

We would like to welcome all parish visitors and invite you to join us after the Liturgy for Coffee hour.

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God

OCA – Diocese of New York-New Jersey

V. Rev. Dr. Matthew Searfoorce, Rector

Sub-Deacon Edward Dawson

Sub-Deacon Vlashi

Parish Council President: Andrew Romanofsky

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, November 6, 2016

Gospel: Luke 8:41-56

Tone 3 (7th of Luke)

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

20th Sunday After Pentecost

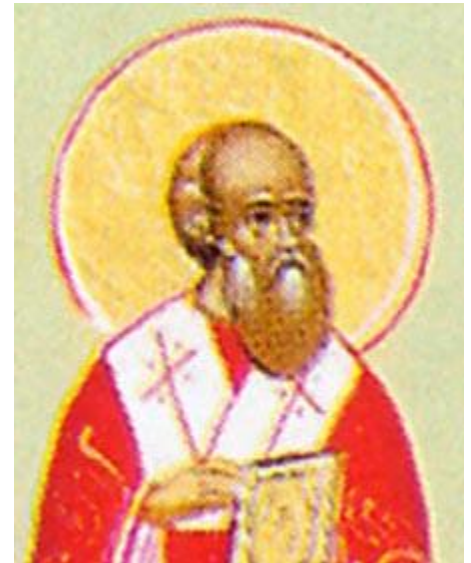
Synaxis of the Holy Unmercenaries. St. Paul the Confessor, Archbishop of Constantinople (350). Ven. Varlaam, Abbot of Khutyn' (Novgorod—1192). Ven. Luke, Steward of the Kiev Caves (Near Caves—13th c.). Repose of St. Herman, Archbishop of Kazan' (1567). Ven. Barlaam of Keret Lake (16th c.). Martyrs Tecusa, Alexandra, Claudia, Matrona, Polactia, Euphrosyne, and Athanasia, of Ancyra (3rd c.). Ven. Luke of Sicily (800-820).

Troparion – Tone 3

For confessing the divine faith, / among her priests the Church has shown you to be another Paul. / Abel cries out to the Lord together with you, as does the righteous blood of Zachariah. / Venerable father, entreat Christ God to grant us His great mercy.

Kontakion – Tone 4

Paul, you shone on the earth like a star of heavenly splendor; / now you enlighten the universal Church for which you suffered, / for you laid down your life, / and your blood cries out to the Lord like that of Zachariah and Abel.



St Paul the Confessor the Archbishop of Constantinople

Prayer Requests

For Health of:

Church of the Mother of God, on 50 Year Jubilee, offered by the Sisterhood of Protection of Theotokos.

Katarina Guri (Children's Home of Hope), on their birthday, offered by Sub-Deacon Vlashi.

Through the Grace of God – Orthodox Christianity

St Paisios: Humble Prayer

“If you want to tune in to God so He listens to you when you pray, turn the knob to humility, for on this frequency God always operates, and humbly ask for his mercy.”

Liturgical Schedule

Sunday, November 6th

9:30 am: No Sunday School
9:45am: General
Confession
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, November 12th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, November 13th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy
**12:15 pm: 50th Golden
Jubilee Anniversary
Celebration Luncheon**

Saturday, November 19th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, November 20th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Saturday, November 26th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, November 27th

9:30 am: Sunday School
9:40 am: Hours
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Bulletin Sponsors:

***The Sisterhood; Sub-
Deacon Vlashi***

Readings:

The Prokeimenon in the 3rd Tone:

Sing praises to our God, sing praises! / Sing praises to our King, sing
praises! (*Psalm 45:7*)

vs. Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
(*Psalm 46:1*)

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

Brethren, I would have you know that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Alleluia in the 3rd Tone:

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be put to shame!
(*Psalm 30:1*)

vs. Be a God of protection for me, a house of refuge in order to save me!
(*Psalm 30:2*)

Gospel: Luke 8:41-56 (7th Sunday of Luke)

At that time, there came to Jesus a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and falling at Jesus' feet he besought him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. As he went, the people pressed round him. And a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years and had spent all her living upon physicians and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." While he was still speaking, a man from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher anymore." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well." And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and bewailing her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed; but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.



