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ARTICLES

The First Known
Christian Martyr in
the Americas

Bigamy in Beautiful
British Columbia

The Next Battle
Over Marriage

Why Slava Matters:
*The Enduring
Importance of
Patron Saints*

The Temptation
of Sunday

A Day in the Life:
*Practical Tips for
Christianizing the
Work Day*

AROUND THE
CHURCH IN TWENTY
WORDS

POETRY

NORTHERN
NOMENCLATURE

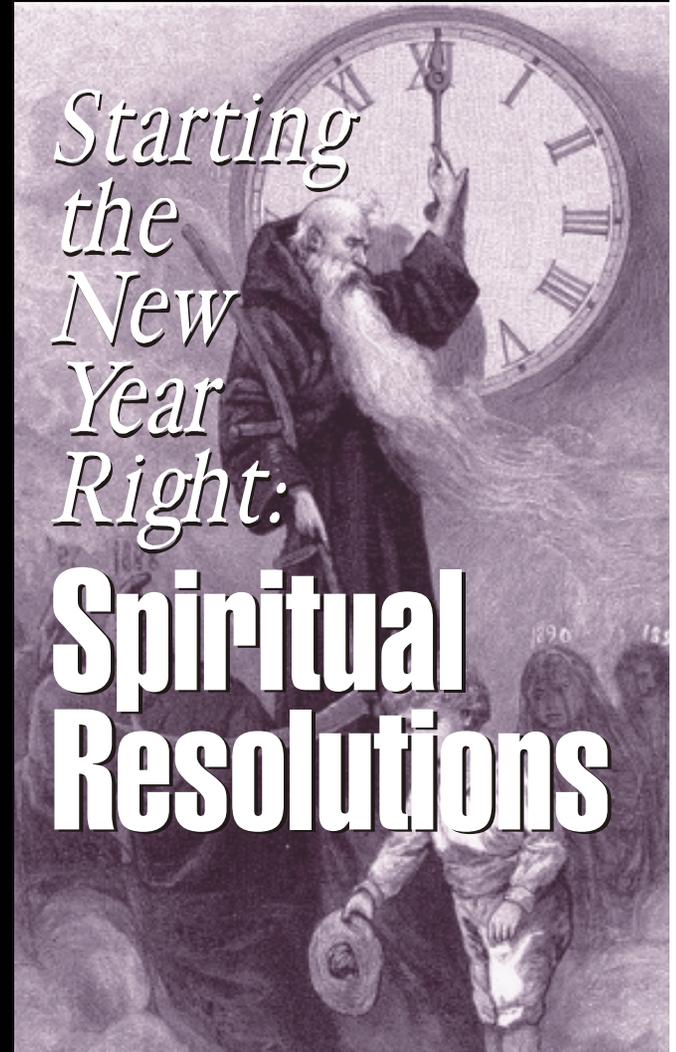
Q & A: QUESTIONS
FROM READERS

Mannerly Resolutions

Sign of the Times

*Starting
the
New
Year
Right:*

**Spiritual
Resolutions**



CONTENTS

- 2 FROM THE EDITOR:
Looking for Hope in All the Wrong Places
- 4 THE FIRST KNOWN CHRISTIAN MARTYR
IN THE AMERICAS
- 6 BIGAMY IN BOUNTIFUL BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Next Battle Over Marriage
- 9 WHY SLAVA MATTERS
The Enduring Importance of Patron Saints
- 13 THE TEMPTATION OF SUNDAY
- 17 A DAY IN THE LIFE
Practical Tips for Christianizing the Work Day
- 21 AROUND THE CHURCH IN TWENTY WORDS
Hellenic Help for the Hagiographically Handicapped
- 24 POETRY: *To Be Thy Servant, Lord, Is What I Seek*
- 25 NORTHERN NOMENCLATURE: *First Footing*
- 27 Q & A: QUESTIONS FROM READERS
- 29 MANNERLY RESOLUTIONS
- 31 SIGN OF THE TIMES

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FROM THE EDITOR

Looking for Hope in All the Wrong Places

“My strength is made perfect in weakness,”

– 1 Corinthians 12:9

As we begin a new year, we once again find ourselves confronted by a whirlwind of hopes for a better years ahead. Sometimes these hopes are for the world at large. Often, they are intensely personal, focussing on our individual capacity to lose weight, to save money, or to make it to appointments on time. Sometimes, these resolutions are achieved; often, they are not.

Facing the start of 2009, there is what might be called a deficit of hope. Westerners, who have put their hopes in economic prosperity, now face the prospect of economic unravelling unknown in a generation. The spillover from economic to political instability faces us each day in the news. The potential for job losses, family crises, and social unrest are real.

In times such as these, there is every temptation to project our hopes onto personal, human achievements. If we are honest with ourselves, any Christian must recognize the inherent limits on our own ability to reach the things for which we strive. We must even question whether the things for which we hope could be misdirected, motivated by our own

clever schemes and passions. Saint James reminds us of our tendency to even ask God for the wrong things, when he writes, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may (spend) it upon your lusts," (James 4:3). And so we do.

The start of the year is not merely a time to set personal life goals which we do not have the capacity to reach: it is the time for each of us to reassess the very nature of our goals in life, and what these should be if we are authentically Orthodox Christians. For our life more than the goals we have: it is fundamentally about the condition of our heart, our conduct on the road to achieve our goals, and whether our hopes and dreams help – or hinder – our salvation.

Our American neighbours begin 2009 with great hopes for their new president, who faces great challenges in the face of the collapse of the modern Western experiment. Both his supporters and his critics are already calling for people to moderate their hopes regarding what he can achieve: after all, he is only a man.

