn near to hell, may the storm of the sea of life not engulf you who are in sorrows. Death, where is thy sting? Hell, where is thy victory? Where is the darkness that thought to hide the Sun of justice? Leap in spirit, all ye faithful, and joyfully cry out: "Thou didst rise as Conqueror, O Christ our God, announcing to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice...to Thy Apostles granting peace, and to the fallen giving resurrection!

14. I Believe in the Resurrection of the Dead

Pascha I Believe in the Resurrection of the Dead. Our Grief Over the death of our close ones would be inconsolable and boundless if the Lord had not given us eternal life. Our life would be meaningless if it ended with death. What benefit, then, would there be from virtue or good deeds? They would be right who say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" But man was created for immortality, and by His Resurrection Christ opened the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom, of eternal blessedness, to those who believe in Him and who live righteously. Our earthly life is a preparation for the future life, and this preparation ends with our death. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). Then a man leaves behind all his earthly cares; his body disintegrates to rise again in the general resurrection. His soul, however, continues to live; not for a moment does it cease its existence.

Many appearances of the dead have given us to know in part what happens with the soul when it leaves the body. When it no longer sees with its bodily eyes, its spiritual vision is opened. This frequently occurs even before actual death; while seeing and even conversing with those around them, the dying see that which others do not. Leaving the body, the soul finds itself among other spirits, good and evil. Usually it strives towards those which are more akin to it, but if while still in the body it was under the influence of certain spirits, it remains dependent upon them when it leaves the body, no matter how unpleasant they might prove to be at the encounter. For two days the soul enjoys relative freedom and can visit its favorite places on earth, but on the third day it makes its way towards other realms. At this time it passes through a horde of wicked spirits, who obstruct its path and accuse the soul of various sins by which they themselves had deceived it. According to revelations, there are twenty such barriers, so-called "toll-houses." At each stop the soul is tested as to a particular sin. Passing through one, the soul comes upon the next, and only after successfully passing through them all can the soul continue its way, and not be thrown straightway into gehenna. These demons and their trials are so horrendous that the Mother of God herself, when informed by Archangel Gabriel of her imminent repose, entreated her Son to deliver her from those demons and, in fulfillment of her prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared from Heaven to take the soul of His Most Pure Mother and carry it up to Heaven. The third day is terrifying for the soul, and it is especially in need of prayer. Once having safely passed through the toll-houses and having bowed down before God, the soul spends the next thirty-seven days visiting the heavenly habitations and the chasms of hades, not knowing where it will find itself, and only on the fortieth day is it assigned its place of waiting until the resurrection of the dead. Some souls find themselves with a foretaste of eternal joy and blessedness, while others — in fear of eternal torments, which will begin in earnest after the Dread Judgment. Until that time, changes in the state of the soul are still possible, especially through offering for their sake the Bloodless Sacrifice (commemoration at the Divine Liturgy), and likewise through other prayers. The importance of commemoration at Divine Liturgy is demonstrated by the following incident. Before the opening of the relics of Saint Theodosius of Chernigov (1896), the priest who had re-vested the relics sat down exhausted near the relics and dozed off. As he was sleeping the hierarch

appeared to him and said, "Thank you for laboring on my behalf. I also ask that when you serve the Liturgy, you commemorate my parents," and he gave their names, Priest Nikita and Maria. "How is it that you, a holy hierarch, are asking my prayers, when you stand at the throne of Heaven and grant people God's mercy?" asked the priest. "That is true," replied the Saint. "But the offering at the Divine Liturgy is more powerful than my prayers." The departed likewise benefit from memorial services and prayers at home on their behalf, and also from good deeds performed in their memory, as, for example, alms-giving and donations to churches. But they benefit most especially by being commemorated at the Divine Liturgy. There have been many appearances of the dead and other occurrences which confirm what great benefit lies in commemorating the departed. Many who died repentant but were unable to manifest this during their life, were released from torment and received repose. In church prayers are always offered for the repose of the departed, and even on the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit, in the kneeling prayers at Vespers, there is a special petition for those "who are held in hades." Each of us, desiring to show his love for the departed and to be of real help to them, can best do this by praying for them, and especially by commemorating them at the Divine Liturgy, when those particles taken out [of the Lamb] for the living and the dead are placed into the Blood of the Lord with the words, "Through the prayers of Thy saints, wash away, O Lord, with Thy precious Blood the sins of those commemorated here." We can do nothing greater, nothing better for the departed than to pray for them, offering their names for commemoration at the Divine Liturgy. They are always in need of this, but especially during those forty days, when the soul of the deceased makes its way to the eternal mansions. The physical body no longer feels anything, it does not see its close ones who have gathered, it does not smell the fragrance of the flowers, it does not hear the graveside soliloquies. But the soul senses the prayers offered in its behalf, and it is grateful to those who offer them and is spiritually close to them. Relatives and dear friends of the departed! Do what is needful for them and what lies in your power. Rather than expending money on the external adornment of the coffin and grave, spend it on helping the poor, in memory of your close ones who have fallen asleep, and on churches, where prayers are offered on their behalf. Show mercy to those who have fallen asleep; attend to the good of their soul. That path awaits all of us. How great will be our desire then to be remembered in prayer! Let us be merciful to the departed. As soon as someone passes away, straightway call a priest, so he can read 'The Office at the Departure of the Soul,' which is appointed to be read over every Orthodox Christian immediately after his repose. Make every effort to arrange for the funeral to be served in a church and, until the funeral, to have the Psalter read over the deceased. The funeral need not be elaborate, but it must not be abbreviated; think not of yourself and your own comfort, but about the deceased, with whom you are parting forever. If in the church there are several deceased at the same time, do not object to having a joint funeral service. It is better that a funeral be served for two or more deceased at once, for the prayers of all their close ones gathered together will be yet more fervent than if the services were conducted in succession and the services abbreviated owing to lack of time and energy; because each word of prayer is for the departed like a drop of water to a thirsty man. Likewise, it is essential to make immediate arrangements for the forty-day memorial, that is, the daily commemoration of the departed at the Divine Liturgy during the first forty days. Usually, in churches where there are daily services, those whose funerals were served there are commemorated over the course of these forty days and longer. But if the funeral is served in a church which does not have daily services, those close [to the deceased] must arrange for a

forty-day memorial in a church which does. It is good likewise to send for commemoration the name of the departed to monasteries and to Jerusalem, where there are constant prayers at the holy places. But it is important that the forty-day memorial begin immediately after the person dies, when the soul is particularly in need of prayer, and for that reason to begin the commemoration in the nearest place where there are daily services. Let us look after those who precede us into the other world, and do for them all that we can, remembering that Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

15. Pascha: In the Beginning was the Word

Pascha Pascha: In the Beginning was the Word. At the Liturgy on the day of the Bright Resurrection, we read the beginning of the Gospel of Saint John, concerning the Divine Word. When all is filled with the light of Christ's Resurrection, when the heavens are united with the earth in the glorification of the Vanquisher of death, the Gospel proclaims Who He is: In the beginning was the Word.

Mention of the Word is made already in the Old Testament: By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth (Psalms 32:6); He sent forth His Word and He healed them (Psalms 106:20). The book of the Wisdom of Solomon speaks especially clearly and expressively about the mighty acts of the Word of God.

However, the Old Testament people understood the Word of God to mean simply the manifestation of God's will and activity. Now Saint John announces that the Word of God is verily the Only-begotten Son of God Himself, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Why is the Son of God also called "the Word"?

Because through Him the Father expresses His will. The Word of God is not the same as a human word. Man uses words to express his thoughts and desires. But the words man utters fall silent and disappear. The desires they express are sometimes fulfilled, but often they remain unfulfilled. The Word of God is eternal and omnipotent. He is always with God. A man's word is his servicing faculty. The Word of God is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. He Himself is God.

God the Word is the Son of God, and He loves the Father and willingly does everything according to His will. More precisely — They have one will.

God the Father loves His Son and creates everything through Him. Nothing is created by Him without the Son, "by Whom all things were made." Everything has its beginning through Him and without Him nothing began to exist that exists: All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3) (as it is expressed by the second article of the Symbol of Faith). When in the book of Genesis it says that at the creation of the world God said, Let there be light... let there be a firmament..., this means that God the Father desired to create light, the firmament, and the rest, and that the Word, His Son, brought this to fulfillment. The Word of God gives life. He is the source of life: In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The Word of God is light. Through Him God the Father reveals Himself and makes known His divine will: That was the true Light, which lighteth every man which cometh into the world (John 1:9). No darkness can conceal that Light: the Light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not (John 1:5).

After the Fall, the darkness or sin took hold of mankind, but it could not conceal the Divine Light. In accordance with the will of the Father, the Son of God, having descended to earth and become incarnate, sanctified the world. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). To

prepare the way for Him in men's hearts, God sent John the Forerunner. He preached about Christ and called all to believe in Him, for He was the Son of God.

Long before that time, the Law was given through Moses. But the Law, which restrained evil, could not save men. While outwardly fulfilling the Law, men remained full of evil within. For this reason the world did not recognize its Creator, the Son of God, when He came to earth: He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not (John 1:10-11). The guardians of the Law did not accept the incarnate Word, for His light was unbearable to them. But the Source of Life, Whom they gave over to death, descended to hades, destroyed it, and dispersed the darkness with His Divine Light.

Having risen from the dead, Christ opened the gates of the Kingdom of His glory to all those who believe in Him. Those who believe in the incarnate Son of God and accept Him into their heart and soul become children of God. The grace of God spiritually regenerates them, dwelling in them and giving them power to love the Truth and to do the Lord's will. As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name (John 1:12).

Those regenerated by grace — if they continue in it to the end of their earthly life, and follow that path indicated by Christ, the True Light — will be deemed worthy of receiving from Him a new gift: they will delight eternally in the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father through beholding the glory of His Only-begotten Son, a glory surpassing everything in the world, and they will experience ineffable joy and blessedness. This same pre-eternal Word of God, by Whom the world was made, saved and regenerated the human race unto a new and joyous life through His Incarnation and Resurrection. The Bright Resurrection is the triumph of God the Word, the day of His victory over hades and death, the beginning of a new life and of eternal gladness — His gift.

Let us, O ye faithful, praise and worship the Word, Who with the Father and the Spirit is without beginning, and Who was born of the Virgin for our salvation; for He was pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and to endure death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

(Resurrection Troparion, Tone 5)

O Only-begotten Son and Word of God, Who art immortal,...trampling upon death by death, Thou Who art One of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us.

16. Pascha!

Pascha

Pascha! A Paschal epistle of Archbishop John [Maximovitch] To the Western European And East Asian Flock And To All His Spiritual Children, 1956, Paris.

Let us cleanse our senses and see through the gleaming, unapproachable light of Christ's Resurrection.

Now is everything filled-full with light — the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. All is presently bathed in light: Christ is risen from the dead. The heavens make merry, the earth rejoiceth, the underworld exulteth. The Angels in Heaven hymn Thy Resurrection, O Christ-Saviour. Do Thou make us, on earth, also worthy to glorify Thee with a pure heart. The Angelic Choir, horrified at seeing Its Creator and Master dead, doth now, in joyous song, glorify Him resurrected. Today doth Adam exult, and Eve rejoiceth; and with them do the Prophets and Patriarchs sing worthy songs to the Creator of all and to our Deliverer, Who did descend into the underworld for our sake. The Giver of Life doth lead men out of hell this day, and up-lifteth them to Heaven; He layeth low the powers of the enemy and breaketh down the gates of hell by the Divine power of His authority. On earth, the Angels announce the gladsome tidings to men and declare Christ's Resurrection. Attired in gleaming white robes, the Angels ask the Myrrh-bearing Women: "Why seek ye the Living One amongst the dead? He is risen; He is not here! Come, see the place where the Lord did lie." The Myrrh-bearing women rush to the Apostles, bearing to them the joyous news. And through the Apostles and the Gospel is Christ's Resurrection preached unto all the world today. Not all the Apostles immediately saw the risen Christ through spiritual eyes. Two disciples travelling to Emmaus did see Jesus walking with them, but did not recognize Him till such time as He had warmed their saddened hearts; and then were their spiritual eyes opened. Mary Magdalene conversed with Christ in the garden, but neither recognized Him nor was cognizant of the mystery of the Resurrection, until the voice of her beloved Teacher touched her heart and illumined her soul, which had been given to thinking in worldly fashion. It was the beloved disciple John, whose heart was pure and undimmed by, timidity, who before all others descried the light of the risen Christ through spiritual eyes; and with his bodily eyes did he behold the manifested Lord. Scattering and dispersing the dark and gloomy tempest of sin, Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shone forth, gleaming not in the hearts and souls of the Apostles only, but in those of all who draw near to Him with faith, salvation seeking. "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed," Christ sayeth; "blessed are those who have perceived Me not with bodily eyes, but with the eyes of the heart." It was with his spiritual eyes that Archdeacon Stephan, the Proto-martyr, saw the heavens opened and the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God the Father. It was with eyes of faith that the risen Lord was beheld by Great-martyr George the Trophy-bearer and by all the other martyrs who laid down their earthly lives for Christ, in order that they might receive from Him life eternal. It was upon Him that podvizhniki ["athletes"-of-the-spirit] did fix their spiritual gaze; despising earthly pleasures, they were crowned in the heavens with glory unfading. But neither the

scribes nor the pharisees, His enemies, saw the resurrected Christ. Nor did the tormentors of the martyrs see Him, strengthening the martyrs. Neither did, nor do, all those whose spiritual gaze is dimmed by unbelief, whose heart is befouled with sins and vices, whose will is directed only toward the earthly, ever see the light of the glory of the risen Christ. Let us cleanse our hearts from all filth and foulness, and our spiritual eyes will be enlightened. The light of Christ's Resurrection will flood and fill our souls, in like manner as the Church of the Resurrection, yearly, throughout the centuries, on Great Saturday, is illumined with light when the Orthodox — and only the Orthodox Patriarch receives the Heavenly Fire. Let us lift up our hearts! Let us forsake everything worldly; let us rejoice in this day and be exceeding glad! Christ is risen from the dead, having trampled death by death. Christ is risen!

Archbishop John, the Pascha of Christ, 1956, Paris

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17. Come, o ye People (Pentecost)

Pentecost Come, o ye People (Pentecost).

God is a holy Trinity. A Trinity consubstantial and indivisible. Consubstantial, that is, one essence, one nature. A Trinity indivisible: the Son has never been divided from the Father, nor the Holy Spirit from the Father or the Son, and never will be divided.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three gods, but one God, since They have one nature. But not only because of this. People also have one nature, one essence. But with people one cannot say that two or three persons are one person, no matter how close and amicable they may be. People not only have separate bodies, but each one also has his own will, his own tastes, his own moods. No matter how similar people may be in body and character, it still never happens that everything is in common or that everything is the same. With the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity everything is in common. The boundless love of the Father for the Son, of the Son for the Father, and the same love between them and the Holy Spirit make Their will and all of Their actions to be common. They have one will, and everything is performed by Them together. Whatever pleases the Father also pleases the Son and the Holy Spirit. Whatever displeases the Holy Spirit also displeases the Father. Whatever the Son loves, the Father and the Holy Spirit love also. Everything is accomplished jointly by the Holy Trinity. At the creation of the world it says in the Bible: And God said, Let there be light: and there was light (Genesis 1:3). What does “said” mean? It means that God the Father created by His Word, by that Word of which the Gospel says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1) and which is the Only-begotten Son of God. God the Father created everything by His Word; in other words, He accomplished everything through His Son. The Father does not create anything without the Son, just as the Son does not create anything without the Father, and the Holy Spirit always assists the Father and the Son. It is said in the Bible about the creation of the world: And the Spirit of God moved over the waters (Genesis 1:2). It “moved” over creation, but did not merely move over it — the word in the Hebrew original, which lacks an exact equivalent in Slavonic, signifies “to cover,” “to warm,” just as a brood-hen sitting on her eggs gives life to them by her warmth, and from them come forth living creatures. By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them by the Spirit of His mouth (Psalms 32:6). All that exists was created by God the Father through the Son and was brought to life by the Holy Spirit. In other words, everything the Father wanted or wants, immediately was or is fulfilled by the Son and is animated by the Holy Spirit. Thus was the world created, thus was all accomplished by the providence of God concerning the world and mankind. In order to save man, who through sin had fallen away from God and became mortal, the Son of God, in accordance with the pre-eternal counsel of the Holy Trinity, obeying the will of the Father, came down to earth, was born of the Ever-Virgin Mary through the action of the Holy Spirit, proclaimed to the people the True God the Father and His Divine will, and taught the true worship of God. Having suffered for our sins, He descended in soul into hades, and, having freed the souls of the dead, He rose from the dead. Even before His sufferings, Christ promised His Apostles, chosen by Him from among His

disciples, to give them the power to loose and to bind — to remit people’s sins or to leave them in their sins. After His Resurrection the Lord bestowed this gift of Grace not on any of the Apostles separately, but on all of them together: He established His Church, the repository of that Grace, and united in her all those who believe in Him and love Him. Having promised His Apostles that He would invest them with power from on high, having sent them the Holy Spirit, and having accomplished all for which He came to earth, the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven, receiving in His humanity that glory and honor which He had as the Son of God since before the creation of the world. In descending upon the disciples of Christ, according to the promise, the Holy Spirit confirmed them in the faith of Christ and through His Grace poured out upon them the gifts of God. He strengthened them for the preaching and fulfilment in life of Christ’s teachings, for the building up of the Church established by Christ and put into action by the Holy Spirit. The Church, standing on her foundation on earth and headed by the Son of God seated at the right hand of the Father, is mysteriously guided by the Holy Spirit. She inwardly links together all of her children and unites them with God. Through the Church, God’s gifts of Grace are poured out on those striving to follow the way of Christ; they sanctify and fortify all good in them, and cleanse them from sin and every defilement, making them able to become receptacles of the radiance of the glory and power of God. Through the Church man is made a partaker of the Divine nature, and he enters into the closest relationship with the Holy Trinity. Not only the soul, but also man’s body is sanctified and communes with God by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, through which he is united with the entire Holy Trinity. Through Divine Grace, with the participation of his own will and effort, man becomes a new creature, a participant in the eternal Kingdom of God. Nature, too, is being prepared for the coming Kingdom of God, for the coming purification by fire of the consequences of man’s sin and the curse that lies on her. She receives the first fruits of sanctification through the descent of the Holy Spirit on her at Theophany in the blessing of the waters and in many other Church rites, so that she may later become a new earth and a new heaven. This will be accomplished at the time appointed by God the Father, and the Son of God will come in glory to pronounce judgment on the world. Then those who have loved God and have been united with Him will shine with the rays of Divine light and will eternally delight in the uncreated light of the Triune Godhead of the Consubstantial, Life-creating, and Indivisible Trinity. To God, our Creator and Saviour, be glory, honor, and worship unto everlasting ages: “Come, O ye people, let us worship the Godhead in Three Hypostases: the Son in the Father, with the Holy Spirit; for the Father timelessly begat the Son Who is Co-ever-existing and Coenthroned, and the Holy Spirit was in the Father, glorified together with the Son; One Might, One Essence, One Godhead. In worshipping Whom let us all say: O Holy God, Who madest all things by the Son, through the cooperation of the Holy Spirit; Holy Mighty, through Whom we have known the Father, and through Whom the Holy Spirit came into the world; Holy Immortal, the Comforting Spirit, Who proceedest from the Father, and retest in the Son: O Holy Trinity, glory be to Thee” (Dogmaticon of Great Vespers of Pentecost).

18. On the Day of the Holy Spirit

Pentecost On the Day of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament there are only obscure indications of the Divine Mystery of the Holy Trinity. The Holy Bible says that before the creation of man, God said, Let us make man according to our image and likeness, which indicates that God is not one Person. But there is no indication as to how many persons are in the Godhead and who these conversers and co-creators are.

Elsewhere [in the Old Testament] the Divine Trinity is revealed somewhat more clearly, in the story of the Righteous Abraham, but again, only in the visible form of three angels.

In the New Testament the mystery of the Holy Trinity is manifest three times: at the Baptism, at the Transfiguration, and at the descent of the Holy Spirit At the Baptism the Divine voice was heard: This is My Beloved Son, when the incarnate Son of God, the God-man, set out on His exploit of saving man. Here is the glory of God the Father, and His exultation at seeing this feat of love. God the Son stands in the streams of the Jordan in the form of a servant, while God the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirms the word of the Father, which testifies to the Divinity of the Son, Who humbly bows His head beneath the right hand of the Forerunner.

19. All Saints of Russia

Pentecost All Saints of Russia. The Day commemorating the saints who have shown forth in the Russian land points to that spiritual heaven beneath which the Russian land was founded and lived.

Before the holy Prince Vladimir, there lived on the Russian land separate, pagan tribes that warred with one another. The holy Prince Vladimir brought them a new faith, a new consciousness and meaning of life, a new inner spiritual state; he gave them a new spirit of life that united everyone, and thus a single nation was formed. The very existence of the Russian nation is tied to the begetting of spiritual life within it, with the assimilation of the fundamentals of a Christian world-view. It is senseless to seek the meaning and purpose of life in earthly life, which ends with death. One must strive to acquire the Divine, grace-filled, eternal life, and then this temporal, earthly life will arrange itself as well: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33).

Faith and the Orthodox Church united the separate tribes into one nation. Faith in the Kingdom of God and the search for it, the search for righteousness [pravda] became the most salient characteristic of the Russian people. For the sake of the Kingdom of God, for the sake of participation in it, for the sake of prayer, Russian ascetics left the vanity of the world and went into the forests, onto uninhabited islands. They sought only the Kingdom of God. They did not want to found or build anything; they went away from people, but people followed after them for the sake of the Kingdom of God, which was present on those islands and in those forests around the righteous ones, and thus lavras and monasteries grew up. The search for righteousness is a basic thread in the life of the Russian people, and it is not by chance that the first written code of laws, which was designed to regulate life, was called "Russian Justice" [Russkaya Pravda].

It was not only those who withdrew from the world and from the company of men, who thought about heaven and the Kingdom of God; all believing Russian people understood the meaning of life. All who truly contributed to the development of Russia as a nation, likewise considered that their primary concern was to be faithful to the Divine Kingdom and to Divine Truth [Pravda]. In Russia there were princes, military leaders, landowners, people of all ranks and occupations; and all had in common a fundamental understanding and striving, which were the acquisition of the Kingdom of God and participation in it. This was the meaning of life.

Saint Alexander Nevsky spent his entire life in struggles on behalf of the military and the State; he rode on horseback through the whole of Siberia to the Tartar khan in order to establish peace in Russia, and became renowned for his military victories. But when he fell ill and death came, he accepted it as liberation from the labors of earthly life and gave himself over to that which was dearer than everything to his soul and became a monk, in order to enter the longed-for Kingdom of God, not as an earthly warrior, but as a warrior of Christ.

Prince Theodore of Smolensk likewise accepted monasticism before his death. In their striving for the Kingdom of God, such spiritual leaders of the Russian people were the best exponents of the fundamental trait of the nation's spiritual life, of the basic force which guided its historical life. The assimilation of the Christian faith regenerated the Russian princes as well. Authority is always an expression of consciousness and will. Authority is always guided by one or another philosophy, by one or another understanding of the meaning and purpose of life and its activity. Before Saint Vladimir, Russian princes were leaders of warring tribes and waged wars for the sake of military spoil and glory. Having become Christians, they became the heads of separate parts of one nation. With the acceptance of Christianity came a sense of unity. Righteousness was in the brotherhood of princes, and internecine war became unrighteous.

Prince Vladimir gave the Russian people a new meaning of life and a new vitality. Calamities, failures and defeats are powerless before the main force of life, powerless before spiritual life. The Kingdom of God, the spiritual joy of participating in it remain untouched. The terrible storm passes, and again a man lives. Thus, during the most cruel tortures, the martyrs rejoiced, sensing God's grace. This is the source of Russia's vitality. Calamities do not strike her heart. The Tartars burned the whole of Russia. Kiev fell, and in the same year Novgorod arose; and that great commander and leader of the Russian people, the Right-believing Prince Alexander Nevsky, roused the Russian people for a struggle, not with the Tartars, who had racked Russia's body, but with the Catholic Swedes, who, taking advantage of Russia's misfortune, wanted to seize the soul of the Russian people and kill the spiritual might of the Russian nation and Russia. For Alexander Nevsky it was necessary above all to preserve that spiritual might. The history of Moscow's ascendancy is a clear confirmation of this same idea. In its nascence, Moscow was a not very large, local amalgamation. But at its head stood right-believing princes, who had assimilated this Orthodox understanding of righteousness; and therefore, when the holy hierarch, Metropolitan Peter, told the prince that Moscow would rise to prominence and that the hierarch himself would live and be buried there if the prince built a home in Moscow for the Most Holy Mother of God, the prince fulfilled this covenant. In other words, the holy hierarch Peter told him, "If thou wilt be faithful to Orthodoxy to the end and wilt first of all seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things — everything earthly, everything of this life, everything pertaining to the state — will be added unto thee."

Such was Moscow's intent, and it was faithful to Saint Peter's testament; the night muster of the military watch on the Kremlin's walls took place with the words: "O Most Holy Theo-tokos, save us!" This does not mean that Russia's life and people were holy. No! Men are always sinful; but when there is an awareness of good and evil, when there is a striving towards righteousness, restoration is possible. This is what is important and soul-saving. In its historical life, sinful Moscow, the capital of sinful Russia, fell to the bottom, but it arose again because the consciousness of righteousness did not die.

During the Time of Troubles, Russia fell so low that all her enemies were convinced that she was mortally stricken. In Russia there was no tsar, no authority, no army. In Moscow, foreigners were in power. People became "fainthearted" and weak, and they awaited salvation from the foreigners with whom they ingratiated themselves. Destruction was inescapable, and Russia would inevitably have perished had the consciousness of righteousness been completely lost. But the holy hierarch Germogen saved Russia and the Russian people. The enemies of Russia held him in a cellar in

the Kremlin, mocked him, tortured him, and tried to force him to submit to them, thereby betraying the Russian understanding of righteousness. Saint Germogen was tortured to death, but spiritually he did not surrender, and he called Russia to her historical path as a Christian state with a Christian authority; he called her to remember the truth and to be faithful to it. In faith and confession, Saint Germogen spiritually and morally regenerated the Russian nation, and it again started on the path of seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, the righteousness of subordinating the earthly life of the state to spiritual principles. And Russia rose up. In history there is no other example of such a profound fall of a state and such a rapid, miraculous resurgence, within a year's time, when spiritually and morally the people rose up. Such is the history of Russia, such is her path.

After Tsar Peter I, public life turned aside from this path. It did not turn aside completely, but it lost the clarity of the consciousness of righteousness, the clarity of faith in the Gospel Truth, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The heavy sufferings of the Russian people are the results of the betrayal of Russia herself, her path, her calling. But those heavy sufferings and the melancholy of life under the cruel atheists' authority indicate that the Russian people has not completely lost the consciousness of righteousness, that it feels spiritually and morally weighed down by the unrighteousness of the godless state and the godless authority.

Russia will arise, just as she arose before. She will arise when faith will flame up, when people will arise spiritually, when a clear, firm faith in the truth [pravda] of the Saviour's words, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you, will again be dear to them. Russia will arise when she will come to love the Faith and the confession of Orthodoxy, when she will see and come to love the righteous and the confessors.

Today, on the day of All the Saints Who Have Shown Forth in the Russian Land, the Church points to them, and the faithful spiritually exult on seeing what a multitude of them there are in the Kingdom of God. And there are countless numbers of those not yet glorified! Here Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev goes to his death, quietly, fearlessly. The murderers lead him out from the gates of the Lavra, in order to kill him outside the city, as they killed the Lord and Saviour, and in silence, like a lamb for the slaughter, the hierarch accepts death for Christ, for the Faith, for the Russian Church, because he sought first of all to acquire the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

There is a multitude of martyrs and confessors; and again we see God's blessing on their struggle of faith, and again the manifestation of incorrupt relics: the bodies of the righteous, who already live according to the laws of the future life, where there is neither suffering nor corruption, and the incorruption of their relics testify of this. Thus, the incorrupt remains of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, which rest in the Gethsemane convent, testify to us of her righteousness in the eyes of God.

Russia will arise when she will lift up her gaze and see that all the saints who have shown forth in the Russian land are alive in the Kingdom of God, that the spirit of eternal life is in them, and that it is necessary for us to be with them and spiritually touch and communicate of their eternal life. Herein lies the salvation of Russia — and of the whole world. In Russia today there is no spirit of life, no joy of life. Everyone is afraid of it, as they are afraid of demons. Russia also was terrible to other powers, but because she drew peoples to herself.

