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# Orthodox Canada



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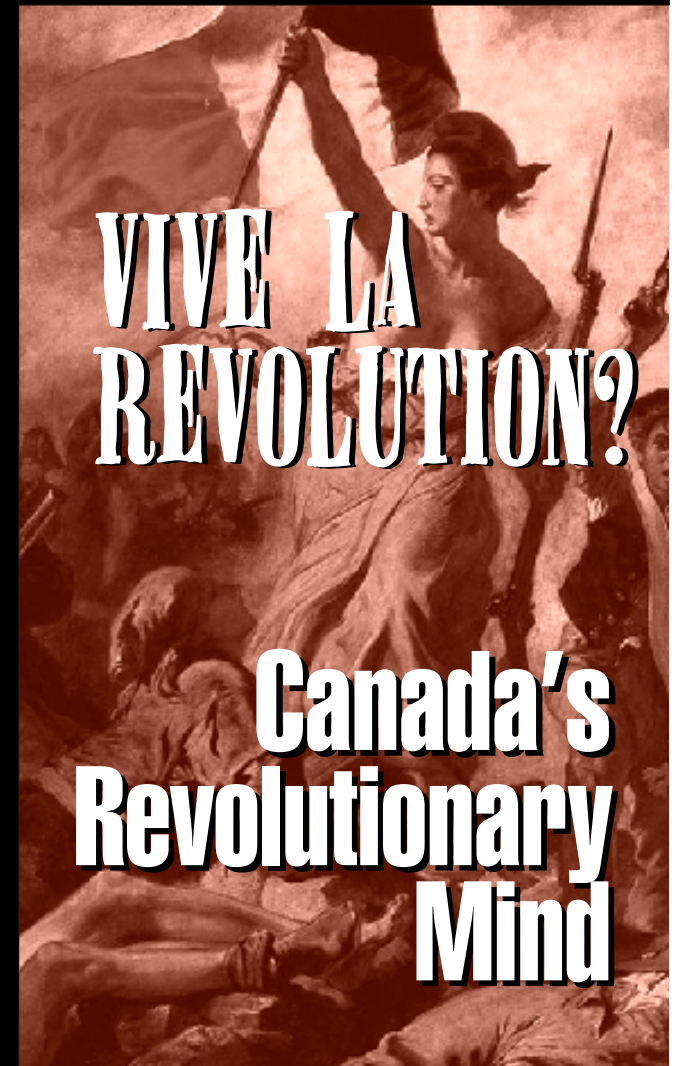
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*ORTHODOX CANADA is dedicated to sharing a traditional vision of Orthodox Christianity with Canadians. The opinions expressed in these articles are those of the author(s), and do not necessarily reflect those of the Archdiocese of Canada (OCA). Uncredited articles are the work of the editorial board.*

## FROM THE EDITOR

### *Revolutions, within and without*

A dear friend recently asked me if serving the Church in Canada was discouraging. It was a poignant question, and it forced a moment's thought to forge a fair and accurate answer.

It has always been tempting for Orthodox Christians to be swept into the whirlwind of the revolutions of world history. From the persecution of Rome, to the oppression of Islamic empires, to the cruel yoke of Communism, there has always been the pressure to keep up with various kinds of worldly progress, and for Orthodox Christians to capture the "*spirit of the times*".

The times in which we live are no exception. Materialism, financial gain, and comfort-seeking dominate our social landscape. Scientific and medical advances constantly press us to turn our minds to promises of some false utopia just around the corner. And in our zeal to share with the world the timeless Gospel of our timeless Lord Jesus Christ, it is easy to get swept up in this revolutionary mind, in a hopeless desire to "bridge the gap".

It is this same mind that fuelled every revolution in the history of the world, destabilizing societies, sweeping away the roots of faith and community. Such thinking is deeply contrary to the organic life of Orthodox Christian tradition; it is also fundamentally contrary to the Canadian tradition, as increasingly Americanized as we have often become.

Whether inside the Church, or in Canadian society in general, the revolutionary spirit is a fundamental challenge to who we are as Orthodox Christians. This challenge can often be discouraging. Yet Christ gives us the answer to this challenge: it is Himself, the Lord Who is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. In this issue, as we explore the question of the modern revolutionary mindset, may we bring ever to mind the Eternal Hope that answers the questions of this passing life.

*Father Geoffrey Korz+  
Managing Editor*

# LETTERS

## A Heartlifting Note

Thank you for continuing to send (Orthodox Canada). I read every word, and it truly lifts my heart and soul. Thank you for keeping (us) in your prayers.

S.T., Hamilton, Ontario

## On the Words of Heaven

We received your interesting newsletter, along with Orthodox Canada.

(Regarding the question of Bible translations), the English have a long history of messing up foreign languages; in all other tongues they say "Our Father who art in the **heavens**," (check your Greek), but later "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (singular there)... Remember in the book of Job, Satan was only able to speak to God in the top heaven. Does it say in the scriptures there are seven heavens...? Remember, saint Paul was caught up to the Third Heaven. Someday we'll ask him what they say there.

Dr. Edward Hartley,  
Surrey, British Columbia

*Editor's response: Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition both indeed speak of various layers in the heavens. While the Greek translation would support the use of the plural in English, two problems exist with this.*

*Firstly, the English language has its own inheritance, which goes back far beyond the King James Bible, all the way back to the usage of Orthodox Anglo Saxons. This early terminology influenced the liturgical life of our linguistic ancestors, who although falling outside the Byzantine-Russian sphere, were wholly Orthodox in their life and practice. To try to reconstruct and to "improve" such an inherited language is a bit too clever by half, and flies in the face of the mind of the Fathers of the Church, who are extremely hesitant to tamper with local uses, however different from those used in power centres of the Church.*

*Secondly, and perhaps more specifically, the term "heaven" derives from the Anglo Saxon word heofon, which literally refers to the strata of the clouds (much like the clouds on which the mythic Greek pagan gods dwelled on Mount Olympus). Thus in Middle and later English, a distinction was made between the heavens (the strata of the clouds), and Heaven, the dwelling place of God the Holy Trinity. Similar distinctions exist in other areas of the traditional English translation.*

*This is an important discussion, since it demonstrates the way in which an exact, literal translation from early languages of the Bible (such as Greek and Hebrew) can actually lose the intended meaning for those who read or listen in other languages. Saint Innocent and other great linguists realized this, and used language in the classical context of each given people, rejecting both everyday jargon, and word-for-word literalism.*

*In keeping with the mind of the Fathers, Orthodox translations capture as much as possible the poetic qualities of the literate local languages, in order to make clear the meaning using locally understood terms (not necessarily exact Greek or Hebrew translations), while still using a written language that rises above the fast-changing nature of day-to-day vocabulary. The King James Bible was never the spoken language of people, which is part of the reason it has endured, while other translations come and go.*



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## SAINT CLOTILDE VS. THE REVOLUTION *Authentic & Inauthentic Identity*

*“Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold,”*

- *The Second Coming*, William Butler Yeats

Recently, the unrelenting debate over Quebec nationalism and separatism took a new turn, as the sovereigntist forces in the province proposed legal measures that would enshrine Quebec identity in the provincial Charter of Rights. Such a question is in fact complex, since the inheritance of Francophone Quebec culture has many layers. Roman Catholicism ruled the French cultural mind for centuries, yet it has largely been abandoned by most Quebecers as a vital force in everyday life. The glory of the Bourbon kings, whose architecture and furnishings adorn the Quebec National Assembly, were similarly wiped away by the

revolutionary bloodshed of 1789, and the legacy of this chapter of French history has been largely lost on recent generations.