This issue, our second anniversary issue, is dedicated to this task of renewing our lives for a new year, in the rhythm of our daily work, in our conduct toward others, and by learning by taking stock of the false hopes that worldly minds offer as if they were true.

Watching from across America's northern border, the lesson of humility is most appropriate for those who call themselves Orthodox Christians: *we are only men*. It is Christ Who must provide our true goals, as well as the means for achieving them. Only in this will we find happiness. Only in this will we find inner peace. Only in this will we find true and eternal success.

*Father Geoffrey Korz+
Managing Editor*



THE FIRST KNOWN CHRISTIAN MARTYR IN THE AMERICAS

Historians have a limited record of life in North America one millennium ago. The record of Orthodox Christian activity on the continent is very fragmentary, apart from certain accounts in Holy Tradition relating to the travels of Celtic Orthodox monastics such as Saint Brendan and his company.

The work of Canadian historian Farley Mowat is a particularly valuable tool in the search for an understanding of Canada's earliest Christian roots, including the often disastrous encounters with natives, which stand in stark contrast to the wise missionary labours of the saints of Orthodox Alaska. We are indebted to Farley Mowat for his efforts to share the details of the earliest Orthodox experiences here, and to bring them to life through his novels and articles.

"In 1059 there may have been a deliberate attempt to revisit Vinland (i.e. Newfoundland) - perhaps sparked by Gudleif's experiences. There is a record of a Celtic or Saxon (Orthodox) priest named Jon, who had at one time worked in Iceland, having gone to Vinland or Vendland on a missionary voyage. He was subsequently reported to have been murdered by the natives there..."

Assuming that Jon was sent to Vinland, his death should have reinforced the belief that no settlement could be established in the New World in the face of the opposition of the natives. Yet, oddly enough, the next chronological reference to the new lands is also to a missionary expedition. This one seems to have taken place in 1121 when Erik, (the Roman Catholic) Bishop of Greenland, is reported to have sailed for Vinland. Nothing further is known about him except that he was succeeded by a new bishop in 1124, from which we draw the conclusion that his luck was no better than Jon's.

The Vinland here referred to here was not Leif's Vinland, which was apparently never rediscovered, but was the later Vinland of the Stefansson map -- the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. It is an ironic thought that if Leif's original Vinland had been rediscovered by Karlsefni or later voyagers (with or without Leif's aid) the Norse might very well have succeeded in establishing a settlement in the New World."

(Leif's settlement in Greenland was a missionary activity of St. Olaf of Norway began in 1000 AD.)

– From the book "West Vikings" by Farley Mowat



BIGAMY IN BOUNTIFUL BRITISH COLUMBIA *The Next Battle Over Marriage*

"Without God, all things are permitted"

– Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The rise of a polygamous sect, a breakaway group of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS), in Bountiful, British Columbia, recently underscored the logical consequences of Canada's ever-evolving definition of marriage.

Since the redefinition over the last three years of civil marriage to include couples of the same sex, many observers have noted the nebulous Canadian legal definition of marriage would ultimately give way to further challenges. While many critics focussed on the likelihood of a challenge from supporters of Islamic Sharia law, the British Columbia case has demonstrated the complexities of the consequence of opening up the traditional Canadian definition of marriage.

Popular media coverage has done little to make the connection between the redefinition of marriage to include homosexual couples, and

the current question of polygamy. Even as late as 1999, a majority of Canadian MPs supported the maintenance of the legal definition of marriage as one man and one woman, and the national consensus on the definition of marriage remained unquestioned by even the most liberal news outlets.

Yet over the course of only a few years, the winds of political opinion changed (at least in the popular media), submitting the natural understanding of the marital union to the distorted reasoning of the ever-changing mind of the times. So speedy was this change that in 2003, the Martin government introduced a law legalizing same sex marriage. Subsequent attempts to overturn the law have failed.

It should be no surprise to see the spiritual vacuum of Canadian policy-making now racing toward the abyss of polygamous marriage. Certainly, there are few in Canada today who would enthusiastically support such a move: advocates of legalized polygamy are generally limited to sects such as the FLDS, and to university campuses. Yet polygamous marriage will inevitably triumph in Canada for the same reason same sex “marriage” went from a taboo subject to a national law in less than five years: there is simply no commonly held moral absolute that exists to stop it.

It remains to be seen what trajectory the question of legalized polygamy in Canada will take. Perhaps the easiest trend that might be foreseen is the shift to a marriage law where the only limiting factor is adult mutual consent in a multicultural, multi-belief environment – the essential basis for the redefinition of legal marriage in 2003. If this is the basis, Canada’s moral vacuum will unquestionably face demands for allowing incestuous marriages (i.e. legal marriages between adult blood relatives). In a civilization where marriage has been essentially divorced from childbearing, arguments cautioning against the likelihood of birth defects in children conceived by such unions simply will not hold up in the public square. And in a nation where life is increasingly isolated from a sense of shared community values, no one will care.

On the other hand, there is also the possibility that such marital innovations will be seen as the creation of social deviants – including religious deviants – and that religious freedoms in Canada will come under attack in the name of compliance. Whatever form the Canadian legal “norm” will take, those who oppose it, or seek to take another path,

may well be targeted as religious zealots or political fanatics. From hiring policies, to questions of the right to refuse to do business with or to serve marriages for particular identified groups, civil rights laws may become the heavy hand of a state desiring to bring into line those guilty of the crime of religious dissent. (Talk with any priest or minister who has already begun to receive wedding requests from same sex couples). While most Canadians will see this as a fight to protect against sects like the FLDS or radical Islam, the implications will reach into churches, workplaces, and schools across the country, impacting not only the costs of employee benefits plans, but more importantly, the understanding of holy and decent living within the Canadian context.