St Paul the Confessor the Archbishop of Constantinople

Saint Paul the Confessor, Archbishop of Constantinople, was chosen to the patriarchal throne after the death of Patriarch Alexander (+ 340), when the Arian heresy had again flared up. Many of the Arians were present at the Council which selected the new Archbishop of Constantinople. They revolted in opposition to the choice of St Paul, but the Orthodox at the Council were in the majority.

The emperor Constantius, ruling over the Eastern half of the Roman Empire, was an Arian. He was not in Constantinople for the election of the Archbishop, and so it took place without his consent. Upon his return, he convened a council which illegally deposed St Paul, and the emperor banished him from the capital. In place of the saint they elevated

Eusebius of Nicomedia, an impious heretic. Archbishop Paul withdrew to Rome, where other Orthodox bishops were also banished by Eusebius.

Eusebius did not rule the Church of Constantinople for long. When he died, St Paul returned to Constantinople, and was greeted by his flock with love. But Constantius exiled the saint a second time, and so he returned to Rome. The Western emperor Constans wrote a harsh letter to his Eastern co-ruler, which he sent to Constantinople along with the holy exiled archpastor. The threats worked, and St Paul was reinstated upon the archepiscopal throne.

But soon the pious emperor Constans, a defender of the Orthodox, was treacherously murdered during a palace coup. They again banished St Paul from Constantinople and this time sent him off in exile to Armenia, to the city of Cucusus, where he endured a martyr's death.

When the Archbishop was celebrating the Divine Liturgy, Arians rushed upon him by force and strangled him with his own omophorion. This occurred in the year 350. In 381, the holy Emperor Theodosius the Great solemnly transferred the relics of St Paul the Confessor from Cucusus to Constantinople. In 1326, the relics of St Paul were transferred to Venice.

St Athanasius the Great, a contemporary of St Paul, writes briefly about his exiles, "St Paul the first time was sent by Constantine to Pontus, the second time he was fettered with chains by Constantius, and then he was locked up in Mesopotamian Syngara and from there moved to Emesus, and the fourth time to Cappadocian Cucusus in the Taurian wilderness."



Bulletin Sponsor: Use the sign-up sheet at the candle stand for the health of, eternal memory of or a Pannikhida for a loved one or friend, for a donation of \$10. Sponsors will be remembered during Divine Liturgy for the day/week that you signed up for.

Memorial Candles: Candles be purchased at the candle stand, suggested donation of \$10 for a large one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times.

General Confession: Will be at 9:45 am on the first Sunday of the month.

Pannikhida Service: The third Sunday of each month there will be a Pannikhida after Divine Liturgy. If you would like your loved ones to be remembered please give a list of names to Father Matthew before that Sunday for those to be remembered in the month.

Special Announcements for the bulletin can be submitted by E-Mail:

OrthodoxChurchMotherOfGod@outlook.com

The Living Clean Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Friday from 8-9:15 pm downstairs in the community room.

The Grey Book Step Meeting Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets every Tuesday from 7-8:00 pm downstairs in the community room.



**Orthodox Church of the Mother of God
50th Golden Jubilee**

Anniversary Celebration

Sunday, November 13, 2016

Luncheon following Liturgy — \$10 Donation — See Lore Stefy for tickets



NY/NJ Diocese News

STOTS to Host Fall Vocations Retreat, "St. John Chrysostom: Champion of the Priesthood"

Saint Tikhon's Seminary will host a Fall Vocations Retreat on Friday and Saturday, November 11-12, 2016. The theme will be "St. John Chrysostom: Champion of the Priesthood."

"We look forward to celebrating the feast of St. John Chrysostom this year by welcoming to campus men and women from throughout the country who are interested in exploring the teachings of this great Church Father," Archpriest Dr. Steven Voytovich, Seminary Dean, said. "His vision of the priesthood is inspiring to anyone who is thinking seriously about serving the Church in some capacity."

During the retreat, participants will have the opportunity to join with the seminary community and monastery brotherhood in prayer, tour the monastery and seminary grounds, hear talks and join in discussions about ministry and St. John Chrysostom, and meet the seminary's Dean, faculty, and students. Both women and men are encouraged to attend.

There is no cost to participate in the retreat, which begins at 6:00 PM on Friday, November 11 and ends at 4:00 PM on Saturday, November 12. Food and accommodations are available at the Seminary, and participants are welcome to extend their stay through the weekend to attend Saturday evening's Vigil and Sunday's Divine Liturgy if their schedule allows. To register or to obtain more information, please contact the seminary at 570-561-1818, ext. 101.

