



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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Visit stsymeon.com

✠ **September 20, 2015** ✠

Postfeast of the Elevation of the Cross

Great-Martyr Eustathius Placidus

and his wife, Martyr Theopistus in Rome (118)



Today: Sacrament of Holy Matrimony: Xenia Preston and Andrew Dill – 3:00pm

➤ Many Years to Newly Illumined Symeon Ory and Andrew Dill! (9-5-15)

➤ **The Annual Parish Meeting is next Sunday, September 27, after the Liturgy.**

Parish Council Nominees: The Ballot for the 2015-16 Parish Council election includes the following 14 nominees (in alphabetical order):

Wilfrid Bodden, Jonathan Boyer, Ignatius Burton, John DeBlock, James Gordon, Innocent Krause, Thomas Lotz, Mary Potts, Theodore Reese, Dunia Ritchey, Jason Simmelink, Columba Spence, Andrew Staursky, Andrew Wells

➤ **Church School begins next Sunday also.**

Fatherly Admonitions

Elder Ephraim of Philotheou Monastery, Mt. Athos and Arizona

What grandeur is the Divine Liturgy! When God looks upon His humble minister, how much does he feel the majesty of the Liturgy; how much do those who are commemorated profit! How much does God honor man, to descend with the angelic orders in every Liturgy and to nourish man with His all-holy Body and Blood!

For all has been restored to us. What things, bodily or spiritual, perishable or imperishable, do we lack? Nothing. For as He gives us each day His deified Body and Blood, what is higher than these? Certainly nothing. In what mysteries does God count man, made of earth, worthy to serve! O

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Wisdom from our Fathers

"Glory be to God for everything! Glory be to God for having created me in His image and likeness. Glory be to God for having redeemed me, the fallen. Glory be to God for having extended His solicitude to me, the unworthy. Glory be to God for having led me, the sinner, to repentance. Glory be to God for having offered me His holy words, like a lamp in a dark place, thus setting me on the path of righteousness. Glory be to God for having illumined the eyes of my heart. Glory be to God for having made known to me His holy name. Glory be to God for having washed away my sins through the bath of baptism. Glory be to God for having shown me the way to eternal bliss. This way is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who says of Himself, "I am the way and the truth and the life."

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

✘ "Men have fallen into unbelief because they have either completely lost the spirit of prayer, or never had it at all, nor have it now--in short, because they do not pray. The prince of this world has full scope for action in the hearts of such men; he becomes their master. They have not asked and do not ask God's grace in prayer (for God's gifts are only given to those who ask and seek), and thus their hearts, corrupt by nature, become dried up without the vivifying dew of the Holy Ghost, and at last from their extreme dryness they take fire, and blaze with the infernal flame of unbelief and various passions, and the Devil only knows how to inflame the passions that keep up this terrible fire, and triumphs at the sight of the ruin of the unfortunate souls that were redeemed by the blood of Him who has trampled the power of Satan under foot."

St. John of Kronstadt

✘ "It is true, therefore, that a man's life is not from his possessions, by reason of his having a superfluity; but very blessed, and of glorious hope is he who is rich towards God. And who is he? Evidently one who loveth not wealth, but virtue rather, and to whom few things are sufficient; one whose hand is open to the necessities of the indigent, comforting the sorrows of those in poverty, according to his means, and the utmost of his power. It is he who gathers in the storehouses that are above, and lays up treasures in heaven."

St. Cyril of Alexandria

✘ "Even the devil, having lost the knowledge of God, and so inevitably becoming ignorant in his ingratitude and pride, cannot of himself know what to do. On the contrary, he sees what God does to save us and maliciously learns from this and contrives similar things for our destruction. For he hates God and, being unable to fight Him directly, he fights against us who are in God's image, thinking to avenge himself on God in this way..."

St. Peter of Damascus

✘ "We should not ask for luxury and delight, but our essential bread, the basic and necessary things ... Let us pay attention to the following: The temporary consuming way of life is totally opposed to the spirit of this petition. It is not eucharistic but un-eucharistic. It is not brotherly but selfish and individualistic. It does not delight in austerity, the essential bread, but it pursues unreasonable extravagance and luxury. Nevertheless, we all know that our over-consuming society ultimately turns out to be our grave and leads to many injustices and social evils."

Archimandrite George of the Holy Mt.

