

*Go therefore and make disciples of
all nations . . .
Mt 28:19*



*Allez, faites de toutes les nations
des disciples . . .
Mt 28:19*

CANADIAN ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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Our fathers and mothers among the saints:

The Holy Chinese Martyrs Of the Boxer Rebellion

June 10 / 23

Orthodox Christianity has often been described as the faith of the martyrs. Without doubt, the centuries have shown among the Orthodox an unparalleled degree of suffering for the sake of Christ's Name. Yet despite the dramatic increase in Orthodox martyrdom in the last century, Orthodox believers living in the comforts of North America remain largely isolated from the suffering of the saints.

Ironically, the western world has become a more potent—and indeed, more subtle—enemy of Christian Orthodoxy than any regime of the past. Cut off from the struggles of our Christian forebears, we have too readily accepted materialism and hedonism. To be a Christian, especially an Orthodox Christian, has become a fundamentally counter cultural calling.

The arrival of the year 2000 marks the centennial of the first martyrs of the last century, and the first known group of Orthodox martyrs from China—a group who knew well the meaning of

standing against the social tide of their day. Some of the 222 Orthodox martyrs of June 10/23, 1900, were direct descendants of the Russian mission set up at the end of the 17th century, after Russia lost its Albazin outpost to Chinese forces.



With the recapture of Albazin, the Chinese Imperial Court looked with curiosity and tolerance upon the Russians in their territories, allowing them a surprising level of religious freedom. A former Buddhist temple near Beijing was converted into a church dedicated to St Nicholas, and church vestments and holy objects were sent from the Imperial Court in Russia. The Chinese and Russian governments proceeded to establish diplomatic relations, a move facilitated by the presence and work

of the Albazin Chinese Orthodox. Since the Russian soldiers were viewed as a loose equivalent of the warrior class of Chinese society, they also moved easily among

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Holy Chinese martyrs, continued from p.1:

the Chinese aristocracy, with many marrying aristocratic Chinese women. Just as many of the first converts at Rome were noble patrons of the Church, so too were Orthodox Christians in China to see a similar beginning.

In the years following, Orthodoxy made significant inroads among the Albazin Chinese population, becoming a kind of ethnic religion of the people. Emperor K'ang Chi was favourable toward these Christians, and for a time it was hoped the emperor might become a kind of Saint Constantine of the East. When the Chinese court later discovered that local Roman Catholic missionaries followed orders from western masters, however, Emperor K'ang Chi and his successors began persecutions against Christians. Because of their position at court and the Orthodox foothold among the Albazin Chinese faithful, the Orthodox were spared much of this persecution—for a time.

While the growth of the Orthodox Chinese mission was modest, its faithful were solid witnesses for their faith in Christ. Just as pagan Rome saw earlier Christian devotion to Christ as a rival to Imperial loyalty, so too did the Imperial Chinese of the late 19th century see Christians as enemies of the Emperor. While some in China were embracing western modernist ideas, others—including the dowager Empress, nationalists, and those who practised martial arts—sought to eliminate any challenges to tradition, including foreign influences. This movement was dubbed by foreigners the “Boxer movement.”

By June 1900, placards calling for the death of foreigners and Christians covered the walls around Beijing. Armed bands combed the streets of the city, setting fires to homes and, with Imperial blessing, killing Chinese Christians and foreigners. Among the Orthodox community of the city were Priest Mitrophan Tsi-Chung, his Matushka Tatiana, and their children Isaiah, Serge, and John. Baptized by Saint Nicholas of Japan, Saint Mitrophan was a shy and retiring priest, who avoided honours, and laboured continually for the building of new churches, for the translation of spiritual books, and for the care of his flock.

It was in this ministry that Saint Mitrophan met his martyrdom on June 10, 1900. About seventy faithful had gathered in his home for consolation when the Boxers

* When popular opinion later turned against foreigners in China, non-Albazin Chinese Orthodox faithful had to pose as Albazins in order to avoid conflicts with authorities and local non-Christians alike.

surrounded the house. While some of the faithful managed to escape, most—including Saint Mitrophan—were stabbed or burned to death. His holy body fell beneath the date tree in the yard of his home, his family witnesses to his suffering.

His youngest son, Saint John, an eight-year-old child, was disfigured by the Boxers the same day. Although the mob cut off his ears, nose, and toes, Saint John did not seem to feel any pain, and walked steadily, declaring that it did not hurt to suffer for Christ. Saint Ia (Wang), a mission school teacher who was also among the martyrs, was slashed by the Boxers and buried, half-dead. In an attempt to save her, a bystander unearthed her, carrying her to his home where the Boxers seized her again, torturing her to death, thereby crowning her with the crown of martyrdom for a second time.

Saint Isaiah, 23, the elder brother of Saint John, had been martyred several days earlier. Despite repeated urging, his bride Saint Mary, 19, refused to leave and hide, declaring that she had been born near the church of the Mother of God, and would die there as well.

When the feast of the Holy Chinese Martyrs was first commemorated in 1903, the bodies of Saint Mitrophan and others were placed under the altar of the church of the All Holy Orthodox Martyrs (built from 1901-1916). A cross was later erected on the site of their martyrdom, standing as a testimony of the first sufferings of Orthodox faithful in a century of such great suffering. This church, along with others, was destroyed by the communists in 1954; the condition and whereabouts of the relics are not known. A short history of the martyrs and an akathist in their memory have recently been written.