Russian humility created faithfulness to the commandment, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." It humbled authority as well, and in the days of its greatest earthly glory, Russian authority, by the lips of Tsar Alexander I, confessed itself as a Christian authority, and on the monument of its glory wrote: "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name." The Russian heaven, the Russian saints call us to be with them, as they are with us. They call us to commune of the spirit of eternal life, and the world thirsts for that spirit. The restoration of Russia is needed by the whole world, from which the spirit of life has departed, and it all shakes in fear, as in the face of an earthquake.

Russia awaits a Christ-loving army, Christ-loving tsars and leaders, who will lead the Russian people, not for earthly glory, but for the sake of faithfulness to the Russian Path of Righteousness.

"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name." In repentance, in faith, in purification, may the Russian land be renewed and may Holy Rus' arise.

1. Translator's note:pravdacovers a wide range of meanings, including "truth," "justice" and "righteousness." Unless otherwise indicated,pravdahas been translated herein as "righteousness."

20. Feast of All Saints of Russia

Pentecost Feast of All Saints of Russia. The feast of All Saints of Russia is not a feast of just righteous ones, but of saints. God is filled with holiness; “Holy is the Lord our God.” But man is created in the “image and likeness” of God, and the Lord at creation breathed into him the power to partake of the Divine essence, and thereby come closer to God. And the closer a man is to God, the holier he is. Saints are those who have partaken of the Divine essence and made it their own; to God, they become “His own.” The saints enjoy blessedness, for God is blessed. From them there is light for men. Through them the power of God is revealed. Saints retain all that is characteristic of the human condition; they know everything that is ours. They are near to God, but they are also near to us; they walked and dwelt among us. The people of Holy Russia venerated them, kissed their icons and holy relics, wanted to be as close as possible to the saints, touched holiness, and the Russian land was filled with it. Holy Prince Vladimir demonstrated the regenerating power of the Divine essence upon himself. Previously wild and passionate, he was completely reborn, so that he became a new person, radiating light and joy, and was called “beautiful sun.” Do not think that contact with holiness is the fate of only the Russian nation. No! All peoples can live in the spirit that Holy Russia lived and lives in, and then they are close and comprehensible to each other. St. Anthony of the Kiev Caves and St. Anthony the Roman were men of different countries, but together they built the Russian Church, and they are equally near and dear to her. Until recent times we did not have martyrs, but there was a multitude of saints. They influenced the direction that the Russian people took; the people loved them and tried to follow them, and this determined the way of life. All of life was illuminated, until spiritual apostasy began, which led to a fall. But Holy Russia is alive. When the persecution began, strugglers were revealed, confessors, and now we have martyrs. The spirit of Holy Russia lives. Holy Russia is part of the Ecumenical (i.e., the entire) Church. Celebrating the saints, we desire to be together with them and to acquire the power of God through their holiness. They know us, our nature, our characteristics and spirits, and they know our souls, too — what is necessary for us. We are close to them as children are close to their parents. The Apostle Peter prayed for his disciples. St. Demetrius of Thessalonica rushes to help the Greeks because this is his own nation. Sts. Boris and Gleb help their relatives (e.g., Alexander Nevsky), and their own Russian people.

21. Sunday 16. Talents and Iconography

Pentecost Sunday 16. Talents and Iconography. The Lord Spoke a parable about a master who distributed talents to his servants, each man according to his abilities. After a certain time had passed, he demanded an accounting from each and rewarded those who earned as much as they had received. But the one who did nothing and simply returned the talent he had been given was punished severely. The master is the Lord God, the talents are His gifts, the servants are men. The Lord grants spiritual gifts; He grants them to individuals, and also to entire nations.

Until the Corning of Christ, God's words were entrusted to Israel. When Israel wavered in faith, when Judea began to fall, the Prophet Baruch, a disciple of the Prophet Jeremiah, called out, This is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that endureth for ever: all they that keep it shall come to life; but such as leave it shall die. Turn thee, O Jacob, and take hold of it: walk in the presence of the light thereof, that thou mayest be illuminated. Give not thine honor to another, nor the things that are profitable unto thee to a strange nation. O Israel, happy are we; for things that are pleasing to God are made known unto us (Bar 4:1-4).

Israel, however, did not keep God's commandments and, rejecting the Son of God, fell away from God. The Lord founded His New Testament Church, into which many formerly pagan peoples entered. After Christianity's victory over paganism, Byzantium became the special guardian of Orthodoxy. There the Ecumenical Councils and Holy Fathers of the Church established a precise exposition of the dogmas of the Faith and Orthodox teaching. After the fall of Byzantium, the Orthodox Faith was preserved best by the Russian people, who by that time had thoroughly absorbed it. Their way of life, the country's civil laws, its customs — all were grounded in the Orthodox faith or conformed to it

One representation of the Orthodox Faith is the temple, and the Russian land was covered with them. The Orthodox temple itself is an image of the invisible universal Church, of which we speak in the Symbol of Faith: "In One Holy, Catholic [meaning "universal"] and Apostolic Church." This is why our temples are also called churches. Rising aloft, the cupola symbolizes for us a striving towards Heaven and reminds us of the heavenly vaults beneath which our prayers ascend to God. It reminds us of the invisible heavens, God's kingdom on high.

Churches are adorned with icons. Icons are not simply pictures of certain people or events. An icon is a symbol of the invisible. It depicts not only the outward, visible countenance of the Lord and His saints, but also their inner likeness, their sanctity.

Even secular paintings often personify certain ideas. Let us take, for example, the famous statue of Peter the Great in Petrograd; here he is represented high up on a rearing horse, symbolic of how high, in many respects, he raised up Russia. Many other statues similarly convey certain ideas. If this is true of secular art, it should be true all the more of religious art, which portrays the sublime, the heavenly, the spiritual. An icon is not a portrait; a portrait depicts only a person's earthly aspect, while an icon depicts also his inner state. Even if only the external features are

depicted, at different times the subject will have a different expression. Blessed Metropolitan Anthony related how, as a student at the Theological Academy, he and some classmates attended services in Kronstadt celebrated by righteous Father John. When Father John ended the Liturgy he appeared radiant, just like Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai. Shortly afterwards Father John received them in his cell and was his usual self. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself once showed us His divine glory on Mount Tabor, while at other times He looked like an ordinary man, and people wondered, amazed, at the source of His power and miracles. An icon ought to depict not only the outward but also the inner life, holiness and closeness to heaven. This is depicted primarily in the face and its expression, and the rest of the icon should conform to this. Our Orthodox iconographers directed all their attention to conveying the state of the soul, concealed beneath the flesh. The more successful this attempt was, the better the icon was. The execution of other parts of the body was frequently inadequate, not because this was done consciously by the iconographers but because the attainment of their principal goal did not always allow them to pay sufficient attention to secondary aspects. One might add that even in taking ordinary photographs, especially candid ones, many would undoubtedly show unnatural positions of the body, which ordinarily we would not notice. One cannot paint an icon by depicting the external aspect alone; this external representation must reflect the unseen struggles and must radiate with heavenly glory. This can be achieved most successfully by the person who himself leads a spiritual life, and who understands and deeply reveres the lives of the saints. Our ancient iconographers, in engaging in this art, always prepared for it with prayer and fasting. To many icons executed in this manner the Lord granted wonderworking power. Of course, every icon, after it is sanctified, should be revered and must not be treated with disdain or disrespect. We should therefore refrain from passing judgment on icons which have already found a place in churches, but we must always strive towards what is better, and, what is most important, our attention should be directed not so much towards the aesthetic appeal of icons as to their spirituality. Icons that do not satisfy the requirements of Orthodox iconography ought not be placed in churches or in homes. Icons cannot be painted by simply anyone who has a talent for art and who is capable of their artistic execution. Often the state of the person painting an icon and a desire to serve God are of greater significance than artistic skill. In Russia, after the reign of Peter the Great, along with the good which arrived from the West, many novelties foreign to the spirit of Orthodoxy entered into Russia. A significant portion of Russia's educated class fell under this influence, which injected much that was unhealthy and bad into their literary and artistic works. This tendency was also reflected in iconography. Instead of emulating the ancient Russian iconographers, they began to emulate artists of the West, who were unfamiliar with Orthodoxy. The new images, although they were very beautiful, did not correspond to the spirit of iconography. This spirit, foreign to Orthodoxy, began to take root in Russia and gradually unsettled her. The words of the prophet are addressed to us today: Give not of thy glory to another, and what is beneficial to thee to an alien people. Just as in life, so, too, in church traditions we must return to those firm and pure foundations on which Russia was built and secured herself. One reflection of these foundations is our iconography. Icons for our churches must not be painted in a spirit foreign to Orthodoxy. Some think this means icons must be painted in dark colors, with unnatural positioning of the bodies. This is not true. Ancient icons were painted with bright colors and darkened over time with the accumulation of dust. At the same time, it must be remembered that many saints were in fact dark-complexioned, having spent their lives in hot deserts, and many had bodies that were indeed emaciated with long

years of ascetic struggle. Theirs was not an earthly but a heavenly beauty. Through their prayers may they help our churches become reflections of heavenly glory and help our flock to unite in seeking the Kingdom of God and to preach — not only through the church but also through life — the truth of Orthodoxy.

22. Sunday 28. Homily on the Two Banquets

Pentecost Sunday 28. Homily on the Two Banquets.

Today's Gospel readings present before us a mental image of two banquets. One banquet, described in the parable, was arranged by a king full of benevolence and mercy. When, however, the banquet was ready, those invited did not come. They preferred to occupy themselves — one with buying, another with his domestic affairs; others seized and insulted those who were sent to call them and even killed some of them. The incensed king, having severely punished the guilty, again sent forth his servants — to invite to the banquet whomever they should meet. Many gathered, and when the king came to see them, he noticed one who was not in proper festive attire. The king asked why it was he had not come suitably dressed. The man was silent, indicating disdain for the king and a lack of desire to participate in the festivities, and for this reason he was made to leave. And so, at this banquet there were many who had been called, but few turned out to be chosen, who took part in the supper. The other banquet belonged not to a parable but to reality. It was a banquet of the iniquitous Herod. It seems that in this case none of those invited refused to come, all were dressed as befitted the occasion, and they enjoyed themselves immensely. The evening passed in drunkenness, in revelry uninhibited by shame or conscience, and it concluded with a monstrous crime, the murder of John the Baptist.

These two banquets are images of two ways of life, two kinds of enjoyment. The first is an image of the spiritual banquet, of spiritual enjoyment. It is arranged by the Lord. This is the banquet of Christ's Church. We are invited to this banquet when we are called to participate in the Divine services, especially the Divine Liturgy and the Communion of the Divine Body and Blood of Christ; when we are called to good works, to vigilance and sobriety. We refuse to go to that banquet when we do not go to church services, when instead of good we do evil, when we prefer life's cares and pleasures to godly life. We come without a wedding garment when we bring an alien, sinful disposition into that life. Each of us is invited to that banquet many times a day, and we refuse each time we prefer what is carnal and sinful to what is spiritual and divine.

Every day we are likewise invited to Herod's banquet. Often we do not immediately realize that we are being tempted by evil. Sin always begins with a small thing. Herod at first even delighted in listening to John the Baptist; inwardly he realized the sinfulness of his conduct, but he did not war against sin and he ended up murdering the great Saint. We go to Herod's sordid banquet each time instead of good we choose carnal, sinful pleasures and hardheartedness; each time we choose to disregard our souls, and so forth.

Once having begun with what appears small or trivial, it is difficult to stop, and if afterwards we do not catch ourselves in time and do not forcefully take ourselves in hand, we can fall into grave sins and crimes, for which eternal torments await us.

Even now John the Baptist calls to each of us: Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent, in order to enjoy the supper of the Lamb, slain for the sins of the whole world, in the bright,

eternal mansions, and not to share with the devil the banquet of malice and torment in Tartarus (in the nether regions) and outer darkness.

23. Theophany (Jan 6/19)

Fixed Feasts Theophany (Jan 6/19).

Today the nature of the waters is sanctified. Today the Son of God is baptized in the waters of Jordan, having no need Himself of cleansing, but in order to cleanse the sinful human race from defilement.

Now the heavens open and the voice of God the Father is heard: This is My beloved Son. The Holy Spirit descends upon the Saviour of the world, Who stands in the Jordan, thereby confirming that this indeed is He Who is the incarnate Son of God. The Holy Trinity is clearly made manifest and is revealed to mankind. The waters of the Jordan are sanctified, and together with them all the waters of creation, the very nature of water. Water is given power to cleanse not only the body, but also man's whole soul, and to regenerate the whole man unto a new life through Baptism.

Through water all of nature is cleansed, for out of water the world was made, and moisture penetrates everywhere, giving life to everything else in nature. Without moisture neither animals nor plants can live; moisture penetrates into rocks, into every place in the world. The waters are sanctified and through them the whole world, in preparation for renewal and regeneration for God's eternal Kingdom which is to come.

Every year on this day the glory of God is revealed, renewing and confirming what was accomplished at Christ's Baptism. Again the heavens are opened; again the Holy Spirit descends. We do not see this with our bodily eyes, but we sense its power. At the rite of blessing, the waters which are thereby sanctified are transformed; they become incorruptible and retain their freshness for many years.

Everyone can see this — both believers and unbelievers, both the wise and the ignorant.

Whence do the waters acquire this property?

It is the action of the Holy Spirit.

Those who with faith drink these waters and anoint themselves with them receive relief and healing from spiritual and bodily infirmities. Homes are sanctified by these waters, the power of demons is expelled, God's blessing is brought down upon all that is sprinkled with these waters. Through the sanctifying of the waters God's blessing is again imparted to the whole world, cleansing it from the sins we have committed and guarding it from the machinations of the devil.

Today the Holy Spirit, descending upon the waters when the Cross of Christ is immersed into them, descends upon all of nature. Only into man He cannot enter without his will.

Let us open our hearts and souls to receive Him and with faith cry from the depth of our souls: "Great art Thou, O Lord, and marvelous are Thy works, and there is no word which sufficeth to hymn Thy wonders."

24. Theophany: Holy Water (Jan 6/19)

Fixed Feasts Theophany: Holy Water (Jan 6/19). On Theophany, the Day of the Lord's Baptism, every year a great miracle is performed. The Holy Spirit, coming down upon the water, changes its natural properties. It becomes incorrupt, not spoiling, remaining transparent and fresh for many years. This Holy Water receives the grace to heal illnesses, to drive away demons and every evil power, to preserve people and their dwellings from every danger, to sanctify various objects whether for church or home use. Therefore, Orthodox Christians with reverence drink Holy Water — a great Agiasma (holy thing), as the Greeks call it.

One should always have at home enough Theophany water to last the whole year, and make use of it at every need: in cases of illness, leaving on a journey, whenever one is upset, students prior to examinations, etc. People who drink a little Holy Water daily, before eating any kind of food, do well. It strengthens the powers of our soul—if it is done with prayer and reverence, and one does not merely expect a mechanical result from it. Every priest should take care to bless a sufficient quantity of water for his church, so that it will be on hand for the course of the whole year for every need and to be given out to those who ask for it; and parishioners should provide themselves at Theophany with Holy Water for the whole year and even so that it can be kept for future years.

25. St. Justin Martyr (Jun 1/14)

Fixed Feasts St. Justin Martyr (Jun 1/14).

(31 May/12 June, 1953)

Tomorrow is the day of the memory of the first literary apologist of Christianity — Justin the Philosopher. A brilliant lawyer and legal expert, he came to understand that the knowledge of laws is not yet the knowledge of Truth. Studying philosophical systems, he did not find in them an answer to the question, “What is truth?” Once he met an elder on the seashore; they struck up a conversation, and Justin said that no one could teach him truth, that no one could teach him to understand God. The elder answered that he would never reach his goal, because he wanted to understand God through the mind. But the truth of God has to be comprehended not by the mind alone, but with all one’s strength: by the mind and the will and the heart; one has to live according to the truth in order to come to know the truth.

26. The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

Fixed Feasts The Nativity of St. John the Baptist (Jun 24/Jul 7).

Among the Church's feasts, there are three in honor of God's saint which in their significance stand out from the others devoted to the saints and are numbered among the great feasts of the Church of Christ. These feasts glorify the economy of God for our salvation.

These three feasts are the Nativity of St. John the Forerunner, his Beheading, and the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. The apparition of the holy Archangel Gabriel to the priest Zacharias in the Temple, with the announcement of the birth to him and the righteous Elizabeth, of a son who would prepare the way for the Lord, the Savior of the world, and the subsequent fulfillment of this promise, are the first of the events related by the Evangelists. The announcement of the holy Archangel Gabriel to Zacharias in the Temple begins the New Testament Gospel. The announcement of the same Archangel Gabriel six months later in Nazareth to the Virgin Mary concerning the birth from Her of the Son of God, Who was to become incarnate, is a continuation of the revelation of the Pre-eternal Counsel concerning the salvation of the human race. Three months after, the Annunciation, St. John the Forerunner was born "in a city of Judah," and six months after him Christ Himself was born in Bethlehem. These events are closely bound together. "The glorious conception of the Forerunner proclaimeth beforehand the King Who is to be born of a Virgin" (Exapostilarion, Sept. 23, Feast of the Conception of John the Baptist). The announcement of the Archangel Gabriel in the Temple, announced later to all living nearby by Zacharias, in the magnificent hymn, which he sang after the birth of the child, John and the restoration to him of the gift of speech (Luke 1:67-79), is the forerunner of the angelic hymn: "Glory to God in the highest;" which was sung in Bethlehem by the angels when they announced to the shepherds the Nativity of Christ. The Nativity of John the Baptist is the first joy sent down by God to the human race, the beginning of its deliverance from the power of the devil, sin and eternal death. It is true that even before the Forerunner, the Most Holy Virgin Mary was born, and angels announced Her birth to Her parents. However, at that time, only Her parents knew of the exalted lot that was prepared for the Virgin Who was born, and they themselves were not fully aware of what had been announced to them beforehand. Therefore, it was only they, who celebrated at the birth of their Daughter, while the rest of the world only later understood the joy that had been announced (to it), by this birth. For this reason, the feasts of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos and Her Entrance into the Temple were established in the Church and began to be solemnly celebrated significantly later than the other great feasts, whereas the Nativity of John the Forerunner is one of the most ancient and most venerated of Christian feasts. Sermons on this feast have been preserved from the first centuries. From the day of the Nativity of John the Forerunner, the preparation of the human race begins for meeting the Son of God on earth. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people . . . And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways (Luke 1:68; Luke 1:76). These God-inspired words of the priest Zacharias, after he had regained the gift of speech, were made known in all the land of Judea, causing disturbance

to all living there, who asked each other in astonishment: What manner of child shall this be? (Luke 1:66). Involuntarily the thought arose: Is this not the Messiah Himself? Judea was in an especially tense state of expectation of the Savior. Thus, the child John prepared the way for the Lord by his very birth; and even while he was still in the womb of His mother, by his leaping (Luke 1:41) he announced the coming birth of the Child Jesus, as if crying out: "Christ is born, give ye glory. Christ comes from heaven, meet ye Him" (Irmos, Canticle One of the Canon, Feast of the Nativity of Christ). Being born exactly half a year before Christ, John the Forerunner by the exact time of his birth depicted his mission of preparing the way for the Lord. He was born at the time of the year (June 24) when the day begins to grow shorter after the summer solstice, whereas the Nativity of Christ occurs (December 25) when the day begins to grow longer after the winter solstice. These facts are an embodiment of the words spoken later, by the Forerunner, after the beginning of Christ's preaching: He must increase, but I must decrease (John 3:30). "The herald of the Sun, the Forerunner" was John the Baptist, who was like the morning star that announces the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in the East. Just as the very event of the Nativity of John the Baptist was the antechamber of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, so also the feast of the Nativity of John the Forerunner is also the antechamber of the feast of the Nativity of Christ.

"The star of stars, the Forerunner, is born on earth today, from a barren womb, John the beloved of God, and manifests the dawning of Christ, the Orient from on high" (Glory at Lauds, of the Feast, June 24).

"The whole creation rejoiceth at thy divine nativity: for thou wast shown forth as an earthly angel, O Forerunner and a heavenly man, proclaiming to us, the God of heaven incarnate" (Canticle Five of the Canon).

"O Prophet and Forerunner of the coming of Christ, we who venerate thee with love, are in perplexity how worthily to praise thee; for the barrenness of her who bore thee and the dumbness of thy father are loosed by thy glorious and precious nativity, and the incarnation of the Son of God is preached to the world" (Troparion of the Feast).

27. Apostles Peter and Paul (Jun 29/Jul 12)

Fixed Feasts Apostles Peter and Paul (Jun 29/Jul 12). The day of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul is the culminating feasts of the Gospel. Although the last event in the life of Christ which is related in the Gospel as His Ascension into heaven (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51), the preaching of the Apostles is closely bound up with the Gospel. The Gospel tells us of their being chosen, and the Gospel indicates beforehand the end of Apostolic activity.

Telling of the appearance of Christ on the sea of Tiberias and the restoration to apostleship of Peter, who by his triple confession corrected his triple denial, the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian speaks also of the prediction to the Apostle Peter concerning the end of his struggle. When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whether thou wouldest not. This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God (John 21:18-19). It was not pleasing to the Lord then, to reveal the face of each of the other Apostles, although, when sending them to preach, He predicted to them, the persecutions that awaited them (Matthew 10:17-36). Now, to the question of Peter about John, Christ replied: If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me (John 21:22). The mysterious words of Christ about John, and the extraordinary circumstances of the latter's end, have been the cause for the opinion, which spread in the Church, beginning from the days of the apostles, that John would remain on earth until the Second Coming. Such a view of the end of the earthly life of the Apostle John is set forth in part also in the hymns on the day of his memorial, where mention is made of his special closeness to the earthly Church. Therefore, the Church does not celebrate the day of the repose of the Apostle John the Theologian, which is also revered by the Church as a great feast, as is the day of repose of the Apostle Peter, which was definitely predicted by the Lord. It is precisely to the Apostle Peter and to no one else, that the Lord predicted the culmination of his earthly ministry, because it was Peter who first confessed Him, on behalf of all the Apostles, to be Christ, the Son of God; he was the first to receive the promise of power to bind and loose, which was subsequently given to all the Apostles (Matthew 16:16-19; Matthew 18:18); and it was he who renounced Christ and was again restored to apostleship. Indicating to Peter the culmination of his Apostolic preaching when restoring to him the Apostolic calling, the Lord thereby reveals the essence of the Apostolic ministry. The preaching of the Word of God not only by word of mouth, but also by deprivations, sufferings and death, constituted the following of Christ and the continuation of His work. The Apostle Peter, as the most zealous of all and one who strove to be before the others in word and deed, by his example aroused the other Apostle Therefore it is primarily him that Christ addresses. He goes in front of the other Apostles, becomes their "leader;" and it is especially to him that the preaching among the Jews was entrusted, while the Apostle of the Gentiles was the one who received precisely this title, being converted later, the no less zealous Paul (Galatians 2:7-9). These two Apostles were as it were the commanders of the rank of the Apostles, which is expressed (in the service to them) by the word "leaders." Without having authority over others, they both stood in front of all others by their warm zeal and labors. Their life was the most brilliant and was a personification of the life and labors of all the Apostles. The end of

their earthly labors was especially impressive, thanks to the fact that it occurred before the eyes of the whole world. One of them (Peter) was crucified upside down, and the other (Paul) was beheaded, both in Rome, towards which at that time the gaze of all peoples was directed. The news of this quickly drew to all the ends of the universe, all the more in that they were both known personally in many places; their names were everywhere the Savior had been preached. The Apostle of the Jews and the Apostle of the Gentiles departed to Christ on the same day, as if indicating their equal nearness to God and the oneness of the Church of Christ, in which there is neither Greek nor Jew (Colossians 3:11). Therefore, the day on which the earthly labors ended for "the leaders of the Apostles, who labored more than all," who "separated in body, are together in spirit;" became one of the memorable days for the whole Church. The Apostle John the Theologian was still alive then, being in Ephesus, from where he was exiled to the island of Patmos. Not long before his transition into the other world, he wrote the Gospel, by which he completed the three Gospels written before him, and which he had approved. Having already completed his Gospel, he added to it, the account of the manifestation of Christ on the sea of Tiberias in order that quoting precisely the words of Christ about himself, he might refute the opinion that he had been promised by Christ to remain on earth until the Second Coming. In this afterward to the Gospel written by him, the Apostle and Evangelist John set forth the prediction of Christ to the Apostle Peter concerning his martyr's death, and thus he bound the memory of this death with the Gospel. Just as the last chapter of the Gospel of John is literally the conclusion of the whole Gospel, so also the feast dedicated to the fulfillment of the prophecy set forth there is as if it were the conclusion of all the Gospel events kept in remembrance by the Church. Being an immovable feast, it is nevertheless bound up with the movable feasts, since the preparation for it—the Apostles' Fast—begins one week after the feast of Pentecost; thus, it depends on the date of the celebration of Pascha. The feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul indicates the lot of the Holy Apostles here on earth and reveals the glory that followed it. The earthly lot of the Apostles was to go around the earth preaching of the Heavenly Kingdom, in this emulating Christ by their poverty, endurance of dishonor and sufferings, by their love for the children of the Heavenly Father, their inward torments of childbirth over those who heeded their preaching and their grief over those who paid no heed to their words and finally, by offering themselves as a sacrifice. However, the culmination of their earthly life is the beginning of their heavenly glory. Their end is for them a dissolving of earthly ties and an ascent to Christ, Whom they loved, in order to remain eternally with Him (1 Peter 1:23). The day of their earthly end is the day of their heavenly birth, and the celebration of it is a solemnity of the coming of the future age for those who have followed Christ in this age. The receiving of the crowns of righteousness prepared not only for them, but also for all who love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). Coming after the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit and being in part bound up with it, the feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul culminates the yearly cycle of feasts dedicated to the earthly life of Christ and reveals the essence of His promises. Just as the Nativity of John the Baptist is the foreword to the Gospel and the beginning of the events described in it, so also the death of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul is their culmination and the afterward of the Gospel. The Nativity of St. John the Baptist is the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel of the New Testament on earth; his Beheading is the preaching of it in hell; and the day of the Holy Apostles is the realization of it in heaven. "The firm and God-proclaiming preachers, the pinnacle of the Apostles, Thou hast received into the enjoyment of Thy good things and into repose; for Thou didst receive their pains and death as

above all offerings, O Thou Who alone knowest what is in the heart" (Kontakion). "The feast of the all-honorable Apostles hath come, interceding for the salvation of all of us. Now mystically clapping our hands, let us say: come into our midst invisibly, vouchsafing immaterial gifts for those who praise your feast in hymns" (Glory at Lauds).

28. The Tsar-Martyr (July 4/17)

Fixed Feasts The Tsar-Martyr (July 4/17).

Forty Years Ago, a single day saw the collapse of the greatness and glory of the Russian State, a bulwark of peace throughout the whole world. The signature of the Sovereign, the Emperor Nicholas II-do, on the act of abdication from the Throne, is a historical boundary separating Russia's great and glorious past from her present dark and cruel circumstances.

The entire weight of the present regime's evil and its reordering of life is aimed at honest, well-intentioned and devout people, and the whole nation lies in oppression and constant fear. People are afraid of their own thoughts, thoughts they have not expressed aloud; they are afraid that what they are thinking might be reflected in their facial expressions.

What happened that day, forty years ago?

Apostasy from God's Anointed, apostasy from an authority submissive to God, apostasy from the oath of fidelity to the Anointed Sovereign, given before God, and the giving over of him to death.

He who had devoted all his strength in God's name to the service of Russia was deprived of authority, and then also of freedom.

For decades the dark forces of evil carried on a struggle against God's Anointed, against the ruling authority faithful to God. These same forces also killed the Emperor Alexander II, the Tsar-Liberator.

This crime sobered the people, it shook the entire country, and that moral upsurge gave Emperor Alexander III, the Peacemaker, the opportunity to rule Russia with a strong arm.

Russia enjoyed two decades of peaceful life and development. Then a new conspiracy arose for the overthrow of the Royal Throne.

It was a conspiracy of Russia's enemies.

Within Russia itself there was a struggle against her very essence, and, having destroyed the Throne, Russia's enemies even obliterated her name.

Now the whole world can see the close connection between the Royal authority, faithful to God, and Russia. When the Tsar ceased to be — Russia ceased to be.

The struggle against the Tsar and Russia was carried out by concealed godlessness, which later revealed itself openly.