From the Office of the Archbishop

Upcoming Events:

- November 11-13: Diocesan Girls Retreat, Saint Basil Academy, Garrison, NY
- November 18-19: Diocesan Matushki Retreat, Warwick Retreat Center, Warwick, NY

Orthodox Church in America (OCA) News



In Memoriam: Catherine Elizabeth Maymon, Mother of Archbishop Mark

Catherine Elizabeth Maymon, beloved mother of His Eminence, Archbishop Mark of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, fell asleep in the Lord on the morning of Friday, November 4, 2016.

The following In Memoriam, written by Archbishop Mark, was posted on the web site of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania. Additional information will be posted as it is received.

Catherine Elizabeth Maymon was born December 26, 1930 to Martin and Lizzie [Hilgert] Hoffman and raised on a farm in Southern Indiana, where she faithfully attended the Roman Catholic Church. She was preceded in her passage to eternal life by her parents, her brother Owen Hoffman, sister Dorothy Parker and her husband of 59 1/2 years, John L. Maymon.

Catherine is survived by her eight children, Mona Lewen, Rhonda Eckert, John Michael Maymon, Joseph Martin Maymon, Archbishop Mark Maymon, Kim Renee Maymon, Patrick David Maymon and Shannon Marie Maymon. She had numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

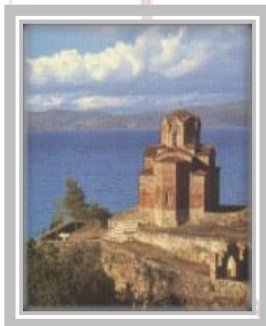
She was a loving and devoted daughter, wife, mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She loved to sew as well as cross stitch. She sewed clothing for her daughters, quilts for her children and grandchildren. Raising eight children, she also canned green beans, tomatoes, sauerkraut, pickles, corn, apple sauce, apple butter, apple jelly, strawberry jam and peaches.

Catherine and her husband John took the kids camping almost every weekend during the summers. Can you imagine all the packing of clothes and food every week and then washing for ten? Even while camping, she made sure everyone went to church on Sunday morning. On the camping trips the family fished and water skied. In 1967 they took their seven children at the time to the World's Fair in Montreal, and generally went to Florida for two weeks many summers. The Florida trips usually included deep sea fishing.

I never heard her gossip, complain or speak ill of anyone. She was a quiet, hard worker. After raising her children, she went to work for Cloth World, managed the store and made many of their model garments for display.

Gatherings for Thanksgiving and Christmas usually was near 50 adults and children. Though we do not grieve as those who do not believe, we will miss the sound of her voice, quiet presence, gentle touch and winning smile. May the Lord receive her into His loving embrace with the souls of the righteous, whence all sickness, all sighing and pain have fled away.

May Catherine's memory be eternal!



Prayers by the Laker, St. Velimirovich, LXXXI:

I was a shepherd for sheep, and You elevated me to be a shepherd for men.

I used to find green pasture for the sheep, and they were satisfied. I offer You as nourishment to men, and many do not even try you.

My heart is convulsed within me from sorrow, my Lord, and my eyes are constantly moistened with tears, because many do not try You, but instead they seek their nourishment in the fields of famine.

Not in that direction, my brethren, not in that direction. Those are the fields of famine where you are heading; your hunger will grow greater. And in demon-crazed hunger you will hunt each other and will devour one another, and your hunger will not be satisfied.

Sheep are nourished with what is from God, but you are men, intended to be nourished with God. If men were also to be nourished with the nourishment of sheep, why would God have created both men and sheep?

What are sheep except grass -- the nourishment with which they are nourished. But you are invited to be gods, therefore God offers Himself to you as nourishment.

O my Lord, I kneel down before You and entreat Your mercy. Faith among Your priests has grown cold, therefore many people do not try You. Your rich pasture lies there scarcely touched by grazing. A good shepherd for sheep is not a good shepherd for men. Why did you not leave me, to be good at something small, rather than designate me to be bad at something great?

