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CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY, HE IS RISEN!



BAPTISM IN MISSION

The baptism of Michael Buckingham at the Monastery brought considerable spiritual joy to the local parishes. Michael has contributed greatly to the diocese and to the monastery, working countless hours to advance the reconstruction and renovation project on the monastery main building.

Michael is a former Roman Catholic and, in keeping with canonical Orthodox practice, was given a proper Orthodox Christian baptism into the Church. The baptism of

adults is a beautiful and spiritually edifying experience, both for the one being baptised and for the community. It is a great tragedy that Modernist Orthodox bodies feel they are doing someone a favour by depriving them of this wonderful and enriching experience; depriving not only the one receiving the blessing of the baptism, but also the community which could be participating in such a deep spiritual experience.

Michael enters into the diocese as part of the Mission, B.C. parish, which currently uses the monastery church for its periodic services.



MEMORIAL FOR A SPECIAL FRIEND

Just send it to "Baba Evlampia in Koprivshitsa", she said. We had encountered an old woman in this historic village in Bulgaria, and in a short time, became very fond of her. She was the oldest resident in the district and she assured us that the postman would know just where to bring the letter we would send, with a copy of the

picture of her with us that we had taken. Over the next few years, we would write to her and hear from her four or five times a year. Her letters were always sweet, enthusiastic and filled with a sincere piety. We just learned that Baba Evlampia reposed this past winter, and the St Nicholas Canadian Orthodox Church in Langley joined us in serving a memorial for her. "The Kingdom of Heaven and eternal memory to Baba Evlampia".

THE BISHOP'S PAGE
by Bishop Lazar Puhalo

THE CYCLE OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN DIVINE SERVICES¹

COMPLINE

(The Night Watch: 10:00PM - 12:00PM)

"Stand in awe and sin not, commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be at peace. Offer the sacrifice of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord...Thou hast put joy in my heart...I will lie down in peace and sleep: for Thou, O Lord, makest me to dwell in safety" (Ps. 4).

The Compline service, together with the prayers before going to bed, is read after supper, and in Slavonic it is called "povecheria," literally, "aftersupper." In it, we recall that sleep is an image of death. Compline has three parts: in the first, we thank God for His help during the day, we lament our sinful falls and ask God's help to face our inevitable repose from this life in peace and repentance. Second, we pray for help to pass through the sleep of this present night free of sin and passions. Finally, we pray for our neighbours and those who are in authority in the Church, those who are travelling, those who are in prisons or grievous circumstances, and for all Orthodox Christians everywhere.

"Let not the sun go down on your wrath," but rather, "Let all bitterness, wrath and anger be put away from you"

¹ The material contained in these lectures was originally used in the 1974 University of Victoria lectures and much of it has appeared in various periodicals. It was also used for the 1982 St Sava Serbian Orthodox Seminary Lectures at New Gracanica when then Abbot Lazar served as first director of that seminary.

(Eph. 4:26,31).

In the monastery, compline is a time of forgiveness, and seeking forgiveness. During the service, we diligently search our hearts to discern what sins we have committed against one another during the previous day, to ferret out any malice, grudges or wrath that may be lurking in us, waiting for Satan to take occasion by them to injure our souls. Having thus weighed our own souls, we are able with sincerity of heart to ask one another's forgiveness at the end of the service, and to give our forgiveness to each other. To the best of our ability, we strive to extend this repentance and forgiveness to those not present. Since sleep is an image of death, we do not wish to fall asleep, burdened with the passions of wrath and malice, just as we do not wish to die with such sins on our souls. Thus, compline should be for all believers a time of repentance of sins against neighbours, and a time to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

Compline, which is often followed immediately by the reading of the "prayers before going to bed", is a reminder of our own mortality and calls us to our senses, teaching us to repent and correct our lives so that we can face death and the judgment in peaceful hope. This is clearly seen in the "prayer before sleep" which is read in the bedtime prayers at the end of Compline:

"O man-befriending Lord, is this bed to be my coffin, or wilt Thou enlighten my soul with another day. Here, the coffin lies before me and death confronts me..." and finally, just as we lie down to sleep, "Into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ my God, I commit my soul and body; bless me, save me and grant me eternal life."

This is a reality which faces all mankind: the end of our lives on earth. The foolish attempt to hide from it, and neglect to call it to mind and prepare for it. In so doing, they place their hope mainly in this life and

material things. The wise person calls it to mind and prepares for it in love and faith, full of hope in the mercy of God who receives our repentance and the love of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has conquered death for those who follow Him in faith; *"For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption"* (Ps.129:7).

THE MIDNIGHT HOUR (Nocturns: 12 Midnight - 3:00AM)

"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh in the middle of the night, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching; but unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless..." (Troparion, Tone 8).

The services of the Midnight Hour comes to us directly from the holy apostles, who carefully and fearfully remembered how they slept in the garden and could not "watch and pray" with the Saviour for even one hour. Harkening to the Saviour's warnings, they passed His injunctions on to all:

"Be ready, for the Son of Man will come in an hour which you do not expect", "Watch, therefore, for you do not know either the day or the hour in which the Son of Man will come", "Watch, therefore, and pray constantly, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things...and to stand before the Son of Man", for, "Behold, I shall come as a thief in the night. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments about him" (Mt.24:42; Lk.21:36; Rev.16:15).

The Midnight Hour, therefore, is a constant anticipation of the Second Coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ and the dread judgment which, according to the Gospel, will take place suddenly in the night when the careless and unfaithful least expect it. This service calls us to an awareness and preparation for this inescapable event so that

we "may not be given over to death and shut out of the kingdom", but "meditating on that awesome day, watch, keeping your vigil lamp lighted and filled with oil..." (Prayer of the hour).

Matins

(The Dawn Watch: 4:00AM - 6:00AM)

"O God, my God, I rise unto Thee early at dawn. My soul has thirsted for Thee....So in the sanctuary I have come before Thee to see Thy power and Thy glory...." (Ps.62).

At Vespers, we anticipated with holy expectation, the fulfilment of the prophecies and the coming of our redemption. We heard it foretold in psalms and proclaimed in the verses for the "Lord I have cried" and the "aposticha." Through the night, our souls kept vigil, filling our lamps of faith with the oil of prayer. Now, we have come to the morning watch. Twilight has not yet broken the velvet blackness of the sky as our souls follow the cautious figures of a group of women moving toward the garden. It is night and we have slept in the image of death, as our Saviour's Body also slept in the tomb. As we spiritually move toward the tomb in the pre-dawn darkness, the lights in the church are off; only a candle burns in the centre, and a few on the sides, as the reader begins to intone the six-psalms with compunction.

As we come half of the way – halfway to the tomb and halfway through the six psalms, the priest comes out of the sanctuary, bareheaded and stands before the closed royal doors, praying; the tomb is still closed, for Christ rose leaving the tomb sealed. As we approach, the angels suddenly cast away the stone in a burst of light and the soldiers fall to the ground in shock. The tomb has been opened so that we may perceive the awesome mystery.

The six psalms lead us step by step to the

tomb, our souls trembling in the face of death, hoping in the promise and finally, rejoicing in the discovery:

"O Lord, why are those who afflict me increased? Many rise up against me. Many say to my soul, 'there is no salvation for him in his God'.

"O Lord, do not rebuke me in anger or chasten me in wrath."

"O God, my God, I rise early at dawn. My soul has thirsted for Thee."

"O Lord God of my salvation, by day and night I have cried before Thee."

"Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

"O Lord, hear my prayer, give ear to my supplication."

