

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: Trudy Ellmore

Parish Council Vice President: Holly Dawson



Sunday, September 13, 2015

Gospel: Matthew 22:35-46

Tone 6

Epistle: II Corinthians 4:6-15

15th Sunday after Pentecost; Forefeast of the Elevation of the Cross & The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross



**Glory to
Jesus Christ!**

**Glory
Forever!**

*The Universal Exaltation
of the Precious and Life-
Giving Cross*

*O Lord, save Your people, And bless Your inheritance.
Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians
Over their adversaries. And by virtue of Your Cross,
Preserve Your habitation.*

Today the Church Remembers

15th Sunday After Pentecost — Tone 6. Forefeast of the Elevation of the Cross. Commemoration of the Founding of the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulcher) at Jerusalem (335). Sunday before Elevation. The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Lifegiving Cross. Hieromartyr Cornelius the Centurion (1st c.). Martyrs Chronides, Leontius and Serapion, of Alexandria (237). Martyrs Seleucus in Scythia, and Stratonicus (3rd c.). Martyrs Macrobius and Gordian at Tomi in Romania (4th c.). Hieromartyr Julian of Galatia (4th c.). Martyrs Elias, Zoticus, Lucian, and Valerian (4th c.). St. Peter of Atroë (9th c.). Greatmartyr Ketevan, Queen of Georgia (1624). Ven. Hierotheus the Younger of Iveron (Mt. Athos—1745). **Rest of St. John Chrysostom** (407). Monk Martyr Macarius of Dionysiou (Mt. Athos—1507). Monk Martyr Joseph of Dionysiou (Mt. Athos—1819).

Weekly Bulletin Sponsors

In Eternal Memory of:

Elena (Helen) Wolfe, offered by Church of the Mother of God, the Sisterhood, parishioners and her family.

Liturgical Schedule:

Sunday, September 13th

9:45 am: General Confession
10:00 am: Divine Liturgy

Monday, September 14th

7:00- 9:00 pm: Viewing for Helen Wolfe

Tuesday, September 15th

10:00 am: Funeral Services for Helen Wolfe

Saturday, September 19th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 20th

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

Saturday, September 26th

6:30 pm: Vespers

Sunday, September 27th

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

Readings:

Epistle: II Corinthians 4:6-15

Brethren, it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death

for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, "I believed, and so I spoke," we too believed, and so we speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

Gospel: Matthew 22:35-46

At that time, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet'? If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?" And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did any one dare to ask him any more questions.



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 and \$2 for a small one.

Private Confessions: Can be heard a half hour before any service. See Father Matthew for other times and **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:
Bulletin@ChurchMotherOfGod.org

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.

SPECIAL PARISH MEETING: On Sunday, September 27th, following the Coffee Hour there will be a parish meeting to approve minor changes to the Amendment to the Parish Corporation Papers which will update their content. Please attend this very important meeting. Council meeting will be following the Special meeting.

Registration for Sunday School is now on-going. Registration forms can be found at the candle stand. Even if your child attended Sunday School last year, please fill out a new registration form. Sunday School classes will begin SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 20TH. The upper elementary class will meet at 9:30 each week except for the first Sunday of the month, when there will be no class. The pre-school/primary class will meet immediately after Divine Liturgy every week, including the first Sunday of the month. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE SEE MARIBETH ROMANOFSKY OR LINDA DANTINNE.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

“Facing Forward” Part 2: Practical Principles of Orthodox Evangelization by Joseph Kormos

8. Prerequisites for evangelizing. There are a number of prerequisites involved in undertaking an evangelization effort.

- **Know God.** If we are to share our faith, we must live it fully. Our first task is to enter into and live in the reality of God – to be in personal communion with Him. The goal of evangelization is “growth in life and faith and spiritual understanding.” That growth is rooted in our knowledge and experience of God and our conviction that Jesus Christ is the very center of our lives. As Saint Gregory of Nyssa writes, “Let your life testify to the presence of God within you.”
- **A community of love.** Our second priority is to manifest a spiritual quality of life within the parish community and project this beyond “our walls.” Where there is hatred, bitterness, resentment and hostility, the community of love is destroyed—and without love, the spiritual character of the Church is destroyed. Evangelization efforts will be useless without a receptive and caring parish.
- **Proclaim and serve.** A third prerequisite is to go out into the world to proclaim the Gospel by serving “the least of the brethren” and providing for their essential needs—as revealed in Matthew 25. The light of God must be allowed to illumine through us and God’s goodness must be made to season our life by our actions. We proclaim faith through actions that shine in the surrounding world.

