



## *Fire & Light*

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

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✠ **September 16, 2012** ✠

**Postfeast of the**

**Elevation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross**

**Great-Martyr Euphemia the All-Praised of Chalcedon (304)**

**St. Cyprian of Carthage (258) St. Dorotheos of Egypt (4<sup>th</sup> C)**

**Martyr Ludmilla, Grandmother of St. Wenceslaus, Prince of the Czechs (927)**

**St. Edith of Wilton (984) St. Cyprian of Kiev (1406)**

When we make the sign of the Cross we should remember that:

*"By this sign I was baptized.*

*By this sign I live.*

*By this sign I conquer.*

*By this sign I shall die."*

⇒ *Congratulations and Many Years! To our Youth Psalm-a-thoners!*

✠ Today – Church School begins / Council Meeting / Junia Boyer - baby shower

✠ October 7 – Annual Parish Meeting / Oct. 28 - 35th Anniversary Banquet

"The Most Holy Mother of God has appeared and spoken to many people in recent times. She has said that she prays to her Son for us, but that there is no repentance among us. She has instructed us on many occasions to repent, because time is accelerating and hard days are ahead for Christians. She tells us that we will have to repent so as not to share the fate of those who have fallen away from God."

Elder Thaddeus of Serbia (+2003)

### **The Holy Fathers on the Cross**

✠ St John Chrysostom wrote: "The Cross is the proof of the love of God, the unshaken wall, the unconquered weapon, the security of the rich, the richness of the poor, the rebuke of the passion, the kingdom of virtue, the wonderful and strange sign. The Cross has opened paradise, and has guided the human race from impending disaster to the kingdom of God". Another Church Father wrote: On the Cross Jesus broke the power of sin and Satan. On the Cross Jesus gave Himself for us. On the Cross Jesus opened the gates of Heaven and won eternal life with God for us. On the Cross Jesus saved us,"

✠ St. John of Damascus said; "The death of Christ on the Cross clothed us with righteousness, wisdom and with the "power of God".

✠ St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) wrote: "As they (Apostles) were looking on, so we too gaze on His wounds as He hangs. We see His blood as He dies. We see the price offered by the Redeemer, touch the scars of His Resurrection, His heart is made bare open, as it were, in love to you. His arms are extended that He may embrace you. His whole body is displayed for your redemption. Ponder how great these things are"...as He was once fixed to the Cross in every part of His body for you, so He may now be fixed in every part of your soul."

⇒ The early Church Fathers had a story about the devil saying, "Three things I fear in Christians; that in which they bathe (Baptism); that which they eat in Church (the Eucharist), and that which they wear around their necks (the Cross)."

## ST. GABRIEL of Pskov : AN EXHORTATION TO THOSE WHO ARE LABORING

Run, run, my beloved in the Lord! Run—the Master Christ is opening His all-joyous embrace! Run, that you might overtake Christ, and He shall show you His own sweetness—the grace of His Spirit. He will come and make His abode within you; the Kingdom of Heaven will dwell in your hearts. Then—having purified your souls, having consecrated your strength, having acquired a mind that is neither restless nor carried away by the frightfulness of thoughts—honor and love the Creator and Master of all more than anything else.

Turn all your desires toward Him, touch Him with fear and trembling, taste His immortal supper, sense the spiritual fragrance of His raiment, and you will come to know that there is nothing more beautiful, more pleasant, sweeter, mightier, or wiser than God, Who can give one life and make one immortal and incorruptible. Do not be disturbed, my dear ones, that, having begun to labor, you feel as though in a waterless desert, far from the promised land that flows with milk and honey.

On the contrary, encourage yourself to further labors so that, although you are in the desert, you will be delivered from slavery to the noetic pharaoh—the enemy of our salvation—you will cross the stormy sea of the passions on dry land, and will stand by the rock flowing with living water, at the feet of Christ our God Himself. Gaze upon Him with eyes of faith and cry out to Him: "Give us this water, that we never thirst!" (cf. John 4:14–15), and from His rib He will pour forth His Blood and living water. They will confirm you in faith and make you ready to die for Christ and His commandments—to die joyfully, with the conviction that such a death (suffering) for Christ will bring forth life (cf. Matt. 16:2); poverty will be turned to riches; humble origins and nothingness will be turned to true glory and eminence. Then, having nothing, you will possess all.