On the occasion of the centenary of the Holy Chinese Martyrs of the Boxer Rebellion, let us as Orthodox faithful ask their prayers that we may have the courage of their witness in our own time and place, and like them to live out the call of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

O Holy Chinese Martyrs, pray to God for us!

—by Geoff Korz, *Christ the Saviour Sobor, Toronto*.
Information for this article was taken from an anonymous
website on the Chinese Orthodox martyrs and the Synaxarion
of the Chinese Orthodox Martyrs, produced by Apostoliki
Diakonia of Athens, Greece.



"That was from me"

The following is a Russian elder's explanation of what it means "to deny oneself and take up one's Cross" and follow Christ. He speaks from the person of Christ our God. Translated from a manuscript brought out of Russia in 1942.

Did you ever think that everything concerning you, concerns Me equally? For everything that touches you, touches the apple of My eye. You are dear to me, worthy in my eyes, and you are My beloved, for these reasons it brings me special joy to attend to the task of your salvation. When temptations arise on you—if the enemy comes upon you like a river—I want you to know that that was from Me, that your infirmity requires My strength, and that your security lies in letting Me fight your battles.

Do you find yourself in trying circumstances, with people who are not attentive to your likes or dislikes, with people who reject you? That is from Me. I am God, Who governs your circumstances. You did not arrive at your current place in life by chance; your place is exactly the place which I assigned to you. Did you not ask Me to teach you humility? Well look, I placed you in exactly the school where this lesson is taught. Your environment and those living with you are only fulfilling My commandments.

Do you find yourself in financial need? Is it hard for you to make ends meet? That, too, is from Me. Because I control your wallet. I want you to resort to Me, to be dependent on me. My riches are inexhaustible, and I want you to be assured continually of My loyalty to you and of the truthfulness of My promises to you, so that no one could ever say to you "You did not trust the Lord God."

Are you being overtaken by sorrow? That is from Me. I am the Father of sorrows, One Who is learned on illnesses. I allowed this, so that you can turn to Me and find everlasting consolation.

Have you been deceived by your friend, one to whom you had opened your heart? That was from Me. I allowed this disappointment to touch your heart so that you would perceive that your best friend is the Lord. I want you to bring everything to Me and entrust all to Me.

Did someone slander you? Leave that to Me and attach yourself closer to Me, your Protector. I will bring out your truthfulness as light, and your righteousness as the midday.

Did your plans fall apart? Did your spirits fall, and are you tired? That was from Me. You made your plans and brought them to Me to bless. But I want you to allow Me to manage your circumstances. Then the responsibility will also be Mine. By yourself you cannot manage; it is too heavy for you. You are only a tool, not the actuating person.

Did you dream of doing some special work for Me, but instead fell into sickness and helplessness? That was from Me. When you were engrossed in your work, I could not draw your thoughts to Me. But I want to teach you My deepest

thoughts, and to teach you that you are in My service. I want you to learn that you are nothing. Some of my best co-warriors are those who are totally divorced from outward works, so that they can learn to wield the weapon of continuous prayer.

Are you unexpectedly called to take on a difficult and responsible position? Proceed, relying on Me. I entrust to you these difficulties, because for that your Lord God will bless you in all your works, in everything, that will be done by you. In this day I give into your hand this vessel of holy oil—My blessing. Use it freely, My child.

Each arising difficulty, each insulting word, each disturbance in your work, which could cause in you a feeling of embitterment—let it be anointed with this oil. Remember that every disturbance is God's teaching for you. Every sting will be dulled, if you will learn to see Me in everything that touches you. Therefore, put into your heart the words which I declared to you today: *that was from me*. For these are not empty words for you; they are your life.

"Release your bitterness"

How do you know when you have not ceased to be bitter? When your mind returns unceasingly to acutely painful memories of past hurts caused by a person who retains great power over you because you have not released this person from your hurt. No matter how terribly cruel this person has treated you, no matter how much pain this person meted out to you, no matter how much heartbreak this person has caused you, you must at some point in order to save your own life, release yourself from this enchantment of pain, hurt, and bitterness. With God's help this is possible. You must go on. You must strive to live and breathe once more. You must know that love is always possible and can be reborn in your heart because God is Himself Love and He would not wish less for you who are His beloved son or daughter.

Release your bitterness. Release your grief. Let your suffering fly away from your hands like captive birds eager for the sky and sun. Give yourself the freedom to be happy again, to be free once more, and to be at peace in the bosom of the Holy Spirit. When you do this, the hurt becomes like a scar that you will always see and never forget, but you will not feel its sharp pain. It will cease to matter to the beautiful reality of your present life. You will know when the bitterness is sucked out of your body like an expelled poison, when you no longer hurt, when you no longer obsess over the person who hurt you so deeply, when you can even forgive and mercifully forget that person.

Life is for love, for living, and redemption. Go into the light and receive God's blessings.

—from a "Solitaria" meditation by Alphonse Vinh, with the kind permission of the author.

The Orthodox Church In Portugal, Spain and Brazil

What? Another travelogue from the bishop? Why does he travel like that? Isn't there plenty to do at home? And he complains of being tired!

No doubt this is how some receive this or other reports of my times away. And it is true that I often react so myself. I also try to minimise the trips. It is not that I or the diocesan budget have resources for much travel. On the other hand, grumble as I may, it is clearer now than ever that I must repent and learn how to accept these voyages abroad as God's will and to accommodate them somehow.

