



St. Xenia Parish News

170 North Lowell Street, Methuen, MA 01844

July - August 2016

Written Opinion of Metropolitan Athanasios of Lemesou, Church of Cyprus

To the Holy and Great Pan-Orthodox Synod of the most Holy Orthodox Church,

Your All-Holiness, Your Beatitudes, holy primates, holy brothers,

Concerning the text of the 5th Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Meeting which occurred in Chambesy-Genera from 10th to the 17th of October in 2015 and which bears the title “Decision-Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World”, I have to state the following:

I am in total agreement with the first three articles of the text. However, at article 4 onwards, I have made the following observations: “The Orthodox Church has always prayed “for the union of all” – I believe this to mean the return to and union with Her of all those who broke away and distanced themselves from Her, of heretics and schismatics, once they have renounced their heresy and schism and flee from those things with repentance and are integrated and joined – united – with the Orthodox Church in accordance with the teachings of the sacred canons

The Orthodox Church of Christ never lost the “unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit” and does not accept the theory of the restoration of the unity of those “who believe in Christ,” because it believes that the unity of those who believe in Christ already exists in the unity of all of Her baptized children, between themselves and with Christ, in Her correct faith, where no heretics or schismatics are present, for which reason She prays for their return to Orthodoxy in repentance.

I believe that what is stated in article 5 regarding “the lost unity of Christians” is incorrect, because the Church as God’s people, united among themselves and with the Head of the Church which is Christ, never lost this unity and therefore is not in need of rediscovering or seeking it, because it always was, is, and will be just as the Church of Christ has never ceased nor will cease to exist. What happened is that groups, peo-

ples or individuals left the body of the Church and the Church prays, and is required to try through mission, that they all return in repentance to the Orthodox Church via the canonical route. In other words, there do not exist other Churches, only heresies and schisms, should we wish to be more precise in our definitions. Put simply, if we wish to be precise in our definitions, there are no other Churches; there are only heresies and schisms. The expression “towards the restoration of Christian unity” is incorrect because the unity of Christians – the members of the Church of Christ – has never been broken, as long as they remain united to the Church. Separation from the Church and flight from the Church have unfortunately happened numerous times due to heresies and schisms, but there was never a loss of the internal unity of the Church.

I am led to wonder why in this text there are multiple references to “Churches” and “Confessions?” What is the difference? What element characterizes some groups as Churches while others are named Confessions? What is a Church as opposed to a heretical or schismatic group or confession? [As for ourselves], we confess [that there is] one Church and all other groups are [merely] heresies and schisms.

I maintain that giving the title “Church” to heretical or schismatic communities is entirely incorrect from a theological, dogmatic and canonical perspective because the Church of Christ is one, as also stated in Article 1, and we cannot refer to a heretical or schismatic community or group outside the Orthodox Church as “Church.”

At no point does this text state that the only way that leads to union with the Church is solely the repentant return of heretics and schismatics to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, which according to Article 1 is our Orthodox Church.

The reference to the “understanding of the tradition of the ancient Church” gives the impression that there is an ontological difference between the ancient Church of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the genuine

continuation of the same until the present day, namely our Orthodox Church. We believe that there is absolutely no difference between the Church of the 21st century and the Church of the 1st century, because one of the attributes of the Church is the fact we also confess in the Symbol of Faith, namely that it is Apostolic.

Article 12 states that the common purpose of the theological dialogues is “the final restoration of unity in correct faith and love”. This gives the impression that we Orthodox are seeking our restoration to correct faith and the unity of love, as if we had lost the right faith and are seeking to discover it through the theological dialogues with the heterodox. I maintain that this theory is theologically unacceptable for us all.

The reference of the text to “the World Council of Churches” gives me the opportunity to make a complaint against occasional syncretistic, uncanonical events which took place therein, but also against its title, since it regards the Orthodox Church as “one of the Churches” or a branch of the one Church which seeks and strives for Her realization at the World Council of Churches. For us, however, the Church of Christ is one and unique, as we confess in the Symbol of Faith, and not many.

The view that the preservation of the genuine Orthodox faith is guaranteed only through the synodical system as the only “competent and final authority on matters of faith” is exaggerated and ignores the truth that many synods throughout Church history taught and espoused incorrect and heretical doctrines, and it was the faithful people which rejected them and preserved the Orthodox faith and championed the Orthodox Confession. Neither a synod without the faithful people, the fullness of the Church, nor the people without the synod of Bishops, is able to regard themselves as the Body of Christ and Church of Christ and to correctly express the experience and doctrine of the Church.

I understand, your All-Holiness and my holy brothers of this Synod, that the use of hard or insulting language cannot be made in ecclesiastical texts of this kind, nor do I think anyone desires the use of that form of expression. However, the truth must be expressed with precision and clarity, though naturally with pastoral discernment and genuine love towards all. We owe it also to our brothers who find themselves in heresy or schism to be entirely honest with them, and with love and pain to pray and do everything possible to bring about their return to the Church of Christ.

I humbly maintain that texts of such importance and prestige as those of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church must be very carefully formulated with theological and canonical precision in order that these ambiguities or untested theological terms do not also give rise to incorrect expressions which could lead to misconceptions and distortions of the correct attitude of the Orthodox Church. Moreover, in order for a Synod to be valid and canonical, it must not depart in any way from the spirit and teaching of the Holy Synods which preceded it, the teaching of the Holy Fathers and Holy Scriptures, and it must be free from any ambiguity in the precise expression of the correct faith.

