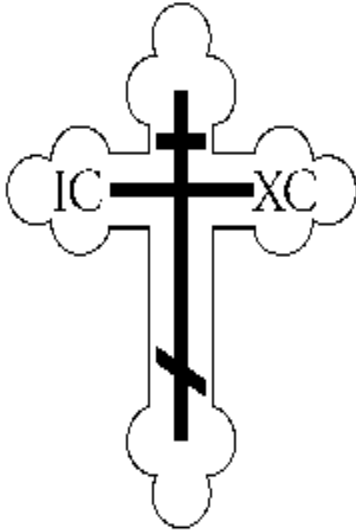

The Good News would like to thank the Sunday school students for their contribution to the newsletter by developing and supplying the cover page.

Thank you and God bless all of you!

“GOOD NEWS”

Christ is Risen!
Indeed He is Risen!



Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church

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I am the Resurrection and the Life.
Whoever believes in me shall not die,
But shall have life everlasting.

~ John 11:25

Volume X – Paschal Edition 2011
Compilation: Greg Ryehlo
Editing and Format: Lorraine Grier

Father's Forum

May 1st 2011, Sunday of Thomas

Cross and Resurrection

Christ is risen!! Indeed He is risen!!

To all the parishioners of Holy Resurrection Church, to your families, to your loved ones: my wishes of a holy Paschal time and my prayer that the Lord may bless you with the joy of His Resurrection.

As I am joyously late writing my contribution for our "Good News", I must apologize and maybe explain myself: I started writing my little article in the middle of Great Lent. It was most fitting then to write about the Cross. I wanted it to be something rather theological in tone and content about the Cross and Salvation.

But during Lent I became more and more aware of a lot of personal and collective suffering in our Parish. Each one of us seems to have to carry a - sometimes heavy- cross. The same is true of the community as such. It seemed better to write something less "theological" and more fundamental or practical.

This is a most fundamental text of the Gospel. This should be our sure foundation:

Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life on account of Me shall find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give as an exchange for his soul?"

(Mt. 16:24-26)

I would like to say, before dealing with this Gospel text, that in my opinion, the famous right to the "pursuit of happiness" is a fallacy. It is a product of individualism and it results in the multiplication of suffering. One would want to think that Christians know better. And, in fact, our Lord warned us clearly:

If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. (Jn 15:20)

Do not suppose that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

(Mt 10:34)

Our Lord did promise: *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (Jn 14:27). But Christ's peace does not necessarily mean security, abundance and lack of anxieties.

Speaking plainly, the "pursuit of happiness" is nothing but the pursuit of self. Fashionable 'self-help', 'self esteem', etc. are also modern myths. But *"Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions,"* as G.K.Chesterton said. And again, here our Lord is most clear: *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself..."* and *"whoever desires to save his life shall lose it."* To deny oneself

means to forget oneself, to stop being self-centered, to lose sight of oneself and to stop seeking one's private pleasures and interests.

It is also true that Jesus said "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*", and that this implies that one must love one's self. Yes, I can and I should love and respect myself as a creature of God. But there is also a gradation in Jesus' words: The first commandment is to love God ("*with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*") The second: *love the others as myself*, which, properly understood, really means that I must not prefer myself to others, period.

No one should think that this is only optional. No one should think that this is only for the saints or very committed serious Christians (whatever those may be?). No one should think: "I do not have the strength to do that". Or: "I'll take the easy way". Because there is no easy way.

One may choose to lie to oneself or to kill one's brain cells one way or another; or to feel pity for oneself or to try to fix one's problems by ignoring them. These methods simply do not work.

The Gospel is not just for pious, "serious" Christians or "canonized-in-life-saints." We believe that it contains true and objective laws of life revealed by God and that these laws concern equally all humans. Such is life; such are we. God made us and therefore He knows us and how we function. He's also the one who wrote the manual of instructions and gave it to us.

... So, how can I think that "I" know better or that "I" am different...?

Then we shy away from Christian life, from going to church and from receiving the sacraments. God is giving us food, medicine, healing, company ... We need God; we need the Church, not the other way around.

If this is too much, too high, too soon ... well, there's no other way.

Obviously, none of us is at the end of the road to holiness before beginning it. There is nothing wrong about being beginners or even to arrive last, as long as we run in the right direction.

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters. (Mt. 12: 30)

Running in the right direction means simply loving with unselfish love. Unselfish love is not only the Christian kind, but also the only real (human) kind of love. Whatever else we call love is some form of egotism.

Is this too hard, too harsh, too difficult? Think of G.K. Chesterton's words:

*The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried. Christianity has not been tried because people thought it was impractical. And men have tried everything except Christianity. And everything that men have tried has failed. (G.K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong With the World*)*

The option then, is not to look the other way. The option is not to say: "Well, then I do not want to come after Christ if I have to deny myself, take up my cross and then who knows what else, nasty or even tragic."

Sure enough, we can decide not to follow Christ. But our cross will not change or get any lighter for that, it will only become meaningless.

The fact of the matter is that to deny oneself, to stop gazing into one's navel or crying for one's hurt feelings, to give up clinging to one's life and to follow Christ is the only way given to us.

Why don't we believe that our God knows better than us what will make our life more meaningful and worth living? Why can't we trust God? Who cares more for our "happiness" than God?

"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields, for My sake and for the sake of the gospel, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, along with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.

(Mk 10: 29-30)

Peace and joy are possible even with persecutions and anxieties. The cross, pain and suffering are inescapable: *"but God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation, He will also make the way out, so as for you to be able to bear it."* (1Co 10:13.)

You may know the old story that has been widely circulated:

One day, a man went to the Lord and said, "Help me Lord....I can't take this suffering anymore. Please give me a different cross to bear." So, our gentle Lord said, "Come with me." All of a sudden, the man and the Lord were standing in a huge room with every kind of cross imaginable. Some were small, some large, others beautiful, some ugly, etc.....The Lord said to the man, "Now you look around and pick out another cross you'd like to carry. "Happily, the man searched and searched and finally found one. He said to the Lord, "Lord, Lord, I will take this one." The Lord just smiled and said, "My dear child, that is the same cross you came in with." In other words, we all have a custom-made cross, uniquely designed for us. The cross God gives you to bear is the very one He knows you can handle. It's designed just for you, and you will be the one that becomes a better person because of it.