Even when I was a shepherd of sheep, I was Your priest. With my shepherd's staff I would overturn every stone and blade of grass, and I would lie on my stomach on the ground and listen to the breathing of the earth, and I would lie on my back and watch the awesome fires of heaven. I would touch the dewy leaves in the mountain forest with my forehead, and would hug the tall fir trees that had been struck by lightning with compassion. And I used to read your name etched with fire all over the earth, and I used to feel every footstep beneath me burning and saying: "I am the altar of the Most High." And I used to fill all the valleys, all the groves, and all the pathways with my amazement at Your majesty. But once I grew up I discovered, with unutterable shuddering, that You are even closer to me than I used to suspect in the fields of my childhood. I discovered, O Lord, that even I myself am the earth, in which you burn and speak. I discovered, my Master, that I am the stranger within myself, and You are the Lord and master of the house.

And this discovery filled me with a horror, which pierced me to the marrow of my bones with an icy chill. I said to myself: "Have you not therefore sullied someone else's home and not your own? And have you not brought shame upon another rather than on yourself? Instead of insulting yourself, have you not insulted the master of the house, in whose home you are a guest? And instead of slinging mud on your own place, have you not slung mud on some sort of sun within you?"

What sort of baptism can wash away my disgrace from You? What sort of repentance can rectify my sin against You? Help me to annihilate myself, so that there is no "me," and so that I may be born anew, as a youth without a past. Help me, my heavenly Father.

The pagan idols expect a certain measure of wisdom from their priests. How much more wisdom is necessary for a priest of the Living God!

The idols expect a certain measure of purity. How much more radiant purity is expected of one who serves the God of gods!

The idols expect a certain measure of strength from their servers. With how much more strength must one gird himself, who is a server of the All-Powerful Almighty?

O my Most High heavenly Father, purify my life and make it a sacrifice on Your sacrificial altar. When I was a shepherd of lambs, I used to cry when they wanted to sacrifice a single lamb. Make me as innocent as a lamb, and consume me in flames on Your altar. I promise You that I shall not cry, O my Lord and my God.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, LXXXI:

**II. The Realities of the Spiritual World
Retribution**

The Saviour of our race, employing all means to free man from deception, has shared with us who obey Him heavenly and divine good things. But to the disobedient he has shown that there awaits them not temporal torments that abide for a time, but eternal and everlasting torments.

+ St. Photius the Great, Amphilochius, 6



The Morning Offering – Daily Inspiration by Abbott Tryphon

Therapeutic Medicine

The Medicine found within the Holy Orthodox Church

One medicine for the heart found within the Orthodox Church, is the use of a “Prayer Rule.” This “Rule” is of the utmost importance, for the Prayer Rule helps develop the discipline we all need to progress spiritually. It is one of the greatest of tools, one that has been handed down from the earliest of times. This “art of prayer” comes down from the experience of the Early Church.

Along with keeping the fasting rules of the Church, including the Wednesday and Friday fasts, the Prayer Rule, given to us by our Spiritual Father, Spiritual Mother, or, our Confessor, is the medicine that will help us in our journey into the Heart of God. One basic ingredient in this Prayer Rule, is the Morning and Evening Prayers. I personally prefer the prayers as found in the Jordanville Prayer Book (they can be purchased directly from Holy Trinity Monastery, in Jordanville, New York,) for the language used is the best of English “liturgical language,” and better serves, I believe, the inner life. Common pedestrian language is fine for everyday communication, but formal English liturgical language, when spoken to God, creates the sacred space one reserves for the Lord.

The use of the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner,” throughout the day, aids us in a most powerful way, to focused on Christ. This prayer is often at the heart of any Prayer Rule, because there is power in the Holy Name of Jesus, and this prayer fulfills Saint Paul’s injunction that we “should pray always.” The Jesus Prayer, also known as the Prayer of the Heart, gives us the strength to walk with Jesus, throughout the day, even when driving through heavy traffic, weeding in the garden, waiting for the bus, or sitting in a long board meeting.

Finally, it is important to remember that the Church, as defined by the Early Church Fathers, is not a religious institution, but, rather, a living organism that is the Hospital for the Soul. Her priests, who first sought therapy, became the therapists. Therefore, the frequent use of the “tools” given to us by Christ, through His Church, are of the utmost importance to assure our spiritual progress. Weekly confession, and the weekly reception of the Holy Eucharist, give us spiritual strength, and enable us to live “in the world,” without being “of the world.”