✘ "And, indeed, we know that there are four cardinal virtues: temperance, justice, prudence and fortitude. He who is poor in spirit is not greedy; he who weeps is not proud, but is meek and tranquil; he who mourns is humble; he who is just does not deny what he knows is given jointly to all for us; he who is merciful confers of his own; he who bestows his own does not seek another's, nor does he contrive a trap for his neighbor. Then, the virtues are interwoven and interlinked, so that he who has one may be seen to have several, and a single virtue befits the Saints; but where virtue abounds, the reward too abounds."

St. Ambrose of Milan

what mysteries does God count man, made of earth, worthy to serve! O heavenly, inestimable love; one drop of divine love surpasses all the bodily, worldly love under the sun.

In the skete of little Saint Anne lived a certain hieromonk Savvas, called the famous Papa-Savvas. Father Joachim Spetsieres had him as spiritual father. The Empress of Russia Catherine also had him as spiritual father. He served the Liturgy every day; he was God-bearing, clairvoyant; a teacher of mental prayer.

Sometimes some people asked him, what moves you to commemorate so many names in the proskomidia? He answered, "When I was younger, we called the Bishop to consecrate the church above the Holy Monastery of Saint Dionysios"-for it was there that he first practiced hesychasm, with his elder Papa-Hilarion, himself also a famous spiritual father. "After the consecration the Bishop said to my Elder, 'May I give Papa Savvas some names to commemorate for 40 days, since he will serve the liturgy every day?' The Elder said to him, 'Give as many as you want.' And he gave me 62 names. When I had finished 39 liturgies and was going to do the 40th, I leaned against the analogion and waited for the Elder to come, to receive the time to serve the Liturgy. I fell asleep and saw in my sleep that I was wearing the priestly vestments and standing before the Holy Table. On the Holy Table was the holy Diskos of the Liturgy, and the holy Chalice full of the holy Blood of Christ. Then I saw Papa Stephanos come, take the paper from the proskomedion and the communion spoon, draw near to the Holy Table and put the paper upon it, near the Holy Diskos. Afterwards he dipped the spoon in the Holy Blood of Christ and erased a name. Again he dipped and erased another, and so forth until all were done and the paper was clean.

"Then I awoke and in a little while my Elder also came. Immediately I told him the above. The Elder said: "Didn't I tell you not to believe in dreams?" After the Liturgy he said to me again, "You are not worthy that the sins of these people be forgiven: through faith they received the forgiveness of sins." So this is the reason I commemorate the names of all."

Immense is the benefit of the Divine Liturgy, of commemorations, etc.: full of sure benefit for those who repented, who had a little yeast of the virtues, but who by reason of negligence, indolence, and occasional procrastination did not arrive on time to knead the bread of virtues; for these

people, the prayers of the Church and their own prayers, charity, philanthropy, etc., fill up their lack, through the multitude of God's mercies!

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem says, concerning all Liturgies, that all who are commemorated, for the sake of whom intercession is made, receive the greatest benefit.

The new venerable Photini, the one from Asia Minor, in one of her many ecstasies of soul saw a man of sacred appearance, like a priest, and he said to her, "My daughter, give your names to the priest; give him also the work of commemorating them, for the souls of those who have died receive great benefit! Be attentive that you not forget to give the names to the priest!"

The greatest charity, the greatest good, that which more than anything else relieves the soul which finds itself in the other world, is the sacrifice of the divine Lamb upon the Holy Table in the Holy Liturgy.

In the Old Testament it is written that the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer cleansed sinners from their transgressions of the Law; how much more will the Blood of Christ, says the Apostle Paul, cleanse us from all sin (Heb. 9:13).

Great, therefore, is the benefit, and this is because the innocent Lamb of God is sacrificed in order to purify men from their sins and to unbind them from the diverse bonds of captivity to the passions.

■ trans. by Elizabeth Theokritoff from the Greek: *Fatherly Admonitions*:
Elder Ephraim of Philotheou.

FOR CONSIDERATION

You sleep and time races on ahead. You are awake, and you have various concerns, but life is being used up, even if it escapes your notice. We are all of us running down one road or another, each of us speeding toward his end...Everything passes us by and is left behind...such is life. Neither its joys are forever nor its sorrows abiding. And the road is not your road, nor are present things yours.