Not surprisingly, advocates of the revised Quebec Charter of Rights would embrace the ideals of the French Revolution, the goals of socialism, democracy, and above all, secularism. As the growing influence of Islam in the French-speaking world presents a fundamental challenge to French culture in Quebec and elsewhere, the jargon of the French Revolution provides a convenient, yet incomplete, response to the threats of fundamental change to francophone culture.

Yet for those who know the heart and soul of the French people, the true history of the francophone culture of Quebec did not begin with the Revolution of 1789. The enduring legacy of the francophone world cannot be reduced to the consequences of Paris street riots, the destruction and abandonment of churches, and the guillotine. The eternal and enduring value of French identity is not to be found in the principles of Robespierre, the Reign of Terror, or Gaullist nationalism. These are but a bigoted shadow of the soil that gave rise to the beautifying aspects of French culture, the forebears of French Canadian culture. Indeed, it is this very struggle between the false French identity and the true destiny of the French people which is alive today, which characterizes the history of the ancestors of today's French Canadians. It is through this inheritance that one can rediscover the eternal essence at the heart of French Christianity, which traces its path back to the Annunciation of the Lord Himself.

## SAINT CLOTILDE AND FRENCH ORTHODOXY

It is surprising - often unbelievable - for contemporary Quebec Catholics to discover the Orthodox Christian roots of their ancestors. Yet it is in the undivided Church of the first millennium that the French people received the Gospel of Christ, much in the same manner as the conversion of so many other peoples, by the direct revelation of God. Suffering from overwhelming losses in war in the year 496, the French pagan King Clovis turned in desperation to a God he did not know, the God worshipped by his Christian wife, Queen Clotilde. Like Saint Constantine the Great, Clovis vowed that if the “God of Clotilde” delivered him the victory, he would accept baptism, and reign as a



Christian king. The historian Saint Gregory of Tours relates that Clovis was granted the honour of consulship by the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I. It was King Clovis who established the capital of the Frankish kingdom at Paris, dedicating there a church in honour of the Holy Apostles\*.

At the baptism of King Clovis, Holy Tradition tells us that the Mother of God appeared to Saint Clotilde, presenting her with a lily (*fleur-de-lis*), the three-leaved flower which soon became the symbol of the Bourbon French house. King Clovis adopted three lilies on blue (the colour of the Mother of God) as his royal standard, replacing the three frogs which he had used previously - a noteworthy symbol of his rejection of paganism in favour of the Holy Trinity. The symbol is used to this day as an emblem of Quebec nationalism.

The early death of King Clovis left Saint Clotilde to live as a widow for nearly four decades. As her sons vied for control of the French lands, Clotilde retired to a monastery, asking the prayers of Saint Martin of Tours. Some historians see her monastic path as the foremost example of women's monasticism among the French. It was this example which led centuries later to the construction of the first extensive network of public hospitals and schools in Quebec, prototypes of the public health and education systems across Canada which continue to this day.

What was distinct about the unique contribution of Orthodox France to Canadian life can be found at the heart of many contemporary debates over the role of religion in public institutions. French monasticism, in the persons of Saints Martin and Clotilde, shaped numerous movements of Church hospitals which existed for the Christian service of those who had nothing with which to pay for their care. The debates over funding that contemporary health ministries face would have been alien to the French ancestors of public health, not just because most who served in



*Saint Clotilde prays at the tomb of Saint Martin of Tours.*

\* The Church of Rome did not split from the Orthodox Church until 1054, at which time many of its beliefs and doctrines began to change. From the conversion of King Clovis, up until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Church of the Frankish people would have held the same faith and doctrine as modern Orthodox Christians, and would have been in full communion with the whole Orthodox Christian world, as the honours bestowed upon King Clovis by the Byzantine Emperor suggest.

such hospitals were monastics, but because they were *Orthodox Christians*, deeply formed in the spiritual life, rather than formed by the consumerism that drives the secular hospital economy of our day.

A similar case can be made for Church-sponsored schools. The monastic milieu of French Christendom saw education as a primary means of shaping a Christian character, of building a right-believing adult from the ground up, with the skills to support the co-operative life of the Church. Mathematics, architecture, language, and the arts were put primarily at the service of the Church, and those who were blessed with wealth and power became patrons not simply of secular institutions that could bear their family name, but patrons of Church institutions that bear the names of Christ's saints. We see this in such early examples the martyrs Saint Hyacinth and Saint Justine, as well as the Mother of God, whose names grace Quebec institutions to this day. Certainly, the patronage of wealthy Christians has not always been altruistic, yet the environment one finds at the heart of Orthodoxy in France and its descendants in Quebec provided the authentic framework in which such human acts of charity were given the benefit of being *spiritual* labours, not simply random acts of personal choice or even self-promotion.

The radicalism that afflicted the heart of French Quebec culture in the 1960s tore deeply at the roots of this inheritance, secularizing hospitals and schools, and culturally turning a proverbial back on ascetic and monastic life as a vibrant force within Quebec culture. In the decades since the Quiet Revolution, the struggle for the heart of Quebecers has usually been reduced to arguments between secular capitalism and secular revolutionary socialism under the banner of Quebec nationalism. Both options are of course false constructs, cut off from the inheritance of Quebec's ancient Christian forebears. Yet in the villages of rural Quebec, in the hearts of her youth, and in the memories of her elderly, Quebec as a distinct society - for such it is - has not yet lost its chance to reconnect to its true roots, to discover the spiritual path of Saint Clotilde. It is in the life of this saint and benefactress of the Church and of French Christian culture in the ancient Church, that French Quebec can once again regain its *joie de vivre*, in the same Church that gave life to the civilization of her ancestors.

- *Father Geoffrey Korz+*





## MARRIAGE À LA MODE

*The number of unmarried people is increasing. And there are some married people who say: "We do not want children, because we want to have as much pleasure as possible." This is a false position, for in a Christian marriage one kind of pleasure is not allowed continually. Christians marry for the sake of God and His law as much as they do for themselves. But Christians who remain single renounce marriage and live holy for the sake of God and Him alone. Thus we find that the family tie is abused, as well as the single state. Courtship of young people just out of school is not to be advised, because it often leads to debauchery. A courtship running through long years also gives occasion to sin and a species of wrongdoing to God, for the heart and its love are stolen from God and thrown away on a man.*

- Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich,  
*Preaching in the Russian Church, 1899*

A 2007 Statistics Canada report revealed that for the first time since Confederation, more Canadian adults consider themselves to be single than to be married. To add to the trend, the number considering themselves "married" even included all those registering under civil

marriage laws as couples of the same sex, indicating that the trend away from marriage is stronger than ever before.