9. Don’t wait for perfection. Many parishes and individuals are unsure if they are ready to evangelize. But “waiting until we’re ready” almost always assures us of “never being ready.”

Every parish is called upon to exercise in its own special way every one of the ministries of the body of Christ as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12. The parish’s ministry for the spiritual growth of its own members is inseparable from its mission to bring those beyond its walls to the knowledge of the Truth. Neither is ever completed.

10. Evangelization will change your parish. Seeking new members without the willingness to accept them fully into the community misses the mark. The fruit of a parish’s evangelization efforts will be new Christians who are, in all probability, going to be different in many ways than its current members. Efforts cannot be restricted to seeking “replacements” who are “just like us.” The very heart of the Gospel is “change”—to “repent” means “to change.”

11. Intentional, structured effort is essential. A parish in decline cannot grow simply because it wants to. While the desire to grow, coupled with a parish climate that fosters growth and attracts and assimilates new members, are necessary, there must be something more. Effective evangelization is not accidental or unconscious. It is intentional. The parish must find ways to translate the evangelistic impulse into a specific, effective, intentional and active ministry.

As a first step each parish should evaluate its performance in evangelism and growth. Key question in this regard include the following.

- Who is responsible for our parish’s outreach and evangelistic witness and ministry?
- What are our current procedures and how well are we doing with various aspects of the evangelistic cycle?
- Where are we ministering—that is, what is unique about the “place” in which we have been “planted” and how might we best relate the Gospel “where we are, here and now?”
- What gifts, talents and skills do we possess and how can they be used in sharing the Gospel with others?

While, as noted above, merely possessing a “plan” is in and of itself insufficient, a parish does need to plan its ministry and set goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time sensitive.

12. Define a parish evangelization cycle. A somewhat systematic approach to the ministry of evangelization can be helpful. One such approach, shown below, follows the life cycle of a new member in coming to the parish.

- ✓ Identify. Locate receptive persons and pockets of persons who represent areas of greatest potency for the parish’s evangelization ministry.
- ✓ Inform. Build an awareness, trust, curiosity and openness to the parish and the Church. And be genuine. A parish that has as its motto “we’re a caring, sharing community,” yet fails to provide a genuine welcome to “outsiders,” will only ensure that such persons remain “outsiders.”
- ✓ Invite those with curiosity and receptivity to “come and see.” Welcome and receive them with warmth.
- ✓ Nurture. Follow up carefully and honestly to grow interest in and excitement for the faith. Assist others to explore what the Church offers and to identify whether they truly seek it. Encourage participation as appropriate in liturgical services, ministries, activities and events.
- ✓ Instruct. Guide enquirers to participate in catechetical programs, Scripture studies or other “points of entry” through parish groups.
- ✓ Incorporate. Involve or include new members in roles, tasks or groups after they’ve embraced the faith.
- ✓ Inspire. Encourage others to begin the cycle anew by evangelizing the active to renew their commitment to Christ, to “heat up” the inactive or minimally involved, and to share the light of Christ with the unchurched.

13. Catechesis is crucial. Evangelization aims at making a life-long commitment. It is crucial to take responsibility for those to whom we have preached. Jesus told His apostles to “go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... teaching them...” [Matthew 28:16ff]. After the day of Pentecost, the disciples “were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” [Acts 4:2]. No one can teach about the Kingdom of God without evangelizing, and no one can properly evangelize without teaching. As receptive persons begin to truly seek Christ, the teaching role of the parish becomes supremely important.

14. Beauty: Our secret weapon. Many Orthodox Christians are familiar with the story of Saint Vladimir, who in the 10th century sent envoys to observe worship firsthand in other lands. After visiting Constantinople’s Great Church of Hagia Sophia, they reported, “We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth... and we cannot forget that beauty.”

Orthodox Christian worship is a sensory experience and strong on beauty. Icons fill the walls, illuminated by candles and framed with chanting and incense. While such beauty alone is insufficient, an atmosphere of beauty teaches wordlessly about the nature of God. It teaches that He is not a “concept” to be discussed endlessly and that, at some point, our capacity to grasp Him intellectually fails and we fall before Him in worship. Beauty opens the heart and stirs a hunger for God.