Never did the holy Fathers nor ever in the holy canons or rulings of the sacred Ecumenical or Local Synods, are heretical or schismatic groups referred to as churches. If the heretics are indeed churches, where is the single One Church of Christ and the Apostles?

I humbly express my disagreement with the fact that the practice of all Sacred Synods until the present of allowing each bishop a vote is abolished. There was never before a system of “one Church, one vote,” which renders the members of the Holy and Great Synod, with the exception of the primates, mere decorative items by refusing them the right to vote.

I have several other disagreements and objections concerning other points in the texts [of the Synod], but I do not wish to tire you any further, and for this reason, I am limiting myself to those issues which I consider to be of the utmost importance and [concerning which] I humbly express my disagreement, my perspective and my faith.

I do not wish with what I have written to grieve anyone nor do I desire to appear to teach or judge my brothers and fathers in Christ. Simply, I feel the necessity of expressing what my conscience dictates to me.

I ask that my views be recorded in the acts of the Holy and Great Pan-Orthodox Synod.

Seeking your holy prayers, I remain

The least among the brethren in Christ

[signature]

Athanasios of Lemesou

June 2016

St. Xenia of St. Petersburg Orthodox Church is a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, under the omophorion of Met. HILARION of Eastern America & New York. The parish newsletter is published bi-monthly under the direction of the V. Rev. Michael Crowley. In order to ensure timely delivery to our far-flung parish, please submit all notices by the 15th of the month prior to publication to Father Michael at frmichael@stxenia.org. Thank you.

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Confessions on Saturday during Vigil, on Sunday during the Hours, and by appointment.

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Trapeza Schedule

* = strict fast

If you cannot be at church on your assigned Sunday, please contact someone directly to switch. If you are not on this list and would like to help, please add your name on the hard copy posted in the church hall and you will be added for the next round. If you have any questions, contact Judy Engalichev -- dujykot@comcast.net.

Trapeza can be whatever you would like to prepare, anything is appreciated. **Note: If you are preparing anything containing nuts or other allergens, please put a small label to that effect in front of your dish. Nut allergies are especially fatal to small children.**

A note about Trapeza etiquette: Standing, even for short periods of time, is often extremely difficult for older people and expectant mothers. It would be an act of Christian charity to allow them to collect their meal first and to be seated. It should go without saying that this courtesy should also be extended to visiting clergy.

If anyone is interested in being added to the Trapeza list for the 2016-2017 season, please email Judy Engalichev at dujykot@comcast.net

July

Summer Potluck

August

Summer Potluck

Sisterhood News

Please note that an announcement regarding opportunities to help with the Parish Feast on September 24th will be forthcoming.

Congratulations

...to the Fedin family on the birth of their son Alexander, born May 30th,

...and to the Andrei and Mary Doohovskoy family on the birth of their daughter Melania on June 17th.

We ask God's blessing and many years to all!

Please Remember In Your Prayers... Athanasia, Masha Harris, Peter Danas, Dimitry Emelianoff, and Lilly Dombrowski. Please note that Lilly always appreciates visitors and cards.

St. John of Damascus Church School News:

...Vacation Church School will begin on Sunday, July 10 after Liturgy and go through Monday to Liturgy on Tuesday, July 12th, ending with the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter & Paul.

...During the summer, the children should practice Oh Heavenly King, Our Father, and the Troparion to St. Xenia in preparation for a presentation during the Parish Feast. Additional presentations will include the recitations of the 7 Days of Creation, the 23rd Psalm and 1Cor on Love, as was done during Pentecost. Copies of the 7 days of Creation can be given out to anyone who does not have a piece of the other works and would like to memorize a verse. We will go over some of these things during the summer or see Matushka or one of the Sunday School teachers to get a verse from the Creation readings.

Please remember, the Church website has a page dedicated to the church school:

<http://www.stxenia.org/churchschool.html>

There you can find information about dates for our special events, pictures from past events, and curriculum guidelines broken down by age group.

Choir News The choir is always looking for capable singers. If you are interested in singing in the choir, please see Laryssa Doohovskoy. Choir members are strongly encouraged to attend as many of the scheduled rehearsals as possible! We meet after Trapeza on Sundays.

Other News

...St. Seraphim Camp will be July 31-Aug 7 this year. Registration is still available by visiting:
<http://www.stseraphimcamp.com/registration.html>

...In August of 2016, a group of Orthodox Christians have been given the opportunity to visit the Holy Land. While there, we will stay at Bethany and help the nuns prepare for the upcoming school year. In addition we will be visiting all of the holy sites. If you are interested in participating in this service learning trip, please feel free to ask Dorothea or Johanna Crowley for more information.

...Summer School of Liturgical Music 2016, July 10-23. "The Summer School of Liturgical Music at [Holy Trinity Seminary](#) was founded in 1992 with the blessing of the Rector of the Seminary, the late Metropolitan Laurus. SSLM was originally established as part of a broader effort by the Synodal Liturgical Music Advisory Board of the [Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia](#) to raise the quality of church singing within ROCOR parishes across the Russian Diaspora. Almost immediately, the School expanded its mandate to welcome students from across all Orthodox jurisdictions, from all corners of the globe, as well as non-Orthodox students who wish to acquaint themselves with the unique tradition of Russian Orthodox liturgical singing.