Taking up one's cross and carrying it with Christ, following Christ and in Christ, makes it all different. Because there can be joy in the middle of suffering, and meaning, growth and reward too. All that, here and now, not only in some afterlife.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed in us. (Ro 8:18)

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Ro 8:28)

Read some more of the verses also in Rom 8:

He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up on behalf of us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ is the One having died, but rather also having been raised, who is even at the right hand of God, who also intercedes on our behalf? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or

distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Just as it is written: "For Your sake we are put to death the whole day long; we are accounted as sheep for slaughter." But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (32-39)

Yes, it is human to be afraid to suffer.

On the other hand, we may think that the sayings of our Lord (or of Paul) are inhuman. We may think that they are not for us, but they are the only truly human (remember, He made us and knows better who we are ...) Our suffering acquires meaning with the Cross, and we may live it with the consolation and with the company of the One who loves us more that we can love ourselves. For the Cross is the saving power of Christ.

My suffering can unite me to Christ in the measure that I may *"know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Php 3:10)*. Most often a broken heart is a necessary condition to understand all this and open up to God. *"A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit: a broken and a humbled heart God will not despise." (Ps.50:17)*

I am not glorifying suffering. I do not think that it is healthy or good for anyone per se. Pain is of no value in itself and it is not to be searched or desired. Even the common wisdom that suffering makes you grow or become more experienced, may or may not be true and is, in any case, a useless consolation. Painful feelings, anxieties, sickness, etc. are real but not final, although they can be also obstacles to life if they direct our energies toward the self. Guilt, for example is a spiritually paralyzing form of suffering (a sin, really!)

To summarize, pain and suffering are and will be. Trying to avoid them, to mask them or turning one's brain to mush will not help. Praising them is not my purpose. Our real problem is self-centeredness, which is at the origin of all pain and suffering. And the only Christian option is to stop looking to oneself, coming out and looking only toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not inhuman or out of touch with real life to say that we must deny ourselves or to lose our life in order to recover it (real life!) because this is a fundamental law of creation.

See how James also formulates it in the form of almost mathematical laws:

Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter change into mourning and your joy into dejection. Be humbled before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

(James 4: 7-10)

Let us trust then the One who created us for Life. Resurrection is truly already present in the Cross, and everything takes its real meaning from the Resurrection:

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but have courage, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Christ is Risen!

Fr. Pau

President's Message

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! It's these glorious words that supersede all other trivial issues in our fallen world. It is these words that are worthy of total focus! It is these words that trump all others! It is these words that shine in the darkness! So I say them again..... **CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!.....** I think these words truly need our focus, especially now. In a year of much concern, much tragedy and internal strife within our larger Church, WE NEED TO FOCUS and pray. More and more, throughout the year, I personally have become mired in the tragedy of scandal, politics in our church (I'm not referring to anything local) and the legal issues surrounding our much loved hierarchy. As a result I have lost focus! I have lost focus on what is truly important. That being the responsibility our Lord has placed on me to fulfill His will in this parish. It (and I pray this) is to have the strength to trust in Him to lead us through these difficult times. And that He will! Having read the different news items, blogs etc. focusing on our church's woes, it is apparent that many are not. Some within the church feel that all the issues outlined are ours alone to fix. Because of our human arrogance we think that we are the only controllers of our destiny and we forget the promise made to us by our Creator... if only to put our faith and trust in Him. Let's make this Pascha a true time of renewal! Let's reaffirm our faith and put our lives in the hands of the only One that can truly make a difference.... Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Greg Rychlo
Parish Council President

Food Bank Requests

We thank those that continue to bring regular food items for the food bank. If possible, please include canned milk, fruits, meats, and vegetables in your contributions. Pastas in any form are always welcome. Remember that all Church Council members will assist if there are persons that come to you in need. Contact Greg Rychlo or Sub Deacon James Davis for further information.

If you have someone come to you for assistance other than food, please contact Fr. Pau or Greg Rychlo.

Paschal Basket Program

The Paschal Basket Program was a rousing success. Our parish was able to assist in making Pascha a little brighter for some families within our parish. What a wonderful gift and blessing it is for the Lord to allow us to give! We pray that God blesses those that have accepted the baskets and those that have given to them.

Thank you to those who helped with the giving and collection of items for our Paschal baskets. Thank you God for instilling the ideas that came forth to augment our ability to help those of our parish that we love dearly and consider a great blessing!

Outreach

Outreach is one of the areas of parish life that we want to expand. We feel there is a great need for charity in our communities and we need your help. We are looking to our sister Orthodox parishes in order to combine resources so we can be the most effective in delivering services needed by those who are requiring help. If you are interested in helping with this important venture, please contact Fr. Pau, Aggie Friesen, Chrystal Herrem or Greg Rychlo.



NASHI

NASHI is a Saskatchewan-based charitable organization run entirely by volunteers who are trying to rally activists in the fight to stop human trafficking. While NASHI is headquartered in Saskatoon and area, we are proud to announce that support groups have been organized in Edmonton and recently Winnipeg.

NASHI'S mission consists of two primary goals. The first covers our local activities to educate children, youth and the general public about child exploitation. Our second goal covers our international activities – to divert children and youth from exploitation by establishing a safe house for youth at-risk in Ukraine. Ukraine is a hotspot and major source country for trafficked victims.

Through 2010 I have met and heard the pain of girls forced into trafficking and shared the tears of a mother who knows her daughter has been trafficked but has no way of rescuing her. It is impossible not to cry when you try to imagine the future of these children. Coming face-to-face with this reality is difficult and often seems insurmountable but there is a light in the darkness.

NASHI has been and will continue to be successful in taking steps to combat this tragedy. Thanks to many of you and from Holy Resurrection, we will soon have our own facility to begin to improve the lives of children at risk. Exterior renovations to our 12,000 sq. ft. facility are completed and interior renovations hopefully will be completed by the fall of 2011.

Together we cannot bemoan the darkness in the world but together we need to light a candle. We must look at the world with hope and love. Be a shining example in your home, your community and in our church. Let us not grow tired of giving.

What can I ask of each of you?

Continue to light a candle and support NASHI. Your gifts have enabled us to do this valuable work. Thank You

SAVELIA CURNISKI

Youth

The youth of our parish have been actively engaged in church life and fellowship through the leadership of our Sunday school teachers and youth leaders. This has been a great improvement and has enriched parish life for all of us. As well, these young people will make up the body of our church in the future. In a world of distractions and influences that take us away from what we should be focused on, this initiative is a very important element of our spiritual life. Please pray for our Sunday school teachers and staff and our youth leaders that they may be given the strength and wisdom to continue these important tasks.