This is the state of those who have already come to know Christ, who have acquired His inscrutable riches. Oh, how happy are they who look upon all that is visible as dust and smoke: faith in Christ not only will enable them to disregard life's pleasures, but will even enable them to patiently and placidly endure every temptation, sorrow, affliction, and unpleasantness that comes against them, waiting until God deigns to look upon them. Imitating David, they say to themselves: With patience I waited patiently for the Lord, and He was attentive unto me (Ps. 39:i)—that is, in enduring afflictions, I have hope that the Lord will help me; that He, seeing how I look for help from Him without wavering, will look upon me and show me His mercy.

My dear ones in the Lord ! You know how Christ praises those who patiently strive toward Him : "Blessed are they who thirst, for they shall be filled" (cf. Matt. :6). I believe in this true promise of God, and hope that you will be consoled by Him, for you too are seeking and thirsting for His Kingdom and His righteousness. If only you will not begin to murmur in your thirst and will patiently wait for God's help—then God's grace will visit your patience, and an end will come to your purifying wanderings through the desert, and the inheritance of the promised land will begin, for this is the end of all the hopes and strivings of man, the summit of his perfection. Those who have not cleansed themselves from the impurities of Egypt, who still miss the Egyptian meat, cannot enter into that rest; but those who are humble and have given themselves over to the will of God will certainly enter therein. They will come to know the Hand of God, which is concerned for their salvation; hence, total faith will be manifest in them, and along with faith, hope. Knowledge will be revealed to them, and the fear of God mixed with love for Him will abide in them.

## **ON SUFFERINGS AND OUR CROSS**

*By St. Ambrose of Optina (19th c.)*

- God does not create crosses for people, i.e., cleansing spiritual and physical sufferings. And however heavy that cross may be for that individual, the tree that produces its timber grows from the soil of his heart.
- If a person walks a straight path, for him there is no cross. However, when he starts to lurch from one side to the other, then different circumstances appear which push him back onto the right track. These elements constitute a cross for a person. Of course they occur differently, according to the individual's needs.
- "Sometimes the cross is a mental one, confusing the individual with sinful thoughts. But the person is not at fault if he doesn't accede to them." The Elder cited an example: "Once a female ascetic was agitated for a long period over having unchaste thoughts. When Christ appeared and drove them away from her, she cried out to Him: 'Sweet Jesus, where were You up to this time?' Christ replied, 'I was in your heart.' She said, 'How can that be? But my heart was filled with unchaste thoughts.' And Christ said to her, 'Therefore understand that I was in your heart, and that you had no disposition toward those unclean thoughts, but even endeavored to free yourself from them. Not being able to do so, you suffered over them, thereby preparing a place for me in your heart.'"
- Sometimes suffering is sent to an innocent person, so that he, as with the example of Christ, suffers for others. Christ Himself suffered for people. Likewise, His Apostles were tortured for the Church and the people. To have absolute love means to suffer for your close ones.

## **ON THE CROSS OF CHRIST**

*From the teachings of Eldress Gavrillia (20th c.)*

"As I have been telling you, we should take all our sorrow and place it at the Feet of Christ, because He suffered on the Cross for our sins, and for our sorrows, and for our problems, and for all the gloom of our souls. For everything! And when you remember that the Blood of our Lord is cleansing us from everything, that is the end of it. Nothing of these exists anymore. If you take the time to think through this thoroughly, then you will understand. There are limits to what we can do.

We cannot give help to all. We cannot be physically present both here and there. In spirit, of course, we can be everywhere. This is exactly why you must convert your sensibilities into prayer. Something wonderful will happen then. Because you could take in your heart all those in need of help and place them at the Feet of Christ, who was crucified for you, for me , for all the world." USED E-mail Dec. 9, 2004

- "Love is persecuted, Love is sacrificed, Love is on the Cross -- no matter what you do. But the joy of the Cross is in the Resurrection. This is why you feel joy even though you are on the Cross. You see the joy of the Confessors, you see those who were cast into the fire, those who were crucified, how they sang hymns and glorified God."