Undoubtedly, most Canadians can find in their own lives a significant number of young people of marriageable age who have no plans to undertake matrimony. Such young people either fear an early commitment, prefer to wait to see what possibilities present themselves in the future or - in an increasing number of instances - reject altogether the very concept of marriage.

One can hardly blame them. The secularization of marriage as a kind of legal contract at its very foundation cannot provide a promising picture to young people. A steadily rising Canadian divorce rate, coupled with the experience of family acrimony resulting from the mounting pressures of societal business and personal excess and selfishness have done little to prepare or encourage a younger generation of brides- and grooms-to-be to undertake the struggles involved in making a marriage successful, starting with making a marriage endure.

Considering the jaded experiences of the next generation in regard to marriage and family life, one should not be surprised at the impact of consumer culture on the approach to marriage itself. Historically, marriage was a communal activity, blessed by the family, by the individuals involved, by the community, and by the Church. Today, the coupling of young people is largely cut off from such guidance, leaving no reference point for the dynamic of courting, establishing intimacy, preparing for the future, struggling with the passions, or objectively choosing a spouse whose fidelity will endure.

Bereft of such examples and guidance, young people are often left with the only reference point given to them: the reference point of the consumer society. If the selection of a spouse can be compared to the selection of a car or a home, expectations are inevitably reduced to utilitarian concerns: appearance, cost vs. benefits, and the enjoyment derived from the shopping experience. Like the decline in brand loyalty that was the hallmark of consumer societies for many decades, the decline in spousal loyalty and commitment is a logical consequence. Hesitant to sign on for the lifetime ownership and responsibility of a spouse, many young people inevitably resort to a kind of "spouse leasing", either dating with sexual relations as a recreational option, or entering passing common law relationships without the grace and stability of marriage.

Orthodox Christians have traditionally provided the life raft to save societies in the midst of various dark ages. At times when human beings lose or abandon what remains of civilized human life, it is Christians who have usually offered the way back, out of the abyss. In our day, the erosion of marriage presents this kind of cataclysm. The death of family life and the civilizing effect of enduring marital loyalties presents yet another opportunity to offer counsel and direction to couples and young people planning for their future lives together. Yet this must go beyond the first step of offering some kind of courses for marriage preparation (a step which most Orthodox jurisdictions completely ignore); Orthodox families, grandparents, parents, friends, and priests must take an active interest in cultivating the building blocks of marriage from an early age. We must take on the task of inculcating modesty and limits of behaviour in our children, based on the examples of the saints, not celebrities. We must reestablish the bedroom as the sacred chamber of marriage, rather than as a forum for isolated social life and all it brings with it. We must teach teens the parameters of public and private conduct toward members of the opposite sex, and instill a sense of “smart shopping” for a spouse, that provides for at least as much caution and restraint as one would demonstrate in purchasing a car with hard-earned cash.

The last decade has seen an emerging trend of young people not marrying at all. This is often seen as a kind of accidental circumstance, resulting from the pressure to achieve a certain level of academic and financial success before settling down. Yet instinctively, many recognize in this the adolescent tendency to avoid commitment, on the off chance that someone better might come along. The growing fear of marriage and commitment reflects a deeper spiritual fear and unwillingness to enter into any arrangement that requires something of us. Countless parallels can be seen in the spiritual lives of individuals and parishes. The “grown-ups” who are willing to take on responsibility for the care of others are too often being replaced by lukewarm adherents afflicted by fickleness and guided by fluctuations of spirit between enthusiasm and boredom. The Church Fathers warn us in numerous places about this state, called in Greek *akkadia*. It is the very same spiritual state - emptiness and rootlessness of heart, coupled with boredom - which fuels both the consumer economy and the practice of unmarried serial polygamy.

The Scriptures and the saints teach us that marriage is a classroom for the soul, an environment of preparation for eternity. The Scriptures

themselves use marriage again and again as a symbol of Christ and the Church. Not only is such an analogy lost on a society that is increasingly drifting away from marriage and family life, but its fundamental role - the civilizing of the human soul, and bringing it to holiness - is lost in the sea of rampant individualism. Where sexual intimacy and marriage become temporary contracts - for a year, a month, or an hour - the stability of human relationships with God cannot be far behind. It should be no surprise to us in North America that the decline of marriage and the decline of religious and spiritual life proceed hand in hand. One is a visible image of the other.

Regrettably, many Orthodox communities have responded to this challenge in the same way as other religious groups across North America: with hand-wringing angst and frustrated silence. Yet the positive role of the Church is given to us throughout the Christian tradition. The role of families, parishes, and monasteries as meeting places for and coaching of courting and marital life is indispensable in combatting the sexual commercialism of our culture. Priests, monastics, and mature faithful everywhere should mindfully play a role in bringing together faithful young people who might be compatible for marriage. Even if they aren't meant to marry each other, they can support each other in the struggle to find a spouse. Young people should be taught from the earliest age to pray for a spouse; the Akathist to Saint Xenia of Petersburg is an ideal place to start. Parents must pray for their children in this vocation as well.

And most primarily, Orthodox clergy and adult family members must redouble our efforts to destroy the hold of consumer culture on our children. Consumerism is harmful enough to our lives, to our pocketbooks, and to our level of satisfaction and peace with that which we have. It is incalculably more destructive to our families when a spouse is reduced to a commodity, and sexual intimacy is reduced to a disposable purchase.

It is here that the line between marriage and fornication is blurred, and the Image and Likeness of Christ in each person is lost, and our hope, our peace, and our joys are lost with it.

Image of the painting *Marriage à la Mode*, by William Hogarth (1697-1764).







## A SEARCH FOR WHOLENESS

### *An Orthodox Response to Organ Donation and Retrieval*

#### PART 3: THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

*For if truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory why am I also still judged as a sinner? And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come?" (Rom 3:7-8)*

So far, we have dealt essentially with organ donation after brain death and heart-beating donations (HBD). More recently, there is a resurgence of interest and experimentation with retrieval of organs from patients after cardiocirculatory death. These individuals have also been termed non-heart beating donors (NHBD).<sup>4</sup> What is this process and why is there such an interest and urgency among health providers and lawmakers to promote and facilitate such a strategy?

Donation after cardiocirculatory death (DCD) is not a new concept. In fact, this practice was the standard practice of organ retrieval prior to the

establishment of NDD. These were the initial organs retrieved from individuals who met the traditional criteria of physical death involving the cessation of the heart and circulation. The Maastricht classification of donation after cardiocirculatory death, published in 1995 (amended in 2003 to include category V), outlines the different groups of NHBD.<sup>16</sup>

- I Brought in dead
- II Unsuccessful resuscitation
- III Awaiting cardiac arrest
- IV Cardiac arrest after brain-stem death
- V Cardiac arrest in a hospital inpatient

Only categories I and II are consistent with the historic definition of death. In categories IV and V, patients in addition to being maintained on life support, have had circulatory arrest at least once but restarted again after cardiopulmonary resuscitation. In regard to transplant and organ preservation, these four categories are termed uncontrolled donation after cardiac death, since warm ischemic time cannot be avoided or minimized. This is in contrast to patients from category III who allow for controlled donation after cardiac death.

