



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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✠ **June 21, 2015** ✠

New Martyrs

of the Turkish Yoke

Martyr Julian of Tarsus (305)

Hieromartyr Terence, Apostle of the 70

Martyr Archil II, King of Georgia (744)

New Martyr Nicetas of Nisiros, near Rhodes at Chios, by the Turks (1732)

Happy Father's Day!

Many Years to the fathers of this community and to all our fathers everywhere! Memory eternal to all our departed fathers!

➤ Tomorrow – Inquirer's Class – 6:30pm > The Apostles Fast continues...

✠ **Tues. June 23 6:30pm ~ Great Vespers – Nativity of St. John the Baptist**

✠ **Wed. June 24 6:00am ~ Divine Liturgy – Nativity of St. John the Baptist**

18th All-American Council – July 19-25, Hilton Downtown Atlanta

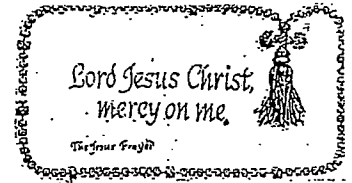
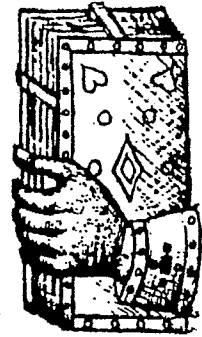
– See oca.org. You can attend for a day or two at any time of the week. There will be morning and evening services each day and all kinds of Orthodox stores and exhibits. It's an extraordinary experience as well to be together with so many Orthodox clergy and faithful.

➤ **New Iconography Donations are welcome ! We have \$25,000 given and will need closer to \$30,000, with the costs of scaffolding, travel, etc. But please don't give if doing so cuts into your current Building Fund support. Please only consider it if it's something extra. May it be blessed!**

Be Ye Not of This World

What can God do with one who willfully gives himself over to the world, and is deceived by its pleasures, or led astray by material wanderings? The man to whom he gives help is the one who turns away from material pleasures and from his former habits, who drags his mind at all times to the Lord, whether it will or not, who denies himself and seeks the Lord only. This is the man whom He keeps under His care: who guards himself on every side from the snares and entanglements of the material world, who works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, who passes with all heed amidst the snares and entanglements and lusts of this world, and seeks the help of the Lord, and hopes by His mercy to be saved through grace. Not in form or in outward figure lies the

(over)



distinguishing mark of Christians. Most men think that the difference which distinguishes them from the world consists in a form and in figures; and lo! In mind and frame they are like the world, undergoing the same shaking, and inconstancy of thought, and unbelief, and confusion, and helter-skelter as all other men. In outward form and appearance they differ from the world, and in a few points of religious ordinance; but in the heart and mind they are bound with earthly bonds, never having acquired rest from God and the peace of the heavenly Spirit in their heart, because they never sought it from God, nor believed that He would grant these things to them.

■ **Saint Macarios the Great (+390)**

ON DENYING ONESELF...

A man takes a little walk and sees something. His thoughts say to him "Go over there and investigate," and he says to his thoughts, "No, I won't," and he cuts off his desire. Again he finds someone gossiping, and his thoughts say to him, "You go and have a word with them," and he cuts off his desire, and does not speak. Or again his thoughts say to him, "Go and ask the cook what's cooking?" and he does not go, but cuts off his desire. Then he sees something else, and his thoughts say to him, "Go down and ask, who brought it?" and he does not ask. A man denying himself in this way comes little by little to form a habit of it, so that from denying himself in little things, he begins to deny himself in great things without the least trouble. Finally he comes not to have any of the extraneous desires; but whatever happens to him, he is satisfied with it, as if it were the very thing he wanted.

■ **Abba Dorotheos of Gaza**

ON TRUE TREASURE...

If we turn to the constant meditation on Scripture, if we lift up our memory to things of the spirit, to the longing for perfection and to the hope of future blessedness, then the thoughts deriving from all this will of necessity be spiritual and they will hold the mind where the thoughts have been.

However, if we are overcome by sloth or by carelessness, if we give ourselves over to dangerous and useless chattering, if we are caught up in worldly cares and in profitless worries, there will follow in effect from this a harvest of tares to serve as a ministry of death to our hearts. As the Lord our Savior proclaimed, where treasure lies for our works and for our hopes our hearts will of necessity abide there too.

■ **Saint John Cassian**

Do We Follow Our Own Advice?

"How One Must Live to Be Truly Happy..."