At this writing, it is now not unreasonable to assume that Canadian civil law will permit polygamy within two or three years, following the same course of logic that gave rise to same sex marriage laws. If and when our national authorities (whether the courts or the politicians who follow them) bring in enforced laws of tolerance and acceptance of such lifestyles, the real question will arise for Orthodox Christians across the country: will we stand as confessors for Truth, or will we be swept away by the mind of the times.

If we fail to retain living, hourly contact with the Living God, all things will undoubtedly be permitted by us, too.

– *Father Geoffrey Korz+*





WHY SLAVA MATTERS

The Enduring Importance of Patron Saints

In this article, author Aleks Stošić fulfills a promise to his Church School students, to explain the significance of the family patron saint's day. While the request of some of the students may have something to do with getting a day off school, the author makes a convincing argument for all Orthodox Christians - Serbs and non-Serbs alike - should adopt a patron saint's slava, and keep it piously.

Alright, I made a promise to my Serbian School pupils, and I'm sticking to it. Here it is. Parents, parishioners, Serbs, and all Orthodox Christians - On the day of your *slava* (the family patron saint's day)¹, stay home. Don't go to work, and don't send your kids to school.

Okay, so my kids essentially wanted their teacher to officially tell their parents that they should not go to school. And I do mean it – stay home!

¹"Slava" is the word for "glory" in many Slavic languages, including Serbian, Ukrainian, and Russian. It is used in this sense as the day on which a saint is commemorated to give glory to God for His many blessings, including the blessing of His Church. The word "Pravoslav", or "right glory" is the Slavic word for the Orthodox Christian Faith - those who give "right glory" to God.

But, there's more to it than that. I feel that in our modern-day world, we may be on the verge of losing our focus on the patron saint's day, and I want to convince you, if you need convincing at all, why it matters. It doesn't matter because of the day off, because of the food and drink, or the socializing. It does matter because of our obligations toward family, faith, and nation.

The slava is our most ancient and most definitive Serbian custom. Among all Slavic nations, and among all Orthodox nations, only Serbs celebrate the family slava. Credit for establishing the slava is often given to Saint Sava, but in fact, it is older than that. From pagan roots of ancestral worship, slava was transformed at the time of the Serbs' adoption of Christianity in the ninth century, during the rule of the Serbian prince Mutimir, probably around the year 874AD. Entire clans of Serbs were baptized by the followers of Saints Cyril & Methodius, and took the day of their baptism as a saint-protector of the family clan. Because the head of the household at that time took the name of that saint as his Christian name, slava is also known as *krsno ime* (baptismal name); the word slava itself means 'glory', to remind us of the benefit that day had for all of our souls. Saint Sava himself had a slava – the Nemanjic dynasty commemorated Saint Michael (Arhandjelovdan) as their family patron. However, the scattered and superstitious Serbian people still clung to many old pagan ways, despite being baptized. Saint Sava made an effort to give his people a truly firm grounding in their faith, establishing a single rite for the blessing of bread, wine and wheat. So, even if he didn't establish the custom per se, he certainly played a very significant role in shoring up its foundations. (In gratitude, Serbia made him its national slava.... Only seems fitting, right?)

So, slava has the weight of history behind it. Countless generations of your ancestors celebrated their slava before you. You are part of a chain that stretches back almost twelve centuries! Every Serb on the planet knows the exact date of his ancestor's baptism 1135 years ago! So, wouldn't it be the ultimate act of hubris, of total selfish arrogance, to break this chain? We are part of something big – we have an obligation to continue it.

Part of the slava ritual itself is a direct commemoration of our ancestors. That is the preparation, blessing and consumption of the koljivo, sweetened wheat. Blessed with wine, the *koljivo* (boiled wheat,

or *žito*) is meant to remind us of those before us who gave us our slava. To our children, it is a reminder that they are part of this unbroken chain. Like the many other traditions of our faith, our children need to be included in order to learn. They can't do that from their schoolroom. Now, before you say "they'll miss so much", or "school's important", I will offer that slava is once a year. With your help, they'll catch up; slava is much, much, much more important. Some parents want the children in school so they're not underfoot during preparations. Well, try to include them in the preparations, as much as they can manage. Definitely include them in the slava ritual, whether it is performed in church or at your home. Other parents, having shifted their slava festivities to a weekend or more 'convenient' date, send the kids to school (and go to work, themselves) on a weekday slava. Our church will tell you that it is of immeasurable importance to commemorate your patron saint on the actual feast day. The shifting of celebrations to 'easier' days, or to avoid a fasting day, is another selfish habit we've gotten used to. Celebrate on the day of the slava, and gather your whole family together for that day. Call the school, take a leave day, and be home. Go to church on the actual day, even if you invite friends over for a slava meal some other day. The slava is the patronal feast of the family and of the home. Saint Paul calls the Christian home a small church (Philemon 1:2). Serbian custom also places great importance on the home, from the wall where your slava icon hangs, to the table where you gather, and to the *ognjište* – the hearth, which is the heart of the home. Your place on your slava day is at your *ognjište*.

Finally, what inspired me to write this in the first place, even before my students begged. In recent years, some staff in local schools, as well as some students, have faced definite obstacles in being allowed to have their slava day as a religious holiday. Although I have never found it difficult personally, I know that the issue came to a head at several of our high schools, to the point where our teachers' federation brought the issue of slava commemoration to our school board on our behalf. Representatives spoke of the lack of respect for cultural diversity and religious tolerance, and letters from our clergy stressed the importance of this unique holiday, mentioning that even Canadian converts to Orthodoxy take on the slava because of its beauty and significance. The issue was settled, but not before it became clear that the real difficulty lay not with Board administration, but with only a few petty individuals

who felt that they could harrass Serbian Orthodox Christians without repercussion.