Over the last decade, due to the profound discrepancy between the supply of vital organs and the demand from patients with end-organ failures, there has been a concerted and coordinated effort by the international transplant organizations to legitimize and make routine the harvesting of organs from category III individuals who have sustained a significant insult (such as a stroke or respiratory failure) and whose condition is deemed medically irreversible and/or terminal but do not meet the criteria for brain death.<sup>17</sup> These individuals are taken to the operating room before death, disconnected from life support (ventilators) and monitored until the heart finally stops beating, hence the description controlled). At this point, only two to five minutes are permitted for the establishing of the absence of spontaneous recovery before the patient is pronounced dead (hence cardiac death). While the body is still warm, the actual process of removing organs is permitted, forgoing the onerous task of establishing brain death since expediency governs the "success" of organ retrieval and preservation. In some centers, prior to cardiac death, certain interventions such as medications and sternotomy (incision from the neck to the abdomen) and vessel cannulation, may be permitted for the purposes of maximizing



organ viability by minimizing warm ischemic time. Of course, this practice violates the dead donor rule which holds that patients must be dead before organ retrieval proceeds and that the person's death must be neither caused nor hastened by retrieval.<sup>15</sup> (Up until 2007, the prosecution of the State of Ohio had filed homicide charges against physicians in Cleveland engaged in controlled cardiac death donations).

Furthermore, the cardiac death of patients cannot be predicted precisely. Beecher recognized this early in the field of transplant science. He wrote: "Dying is a continuous process: while death may occur at a discrete time, we are not able to pinpoint it." The University of Wisconsin had developed a tool to identify DCD individuals who would likely have a cardiac death within two hours after removal of life support. In their experience, about ten percent of identified potential DCD donors were returned to the unit or hospital floor for palliative care.<sup>4</sup>

The ungodly vigil of death during DCD donations is being played out increasingly in operating theatres throughout North America and Europe and shows the depravity of mankind's achievements. In the name of medical and intellectual progress, the process of organ retrieval for transplantation, seen by the world as a great "hope" for life, is, in fact, moral justification for a practice not dissimilar to carrion birds. At the very least, these beasts wait for the death of their prey and their animal subjects do not have immortal souls to reconcile with God. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit....Therefore by their fruits you will know them." (Matthew 7:18-20) This unnatural fight against decay and time is the hallmark of the worldly man, who has long forgotten God and strives for immortality at all costs. Christ spoke truly about this generation: "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 9:36-37)

## SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES OF DEATH

*But even though the devil should transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians. 11:14), or present thoughts which seem most good, the heart will feel a certain lack of clarity, an unrest in its thoughts and a confusion of feeling.*<sup>17</sup> - St. Seraphim of Sarov

The Orthodox do not subscribe to the common view that death is a normal or natural phenomenon. Man was not created to die. "The Church sees death as ultimately negative, the consequence of our ontological separation with God, the consequence of our sinful condition."<sup>18</sup> This consequence has a very real impact on the living. At a worldly level, for the health care workers directly involved in the procurement of organs from NDD or DCD individuals, there are psychological and emotion burdens which the advocates of organ donation try to minimize by focusing on the tremendous benefits to living organ recipients. At a minimum, most health care workers experience degrees of sadness and remorse. This is hopefully only transient and outwardly, related to sentimentality. However, there is a more harmful, lasting spiritual consequence of which the secular world, with all its rationalism and carnal intellect, has no knowledge. The mystical understanding of the consequence of participating in death, decay, corruption and sin can only be fully articulated by the Orthodox Church. It alone has preserved the science of the Fathers, which is not based on man-made ideology or theories, but is rooted in the authenticated knowledge and experience of the whole living church from the beginning of time.

The Church Fathers taught that we are made to account for every thought, word and deed. In our whole life we are constantly in a struggle to draw closer to God, Who is Light and Life, or to the Evil One who is Darkness and Death. St. Nikolai Velimirovic writes, "The main thing is that you know and measure how all your deeds, words, and thoughts unavoidably create an impression on all four sides: on God and the spiritual world, on nature, on man, and on your soul. If you train yourself in this knowledge, you will attain a high level of saving vigilance."<sup>19</sup> This vigilance refers to the watchfulness (*nepsis*) of the *nous*. The *nous* is the highest part of the soul, the part of our nature that is capable of true communion with the living God. Anything that darkens the *nous* can be compared to spiritual poison, which draws us further from God and leads eventually to spiritual death for our immortal soul. This is the meaning of Christ's statement: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light...(but) if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness." (Matthew 22-23). Involvement with death, in any form, whether voluntarily or involuntarily darkens the *nous*. Priests are not

permitted to be undertakers since “what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

The modern approach to transplant and organ donation is a tangible battle of man against the laws of nature. From the moment when a patient is diagnosed with irreversible illness the role of the physician (whether as the intensive care physician or anesthesiologist) fights a desperate battle against demise of the vital organs such as the heart, lungs, kidneys and liver. The ensuing decay and corruption is part of the process of death, but it is not death itself. The idea that science and medicine can prolong indefinitely the life of the body by mechanical life support is simply false and ridiculous. Why else is there such urgency for live donor and cardiac death donations? This propaganda is offered to make organ donation more attractive, insisting that death has truly occurred but through marvellous medical progress, the organs can still be salvaged and made to function. Modern man emphasizes illness and death of the physical body (sometimes of the carnal mind). In his quest to be rational, mankind has become the most irrational and foolish of all beasts fearing the one who could kill the body but not the soul, and giving no heed to Him who, “after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (Luke 12:5)

## WHAT CAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS DO?

*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)*

There are several simple but essential steps Orthodox Christians must take in confronting the question of organ transplants:

1. As Orthodox faithful, we must pray that the world may see the one true great hope that is here and is to come in Christ’s Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, and that Orthodox faithful would be granted the faith to live according to God’s command, striving to be vessels of holiness and purity in preserving the integrity of the human body. As the Apostle Paul writes: “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.” (1Thessalonians 4:13)

2. Learn more about the Orthodox faith through reading the Sacred Scriptures and texts on the Sacred Tradition and the lives of the Saints. Speak to your spiritual father or mother, confessor, or priest, regarding the issues brought up in the article, to ask for their direction before giving consent to organ donation for yourself or, by proxy, for any loved one, bringing to mind the litany offered at every Orthodox service: “A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful and a good defence before the dread judgment seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord. Grant this, O Lord.”

3. If you are in the difficult position, as an employee or administrator, whereby involvement in some part of the process or promotion of organ retrieval is required, at least speak about it to an Orthodox spiritual guide. Pray that in God’s Mercy, He will grant deliverance from such a duty. Ideally, Orthodox Christians should refrain from participation in any way. In addition, offer fervent prayer, and attend the Orthodox funeral services and memorial prayers for the departed.