Such was the essence of the struggle against the Tsar and Russia, against the foundation of her life and historical development.

Such are the meaning and aim of that struggle, which perhaps not everyone realized — those who were its accomplices.

Everything filthy and paltry and sinful which could be found in the human soul was summoned against the Tsar and Russia. All of this, with all its might, rose up in struggle against the Royal Crown, which was crowned by a cross, for Royal service is a bearing of the Cross.

People always rise up against the Cross by means of slander and falsehood, doing the devil's work, for, according to the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, When he speaketh a He, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it (John 8:44).

Everything was roused up against the most meek, pure and abundantly-loving Tsar, so that at the terrible hour of the struggle against him he would remain alone. Filthy slanders were spread beforehand against the Tsar and his family, so that the people would grow cool towards him.

Faithless allies took part in the conspiracy. When the Sovereign was in need of moral support, his closest associates did not provide it and violated their oath. Some took part in the conspiracy; others, out of weakness, counseled abdication. The Tsar remained completely alone, surrounded by "treachery, baseness and cowardice."

From the day of the abdication, everything began to collapse. It could not have been otherwise. The one who united everything, who stood guard for the Truth, was overthrown. A sin was committed, and now sin had easy access. In vain do some wish to separate February from October; the one was a direct consequence of the other. In those March days, Pskov became the Tsar's Gethsemane, and Ekaterinburg — his Golgotha.

Tsar Nicholas died as a martyr, with unshakable faith and patience, having drunk the cup of suffering to the dregs.

The sin against him and against Russia was perpetrated by all who in one way or another acted against him, who did not oppose, or who merely by sympathizing participated in those events which took place forty years ago. That sin lies upon everyone until it is washed away by sincere repentance.

In raising up prayers for the repose of his soul, we pray also for Tsars Paul I and Alexander II, who were likewise slain in March. And we pray for the forgiveness of the Russian people of the grave sin of betrayal and regicide. Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. Before us, before the Russian people, lies the path of resurgence — which is the path of consciousness of sin and repentance.

For the rebirth of Russia, all political and other programs of unification are in vain: what Russia needs is the moral renewal of the Russian people.

We must pray for the forgiveness of our sins and for mercy on our homeland, just as the Lord God freed Israel from the Babylonian captivity and restored the ruined city of Jerusalem.

1. (* Many attribute the Russian Revolution to the Bolsheviks, who seized power in October (O.S.) 1917. Archbishop John and others point out that the groundwork for the Revolution was laid much earlier, as evidenced by the lack of support given the Tsar at the time of the February uprisings,

which precipitated his forced abdication in March. - pub.)

2. Many attribute the Russian Revolution to the Bolsheviks, who seized power in October (O.S.) 1917. Archbishop John and others point out that the groundwork for the Revolution was laid much earlier, as evidenced by the lack of support given the Tsar at the time of the February uprisings, which precipitated his forced abdication in March. - pub

29. The Sin of Regicide (July 4/17)

Fixed Feasts The Sin of Regicide (July 4/17).

After The Death of Saul, who had fallen on his sword during a battle with the Philistines, an Amalekite ran to inform David, who at that time was being persecuted by Saul.

Supposing that David would be very glad at the news he brought, the messenger decided to pose as Saul's killer, in order to increase the anticipated reward.

However, when David had heard the story made up by the Amalekite about how he, at the request of the wounded Saul, had slain him, he took hold of his garments and rent them, as did also all the people who were with him. They mourned and wept and fasted till evening. And David said to the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed (2 Kings 1:1-16 [II Samuel in the Authorized Version]).

Thus the foreigner who posed as Saul's killer was executed. He was subjected to a cruel punishment even though Saul was the persecutor of the innocent David and had done much evil, for which the Lord had departed from him. From David's words it is evident that he doubted the veracity of the Amalekite's story and was not convinced that the man was indeed Saul's murderer; nevertheless, he gave him over to death, considering that even calling oneself a regicide and boasting of such a deed was worthy of death.

How many times more grave and sinful was the murder of the Orthodox monarch anointed by God; how many times greater must the punishment be for the murderers of Tsar Nicholas II and his family?! In contrast to Saul, who had turned away from God and because of this had been abandoned by Him, Tsar Nicholas II was an exemplar of piety and complete devotion to God's will.

Having received not the Old Testament pouring of oil on the head, but the grace-filled "Seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in the Mystery of Chrismation, Emperor Nicholas II was faithful to his high calling till the end of his life and was conscious of his responsibility before God. In his every action, Emperor Nicholas II took his conscience into account; he always "walked before the Lord God." He was "Most Pious" during the days of his earthly well-being, not only in name, but in actual fact. In his time of trial, he displayed patience like that of righteous Job.

Against such a Tsar did criminals raise their hands, and at a time when he had already been purified, like gold in the furnace, by the trials he had endured, so that he was an innocent sufferer in the full sense of the word. The crime against Tsar Nicholas II is all the more terrible and sinful in that his whole family was killed together with him, including the children, who were not guilty of anything!

Such crimes do not remain unpunished. They cry out to Heaven and bring God's wrath down upon the earth.

If the foreigner — the supposed murderer of Saul — underwent death, now the whole Russian nation is suffering for the murder of the defenseless Tsar-Sufferer and his family, because it allowed such a terrible misdeed to take place and remained silent when the Tsar was subjected to humiliation and deprived of his freedom.

God's justice requires of us a profound realization of the sinfulness of what was done, together with repentance before the Tsar-Martyr and his memory.

The memory of the innocent holy princes Boris and Gleb aroused the conscience of the Russian people during the disturbances which upset the appanage principalities, and it shamed the princes who had initiated the strife. The blood of the holy Great Prince Igor brought about a spiritual change in the souls of the Kievans and united Kiev and Chernigov in venerating the slain holy prince. Saint Andrew Bogoliubsky sanctified with his blood the monarchy of Rus', which was confirmed only considerably later, after his death as a martyr. The veneration of Saint Michael of Tver throughout Russia healed the wounds caused by the struggle between Moscow and Tver. The glorification of the holy Tsarevich Dimitri cleared the consciousness of the Russian people, inspired moral strength and led, after severe shocks, to the rebirth of Russia.

The Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II and his much-suffering family have now entered into the choir of these Passion-bearers.

This greatest of crimes, committed with respect to him, must be expiated by fervent veneration of him and by the glorification of his struggle.

Rus' must bow down before its humiliated, slandered and martyred Tsar, just as the Kievans once bowed down before the venerable Prince Igor whom they martyred, and just as the people of Vladimir and Suzdal bowed down before the slain Great Prince Andrew Bogoliubsky!

Then the Tsar-Passion-bearer will acquire boldness before God, and his prayer will deliver the Russian land from the calamities it is enduring.

Then the Tsar-Martyr and his fellow sufferers will become new heavenly defenders of Holy Rus'.

The innocent blood that was shed will regenerate Russia and make it radiant with new glory!

30. St. Vladimir's Day Celebration (Jul 15/28)

Fixed Feasts St. Vladimir's Day Celebration (Jul 28).

(4/17 July 1953)

Today is a great day for the Russian land and her people — her entire life is a result of the deeds of St. Vladimir. All the saints that shone forth in Russia are the fruit of his faith. The entire history of Russia is a continuation of his work along the path that he indicated. He is the establisher of the Russian nation; before him there were only alliances of peoples made by local leaders. St. Vladimir bound the people morally and spiritually with the ruler, and the tribes to each other. Now scattered apart, we find in him unity and a way to union. The Resurrection of Russia is along his path, with the same understanding of the meaning of life, on the same rock of faith.

31. 950-Year Anniversary of the Baptism of Rus'

Fixed Feasts 950-Year Anniversary of
the Baptism of Rus'.

“With Voices of praise the land of Rome extols Peter and Paul, through whom its people came to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Asia, Ephesus and Patmos likewise laud John the Theologian; India — Thomas; Egypt — Mark; all lands and cities and peoples venerate and glorify their own teachers, who instructed them in the Orthodox faith. Let us also, then, with our feeble voices, but to the best of our ability, praise one who wrought great and wondrous deeds, our teacher and instructor, the great kagan (prince) of our land, Volodymir, the grandson of old Igor.”

Thus spoke Saint Hilarion, Metropolitan of Kiev, in the middle of the eleventh century, when little more than half a century had passed since the baptism of Rus'. At that time this holy man, with his penetrating vision, already saw the greatness of Saint Vladimir's accomplishments, and called upon Rus' to glorify him in a fitting manner. In what words, then, and with what colors shall we depict what Saint Vladimir accomplished by the baptism of Rus', now that we have lived to see the millennium of this glorious occurrence? Let us recall what Rus' was before Vladimir and what it became after its baptism by Saint Vladimir.

This was Rus' in the days of “old Igor” or of Vladimir's father, Sviatoslav. Each tribe lived its life in isolation. Various clans were often at odds with one another, avenging themselves and often engaging in mutual self-destruction, as they followed the laws of blood vengeance.

Before Vladimir, Russian princes were more like military leaders and conquerors than fathers and benefactors of their people. They were more concerned with attacking and plundering than with the welfare of their subjects. Many of the tribes were still at a very low stage of moral and cultural development; some of them had the custom of abducting or seizing young women to be their wives.

Still, it would be a mistake to think that the Slavs possessed only negative qualities and comprised simply masses of half-savage people. On the contrary, they had much that was good in their character. They were hospitable, courageous and honest. Wives were faithful companions to their husbands, and their loyalty often extended to those who were dead. The Slavic peoples honored the elderly and listened to them concerning personal or social questions. At the same time, however, treachery, cruelty and guile were found among them. Particularly in times of war, they became a terror to all who were around them. The peaceful Slav would turn into a wild beast, and woe to those against whom his rage was directed, for it spared no one! Byzantium trembled before its northern neighbors, while they themselves often lived in fear of one another.

Thus, the Slavic world stood at the crossroads of good and evil, displaying both the virtuous qualities of man, created in the image of God, and the fierce attributes of a beast in human form.

What were the highest ideals among the Slavs? To what could they direct their thoughts and feelings? Whence could they derive inspiration, and to whom could they turn their uplifted eyes?

The gods in whom they believed possessed all the qualities of their good and bad characteristics. The Slavs served gods of their own devising; this fact reinforced their own faults, which found their justification in the attributes of their gods. Thus, as servants of fierce Perun, the Slavs waged cruel warfare and wiped out their neighbors. It is difficult to say what eastern Europe would have become if Saints Cyril and Methodius had not shed the light of Christ upon the Slavs and begun the enlightenment of the Slavic peoples.

Together with their disciples, Saints Cyril and Methodius enlightened some of the Slavs with the teachings of Christ. The influence of Christianity was soon felt among them, and it brought them into the family of Christian nations. Within a short span of time, those countries which accepted Christianity were transformed. Yet the majority of the Slavs, the East Slavs, continued in their old ways. At times there was reason to fear that their militant princes, such as Sviatoslav, would destroy the young shoots, watered by Christianity, which had sprung up on their brothers' fields. The darkness which hung over the East Slavic tribes was so thick and impenetrable that it could not even be dispelled by one who emerged on the princely throne like the morning star on the horizon, the first Russian Christian princess, Olga. It required the rising of the bright sun itself, and for Rus' this meant Olga's grandson, the Great Prince Vladimir.

Vladimir had learned the rudiments of faith in Christ from his grandmother, but had drowned them in the revelry of youthful passions. Shaken to the depths of his soul by the martyrdom of the Varagian boyars Theodore and John, he decided to change his way of life. After carefully investigating questions of faith, Vladimir, whose life and convictions were closely connected, made a choice. Being by nature straightforward and honest, he did not stop half way along the road, but pursued the best course to the end. He was enlightened by the light of Orthodoxy, and after his baptism became a zealous follower of the commandments of Christ. By his example and his appeals he led his subjects to follow him. A striking change took place in Vladimir; from a pleasure-loving youth of unbridled passions he turned into a man of holiness.

No less striking was the change which came over Rus' after its baptism. The baptism of Kiev, followed by that of the rest of Rus', opened up a new life for the East Slavs; it became the point of departure for their glorious history.

The divided Slavic tribes which composed Vladimir's nation began to feel united. This new consciousness of their unity was strengthened by the fact that for several centuries the whole of Rus' constituted, in ecclesiastical terms, one metropolitan district, despite the later division of Rus' into independent principalities.

The Church greatly influenced the unification of Rus' into one state. As Orthodoxy spread among the Slavic and non-Slavic tribes which were living in eastern Europe, they were able to become one with the Russian nation. The Church acted as a peacemaker in times of civil strife, and inculcated an awareness that the Russian nation is one, and should therefore constitute an integral unit in all things. It was under the protection of the Holy Orthodox Church that Rus' was formed, became strong and grew into a great power, occupying one-sixth of the globe. The Russian people, who accepted Christianity not by force but freely, strove from the very first years

following their baptism to make their life reflect the teachings of the Gospel. People whose hearts had been brutish were reborn through baptism and changed from within. While retaining those qualities which were good from their past, they were freed from the bad qualities which had also been present. The battle between good and evil did not take place in Vladimir's soul alone, but in the entire nation as a whole, and the result was a great change for the good. The Russian people after baptism were not the same as they had been before baptism. They were a new people, a new nation.

This does not mean that they all became perfect right away, or that evil vanished from every heart and ceased to be found in Rus'. Not at all; evil was still present, and it continued its struggle with good in every man. But the force which motivated the Russian people was Orthodoxy, which embraced all areas of life — personal, social and political. Family and community life was imbued with the spirit of the Gospel; opinions were formed under the influence of the Church's rules, and civil laws were in harmony with the canons. The life of the Russian people had a common direction, to seek God's righteousness.

This striving to attain God's righteousness penetrated legislation, the administration of justice, and decisions of state. The same striving to serve God marked the intellectual and spiritual life of the Russian people. Practically all spheres of their cultural life had their origin in the life of the Church and developed under her influence.

Russian literature and Russian art originated in the monasteries and were so thoroughly penetrated by the Christian spirit that not even those writers of later times whose goal was to combat the Church's teachings could completely escape its influence. The principal rulers of Rus', the grand dukes and the emperors of all Russia, were aware of their responsibility to the King of kings and regarded themselves as servants of God, which is what they were in the eyes of their subjects as well. The tsars of Russia were not tsars "by popular will," but tsars "by the grace of God."

Of course, not everything in Rus' went along with this general direction, not by any means. Over the past centuries much was done that was evil. If there is no man that liveth and sinneth not, all the more do sin and evil inevitably occur in the life and history of a nation. However, just as in assessing the character of a person the important thing is to determine which of his qualities are more prominent and outweigh others, so also, in defining the character of a nation one must ascertain what are the chief elements of its spiritual life.

For Rus' and the Russian people, despite all their individual deviations and departures from their ideal, what was of primary importance was to serve righteousness and to stand in the truth. When we call to mind ancient Greece, the words of the Apostle Paul about the ancient Greeks come to mind, The Greeks seek wisdom, even though there were certainly many among them who did not seek wisdom. Sparta is linked with the idea of physical development. The name of Phoenicia is connected with trade. Rome was proud of its civic virtue. Just so, the Russian nation became known as a God-bearing nation, and the Russian land was called Holy Rus'.

Rus' was holy in the multitude of saints who shone forth in the Russian land. Beginning with the sons of Saint Vladimir, the holy and right-believing princes Boris and Gleb, who were the first saints glorified by miracles in Rus', from the baptizer of Rus', Saint Vladimir, and his grandmother

Olga, a countless multitude of saints have lived in holiness and been glorified by miracles in the Russian land. These saints are the “beautiful fruit” of Orthodox Rus’, sharing the very flesh and bones of the Russian people. They were not strangers in their beliefs and way of life; no, they were the clearest expression of the strivings of the people as a whole.

From the baptism of Rus’ down to our own times, there has not been a single hour when, somewhere in Russia, there was not living a saint, one who after death became a heavenly protector of the Russian land. All parts of Russia have had their heroes, from Carpatho-Russia (Saint Moses the Hungarian and Ephrem of Novo-Torzhok) to Alaska, which only belonged to Russia for a short time but produced Saint Herman. Every area of Russia and practically every city of any significance had its shrines. The monasteries were spiritual centers which exercised an influence on the cities and the countryside. Every place, every dialect was sanctified by the service of God. The history of Russia is full of wonderful proofs of God’s care for her; it is a history of the divine plan, a new sacred history. The effect of Russia’s holy men on the events of its history has been so great that the history of the Russian State cannot be separated from the history of the Church. The whole way of life of the Russian people was steeped in the piety of the Church. Even Russia’s foreign policy was frequently an expression of her spiritual make-up.

So it was in the past. But where are you now, Holy Rus’? Do you no longer exist? The throne of Saint Vladimir has fallen, holy things have been desecrated, churches are destroyed. Has the God-bearing nation become a beast? Has the red dragon devoured Holy Rus’? How has a land of spiritual heroism become the site of infamous crimes? How is it that where saints once sought salvation now bandits rule? Is it possible that Holy Rus’ is no more and will never again exist, or perhaps that it never did exist, that it merely wore a veil of holiness, which has now fallen once and for all?

No! Holy Rus’ is not a mirage or an illusion, but a true reality! In heaven there is no end to the offering of incense which is the prayers of the saints who have shone forth in the Russian land and who now pray for it before the throne of God. Yet Holy Rus’ exists not only in heaven; it continues to exist even here on the sinful earth. The rule of God’s enemies has but enslaved it, not destroyed it. The council of the ungodly which has taken over the Russian nation is alien to it, having nothing in common with the essence of Russia. An alien international force, calling itself “the International,” has imposed its yoke on Russia, but remains her enemy. Those of them who formerly called themselves Russians, because they were of Russian blood, have forfeited the name of Russian, because they have become alien to the spirit of Rus’. Of such it may be said, They went out from us, but they were not of us (John 2:19). They have fallen away from the Russian nation, having become oppressors of Rus’. By rejecting God they have also rejected man’s likeness to God, and have surpassed the wild beasts in their ferocious cruelty.

But Rus’ remains holy. The choir of the Apostles was not diminished when Judas fell away from it; the radiance of the angelic ranks was not dimmed when Satan fell away from them, together with those angels who listened to him.

Just as it happened that the devil came from the ranks of the angels, but after the fall of Lucifer and his adherents the rest of the angels were inflamed with an even greater love for God and shone even more brightly in heaven, so also the godless came from among the Russian people, but their defection made the holiness of Rus’ more apparent and caused it to be glorified in heaven

and throughout all the earth.

An innumerable multitude of new martyrs have borne witness to their loyalty to Christ. The entire Russian nation has endured with indescribable patience such sufferings as no other nation on earth has yet experienced, and has furnished an incalculable multitude of new testimonies to its steadfastness in faith. In spite of the crudest persecution the Church remains unconquered. Numerous churches have been destroyed, so that in many cities which were once adorned with majestic churches not a single one of them is left; yet believers gather in secret to pray to the Lord God. Russia has met the age of the catacombs, which it never knew before, because it had never before experienced persecution for the faith.

In the great choir of saints who were pleasing to God and were glorified in Rus' there were many holy hierarchs, monks, righteous men and women, and fools for Christ's sake, but in all of its preceding history there were only a few martyrs in the Russian land. The "radiant army of martyrs," whose blood was the seed of Christianity throughout the world, and which is glorified almost every day by the earthly Church, was practically nonexistent in the heavenly Russian Church. The time came to fill up its ranks. Now an inestimable number of new martyrs and sufferers has been added to the small number of passion-bearers and martyrs who suffered in ages past. Among them is the Tsar, wearing his crown, the descendant and heir of the baptizer of Rus', along with his whole family, as well as that namesake of the baptizer of Rus' who was the chief hierarch of the city of the baptism, and also bishops, princes, noblemen, soldiers, priests, monks, the learned and the illiterate, city dwellers and country folk, the famous and the ordinary. Every age, every class, every corner of Rus' has produced new martyrs. All Rus' has been flooded by martyrs' blood and sanctified thereby.

O wonderful and glorious army of new martyrs! Who can worthily proclaim your glory? Truly, "blessed is the land which has been watered with your blood, and holy are the places which have received your bodies."

Blessed are you, O Russian land, purified by the fire of suffering! You have passed through the water of baptism; now you are passing through the fire of suffering, and you will enter also into your rest. Once Christians would reverently gather the sand of the Coliseum, soaked with the blood of the martyrs. The places where the martyrs suffered and died were regarded as sacred and worthy of special honor. But now all Rus' is the ground where the martyrs contested. Its soil has been hallowed by their blood, its air by their souls' ascent to heaven. Truly sacred are you, O Rus'! That writer of old was right in saying that you are the third Rome, and there will be no fourth. You have surpassed ancient Rome in the multitude of your martyrs' exploits; by your firmness in the Orthodox faith, you have outshone even that Rome which baptized you, and you will remain unsurpassed till the end of the world. Only that land which was made holy by the earthly life and sufferings of the God-Man is holier than you in the eyes of Orthodox people.

Sons of Russia, shake off the sleep of sloth and despondency! Gaze upon the glory of Russia's sufferings and cleanse yourselves, wash yourselves from your sins! Strengthen yourselves in the Orthodox faith, that you may be worthy to abide in the dwelling place of the Lord and to take up your abode in His holy mountain. Awake, awake, arise, O Rus', who have drunk from the Lord's hand the chalice of His anger! When your sufferings come to an end, your righteousness will be with you and the glory of the Lord will accompany you. Nations will come to your light and kings to

the radiance rising over you. In that day, lift up your eyes round about you and behold, for your children will come to you from the west and the north, from the south and the east, blessing Christ in you unto the ages.

1. krasnoye solnyshko, lit., "beautiful sun," an appellation given to Saint Vladimir.

32. Saint Seraphim (July 19/Aug 1)

Fixed Feasts Saint Seraphim (Jul 19/Aug 1).

(18/31 May 1953)

Holiness is the fruit of a man's efforts and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Holiness is reached by him who wears a cross and wages warfare in the name of Christ against the obstacles to holiness, to becoming akin to Christ. These obstacles are sins, sinful habits, firmly rooted in the soul. Struggle against them is the major work of a Christian, and in so far as he purifies his soul, so far will he receive of the Holy Spirit.

St. Seraphim taught the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, and he genuinely acquired it, for the Most Holy Mother of God recognized him as being her own. And the faithful, sincere seekers of the Truth and the Light (as was Motovilov), saw how this great Godpleaser shone with the light of holiness because of their reverence. How varied are the paths of saints! At the throne of God, in front of everyone is the Most Holy Mother of God, more glorious than the seraphim and all the angels and archangels who stood firm, remaining faithful to God through the fearful struggle that was raised against God by the most radiant of them all, Lucifer, which means Light-bearer, who is now the devil, in other words, the one cast down to the deepest darkness. In this struggle the bright angels came so close to God that it is already impossible for them to step back or become separated from Him. All the pleasers of God are like the angels in their love and devotion. Just as the angels, they waged war against the dark forces, and became strengthened in the love of God. All of the prophets of the Old Testament lived in such a struggle. Godlessness prevailed; the Law of God was forgotten. The world persecuted them because they interfered with its sinful life. They hid in the "depths of the earth." The world hated them. The prophet Isaiah was sawed in two by a wooden saw; the prophet Jeremiah was trampled in a swamp. And in such surroundings they stood fast in faith and devotion. All righteous ones were sorrowful in the world because they were strangers to the sinful world. All of the apostles suffered in one way or another. Righteous men left for the desert. What made them saints? Suffering? Not suffering alone makes saints, but striving towards God, the love of God, and the labor of overcoming obstacles to holiness, which is the fruit of man's labor and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

33. The Beheading of St. John the Baptist

Fixed Feasts The Beheading of St. John the Baptist (Aug 29/Sept 11).

“Having suffered for the truth, thou hast gone rejoicing to declare to those in hell the good tidings of God having appeared in the flesh” (Troparion of the Feast, Aug. 29). The whole life of St. John the Forerunner, from its first days, was entirely dedicated to the One Who came after him. In the days of infant massacres in Bethlehem, he was also sought by Herod, and his mother Elizabeth fled with him into the desert, where she died on the fortieth day. About the same time, his father Zacharias was killed by the servants of Herod, in the Temple. The desert raised John, and he remained there in silence, for thirty years, until the word of God came unto him, commanding him to preach repentance and call on men to prepare the way of the Lord (Luke 3:2).

About half a year after the beginning of his ministry, having prepared the Jews to expect the speedy coming of the Messiah, and surrounding himself with disciples, most of whom became the first disciples of Christ, John the Baptist, baptized Christ. The mystery of the Holy Trinity was then revealed to him. Having informed those with him, that the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world was present, John gradually faded into the shadows and everyone began follow the new Teacher. However, John rather than grieving over this, rejoiced. When his especially devoted disciples asked him about his lack of concern over his decreasing fame, he replied with words that clearly expressed his personality. “I am not the Christ, but I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: therefore this my joy is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:28-36). Soon after this, his word thundered forth, accusing Herod, so he was cast into a prison, where his earthly life ended. He was beheaded during Herod’s banquet. The beheading of St. John the Baptist, which cut off his earthly life, at the same time, started his new and glorious ministry as Forerunner. The soul of St. John the Baptist, departing his ascetic body, went to hell, the place where the souls of all who died before the Savior’s death on the Cross. The souls of everyone beginning from Adam were here. However, the holy and righteous soul of St. John the Baptist did not go there in order to experience a dark condition of alienation and distance from God. The “friend of the Bridegroom,” who had baptized Him, suffered for his righteousness, bore the hope of the coming Kingdom of God, preached to all preparing the way for Him, was inseparably bound to Him through his devotion, testifying everywhere for Christ, as His messenger, sent before Him.. Having descended to hell, John continued the ministry that he had performed on earth—the preaching about the Kingdom of God drawing near. The souls of the righteous ones, from the Old Testament were languishing in hell, awaiting the fulfillment of the coming of the One Who would conquer the serpent, as had been told to Adam by God. The prophets, who had seen beforehand in spirit, the coming of the Messiah awaited the fulfillment of the revelations that had been made to them. These souls, deprived of the light of God’s glory, tormented with waiting for the fulfillment of their hope, John came, having descended to hell, bringing the Joyful tidings that soon the kingdom of hell would be destroyed. Those who awaited the Redeemer would soon behold Him and be liberated by Him. John testified that the Son of God

had already come to earth and that after baptizing Him, he had witnessed the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Him (John 1:33-34). The preaching of John concerning the coming of the Messiah was addressed not only to the souls of the righteous, but to all who were in hell. He appeared in hell to prepare the way of the Lord, just as he had prepared it on earth. John the Baptist's descent to hell and his preaching of the Gospel was the proclamation of joy to those who were languishing there. The souls of all the dead, save for the most inveterate sinners, heeded the preaching of the Baptist. Therefore, when Christ descended to hell after His death on the Cross, He was greeted not only by the Old Testament righteous ones, but also by the souls of those who once were disobedient and opposed the long suffering of God in the days of Noah and during the rest of the time that sin reigned among men (1 Peter 3:20). Hell was destroyed by the Christ's soul descent into it; the dark confinement shone with light; the souls of the reposed were led into the Kingdom of Heaven. The entryway to this ruin of hell was the descent of the Baptist. Having fulfilled his ministry as Forerunner on earth, he appeared as the Forerunner of Christ, in hell. His beheading is not only the culmination of his earthly exploit, but also the beginning of a new and glorious ministry. Among them, that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28), Christ said of him. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee (Luke 7:27). These words of the Lord Himself, testify of the spiritual greatness of John and his high purpose in the work of the salvation of the human race. He appeared as the servant and preacher of God as no other single man in the world, having begun to preach and praise Christ before his birth, and finishing it even after his death, ascending with Christ into the Kingdom of Heaven after the destruction of hell. As the greatest of the righteous, a worthy place was prepared for him in the Kingdom of his Friend, where he remains now, awaiting its revelation in all glory and the triumphant feast of the Lamb of God in the Second Coming, when He will gather His wheat into the garner, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17). His beheading was his final exploit on earth, and the last step for the receiving of the greatest reward in the Kingdom of Heaven; while for all those in hell it was the rising of the morning star, before the appearance of the Son of Righteousness. Just as the nativity of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist is the beginning of the Gospel for the living, so is his beheading the beginning of the Gospel for the dead. "The glorious beheading of the Forerunner is part of a certain Divine dispensation, for he preached to those in hell the coming of the Savior" (Kontakion of the Feast). "Be glad, Baptist, and let thy spirit dance: for thou dost accuse the godless Herod, and dost preach to those in hell, saying: Our salvation hath drawn near" (Song of Solomon 4:1-16 of the Canon). "He who came before Thy Birth and Thy Divine Passion is, through a sword, in the nethermost parts of the earth. John, the prophet and messenger of Thy descent there, cries as the voice of the Word: Do ye dead, as Giver of life, do ye blind, as Giver of light, do ye prisoners, as Deliverer, exalt Christ above all forever" (Song of Solomon 8:1-14 of the Canon).