Editor's note: Often we expect of others that which we do not do ourselves. A good example of this is that we demand respect from our children, yet in turn are disrespectful of our own parents. Yet the Fifth Commandment- "Honor thy father and thy mother" - pertains not only to little children but to adults as well. Some useful advice concerning this matter is contained in a brochure printed in Russia in 1912, entitled "How One Must Live to Be Truly Happy." Such brochures were distributed to pilgrims visiting monasteries as "missionary leaflets." Below we offer an excerpt from the aforementioned leaflet. Let us apply these wise words to our own lives:

Do you want to live in such a way that all may be well with you on earth? Do you desire longevity and good success in all things? Then hold your tongue from evil, as you are told by the Prophet David. In God's Law it is said: **"Honor thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee and that thy days may be long on earth."** Then dare not, my brother, utter a single unkind word to your parents. Rather console them in everything. Provide them not only with things necessary for life, but always speak to them with all kindness, with full deference. Do this and it will be pleasant for you to live; you will be filled with cheer and all anxiety will be far from you.

Thus, man, seek happiness not according to your flawed rationale; do not try to achieve it in your own way, but rather do this in the way that God has indicated, the way that the Prophets and Apostles, filled with wisdom, teach. Do not think that your happiness depends upon the acquisition of visible, temporal things or that you need to labor endlessly to achieve this. No! Your true treasure is so close to you, right there by the stove - it is your parents, or perhaps your feeble grandparent. Dare not consider them a burden, but rather as your genuine fortune. Recall who it was that worked so hard for you, and fed you when you were still small.

Who would carry you around on their arms when you did not even know how to crawl? Who tolerated stench from you and, for more than a year, cleansed and washed you from it? Who went sleepless for nights when you were ill and shed so many tears for you? Think about all this, my brother; and also, who was it that gave you this life? Who did God use as the tool with which to grant you numberless blessings? Is it not your only true and greatest benefactors on this earth - your parents, from whom you so often turn away from as something totally useless? Man! Fear God and honor your father and mother! Dare not inflict sorrow by your words. Honor them as if they were your king. These benefactors of yours have earned great mercy from you, if only because they granted you this life ...

And you, you regret that your parents have now departed from this life and that you had treated them so poorly. All is not lost. Things can be corrected. Let not a day go by without your prayer to God for them. Let not a Sunday go by without your offering a prayer in God's church for their blessed repose. And let not a week go by that you do not do some charitable deed for someone in need, in memory of your departed parents. During their life you were unkind to them, but you can bring them even greater good now. Pray for them continually and perform charitable works for them as often as possible. They needed you while they lived. Now they need your care for them all the more.

If your parents are still alive, most of all beware of not causing them any grief. If they tell you something for your edification with which you do not fully agree, be silent, and do not become angry with them. Better yet, say a prayer for them. Do this and you will be happy and long-lived not only in this life, but you will be able to inherit blessedness in the life to come as well. May the Lord grant you wisdom in this.

Translated from a "Holy Trinity Missionary Leaflet" by Archpriest Gregory Naumenko, Orthodox Life Vol. 62 NO.1

Elder Ephraim – On the Passions

“St. Anthony the Great affirms: *‘If a person places the burden on himself, he finds rest. The moment he casts it on someone else, he will feel troubled internally.’* Try it when the opportunity arises. If, during a temptation, you blame the other person, internally you will feel troubled, distressed — a mess! On the other hand, as soon as you think: *‘The other person is not at fault, I am to blame. Why am I speaking about another person? Have I forgotten who I am? I have made so many mistakes and sins ... hence, I should not be speaking at all,’* you will feel as if you are landing on solid ground and are no longer in danger of falling. Whereas previously, when you were soaring high, you were fearful and uneasy: *‘I am about to fall at any moment.’* Once you descend low, and set foot on solid ground, you no longer have anything to fear.”

“Sometimes we find ourselves at odds with another person, and we stubbornly insist: **‘He is at fault. He’s the one who became angry. He’s the one who spoke to me rudely. He must humble himself. If he had spoken to me calmly and addressed me with respect, I would have been patient and not have been offended. Hence, He is to blame!’** We must oppose such thoughts by responding: *‘No, no! If I did not have egotism, I would not be bothered. Hence, I am to blame. My brother is not at fault.’*”

“If I had humility, I would take this opportunity to gain a crown; and I would view this person as Jesus’ cauterizing instrument. He is cauterizing my passion, so I can become healthy. He is helping me now. He is my benefactor! I must embrace him, love him and pray for him, because he actually did me a favor by revealing my sickness. If he had not spoken to me in this manner, I would have remained unaware of the extensive egotism within me; and I would never have realized that I need to struggle against it. The sting of this temptation uncovered my sickness. Now that I have seen it, I will make sure that I apply the medication in order to be healed.”

