

The talk, delivered at the Saint Herman Winter Pilgrimage on December 12/25, 1979, at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, N.Y. by **Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose)** .

## **Orthodoxy in America**

We have gathered here today to venerate St. Herman, first saint of the American land, first Orthodox missionary to America, bringer of Orthodox Christianity to the New World. This feast gives us an opportunity to look at the Orthodoxy he brought: what has happened to it since his time, where it stands in this country today, what are the hopes for it -- and for us, who are today's Orthodox Christians - - in the years ahead, nearly two hundred years after the seeds of the true faith were planted here.

### **The Past of Orthodoxy in America**

I will say only a few words about the past of Orthodoxy in America, in order to concentrate chiefly on what faces us today.

#### **The Beginning and Early Success**

First of all, of course, there was the mission of St. Herman himself, with the seven other missionaries who came with him from Valaam and Konevits Monasteries in the north of Russia in 1794. It is really astonishing what an Orthodox foundation these missionaries laid in Alaska, considering how few they were and what obstacles they faced. One of these eight, Fr. Ioasaph, was consecrated bishop in order to increase the work in America, but he was lost at sea on the return voyage before he could even begin his work. There were few priests in the early years, St. Herman himself wasn't a priest, and the Russian officials in Alaska were not very cooperative -- but in those years thousands of natives were baptized, and their descendants remain Orthodox today; and with St. Herman's labors as a monk, preacher, and carer of orphans, America saw for the first time a living example of the traditional Orthodox piety and spiritual life which made Holy Russia. This is something very important for our Orthodoxy today -- this example of true Orthodox Christianity in practice.

The next great Orthodox missionary in America was the holy hierarch Innocent of Alaska, who first as priest and then as bishop gave a classic example of Orthodox missionary activity, translating the Gospel into the local languages, caring for the bodies as well as the souls of the flock of his vast missionary territory. In his last years, when he became Metropolitan of Moscow, he supported missionary labors in other places also.

With the sale of Alaska to the American government in 1867, the mission territory changed somewhat: the Russian government continued to send support to Alaska, but the seat of the Diocese now became San Francisco, and for the first time an English-language mission was undertaken. The outstanding missionary at the beginning of this century in San Francisco was Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich, a Serb by birth who died in Yugoslavia in 1940, whose books on Orthodox faith and practice in English are still in print. Bishop Tikhon (the future Patriarch of Moscow) also greatly encouraged the English-language mission, and under him and the other Russian bishops there were missions also for other national groups -- Syrians, Serbs, etc.

### **First Troubles**

However, even at this time the beginnings of weaknesses could be noted. America is a vast land; the Russians and other Orthodox settlers were widely scattered; priests were thinly spread; and perhaps most important of all, there were no other-worldly saints like St. Herman to plant the seeds of holiness deep in the American soil. Further, the English-speaking American people were not simple like the natives of Alaska, and they already practiced some form of Christian faith.

For all of these reasons we can see the beginning, even before the Russian Revolution, of the terrible disease we see in the Orthodox jurisdictions in America today; the disease of worldliness. Outwardly, the Orthodox clergy began to look like the non-Orthodox clergy around them; inwardly, the concern was mainly to provide priests for the widely-scattered ethnic flock, without deepening their Orthodoxy by providing English texts of the classic Orthodox books or reaching out to tell the non-Orthodox who might listen that there is a true Christianity that is undreamed of in the West, the fullness of Holy Orthodoxy.

The Revolution of 1917 in Russia struck a deadly blow to the Orthodox mission: support from Russia was cut off, the oneness of the Church fell apart into national jurisdictions, and the clergy were left pretty much to themselves. The worldliness of American life was left free to put its stamp on the Orthodox mission, and there was not much strength to oppose it. When Archbishop Vitaly (later of Jordanville) came to America in the 1930's to become ruling bishop, he saw that Orthodoxy in America, if left to itself, would simply turn into an "*Eastern-rite Protestantism*" - that is, it would retain some of the externals of Orthodoxy, but inwardly would be scarcely different from the worldly Protestantism which is the predominant religion of America.

### **Opposing the Worldliness**

The second wave of Russian emigration after World War 11, including the transfer to Jordanville of Archbishop Vitaly's whole monastic community which he had established in Czechoslovakia -- was the first major influence acting against the

worldliness which has been engulfing America in the 20th century. But its influence has been mostly restricted to our Russian Church Outside of Russia -- the other jurisdictions in America for the most part have continued their worldly path, and this is the chief reason for the widening difference between us and them.

One has only to go into a church of one of the modernist Orthodox jurisdictions in this country to see some of the results of this worldly spirit: pews, often organs, streamlined and sometimes dramatized services, various modern gimmicks for making money; and very often the chief emphasis is placed on ethnic rather than spiritual values -- including the newest ethnic emphasis, Americanism.

