

## *Fire & Light*

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

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✂ **October 12, 2014** ✂

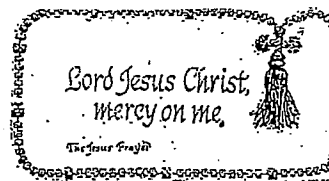
**Feastday of**

**Our Holy Father and Patron,  
St. Symeon the New Theologian (+1022)**

**Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787)**

**St. Martin of Tours (397) St. Wilfrid, Archbishop of York (709)**

*Our Holy Father  
Symeon,  
Pray unto God  
For us!*



+ **Tues. Oct. 14 6:30pm Inquirer's Class**

+ **Wed. Oct. 15 6:30pm Akathist Service**

+ **Baptisms – Sat. October 25, 3:00pm ~ Babies: Ephraim Reese and Patrick Skinner**

⇒ **Baby Showers for Tatiana Landar on Oct. 26 and Blair Boyer on Nov. 2. All boys.**

**St. Symeon the New Theologian (The Philokalia Vol. 4)**

**"Those taught by God will be regarded as fools by the disciples of such as are wise in the wisdom of this world. But in fact it is the worldly-wise that are fools, spouting an inane secular wisdom, the stupidity of which God has demonstrated and which Scripture condemns as material, unspiritual, devilish, filled with strife and malice (cf. James 3:15). Since these people are blind to the divine light, they cannot see the marvels it contains; they regard as deluded those who dwell in that light and see and teach others about what is within it. On the contrary, it is they themselves that are deluded, not having tasted the ineffable blessings of God."**

**St. John of Damascus ~ *On the Divine Images:***

+ "The Lord called His Disciples blessed, for He said, 'Blessed are your eyes, for they see?' (Lk. 10:23). The Apostles saw Christ in the flesh; they witnessed His sufferings and His miracles, and heard His words. We too desire to see, and to hear, and so be filled with gladness. They saw Him face to face, since He was physically present. Since He is no longer physically present, we hear His words read from books, and by hearing, our souls are sanctified and filled with blessings, and so we worship, honoring the books from which we hear His words.

So also, through the painting of images, we are able to contemplate the likeness of His bodily form, His miracles, and His Passion, and thus are sanctified, blessed and filled with joy. Reverently we honor and worship His bodily form, and by contemplating His bodily form, we form a notion, so far as possible for us, of the glory of His divinity. **Since we are fashioned of both soul and body, and our souls are not naked spirits, but are covered, as it were with a fleshly veil, it is impossible for us to think without using physical images?"**

+ **The 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council decreed that the veneration of icons was not idolatry (Exodus 20:4-5), because the honor shown to them is not directed to the wood or paint, but passes to the Prototype (the person depicted). It also upheld the possibility of depicting Christ, Who became man and took flesh at His Incarnation. The Father, on the other hand, cannot be represented in His eternal nature, because "no man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18).**

## **Pearls of the Holy Fathers (11.1)**

Why do you trouble yourself in a house that is not your own? Let the sight of a dead man be a teacher for you concerning your departure from hence.

**St. Isaac the Syrian**

Beguiling and deceptive is the life of the world, fruitless its labor, perilous its delight, poor its riches, delusive its honors, inconstant, insignificant; and woe to those who hope in its seeming goods: because of this many die without repentance. Blessed and most blessed are those who depart from the world and its desires.

**Elder Nazarius of Valaam**

Who am I . . . What shall I call myself? For Abraham says that he is 'but dust and ashes' (Gen. 18:27); David calls himself 'a dead dog' (2 Sam. 9:8) and 'a flea' (1 Sam. 24:14) in Israel; Solomon calls himself 'a little child, not knowing left from right' (cf. 1 Kings 3:7); the three holy children say, 'We have become a shame and a reproach' (Song of the Three Children, verse 10); Isaiah the prophet says, 'Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips' (Is. 6:5); the prophet Abba-cum says, 'I am a child' (Jer. 1:6); St. Paul calls himself the chief of sinners (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15); and all the rest said that they were nothing. What then should I do?

**St. Peter of Damascus**

To the Angels who are spiritual Abraham brought food for the body, and they ate. The new miracle is that our mighty Lord has given to bodily man Fire and Spirit to eat and drink.

**St. Ephraim the Syrian**

When you go to pray, go with greater joy and warmth towards our Christ, let it be as if you were embracing Christ and weep before Him, so that He will watch over you.