Inspirational Reading

‘Poverty Relief Africa’ and the Forgotten Children of Northern Uganda

Catherine Ruiz-Gomar

History

For over 20 years, the people of northern Uganda were caught in a brutal war between the Government of Uganda and Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). Over 30,000 children,-some as young as 6 years old - were abducted by the LRA and forced to serve as child soldiers and sex slaves. The LRA was lead by a man named Joseph Kony, who claimed that he was a messenger from God sent to purify Uganda and rule with the 10 commandments. From the start he exhibited ruthlessness in war, especially against children who were beaten, tortured, used as sex slaves and then forced to kill and abduct other Ugandans, including their own friends and family members. Humanitarian organizations estimate that 80% of the LRA is comprised of children.

The night Commuters: ‘When the sun sets, we start to worry...’

Abductions would generally take place at night, with the LRA attacking and terrorizing whole villages in the poorer, isolated areas of Northern Uganda. Desperately afraid of abduction, each night these vulnerable children, some as young as four years old, would walk from their villages to sleep in the relative safety of a larger urban centre. These ‘night commuters’ travelled as far as 20km on a daily basis without any adult supervision, subjecting them to a wide range of violence. They gathered in schools, hospitals corridors, verandas and the streets,

where they hoped to spend the night in safety. Early in the morning before sunrise, they would awake, return to their villages for the day, and repeat the journey at the end of the day. The crisis of the night commuters went on for over 20 years and as Jan Egeland, past U.N. Under Secretary General of Humanitarian Affairs, said at the time, “The situation in northern Uganda has been the world’s most neglected humanitarian crisis and one of the biggest scandals of our generation.”

Until as recently as 2008, thousands of children continued to walk, while abductions continued, parents were murdered and villages burned and destroyed. In addition to other resulting tragedies, an entire generation of children was deprived of education. In an attempt to try and protect the Acholi population of Northern Uganda, the government forced them into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, which offered neither security nor basic provisions. These settlements were often compared to WWII concentration camps.

This war paralyzed an entire nation with fear, forever altering families, cultural traditions and the way of life for an entire generation.

What is the situation at this time?

Over the past couple of years, the LRA have moved to neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and abductions have more or less ceased in Northern Uganda. Gradually, people are leaving the IDP camps and returning to their villages, which for the most part have been totally destroyed. Villages must be rebuilt and they are still lacking the basics such as safe drinking water.

I have watched countless interviews with the children, most recently and during the years of abductions. When asked, ‘What do they want most of all? Almost all of the children gave the same answer: **‘an education’**. They know that that is their only hope for a brighter future, but sadly, without school fees, most have no access to it!

The Mission of Poverty Relief Africa

Poverty Relief Africa is a registered charity based in Calgary. Its mandate is to relieve the physical, emotional and intellectual suffering of the children in Northern Uganda.

Our program offers the children a solid academic education and a leadership curriculum around several important themes: peace education, human rights, gender equality, environmental protection, social justice and conflict management. Ultimately, the goal is to support our children to become the next generation of leaders in their community by providing education and the skills and knowledge not only to improve their own situation, but also to influence others. It is very much a grass roots organization, functioning almost totally on a volunteer basis. It was founded by Dr. Fred Oola from Northern Uganda who

was himself a 'night commuter', meaning as a child, fearing abduction by the Lord's Resistance Army; he would walk several kilometers each day to sleep in the relative safety of the nearest town. Dr. Fred eventually was able to attend school and later became a physician, thanks to an Italian priest sponsoring his education. In turn, this inspired him to 'pay it forward' by establishing an organization that would provide educational opportunities to those most impoverished. *(Please visit our website: [www. povertyreliefafrika.ca](http://www.povertyreliefafrika.ca))*

What is my involvement with PRA?

In 2004, in the midst of this crisis, my brother David Greene who lives in Calgary accompanied my parents on a trip to Malawi, Africa to assist them with some humanitarian work projects. From Malawi, he ventured off to visit other countries, and arrived in northern Uganda at a time when as quoted by former UNICEF head Carol Bellamy, 'it was pretty much the worst place in the world to be a child'. David visited the IDP camps, met the victims and the families and listened to countless heart wrenching personal stories of abduction, torture and rape, of children been forced to witness killings and then do likewise, as they were forced to kill their friend, family member or fellow citizen. Some children managed to escape, and then were later ostracized by their own communities. It is estimated that thousands remain missing.

David's commitment to these children began at that point, and he now works tirelessly for them, recruiting sponsors, raising awareness, organizing fundraisers and probably most important of all, spending a minimum of 5 weeks in Uganda each winter, assisting with the Leadership training program. He does not have a high paying job, but has chosen to spend basically everything he has on these children and utilizes his annual vacation to go and work with them. In so doing, he has inspired me, most of our family and many others to join the cause.

For the past 5 years I have tried to raise awareness and recruit sponsors in Quebec, largely through the educational system. Teachers, students, parents, friends and the village ecumenical committee, are now working together to pay the annual sponsorship fees for 7 children and also funding part of the leadership training program. Students give presentations to every class in the local elementary and high school and bit by bit awareness of the Northern Ugandan issue is growing in that village of Quebec.

I recently became a member of the small Canadian board, composed of 5 people. We work alongside an American board (The Child is Innocent) and a Ugandan Board (Latin Balle Pee), communicating regularly through e-mails, Skype conference calls and visitations.

This is a grassroots organization: we know the people who are directly involved and we know exactly how every dollar is spent. Most important of all, we see the need and we see the results: either through correspondence with the children, personal visits, program evaluations and academic results.

To learn more or to help out...

Please visit our website which explains the program in detail (povertyreliefafrika.ca). On the home page you will find a recent video made by one of the American board members who was recently in Uganda. I also draw your attention to the section 'What's New?' where among other things, you will find a copy of the recent newsletter (includes an article by David on the bio-sand water filter project). Feel free to speak to me if you are interested in making any form of financial donation either for our leadership program or child sponsorship or bio-sand water filter project.

The leadership program is a vital part of our program and it differentiates us from other non-government organizations (NGOs). The children are all brought together for a period during their annual vacation and it is then that they participate in a curriculum in areas, such as gender equality, non violent conflict resolution, social justice issues, HIV/Aids awareness and/or environmental protection. At the same time all of the students are required to be involved in some form of community service project. For the past few years, David and a team of volunteers have been teaching some of the students how to construct bio-sand water filters with materials found in their country. The students are then expected to return to their village, install the filters and educate the end user on their operation. Later the students are expected to follow up by monitoring and evaluating the water filter performance.

Specific donations are needed for this part of our program as it is not included in the sponsorship fees. The money is needed to pay for trainers, speakers, materials, food and travel expenses for the students etc.