We will come to the tomb and like the myrrh-bearing women, we will find it opened. The priest, like the angel in the garden, will proclaim, *"In peace, let us pray to the Lord..."* and then, *"God is the Lord and has appeared unto us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord... This is the stone which the builders rejected. It has become the head cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes."*

Matins is the end of the night watch, the waking from sleep. As sleep is a type of death, so waking is a type of resurrection, as St Ephraim the Syrian says, "How like is death to sleep and the Resurrection to the morning!" Matins is a resurrection service. In the Sunday Matins, we read the "Resurrection Gospel", and near the end of the service, we chant the Great Doxology, "Glory to Thee Who has shown us the light..." Having come to the tomb and beheld the Resurrection of Christ proclaimed in the Gospel reading, we chant, "Let us who have beheld the Resurrection of Christ, worship our holy Lord Jesus, the only sinless one. We venerate Thy Cross, O Christ, and we hymn and glorify Thy holy Resurrection..."

Matins celebrates the victory of Christ over

death and sends us on toward the feast of the Divine Liturgy with joy, so that there, we may receive the fruits of that victory, that we may participate fully in the risen Christ and the new life He has bestowed upon us.

(To be continued: A more detailed explanation of the Matins Service)



EDITORIAL

JANISSARIES ON MT ATHOS

When the Turks had conquered Orthodox Christian lands, they conceived a diabolical idea for destroying the Christian population, and Christianity itself. They kidnapped young boys from each of the countries they occupied: Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Syria, and others. After an intense programme of brainwashing, they converted them to Islam, and they trained them as soldiers to be sent back into their native lands to slaughter their own people, and spread the religion of Islam.

It is this very same satanic plot which the New Calendarists are now using to undermine the spiritual structure of the Orthodox Church, and spread the polytheism of Ecumenism. Most recently, this plot has been turned against the Holy Mountain, Athos.

For quite some time now, there have been plans afoot on the part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to undermine the Orthodox Christian spirituality of the Holy Mountain, Athos, and convert it, little by little, into a combination museum and pan-religious centre. These plans have been no secret to the careful observer. As the last three Ecumenical Patriarchates have carefully built up a Vatican-like aura for the Phanar, and arrogated Papist powers and pretensions to themselves, they

have realized that Mt Athos would have to be undermined as a centre of Orthodox Christian spiritual life. More and more, we have seen unfolding before us the natural syncretism and pantheism of the Ecumenical Movement. There can be little doubt that the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with the consent and collaboration of the New Calendarist jurisdictions, has the intention of turning the Holy Mountain into a centre such as the syncretistic Congress of World Spiritualities. There are plans eventually to host Ecumenical conferences on Athos, at which women will attend. Half-hearted denials of such plans are singularly unconvincing, particularly in the light of the latest assault on the Holy Mountain. Everyone who resists the heretical and pantheistic advancement of Ecumenism in the Orthodox Church is quickly labelled "uncanonical" (an expression which is utterly without meaning) and persecuted, even if only subtly.

Since the monasteries of Mt Athos naturally resisted the spreading heresy of Ecumenism and the erosion of the Orthodox Christian spiritual ethos, it became necessary for the Ecumenical Patriarchate to undertake a long process of infiltration with specially trained and disoriented younger "monks." These new janissaries of Ecumenism, like the former janissaries of Islam have the task of gradually supplanting the Orthodox monks, particularly the abbots, and transforming the Holy Mountain from a bulwark of Orthodoxy into a centre for Ecumenistic pantheism. During the course of the first few months of this year, the Ecumenical Patriarch has attempted to exert a Papal type rule over Mt Athos, pretending that he has authority to dismiss the abbots of any monasteries that do not bend to his will. Evidently convinced that the carefully planned infiltration of the monasteries was strong enough for a frontal attack, Constantinople moved to depose those abbots who confessed the Orthodox faith, and to remove certain non-Greek elements from Athos in the hopes of

removing international Orthodox Christian representation on Athos, which might strengthen the resistance to the Patriarchs planned use of police or para-military action against the confessing faithful of the Holy Mountain. Such action is possible only with the cooperation of the Greek government.

On Mount Athos, the first monastery to join the ranks of the spiritual janissaries was Stavronikita, followed by Xenophon. These two monasteries gradually managed to take over the monasteries of Iveron and Pantokrator. They did this by exporting groups of janissary monks, well indoctrinated with the basically Masonic ideals of Ecumenism. When these groups of monastics became strong enough, they took control of the respective monasteries and have been working tirelessly toward the spiritual destruction of the Holy Mountain. During the outrageous attacks on the integrity of Mount Athos, commenced by the Ecumenical Patriarch on 15 February of this year, the monastery of Lavra also demonstrated that it had been infiltrated by the janissaries, as did the monastery of Kutloutmousion.

The monasteries which are resisting this destruction of Mt Athos are: Hilandar, St Panteleimon, Vatopedi, Dionysiou, Xeropotamu, Zographu, Dokhiariu, Karkalu, Philotheo, Simon Peter, St Paul, Gregoriou and Konstamonitou. The zealot monastery of Esphigmenou, which recognized the threat while the others were still dreamily ignoring it, has been resisting this venom from Constantinople for decades already, as the brotherhood prepare themselves for martyrdom for the Orthodox faith.

The Holy Mountain is under a powerful spiritual siege from the apostate Patriarchate of Constantinople and the New Calendarist Movement. The fathers of Mt Athos need our prayers and all the support we can muster, whether by political pressure on the Greek government, support for the necessary court challenges to defend various monks and

abbots, but above all our prayers and fasting will be of the greatest help. We ask those who love and value the Orthodox Christian faith to send letters of encouragement and support to those monasteries on Athos which are resisting the wickedness of the Ecumenical Patriarch, and making a stand for Christ's faith. We encourage you also to send letters to the Greek Government asking them to refrain from being used by the Ecumenical Patriarch to enforce his corrupted will by police state tactics.



QUESTIONS TO THE BISHOP:

1

QUESTION:

During your recent visit to our city, you spoke about the problem of people in the Greek Church being forced to kneel on Sundays, even though they know it is wrong. My first question is, can you give us the canons that forbid kneeling on Sundays. My second question is, why do some of our Greek priests purposely try to force us to do things which are not Orthodox and which are against the canons of the Orthodox Church?

REPLY:

As a matter of fact, kneeling is not at all a proper posture of prayer in the Orthodox Church. We use prostrations, not kneeling. Prostrations, and kneeling, are forbidden, not only on Sundays, but on all feasts of the Lord and at all times between Pascha and Pentecost.

The Canons of the Church which forbid such kneeling are Canon 20 of the First Ecumenical Council, Canon 90 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 15 of St Peter

and Canon 91 of St Basil the Great. In his work, On The Holy Spirit, St Basil the Great explains the reason for this.

Before we continue, however, we should point out that there is a difference between kneeling (which is actually never done in the Orthodox Church) and making prostrations. The only place that kneeling is mentioned in the Holy Scripture is when the soldiers knelt to mock Christ. Other places (mistranslations not withstanding), speak of making a prostration, that is, bowing down, touching the head to the floor or ground. Kneeling has no essential meaning, except in the medieval European ritual of one nobleman swearing fealty to a higher ranking nobleman or king. Making a prostration, where one bows to the floor, touching the head to the floor and then rising again almost at once, symbolizes the burial and resurrection of Christ.

Here is the general Church rule for making prostrations in Church:

The instructions of the holy fathers and the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils forbid prostrations (and kneeling) on Sundays, beginning with Vespers the night before, and on all feasts of the Lord.