The two week summer sessions take place in the spiritually enlightening setting of the [Holy Trinity Monastery](#) in Jordanville, NY, where the students have the opportunity to attend services and to interact with the monastic brotherhood, whose support for the School has historically been deeply appreciated.

SSLM is part of the [Holy Trinity Seminary](#), and as such is accredited by the Board of Regents of the State University of New York. Classes take place in the Seminary's classrooms, and some of our male students are housed in the Seminary dormitory."

The Feast of the Mother of God in honour of Her Holy Vladimir Icon (*Commemorated July 6/June 23*) is celebrated in thanksgiving for the deliverance of Moscow from an invasion of khan Akhmat. In 1480 during the time of Great Prince Ivan III Vasil'evich (1462-1505), khan Akhmat of the Golden Horde approached with a vast host up to the River Ugra, which those guarding the Moscow domain called "the Belt (Poyas) of the Mother of God". For an entire day the army of the khan and that of the Moscow prince stood opposite each other, not making the deci-

sion to act -- "the standing at the Ugra". All Moscow prayed to its Patroness the MostHoly Mother of God for the safety of the Orthodox capital. Metropolitan Gerontii (1473-1489) and the father-confessor of the prince, Archbishop Vassion of Rostov, praying, strengthened the Russian army with blessing and counsel. The metropolitan wrote the prince a cathedral missive, in which he called on him to stand bravely against the enemy, trusting on the help of the Mother of God.

The MostHoly Mother of God interceded for the Russian land. The prince commanded his army to fall back from the Ugra, hoping to await the passing over of the Tatars; the enemy decided, however, that the Russians were luring them into a trap, and they thus began to fall back, at first slowly, but by night they fled, driven by fear. In thanksgiving for the deliverance of Russia from the Tatars, this feast was established in honour of the Mother of God. (The account about the Vladimir Icon is located under 26 August).

The Placement of the Venerable Robe of the MostHoly Mother of God at Blachernae (*Commemorated July 15/July 2*) During the years of the reign of the Byzantine emperor Leo the Great the Macedonian (457-474), the brothers Galbius and Candidus, associates of the emperor, set out from Constantinople to Palestine to venerate at the holy places. In a small settlement near Nazareth they stopped for overnight lodging with a certain quite aged Hebrew woman. In her house the burning of candles and smoking incense caught the attention of the pilgrims. To their questions, as to what sort of sacred thing there was in her house, the pious woman for a long time did not want to give an answer, but after persistent requests she replied, that she had a very precious sacred item -- the Robe of the Mother of God, from which had occurred many miracles and healings. The MostHoly Virgin before the time of Her Dormition ("Falling-Asleep" or "Repose") bequeathed one of her garments to a pious Jewish maiden from the family-lineage of this house, having instructed her to hand it on after death to another virgin. Thus, from generation to generation, the Robe of the Mother of God was preserved in this family.

The jewelled chest, containing the sacred Robe, was transferred to Constantinople. Saint Gennadios, Patriarch of Tsar'grad-Constantinople (+ 471, Comm. 31 August), and the emperor Leo, having learned of the sacred find, convinced themselves of the incorruptness of the holy Robe and with trembling they certified its authenticity. At Blachernae, near the seacoast, there was erected a new church in honour of the Mother of God. On 2 June 458 Sainted Gennadios with appropri-

ate solemnity transferred the sacred Robe into the Blachernae church, placing it within a new reliquary.

Afterwards into the reliquary, together with the Robe of the Mother of God, was put also Her omophorion (i.e. the outer or over-robe) and part of Her belt-sash. This circumstance also set its seal upon the Orthodox iconography of the feast, in conjoining the two events: the Placing of the Robe, and the Placing of the Belt-Sash of the Mother of God in Blachernae. The Russian pilgrim Stefan Novgorodets, visiting Tsar'grad in about the year 1350, testifies: "We arrived at Blachernae, wherein lies the Robe upon an altar-throne in an imprinted reliquary".

More than once during the invasion of enemies the MostHoly Mother of God saved the city, to which She had bestowed Her holy Robe. Thus it happened during the time of a siege of Constantinople by the Avars in 626, by the Persians -- in 677, and by the Arabs -- in the year 717. Especially relevant for us are events of the year 860, intimately connected with the history of the Russian Church.

On 18 June 860 the Russian fleet of prince Askol'd, in a force comprising more than 200 boats, having laid waste the coastal regions of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus, entered into the Bay of the Golden Horn and threatened Constantinople. The Russian ships sailed into sight of the city, setting ashore troops who "proceeded before the city, stretching forth their swords". The emperor Michael III (842-867), leaving off his heading of a campaign against the Arabs, returned to the capital; all night he prayed, prostrate down upon the stone tiles of the church of the Blachernae Mother of God. Holy Patriarch Photios turned to his flock with preaching, calling for tears of repentance to wash away sins, and in fervent prayer to seek the intercession of the MostHoly Mother of God.

The danger grew with each passing hour. "The city was barely able to stand against a spear", -- says Patriarch Photios in another of his sermons. Under these conditions the decision was made to save the church holy-things, and foremost -- the holy Robe of the Mother of God, which was kept in the Blachernae church, not far from the shore of the bay. After making an all-night molieben, and taking it out from the Blachernae church, they carried the sacred Robe of the Mother of God in religious procession around the city walls, with a prayer they dipped its edge into the waters of the Bosphorus, and then they transported it to the centre of Tsar'grad -- into the church of Saint Sophia. The Mother of God by Her grace gave shelter and quelled the militance of the Russian warriors. An honourable truce was concluded. Askol'd lifted the siege of Constantinople. On 25 June the Russian army

began to leave, taking with them a large tribute payment. A week afterwards, on 2 July, the wonderworking Robe of the Mother of God was solemnly returned to its place in the reliquary of the Blachernae church. In remembrance of these events an annual feastday of the Placing of the Robe of the Mother of God was established under 2 July by holy Patriarch Photios.