The churches of our Russian Church Outside of Russia are usually quite different, with no pews or organs, and a more old-worldly kind of piety; and there has been a noticeable revival of traditional church iconography and other church arts. The traditional Orthodox influence is visible even in such external things as the way our clergy dress and the beards which almost all of our clergy have. Just a few decades ago almost no Orthodox clergy in America had beards or wore *rassas* on the street; and while this is something outward, it is still a reflection of a traditional mentality which has had many inward, spiritual results also. A few of the more conservative priests in other jurisdictions have now begun to return to more traditional Orthodox ways, but if so, it is largely under the influence of our Church, and a number of these priests have told us that they look to our Russian Church Outside of Russia as a standard and inspiration of genuine Orthodoxy.

However, the object of this talk is to go a little deeper than these externals and to see where our Orthodoxy is today in America, and especially what we ourselves can do to make ourselves more fervent, more Orthodox, more in the spirit of St. Herman, who for all time has set the "tone" for Orthodoxy in America.

To do this, we must first of all recognize the chief enemy facing us: it is, of course, the devil, who wants to knock us off the path of salvation; and the chief means he uses in our times to do this is the **spirit of worldliness**. This is what has weakened and watered down Orthodoxy in America -- and not just in the other jurisdictions. The spirit of worldliness is in the air we breathe, and we cannot escape it. You cannot watch television, you cannot go to a supermarket, you cannot walk in the streets of any city in America -- without being bombarded by this spirit. In supermarkets and other large stores they even play lighthearted, senseless music in order to catch you in this spirit and make sure that you don't think or feel in an other-worldly way. Our Church and everyone in it is attacked by this spirit, and we can't escape it by isolating ourselves in a ghetto or in a small town; the outside influences can be lessened, perhaps, in such ways, but if we are not fighting an **inward spiritual battle** against worldliness, we will still be conquered by it without fail. And so the chief question regarding the future of our Orthodoxy in America -- and in the whole world, for that matter -- is: **how do we remain**

**orthodox and develop our orthodoxy** against the spirit of worldliness that attacks us on all sides?

In order to answer this question we have to ask first another question that might be a little surprising: what is Orthodoxy? But this question is basic; if we aren't sure just what Orthodoxy is, we won't know what we're trying to preserve and develop against the spirit of worldliness. And so let us ask this question:

## **What Is Orthodoxy?**

### **Right is Not Enough**

We can define Orthodoxy in no better way than in the words of the great 18th-century Russian Father, St. Tikhon of Zadonsk -- a Saint whose fervent spirit is needed very much today by Orthodox Christians. We should read him more and practice what he teaches. St. Tikhon calls Orthodoxy "the true Christianity," and he wrote a whole book under this title. But "true Christianity" does not mean just having the right opinions about Christianity -- this is not enough to save one's soul.

St. Tikhon in his book, in the chapter on "The Gospel and Faith," says: "If someone should say that true faith is the correct holding and confession of correct dogmas, he would be telling the truth, for a believer absolutely needs the Orthodox holding and confession of dogmas. But this knowledge and confession by itself does not make a man a faithful and true Christian. The keeping and confession of Orthodox dogmas is always to be found in true faith in Christ, but the true faith of Christ is not always to be found in the confession of Orthodoxy... The knowledge of correct dogmas is in the mind, and it is often fruitless, arrogant, and proud... The true faith in Christ is in the heart, and it is fruitful, humble, patient, loving, merciful, compassionate, hungering and thirsting for righteousness; it withdraws from worldly lusts and clings to God alone, strives and seeks always for what is heavenly and eternal, struggles against every sin, and constantly seeks and begs help from God for this." And he then quotes Blessed Augustine, who teaches: "The faith of a Christian is with love; faith without love is that of the devil" ("True Christianity," ch. 287, p. 469). St. James in his Epistle tells us that "the demons also believe and tremble" (James 3:19).

St. Tikhon, therefore, gives us a start in understanding what Orthodoxy is: it is something first of all of the **heart**, not just the mind, something **living** and **warm**, not abstract and cold, some thing that is learned and practiced in **life**, not just in school.

### **To Be Different**

A person who takes Orthodoxy seriously and begins to really work on understanding it with his heart and changing himself -- has at least a little of a

quality we might call the fragrance of true Christianity; he is different from people who live by nothing higher than the world. St. Macarius the Great, the 4th-century Egyptian desert father, teaches in his Homilies that "Christians have their own world, their own way of life, their own understanding and word and activity; far different from theirs are the way of life and understanding and word and activity of the people of this world. Christians are one thing, and lovers of the world quite another. Inasmuch as the mind and understanding of Christians is constantly occupied with reflection on the heavenly, they behold eternal good things by communion and participation in the Holy Spirit... Christians have a different world ... a different way of thinking from all other men" (Homily V, 1:20). Later I'll try to say a word on how Orthodox Christians should be absorbing this different world and way of thinking. Orthodoxy, the true Christianity, is not just another set of beliefs; it is a whole way of life that makes us different people, and it is directly bound up with how much heavenly and eternal things are present in our life.