If you are interested in learning more about the situation in Northern Uganda, I highly recommend 'War Dance', a documentary which was nominated for an academy award.

On October 21, I will be travelling to Calgary for our big fundraiser. This event will be to raise money and awareness for both Uganda and Malawi. Part of my role as a board member is to recruit a few volunteers. If anyone is interested in going to Calgary that weekend for a most worthy cause and a memorable evening, please let me know! (We can travel together and I can provide accommodation.)

Finally, not everyone wants to or is able to help out financially, but we can all pray and we can all become educated about the issue and help raise awareness. Please pray for the people of Northern Uganda!

— Anders Strinberg

Kiss of Peace, Part 1

SUN 23 Jan 2011

I have had recent opportunity to consider the practice of the Kiss of Peace during the liturgy. Apparently it is seen as disruptive by some members of the Orthodox Church. I am offering (at least) two reflections, the first on its practice, and the second on concerning elements which seem to underlie the reasons offered to no longer allow or encourage the exchange of the Kiss by the laity as well as clergy. The Kiss of Peace is a longstanding tradition that has important meaning for our Christian practice. I offer these reflections in the hope that both laity and clergy take the opportunity to learn both the significance of the action as well as how to do it with a dignity appropriate to its meaning. As a traditional practice, both Paul and Peter tell us to greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom 16:16, 1 Peter 5:14). As a confirmation of baptism, the Apostolic Tradition (2nd century) says that once baptism is complete, the faithful and newly baptized exchange a kiss (22.6), and in the Apostolic Constitutions, the deacon exhorts the congregation to exchange the kiss as a part of the prayer of the faithful (VIII.11). This exhortation remains in our oldest liturgical tradition, the Liturgy of St. James. Justin Martyr places the Kiss of Peace as a part of the Eucharistic celebration (Apology, 65), and Cyril of Jerusalem mentions it before the Eucharistic prayer, where we know John Chrysostom celebrated it as well.

The Council of Laodicea codifies that the kiss is to be exchanged among clergy, and then among the laity. We don't know when the practice of exchanging the kiss among concelebrating clergy only began, but it was likely after the 9th c. As with virtually all of our liturgical practices, there are periods when they were and were not done. Often, what is "traditional" simply depends on which period of history one is referring to.

More compelling to its continuation than its traditional practice is why we exchange the Kiss of Peace. As I was recently reminded in a sermon, we are called to become like God not in God's essence, but in God's actions. Turning to one another, reaching out, kissing one another's cheeks while exchanging the traditional greeting "Christ is in our midst!" and "He is and ever shall be!" is an act which testifies that through the Eucharist we are about to receive, Christ is each and every one of us. Christ does not live only in the Eucharist, or in the communion which exists between the clergy. In baptism, we have all put on Christ (Gal 3:26-28). Christ stands in our friends, the family member that irritates us, and the complete stranger next to us. In the liturgy, 'friend, 'irritating family' and 'stranger' are overshadowed by the love of Christ we are called to bear for one another. The communion which is entered into (in part) via the Eucharist is the communion which exists in our loving actions towards one another. The Kiss symbolizes this and it allows all of us to act in the liturgy the way we are to act in the world, as people who offer peace to one another. The Kiss of Peace is an

expression of forgiveness, reconciliation and unity. It is how we are to act “for the life of the world.”

I entirely agree that the Kiss of Peace can be disruptive. It is not a time to say hello or chit-chat. It is a time to look one another in the eye, declare the presence of Christ, and seal this with a kiss. We all need to be reminded of the riches of our liturgical tradition, the meaning of the phrases and actions that we too often do by rote, completely forgetting their meaning. For those concerned about its disruptive aspects, please take the disruptions as an opportunity to teach the faithful how to practice this act of love towards one another in a dignified and respectful manner.

Kiss of Peace, Part 2

FRI 04 Feb 2011

In my previous post, I briefly noted the history of the Kiss of Peace, its often disruptive quality when misunderstood and poorly practiced, and the importance of teaching us to practice the Kiss of Peace a respectful manner. Here, I would like to address my concerns regarding the reasoning offered by two advocates of ending the practice, a currently practicing priest and an active Metropolitan. Please note that I do not know the context in which these reasons were offered, they were brought to my attention in isolation of any other comments.

The priest writes, “We can still witness this act being done when more than one Priest is celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The Church, however, ceased having the faithful express this act since it became disruptive. In addition, there were some who began to abuse this act with inappropriate behaviour. In recent times, some parishes have tried to “reinstitute” this act by having the people shake hands. This is not the same practice that had originally been taught in the Church and is a recent innovation that is inappropriate!”

The Metropolitan instructs that “the kiss of peace is a practice that is reserved for the clergy concelebrating at the Holy Altar, and indicates the brotherly love that we should have for one another in the priesthood in Christ. Although at one time in the early Church it was done by both the laity and clergy, it fell out of practice because of abuse. If practiced today, it not only usurps a rubric currently reserved for the clergy, but when I have seen it done it is highly disruptive, causing people to think they can greet each other socially as they do at the fellowship hour. It also interrupts the solemnity of the Liturgy of the Faithful, which flows in an uninterrupted and dignified manner. Social activities belong in a social hour; at the Divine Liturgy we are called to a much more reverent and attentive behaviour. At the very most, in parishes where this has been previously practiced, the faithful could simply say to those next to them, ‘Christ is in our midst,’ in a low and reverent manner.”

It is notable that neither clergyman mentions the liturgical or spiritual benefit which was seen as important for almost a thousand years of liturgical practice. Rather, they emphasize the disruptive nature of the practice and its abusive misuse. I have practiced the Kiss of Peace for most of my life. I have never witnessed it being abusive, and I have rarely experienced it as disruptive. I do not deny that it has been abusive, even if I have not experienced it as such. The question is, however, whether stopping the practice (or refusing to reinstitute it) is the appropriate response to abuse or disruption? If the act had no value, if it has nothing to teach us about our Christian lives, then asking people to stop is entirely reasonable.

But what if it does have value? There is a reason that the practice lasted for as long as it did among both clergy and laity, and a reason that it has never completely died out. And there is a reason for the frequent calls by theologians and clergy that the practice be re-instituted as widely as possible. The quotes above make no mention of these reasons, instead choosing to focus on only the negative elements.

What I find disturbing is that both men appear to take the easy way out. When confronted with a practice which has lost its meaning and appropriate expression, rather than offer instruction, they simply forbid it. Telling people to stop is easy. Appealing to 'tradition,' though in this case, a more recent tradition than its original, fully-shared practice is easy. It is much harder to say to people, "how you are doing it is a problem, we need to relearn this practice," and then walk with them over time through the process of creating 'new,' worshipful habits.