### ***On bearing our Cross...*** **COUNSELS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS**

From ages and generations God's way is carved out by the Cross and death. Where did you get this idea of treading the way of God in comfort? . . . The way of God is a daily cross. No one has ascended to Heaven through the easy life. We know where the easy way leads.

- *St. Isaac the Syrian (6th c. )*

Remember that each of us has his own cross. The Golgotha of this cross is our heart: it is being lifted or implanted through a zealous determination to live according to the Spirit of God. Just as the salvation of the world is by the Cross of God, so our own salvation is by our crucifixion on our own cross.

- *St. Theophan the Recluse (19th c.)*

### **ON THE POWER OF THE CROSS . . .**

Abba Dorotheos the Thebite once sent his disciple to get water from the well. No sooner had the disciple uncovered the well to draw water, than he saw a huge poisonous snake inside. Excited, he ran to his Elder.

"Abba! We are done for. Our water is poisoned. I found an asp in the well."

"And if the Evil One decides to put asps in all of the wells, will you die from thirst?" The Elder asked, shaking his head at the cowardice of his disciple.

Afterwards the Elder went to the well, picked up the bucket, and drew the water himself. He made the sign of the Cross and he said, "The malice of the Enemy cannot endure."

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# **ON THE UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN – Part 5**

## **Elder Porphyrios of Athens (+1991)**

Respond to the love of the children with discernment. And once they love you, you will be able to lead them to Christ. You will become the means. Let your love be genuine. Don't love them in a human way, as parents usually do. This does not help them. Love in prayer, love in Christ. This is truly beneficial. Pray for each child you see, and God will send His grace and will unite the child to Him. Before you enter the classroom, especially difficult classes, repeat the prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ...' And as you enter, embrace all the children with your gaze, pray and then start your lesson, offering your whole self. By making this offering in Christ, you will be filled with joy. And in this way both you and the children will be sanctified. You will live in the love of Christ and of His Church, because you will become good during your work.

If a pupil causes a problem, make a general observation first, such as:

'Children, we're all here for a lesson, for a serious business. I'm here to help you. You are working hard to succeed in life, and I, who love you all very much, am also working hard. So please be quiet so that we can achieve our aim.'

And while you're saying this don't look at the pupil who's misbehaving. If he continues, address yourself to him, not with anger, but with seriousness and resolution. You need to be watchful and to keep control of the class to be able to influence their souls. The children are not at fault if they cause problems. It is the grown-ups who are to blame.

Don't speak much about Christ and God to the children, but pray to God for the children. Words enter the ears, but prayer enters the heart. Listen to a secret. The first day you enter a class, don't have a lesson. Speak to the children warmly and clearly and behave with love towards them. To begin with don't speak to them at all about God or about the soul. This comes later. But on the day when you decide to speak to them about God, prepare yourself well and say:

'There is a subject about which many people have great doubts. It is the subject 'God'. What's your opinion about this?'

And then you will have a discussion. On another day you will broach the subject of the 'soul'.

### **Is there such a thing as the "soul"?**

Then you can talk about evil from a philosophical point of view. Tell them that we have two selves, a good and a bad. We must cultivate the good self. It is the good self that desires progress, kindness and love. We need to wake up this good self in order to become right-minded people in society. Remember that hymn: 'O soul, my soul, arise, why are you sleeping?' Don't tell them it like this, but with other words, for example: 'Be bright and awake for good things - for education, for love. Only love makes all things beautiful and fills our life and gives it meaning. Our wicked self desires laziness and indifference. But that takes all flavor from life and takes away all meaning and beauty.'

All these things, however, require preparation. Love demands sacrifices and very often sacrifice of time. Make sure you have mastery of your subject and are ready to give to the children. Be prepared and say everything with love and above all with joy. Show them all your love and know what you want and what you are saying. But how to behave towards children is an art. I heard a lovely story about this.