An Orthodox person who is **not** different can be worse off than the non-Orthodox. There is nothing sadder than the spectacle of Orthodox Christians, who possess a treasure that cannot be valued by any earthly measure, something which many are seeking and do not find in today's world -- nothing is sadder than Orthodox Christians who do not value and do not use this treasure.

### **An Example for the Orthodox**

I'd like to tell you a little about a group of Protestants who live not too far from our monastery in northern California. In some ways I think they are actually an example for us, in other ways a warning, and perhaps most of all an indication of the responsibility and opportunity we Orthodox Christians have because we have been given the **true Christianity**.

These Protestants have a simple and warm Christian faith without much of the sectarian narrowness that characterizes many Protestant groups. They don't believe, like some Protestants, that they are "saved" and don't need to do any more; they believe in the idea of spiritual struggle and training the soul. They force themselves to forgive each other and not to hold grudges. They take in bums and hippies off the streets and have a special farm for rehabilitating them and teaching them a sense of responsibility. In other words, they take Christianity seriously as the most important thing in life; it's not the fullness of Christianity that we Orthodox have, but it's good as far as it goes, and these people are warm, loving people who obviously love Christ. In this way they are an example of what we should be, only more so.

Whether they attain salvation by their practice of Christianity is for God to judge, for some of their views and actions are far from the true Christianity of Orthodoxy handed down to us from Christ and His Apostles; but at least an awareness of their existence should help us to be aware of what we already have. Some of our

Orthodox young people -- for whatever reason, they don't realize what treasure their Orthodox faith contains -- are joining such Protestant groups; and some of our uninformed young people go much farther from Orthodoxy -- one of the 900 victims of Jonestown a year ago was a Greek Orthodox girl, the daughter of an Orthodox priest.

### **A Matter of Life and Death**

I'm telling you about these Protestants both as a warning of how Orthodox young people can lose the treasure they already have if they haven't been made aware enough of it, and more importantly, as a means of defining a little better the true Christianity we have and these Protestants don't have. Some of our Orthodox young people are converted to groups like this, but it works the other way around also -- some of these Protestants are being converted to Orthodoxy. And why not? If we have the true Christianity, there should be something in our midst that someone who sincerely loves the truth will see and want.

We've baptized several people from this Protestant group in our monastery; they are drawn to Orthodoxy by the grace and the sacraments whose presence they feel in Orthodoxy, but which are absent in their group. And once they become Orthodox, they find their Protestant experience, which seemed so real to them at the time, to be quite shallow and superficial. Their leaders give very practical teachings based on the Gospel, but after a while the teachings are exhausted and they repeat themselves. Coming to Orthodoxy, these converts find a wealth of teaching that is inexhaustible and leads them into a depth of Christian experience that is totally beyond even the best of non-Orthodox Christians. We who are already Orthodox have this treasure and this depth right in front of us, and we must use it more fully than we usually do; it is a matter of spiritual life and death both for ourselves and for those around us who can be awakened to the truth of Orthodoxy.

Just this last week I crossed the whole of America by train -- a vast land, with many different kinds of landscapes and settlements. And I thought of St. Seraphim's vision of the vast Russian land, with the smoke of the prayers of believers going up like incense to God. Perhaps someone will say to me: "Oh, you talk like a convert! America is America. It's full of Protestants and unbelievers, and the Orthodox will always be a little minority of people who stick to themselves and have no influence on the rest of America." Well, I'm not saying that we Orthodox will "convert America" -- that's a little too ambitious for us. However, St. Herman himself did have such a dream. He wrote a letter after participating in the first "missionary conference" on American soil, when that small band of missionaries divided up the vast land of Alaska and argued over who would get the most land to cover. St. Herman, hearing this, says that he was so exalted in soul that he thought he was present when the Apostles themselves were dividing up the world for the preaching of the Gospel.

We don't have to have such exalted ideas in order to see that the prayers of believers could be going up to God in America. What if we who are Orthodox Christians began to realize who we are? -- to take our Christianity seriously, to **live** as though we actually were in contact with the true Christianity? We would begin to be different, others around us would begin to be interested in why we are different, and we would begin to realize that we have the answers to their spiritual questions.

### **We Have to Sow More**

On this same train trip across the country I had what could be called missionary encounters. Of course, I wasn't passing out tracts in the aisles; but just sitting there in my ~rassa~ with a cross and my beard, I attracted attention. Some of it wasn't fruitful, but was typical of how we Orthodox are often regarded in America: one small boy thought I was "Santa Claus," and a woman pointed me out as "Ayatollah!" I also had several encounters with people who **should** have been Orthodox: one woman who was married to a Greek man; a man who was married to a Greek woman, but neither of them Orthodox because the woman's grandmother had become a Lutheran for social reasons -- here it was obvious how worldliness had taken its toll of yet another Orthodox family in America.

But there were some fruitful encounters, too. To several people I was able to speak about Orthodoxy (which they had never heard of) and hand out some copies of "The Orthodox Word". One of these people had a story that should move our Orthodox hearts.