Why would I come to such a conclusion? Because I have seen both in Ukraine last year and in Portugal this year the fruit of being obedient in this matter. It has a lot to do with the fact of life that a great deal is accomplished simply by being together, praying together, eating together, and talking both formally and informally. It is a necessity of life in Christ. And what is so internationally is but the extension of what is true in daily local life. We need to be with each other, to pray, eat and talk together. It is part of expressing love, increasing love, serving, and learning trust.

The week in Portugal of 31 January – 4 February was packed full of activity and opportunity. There was a delegation of the Polish Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church to which I was appended. The main reason for the invitation was the consecration of the large Basilica of the Protection of the Theotokos at the women's monastery near Torres Novas, 150 km north of Lisbon and not far from Fatima. This basilica seems capable of containing over 10,000 persons, as it is very spacious and has galleries besides. The territory of this monastery is quite large, and includes olive groves and orchards as well as a smaller church which serves as parish focus, an orphanage serving 125 children, a school, an episcopal residence for the Metropolitan, and other buildings under construction.

The basilica itself, made of stone and concrete and having a well-painted iconostasis, was 23 years in preparation, and seven years in construction—primarily by labour of the faithful themselves. It is of particular interest to Canadians to know that much of the iconography was done by a nun who, born and raised in Montreal, has lived more than ten years in this monastery. Other iconography has been done by the primate, Metropolitan JOÃO [John].

Why do we not know much about this Church, capable of such undertakings and in effect the only

Orthodox Church anywhere in Europe not suffering on its own territory from disunity or multiple jurisdictions? We have seen this phenomenon before, primarily in Africa, most notably Ghana, and in Indonesia and Korea, and even in North America (the "Evangelical Orthodox Church"). In all these cases, as in Portugal, persons having found Orthodoxy in one way or another have sought to establish this life locally and to live by it. Often the beginning has been in isolation due to unpreparedness for mission by our Church. In time, however, things become regularised. So it is the case with Portugal. Over ten years ago the Orthodox Church in Poland took the Portuguese Church under its protection and began to bring this Church, first established under Metropolitan GABRIEL in the 1960s, into communion with the rest of the Orthodox Church.

The Portuguese Orthodox Church numbers eight bishops, including its Metropolitan, and has parishes in Spain and a diocese in Brasil, where the main centres are Recife and Rio de Janeiro. The people of this church are much as one might find Orthodox anywhere—devout, faithful, loving, hospitable. Priests more often than not are working at least part-time secular jobs. Parish communities have generally been small, and often they have taken over small, disused Roman Catholic buildings. Monastic life has long been thriving and the numerous communities include hundreds of monks and nuns, many of them quite young. A not uncommon example is that of one Brazilian family. Of their five children, three are in Portuguese monasteries: one is an igumenia, one an economia, and one a monkdeacon. There is overall an unabashed honest enthusiasm for living the Orthodox Christian life.

The first stage of development of this Portuguese Orthodox Church was the original missionary work of the founder, Metropolitan GABRIEL, a graduate of St-Serge Institute in Paris. Unable to find any support from a canonical church, he found shelter for a time with ROCOR and Greek Old-Calendarists, during which came the next period of missionary expansion and parish and monastic development. Eventually the Polish Orthodox Church offered canonical protection, about ten years ago. After the death of Metropolitan Gabriel, whose tomb is in the new basilica, the third phase began with the building of new churches such as that of St Andrew in Portimão in Algaive, and the completion of the basilica. Other major projects are in progress both in Portugal and Brasil, including new monastery buildings and catholicon in Mafra, and a new large cathedral in Lisbon itself.

The concelebration of the Liturgy on 2 February at the consecration of the Basilica of the Protection included twelve bishops and about fifty priests and four deacons. The delegation of the Polish Orthodox Church included

Archbishop JEREMIAS of Wroclaw and Szczecin, Bishop MYRON of Hainowka, Priestmonk Andrey and Protodeacon Alexander. The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Archbishop LONGIN of Klin, who from Dusseldorff heads the ROC's permanent representation to the European Union. There were over 4,000 faithful present this day at a service which lasted almost six hours. With a blend of Russian and Greek customs and singing, the liturgical language is Portuguese and there are large numbers of communicants. In principle it is not different from our own life.

In the course of this visit, bonds of brotherly love were developed not only with the Portuguese Orthodox Church but also the Polish Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. It is worth knowing that in Portugal and Brasil, one may find truly the warmth of Christian love and hospitality, and for those also so interested, the warmth of the sun and good beaches!

St John the Baptist Monastery

The Stavropigic Monastery of St John the Baptist in Tolleshunt Knights by Malden in East Anglia, UK, was founded by Archimandrite Sophrony (Sacharov) and some disciples including Mother Elisabeth and Archimandrite Symeon, in the 1960s. Father Sophrony arrived via Paris, France, from the Holy Mountain where he had gone as a young man, and where at St Panteleimon's Monastery he met Staretz Silouan, whom we recently recognised officially to be a Holy Man (Saint).

The vocation of this monastery was unusual in more than one way, and remains so. Consisting primarily of hermits, these hermits find themselves giving hospitality and catechesis and solace to a large number of visitors and retreatants. The community is also double, that is, it is made up of both monks and nuns, effectively under the leadership of one archimandrite—first Archimandrite Sophrony, and now Archimandrite Kyrill.