And this brings us to our final reason why you need to stay home on slava: to stand your ground as a Serb and as a Christian. Being either these days is difficult. As an ethnic group, we've suffered almost two decades of media bias and demonization and we don't really see a light on the horizon yet. As Orthodox Christians, we've at least been benignly neglected by most of the world, although slipping under their collective radar has not helped increase understanding of our faith among the general public. While society focuses on issues of inclusiveness and equity, especially if they have anything to do with placating Islam, our slava is deemed insignificant. As one colleague observed when this issue came to light, they wouldn't dare try that with a day holy to Muslims, Jews, or Sikhs. Great pains are taken to ensure that these and other communities are included and acknowledged when their holy days occur, and they receive very public affirmation of their identity from society and the media. Slava is your one day to affirm your Serbian Orthodox identity, without shame, and with dignity. Make that affirmation for your sake, your children's sake, and the sake of your entire community.

To the student whose teacher schedules a test on your slava, speak up – make arrangements to write on an alternate date. To the employee whose employer questions your need to have the full day off, speak up – ask him if he knows what his ancestors were doing 1135 years ago. Slava can be a day of festivities and feasting, of course, but it is first and foremost a day of remembrance, thanksgiving and unity – of your family, of all other families with that same slava, and of all Serbian Orthodox Christians. No matter what form your slava takes, the one imperative is that you commemorate it honourably, willingly, and freely, always.

- Aleks Stošić

This article originally appeared in the Saint Nicholas Church Herald, January 2009, and is reprinted here with permission.





THE TEMPTATION OF SUNDAY

I talked further with this simple brother who gave me shelter and he told me about his life and his ideas. "I had quite a good position in the life of our village," said he. "I had a workshop where I died fustian and linen and I lived comfortably enough, though not without sin. I often cheated in business. I was a false swearer, I was abusive, I used to drink and quarrel. In our village there was an old dyachok who had a very old book on the Last Judgement. He used to go from house to house and read from it, and he was paid something for doing so. He came to me too. Give him threepence and a glass of wine into the bargain and he would go on reading all night till cock crow. There I would sit at my work and listen while he would read about the torments that await us in hell. I hear how the living will be changed and the dead raised; how God will come to judge the world; how the angels will sound the trumpets. I heard of the fire and pitch and of the worm which will devour sinners. One day as I listened I was seized with horror and I said to myself: What if these torments come upon me! I will set to work to save my soul. It may be that by prayer I can avoid the results of my sins. I thought about this for a long time. Then I gave up my work, sold my house and as I was alone in the world, I got a place as a forester here and all I ask of my mir is bread, clothes and some candles for my prayers. I have been living like this for over ten years now. I eat only once a day and then nothing but bread and water. I get up a cock crow, make my devotions and say my prayers before the holy icons with seven candles burning. When I make my rounds in the forest during the day, I wear iron chains weighing sixty pounds next to my skin. I never grumble, drink neither wine nor beer. I never quarrel with anybody at all and I have had

nothing to do with women and girls all my life. At first this sort of life pleased me, but lately other thoughts have come into my mind and I cannot get away from them. God only knows if I shall be able to pray my sins away in this fashion, and it's a hard life. And is everything written in that book true? How can a dead man rise again? Supposing he has been dead for over one hundred years and not even his ashes are left? Who knows if there is really a hell or not? What more is known of a person after they die and rot? Perhaps this book was written by priests and teachers to make us poor fools afraid and keep us quiet. What if we plague ourselves for nothing and give up all our pleasure in vain? Suppose there is no such thing as another life, what then? Isn't it better to enjoy one's earthly life and take it easily and happily? Ideas of this kind often worry me and I don't know but that I shall not some day go back to my old work."

I heard him with pity. They say, I thought, that it is only the learned and the clever who are free thinkers and believe in nothing. Yet here is one of ourselves, even a simple peasant, a prey to such unbelief. The kingdom of darkness throws open its gates to everyone, it seems...

- *The Way of a Pilgrim*, p. 32-34

A few years ago, an Orthodox priest was asked by a faithful woman, "Why is it that my family always seems to have arguments on Sunday mornings? We never argue any other morning." Putting aside the obvious outward variables of time and stress, the priest replied, "The devil simply doesn't want you to be at church."

While Sunday mornings are seen by most people as the day on which religious folk affirm their beliefs, the reality is, Sunday mornings are the time at which Christian faith is most tested. The appeal of the New Age Movement provides an exact contrast to Orthodox life in this respect: while the New Age permits one to do anything one likes, any time one likes, Orthodox Christianity reminds us that our exterior life (i.e. the things we do) plays the most important part in shaping our interior life (i.e. the things we believe, and who we are). *Lex orandi, lex credendi*, as the Church Fathers say - the law (or way) of worship is the law (or way) of belief.

Several years ago, we were in the habit of driving along the Toronto waterfront each Sunday morning. In a scene that mirrors the picture in cities across the country, drivers could view literally hundreds of runners, out for an early morning exercise, as part of their weekly routine. Speaking with our priest one day, I ridiculed the runners. "Why aren't they in Church," I asked. "Don't they have any self-discipline?" The priest answered, "Yes – more than we do. They're devoted to their religion. Are we?"

Are we indeed? One of the Fathers of the Egyptian desert once praised a prostitute for taking such care of herself that she attracted the attention of every man around her. “We should be like this,” the saint remarked, “adorning ourselves with the virtues, that we might attract the blessings of God and the attention of the angels.”

Unlike the runners or the Egyptian prostitute, Orthodox Christians do not have the support of society in our chosen path. We are working against the grain, with every step we take. Canadian society has made Saturday night a party night; for the Orthodox, this means setting aside Saturday nights to attend Vespers or the Vigil, to Confess, and to quietly prepare our hearts for Sunday morning.