34. The Exaltation of the Cross (Sep 14/27)

Fixed Feasts The Exaltation of the Cross (Sep 14/27).

Before The Time of Christ, the cross was an instrument of punishment; it evoked fear and aversion. But after Christ's death on the Cross it became the instrument and sign of our salvation. Through the Cross, Christ destroyed the devil; from the Cross He descended into hades and, having liberated those languishing there, led them into the Kingdom of Heaven. The sign of the Cross is terrifying to demons and, as the sign of Christ, it is honored by Christians. The Lord manifested it in the sky to the Emperor Constantine as he was going to Rome to fight the tyrant who had seized power, and the Emperor, having fashioned a standard in the form of a cross, won a total victory. Having been aided by the Cross of the Lord, the Emperor Constantine asked his mother, the Empress Helen, to find the actual Life-giving Cross, and the devout Helen went to Jerusalem where, after much searching, she found it.

Many healings and other miracles were wrought and continue to be wrought by the Life-giving Cross and also by its depiction. Through it the Lord preserves His people from all enemies visible and invisible. The Orthodox Church solemnly celebrates the finding of the Cross of the Lord, recalling at the same time the appearance of the Cross in the sky to the Emperor Constantine. On that and other days dedicated to the Holy Cross, we beseech God that He grant His mercies not only to individual people, but to all Christendom, to the whole Church. This is well expressed by the Troparion to the Cross of the Lord, composed in the eighth century, when Saint Cosmas, Bishop of Maiuma, a friend of St. John Damascene, wrote the service to the Exaltation of the Cross of the Lord.

“Save, O Lord, Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance, granting victory to (right-believing) kings over adversaries, and by Thy Cross preserving Thy community.”

The beginning of this prayer is taken from the twenty-seventh Psalm. In the Old Testament the word “people” designated only those who confessed the true faith, people faithful to God. “Inheritance” referred to everything which properly belonged to God, God's property, which in the New Testament is the Church of Christ. In praying for the salvation of God's people (the Christians), both from eternal torments and from earthly calamities, we beseech the Lord to bless, to send down grace, His good gifts upon the whole Church as well, and inwardly strengthen her.

The petition for granting “victory to kings,” i.e., to the bearers of supreme authority, has its basis in Psalms 143:1-12, Psalms 143:10, and recalls the victories King David achieved by God's power, and likewise the victories granted Emperor Constantine through the Cross of the Lord. This appearance of the Cross made emperors who had formerly persecuted Christians into defenders of the Church from her external enemies, into “external bishops,” to use the expression of the holy Emperor Constantine.

The Church, inwardly strong by God's grace and protected outwardly, is, for Orthodox Christians, “the city of God,” God's community, His commonwealth, where the path to the Heavenly

Jerusalem has its beginning. Various calamities have shaken the world, entire peoples have disappeared, cities and states have perished, but the Church, in spite of persecutions and even internal conflicts, stands invincible; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against her (Matthew 16:18). Today, when world leaders try in vain to establish order on earth, the only dependable instrument of peace is that about which the Church sings: The Cross is the guardian of the whole world; the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings; the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the wounding of demons.

(Exapostilarion of the Cross)

35. A Hymn to God

Various A Hymn to God.

“O Thou Who art above all things! For what besides this am I allowed to utter concerning Thee? How can words hymn Thee? For Thou canst not be expressed by any words. How can the mind behold Thee? For Thou art inaccessible to any mind. Thou alone art unutterable, because Thou hast brought forth all things that can be uttered in words! Thou alone art unknowable, for Thou hast brought forth all that can be embraced by thought. All things, both rational and irrational, give Thee honor. The common desires of all are directed towards Thee; all hearts are pained for Thy sake; all things send up entreaty to Thee; to Thee all things that understand Thy beckoning utter a silent hymn of praise. By Thee alone do all things exist? All things strive together towards Thee. Thou art the end of all things; Thou art single and all; Thou art neither single, nor solitary, nor all. O Thou Who art named by all names! What shall I name Thee, the single unnamable! Moreover, what heavenly mind can penetrate the veils beyond the clouds? Be merciful, O Thou Who art above all things! For what besides this am I allowed to utter concerning Thee?” (St. Gregory the Theologian).

The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God (Psalms 13:1). The Prophet David, long before the Incarnation of Christ, clearly showed the reason why men strive to convince themselves that there is no God: Thy are corrupt and are abominable in iniquities (Psalms 52:2).

Moral corruption forces men to tremble before the future judgment; the conscience accuses them of sins. Nevertheless, men wish to sooth themselves, to stifle the conscience. They convince themselves that “there is no God.” What else can one call such a self-soothing but foolishness? Whether we acknowledge that God exists or deny it-still He exists. He ceaselessly declares concerning Himself through the book written by His finger: nature. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands (Psalms 18:1) . “I asked the luminaries of heaven;” says one church writer: “Are you God? And they answered: No. I asked the air: Are you God? And it answered: No. I asked the forests and groves: Are you not God? And they answered: No. And then all things cried out together unanimously in a loud voice: No, we are not God, but we were created by Him!” The all nature submits to the Creator and His laws. Only the crown of His creation, tempted by the fallen angel, the devil, rises up against Him. This is nothing new. Soon after the fall (of Adam) men began to turn away from God. However, an inward voice demands the acknowledgement of a higher power. Those who do not desire to revere the true God only create false gods for themselves. The more corrupt the heart is, the more repulsive and vile is the god men worship. Nevertheless, here the chief passion of man steps forth; pride, a pride that demands of man that he submit to nothing higher. A battle begins against every religion; men strive to convince, first, themselves that “there is no God;” there is nothing above them. The awareness of their wrongs inspires them to a battle against faith, a battle against religion, to a war against God Himself. However, the very intensity of this battle only confirms what they deny! If there is no God, then why is there a battle. Do men really fight against what doesn’t exist? An

inward voice says to the militant godless that they are lying to themselves, and this voice they strive to stifle with evil deeds. All the same, even they cannot remain without a god. The godless at the time of the Prophet Daniel made the king their god, demanding that men turn only to him and the idol erected by him. The godless in the French Revolution compelled men to worship reason. The godless of our times have already almost raised up Lenin to be a god: the talks and articles of their leader take the place of Holy Scripture for them, and faith in the Socialist paradise takes the place of the eternal Kingdom of Christ. A new faith is being built: faith in the non-existence of God. In order to strengthen faith in atheism, the counsel of the ungodly (Psalms 1:1) is now gathering. The teachers of the new faith and their disciples gather against the Lord, and against His Christ (Psalms 2:2). They address mankind with an appeal to overthrow submission to God, to throw off His yoke from themselves. He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn and the Lord shall deride them (Psalms 2:4). In earlier times the Lord allowed the Egyptian Pharaoh to rise against Him, and Sennacherib, who mocked God, to utter blasphemous speeches? However, the more the Lord allows, the more frightful is the ruin of the impious! In a moment they have ceased to be; they have perished because of their iniquity (Psalms 72:19). Now, the hour of the Lord's judgment will come, when the Lord shall speak unto them in His wrath, and in His anger shall He trouble the obstinate (Psalms 2:5), and those who are wavering in heart will clearly see the power of God and will have to cry out, like Nebuchadnezzar: Thy Kingdom is an eternal Kingdom, and Thy dominion it from generation to generation (Daniel 3:32).

Commemoration of St. Gregory the Theologian, Shanghai January 25, 1937

36. The Church's Prayer

Various The Church's Prayer. The Church is the union of all who confess the true faith in the true God, with the Lord Jesus Christ at her head, having as her aim the spiritual perfection of each of her members. The Church is called catholic, that is, universal, as embracing everything.

In the Church of Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free (Colossians 3:11); the Church encompasses all peoples; into her enter people from all places and times, living and dead, even the angels. Therefore, all members of the Church can and should participate in the Church's prayers. During the Liturgy, the "common service;" the Bloodless Sacrifice is offered for all the faithful, living and dead. Besides this, the Church offers up separate prayers for all that are in misfortune, in various special circumstances and for the reposed, calling on her living members. To remember with fervor those who have departed into the other life, asking God the forgiveness of sins they may have committed and eternal blessedness in the Kingdom of God.

September 10, 1944 Saturday before the Exaltation of the Cross.

37. Humility and Struggle: the Fundamental Virtues

Various Humility and Struggle: the Fundamental Virtues.

(20 May / 2 June 1953)

God's grace always assists a struggler, but this does not mean that a struggler is always in the position of a victor; sometimes the beasts did not touch the righteous ones, but by no means did they not touch them always. What is important is not victory or the position of a victor, but rather the labor of striving towards God and devotion to Him. Great is the Apostle Paul, but he asks the Lord many times ('thrice' means not once, but many times) that the messenger of Satan depart from him, for he "buffets" him, making some sort of attacks that are difficult and averse to his spirit. But the Lord leaves him in such a position: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) — enough assistance of grace and gifts are provided for him. The Lord wants from the apostle the striving which cleanses his soul.

What is important is the state of the soul, the striving towards God, and not the stature of a victor. "Strength is made perfect in weakness"(2 Corinthians 12:9). Though a man may be found in a weak state, that does not at all mean that he has been abandoned by God. The Lord Jesus Christ, according to the worldly view, was in trouble, but when the sinful world considered Him to be completely destroyed, in actuality He was victorious over death and hades. The Lord did not promise us positions as victors as a reward for righteousness, but told us, "In the world we shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The power of God is effective when a person asks for the help of God, acknowledging the weakness and sinfulness of his nature. This is why humility and the striving towards God are the fundamental virtues of a Christian.

38. A Word to the Youth

Various A Word to the Youth. And the younger son said to his father, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me” [Luke 15:12]. The parable of the prodigal son is a most instructive lesson for youth.

We see in the prodigal son the true character of carefree youth: lightmindedness, thoughtlessness, a passion for independence, in short, everything that usually characterizes the greater part of one’s youth. The younger son grew up in his parents’ house and having reached adolescence imagined that life at home was too restrictive. He thought that living under his father’s rule and his mother’s eye was unpleasant. He wanted to imitate his companions, who gave themselves up to the noisy pleasures of the world. He decided, “I am the heir of a rich estate. Would it not be better if I received my inheritance now? I could handle my wealth differently than my father does.” Thus the light-minded youth was taken in by the deceitful glitter of the world’s pleasures and decided to cast off the yoke of obedience and depart from his parent’s home. Today many are inspired by similar impulses, and if they do not leave their parents’ house, do they not depart from the house of their Heavenly Father, from obedience to the Holy Church? The yoke of Christ and his commandments seem difficult for immature minds. They imagine that it is not entirely necessary to follow what God and His Holy Church commands. It seems to them that they can serve both God and the world at the same time. They say, “We are already strong enough to withstand destructive temptations and attractions. We can, by ourselves, hold on to the truth and correct teachings. Allow us to improve our minds by many kinds of knowledge. Let us strengthen our wills amid temptations and pitfalls. Through experience our senses will be convinced of the foulness of vice!” Such desires are not better than the ill-considered request of the younger son to his father, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.” Today we have light-minded youths who cease to heed the commandments and suggestions of the Holy Church. They stop studying the Word of God and the teachings of the holy fathers, and turn their attention to the ‘wisdom’ of false teachers, thus ruining the better part of their lives. They go to church less frequently or attend without attention, distracted. There is no time to be pious and practice virtues since they are too busy attending movies, going to parties, etc. In short, they give themselves up to the world more and more each day, and, finally, depart into a far country. What is the result of such parting from the Holy Church? It is the same as the result of the prodigal son’s parting from his parents’ house. Light-minded youths waste their excellent energies and the talents of their soul and body very quickly, ruining for this life and eternity all the good they have done. Meanwhile there appears a mighty famine in that land — emptiness and dissatisfaction — a necessary result of wild pleasures. A thirst for satisfaction appears, which is even more intensified by the gratification of base passions, and which finally becomes insatiable. It frequently turns out that the unfortunate lover of the world resorts to the pursuit of that which is base and shameful in order to gratify his passions, but is still not brought to his senses, unlike the prodigal son; he does not return to the path of salvation, but completes his ruin, both temporal and eternal!

39. The Canonization of Saints

Various The Canonization of Saints.

Holiness is not simply righteousness, for which the righteous merit the enjoyment of blessedness in the Kingdom of God, but rather such a height of righteousness that men are filled with the Grace of God to such an extent, that it flows from them, upon those who associate with them. Great is their blessedness, which proceeds from personal experience of the Glory of God. Being filled also with love for men, which proceeds from love of God, they are responsive to men's needs and upon their supplication, they also appear as intercessors and defenders before God.

At the time of the high spiritual fervor in the first centuries of persecutions against Christians, such were the "martyrs also. The martyr's death became a door to the higher Mansions, and Christians at once began to invoke them as holy men pleasing to God. Miracles and signs confirmed this faith of the Christians and were a proof of their sanctity. Subsequently, the great ascetics likewise, began to be revered. No one decreed the veneration as saints such as Anthony the Great, Macarius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Nicholas the Wonder-worker, and many others like them, but East and West equally revered them. Their sanctity can be denied only by those who do not believe in sanctity. The choir of saints pleasing to God grew unceasingly; in every place, where Christians were, its own new ascetics appeared, also. However, the general life of Christians began to decline; the spiritual burning began to grow faint. There no longer was a clear sense of what Divine righteousness was. So the general consciousness of the faithful could not always distinguish who was a righteous man and pleasing to God. In some places, there appeared dubious persons who by false ascetic exploits attracted a part of the flock. For this reason, the Church authority began to keep watch over the veneration of saints, showing concern to guard the flocks from superstition. The life of ascetics revered by the faithful began to be investigated, and the accounts of their miracles to be verified. Towards the time of the baptism of Russia, it had already been established that the acknowledgement of a new saint was to be performed by the Church authority. The decree of the Church authority, of course, was disseminated to the region within its jurisdiction; but other places, too, usually acknowledged a canonization performed elsewhere, even though they did not enter it into their own calendars. After all, the Church authority only testified of sanctity. Righteous men became saints not by the decree of the earthly Church authority, but by the mercy and grace of God. The Church showed approval by the praising in church and the invocation in prayer of a new saint. Which authority should and could do this was not precisely determined; in any case it was an episcopal authority. There have been canonizations performed by the higher Church authority of an entire Local Church, and the names of the newly canonized were then entered into the Church calendar of that entire Church. Others were canonized in one or another locality and their veneration gradually spread to other places. Ordinarily, the canonization was performed in the place where the righteous one lived or suffered. But it also happened in other ways. Thus, the youth George from the city of Kratov (Serbia), who suffered at the hands of the Turks in Sofia (Sredets) (Bulgaria) in 1515, was canonized within fourteen years in Novgorod. Notwithstanding the fact that his

fellow-countrymen also revered him as a new martyr, and that a Church service to him was compiled by his spiritual father, they did not dare to show this openly, fearing the Turks. Therefore, in Novgorod, which had trading connections with these places, by order of the Archbishop a service was compiled and the memory of the martyr George the New began to be revered, and from there it was spread to all of Russia. Later when Serbia and Bulgaria were freed from Turkish slavery, they began to use the Service compiled in Russia, and the Service compiled originally in Sofia remains to this day on a library shelf. In the last two centuries, when Russia lived in glory and prosperity, the canonization of new saints was usually performed quite solemnly by the decree of the Higher Authority. Sometimes (but not always) taking place throughout the whole of Russia, especially in the place where the wonderworking relics were obtained. However, this does not alter the general order in the Church. If the Russian people under the godless yoke of power today cannot openly praise and invoke a Saint of God, glorified by God, it is the duty of the part of the Russian Church that is free, to universally revere and invoke a Wonderworker like St. Nicholas, who is revered in the whole world, to pray to St. John the Righteous one [of Kronstadt] for the correction of our life and the cessation of calamities which (according to prophecy) have befallen our Fatherland. May the Lord grant, that that longed-for day come, when from the Carpathians to the Pacific Ocean will thunder out: "We magnify thee, O righteous Father John, and we venerate thy holy memory, for thou dost pray for us to Christ our God!"

Editor's note: This sermon was occasioned by the canonization in 1964, by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, of the Righteous Father John of Kronstadt, one of the greatest wonderworkers in the history of the Orthodox Church and the public refusal of the American "Metropolia" to accept it, supposedly on the grounds that it could only be performed by the whole Russian Church in Russia.

40. The Glorification of God-Pleasers

Various The Glorification of God-Pleasers.

Holiness is not simply righteousness, for which the righteous are rewarded with blessedness in the Kingdom of God; rather, it is such a height of righteousness that people are so filled with the grace of God that it flows from them even upon those who associate with them. Great is their blessedness, which proceeds from their direct contemplation of the glory of God. Being filled also with love for men, which proceeds from love of God, they are responsive to men's needs, and at their entreaties they act as mediators and intercessors for them before God.

Such, first of all, were the righteous ones of the Old Testament, those whom Christ freed from hades and led into Paradise, and John the Baptist, the greatest of those born of women. Then came the Apostles and their immediate successors. None of the Christians had any doubt of their sanctity, and after their decease — the majority were martyred — they began immediately to venerate them and to call on them in prayer. Such also were the martyrs in the first centuries of persecution, when spiritual fervor abounded. A martyr's death was itself a door to the mansions on high, and Christians began to invoke them as holy men pleasing to God. Miracles and signs confirmed this faith of the Christians and gave evidence of their holiness. In the same way Christians later began to venerate the great ascetics. No one decreed that Anthony the Great, Macarius the Great, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Nicholas the Wonderworker, and many others like them should be venerated as saints, but they are revered by East and West alike, and their sanctity can be denied only by those who do not believe in sanctity.

The assembly of God-pleasers grew continually; wherever there were Christians new ascetics appeared. Overall, however, the life of the Christians began to decline; spiritual ardor began to cool; no longer was there a clear sense of what Divine righteousness is. For this reason the collective consciousness of the faithful could not always recognize who was a genuine ascetic and God-pleaser. In some places there appeared dubious persons who, by means of spurious ascetic feats, deceived some of the flock. Therefore the ecclesiastical authority began to oversee the veneration of saints, taking care to guard the flock from superstition. They began to examine the lives of those ascetics venerated by the faithful, and to verify accounts of their miracles. Towards the time of the Baptism of Rus' it was already established that recognition of a new saint was to be given by the ecclesiastical authority. The decrees made by the ecclesiastical authority were binding in that region under its jurisdiction; however, usually other local Churches also recognized a glorification performed elsewhere, although they did not necessarily enter it into their own menology. After all, the ecclesiastical authority merely attested to sanctity. The righteous became saints not through any decree of the earthly ecclesiastical authority, but by the mercy and grace of God. The ecclesiastical authority merely approved the extolling of the new saint in church and his invocation in prayer.

Just what authority ought and could do this was not precisely determined; it was, in any case, an Episcopal authority.

There were glorification's performed by the higher ecclesiastical authority of an entire local Church; the names of the newly glorified were then entered into all the church menologies of that Church; others were glorified more locally, and their veneration gradually spread to other places. Usually the glorification was performed in the locality where the saint had lived or died. But this was not always the case. For example, the youth George from the Serbian town of Kratov, who suffered in 1515 at the hands of the Turks in Sofia (Sredets, Bulgaria), was glorified fourteen years later in Novgorod. Although his compatriots also venerated him as a New Martyr and a service had even been composed to him by his spiritual father, fear of the Turks prevented them from revealing this openly. For this reason the archbishop in Novgorod, which had commercial ties with those places, ordained that a service be composed, and the memory of the martyr George the New began to be venerated there, whence it spread throughout all Russia. Later, when Serbia and Bulgaria were liberated from the Turks, they began using the service composed in Russia, while the original service composed in Sofia remains to this day a treasured property of the library.

In the course of the last two centuries, when Russia lived in glory and prosperity, the glorification's of new saints were celebrated with great solemnity by decree of the Higher Authority, sometimes (but not always) taking place all over Russia, and especially in the locality where the wonderworking relics were found. This does not, however, alter the general order in the Church, and if, under the scourge of the godless authority, the Russian people cannot openly extol and invoke a saint of God, glorified by God, it is the duty of that part of the Russian Church which is free from the scourge of the godless to extol and invoke that Wonderworker, like unto the holy Hierarch Nicholas, who today is praised throughout the world, and to pray to the holy, righteous John [of Kronstadt] for our personal amendment and for an end to the calamities which, as he prophesied, have befallen our homeland.

May the Lord grant the coming of that longed-for day when, from the Carpathians to the Pacific Ocean, will thunder out:

We magnify thee, O righteous Father John, and we honor thy holy memory, for thou dost pray for us to Christ our God!

41. The Church as the Body of Christ

Various The Church as the Body of Christ. And He [Christ] is the head of the body, the Church (Colossians 1:18), which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22) In the Holy Scripture, the Church is repeatedly called the Body of Christ.

Who [Paul] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, . . . for His Body's sake, which is the Church (Colossians 1:24), the Apostle Paul writes about himself.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, he says, are given by Christ., for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12).

At the same time, bread and wine are made into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy, and the faithful partake thereof. Christ Himself ordained it, in communicating His apostles at the Mystical Supper with the words, Take, eat; this is My Body; . . . Drink ye all of it; For this is My Blood of the New Testament (Matthew 26:26-28).

How is the Body of Christ at the same time both the Church and the Holy Mystery?

Are the faithful themselves both members of the Body of Christ, the Church, and also communicants of the Body of Christ in the Holy Mysteries?

In neither instance is this name, "Body of Christ," used metaphorically, but rather in the most actual sense of the word. We believe that the Holy Mysteries, while keeping the appearance of bread and wine, are the very Body and the very Blood of Christ. We likewise believe and confess that Christ is the Son of the Living God, come into the world to save sinners; that He became true man, and that His flesh, taken from the Virgin Mary, was actual human flesh; that in body and soul Christ was a true man, like other men in all respects except sin, while remaining at the same time true God. In this incarnation, the Divine nature was neither diminished nor changed in the Son of God; likewise the human nature was not changed at this incarnation, but retained in full all human qualities.

Unchanged and unconfused forever, indivisibly and inseparably, Godhead and manhood were united in the One Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son of God became incarnate to make people partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), to free them from sin and death, and to make them immortal.

Uniting ourselves with Christ, we receive Divine grace which gives human nature strength for victory over sin and death. By His teaching, the Lord Jesus Christ has shown people the way to victory over sin, and He grants them eternal life, making them partakers of His eternal Kingdom by His Resurrection. In order to receive from Him that Divine grace, the closest possible contact with Him is necessary. Drawing all to Himself by His divine love, and uniting them unto Himself, the Lord has united to each other those who love Him and come unto Him, uniting them into one Church.

The Church is unity in Christ, the closest union with Christ of all who rightly believe on Him and love Him, and their union is through Christ.

Now the Church consists of both her earthly and heavenly parts, for the Son of God came to earth and became man that He might lead man into heaven and make him once again a citizen of Paradise, returning to him his original state of sinlessness and wholeness and uniting him unto Himself.

This is accomplished by the action of Divine grace granted through the Church, but man's effort is also required. God saves His fallen creature by His own love for him, but man's love for his Creator is also necessary; without it he cannot be saved. Striving toward God and cleaving unto the Lord by its humble love, the human soul obtains power to cleanse itself from sin and to strengthen itself for the struggle to complete victory over sin.

The body also partakes in that struggle; now it is a receptacle and instrument of sin, but it is foreordained to be an instrument of righteousness and a vessel of holiness.

God created man, breathing divine breath into the animate body He had created earlier from the earth. The body was to have been an instrument of the spirit, subject to God, for through it the human spirit manifests itself in the material world. Through the body and its separate members, the spirit reveals its properties and qualities which God gave it, as to His own image, which is why the body also, as a manifestation of the image of God, is both called and is indeed "our beauty created in the image of God" (sticheron from the Funeral Service).

When the first-created people fell away in spirit from their Creator, the body, hitherto subject to the spirit and obtaining its directions through the soul, ceased to be subordinate to it and began to strive to dominate it. In place of the law of God, the law of the flesh began to rule man.

Sin, having cut man off from the source of life — God, rent man asunder. The union of spirit, soul, and body was violated, and death entered into him. The soul, no longer surrounded by the streams of life, could not transmit them to the body, which became corruptible, and the soul began to languish.

Christ came to earth to restore the fallen image and return it to union with Him Whose image it is. Uniting man unto Himself, God thus restores him to his original goodness in all its fullness.

Granting grace and sanctification to the spirit, Christ also purifies, strengthens, heals, and sanctifies the soul and the body.

But he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit [with Him] (1 Corinthians 6:17). The body, then, of the man who has been united unto the Lord, must be an instrument of the Lord, must serve for the fulfillment of His will, and become a part of the Body of Christ. For a man's complete sanctification, the body of the servant of the Lord must be united with the Body of Christ, and this is accomplished in the Mystery of Holy Communion. The true Body and the true Blood of Christ which we receive become part of the great Body of Christ.

Of course, for union with Christ, the mere conjoining of our body with the Body of Christ does not suffice. The consumption of the Body of Christ becomes beneficial when in spirit we strive toward Him and unite ourselves with Him. Receiving the Body of Christ, while turning away from Him in

spirit, is like the contact with Christ which they had who struck Him and mocked and crucified Him. Their contact with Him served not for their salvation and healing, but for their condemnation.

But those who partake with piety, love and readiness to serve Him, closely unite themselves with Him and become instruments of His Divine will.

He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him, said the Lord (John 6:56).

Uniting with the Risen Lord, and through Him with the entire Eternal Trinity, man draws from It power for eternal life and himself becomes immortal. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me (John 6:57).

All who believe in Christ and unite themselves unto Him by giving themselves to Him and by the reception of Divine Grace, jointly comprise the Church of Christ, whose Head is Christ Himself, and they who enter into her are her members.

Christ, invisible to the bodily eye, clearly manifests Himself on earth through His Church, just as the invisible human spirit manifests itself through its body. The Church is the Body of Christ both because her parts are united to Christ through His Divine Mysteries, and because through her Christ works in the world.

We partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, in the Holy Mysteries, so that we ourselves may be members of Christ's Body: the Church.

This is not accomplished instantly. To fully abide in the Church is already a state of victory over sin and complete purification therefrom. Everything sinful estranges us from the Church to some degree, and keeps us out of the Church. This is why, in the prayer read over every penitent at Confession, we hear, "... reconcile and unite [him/her] unto Thy Holy Church." Through repentance a Christian is cleansed and he is united closely to Christ in partaking of the Holy Mysteries. Later, however, the dirt of sin again settles upon him and estranges him from Christ and the Church, and therefore repentance and Communion are again necessary.

Until man's earthly life finishes its course, up to the very departure of the soul from the body, the struggle between sin and righteousness continues within him. However high a spiritual and moral state one might achieve, a gradual or even headlong and deep fall into the abyss of sin is always possible. Therefore, communion of the holy Body and Blood of Christ, which strengthens our contact with Him and refreshes us with the living streams of the grace of the Holy Spirit flowing through the Body of the Church, is necessary for everyone. The great importance of partaking of the Holy Mysteries is seen in the life of Saint Onuphrius the Great to whom, as well as to other hermits living in the same desert, angels brought Holy Communion; and in the life of Saint Mary of Egypt, whose final wish after many years in the desert was to partake of the Holy Mysteries. And there are similar examples in the lives of Saint Sabbatius of Solovki and many others. Not in vain did the Lord say, Amen, amen, I say unto you, except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you (John 6:23).

To partake of the Body and Blood of Christ is to receive in oneself the Risen Christ, the Victor over death, Who grants to those with Him victory over sin and death.

Preserving in ourselves the grace-filled gift of Communion, we have a guarantee and foretaste of the blessed, eternal life of the soul and body.

Up to the very "Day of Christ," His Second Coming and the Judgment of the whole world, the struggle of sin with righteousness will continue, individually in each person, and collectively in all mankind.

The earthly Church unites all who are reborn through baptism and who have taken up the cross of the struggle with sin, and who follow after Christ, the contest-master of this struggle. The Divine Eucharist, the offering of the bloodless sacrifice and partaking thereof, sanctifies and strengthens its partakers and makes those who receive of the Body and Blood of Christ true members of His Body, the Church. But only with death is it determined whether a man remained a true member of the Body of Christ to his last breath, or whether sin triumphed in him and drove out the grace which he received in the Holy Mysteries and which bound him to Christ.