Soon, in October-November of the year 860, a Russian delegation arrived in Constantinople for concluding a treaty "in love and peace". In the conditions of the peace treaty they included articles about the Baptism of Kievan Rus', about the payment of an annual tribute by the Byzantines to the Russians, permission for them to serve with the Byzantine army, to carry on trade in the territory of the empire (primarily in Constantinople), and to send a diplomatic mission to Byzantium.

Most important was the point about the Baptism of Rus'. The continuator of the Byzantine "Theophanes Chronicles" relates, that "their delegation arrived in Tsar'grad with a request for them to be made participants in holy Baptism, which also was fulfilled". An Orthodox mission was sent to Kiev to fulfill this mutual wish of the Russians and the Greeks. Not very long before this (in 855) holy Equal to the Apostles Cyril (Kirill) the Philosopher (+ 869, Comm. 14 February and 11 May) had crafted a Slavonic alphabet and translated the Gospel. With the mission to Kiev essentially in particular there was sent Saint Cyril with his brother, the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Methodios (+ 885, Comm. 6 April and 11 May), together with books translated into Slavonic. This was at the initiative of Sainted Photios, whose student Saint Cyril was. The brothers spent the winter of 860/861 at Kherson (Chersonessus), and in the spring of 861 they were at the River Dneipr, with prince Askol'd.

There stood a difficult choice facing prince Askol'd, just as afterwards it faced holy prince Vladimir: both the Jews on the one hand and the Mahometans on the other wanted to bring him into their faith. But under the graced influence of Saint Cyril, the prince made his choice in favour of Orthodoxy. At the end of the year 861 Cyril and Methodios returned to Constantinople and carried with them from prince (or, as the Kievan princes called themselves during the IX-XI Centuries, "kagan") Askol'd to emperor Michael III. Askol'd thanked the emperor for sending him "such men, who showed by both word and by example, that the Christian faith -- is holy". "Persuaded, -- Askol'd further wrote, -- that this is the true faith, we bid them to baptise at their intent in the hope for us also to attain sanctity. We are all -- friends of the kingdom and prepared to be of service to thee, as requested".

Askol'd accepted holy Baptism with the name Nikolai, and many also of his retinue were baptised. Right directly from Tsar'grad, the capital of Orthodoxy, through the efforts of the holy Apostles to the Slavs there arrived in Rus' both the Slavonic Divine-services and the Slavonic written-language. At Kiev Saint Photios appointed the Metropolitan Michael, and the Russian metropolitan was entered into the notation-lists of dioceses of the Constantinople Patriarchate. Holy Patriarch Photios in a Circular missive of the year 867 called the Baptism of the Bulgarians and the Russians as among the chief accomplishments of his arch-hierarchical service. "The Russians, which lifted their hand against the Roman might, -- he wrote, almost quoting literally from the missive of Askol'd, -- at the present time replaced even the impious teaching, which they held to formerly, with the pure and genuine Christian faith, and with love having established themselves in the array of our friends and subjects". (The Byzantines reckoned as "subjects" all accepting Baptism from Tsar'grad and entering into military alliance with the empire.) "And to such an extent has flared up within them the desire and zeal of faith, that they have accepted bishops and pastors, and they embrace Christian sanctity with great zeal and fervour".

The feastday of the Placement of the Robe of the MostHoly Mother of God in Blachernae reveals itself also as a feastday of the canonical establishing of the Russian Orthodox metropolitanate in Kiev. By the blessing of the Mother of God and by the miracle from Her holy Robe was accomplished not only the salvation of Tsar'grad from the most terrible siege in all its history, but also the salvation of the Russians from the darkness of pagan superstition, to life eternal. Together with this, the year 860 brought recognition to Kievan Rus' from Byzantium, and it signified an equitably-justified emergence of the young Russian realm into the arena of history.

The attempt of prince Askol'd to renew the Christian evangelisation begun by the holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called, and intended by him as a religious and state reform, ended unsuccessfully. The time of affirmation of Christianity in the Russian Land had not yet come. The adherents of the old paganism were too strong, and the princely power was too weak. In the clash of Askol'd with the pagan Oleg in 882 the Kievans betrayed their prince -- Askol'd accepted a martyr's death at the hand of hired killers, tricked by deceit into the camp of his enemies for talks.

But the deed of Blessed Askol'd (the Ioakimov Chronicle calls him such) was not extinguished in the Russian Church. Oleg the Sage, having killed Askol'd, after him occupied the Kiev principdom, and called Ki-

ev the "Mother of Russian Cities" -- this is a literal translation of the Greek expression "Russian metropolia" (i.e. "mater-polis"). The most ancient chronicles of Kiev preserved the grateful memory of the first Kievan Christian-prince: the church of the Prophet of God Elias, built by Askol'd and afterwards mentioned in the Treaty of Igor with the Greeks (in year 944), is on the place where at present stands the church of this name, and there is also the church of Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker, erected in the decade of the 950's over the grave of Askol'd by holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Ol'ga. The most important achievement of Askol'd, entering forever into the Church-inheritance not only of Rus', but of also all Orthodox Slavdom -- is the Slavonic Gospel and Slavonic Divine-services, rendered such by the work of the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril and Methodios. In Kiev at the court of Askol'd in 861 was set the beginning of their apostolic activity among the Slavs, and continued afterwards in Moravia and Bulgaria. Following Blessed Askol'd, speaking the words of the ancient "Alphabetic Prayers", "there soars in flight now the Slavonic tribe -- to Baptism all striving".