**Elder Ieronymus of Aegina**

If you have spoken evil of your brother, and you are stricken with remorse, go and kneel down before him and say: "I have spoken badly of you; let this be my surety that I will not spread this slander any further." For detraction is death to the soul.

**Abba Or, a Desert Father**

Believe me, children, if I possessed any candor before God, I would first of all pray that none of you should pass one single day of your entire lifetime in corporeal health. For I know, I know very well that when the body is ill, the soul will benefit greatly, especially for such as offer thanks for this to God, the Guardian of our souls.

**St. Irene Chrysovalantou**

If you yourself do not repulse His help, God will not give you over into slavery to your former passions.

**Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky**

Let your thoughts be ever in the Kingdom of Heaven and soon you will possess it as a heritage.

**Abba Hyperechius, a Desert Father**

What can those empty worldly goods of ours and riches benefit us in the day of Judgment? Rather they will harm us. Again, neither will youthfulness and comeliness of our bodies remain to the end unfading, but either by old age or untimely death it will be lost and extinguished.

**St. Symeon the Fool-for-Christ**

To be patient for the sake of Christ is a virtue higher than all ascetic feats and pious works.

**Elder Eustratius of Glinsk**

## **Our Holy Father Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022)**

Saint Symeon the New Theologian was born in the year 949 in the city of Galatea (Paphlagonia), and he was educated at Constantinople. His father prepared him for a career at court, and for a certain while the youth occupied a high position at the imperial court. When he was fourteen, he met the renowned Elder Symeon the Pious at the Studion Monastery, who would be a major influence in his spiritual development. He remained in the world for several years preparing himself for the monastic life under the Elder's guidance, and finally entered the monastery at the age of twenty-seven.

St Symeon the Pious recommended to the young man the writings of St Mark the Ascetic (March 5) and other spiritual writers. He read these books attentively and tried to put into practice what he read. Three points made by St Mark in his work "On the Spiritual Law" (see Vol. I of the English PHILOKALIA) particularly impressed him. First, you should listen to your conscience and do what it tells you if you wish your soul to be healed (PHILOKALIA, p. 115). Second, only by fulfilling the commandments can one obtain the activity of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, one who prays only with the body and without spiritual knowledge is like the blind man who cried out, "Son of David, have mercy upon me (Luke 18:38) (PHILOKALIA, p. 111). When the blind man received his sight, however, he called Christ the Son of God (John 9:38).

St Symeon was wounded with a love for spiritual beauty, and tried to acquire it. In addition to the Rule given him by his Elder, his conscience told him to add a few more Psalms and prostrations, and to repeat constantly, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me." Naturally, he heeded his conscience.

During the day, he cared for the needs of people living in the palace of Patricius. At night, his prayers grew longer and he remained praying until midnight. Once, as he was praying in this way, a most brilliant divine radiance descended upon him and filled the room. He saw nothing but light all around him, and he was not even aware of the ground beneath his feet.

It seemed to him that he himself became light. Then his mind rose upward to the heavens, and he saw a second light brighter than the light which surrounded him. Then, on the edge of this second light, he seemed to see St Symeon the Pious, who had given him St Mark the Ascetic to read.

Seven years after this vision, St Symeon entered the monastery. There he increased his fasting and vigilance, and learned to renounce his own will.

The Enemy of our salvation stirred up the brethren of the monastery against St Symeon, who was indifferent to the praises or reproaches of others. Because of the increased discontent in the monastery, St Symeon was sent to the Monastery of St Mamas in Constantinople.

There he was tonsured into the monastic schema, and increased his spiritual struggles. He attained to a high spiritual level, and increased his knowledge of spiritual things through reading the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers, as well as in conversation with holy Elders.

Around the year 980, St Symeon was made igumen of the monastery of St Mamas and continued in this office for twenty-five years. He repaired and restored the monastery, which had suffered from neglect, and also brought order to the life of the monks.

The strict monastic discipline, for which St Symeon strove, led to great dissatisfaction among the brethren. Once, after Liturgy, some of the monks attacked him and nearly killed him. When the Patriarch of Constantinople expelled them from the monastery and wanted to hand them over to the

civil authorities, St Symeon asked that they be treated with leniency and be permitted to live in the world.

About the year 1005, St Symeon resigned his position as igumen in favor of Arsenius, while he himself settled near the monastery in peace. There he composed his theological works, portions of which appear in the PHILOKALIA.