4. Be a witness to others – especially to Orthodox brothers and sisters who are unfamiliar with the realities of organ donation – to inform them about this issue in a firm and loving way with “meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” (1 Peter. 3:15-17)

4 National recommendations for donation after cardiocirculatory death in Canada. CMAJ 2006; 175(8): Supplemental S1-24.

15 Robert D. Truog et al. Role of brain death and the dead-donor rule in the ethics of organ transplant. Crit Care med 2003; 31(9) 2381-6.

16 Peter L. Abt et al. Donation after Cardiac Death in the US: History and Use. Journal of the American College of Surgeons 2006; 203(2): 208-225.

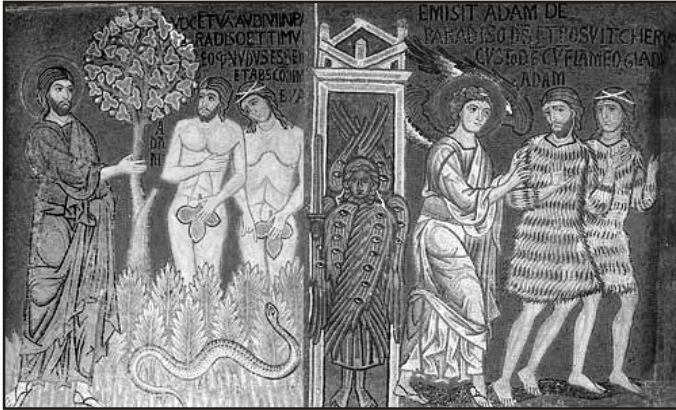
17 Constantine Cavaros and Mary-Barbara Zeldin, Modern Orthodox Saints 5: St. Seraphim of Saro. Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Massachusetts, 1993.

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# “INDEPENDENT” ORTHODOX LIFE

## *Spiritual Delusion and Our Times*

*For the saints, every human sin has a history as long as the distance from Adam to us.*

- Saint Nikolai Velimirovic  
Prologue of Ochrid, February 4

Soon after Christianity became a legal religion in the Roman Empire in the fourth century, a remarkable reaction occurred. Up until that time, to be a Christian meant almost certain death. Once the Faith became legal (and soon after, the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire), Christian citizenship meant rewards, comfort, and all the struggles that come with life in a congregation of various kinds of people - some faithful, some lukewarm, and some who cared little about the Faith.

Centuries ago, the reaction to problems in parish life often took the form of monasticism: an individual would travel out into the wilds, abandoning the comforts of home and family, and live out their lives in strictness and prayer. This was a strong antidote to comfortable life in the city, yet it was not for everyone, and most faithful who were not called to the monastic life and its order and obedience, continued to carry on the struggle of Christian life in the world.

In the last number of years, Church scandals and disputes in parish life, coupled with a sense that many parishes have become spiritually dry or empty, have inspired a new reaction: a movement to a kind of “independent” Orthodox Christianity. Such a movement is not a monastic movement, since it lacks the order and obedience of day-to-day life in a monastery. This trend is also not related to the simple, ascetical life that every Christian is called to live out in their own parish community.

This individualistic tendency is of course rooted in the Fall: it is the ever-present temptation to live and find our fulfillment apart from God. It can be seen in the Roman Catholic concept of the power of the papacy, in Protestant individualism, and in the temptation for every Orthodox Christian to find their way in the spiritual life using their own distorted sense of what is a holy life, without the divine illumination given through ongoing spiritual guidance and relationships with others in the Church.

Monastic life and ascetic life in the world both grew out of the authentic experience of the Church: the examples of lives of holy people, repeated again and again, over place and time. Both roads are authentic paths of the Orthodox Christian life because they are tested by time, confirmed by the experience of others within the Church, and not apart from Her.

The movement toward “independent” Orthodox living is very different. Influenced by modern niche marketing, suburban isolation, and the consumer culture, “independent” Orthodox Christianity carries all the marks of an Orthodox Christian life on the outside - prayer, fasting, icons, right beliefs and “correct” actions, and vocabulary. Yet the interior disposition of the heart tells a very different story. While the symptoms may differ between individuals, as we shall discuss below, one common spiritual sickness can be seen, and this is the desire for a self-directed spiritual life, based on personal interests and affections.

Several varieties of the “independent” Orthodox Christian life have made themselves known in our time:

**Parish Shoppers** - In this variety of the “independent” Christian life, individuals will embark upon a perpetual search for the ideal parish. Such individuals will often have a set of criteria for finding the “right” parish - or at least a parish that is “right” for them. Such persons will often not be attached to a regular confessor or spiritual father. Typically, one will identify within a few months (or sometimes weeks or even

hours or minutes) the weaknesses of a particular parish: liturgical qualities (the way the priest serves, the music, and especially the conduct of other people), theological focus (emphasis of sermons, selection of literature in the parish bookstore), or personal qualities (qualities of the priest, the behaviour of people at coffee hour, the parish executive, volunteers, etc.)

The thing that distinguishes a parish shopper from other Orthodox Christians is not simply the presence of these qualities, which are struggles for most people, but the fact that these characteristics take over the spiritual life, driving them from one parish to another, often in rapid succession.

**Nonattending Supporters** - This affliction often affects individuals with good and upright intentions, but who for various reasons have intense pressures on their personal and family time. Conscious of the need to attend to spiritual responsibilities, there is a temptation for those with this spiritual affliction to reduce the Orthodox Christian life to two essentials: pay and pray. With little regular contact with parish life, the person may try to support the work of the Church through donations, and may even try to live out their prayer life each day. With no access to Holy Mysteries, however, the life of such an individual is not safeguarded from the everyday effects of life in the world. Spiritual growth becomes impossible. If the individual tries to undertake a route of spiritual development on their own, the pressures of time, family, work or recreation quickly take over and disrupt their efforts, since they are without a solid foundation or any external guidance.

People who become non-attending supporters rarely deny their faith, and may continue to attend irregularly for many years. They often have a very positive opinion of the Church, their local parish, the priest, and people in their local Orthodox community. Yet it is this comfort level which can lull them into a certain complacency, developing in them a sense that the spiritual life can be led by proxy and at a distance. If and when a crisis arises and they turn to the Church for help, it can become very difficult for them to make any progress in spiritual healing, since they are used to a casual approach to the Christian life, and think that this should be enough to help, even in a crisis. Those who in a crisis do make a shift out this habit can often fall into one of the other spiritual sicknesses.

**Unattached Pilgrims** - Individuals who are afflicted with this spiritual condition often seek out “holy” places or “holy” people, to the exclusion

of anything else in the Orthodox life. This search may be fuelled by the holy examples of lives of saints, and those who seek them may have strong expectations to find such examples of holiness in daily life in parishes or monasteries. When few examples of living holiness are found (as is inevitably the case in the fallen world), the search is rarely abandoned, but rather intensifies. On a certain level, this is a right and proper thing; taken exclusively, it can grow into a spiritual affliction.

As a result of this condition, such an individual may never put down roots in a parish, and would never have to deal with ongoing relations with other people. Such a situation places no demands of Christian love on the affected person, and allows no development of Christian maturity. The individual thereby remains forever immature in Christ. In some cases, individuals with this affliction can ultimately become so frustrated that they abandon their faith altogether, or even apostatize. This condition can sometimes combine with other varieties of afflictions to produce more complicated effects, deepening the resulting delusion.