For most of the day that I was crossing vast Wyoming -- full of nothing but frozen, barren land and a few antelope herds -- I was talking to an intense young man who was searching for the truth after finding out that the "charismatic" movement is not from God. After becoming disillusioned with American religion -- the Methodists, Roman Catholics, Baptists, and various Protestant evangelists -- as a last resort he is learning Russian in order to go to Russia and find out what he'll be told by people who are suffering for their faith. "Maybe that will be real," he said, as opposed to the religious hypocrisy he sees everywhere. He asked me eagerly about many things, from doctrines to customs to moral teachings, and then read the chapter on the charismatic movement in our book, "Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future" -- which he said put into words what he felt (based on his own experience) but didn't have the teaching to express. Here is where Orthodoxy, the true Christianity, can literally save someone who otherwise might fall into despair from the inadequacy of the Christianity of the West. Here again a seed was sown; perhaps Wyoming won't become Orthodox, but a few souls there might.

All this is by way of explaining that Orthodoxy, in St. Tikhon's definition, is the **true Christianity**, and it was never more needed than today. We must realize what a treasure we have, and make it active in us. This need not mean going door

to door like Jehovah's Witnesses, or preaching in the streets. The outward expression of our faith will come naturally once we have begun to go inward, finding out what this treasure is and letting ourselves be truly changed by it.

Recently an Orthodox person of some sensitivity and depth told me: "Orthodoxy is the truth, but it's too difficult for men today, so I seldom speak of it." There is a kernel of truth in this statement. Orthodoxy IS difficult compared to the Western denominations; but still -- anyone who is capable of wanting a demanding faith is capable of accepting Orthodoxy. We have to sow more, so there will be more to reap. But first of all we have to go inward and make the true Christianity of Orthodoxy a **living part of ourselves**.

## Going Deeper Into Orthodoxy

How do we do this? To some extent, anyone who is close to Church and tries to keep the Orthodox discipline, knows the answer to this question: you attend church services, keep the faith, receive Holy Communion, read Orthodox books. But it is possible to do all this almost mechanically, without going deeper into Orthodoxy.

### Make an Effort

Therefore, first of all we must not merely attend services and keep the outward form of Orthodoxy -- we must be **aware** of what we are doing. If you've ever talked to an earnest Protestant or unbeliever who really wants to know what you believe and why you behave the way you do, you will understand how important this awareness is. You can literally save the soul of someone like that if you can begin, even in a little way, to open up to him the depths of Orthodox Christianity. Why do you make the sign of the Cross? Why do you pray to saints? Why do you stand up in church, or make prostrations during Lent? Why are you always singing "Lord, have mercy"? What is Holy Communion? Why do you confess your sins to a priest? Especially today, when we are surrounded by people who don't know the truth but some of whom are really thirsting for it -- we can't just do these things out of habit; we must be able, as the Apostle Peter says, to give an account of what we believe and do to those outside the Church. There are many ways to become educated in Orthodox Christianity -- ask your parish priest, read books, obtain a copy of some of the Church's services and begin to enter more deeply into their meaning.

Further, we must be not just aware of what our Church teaches and does -- we must be trying to **saturate** ourselves in it. St. Seraphim, in his spiritual instructions, says that the Christian must be "swimming in the law of the Lord" -- and this doesn't mean just making the Church a little part of one's life; it means going deeper and doing more. Of course, we start a little at a time. If you have been going to church just on Sundays, you can begin to go to the Vigil on Saturday night, and to feast-day services. If you've been trying to keep the fast of Great Lent, you can begin to



go to more of the very moving services of Lent -- the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, the Praises of the Mother of God.

### **Written for You**

And another very important thing: You should be reading spiritual books. St. John Chrysostom goes so far as to say that a Christian who doesn't read spiritual books can't be saved. Why? Because the world, whose spirit we absorb unconsciously many hours a day, is so strong that we will almost automatically follow its ways unless we are consciously filling our minds and hearts with Christian impressions.

Innumerable books exist for this purpose, both in Russian and English: first of all the Holy Scriptures and Orthodox commentaries on them. Then the Lives of Saints and recent ascetics; "My Life in Christ" by St. John of Kronstadt; "Unseen Warfare" by St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and Bishop Theophan the Recluse; the Spiritual Instructions of St. Abba Dorotheos; the Homilies of St. Macarius the Great; the Orthodox service books, several of which are now in English; the "Lausaic History" and the Lives and Sayings of the Desert Fathers, which are just as fresh now as when uttered 1.500 years ago; Lives of Russia's New Martyrs; Archbishop Andrew's "The One Thing Needful." The Monastery bookstore here can sell you these and many other books. If you have a spark of Christian fervor in you, you will be surprised how much your soul will be refreshed by reading books like these; they will give you a taste of that other-worldliness without which the Christian soul withers and dies, especially in our worldly times.