He who, as a member of the earthly Church, has reposed in grace, goes over from the earthly Church into the heavenly Church; but he who falls away from the earthly Church will not enter into the heavenly, for the Church in this world is the way into the heavenly.

The more one is found to be under the influence of the grace of communion and the more tightly one has united himself to Christ, the more one will find pleasure in communion with Christ in His coming Kingdom.

It is important to partake of the Mysteries of Christ just before death, when the lot of a man is determined forever. It is necessary to try to receive just before death, if there be even the slightest possibility of this, to beseech the Lord to find us worthy of this and to take thought for others, so that they may not be deprived of Communion before the end.

Inasmuch as sin continues to operate in the soul until death, so the body is liable to its consequences, bearing in itself the seeds of disease and death from which it is freed only when it decays after death, and then rises at last free of them in the general resurrection. He who unites himself in spirit and in body with Christ in this life will be with Him in spirit and in body in the life to come. The grace-filled streams of the life-creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ are the well-spring of our eternal joy in converse with the risen Christ and in the contemplation of His glory.

The same consequences of sin, not yet completely driven out from the human race, operate not only in individual people, but through them they are manifested in the earthly activity of entire parts of the Church. Heresies, schisms, and disputes arise constantly, tearing away part of the faithful. Misunderstandings between local Churches or parts of them have troubled the Church since antiquity, and prayers for their cessation are repeatedly heard in the Divine services.

"We pray for the unity of the Churches," "unity to the Churches" (Triadic, Resurrection Canon, Tone 8), "Set aright the dissensions of the Church" (service to the Archangels, 8 November, 26 March, 13 July), and similar prayers have been offered by the Orthodox Church through the centuries. Even on Holy and Great Saturday, before the epitaphion of Christ, the Church pronounces: "O most blameless, pure Virgin, who didst bring forth the Life, stop the scandals of the Church, and grant peace as thou art good" (last verse of the second stasis of the

Lamentations).

Only when Christ appears on the clouds will the tempter be trampled down, and all scandals and temptations disappear. Then the struggle between good and evil, between life and death will cease, and the earthly Church will merge with the Church Triumphant, in which God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

In the Kingdom of Christ to come, there will no longer be a need to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, for all who have been vouchsafed it will be in closest converse with Him and will enjoy the pre-eternal light of the Life-originating Trinity, experiencing that blessedness which no tongue can express, and which is incomprehensible to our feeble mind. For this reason, after partaking of the Holy Mysteries at Liturgy, in the altar there is always said the prayer which we sing during the Paschal season: "O Christ, Thou great and most sacred Paschal O Wisdom, Word and Power of God! Grant us to partake of Thee more perfectly in the unwaning day of Thy Kingdom" (Ninth Ode, Paschal Canon).

42. Spiritual Condition of the Russian Diaspora

Various The Spiritual Condition of the Russian People in the Diaspora. A Consequence of the downfall of the Russian empire was the rise of a "Russia outside Russia," the Russian Diaspora. More than a million Russians were compelled to leave their homeland and were scattered across the face of the globe. Living in new conditions, among other peoples, many of the Russians in the course of these years have managed almost to forget their homeland, their language, and their customs, and to merge with the peoples in whose midst they reside. The overwhelming majority, however, not only have preserved their nationality, but even live with the hope of returning to the homeland on the fall of the present regime. Today there are Russians living in all parts of the world. There is not one corner on earth where there are no Russians, in greater or lesser number. The important question is, "From a spiritual standpoint, what is the state of the Russians abroad?"

A significant portion of the Russians that have gone abroad belong to that intellectual class which in recent times lived according to the ideas of the West. While belonging to the

Orthodox Church and confessing themselves to be Orthodox, the people of that class had strayed far from Orthodoxy in their world view. The principal sin of these people was that their beliefs and way of life were not founded on the teachings of the Orthodox faith; they tried to reconcile the rules and teachings of the Church with their own habits and desires. For this reason they had, on one hand, very little interest in the essence of Orthodox teaching, often even considering the Church's dogmatic teaching completely unessential, and, on the other hand, they fulfilled the requirements and rites of the Orthodox Church but only insofar as this did not interfere with their more European than Russian way of life. This gave rise to their disdain for the fasts, to their going to church for only a short time (and then only to satisfy a more aesthetic than religious feeling) and to a thorough lack of understanding of religion as the principal foundation of man's spiritual life. Many, of course, were inwardly otherwise disposed, but few possessed sufficient strength of spirit and the ability to manifest this outwardly in their way of life.

In the social sphere this class also lived by the ideas of the West. Without giving any room at all to the influence of the Church, they strove to rebuild the whole life of Russia, especially in the realm of government, according to Western models. This is why in recent times an especially bitter struggle was waged against the government. Liberal reforms and the democratic structuring of Russia became, as it were, a new faith. Not to confess this new idea meant that one was behind the times. Seized with a thirst for power and utilizing for their struggle with the monarchy widespread slander against the Royal Family, the intelligentsia brought Imperial Russia to its downfall and prepared the way for the Communist regime. Then, unreconciled to the thought of losing the power for which they had waited for so long, they declared war on the Communists, in the beginning mainly out of their unwillingness to cede them power. The struggle against the Soviet power subsequently involved broad sectors of the populace, especially drawing in the youth in an outburst of enthusiasm to reconstruct a "United, Indivisible Russia," at the cost of their lives. There were many exploits which manifested the valor of the Christ-loved Russian army, but the

Russian nation proved itself still unprepared for liberation, and the Communists turned out to be the victors.

The intelligentsia was partially annihilated and partially it fled abroad to save itself. Meanwhile, the Communists showed their true colors and, together with the intelligentsia, large sections of the population left Russia, in part to save their lives and in part because of ideology: they did not want to serve the Communists. Finding themselves abroad, the Russian people experienced great spiritual shocks. A significant crisis occurred in the souls of a majority, which was marked by a mass return of the intelligentsia to the Church. Many churches abroad are filled primarily by these people. The intelligentsia took an interest in questions of spiritual life and began to take an active part in church affairs. Numerous circles and societies were formed for the purpose of religious enlightenment. Members study the Holy Scriptures, the works of the Holy Fathers, general spiritual life and theological questions, and many of them have become clergy.

However, all these gratifying manifestations also had a negative aspect. Far from all of those who returned to the faith adopted the Orthodox teaching in its entirety. The proud mind could not be reconciled to the fact that, until then, it had stood on a false path. Many began to attempt to reconcile Christian teaching with their previous views and ideas. This resulted in the appearance of a whole series of new religious-philosophical trends, some completely alien to Church teaching. Among them Sophiology was especially widespread. It is based on the recognition of man's worth in and of himself and expresses the psychology of the intelligentsia.

As a teaching, Sophiology is known to a comparatively small group of people and very few openly espouse it. Nonetheless, a significant part of the immigrant intelligentsia is spiritually related to it because the psychology of Sophiology is based on the worship of man, not as a humble servant of God, but rather as a little god himself, who has no need for being blindly obedient to the Lord God. The feeling of keen pride, joined with faith in the possibility of man living by his own wisdom, is quite characteristic of many people considered to be cultured by today's standards, who place their own reasonings above all else and do not wish to be obedient in everything to the teaching of the Church, which they regard favorably but with condescension. Because of this, the Church Abroad has been rocked by a series of schisms which have harmed her up till now and have drawn away even a part of the hierarchy. This consciousness of a feeling of personal worthiness is manifested also in social affairs, where each person who has advanced a little among the ranks, or thinks he has, puts his own opinion higher than everyone's and tries to be a leader. As a result, Russian society is split into countless parties and groups irreconcilably at odds with each other, each trying to put forward its own program, which is sometimes a thoroughly developed system and sometimes simply an appeal to follow after this or that personality.

With the hope of saving and resurrecting Russia through the realization of their programs, these social activists almost always lose sight of the fact that besides human activity making history, there moves the hand of God. The Russian people as a whole has committed great sins, which are the reasons for the present misfortunes; namely, oath-breaking and regicide. Civic and military leaders renounced their obedience and loyalty to the Tsar, even before his abdication, forcing the latter upon him, who did not want internal bloodshed. The people openly and noisily greeted this act, without any loud protest anywhere. This renunciation of obedience was a breach of the oath taken to the Emperor and his lawful heirs. On the heads of those who committed this crime fell the

curses of their forefathers, [members of] the Zemsky Sobor of 1613, which imposed a curse on those who disobeyed its resolutions. The ones guilty of the sin of regicide are not only those who physically performed the deed but the people as a whole, who rejoiced when the Tsar was overthrown and allowed his degradation, his arrest and exile, leaving him defenseless in the hands of criminals, which itself spelled out the end.

Thus, the calamity which befell Russia is the direct result of terrible sins, and her rebirth is possible only after she has been cleansed from them. However, until now there has been no real repentance; the crimes that were committed have not been openly condemned, and many active participants in the Revolution continue even now to assert that at the time it was impossible to act otherwise.

By not voicing an outright condemnation of the February Revolution, of the uprising against the Anointed One of God, the Russian people continue to participate in the sin, especially when they defend the fruits of the Revolution, for in the words of the Apostle Paul, those men are especially sinful who, knowing ... that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:32 NKJV).

While punishing the Russian people, the Lord at the same time is pointing out the way to salvation by making them teachers of Orthodoxy throughout the world. The Russian Diaspora has acquainted the four corners of the earth with Orthodoxy, for a significant part of the Russian immigration unconsciously preaches Orthodoxy. Everywhere, wherever Russians live, they build little refugee churches or even majestic cathedrals, or simply serve in premises adapted for this purpose.

The majority of Russian refugees are not familiar with the religious tendencies of their intelligentsia, and they are nourished by those spiritual reserves which they accumulated in the homeland. Large masses of refugees attend Divine services, some of them actively participate in them, helping with the singing and reading on cliros and serving in the altar. Affiliated organizations have been established which take upon themselves the responsibility of maintaining the churches, often performing charitable work as well.

Looking at the faithful who pack the churches on feast days, one might think that in fact the Russian people have turned to the Church and are repenting of their sins. However, if you compare the number who go to church with the number of Russians who live in a given place, it turns out that about one-tenth of the Russian population regularly goes to church. Approximately the same number attend Divine services on major feasts, and the rest either very rarely — on some particular occasions — go to church and occasionally pray at home, or have left the Church altogether. The latter sometimes is a conscious choice under sectarian or anti-religious influences, but in most cases it is simply because people do not live in a spiritual manner; they grow hard, their souls become crude, and sometimes they become outright nihilists.

The great majority of Russians have a hard life full of personal difficulties and material deprivation. Despite the hospitable attitude towards us in some countries, especially in our fraternal Yugoslavia, whose government and people are doing everything possible to show their love for Russia and to ease the grief of the Russian exiles, still, Russians everywhere feel the bitterness of being deprived of their homeland. Their surrounding environment reminds them that they are

strangers and must adapt to customs that are often foreign to them, feeding on the crumbs that fall from the table of their hosts. Even in those countries which are very well disposed towards us, it is natural that in hiring practices preference should be given to the country's citizens; and with the current difficult situations of most countries, Russians often cannot find work. Even those who are relatively well provided for are constantly made to feel their lack of rights in the absence of organizations which could protect them from injustices. Although only a comparatively insignificant number have been completely absorbed into local society, it quite often happens in such cases that they become totally alienated from their own people and their own country.

In such a difficult situation in all respects, the Russian people abroad have shown a remarkable degree of patient endurance and self-sacrifice. It is as if they have forgotten about their formerly wonderful (for many) conditions of life, their service to their homeland and its allies in the Great War, their education and everything else that might prompt them to strive for a comfortable life. In their exile they have taken up every kind of work and occupation to make a living for themselves abroad. Former nobles and generals have become simple workmen, artisans and petty merchants, not disdaining any type of work and remembering that no work is degrading, provided it is not bound up with any immoral activity. The Russian intelligentsia in this respect has manifested an ability, whatever the situation, to preserve its vitality and to overcome everything that stands in the way of its existence and development. It has also shown that it has lofty spiritual qualities, that it is capable of being humble and long-suffering.

The school of refugee life has morally regenerated and elevated many people. One has to give honor and credit to those who bear their refugee cross doing difficult work to which they are unaccustomed, living in conditions which previously they did not know or even think of. Remaining firm in spirit, they have maintained a nobility of soul and ardent love for their homeland, and, repenting over their former sins, they endure their trial without complaints. Truly, many of them, men and women, are now more glorious in their dishonor than in the years of their glory. The spiritual wealth which they have now acquired is better than the material wealth they left in the homeland, and their souls, like gold purified by fire, have been cleansed in the fire of suffering and burn like brightly glowing lamps.

With sorrow, however, it must be said that by no means has suffering had such an affect on everyone. Many proved to be neither gold nor precious metal but reed and straw that perish in the fire. Many were not cleansed and whitened by suffering; they did not endure the trial and became worse than before. Many were embittered, not understanding that, being punished by God, we must be consoled, remembering that there are no children that have never undergone punishment, that in chastening us God looks upon us as sons and daughters who must be corrected by punishment. Forgetting about their previous sins, such people, instead of repenting, compound their sins, asserting that there is no use being righteous, that God either does not look at man's affairs, since He has turned His face away from them, or even that "there is no God." Considering in their imagined righteousness that they are suffering innocently, these people have more pride of heart than the boastful Pharisee, but in their sins they often surpass the publican. In their bitterness against God, they are in no way inferior to the persecutors of the faith in our homeland, and by their way of thinking have become closely related to them.

For this reason some of their fervent opponents have become, here in exile, their friends. They have become their open and secret slaves and try to lure their other brothers into the net. Others see no further purpose of existence and consciously give themselves up to vices, or, finding no satisfaction in anything, end their lives by suicide. Then there are others who have not lost faith in God or awareness of their sinfulness, but their will is completely broken and they have become like reeds shaken by the wind. Outwardly they resemble those just mentioned, although internally they are different in that they recognize the foulness of their behavior. However, not finding strength to fight with their weaknesses, they sink lower and lower, becoming the slaves of alcohol or giving themselves up to drugs, and become incapable of doing anything. It is truly pitiful to see how formerly worthy and respected people have sunk practically to the level of beasts. Now they direct the whole meaning of their existence towards satisfying their weaknesses, their only occupation being to search for means to fulfill this goal. No longer capable of earning a living, they look greedily for a hand out and, having received something, they immediately set out to indulge their passions. Only the faith that seems to be hidden in such fallen souls, if combined with self-condemnation, gives us hope that not all of them are lost for eternity.

There are others who, although better outwardly, are far from being better inwardly. They maintain the outward rules of pious behavior, but their consciences are dull. Sometimes they occupy well-paid positions at work and have managed to acquire some standing in the society where they have relocated. But with the loss of their homeland they have lost the internal law of morality. Penetrated through and through with self-love, they are prepared to bring evil upon anyone who stands in the way of their success. They are deaf to the suffering of their compatriots and sometimes act as if they have no connection with them. They are not ashamed to intrigue and slander others in order to knock them off their path, especially defenseless exiles.

There are some that try to appear as if they have cut all ties with their former homeland in order to gain favor in the eyes of their new fellow citizens. As a rule, these spiritually wasted people have no restraining inner law and are therefore capable of any crime that can be to their advantage, if they feel they will not be caught. We are ashamed to say that in almost all the countries of the Diaspora many crimes are committed by people with Russian names. This is why people have less trust in us and our name is ruined among the nations. The breakdown of morality is especially noticeable among families. Twenty-five years ago no one would have believed what is going on there now.

Marriage as something sacred has ceased to exist; it has turned into an everyday transaction. Many respected couples, happily and inseparably married for years, have dissolved their marriage and entered into a new one. Some have done this because of passions, others for gain. Every imaginable reason is found to dissolve a marriage, some even lying under oath to gain their end.

There is no permanency in marriage among the young or old. It has become quite common to hear of a divorce only a few months after the marriage. The slightest argument or disagreement is grounds today for a divorce. This happens because the consciousness that marriage is holy has been lost. Church authorities have condescended to the weaknesses of the present generation, making it significantly easier to obtain a divorce. After a marriage is dissolved, they quickly enter into another, just as unstable, and sometimes a third.

Unable to satisfy all the demands of their lust by marriage, and paying no attention to any Church or moral laws, many go even further, considering it unnecessary to turn to the Church for a blessing on the marriage. In countries where the civil law allows the registration of a marriage without requiring a church wedding, more and more often we see people living together without the blessing of the Church, or obtaining a civil divorce without the consent of the Church, even when the marriage was performed in the Church. It is easy to forget that a sin is no less sinful because a more “respectable” name is given to it, and that cohabitation not sanctified by the Church is nonetheless fornication or adultery. Many openly live together without the slightest concern about hiding their dissipation. Some are joined together out of passion, others for personal advantage, and, suppressing all sense of shame, appear everywhere in society together with their “partner” and dare to introduce them as their spouse. It is especially deplorable that people have begun to look at such occurrences with indifference, not expressing any disapproval. Thus, the number of such cases is increasing since there is nothing holding them back. According to Church rules, people who fall into this category should be refused Communion for seven years or more; according to civil laws, they should be restricted in their civil rights. That which was despised not long ago by society has now become commonplace even among people who attend church regularly and desire to take part in church functions, which in such cases is forbidden by Church rules. What can we say of those who are even less influenced by the Church! How low has the morality fallen among our countrymen; one part coming to church out of habit and the other turning into the dwelling-place of baser passions. They have given in to a lifestyle worse than the animals; they disgrace the Russian name and bring down the wrath of God on the present generation.

The future generation of children and young people is growing up learning immoral lessons from their elders. Besides this, the present generation sins before the future one in paying so little attention to the upbringing of children. Previously, in Russia, the way of life, the whole atmosphere had a great influence on the upbringing of children. Today, we see the opposite: the upbringing of children receives very little attention not only on the part of parents, who are frequently preoccupied with making a living, but on the part of the entire Russian community abroad as a whole. Although in some places Russian schools have been founded (and these do not always live up to their purpose), the majority of Russian children study elsewhere, without any Orthodox training or study of the Russian language. They grow up as strangers to Russia, never knowing her true wealth. In some places Sunday schools or other types of Russian schools have been established in order to give the children that knowledge which they cannot receive in local schools. However, it must be sorrowfully admitted that the parents show little interest in sending their children to these schools. Rich as well as poor parents are guilty of this.

Over the past years, despite the difficult conditions for Russians, many have been able to acquire a comfortable existence. Among us are also those who were able to bring considerable sums out of Russia or who previously had foreign capital and have kept it to this day. Although there are many among them who generously help their compatriots and generally support Russian affairs, most of them are concerned solely with their personal interests. They relate coldly to the plight of their compatriots, whom they look down upon. They are occupied with increasing their wealth and spend their free time amusing themselves. Frequently their extravagance surprises the native people, who then find it hard to believe that among the Russians there are those in need when there are such rich ones among them, and they become annoyed when Russians ask them for

help.

Truly, if there were a greater national self-awareness and understanding of the debt to one's homeland, then great things might be accomplished here abroad. For now we have only a fraction of what we could have, and those few benevolent and educational institutions we do have are maintained more by the gifts of local people than by Russians. Because of this, most of our institutions lack sufficient means. Those Russians who are well-off, instead of coming to their aid, prefer to make use of non-Russian institutions, giving their money to them, while Russian institutions are attended by the less affluent. It is a disgrace that wealthy Russians frequently raise their children in non-Russian schools, which can contribute nothing to the children's Orthodox outlook and appreciation of their homeland, even in the best of circumstances. Meanwhile, they give no assistance to the Russian schools, nor do they make any effort to fill the gaps in the Russian education of their children, although they have the financial means to do so.

Many parents are completely indifferent towards the future worldview of their children. Some, with the help of scholarships, and others, even those who are very well-off, send their children to educational institutions which have as their goal the upbringing of children in a spirit wholly antagonistic to Orthodoxy. Various colleges which have as part of their program some sort of religious, though not Orthodox, education are filled with Russian children, sent there either by rich parents who are interested only in the external aspect of education, or by poor parents who are gratified by the idea of free education for their children, and therefore turn over their children's upbringing to the whims of the institution.

It is difficult to say which children will be more unfortunate in the future: the above or those altogether abandoned — of which there are not a few in the Diaspora. Often not knowing their fathers, abandoned by their mothers, these wander about the big cities begging for food and finally resort to theft. In the end they become professional criminals and fall ever lower morally. Many of them end up in prison or are executed. But in the life to come these unfortunates will not be held to account as severely as those who are educated in magnificent colleges and then become Russia's worst enemies. One can foresee the time when out of the Diaspora will come conscious workers against Orthodox Russia, who will strive either to convert her to Roman Catholicism or to spread sectarianism within her borders. These are people who, while remaining outwardly Orthodox and Russian, will secretly work against her. A significant number of those who are today being educated in native schools, especially convents, though certainly not all, will apostatize and betray Orthodox Russia. Not only will they be guilty, but even more so will their parents who did not guard them from such a path and did not instill in their souls a firm devotion to Orthodoxy.

Striving to provide for their children in this life and therefore choosing schools which in their opinion will give the children more security in the future, these parents pay no attention to their children's souls, and thus they are to blame for their future falling away from Orthodoxy and the betrayal of their homeland. Such parents are greater criminals before Russia than their children, who are won over to a new religion often at an unconscious age and then educated in a spirit hostile to Orthodoxy. Equally bad are those who leave the Orthodox Faith for another in order to assure themselves of a more comfortable lifestyle and a more lucrative job. Their sin is the sin of Judas, and the job or other advantage they received through the betrayal of their Faith may be counted together with the "thirty pieces of silver." Some of them may claim that they did this,

convinced that Orthodoxy is not the truth, and that they will try to serve Russia while confessing their new faith. Russia was founded on and flourished through Orthodoxy, and only Orthodoxy will save Russia. Like those who betrayed her in 1612, during the Time of Troubles, the new traitors should not be allowed to rebuild the new Russia or even be admitted into her borders.

Just what will the Diaspora contribute to the future in view of its present degeneration? Will it not become a source of a new spiritual infection when we return to our homeland?

The moral state of the Russian people in the Diaspora would be hopeless if we did not observe, together with the sad facts already set forth, a greatness of spirit and sacrifice. Despite the difficult conditions in which the exiles live, they find the means to build and embellish churches, support priests, and assist the needy. Together with those who have hardened their hearts and who offer nothing towards the general good, there are others who set aside for these needs a significant portion of what they have. Among us are also those who gladly donate to the Church: some — significant sums from their hard-earned labors, while others give smaller amounts but which constitute almost all they have, like the widow's mites. Contributions are reckoned not only in terms of money but also in the tireless labors for the good of the Church and one's neighbor. Many have dedicated themselves to this, eagerly sharing the work in various church and charitable organizations, or working independently. Burdened as they are already by jobs and trying to make a living, they give up needed rest to devote their free time, energy and strength to these activities, the men contributing their good judgment and the women their innate love.

The concerns of Russians abroad embrace not only needs in the Diaspora, but there are courageous fighters for the homeland, preparing for its liberation. Some of these fighters even risk reentering Russia's frontiers, braving almost certain death. Love for the homeland has moved some in the Diaspora as well to deeds for which they have paid bitterly but which history will record as heroic.

Much zeal and fortitude has been shown in the struggle for Church rights. It is especially heartening to see how dedicated some of the youth are to the Church and to our homeland, loving it wholeheartedly without ever having seen it.

These and similar examples, together with the unsilenceable voice of the conscience, give us hope that there will still be found those ten righteous men for whose sake the Lord was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, and who will show the way for the Russian Diaspora.

Russians abroad have been given to shine with the light of Orthodoxy throughout the world in order that other peoples, seeing their good works, might glorify our Father Who is in heaven, and in so doing the Russians will draw nearer to salvation. By not fulfilling this task and even degrading Orthodoxy by its life, the Diaspora has before it two paths: either to turn to the path of repentance and, beseeching God's forgiveness and renewing itself spiritually, to make itself capable of giving rebirth to our suffering homeland, or to be finally cut off by God and remain in exile, persecuted by everyone, until, gradually degenerating, it disappears from the face of the earth. A report to the Second All-Church Council of the Russian Church Abroad, Belgrade, 1938.

43. The Russian Diaspora

Various The Russian Diaspora. The Russian people as a whole has performed great sins that are the cause of the present misfortunes: the specific sins are oath-breaking and regicide. The public and military leaders renounced their obedience and loyalty to the Tsar even before his abdication, forcing him from the throne. The Tsar did not desire bloodshed within the country. The people affirmed this deed openly and noisily and nowhere did they express loudly their disagreement of the forced abdication. At the same time, there was a violation of the oath given to the Sovereign and his lawful heirs. Besides this, the curse of their ancestors fell upon the heads of those who performed this crime-the Zemsky Sobor of 1613, whose decrees it sealed with the curse of those who would violate them.

Those guilty of the sin of regicide are not only those who physically performed it, but all the people who rejoiced the overthrow of the Tsar and allowed his abasement, arrest and exile, leaving him defenseless in the hands of the criminals, which in fact already predetermined the end. Thus, the catastrophe that has come upon Russia is the direct consequence of terrible sins, and the rebirth of Russia is possible only after cleansing their sins. However, up to this time there has been no genuine repentance, the crimes that have been performed have clearly not been condemned, and many active participants in the Revolution continue even now to reaffirm that at that time, it was not possible to act in any other way. In not expressing a direct condemnation of the February Revolution, the uprising against the Anointed of God, the Russian people continue to participate in the sin, especially when they defend the fruits of the Revolution, for, in the words of the Apostle Paul, especially sinful are those who, knowing that they which commit such things, are worthy of death, not only do the same, but consent with them that do them (Romans 1:32). However, in chastising, the Lord at the same time also shows the Russian people the way to salvation by making it a preacher of Orthodoxy in the whole world. The Russian Diaspora has made all the ends of the world familiar with Orthodoxy, for the mass of Russia, exiles for the most part, is unconsciously a preacher of Orthodox). Everywhere that Russians live there are built small exile churches, or even magnificent churches and often there are services in buildings which have been adapted for this purpose. A consequence of the fall of the Russian State, was the arising of file Russian Diaspora. More than a million people were forced to leave their homeland and be scattered about the whole face of the earth. A significant part of the Russians who went abroad belonged to that intellectual class which in recent times has lived by the ideas of the West. While belonging to the Orthodox Church and confessing themselves to be Orthodox, the people of this class in their world outlook significantly departed from Orthodoxy. The chief sin of people of this class was that they did not build their convictions and way of life on the teaching of the Orthodox faith, but rather strove to make the rules and teaching of the Orthodox Church conform to their own habits and desires. Therefore, on the one hand they were but very little interested in the essence of Orthodox teaching, often even considering the dogmatic teaching of the Church as being completely unimportant; and on the other hand, they fulfilled the demands and rites of the Orthodox Church, but only in so far as this did not interfere with their more European than Russian

way of life. From this comes their disdainful attitude towards fasting, their visiting of churches only for a short time, and this rather more for the satisfaction of esthetic than religious feeling, and their complete lack of understanding of religion, as the chief foundation of the spiritual life of man. In the public realm, this class likewise lived by the ideas of the West. Without giving any place at all for the influence of the Church, it strove to reconstruct the whole life, of Russia, especially in the realm of State government, according to Western models. For this reason, in recent times an especially fierce battle was waged against State authority, and at the same time the necessity for liberal reforms and a democratic organization of Russia became a new faith, not to confess which signified that one was behind the times. Making use in their battle with the monarchy of a slander against the Imperial Family which was widely spread throughout Russia, and likewise being possessed by a thirst for power, the intellectual class led Imperial Russia to its fall and prepared the way for the Communist power. After the coming to power of Communism, the intellectual class was partially annihilated, and partially it fled abroad, saving its life. At the same time, the Communists showed their true face, and besides the intellectual class a multitude of Russians of other classes was forced to leave Russia, in part in order to save their lives, and in part for ideological reasons, as they did not desire to serve the Communists. Finding themselves abroad, the Russian people suffered great spiritual shocks. In the souls of a majority, a significant crisis was marked by a mass return of the intellectual class to the Church. However, this positive manifestation also had its negative side. By no means, all of those who returned to faith accepted it in all the fullness of Orthodox teaching. The proud mind could not agree that up to now it had stood on a false path. There arose strivings to make Christian teaching agree with the previous views and ideas of the converts. Therefore, there was a whole series of new religious-philosophical currents, often completely foreign to Church teaching. Of these currents, especially widespread was Sophiology, which is founded on the recognition of the value of man in himself and expresses the psychology of the intellectual class. Sophiology as a doctrine is known to a comparatively small group of people and very few actually subscribe to it openly. But a significant part of the intellectual class of the emigration is spiritually akin to it, for the psychology of Sophiology is the worship of man, who is no longer the humble slave of God, but is himself a small god, who has no need to be blindly submissive to the Lord God. A feeling of refined pride together with faith in the possibility for a man to live by his own wisdom, is very characteristic of many people who are "cultural" in the modern sense, who place above everything else the conclusions of their own minds and do not desire to be in everything submissive to the teaching of the Church, looking upon it favorably in a condescending way. Thanks to this the Russian Church Abroad has been struck by a series of schisms which have caused it harm up until now and have drawn away into themselves even a part of the hierarchy. In the future life the judgment will be most severe for those Russians who, being educated in superb colleges, become the fiercest enemies of Russia. One is forced to foresee already that in the future the Diaspora will give many conscious workers against Orthodox Russia, who will strive to make it Catholic or spread various sects. Likewise, those remaining outwardly Orthodox and Russian, will secretly work against Russia. However, Russia was founded on and grew through Orthodoxy, and only Orthodoxy will save Russia. To the Russians abroad, it has been granted to shine in the whole world with the light of Orthodoxy, so that other peoples, seeing their good deeds, might glorify our Father Who is in heaven, and thus obtain salvation for themselves. But if it does not perform this purpose and even abases Orthodoxy by its life, the Diaspora will have before itself two paths: either to be converted

to the path of repentance, having acquired forgiveness through prayer to God and being reborn spiritually and to being capable of giving rebirth to our suffering homeland; or else being rejected by God and remaining in banishment, persecuted by everyone, until gradually it will degenerate and disappear from the face of the earth. Moreover, what of the Russian fatherland? Blessed are you, O Russian land, being purified by the fire of suffering. You have gone through the water of baptism, now you are going through the fire of suffering, and you will yet enter your repose. At one time, Christians gathered sand that was drenched with the blood of martyrs, with reverence from the Colosseum. The place of the sufferings and death of the martyrs became sacred and especially revered. Now the whole of Russia is an arena of passion-bearers. Her earth has been sanctified by their blood, her air by the ascent of their souls to heaven. Yea, sacred are you, O Russia. The ancient writer who said that you are the Third Rome and there will be no fourth, was correct. You have surpassed the ancient Rome by the multitude of exploits of your martyrs, you have also surpassed the Rome that baptized you [Constantinople] by your standing in Orthodoxy and you will remain unsurpassed to the end of the world. Only the land that was sanctified by the sufferings and the earthly life of the God-man is holier than you are, in the eyes of Orthodox Christians. Shake away the sleep of despondency and sloth, O sons of Russia! Behold the glory of her sufferings and be purified; wash yourselves from your sins! Be strengthened in the Orthodox faith; to be worthy to dwell in the dwelling of the Lord and to settle in His holy mountain! Leap up, leap up, arise, O Russia, you who from the Lord's hands have drunk the cup of His wrath! When your sufferings shall have ended, your righteousness shall go with you and the glory of the Lord shall accompany you. The peoples shall come to your light, and kings to the shining which shall rise upon you. Then Lift up your eyes and see: behold, your children come to you from the West and the North and the Sea and the East, blessing in you Christ forever. Amen.