The chief theme of his works is the hidden activity of spiritual perfection, and the struggle against the passions and sinful thoughts. He wrote instructions for monks: "Theological and Practical Chapters," "A Treatise on the Three Methods of Prayer," (in Vol. IV of the English PHILOKALIA) and "A Treatise on Faith." Moreover, St Symeon was an outstanding church poet. He also wrote "Hymns of Divine Love," about seventy poems filled with profound prayerful meditations.

The sublime teachings of St Symeon about the mysteries of mental prayer and spiritual struggle have earned him the title "the New Theologian." These teachings were not the invention of St Symeon, but they had merely been forgotten over time.

Some of these teachings seemed unacceptable and strange to his contemporaries. This led to conflict with Constantinople's church authorities, and St Symeon was banished from the city. He withdrew across the Bosphorus and settled in the ancient monastery of St Macrina.

The saint peacefully fell asleep in the Lord in the year 1021. During his life he received the gift of working miracles. Numerous miracles also took place after his death; one of them was the miraculous discovery of his icon.

His Life was written by his cell-attendant and disciple, St Nicetas Stethatos.

Since March 12 falls during Great Lent, St Symeon's Feast is transferred to October 12.

## **Prayers for the Departed - Love**

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (excerpt from his book, Great Lent)

The Church is, first of all, a life of reconciliation, of "gathering into oneness of those who were dispersed," the restoration of love broken by sin. But how can we even begin our return to God and our reconciliation with Him if in ourselves we do not return to the unique new commandment of love? Praying for the dead is an essential expression of the Church as love. We ask God to remember those whom we remember and we remember them because we love them. Praying for them we meet them in Christ who is Love and who, because He is Love, overcomes death which is the ultimate victory of separation and lovelessness. In Christ there is no difference between living and dead because all are alive in Him. He is the Life and that Life is the light of man. Loving Christ, we love all those who are in Him; loving those who are in Him, we love Christ: this is the law of the Church and the obvious rationale for her of prayer for the dead. It is truly our love in Christ that keeps them alive because it keeps them "in Christ," and how wrong, how hopelessly wrong, are those Western Christians who either reduce prayer for the dead to a juridical doctrine of "merits" and "compensations" or simply reject it as useless. The great Vigil for the Dead of Meatfare Saturday serves as a pattern for all other commemorations of the departed and it is repeated on the second, third, and fourth Saturdays of Lent.

It is love again that constitutes the theme of "Meatfare Sunday." The Gospel lesson for the day is Christ's Parable of the Last Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). When Christ comes to judge us, what will be the criterion of His judgment? The parable answers: love - not a mere humanitarian concern for abstract justice and the anonymous "poor," but concrete and personal love for the human person, any human person, that God makes me encounter in my life. This distinction is important because today more and more Christians tend to identify Christian love with political, economic, and social concerns; in other words, they shift from the unique person and its unique personal destiny, to anonymous entities such as "class," "race," etc.

# Saintless Christianity - Fr. Stephen Freeman

## What would Christianity mean if there were no saints?

To rephrase the question: What would be the meaning of the Christian Gospel if there were no wonderworkers, no people who had been transfigured with the Divine Light, no clairvoyant prophets, no healers, no people who had raised the dead, no ascetics living alone in the deserts for years on end, no beacons of radical, all-forgiving love?

What would be the meaning of the Christian Gospel if there were no wonderworking relics, no true Body and Blood of Christ, no true Baptism in the death and resurrection of Christ? What if there were no weeping icons?

First, it would mean that the two-storey version of Christianity was the *correct* version. What would remain if all those artifacts of the faith were removed would be the *mere idea* of Christianity accompanied by the moral efforts of those who admired it. Saints would simply mean "dead Christians."

The Christian Gospel, as recorded in the Scriptures and maintained in Classical Christianity, is replete with the artifacts of holiness – tangible, living examples of transfigured lives – not morally improved but something *other*. Human beings becoming gods (in the bold language of the early fathers).

There began, however, in the 16th century, a rebellion against the honoring of the saints, and the wholesale jettisoning of many aspects of the Classical faith. The 16th century, with the Reformation, saw the advent of the *ordinary* Christian as the *normative* Christian and the *ordinary* world as the *normative* world.

All believers are saints! (they said)...

The preaching of a radicalized grace and the demonization of works brought about the democratization of heaven (many contemporary Christians still denounce practices such as fasting and vigils as "works righteousness"). The spiritual elitism of a special class of Christians was denounced as a fraud. In England (and other places as well), the bodies and bones of the saints were dismantled, desecrated and destroyed. The democratic republic of heaven wanted no going back.