**Church Connoisseurs** - People who affected with this spiritual delusion usually have a positive approach to life in the Church, but this rarely goes beyond a surface level. Enamoured with icons, beautiful worship services, the smell of incense, correct doctrines and poetic prayers, the experience of the spiritual life becomes much more prominent than its content; the five senses take precedence over the spiritual heart. Often those with this mindset will perpetually visit an Orthodox Church, but will never become Orthodox Christians, although sometimes if they do convert, they will continue to focus on external things. Their contribution to the common life of other people within a parish community will often be minimal, since their focus inevitably becomes limited entirely to abstract concerns, making an authentic life of love and commitment to other people quite secondary.

**Isolated Urban Ascetics** - Faithful with this tendency often keep their keen and intense faith a secret from most people, even those within the Church. A regular life in a parish is often rejected as spiritually second-rate, and a search begins for a kind of spiritual intensity that meets the arbitrary standard of the individual. The satisfaction of this search may come partly from pilgrimages to monasteries, or from a relationship to a spiritual father; where these spiritual supports deepen the life of the individual, and encourage the complete living out of the spiritual life with other faithful in a larger Orthodox community, such a search can have healthy results. Yet in certain cases, pilgrimages and contact with



the spiritual father or confessor can become infrequent, and a relationship with a local parish does not develop. Caught in a kind of spiritual limbo and isolation, the individual has neither the supports of life in a monastery, nor the corrective influences of community life. Such cases often give rise to an individually crafted spiritual life, based on undirected spiritual readings, infrequent or non-existent spiritual direction, limited catechism, and a religious emphasis rooted in personal preferences. One may become completely disengaged from parish life, since most parishes are not made up of faithful who are so spiritually intense. Parishes in which a comprehensive spiritual life of prayer, fasting, Confession and Communion are discouraged or ridiculed only deepen this estrangement from the parish. The urban ascetic may find a virtual community of faithful in other places, often at a distance (such as Internet discussion groups), which preclude more authentic spiritual support, and lack concrete, living examples of normal spiritual life.

Each of these spiritual afflictions - which undoubtedly affect each one of us at some time in our life - is complicated by the fact that they are easily mistaken for an authentic spiritual life. Outwardly, each of them bears certain qualities of a faithful life: generosity, zeal, or a search for truth and holiness. Unlike outward heresy or apostasy (which are obvious in their errors), the "independent" Orthodox Christian life appears to many people, including those afflicted by it, to be a faithful path. Each of the varieties lacks the life-saving qualities of external spiritual direction (a spiritual father or confessor) and humility - the critical quality of self-examination, and an openness to the possibility that each of us can be, and often is, misguided, wrong, or deluded.

It is in this that the "independent" Orthodox life is so dangerous. While contemporary culture affirms whatever passing fancy we may entertain, the authentic Christian life calls us to do the opposite: to submit our own delusions to the scrutiny of the whole Church, those living and those with Christ, in order to develop spiritual health, and in order to spiritually mature. It is against this self-reliance that we are warned time and time again by the saints of the Church. The spiritual father and life in the parish require us to live life beyond the limits of our own deluded minds, saving us from the temptations of an unexamined life, and ultimately saving us from ourselves.

- *Father Geoffrey Korz+*



## ON THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

*A Sermon by Our Righteous Father  
Sebastian Dabovich*

SAN FRANCISCO, 1899

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said: Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven (ACTS 1:10, 11). The "two men in white apparel," who immediately after the ascension of the Lord appeared to the Apostles and asked them why they stood gazing up into heaven, were without doubt themselves inhabitants of heaven; therefore it is not to be supposed that this was displeasing to them, or that they desired to direct the gaze of those men of Galilee elsewhere. No. They desired only to put an end to the inert amazement of the Apostles when saying: Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? Having aroused them from their amazement, they draw them into meditation, and teach them and us with what thoughts we should gaze into heaven,

following our Lord Jesus who hath ascended thither. This same Jesus, they added, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

The disciples of the Savior then beheld the exact fulfilment of His words which Mary Magdalene had recounted to them: I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. They could not but conclude that those joyful visitations which He had bestowed upon them during the forty days after His resurrection from the dead, those instructive conversations with Him, that palpable communion between them and His divine humanity, were at that moment ended. When neither hand nor voice could any longer reach Him, they followed Him with their eyes, eager to detain Him; they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up. We can conceive what an immeasurable bereavement the Apostles must have felt after the ascension into heaven of Jesus, who was all and everything in the world to them; and it is this very bereavement for which the heavenly powers hasten to console them when telling them that this same Jesus . . . shall come.

In considering the circumstances of the ascension of Christ into heaven, we may first note the blessing which He then gave to the Apostles, and it come to pass, says the Evangelist Luke, while He blessed them He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. What an endless current of the grace of Christ is thus revealed unto us, Christians! The Lord begins a blessing, and before its completion ascends into heaven; for while He blessed them He was carried up into heaven. Thus even after His ascension does He still continue invisibly to impart His blessing. It flows and descends continuously upon the Apostles; through them it is diffused upon those whom they bless in the name of Jesus Christ; those who have received the blessing of Christ through the Apostles spread it among others; and thus do all who belong to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church become partakers of the one blessing of Christ. As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountain of Zion, so does this blessing of peace descend upon every soul that riseth above passions and lusts, above vanity and the cares of the world; as an indelible seal does it stamp those who are of Christ in such a manner that at the end of the world He will by this very sign call them forth from the midst of all mankind, saying, Come ye blessed!

And now, my brethren, let us consider how needful it is for us to endeavor to gain now and to preserve this blessing of the Ascended Lord, which descends upon us also through the Apostolic Church. If we

have received and preserved it, we shall, at the future advent of Jesus Christ, be called together with the Apostles and the saints to participate in His kingdom: Come ye blessed! But if, when He shall call the blessed of His Father, this blessing either be not found in us, or we be found in possession only of the false blessing of men who themselves have not inherited the blessing of the Heavenly Father by grace and in the sacraments, then what will become of us? Yea, I say, let us consider this vital point before the opportunity be taken away.

The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night. From this same unexpectedness of His second coming our Lord Himself draws for us Christians a saving warning: Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Do not be led away by curiosity or credulity, and beware of such ones who pretend to know more than Christ hath granted them to know. Let us endeavor rather to know what failings we have, to number our transgressions, and to seek a limit to them in repentance. Let us take heed lest the children of this world and our own passions lull our spirits into sleep, till the approach of that longed for, yet dreadful hour: When the Lord come.

The blessing of the Lord come upon you by His grace and love towards man, always, now, and ever and unto the ages of the ages.

Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich was the first North American born Orthodox priest, serving in Canada and the United States. His relics were recently translated to his home parish in California, where many faithful attended in anticipation of his glorification as the most recently revealed saint of North America. This sermon was taken from *Lectures and Sermons by a Priest of the Holy Orthodox Church*, by Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich, Cubery and Company, Publishers, San Francisco CA, 1899, pages: 148-152.