Shanghai, 1938, and Report to the All-Diaspora Sobor, 1938

44. Will These Human Bones Come to Life?

Various Will These Human Bones Come to Life? A Sermon given in 1948, when once again there seemed to be absolutely no hope for the deliverance of Russia from the Communist Yoke.

There was no limit to the grief and despondency of the ancient Jews when Jerusalem was destroyed and they were led away into the Babylonian captivity. Where are Thine ancient mercies, O Lord, which Thou swarest to David? (Ps. 88:50), they cried out. But now Thou hast cast off and put us to shame... They that hated us spoiled for themselves and Thou scatterest us among the nations (Ps. 43:10-12).

However, when it seemed that there was no hope for deliverance, the Prophet Ezekiel, who was likewise in captivity, was made worthy of a wondrous vision. Moreover, the hand of the Lord came upon me, he says of this. The invisible right hand of the Lord placed him in the midst of a field full of human bones. The Lord asked him: Son of man, will these bones live? The Prophet replied: O Lord God, Thou knowest this. Then the voice of the Lord commanded the Prophet to say to the bones that the Lord will give to them the spirit of life, clothing them with sinews, flesh and skin. The Prophet uttered the word of the Lord, a voice resounded, the earth shook, and the bones began to come together, bone to bone, each to its own joint; sinews appeared on them, the flesh grew and became covered with skin, so that the whole field became filled with the bodies of men; only there were no souls in them. Again the Prophet heard the Lord, and at His command, he prophesied the word of the Lord. From the four directions souls flew to them, the spirit of life entered the bodies, they stood up and the field was filled with an assembly of a multitude of people. And the Lord said, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; and they say, Our hope has been lost, we have perished... Behold, I will open your tombs and will bring you up out of your tombs, My people, and I will put thy spirit within you and ye shall live, and I will place you upon your own land (Ezekiel 37:1-14). Thus, the Lord God revealed to Ezekiel that His promises are steadfast, and that what seems impossible to the human mind is performed by the power of God. This vision signified that Israel, after being delivered from captivity, would return to its own land; in a higher sense, it indicated the settlement of the spiritual Israel in the eternal heavenly Kingdom of Christ. At the same time, there is prefigured the future General Resurrection of all the dead. Therefore, this prophecy of Ezekiel is read at the Matins of Great Saturday, when by His death Christ, having broken down the gates of death, opens the tombs of all the dead. Belief in the resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. If there be no resurrection, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain (1 Corinthians 15:13-14). If there is no resurrection, the whole Christian teaching is false. This is why the enemies of Christianity fight so much against faith in the resurrection and it is why the Church of Christ affirms faith in the resurrection. Many times the waves of unbelief have risen high, but they have rolled back before new signs which revealed the reality of the resurrection, of God's bringing to life of what was acknowledged as dead. In the 5th century, in the reign of the Emperor Theodosius the Younger, doubt in the resurrection of the dead was widespread, so that there were disputes about this even in the churches. It was just at this time that a wondrous event occurred, the authenticity of which is confirmed by a number of

historical writings. In the middle of the third century, in the reign of the Emperor Decius (249-251), by his decree seven youths were walled up with stones in a cave near the city of Ephesus. The son of the head of the city of Ephesus, Maximilian, and his six friends- Jamblicus, Dionysius, John, Antoninus, Martinian, and Exacustodian confessed themselves Christians and refused to offer sacrifice to the idols. They had taken advantage of the time, which had been given them for reflection, and of the temporary absence of the Emperor, and had gone away from Ephesus and hidden in a cave in the nearby mountains, (in mountain called Ochlon). When Decius returned and found out about this, he ordered that the entrance to the cave be walled up with stones so that the youths, deprived of food and air, might be buried alive. When the command of Decius had been fulfilled, two secret Christians, Theodore and Rufinus-wrote down this event on pewter plates that they hid among the stones at the entrance to the cave. The youths who were in the cave, however, did not know what had happened. On the eve of this event, having found out about the arrival of Decius in the city, and having prayed fervently to God, they fell asleep in a powerful and unusual sleep which lasted for about 172 years. They awoke only in the reign of Theodosius the Younger, precisely when there were disputes concerning the resurrection. At that time, the owner of that place was taking out the stones that walled up the entrance to the cave and was using them for a building, without suspecting in the least that the children whom everyone had forgotten, long before, were still in the cave. The youths, having awoke, thought that they had slept one night, since they did not notice any changes in the cave, and they themselves had not changed at all. One of them, the youngest, Jamblicus, who had previously gone to the city for food, having prayed to God with his friends, likewise went to Ephesus to find out whether they were being looked for, and to buy some food for themselves. He was astonished at the change, seeing churches which, as it seemed, had not existed the day before, and hearing the name of Christ being pronounced openly. Thinking that by mistake he had come across some other city, he decided nonetheless to buy some bread here. When he gave a coin for the bread, the bread merchant began to examine it carefully and asked where he had found the treasure. When Jamblicus affirmed that he had found no treasure, but that he had received the money from his parents, people began to gather, and they tried to find out where he had found such old money. Jamblicus named the names of his parents and friends, but no one knew them. Finally, Jamblicus heard from those present that he was really in Ephesus, that there had been no Emperor Decius for a long time, and that the Christ-loving Emperor Theodosius was reigning. The head of the city and the bishop heard about what had happened, and in order to test the words of Jamblicus they went with him to the cave where the other six youths were. At the entrance to the cave they discovered the pewter plates, and from them, they found out when and how the youths had been in the cave. Concerning all this, the head of the city immediately informed the Emperor, who personally came to Ephesus and conversed with the youths. During one of these conversations they lay down their heads and fell asleep in eternal sleep. The Emperor ordered that they be brought to the Capital, but the youths, appearing to him to be asleep, commanded him to bury them in the cave where they had already been in a wondrous sleep, for many years. This was done, and during the course of many centuries, their relics reposed in that cave; the Russian pilgrim of the 12th century, Anthony, describes how veneration was paid to them. This miraculous awakening of the youths was accepted at that time as a prefiguration and confirmation of the resurrection. Everywhere the news spread about this. Several contemporary historians mention it, and it was discussed at the Third Ecumenical Council, which soon thereafter, convoked in the same city. This striking miracle

strengthened faith in the resurrection at that time. The power of God, which had preserved the bodies and clothing of the youths incorrupt for many years, was clearly revealed. In addition, just as the Lord raised them from sleep, so will he gather the bones and raise the dead according to the vision of the Prophet Ezekiel. This prophecy, which foreshadows not only the resurrection of the dead, but also the preservation from destruction of the people who keep God's law, was manifestly fulfilled upon the Russian land. At the beginning of the 17th century, with the dying out of the reigning house, a time of troubles came upon Russia. The Russian land was without a government. It was torn asunder by internal rebellion and subjected to the attack of neighboring peoples who seized many Russian provinces and the heart of Russia, Moscow. The Russian people became fainthearted and lost hope that the Russian kingdom would continue to exist. Many sought alms from foreign governments, others adhered to various impostors and thieves who pretended to be crown princes. When it seemed that there was no more Russia and only a few still hoped in her deliverance, then from a subterranean prison in the Chudov Monastery, resounded the last appeal of the starving Patriarch St. Hermogenes. This document, together with the epistle of Archimandrite St. Dionysius of the Trinity St. Sergius Monastery and the cellarer Abraham Palitzin, reached Nizhni-Novgorod. There, the Russian people were called upon to stand up in defense of Moscow's holy things and the House of the Mother of God. The document moved hearts and the citizen Cosmas Minin addressed his fellow citizens from the porch of the cathedral with a flaming appeal to sacrifice everything for the fatherland. Immediately contributions poured in and an army began to be gathered. The courageous general, Prince Demetrius Michaelovich Pozharsky, was called to lead it, although he had scarcely recovered from wounds. While acknowledging the infirmity of human power, the Russian people gave themselves over to the protection of the Champion General and the greatest treasure the army took from Kazan, was the miraculous Icon of the Mother of God which had been brought out of the earth by the holy Patriarch Hermogenes while he was the Presbyter Hernialaus. The Russian army moved, not trusting its weak power, but in the almighty help of God. Moreover, in reality it accomplished what no other force had been able to do. In a short time, Moscow was delivered, and on the same day of the commemoration of the Seven Youths of Ephesus (October 22), the Russian army entered the Kremlin with a triumphant procession, and to meet it, another procession came from the Kremlin with the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God which had been in the captive city. The Russian land was cleansed of the enemies and imposters, the Russian kingdom was restored and the young Michael Feodorovich Romanov ascended on its throne. Russia was resurrected, its wounds were healed and it went from glory to glory. The Icon of the Mother of God with which Moscow had been delivered, and with it the whole Russian land, became the greatest holy object of the entire Russian people. Copies of it were placed in the capital city of Moscow, and later in the new reigning city of St. Petersburg, which was glorified by a multitude of miracles. Kazan Icons of the Mother of God were to be found in every city, village, and in almost every house. All of Russia celebrated the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, as a great feast. Again today, the Russian land has been shaken to its foundation, and the waves of unbelief have risen high. Grief takes possession of the heart, and in perils, the Russian people are ready, like the captive Israelites, to call out: "Our bones are dry, our hope has been lost, we have perished." But the memory of the Seven Youths who arose from sleep, together with the Meeting of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, proclaims the almighty right hand of God, and the word of the Prophet Ezekiel thunders from the depths of the ages with the voice of the Lord: "Behold, I will open your tombs, and will bring

you up out of your tombs, My people, and will bring you into your own land, and you shall know that I am the Lord: I have spoken and will do it, saith the Lord (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

Shanghai, October 22, 1948

45. Iconography

Various

Iconography.

Iconography began on the day our Lord Jesus Christ pressed a cloth to His face and imprinted His divine-human image thereon. According to tradition, Luke the Evangelist painted the image of the Mother of God and many icons painted by him, still exist today. As an artist, he painted the first icons of the Mother of God, but also those of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and possibly others which have not come down to us.

Thus, iconography began. Then it came to a halt for a time. Christianity was cruelly persecuted: all that was reminiscent of Christ was destroyed and subjected to ridicule. Thus, during the course of the persecutions, iconography did not develop, but Christians attempted to express in symbols what they wished to convey. Christ was portrayed as the Good Shepherd, and also in the guise of various personalities from pagan mythology. He was also depicted in the form of a vine, an image hearkening back to the Lord's words: "I am the true Vine. ... ye are the branches" (John 15:1; John 15:5). It was also accepted practice to depict Christ in the form of a fish, because if one writes in Greek "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" (Iisus Hristos, Theulos, Sotir) and then groups together the first letter of each word, one discovers that one has written the Greek word IHTHIS, "fish." So, Christians depicted a fish, thereby reminding people of these words, which were recognized by all, who believed in the Savior. This also became known to the pagans, and consequently the image of the fish was held suspect. When, following the victory of Emperor Constantine the Great over Maxentius, freedom was given to Christians. Christianity quickly transformed the Roman Empire and replaced paganism. Then iconography flourished with full force. We see directives concerning iconography at the first ecumenical councils. In some church hymns, which still are frequently used, iconography is mentioned. Now what are icons? Icons are precisely the union between painting and those symbols and works of art that replaced icons during the time of persecution. The icon is not simply a representation, a portrait. The icon reminds of the spiritual aspect of the Saint depicted. Christianity is the inspiration of the world. Christ founded His Church in order to inspire, to transfigure the world, to cleanse it from sin and bring it to that state in which it will exist in the ages to come. Christianity was founded upon the earth and operates upon the earth, but it reaches to Heaven in its structure; Christianity is that bridge and ladder whereby men ascend from the earthly Church to the Heavenly. Therefore, a simple representation, which recalls the earthly characteristics of some face, is not an icon. Even an accurate depiction, in the sense of physical build, still signifies nothing. A person may be very beautiful externally, yet at the same time be very evil. On the other hand, he may be ugly, and at the same time a model of righteousness. Thus, we see that an icon must indeed depict that which we see with our eyes, preserving the characteristics of the body's form, for in this world the soul acts through the body; however, at the same time, it must point towards the inner, spiritual essence. The precise task of the iconographer is to render, to the greatest extent possible, those spiritual qualities, whereby the person depicted

acquired the Kingdom of Heaven, won the Lord's imperishable crown as the Church's true significance is the salvation of man's soul. That which is on the earth perishes when we bring the body to the grave; but the soul passes on to another place. When the world comes to an end, consumed by fire, there will be a new earth and a new Heaven, as the Apostle John the Theologian says, With the eyes of his soul, he foresaw the New Jerusalem, so clearly described in his sacred Revelation. The Lord came to prepare the whole world for this spiritual rebirth. To prepare oneself for this new Kingdom, one must uproot from within oneself those seeds of sin which entered mankind with our ancestors' fall into sin, distorting our pristine, grace-endowed nature; and one must plant within oneself those virtues which they lost in the fall. Our icons speak of the Christian's goal is to change and improve daily. In remembering the saints and their struggles, an icon does not simply represent the saint as he appeared upon the earth. No, the icon depicts his inner spiritual struggle; it portrays how he attained the state where he is now, considered an angel on earth, a heavenly man. This is precisely the manner in which the Mother of God and Jesus Christ are portrayed. Icons should depict that transcendent sanctity which permeated the saints. The Lord Jesus Christ is the union of all that is human and all that is divine; and when depicted in an icon, the Savior must be painted so that we sense that He is a man, a real man, at the same time, something more exalted than any man, that we not simply approach Him as we would approach a visitor or an acquaintance. We should feel that He is One Who is close to us, our Lord, Who is merciful to us, and at the same time an awe-inspiring Judge, Who wants us to follow Him and wishes to lead us to the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, we should not depict only the spiritual aspect of the saint, completely disregarding how he looked while alive on earth. This would also be an extreme. All saints should be depicted so as to convey their individual characteristics as much as possible — soldiers should be portrayed arrayed for battle; holy hierarchies in their Episcopal vestments . . . It is incorrect to depict bishops of the first centuries vested in the sakkos, for at that time, bishops wore the phelonion, not the sakkos. This is not such a great error, for it is far better to make a mistake in what is physical than in what is spiritual, to ignore, the spiritual aspect. However, it is far worse when everything is correct in the physical, sense, but the saint appears as an ordinary man, photographed, devoid of the spiritual. When this is the case, the depiction cannot be considered an icon. Sometimes undue attention is spent on making the icon beautiful. If this is not detrimental to the spirituality of the icon, it is good, but if the beauty distracts our vision so that we forget what is most important — that one must save one's soul, must raise one's soul to the heights of Heaven — the beauty of the depiction is detrimental. It cannot be considered an icon, but merely a painting. An icon is an image, which leads us to be holy, God-pleasing person, or raises us up to Heaven, or evokes a feeling of repentance, compunction, prayer, a feeling that one must bow down before this image. The value of an icon is that, when we approach it, we want to pray before it with reverence. If the image elicits this feeling, it is an icon. Our iconographers were zealous about this reverence, as can be seen in those ancient iconographers of the time before Russia's conversion and our Russian iconographers, too, beginning with the Venerable Alypius of the Kiev Caves, who painted a number of icons of the Mother of God, some of which still survive. These wondrous icons, which continued the Byzantine tradition of the painting of icons which inspire compunction, were not necessarily painted in dark colors; frequently they were done in bright hues; nonetheless, these colors evoked a desire to pray before such icons. An example of this style can be seen in the holy hierarch Peter, a native of Galicia who later became Metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, painted icons, some of which were

until recently to be found in the Cathedral of the Dormition in Moscow. An entire school of iconography was also established in Novgorod under the direction of the holy hierarch Alexis of Novgorod, where a whole series of icons have been preserved. The Venerable Andrew Rublev painted an icon of the Holy Trinity which is now famous not only in the Christian world, but throughout the half-Christian world as well. Unfortunately, this Orthodox movement started to collapse when Russia began to be infiltrated by Western influence. In certain respects, Russia's acquaintance with the European West was very beneficial. Many technical sciences and other useful knowledge came from the West. We know that Christianity has never had any aversion to knowledge of that which originates outside itself. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom studied in pagan universities, and many writers, among whom were our spiritual authors and many of the best theologians, were also well acquainted with pagan writers. The Apostle Paul himself even cited quotations from pagan poets in the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, not all that was Western was good for Russia. Western ideas also wrought horrible moral damage at that time, because Russians began to accept, along with useful knowledge, that which was alien to our Orthodox way of life, to our Orthodox faith. The educated portion of society soon sundered themselves from the life of the people and from the Orthodox Church, which was regulated by ecclesiastical norms. Later, this alien influence touched iconography as well. Images of the Western type began to appear in icons. Perhaps these icons were beautiful from an artistic point of view, but they were completely lacking in sanctity. They were beautiful in the sense of earthly beauty, but these icons could even be scandalous at times, and devoid of spirituality. These were not icons. They were distortions of icons, exhibiting a lack of comprehension of what an icon actually is. The first purpose of this article is to promote an understanding of the true icon, and the second is to cultivate a love for the true icon. And therefore, increase our desire to adorn our churches and our homes with genuine icons and not with Western paintings. These paintings tell us nothing about righteousness or sanctity, they are merely pleasant to look upon. Of course, there are icons painted correctly in the iconographic sense, but yet very crudely executed. One can paint quite correctly in the theoretical sense and at the same time quite poorly from a practical standpoint. This does not mean that, from the principle of iconography itself, these icons are bad. On the other hand, it happens that one can paint beautifully, yet completely ignore the rules of iconography. Both such approaches are harmful. One must strive to paint icons well in principle, method and execution. This is why we oppose certain people and their attempts to paint our churches, for they have the wrong approach, the wrong point of view. They may paint well, perhaps; but when the point of view is incorrect, when the direction is wrong, no matter how well the locomotive runs, it nonetheless slips off the track and is derailed. This is precisely what happens to those who execute their work technically and correctly, yet due to an incorrect approach and an incorrect point of view, they travel the wrong path.

46. The Typicon

Various The Typicon. The Question of Uniformity in the Church Services Discussed at the Council of Hierarchies of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad 1951 by Archbishop John (Maximovitch). The divine services and rites of the Orthodox Church, having as their foundation one typicon and preserving commonality in all that is substantially important, are extremely different one from another in practice. Not only are the customs of different countries and local Churches different, but even in the bounds of a single region, sometimes even in a single city, the customs vary greatly in churches located close to each other. More than once the question has arisen regarding the introduction of a single common abbreviated typicon which would be mandatory for all churches. However, what may be only a theoretical decision may be in reality impossible to carry out and even harmful if attempted. The difference in the carrying out of the Church typicon comes about because of the strength of customs that have taken root. Sometimes these customs have deeply sensible meanings, but sometimes the meanings are quite nonsensical; thus, they remain because of the zeal and determination of those who carry them out. Without a doubt, we must take into consideration that which has been accepted as sanctified custom; that is, what has been accepted from antiquity as having been established and which has entered the consciousness not only of the clergy that carry it out but of the laity as well. However, we must give considerably less weight to that which is only common practice; that is, to that which is merely a habit of those who carry it out, not having an inner meaning and not having entered into the consciousness of the laity. We must hold onto the first as long as they are of benefit to our activity, as long as they do not contradict the Church typicon. As for the latter, one may give only a common rule: the closer it is to the Church typicon, the better. Our Church typicon is not a compilation of dead rules and it is not the fruit of some abstract desk work, it was imprinted on the spiritual experience of holy ascetics who came to fully understand the depths of the human spirit and the laws of the spiritual life. The Holy Fathers themselves experienced the battle with the infirmities of soul and body, as well as the means for their healing; they came to understand very well the path of prayerful podvig and the power of prayer. The Church typicon is a guidebook for training and schooling in prayer and the more it is adhered to the more benefit is derived from it. In the case of the inability to fulfill all that is laid out in the typicon, we must fulfill all that is in our power, preserving its general structure and main content. It is necessary, on the one hand, to fulfill the principal characteristics for a given service unchanged in its composition and that which maintains its identity separate from others. On the other hand, we must try as much as we can to fill in those parts of the service, which, changing according to the day, express the meaning and reason of the commemoration of the day's event. Divine Services combine in themselves prayer, which is lifted up to God by the faithful, the receiving of God's grace in communion with Him, and the instruction of the faithful. The latter consists of teaching through reading in the divine services and hymns, catechism, and instruction in the Christian life. The divine services in their composition contain all the fullness of the dogmatic teaching of the Church and set forth the path to salvation. They present invaluable spiritual wealth. The more fully and precisely they are fulfilled, the more benefit the participants receive from them. Those who perform them carelessly and who shorten them by their laziness

rob their flock, depriving them of their very daily bread, stealing from them a most valuable treasure. The shortening of the services which comes about through lack of strength must be done wisely and performed circumspectly in order not to touch that which should not be tampered with.

Specifically, at Vespers Psalms 103:1-22 must be read in its entirety; if it is sung it is allowable to sing only a few verses, but with majesty. Preferably, the verses of Psalms 140:1-13; Psalms 141:1-10; Psalms 129:1-8; Psalms 116:1-19, which begin with the words "Lord, I have cried," will be always sung in full, all of the stichera absolutely. On the prescribed days it is necessary to read the Old Testament readings and to perform the Litia. Matins must be served in the morning. Serving Matins in the evening, except for when the All-Night Vigil service is held, is not allowable because, by doing this, essentially the morning service, which is very necessary for the faithful, is abolished; even a short church attendance in the morning has a beneficial effect on the soul, while sanctifying and giving direction to the whole day. The Six Psalms are not to be shortened; also, it is necessary to read the Lauds psalms in their entirety. Reading should not take the place of singing except when there is absolutely no one who is able to sing, since the effect of singing is much stronger than reading and very seldom is reading able to substitute for singing. Do not dare to leave out the Theotokia after the Troparia and other hymns, for in them is given the foundation of our faith-the teaching of the incarnation of the Son of God and of the Divine Economy. The Hours must be served exactly without omissions, as they are already so short. All three psalms of each Hour must be read, as well as the assigned Troparia and other prayers. At the end of each Hour special attention must be given to the prayer, which expresses the meaning of the sacred event commemorated at the given hour. Liturgy must be served, if impossible daily, then at least on all Sundays and Church Feast Days, without taking into account the number of faithful that are able to attend the service. The Liturgy is the Bloodless Sacrifice for the whole world and it is the priest's duty to serve it when required. It is positively forbidden to skip any part of the Service Book (sluzhebnyk). It is also necessary to fulfill the given hymns for the Liturgy. Included are Psalms 103:1-22; Psalms 145:1-21; Psalms 33:1-22; if Psalms 103:1-22 is shortened because of its length (although it is better not to do so), then in any case Psalms 145:1-21 must be sung from the beginning to end, except for the days in which both of them are replaced by the antiphons. Psalms 33:1-22 is replaced only during Bright Week by the singing of "Christ is Risen"; as for the rest of the year, it is to be read or sung in view of its edification and there is no justification for its omission. That troparia which are appointed for each given Liturgy are to be sung and in their proper order, since they are the festive part of the Liturgy. The Church typicon also refers to preserving accurately the order of the Epistle and Gospel readings. If this is adhered to, then throughout the whole year, in those churches where the services are held daily, the Gospel, as well as Epistles, will be read in its entirety. That order requires that the cyclic reading be read necessarily; its replacement by the festive readings happens only on great feast days, but then the cyclic reading is not omitted; it is read on the preceding day, together with the ordinary readings: on medium rank feast days the consecutive and festive readings are read. The reading of only the festive readings, that is, with the omission of the ordinary, is called "irrationality" by the typicon because when this is done the whole meaning of the division of the readings in the specific order is transgressed and those who do this show their lack of understanding (of the meaning of the divisions). The remaining sacraments, as in all of the order of services in the Book of Needs, also must not be shortened except for dire need, and even then only by adhering to all that is essential and the order of the service, remembering one's accountability before God for the damage done to

the souls of the flock by one's negligence. Everyone, while celebrating divine service, must fulfill it more precisely and with better execution so that, bringing spiritual benefit to others, he himself in the Day of Retribution may be likened to the servant who brought forth the ten talents and hear: Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things.

47. Decline of the Patriarchate of Constantinople

Various The Decline of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Translators' Introduction The anti-Orthodox career and statements of the late Patriarch Athenagoras, a sorry memory have been so striking that they have perhaps tended to obscure the fact that the apostasy of this one man was merely the culmination of a long and thorough departure process, from the Orthodox Faith of an entire Local Orthodox Church. The promise of the new Patriarch Demetrios to "follow upon the footsteps of our great Predecessor...in pursuing Christian unity" and to institute "dialogues" with Islam and other non-Christian religions, while recognizing "the holy blessed Pope of Rome Paul VI, the first among equals within the universal Church of Christ" (Enthronement Address)-only confirms this observation and reveals the depths to which the Church of Constantinople has fallen, in our own day.