Work days provide a financial incentive for most adults to get up early to go to work. Yet even for those who are financially well-off, such efforts can never provide lasting results. In particular, they can never provide joy, or peace of heart. Without exertion toward spiritual things, every other effort is wasted: they simply won't make us happy.

The spiritual temptations holding us back on a Sunday morning are known to many of us. Yet it is in reviewing them that we are able to provide for ourselves a defence against them. Tiredness is ready ground for excuses on Sunday mornings. Bad weather goes along with it. As the Proverb tells us, “The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets,” (Proverbs 26:13). Any excuse will do.

Could it be the fact that Sunday is the Day of Christ's Resurrection is simply so far from our minds most of the time that we forget that's the reason we gather together on Sundays? Are we so easily cheated of the benefits of exerting ourselves a little in the spiritual life, that we will so quickly be deprived of the blessings of the holy services? Have we fallen to the level that we have become the spiritual equivalent of a couch potato, consoling ourselves with crumbs of spiritual junk food, while neglecting the small labours that will make us spiritual whole? Are we so fat with worldly things that we have forgotten God?

The temptation of Sunday morning is designed to keep us off balance, vulnerable to the anger, confusion, doubt, and the spiritual assaults we will face throughout the week. We prepare ourselves beforehand for journeys; we prepare ourselves and our children for work and school. Does it not make simple sense to struggle valiantly in an effort to

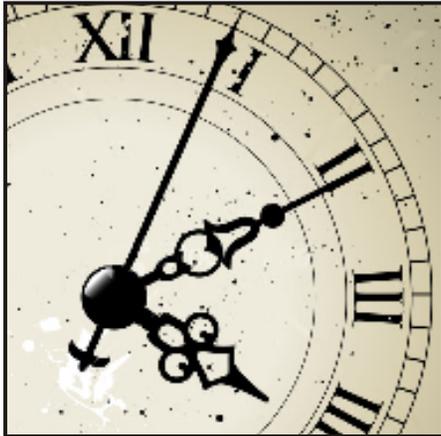
prepare ourselves spiritually each weekend to face the journey and the work of the week ahead?

Could it be that our faith can so easily become an outward thing, that when it is tested by, say, having to forego sleeping in on Sundays, or by taking a day off with pay for a holy day, our faith collapses like a house of cards? It is tempting to find the shortcomings of others: those who do not believe, or who fall into moral lapses. But the Church fathers are very clear that the interior life of the Christian starts not with them, but with me. Outward discipline – not legalistically following rules, but simply ruling our own passions of laziness – is the centre of this struggle.

It is in resolving to do these things – the little things – that we begin to actually live the Christian life as something more than an idea, or a hobby.

– *Father Geoffrey Korz+*





A DAY IN THE LIFE

Practical Tips for Christianizing the Work Day

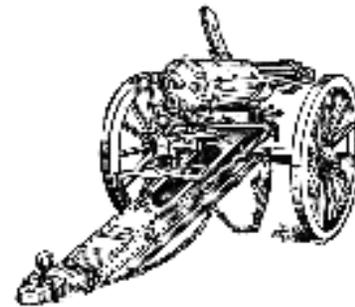
“Bind (the commandments) continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck,”

– Proverbs 6:21

One of the greatest gaps that exists between life in modern North America, and life in Orthodox countries a century ago, is the structure of the regular work day. No part of life dominates such a structured part of adult life as does the forty (or more) hour work week. Yet no part of life seems more closed to the living out of our faith, particularly the ancient and timeless life of Orthodox Christianity.

For all their professed open-mindedness, many Canadian workplaces have come to view religious practice as a rather odd hobby, rather than a central expression of the life of an employee. Cultural holidays are often more easily granted by employers than are religious holidays (with the exception of holidays for non-Christian religions, which are often viewed as sacrosanct because of their close ties with certain cultures, and the potential for accusations of racism if legitimate requests for accommodation are denied).

**Got thoughts on our articles?
Constructive criticism?
A voice that needs hearing?**



Why not fire off a Letter to the Editor?

***Orthodox Canada c/o 10 Princip Street,
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Unfortunately, in many instances Christians have been cowed by what they perceive as a secular – or even hostile – environment at work. The ever-present temptations to avoid praying at work, or to ignore holy days can present themselves as utilitarian: after all, no *respectable* employee wants to be associated with the born-again crowd, or the Muslim fanatic, who actually takes time out to pray – right?

The Orthodox workplace inferiority complex is much more than a social phobia: it is a spiritual sickness, one which demands treatment in the lives of each of us. An important part of that treatment is the Holy Mysteries of Confession to a spiritual father or confessor, along with partaking of Holy Communion. But another critical part is the daily practice of the Faith, in all times and in all places. Saint Paul reminds us that we must pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17); presumably, our time at work would be included in this.

In response to life in the Muslim world, Copts in Egypt and elsewhere have adopted the practice of reading all the appointed prayers of the Hours each day – a remarkable rule of prayer for anyone. Orthodox in Indonesia have adopted a similar practice. But for North Americans who live in a more secular environment, such practices can pose real challenges.

Yet the growth of the commuter culture and the five-, six-, or seven-day work week cannot be an excuse for abandoning the fullness of the Orthodox Christian life for which millions sacrificed their lives. Just as the brief Jesus Prayer – *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner* – is often described as an “arrow” prayer, so too might we moderns adopt the various “arrows” that the Holy Church supplies, and use them throughout our work days: short, direct appeals for God’s grace and help in the situations that cause us a major part of our stress.