(a) TYPIKON, Ch.2, Matins: During the Sunday Matins (even when they are celebrated as part of the Vigil on Saturday night), we do not make a prostration (or kneel) when reverencing the Gospel, but we only bow from the waist.

(b) Canon 20, First Ecumenical Council: "On the Lord's Day, and on all the days of Pentecost, let everything be observed identically in every diocese, and bring prayers to God standing."

(c) Canon 90, Sixth Ecumenical Council: "It has been canonically handed down to us by our God-bearing fathers that we do not bend the knee on Sundays, for the sake of the

honour of Christ's resurrection."

(d) St Basil the Great: "This day (Sunday) is something of an image of the age to come...Therefore, the Church Typikon teaches us that on this day, we pray in an upright (standing) position..., as if transferring our thoughts from the present into the future..."

As the late Father Boris Molchanov says: *"It is not difficult to see, in the rules, the significance the Church gives to regulating prostrations as a way of instilling a harmonious and unified spiritual sensitivity among all the worshippers. Violating these rules deprives the self-willed 'zealot' of what is most important of all in Orthodox worship — entering into full harmony, into the united spiritual rhythm with the whole family of worshippers in the parish."*

The reason it is considered so important for you to be forced to violate basic Orthodox Christian principles of spiritual life and worship is, quite simply, for the sake of advancing Ecumenism.

Excerpts From

THE NEW-WORLD PATERIKON



THE ACTS OF
THE SAINTS



The Martyrdom of St Peter the Aleut

Many Aleut men worked on Russian ships, and often found themselves in Spanish California. There, the Roman Catholic Franciscans seized fourteen Aleut sailors and cast them into prison. On that evening, a terrible inquisition began.

Demanding the Aleuts renounce Christ's holy Church and accept the heresies of Rome,

the inquisitors began to berate and humiliate them. Keeping the prison cell only dimly lit with a few candles and lanterns, to make the Aleuts feel more helpless and frightened, the Franciscans repeatedly demanded of them that they renounce the Orthodox Christian Faith and turn to Papism. The Aleuts answered with one voice: "We are Christians."

With satanic delight, the Franciscans selected the leader of the Aleuts, Peter, and determined to break his spirit, and thus to terrify the others.

They began by cutting off the toes of his feet, one joint at a time, and afterward his fingers. Like a second James the Persian, the Godly-wise Peter was "pruned as a sacred vine in the vineyard of our Saviour".

To every assault and torture, the noble Peter, looking upward to heaven, only replied: "I am a Christian."

Finally, like another Nero or Decius, the torturer cut off the hands of the faithful servant of Christ and watched with delight as he bled to death, still proclaiming, "I am a Christian." Thus did the Holy Martyr Peter courageously witness for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The inquisitors left the bloody cell, threatening the remaining thirteen to return next day and execute them all in like manner, unless they renounced Christ's faith.

On the next day, however, because of the protest of the Russian commander to the Spanish governor, the remaining Aleuts, being Russian citizens, were set free.

Satan is ever deceived even as he seeks to deceive, for he opened the gates of his abyss to Jesus, thinking to have conquered a prophet but found instead the Christ, and saw the gates of his power shattered. So also, the Roman Catholic inquisitors, thinking they had defeated the good confession of St Peter by death, instead caused him to be crowned with everlasting glory.

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Readings with Reader Nicholas;
A regular bookreview column.

Pilgrimage to Dzhvari, by Valeria Alfeyeva.
Harmony Books, 1993 (American Ed.) 313 pgs.

The Lenten/Paschal season is opportune for the reading of works which address themes of pilgrimage and nurturing of faith. 'Pilgrimage to Dzhvari' is such a work, suitable as a travel diversion for those fortunate enough to make a seasonal journey, or as a surrogate quest for the armchair pilgrim. Reminiscent of the classic 'Way of a Pilgrim', 'Dzhvari..' is of keen contemporary interest to Orthodox readers in that it is set in the waning days of the collapsing Soviet regime, and portrays the spiritual journey of a single mother raising an adolescent son.

The novels' narrator/protagonist, Veronica, and her son Mitya (Dmitri) are recent converts to Orthodox Christianity who prevail upon their parish priest to arrange an extended pilgrimage and retreat to Dzhvari, an ancient Georgian monastery. A writer preoccupied with a view of spirituality influenced by aestheticism, Veronica enters the monastery with serious yet sentimental expectations of meeting personal needs through individual guidance, learned instruction and sequestered prayer; her illumination, however, comes about on very different terms. The monastery is a state historical site in the midst of renovation by a team of scholars and artisans from a local academic institution, whose attitude toward the faith served by the monks varies in scope from detachment to disbelief. The tourists who routinely descend upon Dzhvari range from irreverent vacationers to curiosity seekers to sincere devotees. The three monks in permanent residence appear initially wary of Veronica, due both to the sometime awkward nature of her presence in a male monastery, as well as the encroachment on her part into the inner quietude they manage to maintain amidst this public display. Further, the monks have grown cautious of becoming overly attached to the many visitors their obedience instructs them to warmly accommodate. Veronica's makeshift quarters in a tent removed from the monk's quarters tends to physically distance her from the community and lends the impression she is unwelcome, possibly relegated to some unfavourable status. A declared pilgrim, her dress and demeanour are constantly scrutinised by the monks while the most casual dress of women visiting and working at Dzhvari passes seemingly without notice.

Her son, Mitya, by contrast, quickly emerges from his role as Veronica's dependent to fill, in turn, roles of monastery mascot, acolyte, subdeacon, reader, and seminarian. This transformation genuinely delights mother and son, yet renders Mitya increasingly unavailable to alleviate Veronica's painful isolation. Gradually, Veronica begins to grow in a climate of humility to a greater understanding, and to recognize the highly subjective and egoistic origins of her despair. The monks, becoming more aware of Veronica's dedication and sensitivity, renovate more suitable quarters and assign her obediences more integral to the liturgical cycle. When at last she departs Dzhvari, she takes with her spiritual wisdom overreaching her initial romantic imaginings. Mitya, a fatherless foundling of Marxist-Leninism has blossomed under the monk's tutelage and found a vocation in the royal priesthood.

The sequel within the novel, 'Called, Chosen, and Faithful', finds Veronica a few years hence, visiting a clerical residence in southern Georgia. Mitya has at this time been ordained, resides in a monastery and serves as a kind of circuit priest to outlying communities. Through contacts at this diocesan centre, Veronica arranges to enter a small female monastery as a novice. The priest and nuns of Dormition of the Holy Virgin, also a relic of early Georgian Christianity, are engaged in

the renovation not only of their own monastery, but that of much of the decrepit local church community, structures and believers alike. No cumbersome official interferences hamper these efforts to repair decades of programmatic neglect and abuse of the eucharistic communities and their shrines, but neither is there any apparent means of support for these efforts. Like their external edifices, many of the clerics and parishioners are beyond repair in this region where persecution was quite harsh, though not without the potential of acting as conduits for redemption. The narrative of this second book, like its predecessor, is tightly bound metaphorically to setting. The reconstructive projects in which the characters are engaged, are shown to be, as the title suggests, not so much a process of erecting something monumental, or even an achievement of self-transcendence, but a matter of uncovering and restoring an original, pristine Edenic spirituality. The scriptural passages which figure in discourse regarding what is entailed in being 'called...chosen' are interpreted not as indicators of preordained divine favouritism, but as an exhortation to all the faithful to come to know their inherent spiritual nature through vigilance and prayer. Though the setting and circumstance of this second book are more chaotic and foreboding in description than that of the first, the narrator's tone is much less anxious, an indication of the growing capacity of her spiritual interior. Veronica's story ends well, as she departs the monastery to act as housekeeper for her son, Father Dmitri, upon invitation to serve as a parish priest, and the bishop's blessing to help rebuild another community.