■ *Saint Basil the Great*

“Quench Not the Spirit” - The Task of the Christian Educator

by the V. Rev. Vassily Zenkovsky, Director of Religious Education at St. Sergius Institute, Paris

The Christian educator faces a hard yet inspiring task: to awaken and strengthen the religious life of the child. The task is inspiring because religious growth brings forth in a young soul the flowering of all its spiritual gifts, unfolds a perspective of eternal life and brings the radiant image of Christ into a child's heart. There is an inexpressible beauty in childish faith, in the naive prayers of childhood and as we adults witness the awakening of this new life, we seem to share its brightness. But the task of the educator, penetrating into the world of the child's religion, is also hard, for almost everything in our present environment is opposed to spiritual life; everything leads the soul away from God and from His eternal truth. Technical achievements fascinate our young people and they grasp at all the advantages that technical progress puts within their reach. Life itself becomes a kind of technical assignment, for is not the whole world operating according to rational and well organized rules? Is it not sufficient to know these rules, to adjust oneself to them in order to find happiness and solve all conflicts? The tragic element of life is veiled, disguised, removed to some obscure corner, and it is difficult under these conditions to bring to children the message of the Cross, to disclose to them the need for spiritual effort. In our modern world, we adults are lulled by the sense of our civilization's environment; we become spiritually drowsy, trivial. The bright inner world of the child's fantasy is focused from the very beginning on the superficial, external aspects of life. Under such conditions, how can we awaken a thirst for spiritual life? How can we light the fire of a soul's yearning for eternal truth?

Religious education is often deformed, replaced by an appeal to the external faculties of the human soul—to the child's intelligence, to his emotions and his activity. Information about God, about Jesus Christ and the Theotokos, about Saints and church history, which are necessary as a means of bringing the soul nearer to the other-worldly values, grow to be an end in themselves; i.e., they remain unrelated to the process of coming nearer to God. Of course, this information and knowledge is necessary, for without knowledge our spiritual life cannot mature and take shape. But spiritual life as such does not consist in knowledge. The Russian philosopher Keslov made a good distinction between knowledge about God and knowledge of God: knowledge about God includes our ideas about God, the way we visualize our Lord's earthly life, His death and resurrection. But all this is only knowledge about God. Knowledge of God, on the other hand, is our life with Him and in Him. All the knowledge we acquire about God should merely serve to bring us nearer to him: knowledge about God should give shape and expression to those spiritual experiences through which our hearts are drawn nearer to God. But if there is no spiritual life in our heart, then all the knowledge we acquire about God remains worthless.

Spiritual life means standing before God. It means a living consciousness of God, a soul's unfolding.... Spiritual life is—seeking God, and finding Him, it is directing our entire being toward Him. It is living with Him and in Him. We can and should give sufficient attention to the external forms of life, but our soul should be withdrawn in God. We can and should take care of our families, carry out our social and professional duties, but over and above this we should be constantly conscious of our Heavenly Father whom we love and to Whom we surrender our soul completely.

Spiritual life is hidden within us. Saint Peter spoke of the hidden man of the heart, of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. Yes, spiritual life remains hidden in a man's heart. This is precisely why it is possible to slumber spiritually, i.e., to live in such a way that the entire power of our attention, all our spiritual forces are devoted to external values and we remain unconcerned about the need of our spirit to live with God. Many good and kind people remain spiritually asleep and sometimes the moment of awakening comes only with the end of their life.

But if spiritual life remains hidden, it is at the same time unavoidable and indestructible. On the surface of our soul, in our conscious mind, we are completely possessed by externals, but underneath this busy and agitated existence, in the hidden depths of our being, there goes on a process of spiritual life. Unfortunately, it remains inactive and does not influence our conscious life and our behavior. Spiritual life in a human being is determined by the presence in each soul of the image of God. The radiance of grace is constantly penetrating our soul, but if our spiritual life is suppressed into an air-tight compartment, this power of grace cannot affect us; cannot help us. This is the evil of our times in this secularized world in which our entire culture is separated from God and from his Church. Science, art economic life, politics, social activity--all these forms of human activity have become autonomous, have drifted away from God.