“When a person comes to grip with this theoretically, he must make an effort to apply it internally. He must locate the evil within the heart and wage war against the associated passion — the bitterness, the difficulty, and the pressure of the devil, who relentlessly argues: *‘Don’t back down! Don’t humble yourself! Don’t do it!’* At that moment, we must beseech God for the strength to trample on our ego and to respond with determination: *‘Be quiet! Get out of my way. I must fulfill my obligation.’* We must go to the other person and ask for forgiveness. We monks, for example, will prostrate ourselves before another monk. A person living in the world, however, will conduct himself differently. He will say: *‘Good morning! Happy name day! Forgive me ...’* and so on. In this manner, love is restored.”

“When someone takes the first step towards reconciliation, he immediately feels joy, peace and relief. Why? Prior to this, hatred, enmity, separation and alienation laid like a heavy burden on his shoulders. There was also pressure from the devil who wanted his way. God, on the other hand, is love and humility. All of us, nonetheless - and I first - are fooled by our egotism, and seek to erect our own will. We believe that *we* are correct, that *we* are good, and that others are at fault.” ✘ ✘ ✘

Marriage as a Lifetime

of Suffering ~ Fr. Stephen Freeman

"When couples come to ministers to talk about their marriage ceremonies, ministers think it's interesting to ask if they love one another. What a stupid question! How would they know? A Christian marriage isn't about whether you're in love. Christian marriage is giving you the practice of fidelity over a lifetime in which you can look back upon the marriage and call it love. It is a hard discipline over many years."

- Stanley Hauerwas

No issues in the modern world seem to be pressing the Church with as much force as those surrounding sex and marriage. The so-called Sexual Revolution has, for the most part, succeeded in radically changing how our culture understands both matters. Drawing from a highly selective (and sometimes contradictory) set of political, sociological and scientific arguments, opponents of the Christian tradition are pressing the case for radical reform with an abandon that bears all of the hallmarks of a revolution. And they have moved into the ascendancy.

Those manning the barricades describe themselves as "defending marriage." That is a deep inaccuracy: marriage, as an institution, was surrendered quite some time ago. Today's battles are not about marriage but simply about dividing the spoils of its destruction. It is too late to defend marriage. Rather than being defended, marriage needs to be *taught* and *lived*. The Church needs to be willing to become the place where that teaching occurs as well as the place that can sustain couples in the struggle required to live it. Fortunately, the spiritual inheritance of the Church has gifted it with all of the tools necessary for that task. It lacks only people who are willing to take up the struggle.

Marriage laws were once the legal framework of a Christian culture. Despite the ravages of the Enlightenment and Reformation, the general framework of marriage remained untouched. The Church, in many lands,

particularly those of English legal tradition, acted as an arm of the State while the State acted to uphold the Christian ideal of marriage. As Hauerwas noted in the opening quote, marriage as an institution was never traditionally about romantic love: it was about fidelity, stability, paternity and duty towards family. The traditional Western marriage rite never asked a couple, "Do you love him?" It simply asked, "Do you promise to love?" That simple promise was only one of a number of things:

"WILT thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor, and keep her, in sickness, and in health? And forsaking all others, keep thee only to her, so long as you both shall live?"

And this: *"I, N. take thee N. to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death; according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I plight thee my troth."*

Obviously, the primary intent of these promises was faithfulness in all circumstances over the course of an entire lifetime. The laws that surrounded marriage existed to enforce this promise and sought to make it difficult to do otherwise.

Divorce was difficult to obtain – long waiting periods were required and very specific conditions had to be met for one to be granted. Churches made remarriage quite difficult, to say the least. Obligations to children were very well-defined and grounded in parental (biological) rights and obligations. Indeed, there was a large complex of family laws that tilted the culture towards marriage at every turn.

Of course, none of this would have represented any benefit had it not also reflected a cultural consensus. Contrary to popular sayings, morality can indeed be legislated (laws do almost nothing else). But

moral laws are simply experienced as oppression if they do not generally agree with the moral consensus of a culture. The laws upholding marriage were themselves a cultural consensus: people felt these laws to be *inherently* correct.

Parenthetically, it must be stated as well that the laws governing marriage and property were often tilted against women – that is a matter that I will not address in this present article.