## THE KOSOVO LESSON

### *Separatism and the Foundation of Holiness*

No conscientious Orthodox Christian could help but be struck by the tragic declaration of independence by the Serbian region of Kosovo & Metohia earlier this year. The region, cradle of Serbian Orthodox spiritual and monastic life, was within hours recognized - in violation of International Law - by a number of major world powers, including the United States and Britain, setting the stage for the growth of another Islamic nation within continental Europe (the first were the new Albania and Bosnia & Herzegovina).

While the declaration supports the short-term political interests of certain western nations concerned with the growth of Russia and her Orthodox allies, it was grossly naive in its long-term security goals. With Albanian separatist groups in Kosovo & Metohia benefiting from long-standing involvement with international drug smuggling and human trafficking, and from close and supportive ties with Islamic terrorist groups, it is only a matter of time before Kosovo becomes synonymous with western political regrets. Just as the west regretted their support of the Taliban against Russian Communists, so too will Kosovo's name reach the list of Biggest Miscalculations the West Has Ever Made.

On a certain level, politics is politics. Yet on a human level, the crushing blow to the Serbian people, both inside and outside Serbia, speaks volumes. Protesters - both Serbs and non-Serbs - have turned out by the thousands to speak out against the wilful destruction of Orthodox holy places in the Kosovo & Metohia heartland, crimes which have taken place over the last decade with the tacit support of western powers. The dynamiting of churches, the defacing of holy icons with Islamic slogans, and the trampling of holy relics has occurred time and time again, while the pretend Christianity of western nations carries on in purposeful obliviousness.

The Canadian government had initially been deafening in its silence over the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo & Metohia. While some might have mistakenly inferred that the Canadian government is sympathetic to the Serbian people, the reality of their position can be found much closer to home, in the province of Quebec, where the fires of the Quebec separatist movement will undoubtedly play a major part in determining the outcome of Canada's next election. The political parallels between Quebec and Kosovo & Metohia are obvious: a distinct regional geography, a unique regional history and - at least in recent years - a population whose culture, language, and religion are different from the rest of the citizens of their country. Yet in a matter of weeks, even Canada bowed to international pressure and supported plans of the Islamic separatists, naively undertaking a self-inflicted political wound which may take decades to be fully understood by the Canadian public.

Those who deny any possible similarity between the situations in Canada and Serbia are either uninformed or naive. Those who say "Canada isn't Serbia, and Kosovo isn't Quebec" are either in serious denial about the superiority of Canada as a nation, or of how thick the veneer of civilization is on Canadians themselves. One must recall the crisis at Oka, Quebec, where fundamentally different views of nationhood propelled groups of armed Canadians to face each other. The situation has been repeated as recently as last year in Caledonia, Ontario, where native groups claim three counties of urbanized population as the rightful property of their native nation. Where the thin line between good and evil, between violence and the rule of law, runs through the centre of the human heart, Canadians would be wise to learn from the precedent of history.

Those nations which like Russia and other majority Orthodox populations understand the “independence” of Kosovo & Metohia as the loss of a Christian nation and the creation of an Islamic one, reflect the sympathies of Orthodox Christians the world over for the ongoing plight of the Serbs. The severing of Kosovo & Metohia is not merely the loss of real estate which has cut to the heart of the Serbian people, but rather the loss of something holy. As one Serbian friend opined, “I wouldn’t mind it all so much if we could only transplant the monasteries, the relics, the saints - everything that makes Kosovo what it is today.” But of course, we can’t - can we?

Nationalism aside, it is the inheritance of Orthodox Christianity that has made Serbia a great nation - even a holy nation. Saint Sava and his inheritors infused this converted nation with a love for Christ that cut through every aspect of its cultural life: its symbols, its spiritual life, its literature, and its Orthodox monarchy. Nationalism aside, it is the inheritance of Orthodox Christianity that has made Serbia a great nation - even a holy nation. Saint Sava and his inheritors infused this converted nation with a love for Christ that cut through every aspect of its cultural life: its symbols, its spiritual life, its literature, and its Orthodox monarchy. Even the name of the region of Kosovo and Metohia refers to its identity as land set apart for the Church (thus the use of the term metochion is used for any land given to the spiritual use of the Church, from which the name Metohia is derived). Over the centuries, various aspects of this inheritance have been set aside by, lost, or torn away from the Serbian people. Each time, tragic consequences have followed, from the suffering of Orthodox Serbs under the Turks, to the Communist regime, to the Croatian fascists, yet each time, it was through their suffering that the Serbian people have recovered not nationalism, but the essentials of their own identity: the Orthodox Christian faith.

One has no doubt that this will be the case once again in the instance of the Kosovo affair. In the mean time, the Serbian diaspora is presented with an opportunity: that is the chance to rediscover their Orthodox roots and the fullness of the Christian life, and to share it with the world. This is exactly the spirit of Saint Sava, who gave Serbs their national identity. It is the same spirit carried by generations of faithful Serbian Orthodox saints, from Saint John Maximovitch to Saint Nikolai Velimirovich, who laboured tirelessly to share their faith not simply with their own people, but with the world.

The destiny of Serbs as an Orthodox people is an outward-looking destiny, if they continue to accept this call from God. Like the Christians of old, the Serbian people know persecution firsthand. Like the lost tribes of Israel, they know today what it means to lose the altar table at the heart of their sacred homeland, and further what it means to be scattered across the face of the earth. And like ancient Israel, many have yet to discover that in this very suffering and exile, the Serbs as an Orthodox nation carry with them the salvation of the world: the Messiah who comes to save all nations, the Good News that must be shared.

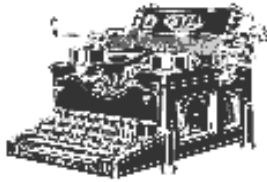
Today may well be the time for Serbian faithful to mourn the externally-imposed divisions of their homeland; all Orthodox Christians should mourn with them, and should stand with the Serbian people to undo the damage that has been done. Yet the time for mourning and the time for political confrontation must also give way to the higher task of carrying the Orthodox Faith to the world. It is this Christian inheritance which makes Kosovo & Metohia a holy place, not simply an ethnic enclave with nationalist aspirations. And it is this spiritual life that can be carried beyond the borders of the Serbian land, however those borders may be drawn by foreign armies and politicians.

The question for each faithful Serb - and for every faithful Orthodox Christian - is when and how to begin the mission.

- *Father Geoffrey Korz+*







## POETRY

### *When Peter did deny and thrice did say*

When Peter did deny and thrice did say  
That he Thyself knew not, though he had seen  
And known Thy love, an arrow sure and keen,  
And all Thy pure and glorious array  
Which on the mountain shone more bright than day,  
Was this the greater sin than that which green  
and jealous Judas, giving way to spleen,  
Did do, when he for coins did Thee betray?

What matters it which sin is larger writ,  
Or which, in lines of darker red is drawn  
Upon the pages of eternity?

For Judas, all confounded in his wit,  
Did sink beneath his sin, but at the dawn,  
The fallen Peter came with tears to Thee.