Pilgrimage to Dzhvari, offers the reader a rich description of church tradition and practice, as well as a thoughtful examination of the nuances of monastic life. The novel's narrative punctuates accounts of the daily routine of monastic life with profound insights voiced by the several well-developed characters as well as reflections of the principal narrator, Veronica. Much of the novel's dramatic development is contained in the first book, in which the protagonist confronts and comes to terms with spiritual delusion and illusion as to projected ideals concerning the cloistered life. Some important topics introduced in the first book remain as open questions for the narrator, and reader, to approach. Among the most striking of these is the symbolism of pilgrimage as a means of bridging the gap of divine/human estrangement. This gap is described as increasing through human history to the extent that through this process of decadence, the consequent perversion of thought and imagery results in self-deception becoming the norm. Pilgrims of the former Eastern bloc include the many who have exhausted and been exhausted by the excesses of rational sophistry and weary of its naive optimism which places faith in human vanity. The genuine promise which figures as the novel's subtext is that humanity, even at its most depraved ebb, continues to present the divine image, however dimmed. The reader is admonished that co-suffering with even the least appealing of victims of depravity moves us to Christlike compassion "...like the crucified God."

Pilgrimage to Dzhvari has been well received by critics of religious works, though perhaps not reviewed before now by any Orthodox publication. A possible criticism from the latter perspective might be that some of the practices and views represented in the novel are not, strictly speaking, canonical, but as a fictional piece a certain amount of license can be anticipated, and none of the characters depicted appear as spokespersons for the faith. Also, it is important for readers to realize the novel takes place in an environment in which the faith has suffered and in which efforts are underway to retrieve and repair traditional practices which have been rendered incomplete through persecution. The work is a well-written account, fictionalized to an unknowable extent, of the author's own spiritual journey, and she offers her audience not a doctrinal summary of a life in the church, but a rendering of an experience lived.

This work ought to be of especial appeal to readers of the Missionary, as among its many

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strengths are remarkable insights into the nature of monastic life and this would seem to be of keen interest to a readership attached to a monastery. A welcome feature of the text is a glossary appendix which contains very key terms employed in Orthodox church life. Yet in its initial American printing, the book, if not in stock in bookstores should be readily available on order. The reader came across the copy reviewed in the Salt Lake City public library, and is aware that readers in British Columbia and Alaska are even more fortunate in that their libraries feature a variety of works by Orthodox Christian authors in response to the many requests for these works. Subscribers are encouraged to make similar requests to their library systems to offer such works as appropriate. This urging is not simply to the end of access for our own communities, who should establish libraries of their own, but to light the way for those seekers after truth, groping through the shelves and stacks.



A CONTINUING QUESTION (Concerning the commemoration of the reposed and the aerial toll house myth.)

In this continuing discussion about the so-called "aerial toll houses" and the commemoration of the reposed, it is inevitable that we must address the question of the heretical, but much publicised book "The Soul After Death." Rather than review it ourselves, we are offering the reviews of two Greek theologians. The first review is actually an official report made to one Orthodox Jurisdiction regarding the book, while the second is a series of answers to questions about the book by the noted Greek theologian and professor of Holy Cross Orthodox Theological Seminary, Rev. Dr. Stanley Harakas. We believe these two documents will give an accurate and fairly complete review of the book.

In the December 6, 1984 edition of THE HELLENIC CHRONICLE, Rev Dr Stanley Harakas, then dean of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary, wrote the following answer to a question to the editor concerning Fr Rose's heretical book, and the teaching about "aerial toll houses" in general:

Dear Father,

I recently read a book by Rev. Seraphim Rose entitled, The Soul After Death. There were many, many teachings that I read for the first time. My question is: "Are these valid Orthodox interpretations and teachings?" (There follow the four questions listed below, which I will briefly respond to.) (D.S. North Royalton, Ohio)

REV DR HARAKAS' ANSWER:

1. Does the soul linger near the body or earth for the first three days?

Though this is a commonly held opinion among Mediterranean peoples, including the Greek people, it finds no answer in the formal teaching of doctrine in the Orthodox Church. We do not know if such is the case, probably because it is not important that this view be accepted in regard to our salvation. Since there is no clear doctrinal teaching regarding it, there is no reason why we would have to accept it.

2. Is the soul met by angels at the moment of death?

Sometimes poetic and sermonic language used in the Church does indicate this. Again, however, most doctrinal treatments of angelology with which I am familiar, do not support this as a formal teaching of the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, iconography does include the presence of angels at the last judgment, but only sometimes are angels depicted as present at the moment of death. Again, there does not seem to be enough evidence to consider this a doctrinal teaching of the Church.

3. Are prayers and almsgiving able to bring relief to the souls of the deceased?

This is clearly the teaching of the Orthodox Church. We do not know what kind of relief, or to what extent our prayers can help the deceased, for our Church teaches that all progress in our life as persons growing in God's image and likeness ends with our lives in this world, and upon our death. Nevertheless, the unity of the Church, between the Church Militant (the faithful living) and the Church Triumphant (the faithful dead) permits and calls for prayer for our beloved dead.

Some efforts were made during the 17th century to work out a more detailed understanding of the nature of the "help" provided for the dead by our good works and our prayers, but these views have not been widely accepted or taught in our Church. As a result, as one writer puts it, "The exact bounds of this relationship, and the conception of the state of such persons and of their condition before the General Judgment does not seem to be very clear from current Orthodox teaching." What is clear from late Jewish history (2 Maccabees 12:43) was that "a sin offering for the dead" was made, and the earliest liturgical practices of the Church, especially in the earliest Divine Liturgies which we have, and the writings of the Holy Fathers, that "through charitable works, the prayers of the Church, the Holy Eucharist, help and comfort are afforded to those who have died in the faith." (Androustos, *Dogmatike*, p.427).

4. And the big question, "What about the toll houses?"

I don't think that it is such a "big question." The idea that when we die we have to go past a number of "toll houses," detaining the soul for testing of the sins which it has committed and requiring payment for them," is certainly a dramatic way of indicating our moral and spiritual responsibility for our lives in this world. However, the overwhelming doctrinal teaching of the Church does not see these statements as anything more than rhetorical devices. "Toll houses" at most, might be called a "theologoumenon" (that is, an optional theological opinion), but for the vast majority of Orthodox teachers of the faith of the Church, such views are either unknown (not mentioned), acknowledged as having some minor elements of tradition supporting them, but not official doctrine, or, finally, simply erroneous misinterpretations, to be condemned. It is this last opinion that many of Fr Rose's "old calendarist" critics have adopted. I tend to agree with them on this matter.

I would suggest that you rather read the following accounts of the Orthodox teachings regarding eschatology (the doctrine of the last things) rather than this quite controversial book, for an authoritative understanding of the Church's doctrine on the last things. A bit polemical, but theologically on target, it appears to me, is Fr Lev Puhalo's *The Soul, The Body, and Death*. For a rather full and middle of the road, generally accepted perspective, read Constantine Callinicos' *Beyond the Grave*. For two very short summaries of Orthodox teaching on eschatology, read Bishop Maximos Aghiorgoussis' *The Dogmatic Tradition of the Orthodox Church*, pp.166-168, in *A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church* and John Karmiris, *A Synopsis of the Dogmatic Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church*, chapter 11.