With the miracle of the Robe of the MostHoly Mother of God at Blachernae are connected several outstanding works of Byzantine Church hymnology and homiletics. To Saint Photios belong two sermons, one of which was given by him immediately within days of the siege of Constantinople, and the other -- soon after the departure of the Russian forces. And with the campaign of Askol'd against Tsar'grad is connected also the composition of a remarkable "Akathist to the MostHoly Mother of God", the source of which certain Church histories ascribe also to holy Patriarch Photios. This Akathist comprises a basic part of the Divine-services of the day of Praise to the MostHoly Mother of God (i.e. the "Saturday of the Akathist" -- Saturday in the 4th Week of Great Lent).

It is not only Byzantine sources that relate the events of the year 860, but also Russian historical chronicles. The Monk Nestor the Chronicler, stressing the significance of the Russian campaign against Tsar'grad, notes that from this time "it was begun to be called the Russian Land". Certain of the chronicles, among them the Ioakimov and Nikonov, preserved accounts of the Baptism of Prince Askol'd and Kievan Rus' after the campaign against Tsar'grad. The popular commemoration concerning this is firmly associated with the names of the Kievan princes Askol'd and Dir, although in the opinion of historians, Dir was prince of Kiev somewhat earlier than Askol'd.

The veneration of the feast of the Robe-placing was known of old in the Russian Church. Saint Andrei

Bogoliubsky (+ 1174, Comm. 4 July) erected in the city of Vladimir at the Golden Gates a church in honour of this feastday. At the end of the XIV Century part of the Robe of the Mother of God was transferred from Constantinople to Rus' by Sainted Dionysii, Archbishop of Suzdal' (+ 1385, Comm. 26 June).

The holy Robe of the Mother of God, earlier having saved the capital of Byzantium, later also saved the capital Moscow from hostilities. Tatars of the Horde of the princeling Mazovshi in the Summer of 1451 approached beneath the walls of Moscow. Saint Jona, Metropolitan of Moscow, by means of constant prayer and church services encouraged the defenders of the capital. On the night of 2 July, relates the chronicle, great confusion occurred within the Tatar camp. the enemy abandoned their plundered goods and in disarray speedily departed. In memory of the miraculous deliverance of Moscow, the metropolitan Saint Jona erected in the Kremlin the church in honour of the Robe-placing, making it his primary church. It burned, but in its place thirty years afterwards was built in the years 1484-1486 a new church, likewise dedicated to the feast of the Placing of the Robe of the Mother of God. This temple, standing at present, continued to serve as the primary church of Russian metropolitans and patriarchs until the cathedral of the Twelve Apostles was built under patriarch Nikon.

Uncovering of the Relics of the Monk Seraphim, Wonderworker of Sarov

(Commemorated Aug 1/July 19) At the beginning of the last century (i.e. the 1800's) a new bright taper blazed upon the candle-tiara of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Lord deigned to send to us on earth a great man of prayer, an ascetic and wonderworker.

In 1903 occurred the glorification of the Monk Seraphim of Sarov, 70 years after his repose (the Vita (Life) of the saint is located under 2 January, the day of his repose). On 19 July, the birthday of the saint, his relics were opened with great solemnity and placed in a prepared reliquary. The long awaited event was accompanied by numerous miraculous healings of the sick, who in large number had gathered at Sarov. Very widely esteemed while yet alive, the Monk Seraphim became one of the most beloved saints of the Russian Orthodox nation, indeed like the Monk Sergei of Radonezh.

The spiritual path of the Monk Seraphim was marked by great modesty, inherent to the Russian saint. From childhood having been chosen by God, the Sarovsk ascetic without hesitation or misgiving ascended from strength to strength in his striving for spiritual perfection. Eight years of novitiate tasks and eight

years of temple service in the dignity of deacon and priestmonk, wilderness-dwelling and pillar-dwelling, hermitage and solitude followed upon each other and crown his eldership. His deeds, by far exceeding natural human abilities (for example, the prayer upon the stone for a thousand days and nights), harmoniously and readily enter into the life of the saint.

The mystery of a living and prayerful communality defines the spiritual legacy of the Monk Seraphim, but he left to the Church still another precious thing -- a short but fine directive, written in part by himself, and in parts by those listening to him. Shortly before the glorification of the saint there was found and printed in 1903 his "Conversation of the Monk Seraphim of Sarov, Concerning the Goal of Christian Life", compiled at the end of November 1831, roughly a year before his repose. This conversation was a very precious contribution of the ascetic into the treasury of teachings of Russian holy-fathers. Besides his teaching about the essence of Christian life, in it are contained new explanations of many important places of Holy Scripture.

"Fasting, prayer, vigil and every good deed, -- taught the Monk Seraphim, -- being howso no less fine in themselves, yet however in fact the goal of our Christian life does not consist only but in them, though they serve as means for its attainment. The true goal of our Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit of God". Once however situated in the Spirit of God, the monk glimpsed all the Russian land, and it was filled and as it were covered over by the incense-cloud of the prayers of the faithful, rising up in supplication to the Lord.