Over the last forty years, the community has grown in both groups, and gradually the accommodations have improved. Living on a small tract of land, the monks first lived in a 400-year-old Rectory belonging to a nearby dis-used Anglican Church, which itself dates from the tenth century, and now is owned by the community. With little or no heat, the monks and nuns lived for some time mostly on potatoes and nettles. The nuns, in fact, lived in small trailers (caravans) for some time, until a separate building was prepared. Lately the small farm and orchard across the road was purchased, and many of the nuns now live there. Already there has been built a large common refectory on this property, and construction has been commenced

on a building for cells for all of the nuns. Guest quarters have been slowly expanded as well, now numbering three houses and rooms among the monks and nuns.

The Community of almost 30 persons subsists under the Omophor of the Ecumenical Patriarch as a Stavropigial institution, and its members are from over twenty countries, and almost a dozen languages are spoken. Services are regularly in English, Slavonic, Greek, French, and occasionally other languages depending upon visitors. There are four regular Divine Liturgies weekly, among the twice-daily services. On Sundays there are large numbers of visitors from other parts of Britain, and there are usually special educational opportunities for the visitors. Of course, hearing confessions is a large part also of the work of the priests of the community.

The Monastery is situated about an hour to the east of London, not far from Colchester. It is an historic area. The old church has Saxon foundations with Norman and later additions. Within eyesight is the island on which St Cedd established his chapel and lived, and opened the area to Christianity about 1500 years ago. Never a wealthy area, it carried traffic from the Continent, however, and Anne of Cleves lived in exile from Henry VIII in Grove Hall less than one kilometre from the Monastery. In the nearby village of Tiptree is a famous jam factory for which the Monastery now grows apples. Access to the Monastery is by car, or train from Liverpool Street Station in London. The Monastery warmly welcomes guests, but because of limited space and great demand, there is need to call ahead and arrange a stay far in advance.

For more notes from the Bishop's desk, see p. 12 . . .

Pastoral Notes

Effective 21 June 1999 **Archpriest Matthew Searfoorce** was received from the Moscow Patriarchate through Metropolitan Theodosius into the Archdiocese of Canada, and assigned Priest in Charge of St John the Divine's Church in Windsor ON where he had already served for several years.

On 25 January 2000 the establishment of a Mission Station in Grande Prairie AB was blessed. It was named for the Apostle Philip.

On 12 March 2000 **Archdeacon Luc (Majoros)** was ordained to the Holy Priesthood during the Divine Liturgy at St-Benoît de Nursie Church in Montréal QC. He is a member of the Communauté Monastique de St-Séraphim de Sarov, and is in charge of the Ermitage de la Protection de la Mère de Dieu in St-Eusèbe de Témiscouata QC.

A book review

Conversion then . . . and now

In the recent Pastoral Encyclical entitled *The Church of Christ in the Third Millennium*, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America reminded us that we, the faithful, can make the occasion of the new millennium one for critical evaluation of the Church's testimony and witness, for furthering the Church's proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God into this world so that those who confess Christ as Lord will be strengthened, and those who do not yet know Him or of Him can be brought from darkness into the light.

Ever since his consecration in 1987, our Bishop Seraphim has made mission and evangelization his priority. We should feel this summons to be particularly powerful in this blessed year 2000. During the beautiful Gospel time (*kairos*) that he became Bishop, His Grace said his first task is to create a visible presence for the Orthodox Church in Canada. This is a ministry which belongs to the entire Body of Christ. It requires, in my estimation, hearts uplifted and thinking caps on.

One valuable tool in our missionary reflections and efforts is an entertaining, though somewhat lengthy, book I read recently, *The Conversion of Europe from Paganism to Christianity, 371 – 1386 AD*, by British historian Richard Fletcher. The book has been properly and justly described as being everything that an historical work should: richly informative, erudite, graceful, witty and full of ideas. The narrative is more than a cavalcade of events. Reminding the modern reader that its conversion to Christianity was the most important event in the history of Europe, the account is sympathetic, detailed and thankfully never dry.

The primary focus of the book is admittedly on the Christianisation of Western Europe, and one learns a tremendous amount about missionary saints like Cuthbert, Boniface, and Patrick. Like any work of its scope, it has its limitations. The decision was made to exclude the Christianisation of nations outside of what is commonly considered Europe but which nevertheless consider themselves European (e.g., Georgia and Armenia). The missions to the Slavs led by Sts Cyril and Methodius are dealt with quite well. However, I found the section concerning the baptism of Prince Vladimir and the subsequent conversion of the Rus' lands to be somewhat on the cursory side.

One thing that struck me about the vast majority of missionaries that Fletcher writes about is that they did

not see themselves on any kind of crusade. They responded to a specific call and met particular needs. The European missions over the millennium the book describes were happily filled with virtues of patience, pastoral generosity, adaptation, cultural sensitivity and that which Fletcher calls "accommodations" which we contemporary Orthodox Christians generally refer to as "economia." On that level, the Cyrillo-Methodian mission was by no means the only example of inculturation, something it appears many missionaries practiced by instinct, seemingly without giving the matter particular thought.

