



Genuine Generosity*

“He will return it to us twofold!”

In the Life of the Russian Staretz Gabriel (1844-1915), we read the following:

Somebody once gave the Staretz three rubles, which amounted to an entire fortune, given his pennilessness. His cell attendant, Father Joseph, knew about the money.

Around that time, they were visited by two nuns who complained sorrowfully about the poverty of their convent. Even their infirmary lacked firewood, they told the Staretz. They were reduced to going about various construction sites in the city in search of left over pieces of wood.



Father Gabriel felt sorry for them and gave them his sole three rubles.

His cell attendant became very upset. He murmured against his Elder’s generosity, since they themselves were destitute.

Father Gabriel did his best to persuade him:

“Please do not grumble. Think how our Lord will send us twice as much as what we gave.”

And that is exactly what came to pass. A merchant from Kazan came to speak with the Staretz, and as he was leaving gave him six roubles.

Father Gabriel called in Father Joseph and triumphantly showed him the money.

“What do you have to say now? Do you see? I told you



that our Lord would return it to us twofold. Now then, here are the six rubles.”

Father Joseph was content.

They used one of the rubles to buy something.

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Shortly thereafter, Father Gabriel looked at Father Joseph sheepishly and said that he had given someone the remaining five roubles.

Seeing Father Joseph’s displeasure, the Staretz again assured him:

“Believe me, the Lord will not abandon us. He will return it to us twofold!”

“Indeed, twofold again! I would be satisfied if we got back the same amount...”

The next day, the mail was brought to Father Gabriel as usual. Among the letters there was a check for ten roubles.

Father Joseph was finally persuaded that the Lord does not forget His servants, and from then on he was the one that would urge Father Gabriel to give money.

“It is nothing, Batiushka,” he would say, “Give it. The Lord will return it to us twofold.”

His predictions did not always come true, of course.

Father Gabriel explained to him that perhaps he (Father Joseph) did not give the money for the right reason, but because he wanted the money doubled. Our Lord, Who sees the hearts of man, does not bless such actions.



* Petros Botse, *The Gerontikon of the North* [in Greek], Volume I (Athens: 1999), pp. 74-75. Translated from the Greek.