

EDIFICATION AND CONSOLATION

“But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men for edification and exhortation and consolation”
(1 Corinthians 14:3)

Simple Catechism Through the Experience of the Orthodox Church

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Renewed by the Incarnation,
we advance to
Crucifixion and Glory



January 1, 2017 (Old Style)

The Stations of our Majestic Course



The Stable in the Cave, where our Life and Archetype was born, lies at the beginning of the path to the Cross, to Glory and to our Regeneration.

✠ Humility • Self-emptying • the Stable • the Cross • Sacrifice • Resurrection • Renewal • Life • the Glory of the Kingdom...

“Stations” on our Glorious Path from the “here” and “now,” which are made new and Christified, to the “everlasting” and the “eternal” Communion of Love with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Walk the good course, under the Protection of the Theotokos!

“I go unto My Father...”

Let us also go, that we may die with Him...”

(St. John 11:16, 14:12)

† Feast of the Circumcision of our Savior, St. Basil the Great
The Least Minister of Christ’s Sheep, Girt with the Towel of Servitude
† Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle

■ When the machinations of the Evil One have no effect

The Good Advice of a Sorcerer* “Without first communing and wearing a Cross around your neck...”

A pious Christian man in Babylon (present day Cairo) of Egypt, from a noble family, was designated a few years ago by the authorities¹ as warden of the prison, where he treated the inmates with kindness and sympathy. We need not reveal his name, since he is still alive.

This man related the following to us, attesting to the veracity of his words with a solemn oath.

“Certain sorcerers were once locked in the prison of which I was warden, and I frequently went to their cell to question them, as is the custom of those in my position, so as to record their statements and deliver a pertinent report to the authorities.

“So then, one of them—the eldest of the lot—seeing that I treated everyone with understanding and compassion, took me aside and told me in the Egyptian tongue: **‘I swear to you by the God Who delivered us into your hands: never interrogate any of us four sor-**



cerers without first communing and wearing a Cross around your neck. My companions are wicked people who want to hurt you, but if you do as I advise, neither they nor anyone else will be able to do you any harm.’”

* * *

When even demons and sorcerers confess such things, it follows that those who do not believe in the Holy Body of Christ and constantly blaspheme His Cross, thereby inflicting pain on us, are even more impious than the former.

To whom am I referring?² I mean the enemies of the Cross, who are bound to perdition, in accordance with God's judgment, as expressed by the mouth of St. Paul.

(*) Unknown pages of the Gerontikon, Part I, Narratives of the Holy Elders, §13 (Ekdoseis “To Periboli tes Panagias,” pp. 64-67.

1. The authorities: representatives of the Islamic state. In the history of Islam, it was not rare for competent and educated Christians (e.g. St. John of Damascus [see his Life, December 4]) to be placed in positions of responsibility.

2. He is apparently speaking of the Saracens, who conquered the region in the eighth century and were tyrannizing the non-Muslims. Indeed, Islam explicitly rejects the divinity of Christ, and consequently the Cross and the Mysteries of the Church.

A Christian only loves

How We Heal Our Brother With Consideration and Love*

By quiet and gentle love we approach and heal the being of man.

We never harp on to someone about his weaknesses and failings. We speak only well of others. While we see their faults, we keep silent and simply love.

For when we behave towards a harsh and callous person as he “deserves,” we only make him worse. When, on the other hand, we treat him with consideration and love, we are able to make him better.

A Christian does not detest anyone.

What does he do? **He only loves. He** loves even his enemies.

When St. Stephen the Protomartyr was being stoned, he gave no thought to the physical pain, but rather how to forgive his torturers.

That is why he said: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

It is astounding to contemplate how far the love of a believer can go.

This is a **distinctive love**, which brings you **freedom** and **calmness**.

It enables the **Light of the Resurrection** to spring forth within you; it opens unto you spiritual horizons, causing you to participate in heavenly things while still on earth.



(*) Bishop Makarios of Christoupolis, “O Lord and Master of my life...” [in Greek] (Athens: Ekdoseis “En plo,” 2016), pp. 122-123.

"Revelations" of the Genuine Ethos of Monasticism

Obedience and Humility*

"God is close to the man who compels himself in all things."

Abbas Petros related the following: "Seven of us, all anchorites, went to Abba Sisoes, who was then living in Klysmas, and asked him to tell us something for our edification.

"He replied:

"Forgive me, I am an illiterate man, but once I went to visit Abba Or and Abba Athre.