Under these circumstances, how can we establish a link between the external life of our heart and mind and the hidden life of the spirit? This is the basic and ineffably difficult task that faces the Christian educator. Religious instruction is, after all, only a part of religious education. Religious instruction is important, but it will be fruitful only if a process of spiritual life goes on, however faintly, if the hidden life of the spirit is not completely separated from the rest of our inner life. The very difficulty of Christian education, its very toil, consists in reestablishing in the human being its spiritual oneness, wholeness, in opposition to the trend of our times. The Christian educator has only one way of achieving this: his own spiritual life. Only if the educator lives himself in his own spirit can he awaken, call forth the hidden power of the spirit in a young heart. We have to "instruct" our children, we have to tell them about God's creation of the world, about man's happy existence in paradise and his fall, about the promise of the Messiah, about Mary the Mother of our Lord, about the Incarnation of the God of gods, and about the new life He brought us. But all this knowledge, however necessary it is, can remain a dead capital in our heart, without illuminating or vitalizing our spirit. This is the common danger faced by the modern Christian world, by modern culture: Christ is not forgotten, but He is not a living experience; the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is not sought after "First", as the Lord taught us. Other, external values, are the object of this seeking.

Yes, the path of the Christian educator is hard indeed. It is a difficult task to establish a link between the hidden life of the heart and our external active life, with our superficial emotional experiences. The truth was expressed a long time ago: "Education is first of all self-education." We cannot simply "teach Sunday school," give our children religious instruction, if we ourselves do not live the truth of the Gospel. We can light a fire in the hearts of our pupils only if our own hearts are aglow.

It is a difficult task, but there are few joys greater than the one we feel when we are able to reach the hidden life of a young soul. When we come in touch with it ourselves we gain depth and enlightenment. Anyone who has experienced this joy in his work with children, has found his vocation. Let the words of St. Paul remain alive in his heart: "Quench not the Spirit" (I Thes. 5:19).

This and That

The “Tolerant” Islam of the Crimean Tatars (excerpt)

Srdja Trikovic, *Chronicles*

The term “the Crimean Raids” is common to Ukraine’s, Russia’s, and Poland’s history. They started when the Crimean Muslims became independent of the Mongolian Golden Horde in 1441 and they continued, under the Ottoman rule, on an almost annual basis, until Catherine the Great conquered the peninsula and established Russian rule in 1774...

A Crimean Muslim author, Hacı Mehmed Senai, mentioned that after a successful raid into Poland and Ukraine during the Chmielnicki rebellion (1648) each Tartar soldier killed 10-15 captives for his own amusement.

Mikhalon the Lithuanian wrote around 1550 in his book *De moribus Tatarorum Lituatorum et Moscorum*: “The Crimean Tatars have much more slaves than livestock and supply them to other lands. Many ships loaded with arms, clothes and horses came to them one after another from beyond the Pontus and from Asia, and left with slaves... These plunderers ... also have slaves for their own estates and to satisfy at home their cruelty and waywardness. We often find among these unfortunate people very strong men, who, if not castrated, are branded on the forehead or on the cheek, and are tormented by day at work and by night in dungeons.”

Marcin Broniewski (Broniovius), who was an envoy of the Polish King Stephen Batory to the Crimean Khan in 1578-79, described how the Crimean Tatars conducted their military raids, captured and tortured their prisoners. Winter, when all marches, rivers, and muddy roads were frozen solid, was the usual time for raids. They avoided battle, moving quickly from one place to another and trying to seize as many captives and as much booty as possible, while plundering and burning everything they met on their way. During a raid, each Tatar had two or more horses for increasing the army’s mobility.

According to Broniewski, the Crimean Tatars did not till the land because slaves were so cheap and plentiful. The Crimean vizir Sefer Gazi Aga thus noted that the slaves were often “a plough and a scythe” of their owners. Most terrible, perhaps, was the fate of the galley-slaves, whose sufferings were poeticized in many Ukrainian folk songs (*dumas*). The Turkish word “*kadirga*” (galley) morphed into *katorga*, became a synonym for “prison” in the Russian language. The captives were exported to the markets of the Ottoman Empire under dreadful conditions.

The Tartar-Muslim Crimean raids, justified under the Sharia law, were a key drain of the human and economic resources of both Russia and Poland, engaged as they were in fighting each other in the 17th century. Those incessant raids prevented the settlement of the “Wild Fields” (*dikoye pole*) of today’s Ukraine and southwestern Russia until the late 18th century. Only a hundred years after Catherine took Crimea, that region was the breadbasket of Europe.

According to a Russian tsarist-era historian, “If you consider how much time and spiritual and material strength was wasted in the monotonous, brutal, toilsome and painful pursuit of these wily steppe predators, one need not ask what people in Eastern Europe were doing while those of Western Europe advanced in industry and commerce, in civil life and in the arts and sciences.”