{PAGE 12: November/December, 1993}

ST NEKTARIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

1223 DOVERCOURT RD.,
TORONTO, ONTARIO
(RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA)

His Eminence,
Archbishop Vitaly

October 11/24, 1980

Your Eminence, Bless,

In obedience to your recent request that I submit a report to you on the disagreement between Fr Lev Puhalo and Fr Seraphim Rose, I humbly submit the following.

Toward the end of August, I received a copy of Fr Seraphim's book "The Soul After Death". This book appeared first as a series of articles in "The Orthodox Word" in 1977 at which time many people, including myself, were shocked by its contents. Unfortunately Fr Seraphim did not listen to any advice as to the errors of these articles but continued on his path and has now published his book of 287 pages. I have photocopied a small section of the book so that Your Eminence can see what conclusions and prelest this book can lead to.

It is very clear that Fr Seraphim is not versed in Orthodox Theology and therefore was misled. The book was written to combat various modern and erroneous beliefs on the soul and "after-death experiences". In his attempt to examine and refute the teachings of Dr Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Dr Raymond Moody, Robert Monroe, Emmanuel Swedenborg and the Theosophists, Fr Seraphim unfortunately was misled and instead of refuting these heretical teachings, adopted them and gave them an "orthodox" form.

Since Fr Seraphim was not familiar with the Orthodox doctrine on this subject he was easily misled concerning the following matters. First and foremost he is not familiar with the Orthodox doctrine concerning the Grace of the All-Holy Trinity and how man receives this Grace. Although Fr Seraphim has devoted two chapters to the "Christian Experience of Heaven" (pp.141-149) and "Characteristics of the True Experience of Heaven" (pp.149-153), he nowhere expounds on the doctrine concerning Grace as taught by the Orthodox Fathers, especially by St Gregory Palamas.

The experience of Heaven according to the Orthodox Fathers is the experience of the Grace of the Holy Trinity which man receives before death causes the separation of the soul and body. That Fr Seraphim does not understand this doctrine is evident from his book which can be summarised in his statement that, "True Christian experiences of heaven always bear one and the same stamp of other-worldly experiences. Those who have beheld heaven have not merely travelled to a different place; they have also entered into a whole different spiritual state" (p.141). Fr Seraphim accepts the Gnostic and Theosophical belief that the soul is imprisoned in the body and must leave the body to "behold heaven" (cf. pp. 36, 123-124, 141, 248). He claims that the soul, which he considers to be a "disincarnate spirit" (p. 106), can travel back and forth on its own, thus making the soul a "ghost".

The Orthodox doctrine as taught by the Fathers states emphatically that the body is not the prison of the soul. The body also shares in the Kingdom of Heaven. St Gregory Palamas (Triads, I,1, 1-12) devotes much space to refuting the belief that the body is a prison for the soul and is, therefore, not able to receive the Grace of the All-Holy Trinity. According to St Gregory and all the Fathers, to seek "out of body experiences" is a "Hellenic error". In the Hagioritic Tome, an apology for the Hesychasts written under the direction of St Gregory Palamas, we find a very clear refutation of the teaching that the soul must leave the body to experience Heaven: "If the body must share with the soul the ineffable blessings of the age to come, it is certain that it must participate in them as far as possible from not one...for the body itself also experiences divine things" (Hagioritic Tome, PG. 150, 1233BD).

Fr Seraphim evidently does not understand the Orthodox doctrine concerning the knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven. Instead he tries to refute the Theosophists and others of their kind by using Augustinian theology. In this case, the use of Augustinian theology is as effective as pouring oil on a fire in order to extinguish it. At one point Fr Seraphim quotes Augustine in an attempt to show that the soul has "out of body experiences" (p.36). For him this one quote of Augustine from the heretical "City of God" is enough to convince him that "out of body experiences"

of the soul are Orthodox. This is why Fr Seraphim can make such erroneous statements as: "When separated from the body, the soul is immediately in a state more natural to it, closer to the state God intends for it" (p.124). Elsewhere he states: "It is also natural for the soul apart from the body to have a heightened awareness of reality and to exercise what is now called extra-sensory perception (ESP)" (p.125).

Since Fr Seraphim has accepted the Gnostic belief that the soul comes to the knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven after leaving the body, he then continues to follow the rest of the Gnostic theology on the ascent of the soul from earth to Heaven. To do this Fr Seraphim takes the Gnostic teaching of intermediate worlds, which the Theosophists call "Astral Planes", and gives it what he believes is an "orthodox" interpretation. This intermediary world he labels "the aerial realm" and it is this "realm" that the soul must travel through to reach heaven (pp.119, 120, 122-123).

It is within this "aerial realm" that Fr Seraphim places the "Toll Houses" and the demons who strive to stop the souls in their ascent. A blasphemous teaching that the demons can pull the soul away from the Grace it became one with while yet in the body. Here Fr Seraphim again shows complete ignorance concerning the Orthodox doctrine of man's participation in the Grace of God and how sin separates us from God. Man does not enter the Kingdom of Heaven as a reward for sinlessness. If this were true, who would enter? If this were true only Purgatory would assure us a place in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not individual sins that separate us from God, but the condition of sin which does not allow us to become united with the All-Holy Trinity before the separation of soul and body. It is not virtues that unite us to the Bridegroom but the acquisition of Divine Grace. This is the interpretation our Holy Fathers have given to the Parable of "The Ten Virgins". This doctrine is beautifully expressed by St Symeon the New Theologian: "Blessed are they who have even now kindled the light in their hearts and have preserved it from being extinguished, for in their departure from life they, being radiant, shall meet with the Bridegroom and shall enter with Him into the bridal-chamber bearing their lamps" (*Tenth Ethical Homily*, lines 805-813).

To insist that the soul immediately after death has to be examined by demons and that if they find the soul guilty of one single sin then it is damned, is not Orthodox. This teaching can be devastating and lead simple Christians to despair.

In attempting to prove his theories Fr Seraphim uses the various demonic experiences of Dr Kubler-Ross, Dr Moody, Monroe, the Theosophists and others as arguments to prove the validity of "out of body experiences" of the soul (p.24). The evidence which these modern Gnostics and Occultists bring forth concerning the soul's leaving the body, having experiences in other worlds and then returning to the body to tell what they saw, is considered by Fr Seraphim to be "a striking confirmation of the Christian teaching on the state of the soul immediately after death" (p.173, cf. pp.99, 106, 113, 119, 124, 160). This is a very dangerous path which Fr Seraphim has followed. The above mentioned "out of body experiences" are all due to Satanic illusion and no good can come from trying to find in them some revelation concerning the "aerial realm". Generally speaking one can be left with the impression that there is not much difference between Orthodox doctrine and the teachings of the Occultists.

I have also examined Deacon Lev's [Puhalo] book on the subject and found it to be sound and not to deviate from the teachings of the Orthodox Fathers. There are some people who would accuse Fr Lev of teaching that the soul after death becomes narcotized and unable to perceive anything. This is not true, and I quote just one part of Fr Lev's book that clearly shows this: "At death too, one ceases to function in any sensual or psychophysical manner and, indeed, he does not function at all relative to anything the human mind can conceive. The intelligent faculty, the soul, the image of God in man continues to be alive because God wills it so. It is alive and, therefore, it perceives that it is in an intermediate state, and whatever else it perceives in the realm of Grace" (p.14). Fr Lev was forced to write his book on this subject only after he saw the confusion which Fr Seraphim's articles had caused. He studied the Holy Fathers and quotes them extensively in his book. He also consulted with many clergy of our Synod and includes a letter of Fr Michael Pomozansky in his book. Again I would like to say that I found Fr Lev's book to contain sound doctrine and that the accusations against him are unfounded.