This unwillingness to challenge and teach often masks a poor view of the people of God. Are we not able to learn? Are we not able to hear that we are doing something disruptive and there is a better way to do it? I am often struck when I teach at the eagerness with which people want to learn, be challenged, grow and change. If we do not expect that people can learn and be challenged, then they will meet our expectations and refuse to learn. But if we expect that they can learn and grow, more often than not, they do. It may be slow and halting, but they grow.

This view of the laity as somehow lesser also seems to be reflected in the implication that witnessing the Kiss of Peace exchanged between concelebrating clergy alone is sufficient. This portrays the laity not as participants, but merely witnesses to the sacred acts of the clergy. This is a very common attitude among Orthodox, an attitude which is encouraged by portraying lay participation as a sort of 'usurping' of clergy privileges. Many of these 'privileges' were shared among clergy and laity for hundreds of years. What is lost in this view is the reality of our common baptism, our common call to be priests, royalty and prophets, and the importance of the liturgy in forming us as persons who love

God and neighbour. Met. Kallistos Ware, speaking at the 2008 Metropolis of San Francisco Clergy-Laity conference, emphasized the importance of restoring a number of ancient practices, among them the shared Kiss of Peace, precisely because these practices are a liturgical help in becoming persons who are in the likeness of God. We do not learn by watching, we learn by doing (http://www.sf.goarch.org/news/articles/2008-03-05-San_Francisco_Clergy_L...).

The Metropolitan is right, the liturgy is a place of reverence, and social niceties belong at the coffee hour. The priest is also right, 'reinstating' the kiss of peace in the form of shaking hands is indeed a recent, and inappropriate, innovation. Yet by characterizing the Kiss of Peace as only disruptive, they lose the opportunity to teach it as a reverent act of witnessing to the Peace of Christ which is given to each and every one of us, and to which we are also called to live out in our daily lives.

I have engaged in the Kiss of Peace my whole life. At times, it has been disruptive. My response in those moments is to simply offer the kiss as I was taught as a child, and return to the prayers while allowing those around me to finish their greetings. Over my many years, I have heard many reminders of how to better engage in the practice. I have never been told that it should cease. The few liturgies I have attended in which the Kiss was not exchanged always leave me with a sense of loss. A lost opportunity to acknowledge the presence of Christ in our midst (whether we feel it or not), a lost reminder of the peace to which we are called. I welcome the disruption if it means the opportunity to engage in this ancient practice.

Submitted by Yvonne Romano

(Many of you already know these 55 maxims. It will not hurt to remember them. I should add that they are also recommended by Vladyka Seraphim. Fr. Pau)

Fr. Thomas Hopko 55 MAXIMS (2008)

01. Be always with Christ, and trust God in everything
02. Pray as you can, not as you think you must.
03. Have a keepable rule of prayer, done by discipline.
04. Say the Lord's Prayer several times each day.

05. Repeat a short prayer when your mind is not occupied.
06. Make some prostrations when you pray.
07. Eat good foods in moderation, and fast on fasting days.
08. Practice silence: inner, and outer.
09. Sit in silence 20 to 30 minutes each day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly.
12. Go to confession and Holy Communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts, and feelings.
14. Reveal your thoughts, and feelings to someone regularly.
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books, a little at a time.
17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person, one of the human race.
19. Be polite with everyone, first of all with family members.
20. Maintain cleanliness, and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, even a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult, and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful.
30. Be cheerful.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet, and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake, and attentive, fully present where you are.
35. Think, and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. Speak simply, clearly, firmly, directly.
37. Flee imagination, fantasy, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, grumble, murmur, or whine.
40. Don't seek, or expect pity, or praise.
41. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
42. Don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend, or justify yourself.
45. Be defined, and bound by God, not by people.
46. Accept criticism gracefully, and test it carefully.
47. Give advice only when asked, or when it is your duty.
48. Do nothing for people that they can, and should, do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim, and caprice.

50. Be merciful with yourself, and with others.
51. Have no expectations, except to be fiercely tempted until your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God, and light, and never on darkness, temptation, and sin.
53. Patiently endure your faults and sins peacefully, under God's mercy.
54. When you fall, get up immediately, and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear, or shame.

The following is an excerpt from *Sacred Symbol That Speak* Volume 11 by Anthony M. Coniaris.

Paschal Eggs

There was a time when it was the custom for ancient people to place eggs on the graves of their loved ones. They believed that even as a little chicken is born alive out of the eggshell so their loved ones and friends would be born again out of the shell of the dead bodies. The egg was a symbol of their belief in a future life.

Christianity borrowed this beautiful idea and made it the symbol of the Resurrection of Jesus. For us Christians the Easter egg represents the sealed tomb in which the Body of our Savior was placed after His Crucifixion.

There is a tradition that the custom of the Easter egg originated with Mary Magdalene who visited the Emperor of the Roman Empire after the Ascension of Christ. She greeted him with "Christ is Risen!" as she gave him a red-colored egg. She then began to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to him using the egg as an introduction.

Originally only red was used in coloring for eggs. This signified the sacred blood of Christ which was shed for our salvation. Gradually, other colors have also come into use.

At the conclusion of the Easter liturgy, in many Orthodox Churches, colored eggs are blessed and distributed to the congregation. Thus everyone receives a personal symbol of the Resurrection of Jesus.

The members of the congregation then greet one another by striking eggs. As they do so, the one whose egg is cracked (the seal of the tomb broken) says, "Christ is Risen!" and the other replies, "Truly He is Risen!"

The easting of eggs at Easter is symbolic also of the breaking of the long Lenten and Holy Week fast since eggs are not allowed during this period. It is a custom not to allow any Easter egg to remain unbroken in order to emphasize our faith that Christ did indeed rise from the dead “by His death trampling upon death and to those in the tombs granting life everlasting.”

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Ask The Clergy

*This section of the **Good News** is dedicated to answering those burning theological questions you may have or questions about why our Holy Orthodox Church does the things it does. Our dedicated and knowledgeable Clergy will attempt to answer them for you. Enjoy!*

Not too long ago, someone left a question in the red box "questions to our clergy". The question was about what we Orthodox believe to be ourselves, and what we think that the other so called churches are. The following text, taken from the "Questions and answers about Orthodoxy" of the OCA site, throws some light on that polemical issue. I think that it can be useful to all of us.