Listen. There was a teacher who was being tormented by the behavior of one of the boys and wanted to expel him from the school. In the meantime, however, a new teacher arrived and took

over the class. The new teacher was told in advance about the problem pupil. He also heard that the boy in question was mad about bicycles. So, on the second day, when he entered the classroom he said:

'Children, I've got a problem. I live far from the school and I want to get a bicycle so that I don't tire my feet out every day walking here, but I don't know how to ride one. Could any one of you teach me how to ride a bike?'

The mischievous boy jumped up at once and said, 'I'll teach you, Sir.'

'Do you know how to ride a bike?'

'Yes, Sir.'

From that moment on they became best friends, to the point that the old teacher got upset when he saw them. He felt a sense of inadequacy that he had been unable to evoke respect from the boy.

There are often orphan children at a school. It's a hard thing to be an orphan. A child, who's deprived of its parents, especially at an early age, becomes unhappy in life. But if it acquires spiritual parents in Christ and our Holy Lady, it becomes a saint. Treat orphan children with love and understanding, but above all bring them into contact with Christ and the Church.

### **Teach the children to seek God's help**

The medicine and great secret for children's progress is humility. Trust in God gives perfect security. God is everything. No one can say that I am everything. That cultivates egotism. God desires us to lead children to humility. Without humility neither we nor children will achieve anything. You need to be careful when you encourage children. You shouldn't say to a child, 'You'll succeed, you're great, you're young, you're fearless, you're perfect!' This is not good for the child. You can tell the child to pray, and say, 'The talents you have, have been given to you by God, Pray and God will give you strength to cultivate them and in that way you will succeed. God will give you His grace.' That is the best way. Children should learn to seek God's help in everything.

Praise is harmful to children. What does Scripture say? O my people, those who call you blessed lead you astray, and pervert the path of your feet. The person who praises us leads us astray and perverts the paths of our life. How wise God's words are! Praise does not prepare children for any difficulties in life and they grow up badly adjusted; they lose their way and in the end they become failures. Now the world has gone haywire. Little children are constantly being praised. We are told not to scold children, not to go against their will and not to impose on them. The child learns to expect this, however, and is unable to deal maturely with even the slightest difficulty. As soon as it encounters opposition, it is defeated and drained of all strength.

Prime responsibility for the failure of children in life lies with their parents and thereafter with their teachers. They praise them constantly. They fill them with egotistical words. They do not lead them to the spirit of God and they alienate them from the Church. When the children grow up a little and go to school with this egotism they abandon and disdain religion and they lose their respect for God, for their parents and for everyone. They become stubborn, hard and unfeeling, with no respect for religion or for God. We have produced a generation of egotists and not of Christians.

## **From a Review of *Sword of the Prophet*, a book by Serge Trikovic**

Paul Eidelberg

I studied the Koran a great deal..... I came away from that study with the conviction that by and large there have been few religions in the world as deadly to men as that of Muhammad. As far as I can see, it is the principal cause of the decadence so visible today in the Muslim world, and, though less absurd than the polytheism of old, its social and political tendencies are in my opinion infinitely more to be feared, and I therefore regard it as a form of decadence rather than a form of progress in relation to paganism itself.

Alexis De Tocqueville (19<sup>th</sup> C), quoted by Serge Trikovic, *The Sword of the Prophet*

The open-ended population explosion in every predominantly Muslim country in the world and the demographic collapse of Europe provide the context of immigration trends, prompting the conviction among many Muslims that tomorrow belongs to Islam. Trikovic

“On the Prophet's own admission, Islam stands or falls with the person of Muhammad, a deeply flawed man by the standards of his own society, as well as those of the Old and New Testaments ... and even by the law of which he claimed to be the divinely appointed medium and custodian. The problem of Islam, and the problem of the rest of the world with Islam, ... is the religion's claim that the words and acts of its prophet provide the universally valid standard of morality as such, for all time and all men.”  
Trikoivic

Our author (S Trikovic) sums up his assessment of Muhammad with the words of Sir William Muir (1819-1905), one of the world's greatest orientalists: “the sword of Muhammad and the Qur'an are the most fatal enemies of civilization, liberty, and truth which the world has yet known.” No academician today would dare such a judgment.

