



Presentation of Our Lord—Encounter of Simeon



Pharisee

God, I thank you that I am not like this tax collector



God, have mercy on me, a sinner

Publican

## *Fire & Light*

### St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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**February 5, 2017**  
**Sunday of the**

### **Publican and the Pharisee**

Postfeast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple

Martyr Agatha of Palermo in Sicily (251) St. Theodosius, Archbishop of Chernigov (1696)

New Martyr and Confessor Valeriu Gafencu of Romania (1952)

### ✠ Fast-Free Week ✠

✠ Tuesday, February 7, 6:30pm ~ Inquirer's Class

✠ Life is something other than what people imagine. Man himself is something other than what he imagines himself to be. The Truth is something other than what the human mind imagines.

~ **New Martyr Valeriu Gafencu**

✠ "The Holy Spirit dwells in the Saints and remains with them forever, if they cleanse the eye of their understanding by cleaving to every sound doctrine and by resolutely pursuing every virtue, and thus maintain the grace within themselves. For Christ says that those who are in the world, that is, those who are preoccupied with the things of this world and choose to love earthly things, are unable to contain or to behold the Spirit."

~ **St. Cyril of Alexandria**

✠ "The man who knows the delight of the love of God, when the soul warmed by grace, loves both God and her brother, knows in part that 'the Kingdom of God is within us'. Blessed is the soul that loves her brother, for our brother is our life." **St. Silouan of Mt. Athos** (Wisdom from Mount Athos)

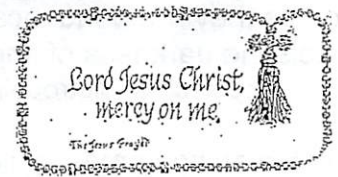
### "Faith Energized by Love"

✠ "Faith without works and works without faith will both alike be condemned, for he who has faith must offer to the Lord the faith which shows itself in actions. Our father Abraham would not have been counted righteous because of his faith had he not offered its fruit, his son. He who loves God both believes truly and performs the works of faith reverently. But he who only believes and does not love, lacks even the faith he thinks he has; for he believes merely with a certain superficiality of intellect and is not energized by the full force of love's glory. The chief part of virtue, then, is faith energized by love."

**St. Diadochos of Photiki** (The Philokalia Vol. 1)

✠ "When our Lord says something that combines in some way the human with the divine, do not on this account take offence and foolishly cease admiring as one ought the incomparably skillful way in which He has chosen His words, elegantly preserving for us in every way His dual character, so that we see Him who is by nature truly both God and man speaking as such at one and the same time, brilliantly combining the humble element of the humanity with the glory of the ineffable divine nature, and maintaining a proportionality of expression with regard to both, in a way that is entirely blameless and free from any reproach."

**St. Cyril of Alexandria**





## The Holy Fathers on Thoughts (V)

“[St. Paisios responds to the comment: ‘I have read somewhere that we must dispel a prideful thought immediately, just as we dispel an indecent thought.’]: The problem is that while an indecent thought is easily recognized, it takes great vigilance to recognize a prideful thought. For example, if an indecent thought comes to mind at a time of prayer, you will recognize it and dispel it immediately. ‘Get away from here!’, you will say. But in church, if the thought comes to you that you read the Psalter very well and you are prideful about it, vigilance is required to become aware of it and dispel it.”

Repulse evil thoughts and do not let them penetrate the heart and settle there; for when passion imbued thoughts persist they bring the passions themselves to life and are the death of the intellect. As soon as you sense they are attacking you, try to destroy them with the arrow of prayer. If they go on importuning you to be let in, confusing your mind, now withdrawing, now assailing you again, you may be sure that a previous desire for them on your part is giving them strength. Because the soul's free will has been overcome in this way, they now have a lawful claim against it, and so they perturb and pester it. Hence you should expose them through confession, for evil thoughts take flight as soon as they are denounced. Just as darkness recedes when light shines, so the light of confession dispels the darkness of impassioned thoughts.

Theoleptos, Metropolitan of Philadelphia (+1322), who was the spiritual father of St. Gregory Palamas.

When evening comes, collect your thoughts and ponder over the entire course of the day: observe God's providential care for you; consider the grace He has wrought in you throughout the whole span of the day; consider the rising of the moon, the joy of daylight, all the hours and moments, the divisions of time, the sight of different colors, the beautiful adornment of creation, the course of the sun, the growth of your own stature, how your own person has been protected, consider the blowing of the winds, the ripe and varied fruits, how the elements minister to your comfort, how you have been preserved from accidents, and all the other activities of grace. When you have pondered on all this, wonder of God's love toward you will well up within you, and gratitude for his acts of grace will bubble up inside you.