Orthodox Christianity is now well into its second century of organized church life in Canada. Of necessity much effort has gone into making sure that various immigrant communities find spiritual refuge in their traditional home. In our Archdiocese we continue to welcome newcomers from ancestral homelands. Nevertheless, that never precludes wider missionary effort.

Richard Fletcher's book is a reminder that the Church is always called to be the church of a particular time and place. It was this openness to a multiplicity of languages and cultures which accounted for the growth of Christianity and had such a profound effect on European society and culture. I have no doubt that we too can be builders of Orthodox Christian civilization in Canada.

To do so means to take seriously Canadian popular culture and to tap into all the resources God is giving us to bring people to the knowledge of the truth. I submit that not to do so is to risk voluntary self-marginalisation. After all, doctrinal purity and liturgical integrity are not ends in and of themselves.

Canada has a long and complex Christian history which we need to examine (separating the wheat from the chaff) and to incorporate into our own inheritance, into our consciousness of what it means to be Orthodox Christians in this country. The very topography, geography, climate and anthropology of Canada should enter our being as we facilitate the encounter between this country which is God's gift to us and Orthodox Christianity, God's supreme gift to all Canadians. Even the architecture of our new temples should say that we are not simply remembering or sacralizing the past but transfiguring by God's grace the here and now.

We have only just begun to teach all nations from sea to sea of this dominion. If one day an historian will be able to write a book entitled *The Conversion of Canada*, then it is my hope that it will to some extent be the result of seeds sown by *The Conversion of Europe*. Many years of fruitful intellectual and spiritual labour to its author, Richard Fletcher! —Priest Evan Lowig, Edmonton.

Chuckle power!

'A Merry Heart Doeth Good like Medicine'

Proverbs 17:22

Humour is a funny thing. There are "pick-me-up" jokes and "tear 'em down" ones, ethnic, political, punchy, knock-knock, cynical ones and more. More options than your best deli! And next to the appearance of the first tooth, we welcome the appearance of budding humour in a child, long treasuring his or her quips and novel insights in baby books and family anecdotes. Clearly, humour in these cases is defined as "that quality of action or speech that excites amusement," the cleverness of humour often being associated with the sharpness of the mind.

All our lives we are surrounded by laughter and its paradoxes. Sitcoms and canned laughter subliminally underline "laugh and the world laughs with you"—that he who laughs, lasts and lasts, for the world is on to the fact that maintaining an optimistic state of mind can be physiologically as well as psychologically beneficial. Staying in good humour through sickness and tragedy is seen as humanistically good in itself and desirably stoic. Media portrayals of heroes who *die laughing* give us a strong, albeit erroneous, hint that this cool *last laugh* is somehow equated with victory over death itself.

But humour is also a serious thing, for each of us must, at any given time, personally decide what we do or do not laugh at. Humour, as such, is a barometer of our inner values. In other words, as believers our sense of humour very boldly catapults who we are and what we stand for into the larger world. As a frequent point of verbal interaction with others, we talk and laugh, often even with a stranger, finding a light topic that somehow gives us a common tongue.

In our family, being of mixed ethnic background gave us an opportunity to observe different approaches to humour firsthand. My father's family joked continually. Only rarely was there a dull, serious or unclever moment. We heard lots of good proverbs. His family had learned to endure hardship in this way, and I witnessed some of the benefits and drawbacks of lots of humour! My mother's side was almost without exception serious, with whimsy moments that brought smiles, but any laughing for any length of time would bring a quiet admonition: "laugh, laugh, and then you'll cry." These different approaches, and being involved later in light radio humour, made it possible for me to look at humour more reflectively, rather than just sitting back and

enjoying it. In recent times this has been reinforced by encounters with persons who were trying to overcome extreme difficulties via humour, the laughter hardly camouflaging tears of pain.

How do we, as followers of our Lord, view humour? Does the Lord touch and heal our "funny bones"? If we are not of this world, ought we to have not-of-this-world humour?

Here it would seem that *humour* is a wide and slightly weak word for something bigger, something that is *cheery-joyful-natural-salty* all rolled into one. It takes on the wider meaning of a *pleasant habitual state of mind or soul* rather than that which generally gives rise to amusement (although if this happens there is no need to apologize!).

While humour is not a fruit of the Holy Spirit in the same way as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance are, there are indications that it ornaments the fruit. Smile lines, twinkling eyes, a quiet, cheerful word, or a chuckle seem to characterize those who have run the race of faith patiently to the end. The sense of humour of one of the desert fathers is described as "a sweet flower on the gnarled ascetic branch" that grew with endurance and suffering. A holy cup jostled by interruption and busyness overflows with what is inside, and if it is filled with that which is sweet and aromatic, that's what one gets, or at least that is the ideal thing to get. And well might those overflowings be flavoured with humour!

It would seem that the source of good humour, as well as the source of every good thing in our lives, must be the Holy Spirit, Who alone can bring needed freshness and spontaneity to our daily lives and situations. The lives of the holy fathers and mothers of the Church reveal their lightness and cheerfulness, shown especially in their God-centered advice to others. St Theophan the Recluse advises one correspondent, a priest surrounded by tribulations, to think of his life as a *pirog* being baked in the oven—the *pirog* only feeling the intense heat and suffering—and the housewife awaiting the coming joy of the lovely pastry. "You have written the speech for the *pirog*. Now take over the speech of the housewife and . . . turn to the

continued, next page . . .