While some might hesitate to adopt a long morning prayer rule, nothing is stopping any faithful Orthodox Christian from speaking a short morning prayers upon awakening, such as the prayer of Saint Silouan, or another such prayer. Each of us also has the capacity – and the pressing spiritual need – to eat a piece of blessed bread (*antidoron*) and drink holy water before beginning our day. (One couple carried tiny ziplock bags of *antidoron* and small plastic bottle of holy water on their travels in order to do just that).

Whether commuting by car, bus, or train, or departing on foot to work, there is no more suitable way for an Orthodox Christian to depart their home than by making the sign of the Cross, and upon arrival at work as

well. Especially during winter months, it is also both fitting and necessary for Canadian Orthodox to do this while driving on snowing highways or streets. Memorial markers at the side of many roads are not only a reminder to drive safely: they are an opportunity to pray for the souls of those who have lost their lives in vehicle accidents.

In most workplaces, there are no prohibitions against placing an icon in a personal office, in a work vehicle, in a locker, or at a desk or work station. In cases where this might be questioned, one can sometimes appeal to cultural inclusiveness. One young teacher mounted a large icon in her elementary classroom, explaining that it was Greek art. The importance of the presence of one or more icons cannot be underestimated or overemphasized.

Of course it is prayer that is at the heart of the Christian life, and the workplace is no exception. Prayer at work is a suitable (not to mention refreshing) way to spend part of a break; the Jesus Prayer is once again ideal for this purpose, but an appointed time must be observe if one hopes to have any success. Work cubicles, offices, boardrooms, and storage rooms provide ideal places to pray, if an icon corner is not available (washroom cubicles are a stretch, but can work if all else fails). Prayer ropes are particularly portable (small ones are ideal for this purpose), and silent to use. In addition, most co-workers (especially those born outside North America who still have a sense of human struggle and spiritual need) appreciate the offer of our prayers for their various needs, in health, family, work, or personal difficulties. It is such small acts of Christian love that can and must define our lives, at home, at work, and everywhere.

– *Father Geoffrey Korz+*





AROUND THE CHURCH IN TWENTY WORDS

*Hellenic Help for the
Hagiographically Handicapped*

While Orthodox parishes in Canada are blessed to enjoy Communion with each other, the effects of the Tower of Babel – the division of the languages – continue to keep us apart. Such separation requires a special effort – a truly Christian effort – to overcome, one which shows enough mutual love between the faithful to learn a small sampling of phrases to communicate within the Church. In this new regular feature, we will offer a sampling of words and terms that are useful to Orthodox Christians, inquirers, and visitors to Orthodox parishes. Phrases and words from a different language will be offered in each article.

Special thanks go out to Charles Berlitz, the language guru, and his book "Around the World in Eighty Words," for inspiring this column, and to Reader John Fortoma, our first contributing linguist.

Esperinos – Vespers, the main evening service of the Orthodox Church.

Orthros – Matins, the main morning service of the Orthodox Church. In Hellenic parishes, this is served prior to the Divine Liturgy on Sunday's and Feasts.

Theia Leitouryia – Divine Liturgy.

Artoklasia – Blessing of the Five Loaves, Wine, and Oil. In Hellenic parishes, when a member of the household is celebrating his names day (or any other special occasion) the family brings five loaves, a bottle of wine, and a bottle of oil. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the priest serves what is in essence an augmented Lityia from Vespers, and immediately blesses the five loaves, wine, and oil. This is done to insure God's blessing on the one celebrating the feast, and also to insure his/her

patron Saint's protection annually.

Mnimosinon – Memorial Service for the Departed. In Hellenic parishes, this takes place at the end of the Divine Liturgy. Boiled wheat (Kolyva; see below) topped with sugars, raisins, nuts, etc. is brought to the Church along with the names to be commemorated. The priest serves the Mnimosinon, praying for the repose of the servant's of God who are listed, and blesses the Kolyva.

Kolyva – Boiled wheat in and of itself, however, the whole boll with the sugars, raisins, nut, etc. will often be referred to as Kolyva.

Christos Gennatai! Doxasate! – Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Greeting that Greeks will use on Christmas, the Lord's Nativity.

Kala Christouyianna! - Good Christmas!

Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti! - Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen! – Paschal greeting with which Greeks greet each other daily from Pascha to the Ascension.

Hronia Polla! – Many Years! Greeting that Greeks will use on most Feastdays, birthdays, anniversaries, to wish the one greeted a long and healthy life on the occasion of the Feast.

Aionia i Mnimi! – Memory Eternal! Wish that Greeks will convey to each other, and to the family of the one who has fallen asleep. This is done during Funerals, Memorials etc.

O Theos Na Ton Synhoresei – May God forgive him (her: instead of *Ton* we use *Tin*). May be used instead or with of Aionia i Mnimi at Funeral and Memorial Services.

O Theos Na Ton Anapafsi – May God rest him. Another wish Greeks will convey at Funeral and Memorial Services.

Vasilopita - A sweet bread blessed on the feast of Saint Basil, the first of January.

Phanouriopita - A sweet cake given by a family who have asked the prayers of Saint Phanourios, usually for the finding of some lost thing. This is blessed after Liturgy.

Kalimera! - Good morning! **Kalispera!** - Good afternoon!

Kalinicta. - Good night.

Kyrios/Kyria– Sir or Mister (also, this is the same word used for the Lord) / Madam or Miss.

Theos – God.

Xristos – Christ.

Panayia/Panagia – The Theotokos and Mother of God.

Evlogite – Bless. Greeting that is used to ask a Priest for his blessing.

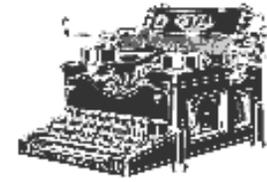
Also, among the faithful. it is used instead of kalimera and kalispera.

Pappas/Pater – Priest/Father.