Lastly, whenever we meet a priest, we should ask for a blessing, remembering that it is not his blessing we are seeking, but the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, Whose priesthood the clergyman participates in. When addressing a priest, or bishop, in a written form, whether by letter, or email, it is a good and pious practice to always ask for a blessing. This can be done, if it be a bishop, by writing, “Master, bless.” If a priest, “Father, bless.” Just before signing your name, “Kissing your right hand, and asking your prayers.” Again, this is NOT about the bishop, or the

priest, but ALL about Christ, Whose blessing we seek. It is much the same with the veneration of icons, for when we kiss the icon of a saint, we not only show our love and respect to the saint, as we seek their prayers, but we are kissing Jesus Christ, Who dwells in His saints.

Because Orthodoxy is “wholistic,” in nature, our living out this Faith should not be confined to Sunday morning. If we were a pianist, and made our living playing with an orchestra, we wouldn’t think of going through a week without daily practice, for we’d not be in the orchestra for long. As well, a marriage that is not worked at on a daily basis, is doomed to ultimate failure, for a relationship between two people requires effort. If we expect to have a relationship with God, and would seek to have Him dwell in our heart, we have to treat our spiritual life as something important, and something that we are committed to. An occasional Liturgy does not suffice if we expect to grow in Knowledge and Wisdom.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon



Daily Reflection **Self-Righteous Anger**



“And the high priest stood up and said, ‘Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?’ But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, ‘He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?’ They answered, ‘He deserves death.’ Then they spat in his face, and struck him; and some slapped him...” (Mt 26: 62-67)

On display here is the ugly face of self-righteous anger, and its usual effects. Anger is an ego-defensive emotion, which attempts to “cover up” or mask the deepest fears and insecurities of the high priest and his crowd. Christ has expressed power, both in His silence and in His words, triggering a feeling of powerlessness in these people. Because the Truth and Righteousness of the God-Man place a big question-mark over their “truth” and “righteousness,” which form their entire “raison d’être.” In reaction to this threat to their “truth” and “righteousness,” and to feeling invalidated, the high priest and his crowd resort to anger. And anger does “for” them what it usually does “for” us: 1. It blinds them to their immediate responsibility (i.e. “response ability” or ability to respond adequately to the Person and situation at hand); 2. It grants them the illusion of being back in control, by demeaning and “invalidating” the One Who has made them feel invalidated.

Today let me pay attention to any anger I might feel, if it rears its ugly head. And let me ask myself what, exactly, anger is masking inside of me, asking God to help me deal constructively and honestly vis-à-vis anyone or anything that is making me feel angry. “For the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God.” (Jas 1: 20) Amen!

Holy Orthodox Quotes

“We cannot fully acquire the virtue of purity unless we have first acquired real humility of heart.”

+St John Cassian

Colossians 3:12-15

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.†

The Philokalia: Daily Readings


The greatest weapons of someone striving to lead a life of inward stillness are self-control, love, prayer, and spiritual reading.

+ *St Thalassios the Libyan, 400 Texts on Love and Self-Control*

Ancient Christian Wisdom

Look at the trees of the forest. See how sturdy and beautiful they are, how tall they grow, and how smooth is their bark. Yet when we plant a garden, we prefer other kinds of trees, such as pomegranate and olive trees. This is because we want trees that bear fruit. We are the trees which God has planted in His garden. He is not concerned at how sturdy and beautiful we are, at how tall we grow, or at how smooth our skin is. As trees in his garden, he is concerned only that we bear fruit. And the fruit which he wants us to bear is spiritual: peace and love, faith and gentleness, patience and self-control, generosity and loyalty... He has planted us on this earth not for our own sakes, but for his glory; and we can only glorify him by the spiritual fruits that grow in our souls.

+ **St. John Chrysostom**



A SIGN OF UTTER
MEEKNESS IS TO HAVE A
HEART PEACEFULLY AND
LOVINGLY DISPOSED
TOWARD SOMEONE WHO
HAS BEEN OFFENSIVE.

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS

Preachers Institute

The World's Premier Online Orthodox Christian Homiletics Resource

Why Orthodox Christianity Should Not Change With The Times

October 6, 2016 by Fr. John A. Peck



By St. Theophan the Recluse

It reached my ears that, as it seems, you consider my sermons very strict and believe that today no one should think this way, no one should be living this way and therefore, no one should be teaching this way. “Times have changed!”