John the Solitary

When the demons see that someone has the zeal and diligence to pray as he ought, then they suggest to him thoughts about something, supposedly important (and then draw away); but a little later they again call up the memory of this thing, urging his mind to examine it (if it is a problem – to solve it; if it is a thing – to acquire it); and he, not finding what he seeks, feels vexed and grieved. Then, when he stands up to pray, the demons remind him of what he had thought of and sought for, so that his mind should once more be moved to inquiry and his prayer become barren.

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

When we strive with diligent sobriety to keep watch over our rational faculties, to control and correct them, how else can we succeed in this task except by collecting our mind, which is dispersed abroad through the senses, and bringing it back into the world within, into the heart itself, which is the storehouse of all our thoughts?

St. Gregory Palamas

If our thought, in a moment of weakness, should succumb, we should not be afraid or despair, or ascribe to our own soul what is said to us by the devil. On the contrary, we should patiently and diligently, to the limit of our strength, practice the virtues and keep the commandments, in stillness and devotion to God, freeing ourselves from all thoughts subject to our volition. In this way the enemy, who day and night promotes every kind of fantasy and deceit, will not find us worried about his tricks and illusions and all the thoughts within which he lurks, presenting to us as truth what are really deceits and falsehoods; and so he will lose heart and go away.

St. Peter of Damascus



A CONTEMPORARY CONFESSOR AND MARTYR FOR CHRIST:  
**VALERIU GAFENCU**  
Commemorated February 5 {+1952}



The Romanian people—situated, according to historical chronicles, “in the path of all evils”—were destined to pass through many trials. The latest was the worst: the Communist steamroller. This demonic ideology, nothing other than the religion of Satan on earth, as someone who passed through Communist prisons called it, claimed hundreds of thousands of victims among us. It did not succeed, however, in breaking those who, not wanting to lose their souls held steadfast with all their being to Christ. Enduring horrible suffering and finally dying at the hands of Communists, they acquired the crown of sainthood.

“Communism filled heaven with saints,” said Father Arsenie Papacioc. If one could somehow come to know all those of our people who passed the threshold of sainthood during the Communist persecution, he would also understand the words spoken in the seventeenth century by the holy Metropolitan Dosoftei of Moldavia: “Therefore also among the Romanians are many saints ... but no one has sought them out.”

Nevertheless, it would be of no small benefit to anyone to devote oneself to reading testimonies of those who passed through these prisons. In them, one would find such valuables which can rightly be compared to those found in a paterikon or in the lives of the saints.

Among the many portraits of the confessors, one will be found in particular that is recalled with reverence by all and is considered a saint: Valeriu Gafencu. Nicknamed “the saint of the prisons” by Father Nicolae Steinhardt in a truly inspired moment, Valeriu Gafencu was one of the more impressive figures who lived an admirable spiritual life amidst prison conditions.

Through his sacrificial love springing from a perfect dedication of his life to Christ, he remains painted in the most luminous of colors in the hearts of those who knew him. Father Gheorghe Calciu wrote, “I have no doubt that he is a saint. He lived the word of God to such a level that it was incomprehensible for us.”

Devoting themselves to the prayer of Jesus, studying and learning texts from the Holy Scripture, the *Philokalia*, and other patristic writings, these prisoners were to form, in the Communist prisons, a philocalic way of life. United in their desire to sacrifice themselves for Christ, these monks in spirit—for as we shall see, they lived a high level of asceticism at Aiud—supported each other, preparing themselves for the difficult trials which were yet to come.

Looking back on these long and hard years of imprisonment, Elder Arsenie Papacioc sees them as a blessed opportunity for strengthening his faith:

*There were no other means of preparation that could offer such possibilities for growing in one's faith, for a spiritual deepening, for a living relationship with God as were offered by the tribulations of imprisonment. I bless that period of time. I spent years in the wilderness without coming upon the possibility to deepen my thoughts of eternity, of the divine nature; this possibility was accorded me by way of the torturous dailiness [of life in a Communist prison]. Suffering also united us. Those of us who succeeded in knowing each other on the cross, so to speak, remained united.*

These prisoners who were monks at heart, clothed the conditions of prison life in monastic garb.

