



■ After Holy Communion

The Wondrous Fragrance*

The Redolence of the Precious Gifts

Father **Gabriel** (1844-1915, † September 24) was possessed by love for God and its life-giving power. **T**hus, he endeavored to put his whole being into submission to God, and to reach the fullness of self-denial.

“**F**or a long time, I attempted to break myself, but did not succeed. **T**hen I finally broke,” he used to tell us later. **U**nfortunately, it remained indefinite what exactly he “broke” within his heart, after which, as it were, all his strength of soul was applied to the love of God and all inner obstacles disappeared.



The path of spiritual perfection in the life-giving rays of this creative love was made smooth, peaceful, and perfectly clear to him. **F**ather Gabriel's entire life in general became simple, owing to his spiritual insight. **T**here were no obstacles, doubts, hesitations, or confusion. **H**is faith in God became strong, even undoubting. **H**ope strengthened him with a foretaste of the future blessedness—in particular, of the blessed immortality in the Lord and with the Lord. **T**he unspeakable love of Christ completely exalted Father Gabriel's heart and thoughts away from the visible world to the world on high.

This was aided by the various wonderful manifestations of the goodness of God. **O**ften, for example, Father Gabriel would smell a **wondrous fragrance**. **U**nable to hide his joy he would call his cell-attendant and ask:

“**D**o you smell that fragrance?”

“Don't believe it, Father Gabriel! **Y**ou are not well. **N**o, I do not smell it; there isn't any such fragrance.”

“**T**he reason you cannot smell it is that **you have been reading cheap romances and you are surrounded by demonic spirits.** Disaster is in store for you! **Y**ou offend the Spirit of God with your cheap romances! **I** implore you not to read them anymore!”

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Father Gabriel's cell was in the main corridor on the way to the monastery's main Church; therefore, the brothers, going to Matins at 4 a.m. would stop to visit their ailing, but always cheerful, Elder, to encourage him. **A**lmost every day, the kind Father Bessarion (the Administrator) would visit him. **O**ther Fathers would also come frequently.

One of these, Father Epiphanius, also sensed the **fragrance** in his cell and immediately turned to Father Gabriel's cell-attendant:

“**J**oseph, what kind of cologne did you put on the Elder? **M**y goodness, it must have been very expensive! **H**ow wonderful it smells!”

After Father Epiphanius left, Father Gabriel turned to his cell-attendant and said:

“**W**ell, what do you have to say now?”

Joseph cried aloud and made a prostration before Father Gabriel's bed:

“**F**orgive me, and pray for me.”

Soon another Hieromonk entered, Father Abenir, who himself liked to use cologne. **H**e also smelled the **unknown fragrance** in the Elder's cell and also turned to Father Gabriel's cell-attendant with the question:

“**W**here and for how much did you buy such a fragrant perfume?”

“**A**nd I,” remembered Father Gabriel, was lying wounded like the one who fell among thieves. **B**ut **I had received Communion of the life-giving**

Body and Blood of Christ, and thus, the life-giving Spirit. **A**nd we sensed His fragrance physically. **C**hrist, like the Samaritan of the Gospel, pours into the wounds of

the man who has “fallen among the thieves” the



wine and oil of His Grace.”

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Once the fragrance in Father Gabriel's cell was also sensed by the doctor, M.E.F., who formerly treated him. **He** was a man who never thought about questions of the faith and salvation, and therefore was disposed to give all miracles in life a “natural” explanation.

He likewise thought that Father Gabriel had used an expensive cologne. **But** Father Gabriel plainly told him that it was not a perfume, but rather **the fragrance of the Holy Gifts, of which he had just partaken prior to the doctor's arrival.**

“Oh, that's what it is! **Certainly** it must have been very fine wine. **That** is very interesting. **Where** was it bought? **I** would like to buy some.... **Very** fine wine! **But** why do you receive Communion so often? **Do** you fear that you are going to die?”

“No, I am not afraid of death; or rather, I am no longer afraid. **And** this is why I receive Communion.”



(*) Source: “Consolation and Edification,” vol. X (June 2017), p. 6, from the book “One of the Ancients: The Life and Struggles of Schema-Archimandrite Gabriel of Kazan and Pskov,” *The Orthodox Word*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (118) (September-October, 1984).