The removal of any form of transformation to somewhere other than our present world was required by the exaltation of the ordinary. The possibility of present-tense transformation endangered the entire scheme of the ordinary. The presence of a single honored saint who was more than merely heroic represented an indictment of the entire Reformation project.

Thinking of the Reformation and contemporary Christianity in such terms almost sounds like the plot of a children's novel. But that is the nature of a time that can only be seen as bizarre.

Moving forward in history, this same shift to the ordinary was met with resistance which continues to this day. The great "awakenings" (the "First" and the "Second") should be seen as uprisings against the ordinary. Against the theory of idealized, postponed Christianity, popular revolts leapt forward towards *experience*. In England, the Methodists following John and Charles Wesley were accused of *enthusiasm* (a very serious matter among the British). People swooned, and even barked like dogs under the "sway of the Spirit" as John Wesley, George Whitefield and others preached. The established Church was ruptured.

The Second Great Awakening gave birth to the Second Birth, and theology itself was ruptured with the creation of evangelical experiential claims. Perhaps the most significant (and extreme) response to the ordinary-driven reforms were found in the various Pentecostal movements of the 20th century (and beyond). Evangelical demands for a born-again experience were pushed by demands for a Baptism in the Spirit (with signs following).

The instinct of these reactionary movements should be seen in the context of *ordinary* Protestantism. The emptiness of a postponed spiritual reality gave birth to undisciplined, non-traditional forms of spiritual experience. The New Testament itself bore constant witness against the banal, empty futility of *ordinary* Protestantism. It promises so much more.

From a Classical Christian perspective these eruptions of experience-hungry movements should not be judged too harshly. They are often defective in doctrine and marked by delusional claims, but their instinct and hunger are correct. I think that current conversations between Orthodoxy and Pentecostalism (at least on the theological level) will be very fruitful – particularly for the Pentecostals.

The Tradition teaches the reality of the spiritual life:

*We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly spirit, we have found the true faith, worshipping the undivided Trinity who has saved us!*

The Tradition also places the reality of the experience into the disciplined life of the Church. Thus 2,000 years of experience produces saints rather than ephemeral movements. For in the end, the experience of Orthodox Christianity is about far more than popular demand: it is the promise and realization of union with God.

Individual believers have a “taste” of this reality – but the fruit of the Orthodox life is found in the saints – those persons who have been so united with Christ that the very life of Christ Himself is tangibly visible in their works and teachings. Like the resurrection of Christ Himself, their reality validates the life and struggles of all believers.

The traditional asceticism of Orthodoxy is not a *method*. It is not a set of actions and thoughts that inherently produce the results of sanctity. Such a notion would reduce God to an impersonal force. They are, however, guards against delusion and the path by which we may normatively know the true and living God. But the “ordinariness” of general experience is not the “norm” for the Christian life. Christ Himself alone, and the stature of His fullness (Eph. 4:13) are the measure and standard of the Christian life.

The language of the Church quickly evolved in its use and definition of the term “saint.” Though St. Paul regularly addresses his readers as “saints,” in a manner that makes the term seem synonymous with the word “believers,” it sometimes has a stronger meaning.

“To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 1:7)

And To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1Co 1:2-3)

In time, the Church came to restrict the use of the title, “saint,” for those whose manner of life truly conformed to the life of the Gospel. They were not merely significant “historical” figures, but people whose lives were indeed filled with the Spirit. Figures who remain controversial in this designation (such as Constantine the Great) are controversial *precisely* because some question whether they rightly meet this standard. Their inclusion does not change the meaning – the questioning confirms it.

I have elsewhere described this normative, Classical understanding of truly experiential Christianity as “Christianity in a One-Storey Universe.” The bifurcation of the Christian life is ultimately a denial of the truth of the faith and an exaltation of a bland, mundane substitute whose emptiness can only suffocate true believing.

The Church of the Saints is the only complete proclamation of the Christian Faith.

# Instructions

## St. Ambrosy of Optina

My child, know that in the last days hard times will come, as the Apostle says, behold due to poverty in piety, in churches the heresies and schisms will appear, and as the Holy Fathers foretold, than on the thrones of hierarchs and in monasteries, there will be no men tested and experienced in the spiritual life. Wherefore, heresies will spread everywhere and deceive many. The enemy of the human kind will act skillfully, if possible, leading the chosen ones to heresy. He will not begin by discarding the dogmas on the Holy Trinity, divinity of Jesus Christ, on Theotokos, but will unnoticeably start to distort the Teachings of the Holy Fathers from the Holy Spirit - the Church teaching itself. The cunning of the enemy and his "tipics" (ways) will be noticed by very few -- only those that are most experienced in spiritual life.