“Prison created special conditions for you,” says Virgil Maxim:

*Your cell became a sanctuary of prayer, of nourishment, an opportunity for asceticism, solitude, renunciation of the material goods and joys of life, an opportunity to live as paupers, in purity and chastity. The chronic uncertainty of our situation enabled us to put our trust in the will and providence*



*of God. Obedience requires a superior—a father confessor—to whom one submits, and God also offered us this gift through the presence of our priests. We were also obedient to the program imposed by worldly authority, as an act of divine pedagogy, in which your will enters consciously in submission to the divine will.* From the book *The Saint of the Prisons—Notes on the Life of Valeriu Gafencu*

## **The Way of Blessedness**

Weak in faith and spiritually impoverished by a lifestyle full of comforts, modern man understands only partially and not without difficulty the sufferings of those who endured life in prison. Many testimonies seem unbelievable to those of us who, as one poet has said, were not with them in the prison cell and do not know the life of darkness. We cannot imagine how they endured so much suffering. But what is even more difficult for us to understand, if not beyond our comprehension, is the nostalgia felt by prisoners when they look back at the time spent in prison.

“It is impossible for someone [free], outside of prison, to understand,” Father Gheorghe Calciu tells us.

“We [who were in prison] are [now] free and we are very happy that we are free, but we have a kind of nostalgia for prison. And we can’t explain it to anyone else. They say we’re crazy. How can you miss prison?”

Because in prison I lived the most spiritual life. I attained to spiritual heights that I am not capable of reaching in freedom. Isolated, anchored in Jesus Christ, I had a joy and an enlightenment that the world cannot offer. I can’t find the words to express with precision the feeling that I had there. Those that did not live this experience cannot understand how we could be happy in prison.”

Valeriu Gafencu lived such happiness—beyond our understanding—in spite of suffering. Virgil Ioanid remembers how, on the road between two prisons, in a police van, laid low by tuberculosis, his cheeks bright red with fever, Valeriu spoke of “the happiness of suffering for Christ and of enduring, like the first martyrs, the persecution unleashed by the enemies of the faith.” Likewise, in a letter sent to his family, he confessed, “Today I am happy. Through Christ I love everyone.”

After arriving at Aiud, Valeriu lived under a harsh regime. For a long time, as he later confessed, he spent much time in isolation, being taken out for a walk only an hour and a half per day. The beginning was not at all easy. “And, dear Mama,” he said in a letter, “I’d like you to know that I suffered very much. During the first winter I would wake up at night and in the solitude of my cell, in cold and in hunger, I looked into the darkness and whispered quietly, so that only I would hear, but loud enough for God to hear, ‘Mama, I’m cold and I’m hungry.’ At the beginning it was very hard.”

The suffering was all the more oppressive because believing in his innocence, he didn’t understand his imprisonment. “From the very beginning, I wondered why I was locked up. In my former social life, in my relationships with people, I was considered a very good person, an example of moral conduct. If I entered into conflict with anybody, it was for the sake of Truth.”

In the midst of this spiritual grinding, he sought an answer in the books that were circulating in prison.

At the beginning, he studied and read very much, but soon his attention was drawn to Christianity, which appeared to him in its true light, in its spiritual intent. Valeriu dedicated himself to intense theological study, undertaking a careful examination of Orthodox spirituality. Among the books he read were the *Paterikon*, *The Salvation of Sinners*, *The Lives of the Saints*, *Imitation of Christ*. He read St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Palamas, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. John Damascene. He also studied Pascal, Bulgakov, Berdyaev, Papini, as well as all the courses offered at the School of Theology. His reading concentrated especially on Holy Scripture. Spiritual books helped him see things more deeply and turn more toward his inner self. In the solitude of his cell he prayed very much, seeking to understand the meaning of suffering. After a time of tormenting unrest and struggle, he experienced through the grace of God a state of enlightenment in which he saw his soul full of sins.



"After a time of much uneasiness, after experiencing a great deal of pain, when the cup of suffering had filled up, there came a holy day, in June 1943, when I fell to the ground, on my knees, my head bent, my heart shattered, in a burst of tears. I prayed to God that He grant me light. At that point I had lost all faith in people. I realized perfectly well that I was in truth, but then why was I suffering? Within my zealous soul only love had remained. No one understood me.

"During this long period of weeping I began to do prostrations. And suddenly—O Lord! How great art thou, Lord!—I saw my soul full of sins, I found within myself the root of all the sins of mankind. Alas, so many sins, and the eyes of my soul, hardened by pride, had not seen them. How great is God!