"Abba Or had been sick for eighteen years.

"I made a prostration before them and asked them to tell me an instructive story.

"Abba Or replied, "What can I tell you? Go and do what you see fit. **God is close to the man who compels himself in all things.**"

"Abba Or and Abba Athre did not come from the same region. Yet there was a wondrous peace between them until their departure from this earth. **For the obedience of Abba Athre was great, as was the humility of Abba Or.**

"I stayed with them for a few days, carefully observing their way of life, and I saw something truly admirable that Abba Athre did.

"One day somebody brought them a small fish, and Abba Athre wanted to cook it for the Elder.

"As he was slicing the fish with a knife, Abba Or called to him. **He immediately left the knife in the middle of the fish without slicing the remainder.**

"I marvelled at his great obedience, be-

cause he did not say, "Wait until I have sliced the fish."

"I then asked Abba Athre, "Where did you acquire this obedience?"

"It is not my own; it is the Elder's."

"He took me by the hand and said, "Come and see the Elder's obedience."

"He cooked the fish, deliberately spoiled it, and brought it to the Elder, who ate it without saying anything.

"Abba Athre asked him, "Is it good, Elder?" "It is very good," he replied.

"He then brought him another small piece, perfectly cooked.

"He said to him, "I spoiled it, Elder."

And the Elder replied, "Yes, you did spoil it a little."

"After this, Abba Athre said to me, "So do you understand now that the obedience is the Elder's?"

"I departed and made every effort to put into practice what I had seen."

That is what Abba Sisoes

recounted to us.

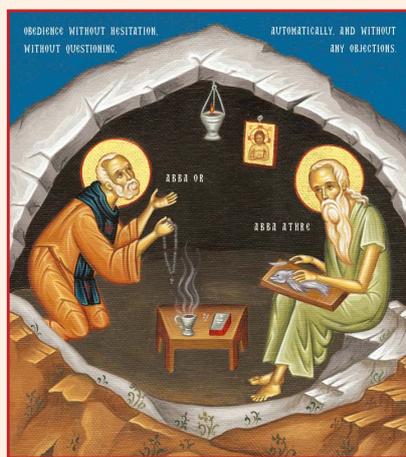
"One of us besought him, saying:

"Kindly tell us something yourself."

"He replied, "He who knowingly possesses humility fulfills the whole of Scripture."

"A second brother then asked, "Father, what does it mean to remove oneself to a remote place?"

"And he replied, "To be silent and not to interfere in the affairs of others, wherever one might be. That is removing oneself to a remote place."



(*) *The Great Gerontikon*, Vol IV, ch. 15, §144 [in Greek], (Thessalonica: Ekdoseis Gynaikieou Hierou Hesychasteriou "To Genesion tes Theotokou," 1999), pp. 110-115.

A Living Icon of Meekness
in Orthodox Romania

My Mother *

“...her love for God, her kindness,
and her modesty...”



Throughout her entire life [recounts Elder Petroniu] my mother lived a profound spiritual life. She took part with great devotion in all the Feasts of the Church, down to the last. Of course she had no book learning, but what she did have was discernment and intuition. She had no knowledge of the Festal Cycle of the Church, yet she participated unerringly in all of its Feasts, fasts, and annual commemorations of the dead.

Almsgiving was her primary concern on nearly a daily basis. She would invite in strangers from off the street, offer them hospitality at our house, and gave them every comfort. Never did a poor person leave our house with empty hands. My father sometimes berated her for her great open-handedness.

My mother took part in memorial services for the dead with great piety. Every Saturday morning, she gave additional alms on behalf of the departed: a bowl of milk or food and water, which she would bring to the neighbors herself.

She would then busy herself with washing clothes for the next day, after which she would cook the meal that we would eat after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, since she never cooked on the Lord's Day.

When the bell rang for Vespers, all of the work for the following day had been completed, and thus Sunday began.

On Sunday morning we would all put on our clean clothes and go to Church.

Our father would rise very early in the morning to say his prayers, after which he would read the Akathist Hymn to our Lord Jesus Christ from the Horologion, followed by passages from the New Testament.

Before leaving for Church, we would first ask forgiveness one of another: “Forgive me” and

“God forgives.” We did so not only amongst ourselves, but also with our neighbors.

All of us—including the children, even if they were sick—devoutly and diligently kept the fast on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, as well as the longer fasts. Great Lent was a very important time in the Christian life of all of us. We had special bowls, plates, and silverware set aside just for this time. At Pascha and the Nativity, the celebrations would last for many days in the villages.