*Heretics will take over the Church, everywhere will appoint their servants, and the spirituality will be neglected. But the Lord will not leave His servants without protection, and in ignorance. He said "by the fruits you will recognize them". And strive to distinguish them from real pastors; those spiritual thieves who are snatching the spiritual flock, do not enter through the door into the sheepfold, but cross in the other place" as the Lord said it, that is, they will enter in an illegal way, with force (violence) destroying God's order. The Lord calls them the criminals.*

Truly, their real duty is persecution of true pastors, their imprisonment, for without that the spiritual flock may not become captured. Therefore, my son, when you see in the Church mocking of the Divine act, teaching of the Fathers, and God-established order, *know that the heretics have already appeared, even though for some time they might hide their evil intentions, or will unnoticeably deform the divine faith, to better succeed by deceiving and tricking the inexperienced .*

*They will persecute not only the pastors, but also the servants of God, for the devil who is directing the heresy cannot bear living in Divine order. Like wolfs in sheep skin, they will be recognized by their vainglorious nature, love for lust, and lust for power - those will be betrayers causing hatred and malice everywhere; and therefore the Lord said that one will recognize them by their fruits. The true servants of God are - meek, brotherloving and obedient to the Church (order, traditions...).*

*At that time, monks will endure great pressures from heretics, and the monastic life will be mocked. The monastic families will be impoverished, the number of monks will reduce. The ones remaining, will endure violence.*

*These haters of the monastic life, who merely have the appearance of piety, will strive to draw monks on their side, promising them protection and worldly goods(comforts), but threatening with exile to those who do not submit. From these threats, the weak at heart will be very humiliated (tormented).*

If you live to see that time, rejoice, for at that time the faithful, not possessing other virtues will receive wreaths **merely for standing in faith**, according to the Word of the Lord "everyone who confesses Me before men, I will confess before My Heavenly Father".

Fear the Lord, my son!, don't lose the received wreath, not to be rejected by Christ into the utter darkness and eternal suffering.

Bravely stand in faith, and if needed joyfully endure persecutions and other troubles, for than the Lord will stand by you...and holy Martyrs and Confessors with joyfully watch at your struggle.

But, in these days, woe be unto monks tied to possessions and riches, and who for the sake of love of comfort agree to subjugate themselves to the heretics. They will lull their conscience saying: we will save the monastery, and the Lord will forgive us.

Unfortunate and blinded, they are not even thinking that through heresies and heretics, the devil will enter the monastery, and then it will no longer be a holy monastery, but bare walls from which Grace will depart from forever.

**But God is more powerful than the devil, and will never abandon His servants. There will always be true Christians, till the end of time, but they will choose lonely and deserted places. Do not fear troubles, but fear pernicious heresy, for it drives out Grace, and separates from Christ, wherefore Christ commanded consider the heretic as let him be unto thee as a heathen man and publican.**

And so, strengthen yourself, my son, in the Grace of Christ Jesus. With joy hasten to the confession and enduring the suffering, like Jesus Christ's good soldier who said: "BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE WREATH OF LIFE"

To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, honor and glory unto ages of ages.  
Amen.

+ St. Amvrosy of Optina (October 10)

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## **On Thoughts — Counsels of the Holy Fathers**

**The person who in thought does not fight the thought of sin, saying nothing against it, commits it bodily.**

**When an evil thought lingers in someone and is not opposed but put into action, it reinforces the passion in him, and then it fights and torments him further.**

**Thoughts rot us and crush us, also creating problems in interpersonal relations. We spend all our time corrupting ourselves by the thoughts which we have against one another and tormenting ourselves.**

***PRAYER BURNS HIM!* - Elder Epiphanius of Athens (+1984)**

**Any person can be concentrated, even for hours, thinking of a certain matter or problem without his attention being distracted by anything else.**

**In earlier times also, when calculators did not exist, accountants worked for eight hours doing additions without lifting their heads and without their minds wandering, even if a noisy compressor was working next to them! Something similar occurs with many students when they are occupied by their lessons.**

**If, however, someone sets out to pray, then all the personal, family or business occupations project themselves before him and distract him. This is proof that the devil exists and that prayer burns him up - for this reason he fights it!**