The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross



The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross of the Lord: The pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind. The Emperor Hadrian (117-138) gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Lord, and to build a temple of the pagan goddess Venus and a statue of Jupiter.

Pagans gathered at this place and offered sacrifice to idols there. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian sacred remains, the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This took place under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) after his victory in the year 312 over Maxentius, ruler of the Western part of the Roman empire, and over Licinius, ruler of its Eastern part. In the year 323 Constantine became the sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire.

In 313 he had issued the Edict of Milan, by which the Christian religion was legalized and

the persecutions against Christians in the Western half of the empire were stopped. The ruler Licinius, although he had signed the Edict of Milan to oblige Constantine, still fanatically continued the persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the 313 Edict of toleration extend also to the Eastern part of the empire. The Holy Equal of the Apostles Emperor Constantine, having gained victory over his enemies in three wars with God's assistance, had seen in the heavens the Sign of the Cross, and written beneath: "By this you shall conquer."

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, St Constantine sent his mother, the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to St Macarius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and the statues in Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful.

Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by the name of Jude who stated that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. They demolished the pagan temple and, after praying, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body (March 6).

In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Savior was crucified, Patriarch Macarius alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead one, he came to life. Having beheld the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found.

Christians came in a huge throng to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching St Macarius to elevate the Cross, so that even those far off might reverently contemplate it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders raised up the Holy Cross, and the people, saying "Lord have mercy," reverently prostrated before the

Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Life-Creating Cross another miracle took place: a grievously sick woman, beneath the shadow of the Holy Cross, was healed instantly. The elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Cyriacus and afterwards was consecrated Bishop of Jerusalem.

During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ (see October 28). The holy empress Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Savior, building more than 80 churches, at Bethlehem the birthplace of Christ, and on the Mount of Olives where the Lord ascended to Heaven, and at Gethsemane where the Savior prayed before His sufferings and where the Mother of God was buried after her death.

St Helen took part of the Life-Creating Wood and nails with her to Constantinople. The holy emperor Constantine gave orders to build at Jerusalem a majestic and spacious church in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, also including under its roof the Life-Giving Tomb of the Lord and Golgotha. The temple was constructed in about ten years. St Helen did not survive until the dedication of the temple, she died in the year 327. The church was consecrated on September 13, 335. On the following day, September 14, the festal celebration of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross was established.

Another event connected to the Cross of the Lord is remembered also on this day: its return to Jerusalem from Persia after a fourteen year captivity. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Phocas (602-610) the Persian emperor Khozroes II in a war against the Greeks defeated the Greek army, plundered Jerusalem and captured both the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord and the Holy Patriarch Zachariah (609-633).

The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years and only under the emperor Heraclius (610-641), who with the help of God defeated Khozroes and concluded peace with his successor and son Syroes, was the Cross of the Lord returned to the Christians.

With great solemnity the Life-creating Cross was transferred to Jerusalem. Emperor Heraclius in imperial crown and royal purple carried the Cross of Christ into the temple of the Resurrection. With the emperor went Patriarch Zacharios. At the gates by which they ascended Golgotha, the emperor suddenly stopped and was not able to proceed farther. The holy Patriarch explained to the emperor that an angel of the Lord was blocking his way. The emperor was told to remove his royal trappings and to walk barefoot, since He Who bore the Cross for the salvation of the world from sin had made His way to Golgotha in all humility. Then Heraclius donned plain garb, and without further hindrance, carried the Cross of Christ into the church.

In a sermon on the Exaltation of the Cross, St Andrew of Crete (July 4) says: “The Cross is exalted, and everything true gathers together, the Cross is exalted, and the city makes solemn, and the people celebrate the feast”.

*Prayers by the Lake, St. Nikolai
Velimirovich, XXII:*

O Only Son of God, receive me into Your wisdom. You are the head of all the sons of men. You are their heavenly comprehension, illumination and jubilation.

You are the One who thinks the same goodness in all men: the same thought and the same light. A man recognizes another man through You. A man prophesies to another man through You. Through Your voice men hear each other. In Your language they understand. Truly, You are the Ultimate Man, for existentially all men are in You and You are in each.