The moral consensus governing marriage began to dissolve primarily in the Post-World War II era in Western cultures. There are many causes that contributed to this breakdown. My favorite culprit is the rapid rise in mobility (particularly in America) that destroyed the stability of the extended family and atomized family life.

The first major *legal* blow to this traditional arrangement was the enactment of “no-fault” divorce laws, in which no reasons needed to be given for a divorce. It is worth noting that these were first enacted in Russia in early 1918, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution. The purpose (as stated in Wikipedia) was to “revolutionize society at every level.” That experiment later met with significant revisions. The first state to enact such laws in the U.S. was California, which did not do so until 1969. Such laws have since become normative across the country.

These changes in marriage law have been accompanied by an evolution in the cultural meaning of marriage. From the earlier bond of a virtually indissoluble union, marriage has morphed into a contractual agreement between two persons for their own self-defined ends. According to a 2002 study, by age 44, roughly 95 percent of all American adults have had pre-marital sex. For all intents, we may say that virtually all Americans, by mid-life, have had sex outside of marriage.

These are clear reasons for understanding that “defense of marriage” is simply too late. The Tradition has become *passé*. But none of this says that the Tradition is wrong or in any way incorrect.

Of course, there are many “remnants” of traditional Christian marriage. Most people still imagine that marriage will be for a life-time, though they worry that somehow they may not be so lucky themselves. Pre-nuptial agreements are primarily tools of the rich. Even same-sex relationships are professing a desire for life-long commitments.

But all of the sentiments surrounding life-long commitments are just that – *sentiments*. They are not grounded in the most obvious reasons for life-long relationships. Rather, they belong to the genre of fairy tales: “living happily ever after.”

The classical Christian marriage belongs to the genre of *martyrdom*. It is a commitment to death. As Hauerwas notes: faithfulness over the course of a life-time defines what it means to “love” someone. At the end of a faithful life, we may say of someone, “He loved his wife.”

Some have begun to write about the so-called “Benedict Option,” a notion first introduced by Alasdair MacIntyre in his book, *After Virtue*. It compares the contemporary situation to that of the collapse of the Roman Christian Imperium in the West (i.e., the Dark Ages). Christian civilization, MacIntyre notes, was not rebuilt through a major conquering or legislating force, but through the patient endurance of small monastic communities and surrounding Christian villages. That pattern marked the spread of Christian civilization for many centuries in many places, both East and West.

It would seem clear that a legislative option has long been a moot point. When 95 percent of the population is engaging in sex outside of marriage (to say the least) no legislation of a traditional sort is likely to make a difference. The greater question is whether such a cultural tidal wave will inundate the Church’s teaching or render it inert – a canonical witness to a by-gone time, acknowledged perhaps in confession but irrelevant to daily choices (this is already true in many places).

The “Benedict Option” can only be judged over the course of centuries, doubtless to the dismay of our impatient age. But, as noted, those things required are already largely in

place. The marriage rite (in those Churches who refuse the present errors) remains committed to the life-long union of a man and a woman with clearly stated goals of fidelity. The canon laws supporting such marriages remain intact. Lacking is sufficient teaching and formation in the virtues required to live the martyrdom of marriage.

Modern culture has emphasized suffering as undesirable and an object to be remedied. Our resources are devoted to the ending of suffering and not to its endurance. Of course, the abiding myth of Modernity is that suffering can be eliminated. This is neither true nor desirable.

Virtues of patience, endurance, sacrifice, selflessness, generosity, kindness, steadfastness, loyalty, and other such qualities are impossible without the presence of suffering. The Christian faith does not disparage the relief of suffering, but neither does it make it definitive for the acquisition of virtue. Christ is quite clear that all will suffer. It is pretty much the case that no good thing comes about in human society except through the voluntary suffering of some person or persons. The goodness in our lives is rooted in the grace of heroic actions.

In the absence of stable, life-long, self-sacrificing marriages, all discussion of sex and sexuality is reduced to abstractions. An eloquent case for traditional families is currently being made by the chaos and dysfunction set in motion by their absence. No amount of legislation or social programs will succeed in replacing the most natural of human traditions. The social corrosion represented by our over-populated prisons, births outside of marriage (over 40 percent in the general population and over 70 percent among non-Hispanic African Americans), and similar phenomenon continue to predict a breakdown of civility on the most fundamental level. We passed into the "Dark Ages" some time ago. The "Benedict Option" is already in place. It is in your parish and in your marriage. Every day you endure and succeed in a faithful union to your spouse and children is a heroic act of grace-filled living.