My mother was an unparalleled housekeeper. She was the one who would sew, weave on the loom, and knit. She made all our clothes herself: shirts, coats, sleeveless overcoats, jackets, as well as rugs and various covers for our beds. She raised eight children—six girls and two boys—nurturing in us the fear of God, respect for others, and a sense of honor. She did not hesitate to give us a beating sometimes, when we would upset the order of her “coenobium.”



Piety, faith, and the fulfillment of our traditional Christian duties became habitual to us. They sprang forth from her very being, just as did her love for God, her kindness, and her moderation.

Once, when I was in the city of Broșteni, I went to our house in order to stay for Pascha, and remembered our Christian customs, which I had not seen again since my childhood.

I was able to have a conversation with my mother, which helped me to understand just how profoundly Christian her life actually was.

On Great Thursday I left the house in the morning, and when I returned and asked what she had done that day, I learned to my astonishment that she had gone to an ailing elderly woman in order to wash her feet, in imitation of the humility of Christ before the Mystical Supper. “The Lord washed the feet of His Disciples and I should not do something for Him? I did something similar. I washed the feet of Gabriel's wife, Maria, who is bedridden, and I put on her a new pair of our own socks.”

On Great Friday, her eyes welled with tears the entire day. “When I think,” she told me, “how greatly our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for our sakes, I want to cry and groan from pain.”

On Great Saturday, when we admired the Paschal breads and biscuits that she was baking for the Feast, she told us: “I made them so nicely not so that you would enjoy eating them (because I myself do not even feel like touching them), but first and foremost for the glory of our Lord, Who tomorrow will be resurrected.”

* * *

In her old age, even though she suffered from various ailments, she was never absent from Church.

The village women had the custom of kissing the hands of the elderly and the widows and of putting money in their hands. Once, my mother asked me whether she did well in accepting the money.

She told me: “I never spend that money on myself, but instead buy candles and light them in front of the Icon of our Lady the Theotokos.



And at home I do ten prostrations for each coin, praying for the health of the person who gave it to me.”

Another time, I wanted to learn what my mother knew of the teaching of the Church. She then recited for me the Symbol of Faith [the Creed]

and the vision of the Panagia and her Epistle, all of which she knew by heart. She also knew entire passages from the Holy Gospel and the Psalter, and recited for me Psalm 49. She knew by heart many prayers, troparia, and verses from various Feast Days, which she had learned in Church. I was astonished by all of this because she had not given me the impression that she knew these things, but kept them devoutly to herself.

She was always at prayer. Before we would leave the house, we would always see her go to the Icon corner. She would make the sign of the Cross and a few prostrations, and then set about her work. She would pronounce the name of Jesus Christ and of our Lady the Theotokos with great spiritual warmth, trust, and unshakable hope in God's help.

* * *

Long before her death she had already prepared everything. Her funeral garment, the shroud for the coffin, and a bundle of candles were tucked away in her trunk.

A few weeks before her repose, I went to see her again and brought her a bundle of pure wax candles. That gave her great joy. She put them in her trunk and that is how I had the opportunity to see what it contained.

She passed into eternity on July 4, 1967, after an illness of a few months.

Even before the Sts. Peter and Paul Fast, she requested of my sister Glykeria: “Call for Father Ionika to confess me and to give me Holy Communion.”

She fasted for three days, confessed, and communed. On Saturday, July 1, she washed herself, changed her clothing, combed her hair, and said to Glykeria:

“Cover me with the sheet, because you see how three women in white are coming down the street.”

“Where are they, mama?” Glykeria asked her, as she peered through the window without seeing anyone.

“Never mind. They are coming for me and not for you....”

One night shortly before her death she had a dream about Demetrios, her young son who died before the rest of us, and on whose account she was always inconsolable. The child was wearing a white shirt, with his head uncovered, and was gathering flowers in a large meadow.

“What are you doing here?” she asked him.

“I am gathering flowers,” her son replied.

“And why is your head uncovered? I put a cap on you.”

“We have no need for such things here,” her son said joyfully.