'A merry heart,' continued from p.7:

expectation of a beneficial outcome . . . I wish you good-natured patience." This is cheerful and natural speech, like that of the Optina elder who met an occultist who was visiting him with the words, "so, how are things in Moscow?" when in all likelihood in his spirit he tearfully and prayerfully knew how things were. (The man was later delivered by the grace of the Lord through the prayers of His servant.)

These holy fathers and mothers come across as fully approachable and human, combining sobriety with cheerfulness and salt. They often employ the wise and even lighter sayings of men to punctuate their life-giving words. "Remember, God leads the brave!" another Optina elder reminds a person beginning a project. Even St Nil Sorsky draws a smile from his readers with his last admonition: "All I have written is to be done in so far as it is pleasing to God and helpful to souls; if such is not the case, *let us do something better.*"

Humour seems to be a touch from the Lord given to us to keep our "seriousness" from growing moribund, so that we don't grow moss behind our ears. It allows us to play a little in expressing our joy, giving us the chance to enjoy the lighter fellowship of other believers, and freeing us from any sense of being obliged always to verbalise our faith one with another at all opportunities, or always to engage in personal spiritual discussion (whether from zeal or inflated piety), lest others should feel put on the spot, or be moved to indiscretion or comparison.

The light stuff can also be downright fun, watering our souls at just the right time. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Prov 11:25) We are multifaceted, it seems, with times to reflect seriously and soberly and times to "lighten up," just as there are times to fast and times to feast. "Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones." (Prov 16:24) Humour is a wonderful leveller for young and old, and for other differences, as witnessed by the warmth that can linger long after a parish's comedy concert.

It would seem that the key to good humour in all of its variety is to avoid all potentially exploitative aspects of jokes, for even in humour we must strive to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke." (Phil 2:15)

Perhaps it can be said that true humour takes courage. Why courage? Can fearful people really laugh? The best humour flows from an inner core of peace, growing in the knowledge of the Lord's victory and His

providential care for us. And then we will be able to say as Hannah of old: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies [*i.e.*, I smile at my enemies] because I rejoice in Thy salvation." (I Sam 2:1)

Knowing who we are in this sense, perhaps we can better resist the temptation to fear one another, or to place much focus on self. Then ease in our relationships will come easily, and we will be glad one of another. And genuine good humour will be manifest equally in our chuckles and our stories. Even in our common, contented silence.—by Kathy Szalasnyj, Holy Resurrection Church, Saskatoon

Humour from the Desert Fathers

A young monk said to an old father, "Abba, it seems to me that Abba Cassian is a little bit paranoid?"

"That's right," answered the abba, "but he is a good paranoiac. A hundred times daily he forgives the insults that he has never received."

* * *

"Abba, why does the Church call 'holy' the marriage itself?" asked a young monk.

"Most probably because it has many, many martyrs," the abba assured him.

—From *Bons mots et facéties des Pères des désert* by Piere Gribaud, trans. dm.

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and other missionary labourers
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Montreal Lenten gatherings Feature Belonick, Plekon

Orthodox Christian Women conference

"Defeating the roots of sin" was the theme of the ninth annual conference sponsored by the Orthodox Christian Women (OCW) of Montreal and held on March 11. The speaker was Matushka Deborah Belonick, of Binghamton NY.

She described the sick "nous," a termed frequently used by the spiritual fathers of the Church and which is often defined as the central core of the soul or "the eye of the heart." When the nous is sick, it indulges in the habit of blaming external circumstances for its misery. It desires things belonging to others, and its love for possessions finds no satiation. It indulges in sensual pleasures and knows no limit and measure of the pleasures. It indulges in fantasy. And it expresses rudeness, manifested outwardly as sarcastic repugnance for someone. All of these things indicate that the ego is at the centre of a sick nous. How can the nous be cured? How can one root out these sins? We must come before God, Matushka Deborah said, and say what the Publican's prayer means: "I have done nothing in my life that I can offer. Be my Saviour."

Calling for the spiritual discipline of silent meditative prayer, even if for only fifteen minutes a week, she went on to list "five steps to salvation":

- acknowledge the grace given in baptism and chrismation;
- comprehend that this grace is more valuable than anything else in one's life;
- desire with all one's strength to adapt to that grace;
- resolve to achieve this;
- resolve to change this decision into reality.

Orthodox Theological Institute retreat:

"Living Icons: People of Faith and the Life of Holiness in Our Time" was the theme of the annual Orthodox Theological Institute liturgical retreat, held March 23-25 in Châteauguay. The retreat speaker was Father Michael Plekon, a priest of the OCA, associate at St Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls NY.

Father Plekon has undertaken to write a book about seven persons he considers to be examples, images, or icons of holiness in our time. One is St. Seraphim of Sarov. The others are not canonised. They are: Fr Alexander Schmemmann, Paul Evdokimov, Fr Gregory Krug, Fr Alexander Men, Fr Lev Gillet and Mother Maria (Skobtsova).

The speaker dealt in detail with the lives of some of them, notably St Seraphim, Paul Evdokimov, Mother Maria, and Father Alexander Men. He noted that there are several common features of these "living icons." All but St Seraphim are people of our century. All of them but him lived in the world. All of them served the Church. Their holiness was not hidden from the world. And they were all inspired by the Gospel. In Fr Michael's reflections on these icons he has been contemplating, is a hopeful message for Christians of our time: we too can become saints, while living in the world. We do not have to be monks or nuns, nor superhuman. We must not only pray, but become prayer. "In praying for forgiveness, we become forgiveness, in praying for love, we become love."