Paul Eidelberg, review of *The Sword of the Prophet*

Thanks to Saudi Arabia, thousands of mosques have sprung up throughout the U.S. and Europe. Their predominant message? Islam is the wave of the future. Despite Islam's openly declared objectives, the West refrains from restricting Muslim immigration and from enforcing the laws against Muslims who exploit democratic values to advance Islam's totalitarian ends. Allied with these Muslims are post-modern liberals. These liberals are motivated by a hatred of Western civilization, primarily its biblical roots. Paul Eidelberg, review of *The Sword of the Prophet*

“Thirteen centuries of religious discrimination (by Islam), causing suffering and death of countless millions, have been covered by the myth of Islamic 'tolerance,' that is hurtful to the few descendants of the victims as it is useless as a means of appeasing latter-day jihadists.”

Trikoivic

“Islam,” Trikoivic concludes, “is a collective psychosis seeking to become global, and any attempt to compromise with such madness is to become part of the madness oneself.” But what most threatens the West is not Islam so much as the West's own “loss of Faith, and ... the arrogant doctrine—rampant in 'the West' for three centuries now—that man can solve the dilemma of his existence by his unaided intellect alone. If that loss is not reversed, the game is over anyway—proving that where God retreats, Allah advances.”

*The Sword of the Prophet*

## ***This and That***

### **Religious persecution from Russia's liberals – On the recent desecration of Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow:**

Alexander Shchipkov, chairman of the Club of Orthodox Christian Journalists, whom the Voice of Russia characterizes as “a prominent blogger who had to pay dearly for his religious beliefs back in the Soviet times,” regards the group’s cathedral “protest” as a “a cold, bloodless terrorist act.”

“The people who stand behind (the protestors) want the church to adopt a secular system of values – moral relativism, ecumenism, political correctness and other rules of consumer society. The church will never agree to this kind of ‘secular Reformation,’” Shchipkov added, according to the Voice of Russia.

...“They chose the church as a target for attack, as Orthodox priests are actively supporting the traditional family and the telling of truth about homosexuality,” he continued. “Obviously, in the spread of the ‘culture of death’ this group and all of their actions are a well-planned social project to discredit the church and the destruction of the natural family.”

“That is why today the anti-Christian lobby is expending huge resources in order to present this group as ‘martyrs.’ In fact we are dealing with dangerous anti-moral ‘terrorists’ fighting against society, churches and our children,” he added.

#### **Above Criticism?**

Israel's alleged moral superiority is a myth... It is almost impossible to criticize the Jewish state without being accused of religious bigotry, which is just how Israel's partisans want it. In the halls of Congress and the corridors of power, Israel is above criticism.

“No discussion of how the Israel Lobby operates would be complete without examining one of its most powerful weapons: the charge of anti-Semitism. Anyone who criticizes Israel's actions or says that pro-Israel groups have significant influence over U.S. Middle East policy – an influence that AIPAC celebrates – stand a good chance of getting labeled an anti-Semite. In fact, anyone who says that there is an Israel Lobby runs the risk of being charged with anti-Semitism, even though the Israeli media themselves refer to America's 'Jewish Lobby.' In effect, the Lobby boasts of its own power and then attacks anyone who calls attention to it.

~ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt

#### **THE CONSTITUTION**

- They keep talking about drafting a Constitution for Iraq...why don't we just give them ours? It was written by a lot of really smart guys, it has worked for over 200 years, and we're not using it anymore.  
- anon.

—As we enter ever more fully into the “brave new world” of creating the children of our choosing, we need to look at the consequences of these actions: “The pricey manufacture of ‘custom kids’ [by genetic enhancement] would in fact undermine the value and dignity of human life by reducing these children to customized products like cars or computers. Rather than surprise and appreciation for the uniqueness and mystery of each individual, these custom-made children would be judged by how they conform to preset specifications.

(Marilyn Coors, Ph.D., Respect Life Program, 2005-6)

The frustrating thing is that those who are attacking religion are doing it in the name of tolerance, freedom and open-mindedness. Question: Isn't the real truth that they are intolerant of religion. They refuse to tolerate its importance in our lives.  
Ronald Reagan

**I'm afraid of a world run by adults who were never spanked as kids  
and got trophies just for participating... - Anonymous**