### **Help in Struggle**

And of course, a central part of this going deeper into Orthodoxy are the Church's medicines of confession and Holy Communion, which you should participate in as fully as possible, according to the counsel of your spiritual father. Then there are the daily opportunities for expressing Christian love -- giving alms, visiting the sick, helping those in need. All of these means, if one's heart is in them, are what help to make the Christian different from the world, because they lift his eyes above this passing world to the heavenly Kingdom which is our goal as Christians. These are the positive means of going deeper into Orthodoxy. There are, of course, negative things you will have to fight against as well. Once you become aware that there is an unseen warfare going on, that our Christianity is constantly being attacked by our unseen enemies, especially through the spirit of worldliness, you will begin to see also the negative things in your life that have to be changed. But with a firm understanding of the positive, inspiring side of Christian life, this struggle against negative faults and habits becomes much easier. Part of our awareness of what Orthodoxy is involves knowing that this world is largely the domain of the devil, the prince of this world, who acts on our souls and hearts chiefly by the love of this passing world. But if we are struggling in an Orthodox

way, we are receiving the grace of God which is the only thing that can raise us above this world that lies in evil.

## **Some Pitfalls**

Now I'd like to say a word about a few of the pitfalls into which one can fall once one has begun to take up the path of fervent Orthodox Christianity. One might think, hearing about our faith; that all one has to do is to become on fire with zeal for it, and then one can enter the Heavenly Kingdom. But it so happens that we have an enemy -- the devil -- and as soon as we become fervent, the enemy comes and begins to fight. I'll speak here of three of the ways in which he attacks, and this will also help us to define a little more precisely what is the true Christianity of Orthodoxy.

### **Missing the Basics**

The first pitfall occurs when one begins to read Orthodox books, is inspired by them, but does not apply their principles properly to one's own life. Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, one of the great Russian Fathers of the 19th century -- a beacon light for modern times, together with his contemporary, Bishop Theophan the Recluse -- wrote a special book, called in English "The Arena," for the monastics of the last times -- our times -- where he gives advice which all Orthodox strugglers of our times should heed. In this book he warns beginners on the monastic path not to become so exalted by some inspiring writings of the Holy Fathers or even by the Lives of Saints, that one forms "an impossible dream of a perfect life vividly and alluringly in his imagination" and ceases to do the humble Christian tasks right in front of him (ch. 10).

This is a basic pitfall. One can think about living in the desert, while right in front of one there may be an excellent opportunity to practice Christianity -- someone may be in trouble, and with our high ideas we may not even think of helping him. Or, with these same high ideas in our mind, we may begin to criticize others and be lacking in the basic Christian love without which all our high ideas are empty. Through experience we must learn how to apply the writings of the Holy Fathers and the Scripture itself to our own level and circumstances.

Our spiritual life is not something bookish or that follows formulas. Everything we learn has to become part of our life and something natural to us. We can be reading about hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer, for example, and begin to say it ourselves -- and still be blind to our own passions and unresponsive to a person in need right in front of us, not seeing that this is a test of our Christianity that comes at a more basic level than saying the Jesus Prayer. We have to read Orthodox books that are on our level -- the ones I mentioned above are more for beginners -- and we have to read them very humbly, realizing the nature of our times when worldly

influences are present everywhere and affect our thinking even when we aren't aware of it, and never dreaming that we are on any level but that of raw beginners.

### **The Disease of Correctness**

Bound up with this is a disease of today's Orthodox Christians which can be deadly: the "correctness disease." In a way this is a natural temptation to anyone who has just awakened to Christian faith and to spiritual life -- the more one finds out about Christian doctrine and practice, the more one discovers how many "mistakes" one has been making up to now, and one's natural desire is to be "correct." This is praiseworthy, although in the beginning one is probably going to be too artificially "strict" and make many new mistakes out of pride (to which we are constantly blind). If you are critical of others, self-confident about your own correctness, eager to quote canons to prove someone else is wrong, constantly "knowing better" than others -- you have the germs of the "correctness disease." These are signs of immaturity in spiritual life, and often one outgrows them if one is living a normal spiritual life.

But especially in our days, the spirit of worldliness is so strong, and there is obviously so much wrong in our church life -- that there is a strong temptation to make "correctness" a way of life, to get stuck in it. And this is not only a disease of converts; one of the best bishops of the Old Calendar Greeks, Bishop Cyprian of Sts. Cyprian and Justina Monastery near Athens, has written that this spirit of "correctness" has already done untold damage to Orthodoxy in Greece, causing fights and schisms one after the other. Sometimes one's zeal for "Orthodoxy" (in quotes) can be so excessive that it produces a situation similar to that which caused an old Russian woman to remark of an enthusiastic American convert "Well, he's certainly **Orthodox** all right -- but is he a **Christian**?"

To be "Orthodox but not Christian" is a state that has a particular name in Christian language: it means to be a pharisee, to be so bogged down in the letter of the Church's laws that one loses the spirit that gives them life, the spirit of true Christianity. In saying this my aim is not to be critical or to point to anyone in particular -- we all suffer from this -- but only to point out a pitfall which can cause one to fail to take advantage of the riches which the Orthodox Church provides for our salvation, even in these evil times.

