

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

Studies in the Faith

Living an Orthodox Lifestyle



**GREEK ORTHODOX
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OF THE
ASSUMPTION**

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*Orthodox isn't a name
you call yourself...*



*Orthodox is a life
you live.*

LIVING AN ORTHODOX LIFESTYLE

In View of All This, What Therefore is Expected of Us?

(from Introducing the Orthodox Church: Its Faith and Life by Anthony M. Coniaris)

The final chapter of this book must deal with the question: in view of all that God has done for us (as we have seen in the preceding chapters), what therefore is required of us?

In the letter to the Romans, Paul writes eleven long, difficult "theological" chapters, explaining to the Romans what Christian faith is, who Jesus Christ is, what He has done for us and so on. Straight theology! Then what? Chapter 12 begins, "I appeal to you *therefore* brethren," and Paul gives a long list of specific things Christians are to do-things like:

Let love be genuine.
Hate what is evil.
Hold fast to what is good.
Love one another with brotherly affection.
Bless those who persecute you.
Live in harmony with one another.
Repay no one evil for evil.

In other words, Paul is saying, *because* God has done all these things for you, *therefore* this is the way you must act.

The same thing happens in the letter to the Ephesians. The first three chapters expound the work of Christ upon the Cross. And the fourth chapter begins,

"I *therefore*, a prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

Because this is what God in Christ has done for you, says Paul, *therefore* this is the way you must live.

In Philippians Paul tells us that Christ, who was in the form of God, emptied Himself, took the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:3-8). Because God in Christ did all this for us: humbling Himself, becoming a servant for us, dying the death of a slave in our behalf, *therefore* we are to humble ourselves and become servants to our fellow men, serving one another in love.

Whatever we do as Christians, we do *not* to buy the love of God, *not* to purchase our way into heaven with our good works, *not* to pride ourselves on being better than the next man. Whatever we do as Christians, we do as *a grateful response to what God has done for us in Christ*.

Because God has forgiven us, *therefore* we are obligated to forgive those who have hurt us. "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt ... should not you have mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?"

Because God humbled Himself and became a slave for us on the cross, *therefore* we must be first in our willingness to serve. "If I then your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). Every Christian is engaged in *diakonia*, servanthood for Christ in the world, serving Christ in the least of His brethren.

Because God comforts us, *therefore* we must comfort others. As St. Paul writes, "Blessed be . . . God . . . who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3-5). The comfort that comes to us from God must pass through us to others. Let us examine a few more of the "therefore" s that are expected of every Orthodox Christian.

OBEDIENCE

Keeping the commandments is not a slave morality that is imposed upon us by God. Before God gave the ten commandments He said to His people: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." It is only after this statement that God proceeds to give the ten commandments. Because God has redeemed His people from slavery, *therefore*, their grateful response will be to obey His commandments. The Israelites first experienced God's redemptive love in the exodus from Egypt; then they were called to return that love through obedience. We obey because we love. Our obedience is always a *grateful response* to God's grace and love.

LOVE

So it is with the commandment to love. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). The commandment to love is based on what God has already done for us in Christ: He loved us even unto death on the cross. Our love is to be a *grateful response* to His love for us. "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God loved us, we also ought to love one another. . . We love, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:10-11,19). Before we can confess the Nicene Creed in the liturgy, we are called upon to "love one another." Love must precede even our confession of faith.

DOXOLOGY

Another grateful response to what God has done for us in Christ is doxology and praise. In fact, the dominant theme of our Orthodox Christian faith is doxology. The Sunday liturgy in the Orthodox Church is preceded by the singing of the great Doxology. This sets the tone for the entire liturgy which is one of complete eucharistia: gratitude and praise. "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit..." "Blessed be the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." This is the major theme of Orthodox worship as it was the dominant motif of the early Christians. What do we find in the New Testament? Tribulation, demons, suffering, crucifixion-yet always with a doxology because Christ has taken the worst of man and overcome it. "In the world you have tribulation," said Jesus, "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Not crucifixion but resurrection has the last word! Not death but life! What can our response to this victory be but one of constant doxology and praise.