It should be noted that the title "Ecumenical" was bestowed on the Patriarch of Constantinople as a result of the transfer of the capital of the Roman Empire to this city in the 4th century; the Patriarch then became the bishop of the city which was the center of the ecumene or civilized world. Lamentably, in the 20th century the once glorious See of Constantinople, having long since lost its earthly glory, has cheaply tried to regain prestige by entering on two new "ecumenical" paths. It has joined the "ecumenical movement," which is based on an anti-Christian universalized and imitation of apostate Rome, it has striven to subject the other Orthodox Churches to itself and make of its Patriarch a kind of Pope of Orthodoxy. The following article, which is part of a report on all the Autocephalous Churches made by Archbishop John to the Second All Diaspora Sobor of the Russian Church Abroad held in Yugoslavia in 1938, gives the historical background of the present state of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It could well have been written today, nearly 35 years later, apart from a few small points which have changed since then, not to mention the more spectacular "ecumenical" acts and statements of the Patriarchate in recent years. These have served to change it from the "pitiful spectacle" described here, into one of the leading world centers of anti-Orthodoxy. The primacy among Orthodox Churches is possessed by the Church of the New Rome, Constantinople, which is headed by a Patriarch who has the title of Ecumenical, and therefore, is called the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which territorially reached the culmination of its development at the end of the 18th century. At that time, there was included the whole of Asia Minor, the whole Balkan Peninsula (except for Montenegro), together with the adjoining islands, since the other independent Churches in the Balkan Peninsula had been abolished and had become part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Ecumenical Patriarch had received from the Turkish Sultan, even before the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, the title of Millet Barb, the head of the people, and he was considered the head of the whole Orthodox population of the Turkish Empire. This, however, did not prevent the Turkish government from removing patriarchs for any reason whatever and calling for new elections and collecting a large tax from the newly elected patriarch. Apparently, this tax collection had a great significance in the changing of patriarchs by the Turks. Therefore, it often happened that they again allowed a patriarch whom they had removed, to return to the Patriarchal Throne, after the death of one or several of his

successors. Thus, many patriarchs occupied their see several times, and each accession was accompanied by the collection of a special tax from them by the Turks. In order to make up the sum that he paid on his accession to the Patriarchal Throne, a patriarch made a collection from the metropolitans subordinate to him, and they, in their turn, collected from the clergy subordinate to them. This manner of making up its finances left an imprint on the whole order of the Patriarchate's life. In the Patriarchate, there was also evident the Greek "Great Idea," to attempt to restore Byzantium, at first in a cultural, but later in a political sense. For this reason in all important posts there were assigned people loyal to this idea, and for the most part Greeks from the part of Constantinople called the Phanar, where also the Patriarchate was located. Almost always, the episcopal sees were filled by Greeks, even though in the Balkan Peninsula the population was primarily Slavic. At the beginning of the 19th century, there began a movement, of liberation among the Balkan peoples, who were striving to liberate themselves from the authority of the Turks. There arose the states of Serbia, Greece, Rumania, and Bulgaria, at first semi-independent, and then completely independent from Turkey. Parallel with this, was the formation of new Local Churches, which were separate from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Even though it was unwillingly, under the influence of circumstances, the Ecumenical Patriarchs permitted the autonomy of the Churches in the vassal principedoms. Later, they recognized the full independence of the Churches in Serbia, Greece and Rumania. Only the Bulgarian question was complicated in view on the one hand of the impatience of the Bulgarians, who had not yet attained political independence and on the other hand, thanks to the unyieldingness of the Greeks. The self-willed declaration of Bulgarian autocephaly on the foundation of a firinan of the Sultan was not recognized by the Patriarchate, and in a number of dioceses there was established a parallel hierarchy. The boundaries of the newly formed Churches coincided with the boundaries of the new states, which were growing all the time at the expense of Turkey, at the same time acquiring new dioceses from the Patriarchate. Nonetheless, in 1912, when the Balkan War began, the Ecumenical Patriarchate had about 70 metropolias and several bishoprics. The war of 1912-13 tore away from Turkey a significant part of the Balkan Peninsula with such great spiritual centers as Salonica and Athos. The Great War of 1914-18 for a time deprived Turkey of the whole of Thrace and the Asia Minor coast with the city of Smyrna, which were subsequently lost by Greece in 1922, after the unsuccessful march of the Greeks on Constantinople. Here the Ecumenical Patriarch could not so easily release from his authority the dioceses that had been torn away from Turkey, previously. There was talk concerning certain places which in the past, had been under the spiritual authority of Constantinople. Nonetheless, the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1922 recognized the annexation to the Serbian Church of all areas within the boundaries of Yugoslavia; he agreed to the inclusion within the Church of Greece of a number of dioceses in the Greek State, preserving, however, his jurisdiction over Athos. In 1937, he even recognized the autocephaly of the small Albanian Church, which originally he had not recognized. The boundaries of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the number of its dioceses had significantly decreased. At the same time, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in fact lost Asia Minor also, although it remained within its jurisdiction. In accordance with the peace treaty between Greece and Turkey in 1923, there occurred an exchange of population between these powers, so that the whole Greek population of Asia Minor had to resettle in Greece. Ancient cities, having at one time a great significance in ecclesiastical matters and glorious in their church history, remained without a single inhabitant of the Orthodox faith. At the same time, the Ecumenical Patriarch lost his political significance in

Turkey, since Kemal Pasha deprived him of his title of head of the people. Actually, now, under the Ecumenical Patriarch, there are five dioceses within the boundaries of Turkey, in addition to Athos with the surrounding places in Greece. The Patriarch is extremely hindered in the manifestation of his indisputable rights in church government within the boundaries of Turkey, where he is viewed as an ordinary Turkish subject-official, being furthermore, under the supervision of the government. The Turkish government, which interferes in all aspects of the life of its citizens, only as a special privilege has permitted him, as well as the Armenian Patriarch, to wear long hair and ecclesiastic garments, forbidding this to the rest of the clergy. The Patriarch has no right of free exit from Turkey, and lately the government is ever more insistently pursuing his removal to the new capital of Ankara (the ancient Ancyra), where there are now no Orthodox Christians, but where the administration with all the branches of governmental life is concentrated. [Such an outward abasement] of the hierarchy of the city of St. Constantine, which was once the capital of the ecumene, has not caused reverence toward him to be shaken among Orthodox Christians, who revere the See of Sts. Chrysostom and Gregory the Theologian. From the height of this See the successor of St. John and Gregory could spiritually guide the whole Orthodox world, if only he possessed their firmness in the defense of righteousness and truth and the breadth of views of the recent Patriarch Joachim III. However, to the general decline of the Ecumenical Patriarchate there has been joined the direction of its activity after the Great War. The Ecumenical Patriarchate has desired to make up for the loss of dioceses which have left its jurisdiction, as well as, the loss of its political significance within the boundaries of Turkey, by submitting to itself areas where up to now there has been no Orthodox hierarchy, and likewise the Churches of those states where the government is not Orthodox. Thus, on April 5, 1922, Patriarch Meletius designated an Exarch of Western and Central Europe with the title of Metropolitan of Thyatira with residency in London; on March 4, 1923, the same Patriarch consecrated the Czech Archimandrite Sabbatius Archbishop of Prague and All Czechoslovakia; on April 15, 1924, a Metropolia of Hungary and All Central Europe was founded with a See in Budapest, even though there was already a Serbian bishop there. In America, an Archbishopric was established under the Ecumenical Throne; then in 1924 a Diocese was established in Australia with a See in Sydney. In 1938, India was made subordinate to the Archbishop of Australia. At the same time, there has proceeded the subjection of separate parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, which have been torn away from Russia. Thus, on June 9, 1923, the Ecumenical Patriarch accepted into his jurisdiction the Diocese of Finland as an autonomous Finnish Church; on August 23, 1923, the Estonian Church was made subject in the same way; on November 13, 1924, Patriarch Gregory VII recognized the autocephaly of the Polish Church under the supervision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate-that is, rather autonomy. In March 1936, the Ecumenical Patriarch accepted Latvia into his jurisdiction. Not limiting himself to the acceptance into his jurisdiction of Churches in regions which had fallen away from the borders of Russia, Patriarch Photius accepted into his jurisdiction Metropolitan Eulogius in Western Europe together with the parishes subordinate to him, and on February 28, 1937, an Archbishop of the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch in America consecrated Bishop Theodore-Bogdan Shpilko for a Ukrainian Church in North America. Thus, the Ecumenical Patriarch has become actually "ecumenical" [universal] in the breadth of the territory which is theoretically subject to him. Almost the whole earthly globe, apart from the small territories of the three Patriarchates and the territory of Soviet Russia, according to the idea of the Patriarchate's leaders, enters the composition of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Increasing without limit their desires to submit to themselves parts of

Russia, the Patriarchs of Constantinople have even begun to declare the uncanonicity of the annexation of Kiev to the Moscow Patriarchate, and to declare that the previously existing southern Russian Metropolia of Kiev should be subject to the Throne of Constantinople. Such a point of view is not only clearly expressed in the Tomos of November 13, 1924, in connection with the separation of the Polish Church, but is also quite thoroughly promoted by the Patriarchs. Thus, the Vicar of Metropolitan Eulogius in Paris, who was consecrated, with the permission of the Ecumenical Patriarch, has assumed the title of Chersonese; that is to say, Chersonese, which is now in the territory of Russia, is subject to the Ecumenical Patriarch. The next logical step for the Ecumenical Patriarchate would be to, declare the whole of Russia as being under the jurisdiction of Constantinople. However, the actual spiritual might and even the actual boundaries of authority by far do not correspond to such a self-aggrandizement of Constantinople. Not to mention the fact that almost everywhere the authority of the Patriarch is quite illusory and consists for the most part in the confirmation of bishops who have been elected to various places or the sending of such from Constantinople, many lands which Constantinople considers subject to itself do not have any flock at all under its jurisdiction. The moral authority of the Patriarchs of Constantinople has likewise fallen very low in view of their extreme instability in ecclesiastical matters. Thus, Patriarch Meletius IV arranged a "Pan-Orthodox Congress," with representatives of various churches, which decreed the introduction of the New Calendar. This decree, recognized only by a part of the Church, introduced a frightful schism among Orthodox Christians. Patriarch Gregory VII recognized the decree of the council of the Living Church concerning the deposing of Patriarch Tikhon, whom not long before this the Synod of Constantinople had declared a "confessor," and then he entered into communion with the "Renovationists" in Russia, which continues up to now. In sum, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in theory embracing almost the whole universe and in fact extending its authority only over several dioceses, and in other places having only a higher superficial supervision and receiving certain revenues for this; persecuted by the government at home and not supported by any governmental authority abroad; having lost its significance as a pillar of truth and having itself become a source of division, and at the same time, being possessed by an exorbitant love of power-represents a pitiful spectacle which recalls the worst periods in the history of the See of Constantinople.

48. Laboring With Christ

Various Laboring With Christ The Address of Blessed Archbishop John (Maximovitch) on the occasion of his consecration as Bishop of Shanghai May 27, 1934 - Belgrade Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19) With these words the Lord called His first Apostles, As a child, little did I think that this same call would some day be directed towards me, although for as long as I can remember it was my desire to serve truth. My parents nurtured me in a striving to stand unwaveringly for the truth, and my soul was captivated by the examples of those who had laid down their lives for its sake, who had fought against kings who persecuted the saving Faith, and on behalf of those kings who showed themselves to be carriers and defenders of piety. In these early years I had a poor conception of the path to be taken. As I grew older I thought of entering military or civil service and thereby to devote myself to serving my country which was at that time a stronghold and guardian of true piety.

I entered a secondary school bearing the name of one of the most illustrious pages in Russia's history: the Petrovsk Poltava Military Academy; but there I felt that I must choose another path. Encouraging this new flow of thought was my contact with our religious studies instructor-Archpriest Sergei Chetverikov and the rector of the seminary-now Archbishop Varlaam. The day I finished my secondary schooling coincided with the day when a newly consecrated archbishop took up his position as ruling hierarch in the city where I was to pursue my higher education. This archpastor (now Metropolitan Anthony [Khrapovitsky] of Kiev, (then Archbishop of Kharkov), became and has remained, my spiritual mentor. While studying secular subjects, I became more and more engrossed in the study of that science of sciences, the spiritual life. The church and the monastery where the Archpastor lived held a greater attraction for me than the place where I was pursuing my courses. The ensuing ruination of our country's governing power convinced me once and for all of the transience of everything earthly and of the weakness of human strength and human capabilities, and I decided to break with the vanities of the temporal world end to dedicate myself exclusively to serving, God. But the call to serve God, which commanded my soul to deny itself and take up its cross and follow after Christ (Matt. 16: 24), carried also another requisite: to become a fisher of men, Before my outward ties with the secular world were severed altogether, a thirst for theological learning led me into a seminary under the protection of that great hierarch, St. Savva, and then onto the path which he indicated.

Today, with the voice of the archpastors of the Church, I am being called to enter into the archpastoral service. I do not presume myself worthy of such a dignity, aware as I am of my sinfulness; but I fear to refuse it, hearing the words which the Lord directed towards Peter who had sinned so grievously, though he later repented: "If thou lovest Me, feed My sheep, feed My lambs . " In explaining this Gospel passage, St. John Chrysostom calls attention to the fact that as a proof of love it was none other than the podvig of pastoral service that the Lord demanded. Why is pastoral service so great in the eyes of the Lord? Because, in the words of the Apostle Paul, pastors are "laborers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Christ came to earth to restore in man God's image which had grown defiled, to call people, to unite them as one that faith one mouth

and one heart they would glorify their Creator.

It is the task of each pastor to pray people to this unity, to renew them and enlighten them. What can be greater than to re-create God's creation! What greater good can one bring to one's neighbor than to prepare him for eternal life! The fulfillment of this task is not easy-one must battle with a man's sin corrupted nature, one often meets zenith misunderstanding, and sometimes conscious opposition or even hatred on the part of those one loves and cares to help. Great must be the self-sacrifice of a pastor, and great must be his love for his flock. For its sake he must be ready to endure everything, and each lamb must find a place in his heart. He must apply appropriate treatment to each one individually, taking into consideration the particular character and circumstances of each.

If the duties of an ordinary pastor are so difficult and complex, and his responsibility for the salvation of his flock so great, then what can be said about an Archpastor! Truly, the Lord speaks to him when He said aforetime to the prophet Ezekiel:

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word of My mouth, and give them warning from Me. (Ezekiel 3:19) An archpastor is responsible not only for all the sheep which God entrusts to him, but also for the pastors. He is called to account for every sinner whom he neglected to enlighten in time, for each soul that once walked the path of truth but then went astray. He is called upon to feel the pain of his suffering sheep and thereby to heal them, like the Chief Shepherd Christ, "by Whose wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). He has no personal life; he must give himself entirely to the work of saving souls and leading them into the Kingdom of Heaven. He must be prepared to endure all manner of vexation, persecution and death itself for the sake of the truth, to drink Christ's cup end to tee baptized with His baptism (Matthew 20:23; Mark 10:39). He must concern himself not only with those who come to him, but he must actively seek out and return to the flock the lost sheep, carrying them upon his shoulders. It is his duty to proclaim Christ's teaching to those unfamiliar with it: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Penetrated by the knowledge of the Church's universality, he is not to limit his concern to those directly entrusted to his care, but with the eyes of his hears he is to view the entire universal Church of Christ with the desire that all nations be enlightened and grow in the true faith, for within the Church "there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian or Scythian," but all are equally beloved children of the Heavenly Father. In his concern for the salvation of men, a pastor must adapt himself to their individual perceptions in order to draw all people to Christ, in imitation of the apostle Paul, and to be able to say with him:

Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law...To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. (1 Corinthians 9:20; 1 Corinthians 9:22) In his concern for the salvation of souls, a pastor must remember that people also have physical needs which cry out for attention. One mustn't preach the Gospel without showing love in action. At the same time, caution must be observed lest solicitude in meeting the physical needs of his neighbor swallow up the pastor's attention altogether and serve to detract from his spiritual concerns. He must bear in mind the Apostle's words: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables" (Acts 6:2). Everything must be directed towards acquiring the Kingdom of God and fulfilling Christ's Gospel.

True Christianity does not consist in intellectual abstract deliberations and teachings; rather, it is incarnate in life itself. Christ descended to earth not to instruct people in new forms of knowledge, but to call them to a new life. During our earthly life we prepare ourselves for eternity. The various circumstances and events of temporal life act to influence a man's spiritual life. Those with strong characters are able to surmount the influence of their surroundings, while the weak give in to it. The strong in spirit are tempered by persecutions, while the weak fall. It is therefore necessary, insofar as possible, to create conditions in which as many people as possible can be spiritually formed. A pastor should not shun contact with society, but his participation must be as a bearer of Christ's law and as a representative of the Church. A priest cannot make himself into a public figure or a politician, forgetting the essential character of his ministry and its goal. Christ's Kingdom is "not of this world" (John 18:36), and Christ did not establish an earthly kingdom. Without becoming a political leader and without becoming embroiled in party conflicts, a pastor can bring a spiritual perspective to bear on life's experiences, thereby giving his flock to know what path to hold and how to act as Christians not only in their personal life but also in the world. An archpastor must be able to give spiritual advice to everybody: to the hermit monk who is cleansing his mind from vain thoughts, to the king ordering the affairs of government, to the military commander setting off for battle, and to the ordinary citizen. This is especially important for a pastor of the Russian Church, whose personal life is today closely tied to what is happening in the homeland.

Among the Russian people, hardly anyone has remained untouched by those events which so deeply affect the souls of all who give thought to them. Is it possible to look indifferently at what has happened to the Kremlin which has experienced the fulfillment of the bitter words of the prophet Isaiah: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteous lodged in it; but now murderers" (Isaiah 1:21). What believing soul does not shudder in thinking about the widespread desecration and unheard-of persecutions! All the sons of Russia, in one way or another, feel upon themselves the breath of the red beast who wars against the Bride of Christ. From the first centuries Christians suffered persecutions for the sake of Christ; they never rejoiced in these trials but raised their voices against them. Numerous apologists and martyrs convicted the persecutors in the first centuries, and after them came a great multitude of hierarchs and confessors. In peaceful times the hierarchs and righteous gave attention to propagating the word of God, while in evil times they censured those in power. Rus was established under the immediate influence of her great pastors and her men and women of prayer. We cannot but grieve, seeing the destruction of that great 'house of the Theotokos' as the Russian empire was once called. We cannot but experience pain, when the souls and bodies of our close ones are being tortured, when our pastors and archpastors in the homeland are forced to silence by fear of death. Even outside her borders, we remain sons of Rus. Exiled from our earthly homeland, we continue to be the spiritual flock of the hierarchs Peter, Alexis, Jonah, Philip and Hermogenes. We are still part of the suffering and persecuted Russian Church, now drenched by the blood of the hieromartyrs Vladimir of Kiev, Benjamin of Petrograd, Hermogenes of Tobolsk, Mitrofan of Astrakhan, Andronik of Perm, and a countless host of other new martyrs and hieromartyrs. Their testament is our sacred treasure which we must preserve until such a time as it pleases God to reveal His might and raise the horn of Orthodox Christians. Until then we must remain in spiritual unity with the persecuted and strengthen them with our prayers.

Although absent from them, we kiss their bonds, and we grieve for those who have wavered. We know that even the ancient confessors of the truth sometimes wavered. But we have examples of steadfastness: Saint Theodore the Studite who condemned any departure from the Church's teachings, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Patriarch Hermogenes. We dread to slip from the path they trod, for if human weakness can be used to justify those beneath the yoke of terror, what can we say if we are scared by mere threats? Living in comparative security, we should strengthen ourselves spiritually in order to re-create what has been destroyed, "to turn back the captivity of Zion" if the Lord so allows, or to go ourselves in the steps of those who are suffering for the truth-if it should be necessary. For this reason we must above all preserve among ourselves oneness of mind and unity, presenting a unified Russian Church, and at the same time continue her vital work among other peoples. From the very first centuries of Russia's acceptance of Christianity, she sent forth missionaries to distant parts. First to shine forth were the righteous Kuksha and Leonty of Rostov, afterwards Stefan of Perm, Innocent of Irkutsk, and in our time Macarius-Apostle to the Altai, and Nicholas of Japan. Now the dispersed Russian people have become propagators of the Faith in all corners of the world. The task of the Russian Church Outside Russia is to occupy herself with the work of enlightening as many people as possible from all nations.

It is for this purpose that the Synod of Russian Hierarchs Abroad is sending me to a country from which arises the material sun, but which has need of the illuminating rays of the intellectual Sun of Righteousness.

Acknowledging my weak powers, it is in obedience to the Church authorities and my spiritual mentor that I submit to this choice- not for the sake of honor and power, but to give myself entirely to the service of the Church.

I beseech the Lord God that He help me and strengthen me to actively labor until death for the sake of the truth. In this significant hour of my life, I pray for those who schooled me and edified me with their instructions; I pray for those among whom I have spent until now my years of service to the Church; I pray for the youth whom I nurtured spiritually, for my future flock, for the universal Church, for the suffering Russian land! I trust in the prayers and protection of the mighty host of heavenly warriors of the Christian race. I likewise ask you, God's hierarchs,...to pray for me and to bestow God's blessing.

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49. Lay not up Treasures on Earth

Various Lay not up Treasures on Earth, but in Heaven where Nothing is Lost (22 February/7 March, 1954) The Lord speaks to all people of all times and races, and tells them something clear and well-known. Today a person is alive, but tomorrow he dies and everything that he has is lost to him. But the soul, which moves the body, continues to live and it is either comforted and happy, or sad and burdened. Man is created thus; the body must live as the soul desires. At the moment of death the soul continues to live without the body. Everything will perish except that which the soul has gathered through love and prayer. Everything virtuous done by a man is written in the soul and will not be taken from him. While a person is alive, he finds himself paying attention to many things: clothing, health, his job, studies. There are times when he is concerned only with the thought of war or a failed harvest - of everything that is necessary for life on earth. So, too, in spiritual life there are times of special attention to what is needful for the soul. Such is Great Lent - a time of special attention, examination, of the freeing of spiritual forces. Fasting is established by the Holy Spirit. Righteous men, striving towards God, through life experience came to know the meaning of fasting and bear witness that without fasting there can be no spiritual life. All the various attacks of the devil, all his temptations, everything concerning the diabolic world, is cast aside -becomes powerless and is shamed-when a person firmly follows the words of the Saviour Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ: " .. . This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

Now is a time of fasting, a suitable time for cleansing the soul. This is the most important thing, for a soul to be able to accept the grace of God, so that those treasures will be stored up in the soul, which will not be taken from it. And then the path of its life will be straight; in the soul there will be peace and joy.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

50. The Cross, Preserver of the Universe

Various The Cross, Preserver of the Universe IN THE prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 9:6) it is said that when the Angel of the Lord was sent to punish and destroy the sinning people, it was told him not to strike those on whom the "mark" had been made. In the original text this mark is called "tau," the Hebrew letter corresponding to the letter "T.", which is how in ancient times the cross was made, which then was an instrument of punishment. And so, even then was foretold the power of the Cross, which preserves those who venerate it. Likewise by many other events in the Old Testament the power of the Cross was indicated. Moses, who held his arms raised in the form of a cross during the battle, gave victory to the Israelites over the Amalekites. He also, dividing the Red Sea by a blow of his rod and by a transverse blow uniting the waters again, saved Israel from Pharaoh, who drowned in the water, while Israel crossed over on the dry bottom (Exodus 14:1-31, Exodus 17:1-16).

Through the laying on of his hands in the form of a cross on his grandsons, Jacob gave a blessing to his descendants, foretelling at the same time their future until the coming of the "expectation of the nations" (Genesis 48:1-22). By the Cross, the Son of God having become man, accomplished our salvation. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross (Php 2:8). Having stretched out His hands upon the Cross, the Saviour with them, as it were, embraced the world, and by His blood shed on it, like a king with red ink, He signed the forgiveness of the human race. The Cross of the Lord was the instrument by which He saved the world after the fall into sin. Through the Cross, He descended with His soul into hell so as to raise up from it the souls who were awaiting Him. By the Cross, Christ opened the doors of paradise which had been closed after our first ancestors had been banished from it. The Cross was sanctified by the Body of Christ which was nailed to it when He gave Himself over to torments and death for the salvation of the world, and it itself was then filled with life-giving power. By the Cross on Golgotha, the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31) and an end was put to his authority. The weapon by which he was crushed became the sign of Christ's victory. The demonic hosts tremble when they see the Cross, for by the Cross the kingdom of hell was destroyed. They do not dare to draw near to anyone who is guarded by the Cross. The whole human race, by the death of Christ on the Cross, received deliverance from the authority of the devil, and everyone who makes use of this saving weapon is inaccessible to the demons. When legions of demons appeared to St. Anthony the Great and other desert-dwellers, they guarded themselves with the Sign of the Cross, and the demons vanished. When they appeared to Saint Symeon the Stylite, who was standing on his pillar, what seemed to be a chariot to carry him to heaven, the Saint, before mounting it, crossed himself; it disappeared and the enemy, who had hoped to cast down the ascetic from the height of his pillar, was put to shame.

One cannot enumerate all the separate examples of the manifestation of the power of the Cross in various incidents. Invisibly and unceasingly there gushes from it the Divine grace that saves the world. The Sign of the Cross is made at all the Mysteries and prayers of the Church. With the making of the Sign of the Cross over the bread and wine, they become the Body and Blood of

Christ. With the immersion of the Cross, the waters are sanctified. The Sign of the Cross looses us from sins. "When we are guarded by the Cross, we oppose the enemy, not fearing his nets and barking." Just as the flaming sword in the hands of the Cherubim barred the entrance into paradise of old, so the Cross now acts invisibly in the world, guarding it from perdition. The Cross is the unconquerable weapon of pious kings in the battle with enemies. Through the apparition of the Cross in the sky, the dominion of Emperor Constantine was confirmed and an end was put to the persecution against the Church. The apparition of the Cross in the sky in Jerusalem in the days of Constantius the Arian proclaimed the victory of Orthodoxy. By the power of the Cross of the Lord, Christian kings reign and will reign until Antichrist, barring his path to power and restraining lawlessness (Saint John Chrysostom, Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7). The "sign of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:30), that is, the Cross, will appear in the sky in order to proclaim the end of the present world and the coming of the eternal Kingdom of the Son of God. Then all the tribes of the earth shall weep, because they loved the present age and its lusts, but all who have endured persecution for righteousness and called on the name of the Lord shall rejoice and be glad. The Cross then will save from eternal perdition all who conquered temptations by the Cross, who crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts, and took up their cross and followed their Christ. But those who hated the Cross of the Lord and did not engrave the Cross in their soul will perish forever. For "the Cross is the preserver of the whole universe, the Cross is the beauty of the Church, the Cross is the might of kings, the Cross is the confirmation of the faithful, the Cross is the glory of angels and the scourge of demons" (Octoechos: Exapostilarion, Monday Matins)

51. What do we mean by the word ORTHODOX?

Various What do we mean by the word ORTHODOX?

SHORTLY AFTER THE DOCTRINE of Christ began to be propagated among the Gentiles, the followers of Christ in Antioch began to be called Christians (Acts 11:26). The word "Christian" indicated that those who bore this name belonged to Christ—belonged in the sense of devotion to Christ and his Doctrine. From Antioch the name of Christian was spread everywhere. The followers of Christ gladly called themselves by the name of their beloved Teacher and Lord; and the enemies of Christ called His followers Christians by carrying over to them the ill-will and hatred which they breathed against Christ.

However, quite soon there appeared people who, while calling themselves Christians, were not of Christ in spirit. Of them Christ had spoken earlier: Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven (Matthew 7:5). Christ prophesied also that many would pass themselves off for Christ Himself: Many shall come in my name, sayings I am Christ (Matthew 24:5) The Apostles in their epistles indicated that false bearers of the name of Christ had appeared already in their time: as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists (1 John 2:19).

They indicated that those who stepped away from the doctrine of Christ should not be considered their own: They went out from us but were not of us (1 John 2:19)" Warning against quarrels and disagreements in minor matters (1 Corinthians 1:10-14), at the same time the Apostles strictly commanded their disciples to shun those who do not bring the true doctrine (II John 1:10). The Lord, through the Revelation given to the Apostle John the Theologian, sternly accused those who, calling themselves faithful, did not act in accordance with their name; for in such a case it would be false for them. Of what use was it of old to call oneself a Jew, an Old Testament follower of the true faith, if one was not such in actuality? Such the Holy Scripture calls the synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9). In the same way a Christian in the strict sense is he only who confesses the true doctrine of Christ and lives in accordance with it. The designation of a Christian consists in glorifying the Heavenly Father by one's life. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16). But true glorification of God is possible only if one rightly believes and expresses his right belief in words and deeds. Therefore true Christianity and it alone may be named "right-glorifying" (Ortho-doxy). By the word "Orthodoxy" we confess our firm conviction that it is precisely our Faith that is the true doctrine of Christ. When we call anyone or anything Orthodox, we by this very fact indicate his or its non-counterfeit and uncorrupted Christianity, rejecting at the same time that which falsely appropriates the name of Christ.