Fr. Pau

Orthodox Christianity and the "Branch Theory"

QUESTION:

In an answer to the question "Is the Orthodox church anti-Roman Catholic?" you stated that: "We continue to pray for unity while, at the same time, rejecting any notion that Orthodox Christianity is just one of many 'branches' or 'expressions' of Christianity. To believe this would be to reject our understanding of Orthodoxy as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church."

With all due respect, this strikes me as highly prideful. The apostles were dispersed throughout the world, and those they taught to follow them were dispersed yet further. Clusters of Christians organized churches where the Holy Spirit led them, and according to their own character, the environment and cultures in which they found themselves, etc. The tree of life indeed has many branches, and the only trunk and root is Christ and Israel ("I am the vine..."). That you should presume that Orthodox Christianity is the trunk and not one of the oldest and thickest branches is an extremely heretical position, as heretical as the Roman Catholic claim that Peter and his successors are infallible. (Did not JESUS say to Peter, his rock: "Get thee behind me Satan" when the latter attempted to hold him back from His passion?)

Indeed, the paradox which all Christians (including the Eastern rite branch) must live with is that while Peter is indeed the rock on which God's church is founded, he is also called 'Satan' by his Master, and he denies Him three times. This should be a comfort for our human frailty, fear and lack of faith.

The certainty with which you express that Orthodox Christianity is the only true catholic and apostolic church is no doubt based in the deeply felt understanding that yours IS a true and living branch on the vine of Christ. But dear friend, it is just another bitter branch grafted onto the rootstock of sweet truth.

Doctrinal differences are caused by the persistence of human sin and error, to which we are all subject as sinners. The truth cannot be expressed in doctrine alone, because it is Jesus Christ who is the truth; the Gospels are an expression of His truth and our interpretations are expressions of our desire to understand His truth. But verily, the only Truth is to be found in Himself, as the very Son of God. I have nothing against special garments and titles, but I do have something against those who do not perceive the vanity of such things.

ANSWER:

Thank you for your enquiry. Without wishing to enter into a lengthy debate, I must say that I think you were reading a bit more into the answer than what is there.

The statement to which you take exception is not a statement of pride; it is a statement of fact that Orthodoxy indeed rejects the "branch theory," for very good reason -- namely that not all who refer to themselves as "Christian" possess the fullness of Christian truth. To say that "it's all the same, there's only one Christ, there's a variety of different ways to express our belief in Him," is to flatly ignore the history of Christianity, specifically the first two Ecumenical Councils, which discerned once and for all the truth concerning the person and mission, the humanity and divinity, of Jesus Christ -- and which, incidentally, in no way subscribes to the branch theory.

While I would wholeheartedly agree with your statement that "the truth cannot be expressed in doctrine alone," it must be stated that not all expressions of belief in Jesus Christ constitute the truth. There are some Christians to this day who deny His divinity. There are others who deny His humanity. And there are others who have distorted His teachings on everything from fasting to the centrality of the Eucharist to the role of His Mother in the life of the Church. To say that all of these are different "expressions" of the same "truth" is a lie at worst, a distortion at best. If Christ is both God and man, for example, one who would affirm that He is only God or only human would not be proclaiming the same truth as one who would affirm that Christ is both divine and human. Are we to affirm that those who believe that Jesus is the manifestation or incarnation of the Archangel Michael hold the same truth as those of us who believe that He is the only-

begotten Son of God Who took on the human nature without relinquishing His divinity? Are we to see those who deny the presence of Christ in the Eucharist as holding the same truth as those of us who believe that the Eucharist is the very Body and Blood of Christ? Are we to claim that those who deny the ever-virginity of Mary hold the same truth as those of us who believe that she was a virgin before, during, and after the incarnation of Our Lord? These are hardly different "expressions" or "nuances" of the same truth. And, as such, they are not seen by Orthodox Christianity as being a part of the same trunk, founded upon the rock of Peter's faith [and not on Peter himself, as Orthodox Christianity understands the "upon this rock" passage], since the teachings of some traditions are diametrically opposed to the fullness of truth as discerned and defined by the ecumenical councils of the undivided Church, to which Orthodox Christianity looks as definitive for all time, and not just for "part" of the time.

Of course, as you rightly assert, Jesus Christ is the truth. Of course, the Gospels are an expression of His truth, a revelation through the written word of God of the Living Word of God Himself. And of course, the only truth is to be found in Jesus Christ, the very Son of God. But are we to say that those who do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God hold the same teachings as we hold, or that those who reject certain teachings found in Scripture or who reject the Holy Mysteries or who reject the ongoing Tradition of the Church believe and hold the same truths as we believe and hold? Are we to agree with those who insist that, in venerating icons, we are "worshipping wood and paint and varnish," even though the seventh ecumenical council in 787 AD affirmed that worship is accorded to God alone and that the Church does not "worship" icons? Are we to imply that those who insist that Mary had other children hold the same faith as those of us who insist on her ever-virginity? Are we to accept that those who believe that God is a single person with three "modes" or "expressions" known as "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" believe the same as those of us who believe that God is in fact three separate, equal and distinct persons rather than a single person who merely reveals Himself at some times as Father, at other times as Son, and still at other times as Holy Spirit? Are we to say that those who believe that good works are meaningless in the process of salvation hold the same faith as those of us who accept St. James' precept, namely that "faith without works is dead"? Are we to acknowledge that those who are convinced that the episcopacy is not scriptural [even though the New Testament makes clear reference to the "episcopi"] hold the same truths that we hold? And what about those Christians who believe that the white race is God's chosen race, that all other races exist out of God's punishment or anger? Do these Christians hold the same truths as we hold? Can one reconcile this notion with the faith of St. Paul, who says that "in Christ there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek," and, by extension, "black nor white nor red nor yellow"? Would Roman Catholicism hold that those fundamentalist Christians who believe that the Pope of Rome is one and the same as Anti-Christ hold the same faith that they, as Roman Catholics, hold?

The Church struggles to preserve the "fullness of Truth." As such, there is no room for "relativism" in the sense of "all Christians being grafted to the same trunk." Clearly, there are those whose branches have completely fallen from the trunk, who have severed any and all connection from historical Christianity. Are you aware that there are those who literally believe that from the time of the apostles until the first stirrings of reformation, the "true" Church simply did not exist -- for some 1400 years! It is patently ridiculous to imply that Orthodox Christianity should acknowledge as "branches" those who reject the "trunk" from which they supposedly sprout, or who deny that the "trunk" even exists in the first place.