We have plenty of equipment, Fr Michael said, for the way to holiness, but the map has to be our own life. For only by truly loving our own life do we accept that life as a gift of God and go on to love and serve others in holiness, becoming living icons ourselves.

The next OTI retreat will be held March 29-31 2001—two weeks before the common Eastern and Western Pascha/Easter. —*Evelyn Dumas, The Sign of the Theotokos, Montreal*

Bishop Seraphim's Visitation Schedule June — September 2000

3 Jun	Diocesan picnic, Fair Haven
9 – 11 Jun	Archdiocesan Council, Ottawa
17 Jun	St George's Chapel, Hinchin Brooke QC
24 Jun	Milton ON: Canadian Episcopal Celebration (Millennium)
25 Jun	St Nicholas, Wostok-Bukovina AB: 100th Anniversary
25 Jun – 7 Jul	Alberta Deanery
9 – 17 Jul	Manitoba Deanery
15 Jul	St Nicholas, Sandy Lake MB: 100th Anniversary
16 Jul	Winnipeg MB: Canadian Episco- pal Concelebration (Millennium)
30 Jul	St Seraphim, Rawdon QC
1 – 18 Sep	British Columbia Deaneary
23 Sep	Edmonton AB: Canadian Episco- pal Concelebration (Millennium)

Questions and answers About receiving converts Into the Church

In recent years there has been some debate about the customary ways in which converts have been received into the Orthodox Church. The following is a contribution to this debate by the Very Rev'd Andrew Morbey, Dean of Annunciation/St Nicholas Cathedral in Ottawa.

Q. Does the Mystery of Baptism exist outside the Church?

A. No. The Mystery of Baptism is uniquely "of the Church."

Q. Why then does the Church receive some converts from heterodox confessions by means other than Baptism?

A. The Church recognises that among the various heterodox confessions some stand closer to and some farther from the Church, that there are in some cases deep historical ties and bonds of ecclesial kinship with the Church, and that there are manifestly degrees of proximity to the Church in terms of faith, rite and worship. For the sake of the salvation of many and honouring the mercy of God, the Church fills and perfects the rites and honours the faith of those heterodox confessions in which the Church discerns vestiges, continuities and other evidences of the authentic rites and living faith uniquely found in the Church.

Q. Are those received by non-baptismal means actually recipients of grace, of full membership in the Church, and the saving and deifying life in Christ?

A. Indeed! Reception by the Church and participation in the Mysteries establishes the convert in Christ, confers the gift of the Holy Spirit, and grants every Grace essential and needful to the living and perfecting of Christian life. Those so received are full members of the Church, sharing in every hope and every blessing of Orthodox Christian life.

Q. What of those who are Baptised *after* having been received by Chrismation?

A. They have been misled into great sin. Those who have encouraged them appear implicitly to deny the ability of the Holy Spirit to achieve that which was intended and confessed concerning the reception by Chrismation, that is, that the Holy Spirit establishes the convert in Christ, and unites him with the Body of Christ, the Church. In this sense they appear to repudiate the Gift of the Holy Spirit given in Chrismation. Since there is nothing necessary

nor essential lacking in the one Chrismated, there is nothing additional for such a "baptism" to confer. The one who, having received the Gift of the Holy Spirit, and every Grace, submits to the rite of Baptism as if to acquire some lacking Grace, is roundly and soundly condemned by the Holy Fathers. Doubts about one's status in the Church cannot be properly met by actions with such blasphemous implications. Further, such "baptisms" are often encouraged on the basis of personal feelings of unhappiness, inadequacy or anxiety about whether or not one is "really" Orthodox. The Mysteries as means of Grace cannot be ordered up merely on the basis of ill-informed "feelings" about the adequacy of the Mystery of Chrismation. Baptism after Chrismation is the height of innovation, subjectivism, individualism, consumerism and pastoral irresponsibility.

If, in fact, those Chrismated are *not* fully and perfectly united to the Church, how is it that they receive Holy Communion? Only Orthodox Christians may receive Holy Communion. What of those clergy who have been received by Chrismation? How then can they offer the Mystical Sacrifice? What are they doing when they serve as priests, bless, offer, commune, baptise, bury, counsel, lead in prayer? How can they possibly be ministers of Grace if they themselves were not united to the Church? And is there any sectarian group which does not have its roots in a local Church which includes among its number, even among hierarchs and clergy, those who have been received by non-baptismal means?

Q. Has the Church received many converts without the rite of Baptism?

A. Innumerable hundreds of thousands—possibly millions—of the faithful over the entire history of the Church have been restored to the Church from heterodoxy by non-baptismal means, often together with their hierarchs and clergy. The reception of converts, both in mass returns to Orthodoxy and in individual conversions, is an inspiring and compelling story and a significant dimension in the evangelical and missiological task of the Church.

Q. Are the means of reception optional?

A. Not at all! Although there are variations in application between local Churches, and short periods of divergence in theory and practice, in general terms the Church in the period of the Ecumenical Councils, in the mediaeval period, and up through today mandates the appropriate mode of reception.

. . . Reception into the Church . . .