"Seeing all my sins, I felt the need to shout them forth and cast them away from me. And a deep peace, a deep wave of light and love poured into my heart. As soon as the door opened, I left my cell and went to those whom I knew to love me and to those who hated me and to those who had most wronged me and I confessed to them openly, 'I am the most sinful man. I do not deserve the trust of even the last among men. I am blessed!'

"Everyone was astounded. Some looked at me with disdain, others with indifference. Some looked at me with a love that they themselves could not have explained. A single person said to me, 'You deserve to be kissed.' But I fled quickly back to my cell, threw my head into my pillow and continued my weeping, thanking and glorifying God."

This moment of enlightenment was a true rebirth for Valeriu. The most immediate benefit of the awareness of sins is the understanding of the meaning of suffering. "Suffering, no matter how difficult it may be, has no other meaning than the cleansing of souls thirsting for salvation."

From day to day he created order in his soul, he became a new person, he accustomed himself to life in the Spirit in accordance with Christian teaching. His progress was harmonious, seeking to realize the new man. Through the grace of God, he went down the path of the most authentic Orthodox spirituality.

"When he was feeling better," continues Ianolide, "Valeriu spoke beautifully and with fervor, focusing mainly on his favorite subject: interior purification and union with Christ.

"Through baptism, we received purifying grace, while being anointed with Holy Chrism, we have been adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But this blessed internal state is ineffective within us, we are Christians in name only. We live in a world of confusion, of loose morals, of sin. It's considered shameful to be a believer, and old-fashioned to be moral. The baptized man, in order to be saved, has to live all his life in the Holy Spirit, but we haven't succeeded in doing this. We have believed, we have prayed, we have kept the faith, we have suffered, but in order to be united with Christ, one must purify oneself inwardly through confession and renew oneself through Holy Communion. Therefore unite yourself to Christ conscientiously and with great steadfastness, making yourself a bearer of His holiness, His power, His love, His light, His immortality. You must oppose sin mercilessly. Then you will be born anew. There is no path of compromise."

Another time he said to us, "The teaching of Christ is so wonderful, so consummate, that if we understand it, we have the most powerful argument possible for the existence of God. When I had this revelation, I wept from pain and from happiness! Those who believe in Him must bear witness to this truth even if it means being martyred. Wasn't the Son of God killed as an enemy of His people?"

One day Valeriu was feeling so bad that we thought he was going to die. In addition to all the other illnesses he suffered from, he also developed acute appendicitis. He could have been left to die, but that would not have been "humanitarian." Humanitarianism is the hypocrisy of cruelty, it brings to light the poisonous and lamentable domain of the Communist revolution, with its slogans and beautiful vestments. So the doctor sent a report to prison administration so that he could be transported to the hospital in town for an operation.

The penitentiary agent came to him and said: "Your life is in my hands. If you don't have this operation, you will die." Valeriu smiled indulgently and answered: "If one man's life depends on another, then this man indeed has great responsibility! But if everyone would realize that their lives depend on God, then everyone would value the life of his neighbor!"

"You're crazy," the agent said to him, and sent him to the operating room under strict guard.



When he came back to the sanatorium, the agent said to him: "Look, you were face to face with death! You see, we wanted to show you that your life is in our hands. Maybe now you've changed your mind and you'll cooperate with us. We'll give you streptomycin<sup>141</sup>! You'll also get packages from your family. And you know what might happen later? ... You're an intelligent man and you could be useful to us. We know that you're not interested in politics, but in religion, but isn't the patriarch and all of his priests on our side now? Why don't you join our side too? You have a lot to gain!"

"I thank you for allowing me to have an operation. From now on, my torments will go on even longer ... As for the rest, between you and me, there is a matter of conscience. For the sake of my spiritual freedom I have decided to die. It is good that the truth be told plainly, and I serve the truth. I am not the judge of others, but a confessor of God. There is nothing under the sun that can survive without God. You cannot accept Christ. I cannot accept spiritual death."

"I told you already that you are crazy!" shouted the agent. "I'm going to file a report. You are a reactionary, a fascist, an enemy of the people, in the service of American bandits! We know how to deal with people like you! You're only fit to die! Go and die with your Christ! I won't try to stop either Him or somebody like you!"

"You can kill me now, but no one can kill Him any longer. He is a stumbling block for all kinds of pride. Understand well that Christ is the only power that can deliver mankind from suffering and sin."

"Give up all this nonsense. The truth is on our side!"

"The truth is love that sacrifices itself for the poor and the persecuted!"

"Look here, you're staring death straight in the face and you're giving me mystical sermons?! You want to convince me too? See, now you've gone too far! You've spread yourself too thin."