While the Church preserves the "fullness of Truth," it does not imply that everyone else is completely and utterly devoid of all truth. As Fr. Georges Florovsky once said, nothing is 100% wrong. Wherever life exists and love is experienced, God's presence is found, even if those who live and love reject His presence. Even if a tradition preserves but one percent of truth, it is not totally devoid of truth. But one must not forget that one percent of the truth is certainly not "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." And to imply that traditions that believe in "truths" that are diametrically opposed to those held by the Church in all places and at all times are merely expressing the same faith but in different terms or from different perspectives is not a principle of Orthodox Christianity; it is the hallmark of relativism.

There is no "relativism" or "varying perspectives" or "nuances" in the truth as revealed by Christ. For example, He did not say, "This is My Body, but it is equally true that this could be My Body, or that this symbolizes My Body, or that this is My Body if you believe it is but not My Body if you don't." He said, "This IS My Body." Not much room for discussion or alternative "expressions" here, or anywhere else in His words and actions.

Hope this helps.

In Christ,

Father John Matusiak

This text was taken from: *Questions and answers about Orthodoxy* at:

<http://www.oca.org/QA.asp?ID=27&SID=3>

Parishioners' Ponderings

Submission by an Anonymous Contributor

Accidie - A disease of the spirit

The Greek word for it is accidie or akidia. We know it as sloth, spiritual weariness, carelessness, sleepiness, distress of heart, tedium, torpor of spirit, despair or despondency. It is known to St John Climacus as

...paralysis of the soul, a slackness of the mind, a neglect of religious exercises, hostility to vows taken. It is an approval of worldly things, it is a voice claiming that God has no mercy and no love for men...a laziness in the singing of psalms, a weakness in prayer, a stubborn urge for service, a dedication to the work of the hands, an indifference to the requirement of obedience.

A footnote in St John's book *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* says it, "... afflicts a monk when he relaxes his struggle to attain the virtues. It begins as a loss of a sense of purpose and ends in despair and spiritual death."

Accidie is one of the passions to battle and by all accounts one of the deadliest. "There is a particular virtue to overcome all the other passions. But tedium is a kind of total death for the monk," continues St John.

Accidie's object is to keep us from prayer. Its purpose is to keep us from salvation and to this end it is progressive –slowly developing towards the goal. It comes in different forms shape-shifting to best suit the particular make-up of its victim.

Sometimes it comes as sickness, "...especially disturbing to a monk about the sixth hour (midday), like some fever which seizes him at stated times, bringing the burning heat of its attacks on the sick man at usual and regular hours," St. John Cassian states in his *Book X - The Spirit of Accidia*. (The fathers commonly attribute despondency to the noonday demon talked about in psalm 91 verse 6, "...Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday".)

Sometimes masquerading as something good, even sought after and wholesome. "Tedium loves to be involved in hospitality, ... and exhorts us to visit the sick, recalling even the words of Him Who said, ' I was sick and you came to visit me' (Matt. 25:36). Tedium suggests we should call on the despairing and the fainthearted, and she sets one languishing heart to bring comfort to another," from *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.

Always deceptive, "Tedium reminds those at prayer of some job to be done, and in her brutish way she searches out any plausible excuse to drag us from prayer, as though with some kind of halter," continues St. John Climacus.

In Laura Swan's book *The Forgotten Desert Mothers: Sayings, lives, and stories of early Christian women*, Amma Theodora, who is credited by the author as being one of the first ascetics to give a definition of accidie says,

However, you should realize that as soon as you intend to live in peace, at once evil comes and weighs down your soul through accidie, faintheartedness, and evil thoughts. It also attacks your body through sickness, debility, weakening of the knees, and all the members. It dissipates the strength of soul and body, so that one believes one is ill and no longer able to pray. But if we are vigilant, all these temptations fall away. There was in fact an ascetic who was seized by cold and fever every time prayers began, suffering from headaches, too. In this condition, the ascetic thought, 'I am ill and near death; so now I will get up before I die and pray.' By reasoning in this way, the ascetic exercised self-discipline. When finished praying, the fever abated. So by reasoning in this way, the ascetic resisted, prayed and was able to conquer unhelpful thoughts.

"All the inconveniences of this disease are admirably expressed by David in a single verse, where he says, 'My soul slept from weariness', that is from accidie. Quite rightly does he say, not that his body, but that his soul slept. For in truth the soul which is wounded by the shaft of this passion does sleep, as regards all contemplation of the virtues and insight of the spiritual senses," says St John Cassian. Where there is no care for one's salvation despondency necessarily sets in.

The only weapon the enemy has, is to try to puncture or infiltrate our armor with intrusive thoughts and/or mental images or fantasies... and only as the Lord allows, which is a very important concept to keep in mind. Therefore to battle against accidie or any of the passions we must be as vigilant as we are able in our thought life; guarding the heart, with what the Fathers call 'watchfulness'. And the way to do this is by prayer, by the continual invoking of the name of our Lord. "Intellect is invisibly interlocked in battle with intellect, the demonic intellect with our own. So from the depths of the heart we must at each instant call Christ to drive the demonic intellect away from us and in his compassion give us the victory," says St Hesychios the Priest.

A thought in and of itself carries no sin. We are not responsible for the thoughts that are thrust into our heads because we have no control over that. There is sin when we admit or receive the thought, entertain it, make it our own, etc because then it enters the heart and defiles us, driving us further from our original and God given nature.

One Father of the church made the analogy of watching a thought as if you were passively watching a scene through a window and letting it pass by without allowing any entrance or being disturbed by it in any way. St Isaiah The Solitary tells us, "When a man has an exact knowledge about the nature of thoughts, he

recognizes those that are about to enter and defile him, troubling the intellect with distractions and making it lazy. Those who recognize these evil thoughts for what they are remain undisturbed, and continue in prayer to God.”

Fr Zacharias (Archimandrite Sophrony’s disciple) on a C.D. of one of his talks, calls the nature of thoughts the *energy* of the thought, and further explains that the Fathers could discern the energy of the thought immediately before the thought was formed and repelled it, without even knowing what that particular thought was.

“Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murder, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Mathew 15:19).

To cleanse the heart is an arduous and lengthy task, a deliberate and forceful process – it is a violent task, full of deep anguish: “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force” (Mathew 11:12). It has to be thus because of the great distance engendered by Adam’s fall from his original nature.

Archimandrite Sophrony (St Silouan’s disciple) tells us in his book *On Prayer*:

All we sons of Adam must go through this heavenly flame that consumes our deathly passions. Otherwise we shall not see the fire transformed into the light of new life, for it is not light that comes first, and then fire: in our fallen state, burning must precede enlightenment”(Pg 10).