Even when it is not fanatical, this spirit of "correctness" for its own sake turns out to be fruitless. As an example, I can tell you of a very good friend of ours, one of the zealot fathers of Mt. Athos. He is a "moderate" zealot, in that he recognizes the grace of New Calendar sacraments, accepts the blessings of priests of our Church, and the like; but he is absolutely strict when it comes to applying the basic Zealot principle, not to have communion not only with bishops whose teaching departs from Orthodox truth, such as the Patriarch of Constantinople, and not only with anyone who has communion with him, but with anyone who has communion with

anyone who in any remote way has communion with him. Such "purity" is so difficult to attain in our days (our whole Russian Church Abroad, for example, is "tainted" in his eyes by some measure of communion with the other Orthodox Churches) that he is in communion with only his own priest and ten other monks in his group on the Holy Mountain; all of the rest of the Orthodox Church is not "pure."

Perhaps there are only ten or twelve people left in the world who are perfectly "strict" and "pure" in their Orthodoxy -- this I really don't know; but it simply cannot be that there are really only ten or twelve Orthodox Christians left in the world with whom one can have true oneness of faith, expressed in common communion. I think that you can see that there is some kind of spiritual dead-end here; even if we had to believe such a narrow view of Orthodoxy according to the letter, our believing Christian heart would rebel against it. We cannot really **live** by such strictness; we must somehow be less "correct" and closer to the **heart** of Orthodox Christianity.

In smaller ways, too, we can get carried away with "correctness": we can like well-done Byzantine icons (which is a good thing), but we go too far if we are disdainful of the more modern style icons which are still in many of our churches. The same goes for church singing, architecture, the following of correct rules of fasting, of kneeling in church, etc. While striving to be as correct as we can, we must also remember that these things belong to the **outward** side of our Orthodox faith, and they are good only if they are used in the right spirit of the true Christianity St. Tikhon talks about. Vladimir Soloviev, in his Short Story of Antichrist, ingeniously suggests that Antichrist, in order to attract Orthodox conservatives, will open a museum of all Christian antiquities. Perhaps the very images of Antichrist himself (Apoc. 13:14) will be in good Byzantine style -- this should be a sobering thought for us.

### **"Charismatic" Deception**

The third pitfall I'll just mention, because it doesn't seem to be a problem in our Church. This is the "charismatic" movement which imagines it is acquiring the Holy Spirit by various Protestant techniques. This movement is filled with such an obvious spirit of inflated self-esteem and has so many of the characteristics of what Orthodox writers describe as spiritual deception (*prelest*) that I won't dwell on it here. The true Orthodox spirit is something very different.

### **Examples of True Christianity**

After mentioning these pitfalls I'd like to get back to the subject and mention some final ways we have in our Russian Church Outside of Russia today of increasing our awareness of Orthodoxy and helping us to value it more and use it better.

Our Orthodox faith comes down to us through tradition. This means it isn't something we just read about or rediscover through books -- it is something passed on from father to son, from one generation to the next, which we see being practiced around us by our fathers and brothers in the faith. If we are in living contact with these people who are passing down the tradition, "correctness" will not be such a temptation for us; we will be "hooked up" with the tradition. This doesn't mean we must believe every opinion we hear from seemingly pious people -- we have the writings of the Holy Fathers and the whole tradition of the Church to guide us if there are doubts or perplexities.

Some of those who pass on the Orthodox Faith have a special message for us. I'd like to mention here just three of those who have something to say to us: two of them died in the last few years, and some of you here knew them; another is still alive. All three are bound up with Russia which is now undergoing the terrible trial of atheist rule, and that also has something to say to us.

### **Archbishop Andrew of Novo-Diveevo**

The first of these men is Archbishop Andrew of Novo-Diveevo, who died last year after a long and full life in the Church. He was just setting out in life when the Russian Revolution broke out, and he had to rethink his whole goal in life under the changed circumstances. What is life for, and what is worth doing in life if all the normal foundations of life can be so suddenly overthrown? Having known the warmth of Orthodoxy in childhood, he sought for it as an adult at first in vain, until he discovered that he himself had to **go deeper** and **suffer** for what he needed. He read Dostoyevsky, which deepened his view on life; he fell in with a non-Orthodox Christian group, which had fervor but couldn't satisfy his Orthodox soul. He found a priest who opened up to him the **meaning** behind the Church's services and customs. He read the Holy Fathers, and came back to life from his earlier despair. And then he found the elders of Optina: Nectarius, who taught him what true godliness or piety is -- to keep everything of God's in honor; and the Elder Anatole, who gave him St. Tikhon's book "On True Christianity" and told him to **live** by it.