OUR WITNESS FOR CHRIST IN THE WORLD

Another one of the great responses to God's love is to share Christ with others, to confess Him before men. "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

Today we confess Christ before men publicly every time we recite the Nicene Creed in the liturgy. Our job is to keep confessing Him in the "liturgy after the liturgy" when we return to our places in the world. This is not a difficult task. Look at the blind man who was healed by Jesus. He confessed Christ among men simply by stating what Jesus did for him: ". . . one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). For example, you fall into a conversation with a neighbor, co-worker, or stranger. They, not you, bring up a problem or concern. As they talk, you remember how God helped you with one of your own problems. If you share your experience, you may fumble with words or even blush. You may come away certain that you have made a grievous mistake by sharing. But the outcome of your sharing is not up to you. It is the Lord's job to take your witness, however grand, or simple or weak, and use it to get to the heart of the one hearing you; to get him to connect to ➔

➔ the Source of Power that will help him also, as it helped you. Who can tell what it might mean to others if we quietly testified what the Lord did for us in time of weakness or sorrow?

CONFESSING CHRIST STRENGTHENS FAITH

We are greatly strengthened when we make a public confession of faith in Jesus. Our faith is tremendously fortified by such an act. Try it! Say to a member of your family, "You know, one of the most precious persons in my life is the Lord Jesus. I simply cannot tell you what He has meant to me in my life-how He leads me, and guides me, and enriches my life every day." Just a simple confession, but how greatly it strengthens your faith when you say it with your lips. You will actually feel your faith growing stronger within you. Or take another example: you meet someone who does not come to church and you confess Christ by saying, "You know, I simply cannot tell you how much guidance and strength I receive in church every Sunday. Why, I can hardly wait for Sunday morning to come along. Mind if I pick you up next Sunday and we worship together?" Not only will your faith grow stronger when you confess Jesus this way, but you have His word for it that He will not forget it: one day He will "acknowledge" you before His Father in heaven.

John Berryman wrote a poem in which he recalls how boldly the martyrs of the early Church confessed their faith in Christ. He looks at his own life and thinks of the many things that can happen to him before the end comes. He prays that no matter what happens his lips may be ready to confess his Lord: "Cancer, senility, mania, I pray I may be ready with my witness."

THE STEWARDSHIP OF TIME, TALENTS AND POSSESSIONS

Another response to God for His gracious love is the stewardship of our time, talents and possessions. We are called to use our God-given talents to serve God and glorify Him.

The word *steward* is an English translation of the Greek word *oikonomos*, which means manager. Every Christian is a manager of the time, talents and possessions God has loaned to him. He is responsible to God for the use of these gifts and will be called on by God one day to give an account of how he used them.

Much needs to be said about the importance of stewardship since the entire work of the Church as the Body of Christ in the world today depends on it. Our monetary gifts to the Church are translated into deeds of love. Consider what our gifts to the Church can do. They give legs to a word like love and send it off on urgent errands of mercy. They bring hope, health, sanity and salvation to people in the spirit of Christ. They put clothing on the naked, food in the stomachs of the starving. They preach God's words. They administer the sacraments. They educate young people in the faith. They gather workmen to build schools, hospitals, colleges, seminaries, churches. They bring new life to the handicapped.

TWO PLATES NOT ONE

Someone said one Sunday during the offering, "Here we go again! There's always a plate." The person was right in one way and wrong in another. There is not one plate-but two! One is man's: the offering plate that is passed to us every Sunday. The other is God's. And that is the paten, the plate that carries the Precious Body of our Lord during the liturgy.

God gives *first*. He give us our body, mind, life, health, talents. On the paten-the plate of God's mercy-He gives us Himself as the Bread of Life, the manna from heaven. He gives forgiveness, strength, courage. He gives victory over sin and death. He gives eternal life. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which He lavished upon us" (Eph. 1:7-8). God gives! That is the meaning of the first plate-the paten.

THE SECOND PLATE

The second plate which is passed to us every Sunday is the offering plate. It represents our response to the first plate. We are invited to give in gratitude for God's generosity, for His limitless forgiveness and mercy. The

emptiness of the offering plate represents the aching needs of the world-spiritual hunger, physical hunger, etc., which we are called to help remedy through our sharing. It represents the great spiritual hunger that exists in the world-the God-shaped vacuum in every heart-that only Christ can fill.

We give, but He gives first. However much we give, it will never be more than just a fraction of what we receive.

"There's always a plate." Indeed there is. Not one but two. First God's, then man's.

A woman traveling through Europe sent this cable to her husband: "Found a bracelet. Price: \$75,000. May I buy it?" He promptly wired back, "No, price too high." But the operator missed the comma, and the reply read, "No price too high." So the woman bought the bracelet. Later the husband sued the cable company.