Valeriu struggled to keep looking at him, because his eyelids had grown heavy. He felt worn out physically, but an internal joy compelled him to speak about faith in order to leave an eternal testimony. The smile of his measureless love blossomed on his cheeks. He prayed in secret for this unhappy man and for God to deliver the world from leaders like him.

The agent was confused, muddled. He swore a blue streak and then ordered that Valeriu be taken back to his room.

## **I Saw the Mother of God**

During the night of his last Christmas, toward dawn, Valeriu testified to his friend Ioan Ianolide:

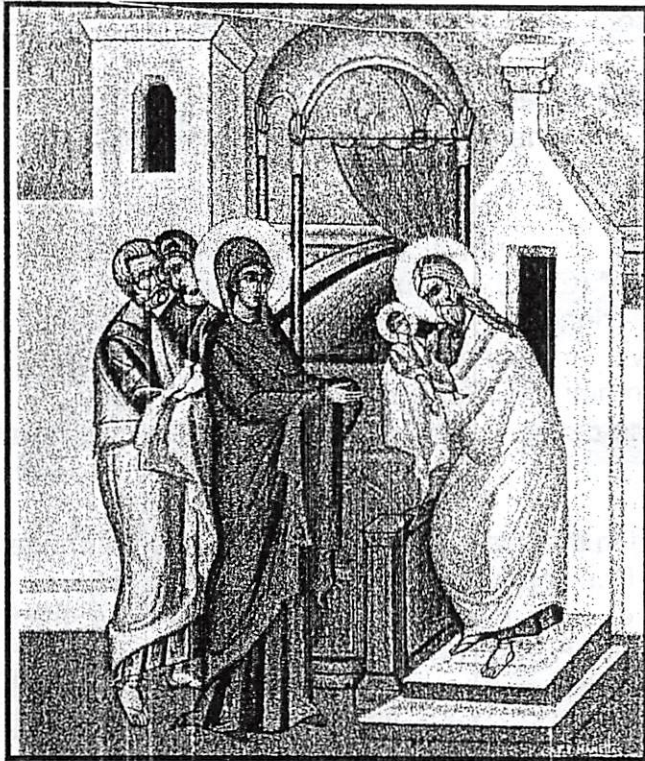
"This night, I kept vigil. I was waiting for my carol to come. I wanted it to be very beautiful. I sang it in my head. I heard it in the high heavens, from where it descended. Rather difficult for me, since I don't know musical notes and I have to sing by ear. So I was awake, lucid and serene, when, all of a sudden, I noticed a photograph of Seta [the girl he had loved] in my hand. Amazed by this, I lifted my gaze and at the head of my bed I saw the Mother of God, clothed in white, vivid, real. She was without her Child. Her presence seemed material to me. The Mother of God was actually beside me. I was happy. I forgot everything. Time seemed endless. Then she said to me:

I am your love! Don't be afraid. Don't doubt. My Son will be victorious. He has sanctified this place now for future life. The powers of darkness are growing and will frighten the world still more, but they will be scattered. My Son is waiting for people to return to the faith. Today, the sons of darkness are bolder than the sons of light. Even though it may seem to you that there is no more faith left on earth, nevertheless, know that deliverance will come, albeit through fire and devastation. The world still has to suffer. Here, however, there is still much faith and I have come to encourage you. Be bold, the world belongs to Christ!

"Then the Mother of God disappeared and I remained overwhelmed with happiness. I looked at my hand, but the photograph was no longer there."

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## Meeting of the Lord

Forty days after Christ was born he was presented to God in the Jerusalem Temple according to the Mosaic Law. At this time as well his mother Mary (the Theotokos) underwent the ritual purification, and offered the sacrifices as prescribed in the Law. Thus, forty days after Christmas, on the second of February, the Church celebrates the feast of the presentation called the **Meeting** (or **Presentation** or **Reception**) of the Lord.

The meeting of Christ by the elder Simeon and the prophetess Anna (Luke 2:22-36) is the main event of the feast of Christ's presentation in the Temple. It was "revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26) and, inspired by the same Spirit, he came to the Temple where he met the new-born Messiah, took him in his arms and said the words which are now chanted each evening at the end of the Orthodox Vesper service:

**Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32).**

At this time as well Simeon predicted that Jesus would be the "sign which is spoken against" and that he would cause "the fall and the rising of many in Israel." He also foretold Mary's suffering because of her son. (Luke 22:34-35) Anna also was present and, giving thanks to God "she spoke of Jesus to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38)

In the service of the feast of the Meeting of the Lord, the fact emphasized is that Christ, the Son and Word of God through whom the world was created, now is held as an infant in Simeon's hands; this same Son of God, the Giver of the Law, now himself fulfills the Law, carried in arms as a human child.