In the recorded life and deeds of Saint Seraphim are quoted many eye-witness accounts of the graced gift of perspicacity (i.e. insight), which he utilised for stimulating within people repentance of sins and moral rectification.

"The Lord hath revealed to me, -- said he, -- that there shalt be a time, when the hierarchs of the Russian land and other spiritual persons will deviate from the preservation of Orthodoxy in all its purity, and for this the wrath of God wilt strike them. For three days I stood, I besought the Lord to have mercy on them and besought it better to deprive me, the wretch Seraphim, of the Kingdom of Heaven, than to punish them. But the Lord inclined not to the plea of the wretch Seraphim and said, that there would be not mercy for them, since they will teach human teachings and commandments, while their hearts stand far from Me".

Manifesting the graced gifts and power of God to people, the Monk Seraphim instructed those coming

to him, on how to transverse the narrow path of salvation. He commanded obedience of his spiritual children and to the end of his life he was faithful to it. Having spent all his life in ascetic deeds beyond the power of ordinary people, his advice was to go by "the royal (middle) way" of the holy-fathers and not take upon oneself excessive difficult works: "to take on excessive measure of exploit is not necessary; but strive, so that the other aspect -- our flesh -- be true and capable for the doing of good deeds".

The monk considered prayer to be the prime exploit and means for the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. "Every good deed, done on account of Christ, bestows the grace of the Holy Spirit, but... prayer most of all beareth the Holy Spirit, and it is most convenient of all for each to improve".

The Monk Seraphim advised during the time of Divine-services to stand in temple now with eyes closed, and then to turn one's gaze upon an image or burning candle and ponder this thought, -- that it would suggest the fine comparison of human life with a waxen candle.

If someone complained to the holy elder about the impossibility to fulfill the rule of prayer, he then advised them to pray unceasingly: both during the time of work, and when going wherever, and even in bed. And if anyone can make the time, said the monk, let them take on soul-edifying prayers and readings of prayer-canons, akathists, psalms, the Gospel and Epistles. The saint also advised to study the order of Divine-services and to commit them to memory.

The Monk Seraphim regarded a lengthy rule of prayer as non-obligatory and he gave his Diveevsk community of women monastics a light rule. The Mother of God forbade Father seraphim to obligate novices with the reading of long akathists, so as not to impose an excessive burden on the incapable. But with this the saint strictly mentioned, that prayer ought not to be a formality: "Those monks, who do not unite external prayer with the inner, are not monks, but black torch-heads!" There thus became known the Seraphim Rule for those laypeople, who under the circumstances of life were not able to read the customary morning and evening prayers -- in the morning, before lunch and at evening to read the "Our Father", thrice the "Hail Mary, Virgin Mother of God", the Creed "I Believe" once; attending to necessary tasks, from morning til dinner to do the Jesus Prayer "Lord, Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner" or but simply "Lord, have mercy", and from dinner til evening the prayer "Most Holy Mother of God, save me a sinner" or "Lord, Jesus Christ, through the Mother of God have mercy on me a sinner".

"In prayers be attentive to thyself, -- advised the ascetic, -- that is, prepare the mind and unite it with the soul. On the first day, twice or more make this prayer with the whole mind, attending separately to each particular word. Later on, when the Lord heats thy heart with His warm grace and unites that in thee in one spirit: then flows within thee unceasingly that prayer and always will it be with thee, delighting and nourishing thee..." The monk said that in fulfilling this rule with humility, it is possible to attain Christian perfection even in worldly life.

"One must needs provide the soul with the Word of God. Most of all one ought to exercise in the reading of the New Testament and the Psalter. From this occurs enlightenment of the intellect, which is transformed by a Divine transformation", -- advised the holy ascetic of Sarov, himself constantly reading through all the New Testament during the course of the week.

Communing the Holy Mysteries each Sunday and each feastday without fail, -- to the question of how often one should approach for Communion, the Monk Seraphim answered: "the more often, the better". He said to the priest of the Diveevsk community, Vasili Sadoysky: "The Grace, given us by Communion, is so great, that though a man be unworthy and sinful, if such a man in humility conscious of his all-sinfulness approacheth nigh [for Communion] to the Lord, Who hath redeemed us all, though he be covered head to foot by the bounds of sin, yet shalt he be cleansed by the grace of Christ, for all the more and more it illumineth him, and altogether it doth enlighten and save him".

"I believe, that through the great blessing of God grace doth make its mark also upon those communing..." The saint however did not give everyone the identical advice regarding frequent Communion. For many he advised to make the preparatory fast during all four lenten periods and during all the twelve feastdays. But it is necessary to remember his warning about the possibility of communing unto condemnation: "Sometimes thus it doth happen: here on earth they indeed do commune, but with the Lord they remain non-communicants!"