After taking Holy Communion, her face was transfigured. She no longer ate anything, but only asked for water, since she was burning with fever. She was then filled with a great joy, such as she had never displayed before, and began to sing the Troparia that she had learned in Church: “Christ is Risen,” “All ye that have



→ Continued on p. 8

■ Abba Dorotheos of Gaza (6th century)

The Three Faculties of the Soul and the Cultivation of “Good Thoughts” *

Patristic Therapeutics

According to the Holy Fathers, the soul has three faculties: “It has the **appetitive**, the **incensive**, and the **rational**.”¹

Blasphemous thoughts are engendered by the passions of the **rational faculty**. **Malicious thoughts** are engendered by the passions of the **incensive faculty**.² **Lascivious thoughts** are engendered by the passions of the **appetitive faculty**.

In general, when the three faculties of the soul do not function according to nature, they become ill and perverted. When they are in the state that is contrary to nature, they become seats of the three most general passions: **ambition** (rational), **avarice** (incensive), and **love of pleasure** (appetitive).

Abba Dorotheos, with great grace and simplicity, in the first place assures us that “All of the Fathers say that each passion arises from one of these three passions: ambition, avarice, or the love of pleasure.”³

* * *

Further on, he gives us guidance on how to cure the three faculties of the soul and the evil thoughts engendered by them:

“Each passion has its opposing virtue. **Pride** has humility, **avarice** has almsgiving, **prodigality** has temperance, **faintheartedness** has patient endurance, **wrath** has meekness, **hatred** has love. In short, every passion, as I have said, has its opposing virtue.”⁴

* * *

It does not suffice, however, to expel the

passions; it is necessary to put the virtues back inside us and to establish them in their place, because they have been sown in our hearts by God Himself:

“The virtues have been given to us by God as part of our nature. At the same time that God created man, He implanted the virtues in him”; “Thus, God has endowed our nature with the virtues, but the passions do not belong to us by nature; they have neither essence nor substance”; “When the soul turns away from the virtues through love of pleasure, it creates the passions and sets them up in opposition to itself.”⁵ [Darkness, which was not created and does not exist in essence, prevails when there is no light.]

Abba Dorotheos goes on to exhort us:

“This is why I am always telling you to be zealous in cultivating good thoughts, so that you might find them in the next life [after your departure from the body].”⁶

* * *

Speaking in particular about the “harmfulness of suspicions,” this God-bearing Abba advises us to be sure,

“with all our strength, never to trust our suspicions,” but to confront them actively with “good thoughts”:

“Therefore, if suspicions are sown in us through our own evil, let us immediately transform them into good thoughts, and thus they will do us no harm. Suspicions are evil, and they never allow the soul to find peace.”⁷

“Do not seek to know your neighbor’s evil and do not accept suspicions about him. If, however, suspicions are sown in our heart because of our own wickedness, take care to transform them into good thoughts, and in all things be thankful to God. Thus will you obtain goodness and holy love.”⁸



Praying with Reverence

The Theotokos takes pleasure in the “Salutations”*
 “...and to you, rejoice!”



The ineffable and inexpressible miracle of all creation, both in Heaven and on earth, namely, the Most Holy Mother of God, can only be worthily

hymned—as far as such is possible to the human tongue—by the Salutations to our Lady the Theotokos, which were written through Her own Grace and illumination.

That is why, when the Mother of our Lord appeared to many Saints, such as St. John Koukouzeles, Father Antipas of Moldavia, St. Alexander of Svir in Russia, the Bulgarian St. Kosmas the Zographite, and the clairvoyant Elder Philaret of Konstantonitou Monastery, she said to them:

“Since I greatly delight in the beautiful hymns of the twenty-four Odes (of the Salutations), I will love, protect, shelter, and preserve from all evil every Christian that greets me every day with these hymns and lives in accordance with the law of God. And on the last day of his life, I will defend him before my Son.”

(*) Archimandrite Ioannikios Kotsones, *An Athonite Gerontikon* (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis Hierou Hesychasteriou Hagiou Gregoriou Palama, 1999), p. 337.

Father Tychon the Ascetic would say that a monk should alternate between **one hour of work and one hour of prayer.**

He also told of an incident that occurred in a Russian monastery regarding the Salutations to the Mother of God, for which he had great love.

“There was a monk who recited the **Salutations twenty-four times every day.** When he would hear the clock strike the hour, he would begin. And indeed, each time he would repeat it with such reverence that it was if he were saying it for the first time. **One day he heard a voice coming from the Icon saying: ‘Rejoice, O servant; and to you, rejoice!’”**

Father Tychon would also read the Salutations many times a day with tears of compunction.



(*) Source: “Agios Kyprianos” No. 303 (July-August 2001), pp. 54-55. Publication layout ours.