When it comes to our giving to God, there is no minimum and no maximum. No price is too high for Him Who is the Pearl of Great Price.

How should we give to God? Following are some guidelines.

GIVE PROPORTIONATELY

The trouble with most of church giving is that it is out of proportion to what we have, to what we earn. The important thing in Christian giving is not "how much" we give, but "how much in comparison to our ability". A gift does not need to be large in order to be significant. It is great or small in proportion to the amount of other things we possess. One of the great examples of Christian stewardship is the poor widow who came into the Temple one day and gave "all that she had". It wasn't very much, just a fraction of a cent, but it caused the treasury bell to ring and Christ to give her a commendation that keeps ringing down through the centuries: "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all of those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living" (Mark 12:43,44).

GIVE LOVINGLY

Give proportionately as God has blessed you. And then give lovingly. True Christian giving begins with my personal commitment to Christ, and it proceeds from there. It says, "If you don't love God, don't give. God does not need the token support of those who do not really care." And conversely, Christian giving says, "If you do love God, let your giving be some indication of the measure of that love."

GIVE GENEROUSLY

Give proportionately, lovingly. Give generously. "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly." When it comes to giving to God and His work, if you must err, err on the side of generosity, as you would if your loved one were in need and presented a request. Err on the side of going beyond what is practical and try what is spiritual. "He who sows bountifully, will also reap bountifully," writes Paul in the epistle lesson. Give abundantly and you will receive abundantly.

GIVE WISELY

Give proportionately, lovingly, generously. Give wisely. Many of the ancient Greek coins have an owl on them. The owl was to remind people that they should be as wise as owls in the spending of money. How does a Christian spend money wisely? A wise Christian will sit down and make two columns. Column #1 will be entitled, "WHAT ARE WE LIVING FOR?" And Column #2 will be called "WHAT ARE WE SPENDING FOR?" We can never determine wisely what we shall spend for until we realize what we are living for. What we are living for will determine what we do with our possessions.



GIVE GLADLY

Give proportionately, lovingly, generously, wisely. Give gladly! "Everyone must give," St. Paul says, "as he has determined in his heart; not grudgingly, nor of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver." Give from your heart-cheerfully.

An example of cheerful giving is Alvin Dark, a former manager of the San Francisco Giants. He wrote, *"Tithing... Giving the first tenth of my income back to God was just as unquestioned in our home as putting on my socks before my shoes. And a nickel out of every 50 cents was quite a lot when I got up every day before dawn to pedal around my paper route. But as the years went by and my income increased, I found out I could never win in this game of giving to God. He always out-gave me. He gave to me physically, financially and in a dozen other ways. He led me into a satisfying career in baseball. Actually, if I belong to Him, He owns me and my income too, all of it. I have learned that tithing is just a symbol of my trust in Him."*

GIVE HUMBLY

Give proportionately, lovingly, generously, wisely, gladly. And finally give humbly. Those who follow the Hindu religion must bring their thank offerings to the local priest in the following manner. They fall to their knees, close their eyes, and then place the offering in the open hand of the priest. When asked the reason for this they reply, "We close our eyes because we are ashamed to bring so little. We are ashamed because no matter how great our gift, it is tiny when compared to His love for us. So, as we present our gift, we fall to our knees in deep humility."

No matter how much we give to God, we ought to close our eyes and fall on our knees humbly because we bring so little when we think of how much He gave for us on the Cross and still gives.

BLESSED TO BLESS

Our response to God's gracious act of salvation, therefore, is a constant doxology of thanksgiving and praise. God said to Abraham, "I will bless thee ... and thou shalt be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2). We are blessed to bless. We are forgiven to forgive. We are loved to love. We return that love through obedience. We are saved to help others find salvation. We are comforted to comfort. We are served to serve. Christ confesses us before His Father in heaven as his very own that we may confess Him among men in the world. He daily loads us with blessings that we may use them to glorify and serve Him proportionately, lovingly, generously, wisely, gladly and humbly. ■

Lenten Pilgrimage on Fasting

(from Great Lent! by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann)

1. Why 40 Days?
What is the purpose of Lent?
And How is fasting connected with Great Lent?
2. The fast of Holy week began as a two day fast leading up to the celebration of Pascha on Holy Friday and Holy Saturday. As our Lord said in St. Mark's Gospel 2:18ff, "...Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? And Jesus said to them, Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, with the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day." On Holy Friday we celebrate the crucifixion and on Holy Saturday we celebrate our Lord's decent into Hades to destroy the power of death over us, two days when our Lord is not with us in the liturgical calendar of the year.