How glad I was to hear this. This means that you listen carefully to what I say, and not only do you listen, but you are also willing to abide by it. What more could we hope for, we who preach as we were ordered and as much we were ordered?

Despite all this, in no way can I agree with your opinion. I even consider it my duty to comment on it and to correct it, since – even though it perhaps goes against your desire and conviction – it comes from something sinful, as though Christianity could alter its doctrines, its canons, its sanctifying ceremonies to answer to the spirit of each age and adjust itself to the changing tastes of the sons of this century, as though it could add or subtract something.

Yet, it is not so. Christianity must remain eternally unchanging, in no way being dependent on or guided by the spirit of each age. Instead, Christianity is meant to govern and direct the spirit of the age for anyone who obeys its teachings. To convince you of this, I will put forward some thoughts for you to consider.

Some said that my teaching is strict. First of all, my teaching is not my own, nor it should be. In this sacred office nobody should, nor even can, preach his own teaching. If I or someone else ever dare to do so, you can put us outside the Church.

We preach the teachings of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of the holy Apostles, and the Holy Church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit. At the same time, we make sure to do everything possible to keep these teachings whole and inviolate in your minds and hearts. Every thought we present and every word we use, we do so very carefully, so as not to overshadow this brilliant and divine teaching in any way. Nobody can act differently.

...a single raising of your mind to God, and a single humble genuflection to His glory and in His honor has infinitely more value than all the treasures of the world... –St Nicodemos and Theophan the Recluse (Unseen Warfare: Chapter 20)

Such a law that calls for each man's preaching in the Church to be “God-sent,” was established at the creation of the world, and should thus remain valid until the end of the world. The Prophet Moses, after the delivery of the commandments from God Himself to the people of Israel, concluded:

“You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you.” (Deut. 4:2)

This law of constancy is so unalterable that the Lord and Savior Himself, when He was teaching the people on the mountain, said:

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” (Math. 5:17-18)

Then He gave the same validity to his teaching, before interpreting the commandments in the spirit of the gospel, by adding:

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” (Math. 5:19)

This means that anyone who wrongly interprets the commandments of God and lessens their validity will be an outcast in the future life. This is what He said at the beginning of His preaching. He assured the same thing to Saint John the Theologian, the beholder of ineffable revelations, to whom He described the final judgement of the world and the Church, indicating in the Apocalypse (Book of Revelations):

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.” (Rev. 22:18-19)

From the time of His first appearance in the world until the Second Coming, Christ has given the Holy Apostles and their successors the following law:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” (Math. 28:19-20)

That means

“for you to teach, not what anyone else could possibly imagine, but what I ordered, and this to the end of the world.”

And He adds:

“And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.” (Math. 28:20)

The Apostles received this law and sacrificed their lives in order to keep it. And to those who wanted to keep them from preaching what it was they preached under the threat of punishment and death, they replied: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19-20)

This clear law was delivered by the apostles to their successors, was accepted by them, and has timeless effect in the Church of God. Because of this law, the Church is the pillar and the ground of truth. Can you see then what an

inviolable steadfastness it has? After that, who would be so bold as to stubbornly disturb or move anything in Christian doctrine and law?

Next listen to what is said of the Prophet Ezekiel who for seven days was in the ecstasy of prayer and after seven days heard the word of the Lord:

“Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth” (Ezek. 3:17),

and he declared to the people: Here is the law for you! If you see a wicked person committing iniquity and you do not tell him: leave your iniquity and change your way,

“that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.” (Ezek. 3:18)

Conversely,

“if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul.” (Ezek. 3:19-21)

What a strict law! And though it sounds in the consciences of all pastors during their election and consecration, when a heavy yoke is put on them, namely the instruction of the flock of Christ that He entrusted to them, big or small, not only to guide it but also to preserve it. How could anyone be so bold, to pervert everything in the law of Christ, when this involves the destruction of both pastors and flock?

If the saving power of this teaching depended on our opinion of it and our consent to it, it would make sense for someone to imagine rebuilding Christianity according to human weaknesses or the claims of the age and adapt it according to the sinful desires of his heart. But the saving power of Christian law does not at all depend on us, but on the will of God, by the fact that God Himself established precisely the exact path of salvation. Beyond this there is no other way, nor could it exist. Therefore, anyone who teaches in any other way is deviating from the true path and is destroying himself and you. What logic is there in that?