You build the mind of man, and Your shadow demolishes it.

You have formed all forms, and You have stamped all of them with the seal of Your wisdom. You have fashioned all vessels from clay and have filled them all with the song and joy of the Holy Trinity, but Your shadow has dripped a drop of sorrow into each vessel, with which the sorrowful inscribe griefs on You.

O Majestic Lord! You dance on Your Mother's lap, quickened by the All-Holy Spirit. Direct my mind to Your mind, and with Your radiance cleanse it of sorrowful thoughts, of sorrowful forebodings, of sorrowful intentions. O my Majestic Lord!

You fill the whole soul of Your Mother, all Her virgin breast; and there is nothing in Your Mother's soul except You. You are Her radiance and Her voice, truly Her eye and Her song.

You are the pride of the Holy Spirit Lord--His activity and His fruit--His fascination and His admiration! You, my Majestic Lord, who dance on Your Mother's lap, quickened by the Holy Spirit!

You are the courage of the Holy Trinity, Its heroism and Its history. You dared to let one triune ray into chaos and darkness, and the world became--a miracle, that the eye can not see nor the ear hear, O Creator of the eye and the ear.

And this whole miracle is just a pale picture of You, just a copied and distorted likeness of You in pieces of a half-darkened mirror.¹ My heart yearns for Your complete image, O Son of God. For it is bitterness to be a fragment of Your image, drifting in-securely on an ocean of darkness.

Shatter the narrowness of my soul, O expanse of the triradiate Godhead!

Illuminate my mind, O light of angels and creatures. Make my life logical, Most Wise logos of God. Make my soul a virgin, and be her eye and her song.

Sayings of the Ascetics of the Orthodox Church, XXI

Those Who Have Known God

Don't be troubled if you don't feel the love of God in yourself, but think about the Lord, that He is merciful, and guard yourself from sins, and the grace of God will teach you.

St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, IX.16

The Prologue of Ohrid

St. Nikolai Velimirovic

Reflection

What happens to the persecutors of Christ's Church? Ask Saul, the persecutor of the Church, what happened to him. *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks* (Acts 9:5), the Lord said to Saul; and Saul was baptized and became Paul. What happened to Herod, the first persecutor of Christians? What happened to Julian the Apostate? They died evil deaths and their efforts against Christ dispersed into nothing, like smoke. And so it was throughout all of history: some persecutors converted to Christianity and others died evil deaths; but always, the efforts of one or the other against Christianity are dispersed into nothing, like smoke. When he attacked Jerusalem, Emperor Hadrian sought revenge against the Jews and against the Christians, for he did not distinguish Christians from Jews. He dispersed the Jews throughout the world, and built an idolatrous temple on the spot where the Temple of Solomon had stood. He also renamed Jerusalem "Aelia," after his own name [Aelius], and forbade that this city be called Jerusalem by anyone. He built a temple on Golgotha to the fowl Venus, a temple to Zeus over the tomb of the Lord, and a temple to Adonis in Bethlehem. How sorrowful the Christians of that time must have felt, seeing their holy shrines mocked in such a manner. But what happened in the end? Emperor Hadrian died an evil death and, in the time of Empress Helena and Emperor Constantine, the pagan temples were torn down, and in their places beautiful Christian churches were built--and these are still standing, even today. *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*. Oh, how desperate and hopeless is every struggle against Christ!

Contemplation

Contemplate the vanity of men's efforts in opposition to the will of God (I Kings 12):

1. How ten tribes broke away and took Solomon's servant as king;
2. How Rehoboam prepared an army to make war against Jeroboam;
How God held him back from war, saying through the prophet: *For this thing is of Me* (I Kings 12:24).

Homily:
on how the world hates the witness of its sin

The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth (John 7:7).