**Receive him, O Simeon, whom Moses on Mount Sinai beheld in the darkness as the Giver of the Law. Receive him as a babe now obeying the Law. For he it is of whom the Law and the Prophets have spoken, incarnate for our sake and saving mankind. Come let us adore him!**

**Let the door of heaven open today, for the Eternal Word of the Father, without giving up his divinity, has been incarnate of the Virgin in Time. And as a babe of forty days he is voluntarily brought by his mother to the Temple, according to the Law. And the elder Simeon takes him in his arms and cries out; Lord now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, O Lord, who has come to save the human race - glory to Thee! (Vesper Verses of the Feast)**

....The celebration of the Meeting of the Lord in the Church is not merely an historical commemoration. Inspired by the same Holy Spirit as Simeon, and led by the same Spirit into the Church of the Messiah, the members of the Church also can claim their own "meeting" with the Lord, and so also can witness that they too can "depart in peace" since their eyes have seen the salvation of God in the person of his Christ.

**Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Full of Grace! From you shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those who sat in darkness! Rejoice and be glad, O righteous elder; you accepted in your arms the Redeemer of our souls who grants us the resurrection. (Troparion of the Feast)**

**By Thy nativity, Thou didst sanctify the Virgin's womb. And didst bless Simeon's hands, O Christ our God. Now Thou hast come and saved us through love. Grant peace to all Orthodox Christians, O only Lover of man. (Kontakion of the Feast)**

It is customary in many churches to bless candles on the feast of the Meeting of the Lord.

*(Adapted from 'The Orthodox Faith: Vol. 1' by Fr. Thomas Hopko, DRE, OCA; Used by permission.)*

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**Men are enveloped in the darkness of ignorance of God, of themselves, and of the enemies of their salvation, who can therefore easily rob the mental house of our soul - its mental health. (Father John of Kronstadt)**



## "Works" in St. Paul's Writings (Adapted from "The Orthodox Study Bible")

St. Paul uses the term 'works' extensively in his letters, and we encounter his use of the word especially in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. By this term, he means human activities which he generally classifies in two categories.

1) **Dead Works:** These are (a) works which are evil, such as murder, adultery, idol worship, and robbery. These the Scriptures also call, "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19) and obviously condemn. But, in addition, dead works are (b) works - even good works - done for the wrong reasons. These are works which are good in themselves, such as fasting, giving money, and feeding the poor, but are done to call attention to oneself or gain standing in the community. Selfish motivation turns good works to dead works. The solution to this problem is not to cease fasting, giving or helping but to turn from the sin of self-glorification.

(2) **Living Works:** These are deeds which are both good in themselves and done for a good purpose: to glorify God. Good works the Scriptures commend. St. Paul teaches they are an outgrowth of our salvation when he writes: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). They contribute to our faith, as St. James teaches, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only [or alone]" (James 2:24). When we do living works, we seek to bring glory to God, not to ourselves, through what we do, and we rely upon the strength and the grace of God.

Some have erroneously understood St. Paul, particularly in Romans 4, to be condemning all works. A careful reading of Romans, however reveals that St. Paul is not putting down works in general, but *dead works*. St. Maximus the Confessor, writing in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, states clearly the view of the Church concerning dead works:

"Many human activities, good in themselves, are not good because of the motive for which they are done. For example, fasting, vigils, prayer, psalmody [the singing of Psalms], acts of charity and hospitality are by nature good. But when performed for the sake of self-esteem, (vainglory, self-glorification) they are not good. In everything we do, God searches out our purpose to see whether we do it for Him or for some other motive quite clearly He bestows blessing only when something is done for the right purpose. For God's judgment looks not at the actions, but at the purpose behind them."

Thus, the Christian actively cultivates a habit of doing good works for the glory of God, and as a way of life. The writings of St. Paul are clear. If we are joined to Christ and cleansed from the dishonor of the past, we become "a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). God sets us apart to Himself so we will be productive and useful to Him.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren," St. Paul tells the Corinthians, be steadfast, immovable, always abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

"Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be 'seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you; as the hypocrites do... that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matt. 6:1-4) ✕

➤ There is no limit in the amount of good you can do, if you don't care who gets the credit. - Ronald Reagan