This "mandate" is found in the Holy Canons, the legislation and customary rules of the local Churches, in the manuals for clergy, the text-books of seminaries, in the Book of Needs, and so on.

Q. Why do some Orthodox insist on Baptising every convert?

A. Good question. Perhaps theirs is an abstract ecclesiology, divorced from the actual, historical life of the Church. It is typical of sectarians to have a strict logic in their systems of thought, based upon certain abstract and absolutised principles, wrenched out of the Spirit-filled context of the on-going life of the Church. For it is clear that the majority opinion and practice of the Holy Fathers and the local Churches is manifest in the decisions of the Ecumenical and local Councils, official directives and *ukases*, liturgical books, catechetical material and clergy guidelines. According to this sacred opinion, the various ways in which the wicked one has wrenched Christians from the Church—by heresy, schism or canonical disorder—and the nature of the heterodoxy determine the manner in which they are restored to the Church. Where there is no vestige of the rite of baptism and no proximity in faith the Church baptises. Where some measure of formal continuity exists in rite and doctrine, the Church receives by the Mystery of Chrismation. Where the canonical authority of the Church discerns a veritable approximation of her Mysteries and Doctrine, the heterodox convert may be received by an anointing, or even by repudiation of error, Confession and Communion.

Those who insist on Baptising every convert deny that there are any vestiges, continuities and proximities with Orthodoxy in heterodox confessions, or that the Church has the pastoral and canonical authority to fulfil, revive, rescue or perfect that which it discerns to exist imperfectly elsewhere.

It is clear that such a position is and was an innovation and a rejection of the tradition of the Church. These people—often self-proclaimed traditionalists and zealots, and often highly sectarian and very limited and selective in their canonical consciousness—set their personal opinion against the sacred canons and Church consensus. They scandalise the faithful, prey upon the weakness and scruples of neophytes, generate innumerable squabbling counter-hierarchies, and break the communion and unity of the Church.

Q. What about the holy Kollyvades fathers?

A. These fathers—and among them several wonderful saints of the Church—were led by their zeal to protect the integrity of the Orthodox Church by insisting that all converts be baptised. In doing so, they witness to the fact that the Church was *not* baptising all converts. The fact that their opinion was highly controversial indirectly shows that this idea was not part of the received custom of the Church. Opposition to this particular teaching was widespread. It was not accepted in most of the Orthodox world. Only with difficulty and under highly-charged circumstances did it become, and even then only for a brief time, the policy in certain Greek circles. It is no dishonour to the Kollyvades fathers to place their opinion in the context in which it arose and to see it as largely a product of those circumstances. The various fathers—and even St Nikodemus himself—entertained some ideas at various times about which the Church has reserved judgment.

It is noteworthy that the learned Greek theologian who has made the teaching of the Kollyvades fathers prominent once again today by advocating their ideas concerning the reception of converts has not, even while holding this opinion, made it the pretext for breaking communion with his local Church or the Orthodox Church generally. He has not attempted to set up a counter-Church. He repudiates the idea of baptising Orthodox Christians who previously were received by Chrismation.

Q. What about the holy Athonite fathers?

A. What is said above about the Kollyvades generally is true of many of the Athonite fathers. There are many Athonite fathers who accept this teaching, there are many who do not.

Q. Do you see the possibility of change in the customary practice of the Church?

A. It is possible that the norm expressed in the customary practice of the Church will be "oikonomised"—that is, that the Church will come to certain conclusions about some or all of the heterodox bodies and determine that these groups no longer provide any basis whatsoever for non-baptismal reception. This is a matter for the Church as a whole, and not for individuals and those with grievances and unhappy personal experiences. The possibility that all or most converts will be baptised is not a remote one. The notion of baptising persons after Chrismation will always be wrong.

Ottawa girl guide Honoured for almsgiving

We reported recently about the continuing progress of Rebecca Dixon from Annunciation/St Nicholas Cathedral, Ottawa, in her pursuit of Religion-in-life achievement as a Girl Guide. Since that time another remarkable event has occurred—her being named one of the 2,000 “Millennium Dreamers Ambassadors” from around the world who will participate in a Youth Summit in Orlando FL in May of this year. This is an event co-sponsored by UNESCO and McDonalds Restaurants. Rebecca was recognised for her collecting and raising money for charity, to help those suffering from floods, and in this case, people in Ukraine. The purpose of giving a second mention to Rebecca is not to “play favourites” but only to hope that mention of her straightforward activities can be an inspiration to us all. The point for us all to remember is simply that you and I do make a difference and can make a difference with our alms-giving, whether locally or internationally. In congratulating Rebecca, it is important for each of us to remember our Christian responsibility always to be looking to give alms—not just in Great Lent.

A source for church candles Which will benefit our Archdiocese

This is a first notice about an offer to us from the Hope Candle Company in Toronto (Brampton), ON. Philip Kyrou, an Orthodox person, is the president of this company which sells candles of all sorts at a reasonable price. He is willing to work in cooperation with our parishes in the Archdiocese, and to make contributions to the Archdiocese proportional to parish purchases. It needs also to be said that Mr Kyrou has no desire to compete with monks and nuns who also make candles!

Should your parish be interested in at least investigating this proposal, contact the Bishop or the Chancellor, and Mr Kyrou also at:

The Hope Candle Company Ltd
28, Melanie Dr
Brampton, ON L6T 4H7

Seraphim

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