Notice how strict judgment was mentioned when something similar happened to the nation of Israel during the difficult years of their captivity. Some prophets out of pity for the suffering and sick talked to the people, not as the Lord had ordered, but as their heart dictated. Concerning them the Lord gave the following commands to Ezekiel:

“And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own minds. Prophesy against them and say, Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature, in the hunt for souls.” (Ezek. 13:17-18)

This means: Woe to those who order any kind of special treatment and suggest such leniency, so no one feels the slightest displeasure, either from those on top or those at the bottom, not caring whether this is for their salvation or destruction, whether it is pleasing to God, or repulsive. Woe to them, because

“thus says the Lord God...your pillows and veils,”

namely your candied and comforting teaching,

“upon which there you are perverting souls, I will tear from your arms and I will let their souls that you are perverting, go away...” (Ezek. 13:20-21)

from this teaching of yours and I will destroy you corrupters.

This is the benefit of this special treatment and leniency, such as you want to hear from preachers! When you put all this deep in your heart, it is not right for you to want us to make any concessions in Christian doctrine, having the wrong desire to be pleased by us. On the contrary, you are obliged to persistently demand from us to remain true to doctrine, as strictly and firmly as possible.

Have you ever heard of the indulgences of the Pope of Rome? Here is what they are: special treatment and leniency, which he gives defying the law of Christ. And what is the result? From all of this, the West is corrupt in faith and in their way of life, and is now getting lost in its disbelief and in the unrestrained life with its indulgences.

The Pope changed many doctrines, spoiled all the sacraments, nullified the canons concerning the regulation of the Church and the correction of morals. Everything has begun going contrary to the will of the Lord, and has become worse and worse.

Then came along Luther, a smart man, but stubborn. He said,

“The Pope changed everything as he wanted, why shouldn’t I do the same?”

He started to modify and re-modify everything in his own way, and in this way established the new Lutheran faith, which only slightly resembles what the Lord had commanded and the Holy Apostles delivered to us. After Luther came the philosophers. And they in turn said,

“Luther has established himself a new faith, supposedly based on the Gospel, though in reality based on his own way of thinking. Why, then, don’t we also compose doctrines based on our own way of thinking, completely ignoring the Gospel?”

They then started rationalizing, and speculating about God, the world, and man, each in his own way. And they mixed up so many doctrines, that one gets dizzy just counting them.

Now the Westerners have the following views: Believe what you think best, live as you like, satisfy whatever captivates your soul. This is why they do not recognize any law or restriction and they do not abide by God’s word. Their road is wide, all obstacles displaced. Their way is broad, all the obstacles taken out. But the broad road leads to perdition, according to what the Lord says. This is where leniency in teaching has led! Lord, save us from this broad way! But it is better to love each difficulty that the Lord has appointed for our salvation. Let us love Christian doctrines and let us compel our mind with them, pushing it not to think otherwise. Let us love Christian morals and let us compel our will in them, forcing it to lift the light yoke of the Lord humbly and patiently. Let us love all Christian rituals and services which guide us, correct us, and sanctify us. Let us compel our heart with them, encouraging it to convey its desires from the earthly and perishable, to the heavenly and imperishable.

Let us confine ourselves as though in a cage. Or better, let us drag ourselves, as if we were passing through a narrow passage. Let it be narrow, so no one can deviate neither to the right left, nor the left. Yet undoubtedly, through this narrow way we will obtain the kingdom of the heavens in return. For as you know, this kingdom is the kingdom of the Lord. The Lord laid this narrow way and said,

“Follow exactly this route and you will obtain the kingdom of heaven.”

Could anyone then doubt whether the traveler will get to his destination? And what mind would one have who starts wanting all kinds of annulment of the commandments, when by doing this he would immediately lose his way and be lost?

Once you have fully understood this assertion, do not worry if something in our teaching seems to be strict. The only thing you should strive for is to carefully make sure if it is from the Lord. And after you have made sure it is from the Lord, accept it with all your heart, no matter how strict or obliging it may be. And not only avoid wanting special treatment and leniency with doctrine and the ethics, but even flee from all these, as though fleeing from the fire of Gehenna. Those who cannot escape from this are those who think up such things and with them lure those who are spiritually weak to follow them. Amen.