52. Life After Death

Various Life After Death

Recently there have been many questions raised about what happens to the soul when a person dies. The following sermon by St. John of San Francisco outlines the Orthodox teaching. I have appended to the sermon by way of endnotes additional comments and extensive Patristic support for this comments. It is important for us as we approach this all-important subject to lay aside all preconceptions and to be willing to accept what the Fathers of the Church teach. Your opinion and my opinion are just that: OPINIONS; what is presented here is TRUTH! —Fr. John Mack

Limitless and without consolation would have been our sorrow for close ones who are dying, if the Lord had not given us eternal life. Our life would be pointless if it ended with death. What benefit would there then be from virtue and good deed? Then they would be correct who say: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" But man was created for immortality, and by His resurrection Christ opened the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom, of eternal blessedness for those who have believed in Him and have lived righteously. Our earthly life is a preparation for the future life, and this preparation ends with our death. "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Then a man leaves all his earthly cares; the body disintegrates, in order to rise anew at the General Resurrection. Often this spiritual vision begins in the dying even before death, and while still seeing those around them and even speaking with them, they see what others do not see [1]. But when it leaves the body, the soul finds itself among other spirits, good and bad. Usually it inclines toward those which are more akin to it in spirit, and if while in the body it was under the influence of certain ones, it will remain in dependence upon them when it leaves the body, however unpleasant they may turn out to be upon encountering them [2]. For the course of two days the soul enjoys relative freedom and can visit places on earth which were dear to it, but on the third day it moves into other spheres [3]. At this time (the third day), it passes through legions of evil spirits which obstruct its path and accuse it of various sins, to which they themselves had tempted it. According to various revelations there are twenty such obstacles, the so-called "toll-houses," at each of which one or another form of sin is tested; after passing through one the soul comes upon the next one, and only after successfully passing through all of them can the soul continue its path without being immediately cast into gehenna. How terrible these demons and their toll-houses are may be seen in the fact that Mother of God Herself, when informed by the Archangel Gabriel of Her approaching death, answering Her prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared from heaven to receive the soul of His Most Pure Mother and conduct it to heaven. Terrible indeed is the third day for the soul of the departed, and for this reason it especially needs prayers then for itself [4].

Then, having successfully passed through the toll-houses and bowed down before God, the soul for the course of 37 more days visits the heavenly habitations and the abysses of hell, not knowing yet where it will remain, and only on the fortieth day is its place appointed until the resurrection of the dead [5]. Some souls find themselves (after the forty days) in a condition of foretasting eternal

joy and blessedness, and others in fear of the eternal torments which will come in full after the Last Judgment. Until then changes are possible in the condition of souls, especially through offering for them the Bloodless Sacrifice (commemoration at the Liturgy), and likewise by other prayers [6].

How important commemoration at the Liturgy is may be seen in the following occurrence: Before the uncovering of the relics of St. Theodosius of Chernigov (1896), the priest-monk (the renowned Starets Alexis of Goloseyevsky Hermitage, of the Kiev-Caves Lavra, who died in 1916) who was conducting the re-vesting of the relics, becoming weary while sitting by the relics, dozed off and saw before him the Saint, who told him: "I thank you for laboring with me. I beg you also, when you will serve the Liturgy, to commemorate my parents" -- and he gave their names (Priest Nikita and Maria). "How can you, O Saint, ask my prayers, when you yourself stand at the heavenly Throne and grant to people God's mercy?" the priest-monk asked. "Yes, that is true," replied St. Theodosius, "but the offering at the Liturgy is more powerful than my prayer."

Therefore, panikhidas (i.e., Trisagion Prayers for the Dead) and prayer at home for the dead are beneficial to them, as are good deeds done in their memory, such as alms or contributions to the church. But especially beneficial for them is commemoration at the Divine Liturgy. There have been many appearances of the dead and other occurrences which confirm how beneficial is the commemoration of the dead. Many who died in repentance, but who were unable to manifest this while they were alive, have been freed from tortures and have obtained repose. In the Church prayers are ever offered for the repose of the dead, and on the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, in the kneeling prayers at vespers, there is even a special petition "for those in hell."

Every one of us who desires to manifest his love for the dead and give them real help, can do this best of all through prayer for them, and particularly by commemorating them at the Liturgy, when the particles which are cut out for the living and the dead are let fall into the Blood of the Lord with the words: "Wash away, O Lord, the sins of those here commemorated by Thy Precious Blood and by the prayers of Thy saints." We can do nothing better or greater for the dead than to pray for them, offering commemoration for them at the Liturgy. Of this they are always in need, and especially during those forty days when the soul of the deceased is proceeding on its path to the eternal habitations. The body feels nothing then: it does not see its close ones who have assembled, does not smell the fragrance of the flowers, does not hear the funeral orations. But the soul senses the prayers offered for it and is grateful to those who make them and is spiritually close to them.

O relatives and close ones of the dead! Do for them what is needful for them and within your power. Use your money not for outward adornment of the coffin and grave, but in order to help those in need, in memory of your close ones who have died, for churches, where prayers for them are offered. Show mercy to the dead, take care of their souls [7]. Before us all stands the same path, and how we shall then wish that we would be remembered in prayer! Let us therefore be ourselves merciful to the dead. As soon as someone has reposed, immediately call or inform a priest, so he can read the Prayers appointed to be read over all Orthodox Christians after death. Try, if it be possible, to have the funeral in Church and to have the Psalter read over the deceased until the funeral. Most definitely arrange at once for the serving of the forty-day memorial, that is, daily commemoration at the Liturgy for the course of forty days. (NOTE: If the funeral is in a church where there are no daily services, the relatives should take care to order the forty-day memorial

wherever there are daily services.) It is likewise good to send contributions for commemoration to monasteries, as well as to Jerusalem, where there is constant prayer at the holy places. Let us take care for those who have departed into the other world before us, in order to do for them all that we can, remembering that "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

ENDNOTES

1. But his soul continues to live. Not for an instant does it cease to exist. Our external, biological and earthly life ends with death, but the soul continues to live on. The soul is our very existence, the center of all our energies and our thoughts. The soul moves and gives life to the body. After its separation from the body it continues to live, to exist, to have awareness. St. Theophan the Recluse, in a message to a dying woman, writes: "You will not die. Your body will die, but you will over to a different world, being alive, remembering yourself and recognizing the whole world that surrounds you." St. Dorotheos (6th century) summarizes the teaching of the early Fathers in this way: "For as the Fathers tell us, the souls of the dead remember everything that happened here -- thoughts, words, desires -- and nothing can be forgotten. But, as it says in the Psalm, 'In that day all their thoughts shall perish' (Psalms 145:5). The thoughts he speaks of are those of this world, about houses and possessions, parents and children, and business transactions. All these things are destroyed immediately when the soul passes out of the body. But what he did against virtue or against his evil passions, he remembers and none of this is lost. In fact, the soul loses nothing that it did in the world but remembers everything at its exit from this body." St. John Cassian (5th century) likewise teaches: "Souls after the separation from this body are not idle, do not remain without consciousness; this is proved by the Gospel parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:22-28). The souls of the dead do not lose their consciousness, they do not even lose their dispositions -- that is, hope and fear, joy and grief, and something of that which they expect for themselves at the Universal Judgment they begin already to foretaste."

2. He who departs from this world experiences much consolation when he sees friendly people surrounding his dead body. Such a person discerns in his beloved friends' tears of pain their love and sincere dedication. The greatest earthly joy is undoubtedly the realization that we die honored and appreciated by all who knew us. But just as at the hour of death the dead body is surrounded by relatives and friends, so also is the soul, which abandons the body and is directed towards its heavenly homeland, accompanied by the spiritual beings related to it. The virtuous soul is surrounded by bright angels of light, while the sinful soul is surrounded by dark and evil beings, that is, the demons. St. Basil the Great (4th century) explains it this way: "Let no one deceive you with empty words; for destruction will come suddenly upon you; it will come like a storm. A grim angel (i.e., a demon) will come to take and drag violently the soul that has been tied to sins; and your soul will turn toward here and will suffer silently, having already been excluded from the organ of mourning (the body). O how you will be troubled at the hour of death for yourself! How you will sigh!" St. Macarius of Egypt writes of this: "When you hear that there are rivers of dragons and mouths of lions (cf. Hebrews 11:33, Psalms 22:21) and dark powers under the sky and burning fire (Jeremiah 20:9) that crackles in the members of the body, you must know this: unless you receive the earnest of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5), at the hour when your soul is separated from the body, the evil demons hold fast to your soul and do not suffer you to rise up to heaven." This same Father also teaches us: "When the soul abandons the body a certain great mystery is enacted. If the deceased has departed unrepentant, a host of demons and rejected

angels and dark powers receive that soul and keep it with them. The completely opposite happens with those who have repented: for near the holy servants of God there are now angels and good spirits standing by, surrounding and protecting them, and when they depart from the body, the choir of angels receive their souls to themselves, to the pure aeon." The champion of Orthodoxy against the Nestorian heresy, St. Cyril of Alexandria likewise teaches: "When the soul is separated from the body it sees the fearful, wild, merciless and fierce demons standing by. The soul of the righteous is taken by the holy angels, passed through the air and is raised up." St. Gregory the Dialogist writes: "One must reflect deeply on how frightful the hour of death will be for us, what terror the soul will then experience, what remembrance of all the evils, what forgetfulness of past happiness, what fear, and what apprehension of the Judge. Then the evil spirits will seek out in the departing soul its deeds; then they will present before its view the sins towards which they had disposed it, so as to draw their accomplice to torment. But why do we speak only of the sinful soul, when they come even to the chosen among the dying and seek out their own in them, if they have succeeded with them? Among men there was only One Who before His suffering fearlessly said: 'Hereafter I talk not much with you: For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me (John 14:30)." This truth is confirmed by various liturgical services. For example, in Small Compline we ask the Mother of God to "be merciful to me not only in this miserable life, but also at the time of my death; take care of my miserable soul and banish far from it the dark and sinister faces of the evil demons." In a prayer of the Midnight Service of Saturday (addressed to the Savior) we pray: "Master, be merciful to me and let not my soul see the dark and gloomy sight of the evil spirits, but let bright and joyous angels receive it." Again, in another hymn to the Theotokos (from the Monday Matins service) we pray: "At the fearful hour of death free us from the horrible decision of the demons seeking to condemn us." Similar prayers, addressed to the Lord and to the holy Angels, are found throughout the service for the Repose of the Dying.

3. Here, St. John is simply repeating a teaching common to the Church, St. Macarius of Alexandria (having received the teaching not from men but from an angel) explains: "When an offering (i.e., the Eucharist) is made in Church on the third day, the soul of the departed receives from its guardian angel relief from the sorrow it feels as a result of the separation from the body. In the course of two days the soul is permitted to roam the earth, wherever it wills, in the company of the angels that are with it. Therefore, the soul loving the body, sometimes wanders about the house in which its body has been laid out, and thus spends two days like a bird seeking its nest. But the virtuous soul goes about those places in which it was wont to do good deeds. On the third day, He Who Himself rose from the dead on the third day, commands the Christian soul, in imitation of His Resurrection, to ascend to the Heavens to worship the God of all." St. John of Damascus vividly describes the state of the soul, parted from the body but still on earth, helpless to contact the loved ones whom it can see, in the Orthodox Funeral Service: "Woe is me! What manner of ordeal doth the soul endure when it is parted from the body! Alas! How many then are its tears, and there is none to show compassion! It raiseth its eyes to the angels; all unavailing is its prayer. It stretcheth out its hands to men, and findeth none to succor. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, meditating on the brevity of our life, let us beseech of Christ rest for him who hath departed hence, and for our souls great mercy." St. Theophan, in writing to the brother of a dying woman, says: "Your sister will not die; the body dies, but the personality of the dying one remains. It only goes over to another order of life. It is not she whom they will put in the grave. She is in another place. She will be just as alive as you are now. In the first hours and days she will be around you. Only she will not say

anything, and you won't be able to see her; but she will be right here. Have this in mind."

4. There is absolutely no doubt that the teaching of the toll-houses is the teaching of the Orthodox Church. We find this teaching in Holy Scripture (cf. Ephesians 6:12), the writings of all the Church Fathers (both ancient and modern) and throughout the prayers of the Church. Space does not allow for the full outlining of source material, but, in light of some recent discussions concerning the toll-houses, I will quote extensively from various Fathers and prayers. St. Athanasius the Great, in his famous life of St. Antony, describes the following: "At the approach of the ninth hour, after beginning to pray before eating food, Antony was suddenly seized by the Spirit and raised up by angels into the heights. The aerial demons opposed his progress: the angels disputing with them, demanded that the reason of their opposition be set forth, because Antony had no sins at all. The demons strove to set forth the sins committed by him from his very birth; but the angels closed the mouths of the slanderers, telling them that they should not count the sins from his birth which had already been blotted out by the grace of Christ; but let them present -- if they have any -- the sins he committed after he entered monasticism and dedicated himself to God. In their accusation the demons uttered many brazen lies; but since their slanders were wanting in proof, a free path opened for Antony. Immediately he came to himself and saw that he was standing in the same place where he had stood for prayer. Forgetting about food, he spent the night in prayer with tears and groanings, reflecting on the multitude of man's enemies, on the battle against such an army, on the difficulty of the path to heaven through the air, and on the words of the Apostle who said: 'Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of the air' (Ephesians 6:12; Ephesians 2:2). The Apostle, knowing that the aerial powers are seeking only one thing, are concerned over it with all fervor, exert themselves and strive to deprive us of a free passage to heaven, exhorts: 'Take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day (Ephesians 6:13), that the adversary may be put to shame, having no evil thing to say of us (Titus 2:8)." St. John Chrysostom, describing the hour of death, teaches: "Then we will need many prayers, many helpers, many good deeds, a great intercession from angels on the journey through the spaces of the air. If when traveling in a foreign land or a strange city we are in need of a guide, how much more necessary for us are guides and helpers to guide us past the invisible dignities and powers and world-rulers of this air, who are called persecutors and publicans and tax-collectors." St. Isaiah the Recluse (6th century) teaches that Christians should "daily have death before our eyes and take care how to accomplish the departure from the body and how to pass by the powers of darkness who are to meet us in the air." St. Hesychius, Presbyter of Jerusalem (5th century) teaches: The hour of death will find us, it will come, and it will be impossible to escape it. Oh, if only the prince of the world and the air who is then to meet us might find our iniquities as nothing and insignificant and might not be able to accuse us justly." St. Ephraim the Syrian (4th century) thus describes the hour of death and the hour of judgment at the toll-houses: "When the fearful hour comes, when the divine takers-away command the soul to be translated from the body, when they draw us away by force and lead us away to the unavoidable judgment place -- then, seeing them, the poor man comes all into a shaking as if from an earthquake, is all in trembling. The divine takers-away, taking the soul, ascend in the air where stand the chiefs, the authorities and world-rulers of the opposing powers. These are our accusers, the fearful publicans, registrars, tax-collectors; they meet it on the way, register, examine and count all the sins and debts of this man -- the sins of youth and old age, voluntary and involuntary, committed in deed, word and thought. Great is the fear here, great the trembling of the poor soul,

indescribable the want which it suffers then from the incalculable multitudes of its enemies surrounding it there in myriads, slandering it so as not to allow it to ascend to heaven, to dwell in the light of the living, to enter the land of life. But the holy angels, taking the soul, lead it away." St Cyril of Alexandria explains this further: "As the soul ascends, it finds tax officials guarding the ascent, holding and preventing the souls from ascending. Each one of these custom stations presents its own particular sins of the souls. But, by the same token, the good angels do not abandon the soul to these evil stations. At the time of its accounting the angels offer in turn the soul's good works. In fact, the holy angelic powers enumerate to the evil spirits the good acts of the soul that were done by word, deed, thought and imagination. If the soul is found to have lived piously and in a way pleasing to God, it is received by the holy angels and transferred to that ineffable joy of the blessed and eternal life. But, if it is found to have lived carelessly and prodigally, it hears the most harsh word: 'Let the ungodly be taken away, that he not see the glory of the Lord' (Isaiah 26:10). Then the holy angels with profound regret abandon the soul and it is received by those dark demons so that they may fling it with much malevolence into the prisons of Hades." An early Church catchiest, referring to custom officials who collected taxes, relays to us the common Church teaching: "I know of other tax collectors who after our departure from this present life inspect us and hold us to see if we have something that belongs to them." The same catchiest goes on to say: "I wonder how much we must suffer at the hands of those evil angels, who inspect everything and who, when someone is found unrepentant, demand not only the payment of taxes simply, but also seize and hold us completely captive" (Origen). This view is upheld by our great Father, St. Basil. Speaking about the courageous athletes of the faith, he teaches that they too will be scrutinized by the "revenue officials," that is, by the evil spirits. The same Father also says that the evil spirits observe the departure of the soul with so much more vigilant attention than do enemies over a besieged city or thieves over a treasury house. St. John Chrysostom likewise calls demons "revenue officials" who threaten us and who are "overbearing powers with a fearful countenance that horrifies the soul that looks upon them." In another place St. John says that these evil spirits are called "persecutors and revenue officials and collectors of taxes in the Sacred Scripture." According to St. John, even the souls of innocent infants must pass through these toll-houses, for the all-evil devil seeks to snatch their souls, too. However, the infants make the following confession (according to St. John): "We have passed by the evil spirits without suffering any harm. For the dark custom officials saw our spotless body and were put to shame; they saw the soul good and pure and were embarrassed; they say the tongue immaculate and pure and blameless and they were silenced; we passed by and humiliated them. This is why the holy angles of God who met and received us rejoiced, the righteous greeted us with joy and the saints with delight said, 'Welcome, the lambs of Christ!'" Probably the clearest and most comprehensive account of the toll-houses is that given by an angel of the Lord to St. Macarius of Egypt: "From the earth to heaven there is a ladder and at each rung has a cohort of demons. These are called toll-houses and the evil spirits meet the soul and bring its handwritten accounts and show these to the angels, saying: on this day and such and such of the month this soul did that: either it stole or fornicated or committed adultery or engaged in sodomy or lied or encouraged someone to an evil deed. And everything else evil which it has done, they show to the angels. Then angels then show whatever good the soul has done, charity or prayer or liturgies or fasting or anything else. And the angels and the demons reckon up, and if they find the good greater than the evil, the angels seize the soul and take it up the next rung, while the demons gnash their teeth

like wild dogs and make haste the snatch that pitiable soul from the hands of the Angels. The soul, meanwhile, cowers and terror encompasses it, and it makes as if to hide in the bosom of the Angels and there is a great discussion and must turmoil until that soul is delivered from the hands of the demons. And they come again to another rung and there find another toll-house, fiercer and more horrible. And in this too, there is much uproar and great and indescribable turbulence as to who shall take that wretched soul. And shouting out aloud, the demons examine the soul, causing terror and saying: 'Where are you going? Aren't you the one who fornicated and thoroughly polluted Holy Baptism? Aren't you the one who polluted the angelic habit? Get back. Get down. Get yourself to dark Hell. Get yourself to the outer fire. Get going to that worm that never sleeps.' Then if it be that that soul is condemned, the demons bear it off to below the earth, to a dark and distressing spot. And woe to that soul in which that person was born. And who shall tell, holy Father, the straits in which the condemned souls will find themselves in that place! But if the soul is found clean and sinless, it goes up the Heaven with such joy." Descriptions of the aerial toll-houses may also be found in the following Saints' lives: St. Eustratius the Great Martyr (4th century), St. Niphon of Constantia in Cyprus (4th century), St. Symeon the Fool for Christ (6th century), St. John the Merciful (7th century), St. Symeon of the Wondrous Mountain (7th century), St. Macarius the Great (4th century), St. Columba (6th century), St. Adamnan (8th century), St. Boniface (8th century), St. Basil the New (10th century), the Soldier Taxiotes, St. John of the Ladder (6th century), etc. This very ancient teaching of the early Church Fathers and ascetic Saints is confirmed by the experience and teaching of saints more modern. St. Seraphim of Sarov relates: "Two nuns passed on. Both had been abbesses. The Lord revealed to me that their souls were having difficulty getting through the aerial toll-houses. Three days and nights, I, a lowly sinner, prayed and begged the Mother of God for their salvation. The goodness of the Lord, through the prayers of the Most Holy Mother of God, finally had mercy upon them. They passed the aerial toll-houses and received forgiveness of sins." Likewise, St. Theophan the Recluse writes: "No matter how absurd the idea of the toll-houses may seem to our 'wise men,' they will not escape passing through them. What do these toll-gatherers seek in those who pass through? They seek whether people might have some of their goods. What kind of goods? Passions. Therefore, in the person whose heart is pure and a stranger to passion, they cannot find anything to wrangle over; on the contrary, the opposing quality will strike them like arrows of lightning. To this someone who has a little education expressed the following thought: The toll-houses are something frightful. But it is quite possible that the demons, instead of something frightful, might present something seductive. They might present something deceptive and seductive, according to the kinds of passions, to the soul as it passes through one after the other. When, during the course of life, the passions have been banished from the heart and the virtues opposed to them have been planted, then no matter what seductive thing you might present, the soul, having no kind of sympathy for it, passes by it, turning away from it with disgust. But when the heart has not been cleansed, the soul will rush to whatever passion the heart has most sympathy for; and the demons will take it like a friend, and then they know where to put it. Therefore, it is very doubtful that a soul, as long as there remain in it sympathies for the objects of any passion, will not be put to shame at the toll-houses. Being put to shame here means that the soul itself is thrown into hell." In another place, St. Theophan (continuing his letter to the brother of the woman who was about to die) writes: "In the departed there soon begins the struggle of going through the toll-houses. Here she needs help! Stand then in thought, and you will hear her cry to you: Help! This is where you

should direct all your attention and all your love for her. Immerse yourself in prayer for her in her new condition and her new, unexpected needs. Having begun thus, remain in unceasing crying out to God to help her, for the course of six weeks, and indeed for longer than that. In the account of Theodora, the bag from which the angels took in order to be separated from the tax-collectors was the prayers of her elder. Your prayers will do the same; do not forget to do this. This is love!" Significantly, all of this testimony is confirmed by the liturgical prayers of the Church. St. Ignatius Brianchinov cites over 20 examples of references to the Toll-houses in the Divine service books and this is not a complete list!

5. According to the revelation of the angel to St. Macarius, the Church's special commemoration of the departed on the 9th day after death (apart from the general significance of the ranks of angels) occurs because up to then the soul is shown the beauties of Paradise, and only after this, for the remainder of the forty days, is shown the torments and horrors of hell, before being assigned on the fortieth day to the place where it will await the resurrection of the dead and the Last Judgment.

6. The Church's teaching on the state of souls in heaven and hell before the Last Judgment is set forth in its clearest fashion by St. Mark of Ephesus in his dialogue with the Roman Catholics over the Roman doctrine of Purgatory (which the Orthodox reject as false). It is an extensive collection of writings, and much of it is beyond the focus of this limited study. The following should suffice, however, to illustrate the Orthodoxy of St. John Maximovitch's words: "Those reposed in faith are without doubt helped by the Liturgies and prayers and almsgiving performed for them, and that this custom has been in force from antiquity, there is the testimony of many and various utterances of the Teachers, both Latin and Greek, spoken and written at various times and in various places. But that souls are delivered thanks to a certain purgatorial suffering and temporal fire which possesses such (a purgatorial) power and has the character of a help -- this we do not find in either Scripture or in the prayers and hymns for the dead, or in the words of the Teachers. But we have received that even the souls which are held in hell and are already given over to eternal torments, whether in actual fact and experience or in hopeless expectation of such, although not in the sense of completely loosing them from torment or giving hope for final deliverance. And this is shown by the words of the great Macarius the Egyptian ascetic who, finding a skull in the desert, was instructed by it concerning this by the action of Divine Power. And Basil the Great, in the prayers read at Pentecost, writes literally the following: 'Who also, on this all-perfect and saving feast, are graciously pleased to accept propitiatory prayers for those who are imprisoned in hell, granting us a great hope of improvement for those who are imprisoned from the defilements which have imprisoned them, and that Thou wilt send down Thy consolation' (Third Kneeling Prayer at Vespers). But if souls have departed this life in faith and love, while nevertheless carrying with themselves certain faults, whether small ones over which they have not repented at all, or great ones for which -- even though have repented over them -- they did not undertake to show fruits of repentance: such souls, we believe, must be cleansed from this kind of sins, but not by means of some purgatorial fire or a definitive punishment in some place (for this, as we have said, has not at all been handed down to us). But some must be cleansed in the very departure from the body (as St. Gregory the Dialogist literally shows); while others must be cleansed after the departure from the body, before they come to worship God and are honored with the lot of the blessed, or -- if their sins were more serious and bind them for a longer duration -- they are kept in hell, but not in order to remain forever in fire and torment, but as it were in prison and confinement under guard. All

such ones, we affirm, are helped by the prayers and Liturgies performed for them, with the cooperation of the Divine Goodness and Love for mankind. And so, we entreat God and believe to deliver the departed (from eternal torment), and not from any other torment or fire apart from those torments and that fire which have been proclaimed to be forever." St. Mark further explains the state of the departed in this way: "We affirm that neither the righteous have as yet received the fullness of their lot and that blessed condition for which they have prepared themselves here through works, nor have sinners, after death, been led away into the eternal punishment in which they shall be tormented eternally. Rather, both the one and the other must necessarily take place after the Judgment of that last day and the resurrection of all. Now, however, both the one and the other are in places proper to them: the first, in absolute repose and free, are in heaven with the angels and before God Himself, and already as if in Paradise from which Adam fell and often visit us in those temples where they are venerated, and hear those who call on them and pray for them to God, having received from Him this surpassing gift, and through their relics perform miracles and take delight in the vision of God and the illumination sent from Him more perfectly and purely than before, when they were alive; while the second, in their turn, being confined to hell, remain in 'the lowest pit, in darkness and in the shadow of death' (Psalms 87:7), as David says, and then Job: 'to the land where the light is darkness' (Job 10:21-22). And the first remain in every joy and rejoicing, already expecting and only not having in their hands the Kingdom and the unutterable good things promised them; and the second, on the contrary, remain in all confinement and inconsolable suffering, like condemned men awaiting the Judge's sentence and foreseeing the torments. Neither have the first yet received the inheritance of the Kingdom and those good things 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man' (1 Corinthians 2:9); nor have the second part yet been given over to eternal torments nor to burning in the unquenchable fire. And this teaching we have as handed down from our Fathers in antiquity and we can easily present it from the Divine Scriptures themselves." St. Gregory the Great, in answering the question, "Is there anything at all that can possibly benefit souls after death?" teaches: "The Holy Sacrifice of Christ, our saving Victim, brings great benefits to souls even after death, provided their sins (are such as) can be pardoned in the life to come. For this reason the souls of the dead sometimes beg to have Liturgies offered for them. The safer course, naturally, is to do for ourselves what we hope others will do for us after death. It is better to make one's exit a free man than to seek liberty after one is in chains. We should, therefore, despise the world with all our hearts as though its glory were already spent, and offer our sacrifice of tears to God each day as we immolate His sacred Flesh and Blood. This Sacrifice alone has the power of saving the soul from eternal death, for it presents to us mystically the death of the Only-begotten Son." Many incidents from the Lives of Orthodox saints and ascetics confirm this teaching.

7. The Apostolic Constitutions (1st/2nd century) teach that Memorials for the dead be served with "psalms and readings and prayers" on the third day after the death of our beloved one, on account of the Lord Jesus "who rose after three days." They prescribe Memorials on the ninth day "as a reminder of the living and the dead," as well as "on the fortieth day after death according to ancient practice." This is how the people of Israel mourned for the great Moses. In addition to these we must have annual Memorials in remembrance of the deceased. This teaching is also given by St. Isidoros of Pelusium, St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory the Theologian. In addition to these Memorials, our holy Church has ordained that the Sabbath (Saturday) be a day of commemoration of the Holy Martyrs and of all the deceased. For the Sabbath, as the seventh day

from the beginning of creation, is the day which saw bodily death, imposed upon man by the righteous God. This day is continued, in as much as the death of man is also continued at the same time, Sunday, however, is the "day of the Resurrection, the eighth day, which symbolizes the anticipated age of eternity, the resurrection of the dead and the endless kingdom of God." Our Mother Church has also ordained common Memorials twice a year: on the Saturday before Meatfare Sunday and on the Saturday before the great feast of Holy Pentecost. St. John of Damascus adds: "the Apostles who speak for God and the spirit-bearing Fathers have decreed this with inspiration and in a manner pleasing to God."

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