The heavenly flame is Holy Sorrow or Mourning, a gift from God not to be strived after. Archimandrite Saphrony further explains,

The pain the Christian ascetic feels in his heart is not a pathological symptom: it occurs ‘organically’, having its origin in love. One does not cultivate it – that would lean towards an unhealthy dolor. It is not the result of some psychological conflict of unsatisfied passion.

What one *does* cultivate is humility. According to St Symeon The New Theologian in *The Discourses* (pg 80):

He who advances rapidly is the one who is humble in heart, who thinks the most humble thoughts and is contrite in mind (Ps. 51:19) and chooses more zealously to follow the divine Scriptures. ... numbers himself among the lowliest of all; and sees himself as a sinner.

To see ourselves as a sinner we must necessarily see our own sin... to, ‘keep our sin ever before us’ –to repent, realign, rethink. When we see our own sin we are faced with the painful knowledge, in a progressive ever-deepening fashion, of our wretched and pitiable state; this in turn, leads one naturally away from pride and towards humility, and in an ever-deepening fashion to spiritual mourning or poverty of spirit –seeing ourselves as the worst of all sinners, “of whom I am first”.

In a footnote to Mathew 5:4 *The Orthodox study bible* notes that “Holy

Sorrow is part of conversion, the consummation of repentance, the first fruit of infinite joy. It is distinguished from ungodly sorrow, a sadness which leads to despair (2Cor 7:10).”

Humility absolutely conquers the enemy. If we follow Christ and go down, the enemy cannot follow, he cannot go down - he only wants to go up, to be higher than Christ, Fr Zacharias, says.

In conclusion, I would like to briefly talk about St. Silouan and quote from the book *Wisdom from Mount Athos – the writings of Staretz Silouan 1866-1938* by Archimandrite Sophrony. In my opinion this book is a guide to us Orthodox Christians in the world, as *The Ladder* is to monks.

Our beloved Archbishop Seraphim named his monastic community after St Silouan, sometimes calling it his “virtual monastery”. Which realized the Saint’s prophetic statement that soon monastic communities will house monks or nuns who are monastic by virtue of obedience to their spiritual elder and their vows, rather than by living together in cenobitic houses, because of the world’s need for them to be visibly and physically in the world.

On the same CD referred to earlier, Fr Zacharias relays a conversation suggesting the greatness of St. Silouan, even perhaps surpassing St Symeon the New Theologian because of the healing in his words.

Saint Silouan’s writings are extraordinary in their simplicity and profound understanding of the way the Lord through the Holy Spirit makes Himself known: “For the Holy Spirit, sweet and gracious, draws the soul to love the Lord, and in the sweetness of the Holy Spirit the soul loses her fear of suffering.”

St. Silouan encapsulates the Christian walk –how we are schooled in the Holy Spirit –beautifully.

At first when a man begins to work for the Lord grace gives him the strength to be zealous after good, all is easy and effortless; and seeing this, in his inexperience he thinks to himself; ‘I shall continue thus zealously all my life long,’ and at the same time he exalts himself above those who live carelessly, and begins to pass judgment on them. And so he loses the grace that was helping him to keep God’s commandments. And he does not understand what has happened – everything was going so well with him, but now it is all so difficult and he feels no desire to pray. But he should not be afraid: it is the Lord in His mercy nurturing the soul. The moment the soul exalts herself above her fellows she is attacked by some thought or impulse unpleasing to God. If she humbles herself grace does not depart, but if she does not, some small temptation follows to humble her. Should she again not humble herself, a ravaging struggle with the passions will start up within her. If she still does not humble herself she will fall into a measure of sin. Should she once again fail to humble herself a great

temptation will ensue, and there will be grave sin. And so it will go on until the soul humbles herself, when temptation will leave her; and if she brings herself very low a gentle peace will come, and all that is evil will disappear. Thus the whole spiritual warfare wages round humility.

And then he teaches us how to keep the grace that we have been given. Be obedient and sober. Do not find fault, and keep mind and heart from evil thoughts. Remember that all men are good and beloved of the Lord. For such humility the grace of the Holy Spirit will dwell in you, and cause you to exclaim, 'How merciful is the Lord!' But if you find fault and are rebellious, if you want your own way your soul will fail and you will cry, 'The Lord has forgotten me!' But it is not the Lord who has forgotten you: it is you who have forgotten that you must humble yourself, and so the grace of God abides not in your soul. Into the humble soul now, this grace enters with ease, bringing peace and rest in God.

Sweet Jesus

Submitted by Carol Rychlo

We live in a world that has become uncomfortable talking about God. I am a teacher in the public school system in our province where teaching religion has become a no-no. Apparently the Lord's Prayer is offensive to some. Many of the families who have children in the school where I teach aren't practicing Christians. Thus these young people are not well versed in the bible. I remember a particular incident a few years ago when my daughter and I went to see the movie "The Passion of Christ". A couple of my students were at this movie and so we talked about it the next day at school. Apparently one of these girls was not familiar with the story of Jesus because she had asked her friend part way through the movie if Jesus dies in the story. I was astounded that this young lady, who had grown up in rural Saskatchewan, had so little knowledge of Jesus. Surely, I thought, everyone knew that Christmas was the celebration of Jesus' birth and Easter was the celebration of His triumph over death (His resurrection)! Apparently not.

I like to talk with these young people about issues that are important but bringing up Christianity in the classroom is a delicate matter (did I mention that I love my job?! But if the opportunity presents itself I don't usually hesitate. The subject of God often comes up during our discussions of the Theory of Evolution. It's wonderful to listen to the opinion of a teenager on the subject. They often think evolution is a lot of hogwash. They find it pretty difficult to internalize the

concept that the earth's great variety of life evolved from a single cell. Many of them believe that some greater power had a hand in forming our incredible universe. So we talk about God and the fact that maybe life didn't come about by chance, but that God guided the process. I try to plant the seed.

One of my students commented just last week as she read the math assignment for the day "Sweet Jesus!" she said. I replied, "yes, yes He is"! She looked at me confused for a minute, than a smile came to her face. "Good God!" said another student while trying to solve a math problem (I had no idea math could inspire so much theological thought!). "He sure is" I replied!

These are some Good News items that we hope interest you. If you have any comments on them or anything else in Parish life, please contact anyone on parish council. The members are: **Parish Priest:** Fr. Pau, **Auxiliary Priest:** Father Dan Guenther, **Council President:** Greg Rychlo, **Financial:** David Grier, **Secretary:** Arlene Dumais **Maintenance:** Sub Deacon Neil Sedgewick, **Events:** Chrystal Herem, **Members At Large:** Savelia Curniski, Vickie Guenther, Weldetinsae Yemane.



Christ is Risen!
Indeed He is Risen!