Humbly and obediently yours,

/s/

Fr Panagiotes Carras.

THE CANADIAN ORTHODOX READER

by Fr Moses Armstrong

PASCHA THE FEAST OF FEASTS

It was a bright and cheery Saturday morning, which is not usual weather for British Columbia at this time of the year. Our whole family was excited to be going to spend Holy Week and Pascha with Grandma. It would be the first time so we weren't sure of what to expect, except that we would be going to church a lot since Holy Week and Pascha are a special time of the year and also since Grandma told us a bit about it.

We drove to Vancouver but this time we did not stop at the parks or any stores: we were going straight to Grandma's house since Holy Week and Pascha were the main reasons for our visit.

Just like the first time we visited Grandma, we drove along streets lined with large, old trees and branches hanging over the streets, forming a green canopy. We stopped along the curb and walked through the wooden gate which creaked just as it had last time when we opened it. Again, the little grey and black striped cat greeted us with a few welcoming "meows" as we walked through the herb garden and to the front door. Dad knocked and Grandma came to the door. After the grandmotherly hugs and kisses, Grandma reminded us of the icons she had on the wall, facing the door. We stood in front of the icons and crossed ourselves and then bowed, then went to the dining room where we had tea and home made bread, fresh from the oven. After a bit of talking, Grandma suggested that we all might like to take a rest since this evening was the vigil service for the raising of Lazarus and the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.

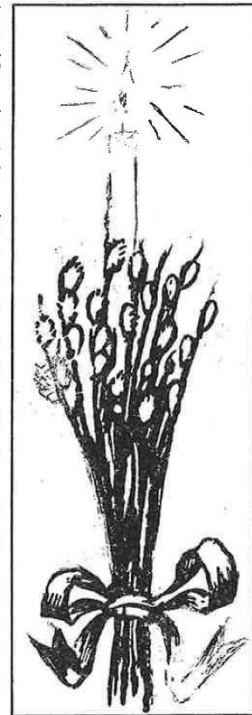
After our rest, we got up and ready for church. Grandma wore her green scarf which she had embroidered with gold and silver thread. Mom wore her blue velvet tam with a silver hat pin and dad and I wore our new, matching suits.

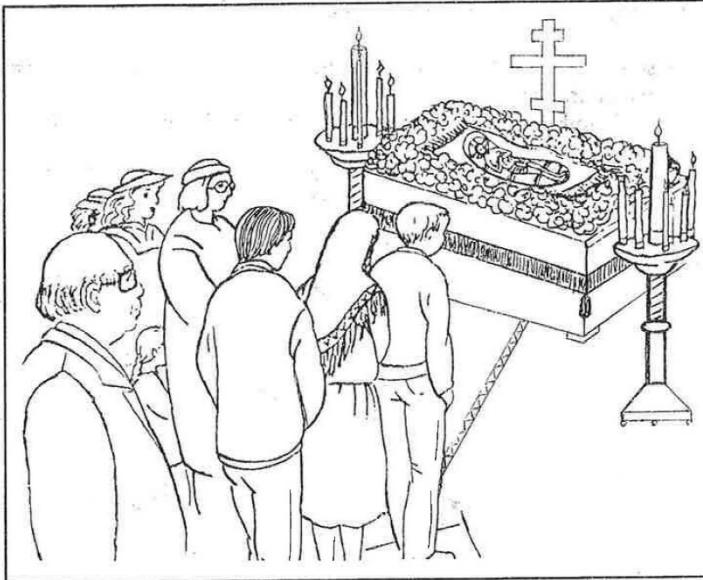
We got to church, bought our candles as well as little bundles of flowers to hold in church. The service was pretty long but very interesting. Father read the Gospel, then the acolytes brought holy water and the censer which were used for the blessing of the palm and willow branches, which sat in a vase on a little table in front of the icon of the feast. After the blessing, we all got a little branch which we stuck in the middle of our little bundles and held all through the rest of the service.

When we got back to Grandma's house, she took her palm and willow branch to the big icon corner where she put them behind the icon of Christ. We took ours home and put them into our icon corners.

On Thursday and Friday we went to church quite often and did not really do much else because we were too tired from the really long services.

Holy Friday was especially long with all the readings. We got to stand in church holding candles. Then the choir began chanting the "Noble Joseph" and the icon of the holy winding sheet was brought out of the sanctuary and placed in the tomb in the middle of the church. Grandma,



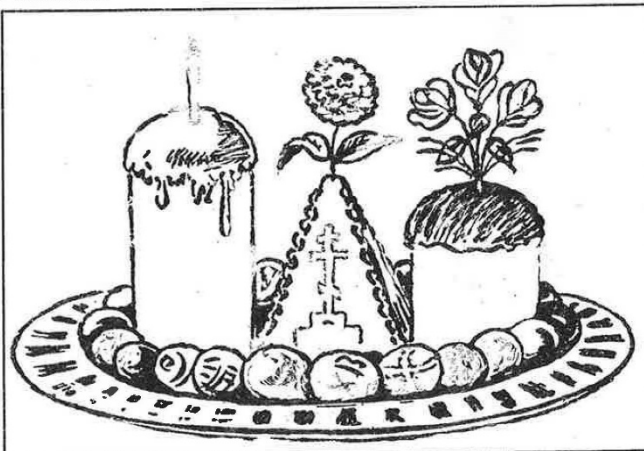


our mom, my sister and I, decorated the tomb with ferns and all kinds of flowers. Candle stands were placed on each side of the tomb and the book of the Holy Gospels was placed over Christ's hands. Each of us went forward where we made prostrations before the tomb then kissed the book of the Holy Gospels, then the hands and the feet of Christ on the icon.

That following evening, we went for the service of the lamentations. A beautiful and slow "Holy God" was sung while we all lit our candles. Then the priests, deacons and servers

all came out and lifted the icon of Christ from the tomb while the large bell was rung just like at a funeral. We followed the icon out of the church and around three times, then went in and sang the lamentations; it was sad but also beautiful.

Saturday, we helped Grandma dye red eggs for taking to church that evening. For four months Grandma had been making her beautiful Pascha eggs which she called "pysanky" and had a whole basket full of these which she was taking to church to have blessed and to give as presents to her friends. We also made several baskets of food to take to church for a blessing. Since we were not blessed to eat cheese or eggs or drink milk or eat meat during the fast, Grandma had made a Pascha cheese dessert, Pascha bread made



with eggs and butter and cream, and a smoked ham. First we put an embroidered white cloth in the basket then set all the food in the basket. Next, we put the pascha eggs all around the food, like a wreath, and had a candle to stick into the bread.