Paraklisis – Service of Supplication to the Theotokos or to various Saint's. The Paraklisis to the Theotokos is served in Hellenic parishes from Aug. 1st – 13th daily (except Saturday's and the eve of Aug. 6th) in anticipation for *Koimisis tis Theotokou* – Dormition of the Theotokos, one of the Hellenic people's, most beloved Feast (if not the most beloved Feast, outside of Pascha, Christmas, and Theophany).

Ellada/Ellines – Greece/Greek.

- Reader John Fortoma



POETRY

To Be Thy Servant, Lord, Is What I Seek

To be thy servant, Lord, is what I seek.
My will doth dwell upon such trifling things
As meat and drink, and wealth of worldly kings,
Which make the soul within me small and weak.
As rain and wind the highest mountain-peak
Do grind to dust o're many million Springs,
So too my world-worn will to nothing brings
All good which I might think or do or speak.
My flesh is strong and seeks to bind me fast
Unto the earth where mortal things abide,
And yet my spirit, broken and downcast,
Doth wish to have Thee as its guard and guide.
To dwell where Truth and Joy and Beauty last
And are not dimmed, I must by Thee be tried.

- Sara Hillis





NORTHERN NOMENCLATURE

FIRST FOOTING (Pr. Noun)

Many Canadians of Irish and Scottish ancestry (particularly those in Newfoundland) still observe an unusual New Year's practice known as "First Footing", or Hogmanay. While the specifics of the custom sometimes differ, the observance in general begins immediately after midnight on New Year's Eve.

The "first foot" across the threshold of any home is considered to set the tone for the year ahead – one of blessing or curse, good "luck" or bad. Traditionally, a "dark man" (a male with dark hair) is recruited to arrive at the door minutes after midnight, bearing gifts such as alcohol (often Scotch whiskey), shortbread cookies, fruit cake, and salt. Upon entering, the "dark man" wishes God's blessing to the house, and all guests are offered refreshments.

In the Highlands of Scotland, an older custom survives in which the "dark man" comes for Hogmanay (Scots Gaelic for "blessing"), bearing burning juniper branches into each room in the house, and sprinkling water from a local ford throughout the house, particularly on the beds.

To those who observe it, the arrival of a fair-haired woman (or worse still, a red-haired one) is still considered a very bad thing indeed. The best explanation we could obtain over the last twenty years of asking came from an old Irish-Canadian gentleman, who explained that such a

woman "brings the devil" with her².

The roots of the term Hogmanay suggest a possible explanation for the strange custom – one which has its roots firmly in Orthodox life. While the Scots trace the term to the word for "blessing", both the Anglo Saxon *haleg monað* (HAL-eh MO-nath) and the Greek *αγιος μηνας* (AH-gee-os MEE-nas) refer to a "holy month" – a month in which blessing occurs.

Taken together, might these roots point to an early practice of the Orthodox Christian house blessing at the time of Theophany, where a fair-haired woman (perhaps a local practitioner of pagan witchcraft) brings a curse, while a "dark man" (perhaps a priest) brings holy water and sweet smelling smoke to bless a home for the year ahead? Any Orthodox priest would tell you about the annual struggle to refuse the insistence of well-meaning grandmothers who offer sweets and alcohol to the visiting cleric; the offering of salt to a visiting bishop is maintained in the Church to this day. Left without canonical priests in the remote areas of their lands, it would be no surprise if Scots and Irish adopted the custom of attempting their own house blessing, much as the Old Rite in Russia maintained an icon screen without an altar (since they had also lost the priesthood).

Only time and the revelation of God will provide a firm answer.



²I recall the same gentleman and his wife some twenty years ago one New Year's Eve refusing to admit their fair-haired daughter to their home when she returned a few minutes after midnight. They insisted upon waiting for her brother, a dark-haired young man. She was left sitting outside in the cold for close to one hour. Years before, several older neighbourhood women refused to return home from a New Year's levee until one dark-haired young man agreed to take their house keys, to enter their homes, to change the calendars, and to have a drink. The tea-totalling young man was only brought to compliance by the thought that the elderly women would rather remain out in the cold than enter their homes before he had served as their "First Foot" – Editor.



Q&A

Questions from Readers

When does a thought become a sin? If a thought enters our consciousness, does that make it a sin? Or is it only if we entertain it? What does it mean to entertain the thought of a sin? To engage it in dialogue? What if we are refuting the thought in dialogue, is this still sin?
- Anonymous, Ontario

This is an important question. All sorts of thoughts enter our consciousness, but this does not make them sins. You are correct that one must entertain or engage a thought for one to be responsible for it. The Church Fathers warn against having any sort of mental dialogue with a sinful thought, even if our goal is to refute the thought. Much like entering into debate with a Jehovah's Witness on our doorstep, in entering into dialogue with a thought we begin to play by its rules: the fact that we are engaging it at all leaves us vulnerable.

The Fathers make numerous suggestions for dealing with various thoughts, including prayer (especially the Jesus Prayer), and even distraction through work (simple, but often effective). Two resources which you may have read already, but which may be helpful are "The 5 Stages of Sin", and "The Road Out of

*Sin", available online at our parish website, <http://www.asna.ca/resources/index.html>.
- FrG+*

I am Orthodox, and my family want me to get married in the Orthodox Church. My fiancé is not Orthodox, and not a Christian. What is our best course of action?
- S.M., Toronto, Ontario

The issue raises other important questions. If you have built a deep relationship with a non-Christian, one can only suppose that it is not based on a shared faith, or that you no longer hold the beliefs of an Orthodox Christian. If the latter is the case, it would not make sense to be married in the Orthodox Church, since neither you nor your fiancé share the Orthodox Faith.