1. Abba Dorotheos, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVIII, col. 1832B (“An Interpretation of Certain Sayings of St. Gregory Chanted in Honor of the Holy Martyrs”).

2. By “malicious thoughts,” here, are meant not the usual kind of lascivious thoughts, but those by which people “deliberate about how to harm and take revenge on their enemies” (St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Exomologitarion* [Manual of Confession] [Athens: M. Saliveros, n.d.], p. 42).

3. Abba Dorotheos, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVIII, col. 1756C (Homily 12, §5).

• See also St. Mark the Ascetic, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXV, col. 917C (*On the Spiritual Law: Two Hundred Texts*, §103, and *Philokalia*, Vol. I, p. 102, §101: “The intellect is made

blind by these three passions: avarice, vainglory, and sensual pleasure.”

4. Abba Dorotheos, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXVIII, col. 1757B (Homily 12, §5). 5. *Ibid.*, col. 1757C (Homily 12, §6). 6. *Ibid.*, col. 1753C (Homily 12, §4). 7. *Ibid.*, col. 1720C (Homily 9, §3).

8. *Ibid.*, col. 1804BC (Teaching 17, §3) (*Sources chrétiennes*, Vol. XCII, p. 504, ll. 26-30 [Letter 2, §187]).

• See also *ibid.*, col. 1800B (Teaching 16, §4) (*Sources chrétiennes*, Vol. XCII, p. 496, ll. 15-21 [Letter 1, §183]): “May God, in His goodness, grant us a good spiritual state, so that we also might be able to derive some profit from every single person and never think anything evil of our neighbor. Even if we think or suspect something evil out of our own wickedness, let us immediately transform our thought into a good one. For, not seeing evil in our neighbor gives birth to goodness, with God’s help.”

■ “Glory to God in the highest...”

Thanksgiving and Glorification to our Lord for All of His Mercies

Staretz Nektary would time and again remind his spiritual children to give thanks to our Lord for all of His mercies.

As an example of sincere gratitude, he would refer to St. Eleazar of the Skete of Anzersk.

One night, St. Eleazar went out onto the balcony of his cell and, contemplating the beauty and tranquillity of the Skete's natural surroundings, was moved to tears.

And from the depths of his heart, which was filled with Divine love, came forth a deep sigh:

“O Lord, such beauty You have created for us! By what means and in what way can I, wretched worm that I am, give thanks to You for all of the great and abundant mercies You

have bestowed upon me?”

The power of the Saint's sigh and prayer opened the heavens, and before his eyes there appeared myriads of radiant Angels chanting the Great Angelic Doxology: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.”

A voice said to the Saint:

“You also, Eleazar, give thanks to your Fashioner and Creator with these words of glorification.”

And Staretz Nektary added with a sigh:

“Today's generation has ceased addressing prayers of thanksgiving to our Lord, and limits itself to addressing Him only with contant requests, like an ungrateful beggar.”



(*) *Holy Elders of Optina: St. Nektary* (Kalamos: Hieras Mones Osiou Symeon tou Neou Theologou, 2003), p. 304. Translated from the Greek.

→ Continued from page 5 • My Mother

been baptized unto Christ,” “Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,” the Troparion of Pentecost, and others. She prayed without ceasing: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner. Mother of our Lord, have mercy on me a sinner.” “O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy anger, nor chasten me in Thy wrath,” Psalm 50, and she repeated constantly: “Received, O Lord, those who come to Thee, and then receive me also...”

The day and night before Tuesday, she did not sleep at all, but prayed constantly in a whisper. She then said to Glykeria: “Do a proper Memorial Service for me with kollyva, prosphora, and flowers, and... impart to Father [Petroniu] the remission of my sins, for him to have as a token of remembrance from his mother...”



On Tuesday morning, July 4, when the first rays of sun streamed

through her bedroom window, she asked Glykeria for the candle, opened her eyes, and whispered: “Forgive me!” after which she turned on her side and fell asleep once and for all.

Her soul flew out of the earthen vessel of her body, which had undergone such sufferings and hardships. Her face was peaceful and a smile was on her lips.

* * *

She lived approximately eighty-seven years, thirty-nine of which with her husband and the remaining twenty-five as a widow. She was born on September 8, 1880, married in January of 1903, and died on July 4, 1967.

My father was born in 1873 and died on August 1, 1942.

(*) Elder Petroniu Tanase, *Icons of Meekness* (Ekdoseis: Orthodox Kypsele, 2004), pp. 95-101. • Translated here from the Greek.

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