Wherever he was -- in Russia, Germany, or America -- he strove to establish an atmosphere of Christian warmth where other seekers could find the peace he had found. He saw that most of our Christian life is outward and cold, and he strove always to awaken the true inward life and warmth of Orthodoxy when it is deeply understood and practiced. He hated the "hothouse" Christianity of those who "enjoy" being Orthodox but don't live a life of struggling and deepening their Christianity. We converts can easily fall for this "hothouse" Orthodoxy, too. We can live close to a church, have English services, a good priest, go frequently to church and receive the Sacraments, be in the "correct" jurisdiction -- and still be cold, unfeeling, arrogant and proud, as St. Tikhon has said. In this way we will not grow because we don't have the sense of urgency and struggle that Vladika Andrew talked about. Once, when he only suspected that one of his spiritual

children was growing comfortable in his Orthodoxy, he took him by the shoulders and literally shook him and told him: "Don't you be a hypocrite!"

You can read further about Archbishop Andrew and his Orthodox philosophy of life in a booklet published several years ago: "The Restoration of the Orthodox Way of Life." From Vladika Andrew we can learn that Orthodoxy is a matter of life and death, that it requires intense awareness and struggle, that it can't be "comfortable" unless it is fake.

### **Professor I.M.Andreev**

The second man I'd like to mention lived for many years right here in Jordanville. He was a philosopher -- I.M. Andreyev. He belonged at first to the liberal intelligentsia, and only gradually, in the first decade of the Revolution, did he come back to Orthodoxy, where he found the whole philosophy of life which the Western schools could not give. His pilgrimages to Sarov, Diveevo, and other monasteries in Russia just before they were closed, deepened and made real his new-found faith. Then came his years of standing in the truth when he sided with the Catacomb Church in the terrible years of the 1920's and '30's.

He was a refined and philosophical thinker, but most of all he had an Orthodox heart, and he grieved most of all at seeing how few Orthodox people seem to care deeply for God and their faith and their fellow men. In his article "Weep," after describing how a young mother in New York City brutally killed her infant son, he addresses the Orthodox people: "All for one and one for all are guilty... Let each one think of himself... What were you doing on that evening when this unbelievable but authentic evil deed was performed? Perhaps it was your sin, your immoral deed, your malice, which turned out to be the last little drop which caused the vessel of evil to overflow. This is the way we must reflect, if we are Christians... Weep, brothers and sisters! Do not be ashamed of these tears... Let your tears be a fount of a different energy, an energy of good that fights against the energy of evil... Let these tears also awaken many of the indifferent."

Andreyev's burning concern shows us that we must have a **deeply-feeling heart**, or else we are not Christians. [On his life and philosophy, see "The Orthodox Word," 1971, no. 74.]

### **Father Dimitry Dudko**

Finally, I'd like to mention one man who is alive today in Soviet Russia -- Father Dimitry Dudko. He was born already after the Revolution, and came to Christ in the late Soviet period through the sufferings of living under the atheist rule and spending 8 1/2 years in prison camp. His words in recent years speak with extraordinary power for us Orthodox Christians outside of Russia. One might disagree with him on a few theoretical points, but his **heart** is so right, so

Orthodox. In Fr. Dimitry is the same concern and feeling that Andreyev found largely lacking in the West; the same intensity and struggle Vladika Andrew preached. Once, when someone asked him at his question and answer sessions several years ago after the All-night Vigil, recorded in his book, "Our Hope" -- Isn't Christianity in the West better off, being in freedom? -- he replied: No. There they have spirituality with comfort, and you can't expect much from that; here in Russia we have martyrs and suffering, and from that can come resurrection and new life.

Actually, if you take seriously what Orthodox teachers like Archbishop Andrew, Andreyev, and Father Dimitry are saying, you can come to think there isn't much hope for us -- we're too soft, too unaware, too shallow, too outward. Well, it's good to think like that -- it might make us begin to wake up and struggle. Let the words of these fervent souls be a warning for us.

## **Our Talent of Freedom**

We are in a privileged position of peace and freedom, and this is dangerous for us. We can sit in the midst of our Orthodox treasures, the treasures that give salvation that no one else has -- and be satisfied with our situation and so be totally fruitless. If we have difficulty in being Orthodox -- then let us rejoice, for that means we must struggle, and there is hope that we won't wither and die spiritually.

### **Orthodoxy -- Here and Now**

Often we have the wrong idea about our situation. We think: "If only I could go somewhere else, change my situation, and the like, my problems would be solved"; but usually this is not right at all. We must start right now, wherever we are. If it is difficult, that is all the better -- it means we have to fight for our Christianity; and if you have to fight and struggle, you become more aware.

But there are also opportunities in our privileged position, and we should use them.