If your fiancé is interested in becoming Orthodox (with no pressure from you or your family), you should speak with your parish priest to pursue a constructive catechism and baptism, well in advance of making marriage arrangements. If your fiancé is not interested in Christ, one must ask what the basis will be for your marriage. As Orthodox Christians, we can only ultimately rely on God in times of trouble, which will inevitably come in any marriage. Without that, you're on your own.

*Editor's Note: Families who have not taken the greatest care from the earliest years to raise their children in the practice of the fullness of the Orthodox Faith should not be surprised when their children seek to marry outside the Church. In such cases, it is simply not a realistic expectation to hope that a young person will build an Orthodox Christian life where none has ever existed – no more than expecting strawberries to grow from a potato seed! While each individual is responsible for their own choices, parents are responsible before God for whatever they plant - or fail to plant - in the hearts of their children.
- FrG+*

If a person is considering monastic life, or the life of a priest or priest's wife in their future, are there any barriers that disqualify a person?

- N.M., Ontario

When it comes to the monastic life (for either monks or nuns), there are no barriers that disqualify any Orthodox Christian in Communion with the Church. The critical question for monastic life is, do you have a monastic vocation? One superior of a monastery once told us that only one in ten monastic candidates who come to the monastery actually have a monastic calling, one that requires great humility, and a willingness to be obedient within a monastic community. Monasticism is much more than a love for silence, prayer, and the holy services: these are things all Orthodox Christians should rightly love, whether they have a monastic calling or not.

As far as vocations to the priesthood, there are a few canonical impediments for men who might seek ordination. A candidate for ordination may only have been married once, even if their wife has died. This applies also to the wife of the candidate; if she has been married before, her husband cannot be ordained. Normally, a candidate for ordination cannot have ever been a member of a secret society, such as the Masonic Lodge (exceptions are sometimes made for those

*who have renounced their membership in such organizations). Additionally, a candidate for ordination cannot have had sexual relations outside marriage (either premarital, or extramarital affairs). Those who have committed murder are also canonically excluded from Holy Orders. In all cases, those who have any of these impediments prior to baptism are granted God's grace at baptism, which is a new beginning as far as the canons of the Church are concerned. Thus, a divorced man, a fornicator (one who has sexual relations before marriage), a member of a secret society, or even a murderer can be considered as a candidate for holy orders, provided they have not fallen into these sins after baptism. In the opinion of every bishop we have asked about this question, those who have been received into the Church by Chrismation are still excluded from Holy Orders, except in some cases of premarital sexual activity prior to conversion to Orthodoxy, and then only at the discretion of the ordaining bishop. In all cases, the bishop makes the final decision, and in such cases bears the burden of standing before God in all his actions.
- FrG+*



MANNERLY RESOLUTIONS

Love does not insist on its own way.

– 1 Corinthians 13:5

When one considers history, Orthodox Christianity played a major role not just in the spiritual salvation of people, but in civilizing societies. We find the example of Saint Patrick and his monastic compatriots in Britain and the Celtic lands preserving the written word, and much of the learning of the ancient world. We remember Saint Sava, who not only became the enlightener of the Serbs, but the founder of their cultivated literary and artistic civilization. We find countless examples of courtesies and culture in the great empires of Byzantium and Russia.

If we have eyes to see it, Orthodox Christianity has the same task in our time: to assist in the rediscovery of a culture of mannerliness, of standards in homes, cultivating this with our children and with each other.

As a new year begins, maybe it's time for Orthodox Christians to rediscover manners. Let us consider the following:

- **Turning off our cell phone**, and not answering it in the midst of any social or business meeting;
- **Not checking our Blackberry**, and looking up from the computer or cell phone screen when someone enters the room;
- **Having less music and television**: unless we have set aside some time to watch a particular program, the television remains turned off, never serving as a source of mere background noise (we might even consider the radical act of allowing our cable service to lapse);
- **Sending personal, handwritten notes** to thank and encourage

other people, especially brothers and sisters in Christ;

- **Taking time for dinner together with our family**, and for conversation;

- **Dressing for dinner**; in a modern context, this may mean simply no t-shirts at the dinner table, yet even this restores civility and order in a chaotic world;

- **Holding open doors** in buildings or in cars, especially for women and the elderly;

- **Listening to other people**; in many cases this means simply keeping quiet long enough to listen: this is a spiritual discipline, suggested by the most strict elders of the Egyptian desert, and it saves us from sin.

- **Using the word “please”, rather than, “okay?”**; this is especially important when dealing with children, since the use of the modern expression implies they have the option to say, “No, it's NOT okay!”

- **Using the term “thank you” or “you're welcome”**, rather than “no problem” (which implies simply that the person who did the act of kindness did not exert himself - heaven forbid!)

The point of the Christian life is that love actually requires exertion. Polite language and actions conveys these small acts of personal exertion for the sake of others. It goes far beyond puritanism: it has everything to do with showing concern and reverence for all those made in the Image of God.





SIGN OF THE TIMES

A number of external factors will have to play a significant role in strengthening the power of the coming Antichrist. Possibly, during his time the threat of nuclear and biological warfare, or the spectre of a horrible political and economic crisis will hang over mankind. Governments will be on the verge of collapse, and nations in turmoil and revolt. Then, on the murky waters of a global cataclysm, a "brilliant" leader will surface as the sole saviour of mankind. Backing him will be a formidable organization with the goal of global domination. With its support the Antichrist will emerge with a prepared program of socio-economic reforms, which will be actively supported and advocated by the mass media. What will be the secret of the Antichrist's persuasive power and his ability to direct world events? We can envision him as a gifted and inflammatory orator, like Lenin or Hitler. His ideas and propositions will be readily accepted because they will express the thoughts and feelings of the masses of his materialistic epoch.

– *Bishop Alexander Mileant*
“End of the World”, 2002