"There is no worse a sin and nothing is more terrible and harmful of spirit than despondency", -- said Saint Seraphim. He himself shone with a spiritual joy, and with this quiet peaceful joy he in abundance filled the hearts of those about him, greeting them with the words: "My joy! Christ is Risen!" Every burden of life became light while being close to the ascetic, and a multitude of the grieving people and seekers of God crowded about his cell and together with them her-

mits, wanting to share in the graces radiating from the God-pleasing saint. In the eyes of all was affirmed the truth, expressed by the saint himself in a great angelic calling-out: "Acquire peace, and around thee a thousand wilt be saved". This command about the acquisition of peace leads up to the teaching about the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, but of itself it appears as a most important step on the way of spiritual growth. The Monk Seraphim, in experience having passed through all the ancient Orthodox science of ascetic deed, foresaw how the spiritual activity of coming generations would be, and he taught to seek out peace of soul and to condemn no one: "Whoso goeth about in a worldly manner, that one as though a liar draweth up spiritual gifts". "For preserving peace of soul... everyone ought to flee the judging of others... In order to be delivered from judgement, one ought to attend to oneself, and not from whomever to adopt extraneous ideas and become deadened towards everything".

The Monk Seraphim rightly can be called a disciple of the Mother of God. The Most Holy Mother of God thrice healed him from grievous illness, and repeatedly She appeared to him, guiding and encouraging him. While still at the beginning of his way he heard, how the Mother of God in directing him as he lay upon his sick bed, said to the Apostle John the Theologian: "This one is of our kind".

Upon emerging from seclusion the monk devoted much effort to the building up of the women's monastic community at Diveevo and he himself said, that he gave no particular directives on his own, but rather he gave everything through the will of the Queen of Heaven.

The Monk Seraphim stands at the head of a remarkable upwards-flight of Russian Orthodox spirituality. With great strength resounds his recollection: "The Lord seeketh out the heart, overflowing with love towards God and neighbour; here is the throne, upon which He doth love to preside and appear in the fullness of His supra-heavenly Glory. "Son, give Me thine heart, -- sayeth He, -- and all else I Myself wilt provide thee", -- wherefore it is in the human heart that the Kingdom of Heaven can be realised".

The Procession (Carrying-forth) of the Venerable Wood of the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord (*Commemorated Aug 14/Aug 1*) In the Greek Chasoslov (Orologion) of 1897 is explained thus the derivation of this feast: "By reason of the sicknesses, often everywhere occurring in August, from of old customarily it was done at Constantinople to carry out the Venerable Wood of the Cross along the roads and streets for the sanctifying of places and for the driving

away of sicknesses. On the eve (31 July), carrying it out from the imperial treasury, they placed it upon the holy table of the Great Church (in honour of Saint Sophia -- the Wisdom of God). From this feastday up to the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, making litia throughout all the city, they then placed it forth for all the people to venerate. This also is the Issuing-forth of the Venerable Cross".

In the Russian Church this feast is combined also with a remembrance of the Baptism of Rus', on 1 August 988. In the "Account about the making of services in the holy catholic and apostolic great church of the Uspenie-Dormition", compiled in 1627 by order of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' Philaret, there is provided suchlike an explanation of the feast: "And on the day of the procession of the Venerable Cross there occurs a church-procession for the sanctification of water and for the enlightenment of the people, throughout all the towns and places".

Knowledge of the day of the actual Baptism of Rus' was preserved in the Chronicles of the XVI Century: "The Baptism of Great-prince Vladimir of Kiev and all Rus' was on August 1".

In the practice now of the Russian Church, the service of the Lesser Sanctification of Water on 1 August is done either before or after Liturgy. Together with the Blessing of Waters, there is made a Blessing of Honey (i.e. first-honey for the Saviour: "Saviour of the Water", "Saviour Moisture" [apparently in place of the vinegar and gall offered Him on the Cross?]). And from this day the newly harvested honey is blessed and tasted.

The Martyrs Florus and Laurus (*Commemorated Aug 31/Aug 18*) were brothers by birth not only in flesh but in spirit. They lived in the II Century at Byzantium, and afterwards they settled in Illyria (now Yugoslavia). By occupation they were stone-masons

(their teachers in this craft were the Christians Proclus and Maximus, from whom also the brothers learned about life pleasing to God). The governor of Illyria Likaion dispatched the brothers to a nearby district for work on the construction of a pagan temple. The saints toiled at the structure, distributing to the poor the money they earned, while themselves keeping strict fast and praying unceasingly. One time the son of the local pagan-priest Mamertin carelessly approached the structure, and a chip of stone hit him in the eye, severely injuring him. Saints Florus and Laurus assured the upset father, that his son would be healed. They brought the youth to consciousness and told him to have faith in Christ. After this, as the youth confessed Jesus Christ as the True God, the brothers prayed for him, and the eye was healed. In view of such a miracle even the father of the youth believed in Christ. When the construction of the temple was completed, the brothers gathered together the Christians, and having gone through the temple, they smashed the idols and in the eastern part of the temple they set up the holy cross. They spent all night in prayer, illumined with heavenly light. Having learned of this, the head of the district condemned to burning the former pagan-priest Mamertin and his son and 300 Christians. The martyrs Florus and Laurus, having been sent back to the governor Likaion, were thrown down an empty well and covered over with ground. After many years the relics of the holy martyrs were uncovered undecayed, and transferred to Constantinople. In the year 1200 the Novgorod pilgrim Antonii saw them; in about the year 1350, Stefan of Novgorod saw the heads of the martyrs in the Almighty monastery.