If modern sculpture were placed in a junkyard, art critics couldn’t find it. Most of what we are told are great works are great works only because we are told that they are. – Fred Reed

Progressivism is an ideology of highly selective compassion. – Theodore Dalrymple

“Everyone wants to save the world but no one wants to help mom with the dishes.”

~ P.J. O’Rourke

Wise Counsels of Elder Ambrose of Optina

In order to give the necessary understanding about the power and importance of repentance, Staretz Ambrose would say: "What times have befallen us! Before, when somebody sincerely repented his sins, he changed his sinful lifestyle and lived chastely. But now it often happens, that during confession a person would detail all his sins and then continue his lifestyle unchanged."

Staretz imparted another instructional narrative: "A demon in the appearance of a human was sitting and dangling his feet. Seeing him with his spiritual eyes, he asked him: "Why aren't you doing something?" The demon replied: "Well there is nothing for me to do but to dangle my legs, because people are doing everything better than me."

"It happens," Batushka used to say, "that although our sins are forgiven through repentance, our conscience does not cease to reproach us. As a comparison, the reposed Staretz Macarius used to show his finger that was cut a long time ago: the pain had long gone but the scar remains. That is exactly the same that after repentance, the scars remain, i.e., admonitions of the conscience."

"Although God forgives the sins of those repenting, every sin demands a cleansing punishment. For example, after Christ said to the wise thief: "Today you will be with Me in Paradise," his knees were broken. And what was it like to hang on his hands only, with broken kneecaps, for some three hours? It meant that he had to cleanse himself through suffering. The cleansing of those sinners who die immediately after repentance, is done through the prayers of the Church and those present, while those living, have to cleanse themselves through a change in their lifestyles and charity that would cover their sins."

SALVATION THROUGH CONCESSION

Source: Life of St. Pachomius (commemorated on May 15th).

There was a small monastery about two miles to the south of Tabennesi. The father of that monastery would often come to see our Elder Pachomius because he loved him very much; and the words of God he heard from his mouth he would repeat to his own monks so that they too might hear God's commandments.

It happened that a brother of his monastery asked for a certain rank, and he replied to that brother, "Our father, Abba Pachomius, warned me not to do this because you are not yet worthy of that thing."

The brother grew angry and dragged him along, saying, "Come, let us go to him, and he shall have to prove that to me." The other followed him in amazement and sorrow wondering what was going to happen. When the two of them and one other came to Abba Pachomius, they found him busy building a part of the monastery wall. The brother approached our father Pachomius and said to him very angrily, "Come down and give me proof of my sin, O liar Pachomius!"

Elder Pachomius, thanks to his long suffering, gave him no word whatever in reply. The other went on and said to him, "Who compelled you to lie, you who pride yourself on clear vision while your light is darkness?" The man of God, Abba Pachomius, understood the wiles of the devil who was in that man, and he said to him respectfully, "I have sinned, forgive me. Do you never sin yourself?" And at once the brother's wicked anger calmed down.

Then our father Pachomius took the father of that monastery aside and questioned him, "What happened to this brother?" He answered him, "Forgive me, my lord father. The fact is that this man asked me for a thing that he does not deserve. I knew that he would not obey me, so I quoted you to him by name so he might perhaps have nothing to say. For I know that nothing is hidden from you. And behold, he has added an evil deed to his wickedness."

Then our father Abba Pachomius said to him, "Listen to me; give him that office so that by this means we may snatch his soul out of the enemy's hands. For if we do good to a bad man, he comes thereby to have a perception of the good. This is God's love, to take pains for one another." When they heard this teaching of our holy father Pachomius, they went away very comforted and giving thanks to God. When they arrived at their monastery, the father of the monastery gave the rank to the brother as he had asked, in accordance with our father Abba Pachomius' instruction.

A few days later, that brother came to regret his fault. Then he went back to our holy father Abba Pachomius, kissed his hands and feet, and said to him, "Truly, O man of God, you are much greater than what we hear of you every day. For the Lord knows that if you had not been patient with me the day I insulted you, sinner that I am, and if you had spoken some harsh word to me, I would have rejected the monastic life and gone back to the world. Blessed are you, O man of God, my lord father, for thanks to your patience and graciousness, the Lord has brought me back to life."