After getting dressed, we all picked up our baskets and went to the church. Grandma wanted to go early so she could take her turn at reading from the book of the Apostles which were on the reading stand near the tomb with the icon of the burial of Christ. We also volunteered to read

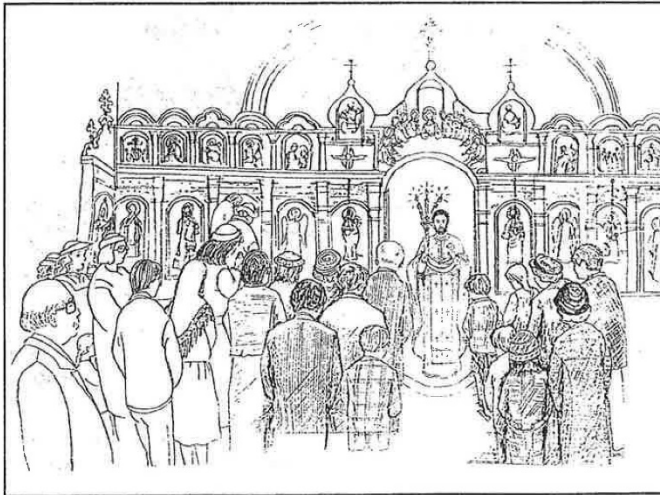
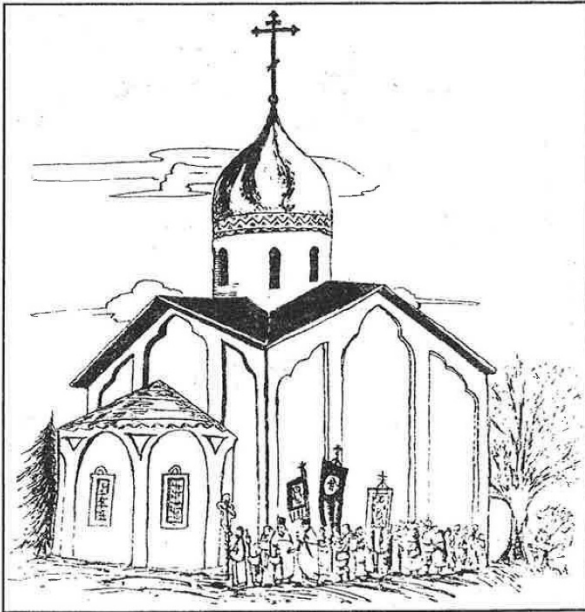
while Grandma took the baskets into the church hall where she sat them on one of the large tables.

Grandma came back for the rest of the service and many other people came to bring their baskets into the hall and then into the church for the service.

The priest took the icon from the tomb and carried it through the royal doors and into the sanctuary, where he sat it on the Holy Table.

At midnight, the bells began to ring as the priests began to sing, "Thy Resurrection O Christ our Saviour, the angels in heaven sing..." Everyone lit their candles from the candles on Father's hand cross and then we all followed the procession. First came the processional cross, then the Holy Gospels and the icon of the resurrection. On each side were acolytes swinging censers. As we all followed the rose scented smoke, we circled the church three times with our lighted candles in hand, singing, "...enable us on earth, to glorify Thee in purity of heart." Then we stopped at the doors, just like the holy women who brought myrrh and spices to anoint the body of Christ. Just like the holy women, we enter the church and find that Christ has risen.

As our priest blesses the beginning of the Matins service for Pascha and the



doors are opened, Grandma, mom, dad, my sister, all the parish family and me, sang, "Christ is risen from the dead..." many times. We enter the church and just like the holy women, we find the church full of light, candles and flowers. The service is long but very happy. We all took Holy Communion and then came up at the end of the service to kiss the cross, receive a blessing and a red egg from the priest. We all went to the church hall to break the fast together as a church family. First, the candles in the all the baskets were lit. Then

Father read the prayer of blessing, sprinkled them and us with holy water and we sang, "Christ is risen..." three times.

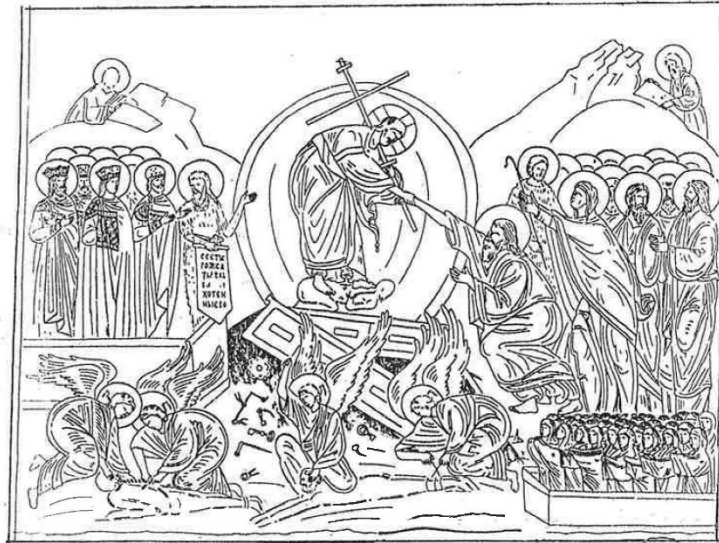
Now people started taking the things out of their baskets and people began sharing their food. Grandma had fun visiting all the other parish grandmothers and telling them, "Christ is risen!" They all answered, "Truly He is risen!" and kissed her three times. We saw everyone else doing it so we did it too.

Grandma exchanged eggs with her friends and so we took our eggs and traded with friends. There were some people visiting who didn't know anyone so Grandma took us over to meet them. She introduced herself, gave them some eggs and then invited them to her house on Pascha afternoon for the Pascha Vespers and the meal following.

After much eating and talking, we helped clean up the hall and then went home, very tired. We went to sleep right away because Grandma had invited the whole parish to her house for Pascha Vespers and dinner. At four o'clock, almost all the people had arrived and so Father began the service at Grandma's big icon corner. We all sang the service together. This service was short compared to the other long services of Holy Week and Pascha.

When the meal was finished and all the people had left, we went to sleep after getting a blessing from Grandma and dad. The morning began with an early breakfast. First we stood, facing the icons and sang, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life". This we sang three times and then sat down to a meal of eggs, cheese pancakes and home made bread. Then Grandma served coffee and tea and we stood up, sang "Christ is risen..." three more times and thanked Grandma for having us. We got her blessing and then she reminded us all that, "Christ is risen!" and kissed us all three times. What a wonderful way to complete our visit with Grandma, to be reminded that Christ is risen and to take the remembrance of the resurrection with us from Grandma's house.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!





90

THE DEATH OF TWO HERMITS

Two hermits lived high up in the Rossus Mountains, on a high mountain known locally as "the roof", near the River Piapa, and the monastery of Abba Theodosios in Skopelos. The monk demised and his pupil, having prayed, buried him on the mountain.

Several days passed. The hermit's pupil descended down from the mountain and walking past a settlement, he met a man who was toiling in his field.

"Honoured monk," he said to him, "be so good as to take your pick-axe and spade, and come with me."

The farmer immediately went with him. They went up on the mountain. The hermit pointed out the grave of his monk to the layman and said, "Dig here!"

When he dug a grave, the hermit began to pray and, finishing it, went down into the grave, lay over his monk and gave up his soul to God. The layman buried the hermit and gave up thanks to God. Going down from the mountain at a distance of a stone's throw he said to himself, I should have received a blessing from the holy ones!"

But returning, he could no longer find their graves.

91

LIFE OF THE HERMIT ABBA GEORGE
AND HIS PUPIL THALELIOS

Some of the fathers told us about the hermit Abba George, that he roamed for

thirty-five years in the deserts without clothing.¹

Of him they said that, living in the mountains of the monastery of Abba Theodosios in Skopelos, he had a pupil. When the pupil demised, Abba George, not having any tools, in order to dig a grave and bury the brother's body, went down from the mountain to the sea and saw a ship approaching. He called out to the master of the ship and the sailors, asking them to go with him up the mountain to bury the brother. They were pleased to go and, taking the necessary tools, went with the monk onto the mountain.