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JULY 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Jun 26 (Jun 13) 1st Sunday after Pentecost. All Saints. Tone 8 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Jun 27 (Jun 14) Prophet Elisha Fast	Jun 28 (Jun 15) St. Jonah, met. of Moscow Fast: fish, wine, & oil	Jun 29 (Jun 16) Ven. Tikhon of Kaluga Fast	Jun 30 (Jun 17) MM Manuel, Sabel, and Ismael of Persia Fast: wine & oil	1 (Jun 18) 6:30 Vigil of St. John Fast	2 (Jun 19) St John of Shanghai & San Francisco 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: fish, wine & oil
3 (Jun 20) 2nd Sunday after Pentecost All Saints of Russia, Tone 1 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine & oil	4 (Jun 21) M Julian of Tarsus in Cilicia Fast	5 (Jun 22) HM Eusebius, bishop of Samosata Fast	6 (Jun 23) Meeting of the Vladimir Icon Fast	7 (Jun 24) Nativity of the Baptist Fast: fish, wine, & oil	8 (Jun 25) VM Febronia of Nisibis Fast	9 (Jun 26) Appearance of the Tikhvin Icon 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
10 (Jun 27) 3rd Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 2 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	11 (Jun 28) Unmercenarys Cyrus and John 6:30 Vigil Sts. Peter & Paul Fast	12 (Jun 29) Sts. Peter & Paul 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy	13 (Jun 30) Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles Fast: wine & oil	14 (Jul 1) Unmercenarys Cosmas and Damian	15 (Jul 2) Placing of the Robe of the Most Holy Theotokos at Blachernae Fast	16 (Jul 3) M Hyacinth of Caesarea 5:30 All-Night Vigil
17 (Jul 4) 4th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 3 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	18 (Jul 5) Ven. Athanasius of Mt. Athos & comp.	19 (Jul 6) Synaxis of All Saints of Radonezh	20 (Jul 7) Ven. Thomas of Mt. Maleon Fast	21 (Jul 8) Appearance of the "Kazan" Icon	22 (Jul 9) HM Pancratius, bishop of Taormina Fast	23 (Jul 10) Placing of the Precious Robe of the Lord at Moscow 5:30 All-Night Vigil
24 (Jul 11) 5th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 4 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	25 (Jul 12) MM Proclus and Hilary of Ancyra	26 (Jul 13) Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Gabriel	27 (Jul 14) Ap. Aquila of the 70, and St. Priscilla Fast: wine & oil	28 (Jul 15) St. Vladimir	29 (Jul 16) HM Athenogenes, bishop of Heracleopolis Fast	30 (Jul 17) GM Marina of Antioch 5:30 All-Night Vigil
31 (Jul 18) Holy Fathers of the First Six Councils tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	Aug 1 (Jul 19) Ven. Macrina, sister of St. Basil the Great	Aug 2 (Jul 20) Prophet Elijah	Aug 3 (Jul 21) Prophet Ezekiel Fast	Aug 4 (Jul 22) Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalen	Aug 5 (Jul 23) "Pochaev" Icon Fast	Aug 6 (Jul 24) Martyr Christina of Tyre 5:30 All-Night Vigil



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AUGUST 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Jul 31 (Jul 18) Holy Fathers of the First Six Councils tone 5 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	1 (Jul 19) Ven. Macrina, sister of St. Basil the Great	2 (Jul 20) Prophet Elijah	3 (Jul 21) Prophet Ezekiel	4 (Jul 22) Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalen	5 (Jul 23) "Pochaev" Icon	6 (Jul 24) Martyr Christina of Tyre 5:30 All-Night Vigil
			Fast		Fast	
7 (Jul 25) 7th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 6 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	8 (Jul 26) Martyr Parasceve of Rome	9 (Jul 27) Holy GM and Healer Panteleimon	10 (Jul 28) App. of the 70 and Deacons: Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, and Parmenas	11 (Jul 29) Martyr Callinicus of Gangra	12 (Jul 30) App. Silas and Silvanus of the 70	13 (Jul 31) Righteous Eudocimus of Cappadocia 5:30 All-Night Vigil
			Fast		Fast	
14 (Aug 1) Procession of the Cross, Tone 7 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast	15 (Aug 2) Blessed Basil of Moscow, fool-for-Christ Fast	16 (Aug 3) Holy Myrrh-bearer Salome Fast	17 (Aug 4) Holy "Seven Sleepers" of Ephesus Fast	18 (Aug 5) Martyr Eusignius of Antioch 6:30 Vigil of Transfiguration Fast	19 (Aug 6) TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD 9:30 Hours & Divine Liturgy Fast: fish, wine, & oil	20 (Aug 7) Trans. of the relics of St. Metrophanes, first bishop of Voronezh 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
21 (Aug 8) 9th Sunday after Pentecost. Tone 8 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy Fast: wine & oil	22 (Aug 9) Apostle Matthias Fast	23 (Aug 10) MM Archdeacon Laurence and Pope Sixtus and comp. Fast	24 (Aug 11) Martyr and Archdeacon Euplus of Catania Fast	25 (Aug 12) MM Anicetus and Photius of Nicomedia Fast	26 (Aug 13) Ven. Maximus the Confessor Fast	27 (Aug 14) Prophet Micah 5:30 All-Night Vigil Fast: wine & oil
28 (Aug 15) DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS 9:30 Hours and Divine Liturgy	29 (Aug 16) Trans. of the Image Not-Made-By-Hands of our Lord Jesus Christ from Edessa to Constantinople	30 (Aug 17) Martyr Myron of Cyzicus	31 (Aug 18) MM Florus and Laurus of Illyria Fast	Sep 1 (Aug 19)	Sep 2 (Aug 20) Fast	Sep 3 (Aug 21) 5:30 All-Night Vigil