- Sara Hillis



## THE CHURCH KITCHEN

### MINISTRONE SOUP

*(Serves 6)*

#### *Ingredients*

3 carrots      2 leeks  
2 cloves garlic finely sliced  
1 tbsp chopped fresh rosemary  
5 ribs celery      2 red onions  
3 cups vegetable stock      1 tbsp olive or vegetable oil  
3 handfuls fresh basil, torn  
1 cabbage      6 oz pasta  
2 x 14 oz cans of tomatoes (drained) *or* 10 plum tomatoes  
parmesan or vegan parmesan cheese (grated )

Chop and peel veggies to a common size (around a ¼ inch diced). Heat olive oil in a thick bottom pan and add carrots, leeks, celery, onion, garlic, rosemary. Heat at a medium temperature until tender. Add tomatoes. Cook for 1-2 minutes. Add vegetable stock, bring to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes, skimming if necessary. Add cabbage, cover pan and simmer for 10 minutes. Add basil and pasta. Simmer for 5 minutes or more, taste and season. The soup should be quick thick full of flavour and the cabbage shouldn't be overcooked – you want to retain the deep colour. Serve with some fresh ground pepper or peppered oil olive if you can find it and fresh parmesan cheese.

- Laurentia Woods



## NORTHERN NOMENCLATURE

### SHEILA'S BRUSH (n.)

The Orthodox Christian practice of noting dates based on feast days, rather than month name and numerical date, has countless precedents in Canadian life. A Sheila's Brush is an expression sometimes used in Newfoundland to refer to the last big storm of winter, accompanied by high winds around Saint Patrick's Day. It generally followed a spell of reasonably good weather.

If the storm happened around the feast of Saint Patrick, it was referred to as Sheila's Brush, based on a Celtic legend that a relative of Saint Patrick was named Sheila (either his wife, sister, or mother, depending upon the source), and that the snow was somehow a result of her sweeping. If the storm came before Saint Patrick's day, it was known as a Patrick and Sheila, and suggested that a bad spring would follow.

Since such a storm could always be expected, many Newfoundland fishermen would not venture out on the ice hunting seals (a major food resource) until this last storm had come and gone.

Taken from the *Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador* by Ron Young, published 2006 by Downhome Publishing, Saint John's NL, p. 194.



## Q & A *Questions from Readers*

**I have a question about giving blood. I just made an appointment to give blood tomorrow, but I also just took communion today. Is this going to be a problem?**

- J.J., Paris ON

*A good question. The general rule: don't give blood on the same day you receive Communion (wait at least 9-12 hours, if you are looking to pin in down).*

*The principle is the same as cases of bleeding: since the Lord's Body and Blood become part of us, we endeavour as much as possible to maintain our physical integrity and wholeness, as far as possible, after receiving Communion. Blood is life. Traditionally, this means those who are losing blood (whether women during their monthly cycle, or priests like me who suffer from periodic nosebleeds), hold off on Communion.*

*In cases where the act of you giving blood would be for the sake of immediately saving the life of someone in an emergency situation, by all means do it.*

**I wanted to ask your guidance for the upcoming period of fasting during Great Lent. I am currently being treated for a medical condition. Compliance with the goals of the treatment include eating as**

**directed by the Canada food guide for ones age and gender, as well as not restricting any foods(3 meals plus 3 snacks each and every day). I was hoping you might have some guidance on how I can maintain the spirit of the fast if I am not able to keep it in the exact law?**

- D.R., Cambridge ON

*This is an excellent question. The principles of the fast are all directed toward supporting our spiritual struggle, to strengthening our will, and to taming our passions. Thus, the experience of the Church combines a variety of things to achieve these goals: fasting, prayer, prostrations, abstinence within marriage, quietness of life, and more frequent attendance at services.*

*Because the Church does not give us a law, but rather a path to follow, variation can and does exist in the way in which the fast is followed. For example, pregnant and nursing women do not follow the fast from foods; people with medical considerations must also modify, sometimes even set aside, the fast from food. I know a diabetic cleric who must eat something before serving the Liturgy for example; the food is his medicine. If he doesn't have something, he'll collapse.*

*In your case, I would encourage you to observe the fast as it pertains to alcohol (i.e.*

no alcohol), and to follow your medical diet. If you are able to avoid meat during Holy Week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, and/or for the whole fast (i.e. if there are substitutes recommended in your diet), do so, but don't try anything beyond this in terms of food. If no substitutes are offered, simply follow your diet, meat and all.

Instead of the food fast, you might offer some additional daily prayers, such as 100 Jesus Prayers, or reading a daily Akathist service, or something like that. This serves to supplement the spiritual benefits which would otherwise be gained from fasting from food. You would also be able to benefit from what one might call the "entertainment fast" - the reduction or elimination of parties, theatre, DVDs, and television during the fast. This is based on the ancient Christian tradition that we set ourselves aside from such things for a time during the season of Great Lent. It has wonderful benefits. However you approach it, be sure to set a reachable goal, something which can be sustained for the whole of the fast.

#### **How does (and doesn't) the North American Orthodox Church interact with the Patriarch of Moscow?**

- E.A., Fergus, Ontario

Orthodox jurisdictions (under local bishops in each area) hold the same beliefs, teaching, and worship. We are in Communion with each other (i.e. our clergy can serve together whenever we might be in another place, with the blessing of the bishop). There may be various meetings, conferences, and statements by groups of Orthodox leaders. Each local Church is self-governed by a synod (council) of bishops, who oversee the good order of the Church there. Specifically, each land properly has the Church as it expressed in its fullness in its own land: the Church in Greece, the Church in Russia, the Church in Georgia, the Church in North America, etc. Our jurisdiction here (the Orthodox Church in America or OCA) is historically connected to

its Russian roots, but is practically speaking only Russian on a liturgical level, rather than a cultural one, in many cases..

#### **I am an Orthodox Christian, and may have an opportunity to work at a private school run by the Christian Reformed denomination. Is this allowed?**

- K.D., Hamilton, Ontario

With an increasing number of issues presenting themselves for those who would teach or learn in state-run schools, it is not surprising that Orthodox teachers would seek employment elsewhere.

The Christian Reformed group generally presents a solid moral, family-supportive tone in their schools, and in this respect, if they would have you as a teacher, you would likely feel quite comfortable teaching there. When it comes to doctrinal questions, a teacher can simply say, "This is the Christian Reformed belief," while still being clear about the fact that you are an Orthodox Christian. In most cases, such questions rarely arise.

The real question will likely arise before you even enter the classroom. To work in many independent religious schools, a teacher must sign a statement of faith, drafted by the school governors. In many cases, this will be at variance with the Orthodox Faith. You should ask for a copy of the document, and share it with a priest for his feedback before agreeing to sign anything. One would never of course sign anything that is in conflict with Orthodox Christian truth, for which the Lord died, and the martyrs suffered.

In some cases, it will be possible to sign a declaration, if it contains statements of faith in Christ, His Resurrection, the reality of the Holy Trinity, etc. In other cases, especially where certain sectarian doctrines are in question, it would simply not be possible.

May God grant you wisdom.