Why does the world hate Christ the Lord? The Lord Himself immediately explained this: *Because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil* (John 7:7). Men do not hate anyone as much as a witness to their sin. Because of this, the greatest misdeeds of the world are committed at night, in darkness. But does God not see at night, in darkness? In truth, God sees, but the evildoers do not see God. And even if some of them believe somewhat in God, they think, because of their own insufficient enlightenment, that darkness is a curtain between men and God. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself clearly revealed that God is all-seeing, and that no darkness prevents His eyes from seeing. He Himself saw men at a distance, such as Nathaniel under the fig tree. He saw a donkey with its colt in another village. His sight was not impeded by spatial distance. He foresaw the denial of Peter, the betrayal of Judas, His own death and Resurrection, the destruction of Jerusalem, the eternity of His Church, the suffering of His followers, and the events at the end of time. His sight was not impeded by the distance of time. But what more is there to enumerate? And what is more hidden than the hearts of men? Is not the heart hidden by the thick curtain of the body? Are not the thoughts in the heart more hidden than the heart itself? Nevertheless, He penetrated the darkness of men's hearts and read their thoughts there: *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?* (Matthew 9:4). Brethren, it is no wonder that all those who thought or committed evil were afraid of such a witness. Is it a wonder, then, that the evildoers hated Him?

The world cannot hate you. Whom? All of you who participate in the evil of the world and who, because of your participation, dare not witness against the world. How can those who fear men witness against men? How can those who seek the glory of men bring the condemnation of men against themselves?

O my brethren, it is better for us if the world hates us, and Christ loves us--than if the whole world loves us and glorifies us, and Christ turns His face from us, saying: *I know you not*. If the world hates us, let us be comforted by the words of the Savior: *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you* (John 15:18).

O Blessed Lord, the Source of all blessings, strengthen our hearts, that we may not be frightened when the world hates us. Only bless and love us, O Good Savior.

To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Thoughts for Each Day of the Year
According to the Daily Church
Readings from the Word of God
By St. Theophan the Recluse

The Lord offered the commandment about love for God and one's neighbor, and immediately supplemented it with the teaching about His Sonship to God and His Divinity. Why was this? Because true love for God and people is possible no way other than by the influence of faith in the Divinity of Christ the Saviour, that He is the incarnate Son of God. Such faith arouses love for God, for how can one not love God, who has loved us so much, Who did not even spare His Only-Begotten Son, but gave Him up for us? Faith brings this love to complete fulfilment, or to what it seeks; while love seeks a living union. To attain this union, one must overcome a feeling of God's righteousness which punishes sin; without this it is terrifying to approach God. This feeling is overcome through the conviction that God's righteousness is satisfied by the death on the cross of the Son of God. Such a conviction comes from faith; consequently, faith opens the path of love toward God. This is the first thing. Second: faith in the Divinity of the Son of God Who was incarnate, suffered, and was buried for our sake, gives an example of

love for one’s neighbor; for love is when one lays down his soul for his beloved. Faith also gives strength for the manifestation of such love. To have such love, one must become a new person instead of an egotistical person—one must become a self-sacrificing person. Only in Christ does a person become a new creature; but we can only be in Christ if we unite with Christ by faith and grace-filled rebirth through the holy mysteries accepted with faith. From here it follows that any expectation by people without faith to maintain even good moral conduct is in vain. Everything is together; it is impossible to divide a man. One must satisfy all of him.

PRIDE

Pride, and the monks struggle for humility

Struggling with his pride, the monk focuses on bringing his own will into conformity with the will of God, through monastic obedience. This obedience is not limited to obeying the directives of his abbot, but taking up a standard of humility that takes seriously his adherence to the 102 canons of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, in the garb he wears, and refraining from cutting his hair and beard. The monk places his own will aside, taking up the tradition of the Church, and making it his own.

Recognizing that false humility is almost wholly the product of self-righteous hypocrisy, the monk dedicates himself to a truth which is absolute, and which transcends his personal opinion. It is precisely this humility which Saint Paul reveals to us when, boasting of his sufferings and exploits, he tells us that they have meaning only in Jesus Christ.

The monk fights off the temptation of making his faith a form of ideology, for he knows the knowledge of Jesus Christ, when transformed into an ideological and moralistic knowledge,

closes the door to others, and turns Christianity into a list of requirements, denuding the message of the Church into yet another worldly political force. Thus, the monk refuses to let his Christian faith distance himself from others, because he knows the monastic life is not a withdrawal from others, but an embracing of all humanity, through his intimate relationship with Christ, through Whom all are united.

It is only through his immersion in a life of prayer, that the monk's faith becomes something other than an ideology. Through his uniting of himself in the prayer of the Church, the monk loses himself, becoming one with Christ, and with all Christians. His quest for humility comes through his having united himself to the humility of Christ, Who condescended to take on our flesh, in order to unite His divinity, with our humanity.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