They dug a grave and buried the body. One of the sailors by the name of Thalelios, was touched by the sight of the virtuous monk and he besought him to allow him to stay with him. The old monk replied that, "You will not be able endure the toils of asceticism". But the youth affirmed that he was ready for all struggles. And, indeed, he remained with the old monk for over a year, sharing his exhausting struggles.

At the end of the year, Brother Thalios fell at the monk's feet with the words, "Pray for me, father! By your prayers, God has delivered me from sufferings. I do not feel exhaustion; the dampness of the air no longer acts upon me, the burning heat does not scorch me; I do not shiver during frosts. On the contrary, I experience complete tranquillity."

The abba blessed the brother. Two and a half more years passed. Brother Thalelios foreknew his demise and appealed to the elder with a request: "Take me to Jerusalem in order that I might reverence the Holy Cross and the Holy Resurrection of Christ our God, because in three days, the Lord will take me to Himself."

Fr George set out with him to the holy city. Having revered the holy and dear places, they went on to the holy Jordan and bathed in it, and three days later Brother Thalelios reposed.

The monk buried him in the "Kopratha" lavra.² Not much time passed and the hermit Abba George himself demised. And the fathers of the Kopratha lavra buried him in their

church.

1. Concerning those who lived without clothing and "foragers", see the footnotes to chapter 19. There were also some ascetics who lived naked in caves. Sulpicius Severus recounts one ascetic on Mt Sinai "who, for fifty years, covered himself only with his own hair". The same is said about the anchorites Onuphrios and Sophronios. St Agabus, who lived in the Korif monastery on the bench of Mt Aman was "indifferent to cold and heat", according to Theodorit. The Syrian ascetic St Jakob (died around +450) could pray for two to three days without stopping, while the snow was falling on him so intensely that he had to be dug out. It is remarkable that the ascetics lived to the age of 100 years and more, given the style of life they led.

2. About lavra of Kopratha, see the introduction.

92

LIFE OF GEORGE OF CAPPADOCIA AND THE FINDING OF THE BODY OF PETER, THE DESERT-DWELLER

Our holy father Abba George,¹ archimandrite² of the monastery of our holy father Theodosios,³ situated in the desert near the holy city of Christ our God, told Brother Sophronios the sophist and me:

There lived here with me a brother by the name of George, by birth from Cappadocia, who served in Fasaelida.⁴ Once, the brethren were baking bread and George was kindling the oven. Having heated the oven, he could not find the cloth for wiping it out, because some of the mischievous brethren had hidden it. He crawled into the oven and wiped it out with his cloak, then he came out of the fire without any harm. When I heard about this, I strongly reproached the brethren for such behaviour.

That same Abba George, told us another incident in the life of this brother George. He was once pasturing swine in Fasaelida. Two lions came to seize one of them, but Brother George raised his cane and drove them away to the holy Jordan.

Another time, Abba George informed us:

I was preparing to build a church in the name of St Kiriakos⁵ in Fasaelida. We dug the footing for the foundation, and then, in a dream, there appeared to me an unknown monk, a great ascetic by outward appearance. His under clothes were of palm leaves; on his

shoulders was a short mantle of matting. He said to me in a pleasant voice:

"Tell me, Abba George, after my great toils and struggles, would you leave me to lie outside the church being erected?"

Amazed by the beautiful appearance of the monk, I said to him, "Who are you, my lord?"

"I am Peter, a desert-dweller and forager of the holy Jordan," he replied.

When I arose in the morning, I widened the plan of the church. When we began to dig, we found his body lying in the ground in the very appearance as he appeared to me in the dream. When we completed the church, in the left corner of the church I built a beautiful tomb and placed him there.

1. St George, was archimandrite of the Theodosian Monastery in the last quarter of the 6th century. He resembled the founder, St Theodosios both in features and in his virtuous style of life. He had common sense, perseverance and was devoted to the welfare of the monastery and the brotherhood. He was well respected everywhere. Emperor Tiberius received him with respect in Constantinople, and when St George asked for assistance to the monastery, Tiberius immediately agreed to provide it. St George visited other monasteries as well as ascetics in the hermitages, and constantly learned from them. He achieved a high degree of spiritual perfection.

2. The origin of the title, archimandrite is interesting. Mandros means sheep-fold in Greek. It was also the name of the mountain where St Simeon the Stylite lived, and thus became the name of the monastery located on this mountain. The term "archi" means head, senior or first [in rank]. The head of the Monastery of Mandros was called by this title, hence the word "archimandrite", which means: the head of a sheep-fold, came into usage as a title for the head of a large monastery, or collection of monasteries.

3. Concerning St Theodosios and his monastery, see the footnotes for Chapter 4.

4. Fasaelis or Fasaelida is located at 32 degrees of Northern latitude on the road from Jerusalem to Jericha. It is named after Faisael, the brother of Herod.

5. About St Kyriakos, see the footnotes to the Chapter 26.

93

DEATH OF ABBA SOSINIOS AND HIS DISCIPLE

From the Abba George, we heard the following story:

Once I came to the hermit Bishop Sosinios. This monk left his episcopacy in order to dedicate himself completely to God. He began to lead a silent life near the settlement of Bethabara,¹ about six miles from the Holy

Jordan.

"We came to see him, and we knocked for a long time. A considerable time passed before his disciple opened to us.

"Father," he said to us, "the elder is near death. He prayed to God not to send him death before I heard of your return to this land."

"It so happened that we, because of needs of the monastery, had gone to Constantinople to the most pious Emperor Tiberius. The disciple went to the monk and informed him of my arrival. Much time passed again before he returned.

"Come in!" he said to me.

"We entered and found Sosinios already dead. Then I found out that he departed to the Lord as soon as he discovered that it was I who was knocking. When I kissed him, the dead one quietly said to me, 'My abba has returned safely', and fell silent.

"Then I let it be known in the settlement to come and bury Sosionios. When those who came from the settlement began to dig a grave, the monk's disciple asked them, 'Be so kind as to dig a little wider so that two could be laid out.'

"While they were digging the grave, the disciple lay on a matting and demised. And we buried them together — the monk and his disciple."

1. Bethabara is near the place where John the Forerunner was baptising.

94

ABOUT SAINT JULIAN, BISHOP OF BOSTRA¹

Our father, Archimandrite George, also told us about Abba Julian who was Bishop of Bostra.²

When he departed from the monastery and became bishop in Bostra, some of the inhabitants of the city, haters of the name of Christ, thought to destroy him with the aid of poison. They bribed a servant who served the

wine diluted with water to the bishop, to mix poison into the cup with wine. They supplied the servant with the poison, and he carried out the deed.

The bishop accepted the cup and, by divine inspiration, realized the evil intention of those who arranged it. Taking the cup, the bishop placed it in front of himself, not having said a word to the servant. Then he called together to himself all the inhabitants, in whose number were the evil-doers.

The wondrous Julian, not wishing to submit to the disgrace of the conspirators, turned to everyone with modest words, "If you wish to kill the humble Julian with the aid of poison, I then drink it before you."

Saying this, he thrice made a sign of the cross over the cup. "In the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit — I drink this cup!" he pronounced and, drinking the poison before everyone, he remained unharmed. Seeing this, the people fell before him and asked for his forgiveness.

1. Bostra is a town in Arabia Petraea. It was the see of the renowned Church father, St. Titus of Bostra.

2. Julian was a bishop in Bostra during the reign of Anastasios. He was deposed after refusing to follow the heresy of Severus (the heresy of the "Syrian Church"), and retired to the monastery of Theodosios, his former teacher. He was reinstated after the death of Anastasios.



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