First of all, perhaps many of you don't know that there are many contacts now between people in Russia and people outside. We can become informed of what is going on there. Read Fr. Dimitry Dudko's books, or his little newspaper. There are also Western sources which give fresh information on what is happening to Orthodox Christians in Russia -- Fr. Victor Potapov's "Orthodox Monitor, the Keston News Service, "Aid to the Russian Church," and so forth. Find out about these suffering people and pray for them. Do you know about Nun Valeria, arrested and placed in a psychiatric hospital for selling belts with the Ninetieth Psalm embroidered on them? About Father George Calciu in Rumania, now in prison for his Christian sermons? About Alexander Ogorodnikov, imprisoned for holding a Christian discussion group? About Vladimir Osipov, the Russian patriot and samizdat publisher? About Fr. Gleb Yakunin, Fr. Vasily Romanchuk, Sergei

Yermolaev, Igor Ogurtsov -- the list is long. We have to start praying for these people who are suffering for their faith.

And we can help them: we have their prison addresses and can send them letters. Even if they don't receive them, the prison officials do, and the treatment of prisoners with "friends abroad" noticeably improves. Through "Orthodox Action" you can send literature in regular envelopes. There are even ways of getting books through. You can write to Fr. Dimitry Dudko -- some letters get through, and he even replies. Everyone can do something, and every bit helps. In the West we've grown too passive -- now is the time when we can express our care and concern.

### **When Fool's Paradise is Lost**

Perhaps even more, we can **learn** from the suffering people of Russia and other Communist countries. I don't want to frighten you, but we'd better face the fact that what they're suffering now, or something similar, is probably coming here, and soon. We're living in the last times, Antichrist is close, and what happens in Russia and other countries like it is the normal experience for our times. Here in the West we're living in a fool's paradise which can and probably will soon be lost. Let's start to prepare -- not by storing food or such outward things that some are already doing in America, but with the inward preparation of Orthodox Christians.

Have you ever asked yourself, for example, the question how you will survive if you are placed in prison or concentration camp, and especially in the punishment cells of solitary confinement? How are you going to survive? You will go crazy in a very short time if your mind has nothing to occupy itself with. What will you have in your mind? If you are filled with worldly impressions and have nothing spiritual in your mind; if you are just living from day to day without thinking seriously about Christianity and the Church, without becoming aware of what Orthodoxy is, and you are placed in a situation like solitary confinement where there is nothing to do, nowhere to go, no movies to see, just staying in one spot facing four walls -- you will scarcely survive.

The Rumanian Protestant pastor, Richard Wurmbrand, has a tape devoted to this subject which is very interesting. In a crisis situation like that, when all our books and outward props are taken away, we can depend on nothing except what we've acquired within ourselves. He says that all the Bible verses he knew didn't help him much; abstract knowledge of dogmas didn't help much -- what is important is what you have in your soul. You must have Christ in your soul. If He is there, then we Orthodox Christians have a whole program which we could use in prison. We can remember the Orthodox Calendar -- which saints and feasts are commemorated when. We don't have to know the whole Calendar, but from our daily life in the Church we will remember the milestones of the Church year; whatever we have stored up in our hearts and minds will come back to us. Whatever prayers and



hymns we know by heart will help us, we will have to sing them every day. You will have to have people to pray for.

The world-wide dispersion of our Russian Church Abroad is ideal for this. You can go over the whole globe in your mind, one country or continent at a time, and pray for those you know, even if you can't think of their names -- bishops and abbesses, parishes and priests both Russian and missionary, the monasteries in the Holy Land, prisoners in Russia and Rumania and other lands under the atheist yoke, the missions in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa where it is very difficult, the monks of Mt. Athos, the suffering Old Calendarists of Greece. The more of these you are aware of and praying for now, the better it will be for you when you have to suffer yourself, the more you will have to take with you into prison.

As Andreyev says, it is "one for all and all for one" -- we are involved in practicing our Christianity in a world that has become atheist, whether or not open persecution is going on.

## **Resolve**

Every Christian has a talent from God, and He will ask what we have done with what He gave us. In Soviet Russia and other Communist countries, there is the talent of suffering for Christ and being faithful in the midst of trials. In the free world, the talent given most of us is the talent of **freedom**: we have been given the freedom to practice our faith and the opportunity through our abundance of Orthodox texts to become fully aware of it and deepen it within ourselves. But this Orthodoxy must be the **true Christianity** that St. Tikhon describes -- the Orthodoxy not of the mind but of the heart. This kind of Orthodoxy cannot be acquired overnight; it requires suffering, experience, testing. But first of all it requires **resolve**. If each one of us puts this resolve in his heart, if we take our Christian Faith seriously and resolve to be faithful to it, there can be a literal resurrection of true Christianity in our midst, something that Fr. Dimitry Dudko and others mention as beginning to happen in Russia.

Let me end with the words of St. Herman, whose feast we are celebrating -- he also was one of those concerned ones who made full use of the opportunities given them. In the famous incident when he asked the officers of a ship what they loved most of all, and then put them to shame by telling them that only God is worth loving so much, he ended his instruction with these words, which you will find on some icons of St. Herman: "**From this day, from this hour, from this minute, let us love God above all.**" A very simple thing -- which is exactly what we all must do. May God give us the strength for it, by the prayers of His great Saint, Herman of Alaska.

Amen.