We are not promised that the Option will be successful as a civilizational cure. Such things are in the hands of God. But we should have no doubt about the Modern Project going on around us. It is not building a Brave New World. It is merely destroying the old one and letting its children roam amid the ruins.

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A follow-up comment from Fr. Stephen:

I could have added to my observations on marriage, that they apply equally well to the parish Church. To be a practicing Christian involves a lifetime of suffering – voluntary – but real. I've observed that people are even less committed to parish life than they are to marriage. They leave at the drop of a hat and rarely endure and address the real difficulties that are inevitably involved in real Christianity. All of this is quite difficult. I pray God to have mercy on us, forgive us, and get us through.

When we were baptized, we were told to take up our Cross and follow. These things – including our miserable, tragic failures – are what that Cross looks like.

Please know, that all of this will get much worse before it gets better, if it gets better. Fortunately, we are not being saved by our excellence and success, but by our weakness and our failure. Thus, there will be no shortage of opportunities for our salvation. Neither is there any lack of blame to go around.

Reader Comment:

Men need to learn how to be men. That too is a form of martyrdom especially in this society. To the extent that I am unwilling to give my life for my wife in myriad small and mundane ways, I am not being a good husband. It is on the Cross that one finds headship. One of my main tasks as a Christian husband is to build up my wife and continually pray for; to see, nurture and expect the goodness in her without trying to force anything on her. When I err, to ask forgiveness. – Michael Baumann

This and That

Egalitarianism

There is a difference between an egalitarian philosophy and a democracy. A further difference between either of those and a republican form of government. But that is really beside the point. All government tends to corruption and tyranny as they are increasingly run by those who seek and want to exercise power whether those people are 'elected' or not.

Now, what most people think of when the word democracy is used is really much closer to egalitarianism. **Egalitarianism refuses philosophically to recognize any difference in people any hierarchy of talent, virtue, values or morals. It does not even recognize God.**

In practice such a philosophy has always led to reigns of terror and tyranny because we are naturally hierarchical and the built-in hypocrisy of egalitarianism requires a tyranny to enforce and to make order. The French Revolution was the dark side of our own.

Egalitarianism and hedonism are closely related. The passions become the rule. Whatever I want is good, therefore no one can legitimately keep me from what I want OR even criticize what I want or that is a personal attack on me. It is discrimination! It is insanity. But that is the world in which we live. Freedom does not lie in the continuous exercise of individual choice, let alone the continuous and unchallenged exercise of our desires but in allowing your minds and hearts to be conformed to the mind of God. Such ideas, let alone any effort to realize such through obedience makes the insane hate us with a demonic fury.

– Michael Baumann

True freedom is not about choosing "whatever I want", but rather "what I was created to choose". A dichotomy exists in this world because we are disordered. We are bent and broken and therefore find ourselves choosing things that are contrary to our nature.

When we choose to follow Christ, we also are by default choosing to live according to our nature. Granted we don't know or understand much of this at the time – by the very virtue of the fact that we bent and broken and therefore don't know what to choose.

The way Christ asks us to live, that is how we would naturally choose to live if we were free to do so, that is, if we were not bound by sin. It is true of course that He has freed us from our bonds, but the "old man" is still in the habit of living in bondage and has to intentionally choose to live in this "new" way.

When a person "stops choosing and just follows Jesus", it means that they try to stop making all the judgments that would normally fall to God and simply practice obedience to Christ. So isn't a cessation of the will, but a continual day-by-day, decision-by-decision submission of our choices to Him and His way of living.

One quote that comes to mind from St. Theophan the Recluse: All troubles come from a mental outlook that is too broad. It is better to humbly cast your eyes down toward your feet, and to figure out which step to take where. This is the truest path.

Classical liberalism, a political or social philosophy advocating the freedom of the individual, parliamentary systems of government, nonviolent modification of political, social, or economic institutions to assure unrestricted development in all spheres of human endeavor, and governmental guarantees of individual rights and civil liberties. – Internet comment, *Glory to God for All Things Blog*

The Freedom of Obedience

...Human rights and freedoms are only present in a Godly culture. Politics, no matter how well intentioned or seemingly well intentioned, cannot help to create such freedoms. It always deteriorates into an ideological battle of might makes right. Always. That is because we have no rights and our freedom lies only in our obedience to God. That is the lesson of Adam and Eve in the Garden. Adam and Eve exercised their rights and freedom. Look what that got us. Mary and Jesus in their own ways said, "Let it be done unto me according to thy Word."

- Michael Baumann