The fast was a fast of xerophagia, only bread and water, and those who were able ate nothing for both days. By the year 200 ad., as the Liturgical calendar of the Church continued to develop, as each day of the week prior to Pascha took on a paschal theme, and came to be known as Holy Week, the fast in some parts of Orthodox Christendom was extended to include Holy Monday through Holy Saturday, six days of fasting with Holy Friday and Holy Saturday being the strictest in the fasting discipline of the week. This practice continues to this day.

The fast of Holy Week was a fast to prepare all Christians to celebrate the Resurrection, the Pascha of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

St. Irenaeus in a letter written to Pope Victor regarding some Paschal disputes that were occurring at that time wrote (around 200 ad.) *"...for the controversy is not only concerning the day, but also concerning the very manner of the fast. For some think that they should fast one day, others two, and yet other mores."* It is clear therefore, that fasting had become intricately connected with Pascha even from the apostolic period. By the end of the third century the Holy Week fast was observed by most all of Christendom.

3. The forty day fast leading up to Holy Week developed after apostolic times and for different reasons.

The Didache (Page 313): the sponsor, person who is being baptized and whole community should fast for two days. Those who had lapsed from their Orthodox Christian faith would also be received into the Church at this time. The whole community participated. This two day fast period is directly related to a community preparation to bring into the faith those catechumens who were to be baptized during the Paschal liturgy and those Orthodox Christians who had lapsed.

In the canons of the first ecumenical council which meet in Nicea in the year 325 AD, specifically canon five, mentions the forty day fast not as an innovation but as something which was being widely practiced. By the end of the fourth century it was clearly a standard practice by the Church.

The Holy week fast which developed during apostolic times was strictly a paschal fast, this post-apostolic forty day fast was connected more particularly with the final preparation of the catechumens for the sacrament of Baptism or illumination.

The preparatory fast developed from a two day to a forty day fast. Why forty days?

Exodus 34:27ff: Moses experiences a period of forty day fasting and then he experiences a theophany, a manifestation of God in his life.

1 Kings 19:8ff: Elijah experienced a forty day period of fasting followed by a theophany, a manifestation of God in his life. A biblical pattern!

Matthew 4:1ff: Our Lord fasted for forty days and then was tempted by the devil. Latter, in scripture our Lord states that evil in our lives can be overcome only by prayer and fasting.

The number 40 is a number of purification and preparation for an experience of God. We don't baptize hundreds of people on Pascha anymore as the early Church did. However, we need to approach Pascha, and especially lent, as if we are preparing to renew our own baptismal vows. Therefore we need to go through this forty day process of purification which is accomplished through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. ,

4. About fasting. Why do we fast? Why is this concept of purification associated with food?

In Genesis 3: If the fall of man is described. Adam and Eve were tempted by food so that, as the devil told them, they could become God's, knowing good and evil, without God. They could become self-sufficient!

Our Lord and Savior himself was tempted with this same concept of self-sufficiency by the devil when he ➔

➔ first started his ministry. In St. Matthew's Gospel 4:lf our Lord having fasted was tempted with food by the devil, just as the devil tempted Adam and eve.

The devil came to two men and said, "eat, for your hunger is the proof that you depend entirely on food, that your life is in food and not in God."

We have adopted a very western mindset that says that we have to give up something for lent. A very legalistic approach and takes us from the true meaning of lent. Yet, how many times do you hear people say, what are you giving up for lent?

In reality, Lent, we really don't focus on what we give up. That is a western Christian mindset. The spirit of the Eastern Church says that lent is not the absence of something but the presence of something, and that something is the spirit of Jesus Christ in our life !!!

Our life is in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But we must strip away all the things that keep us from God. We begin with food to come to the realization that only in Christ do we have life. St. John Climacus states, "gluttony is the prince of the passions..." Do we seriously think that we can encounter and battle satin when it comes to other passions of the flesh, such as lust or avarice or jealousy for example.

When we fast we are hungry, but that hunger reminds us of our hunger for God.

Yet, fasting is a total mindset of which food is just a part. What other things can we fast from, not just food. Fasting is a total orientation of our life, it is a stripping away for purification! What other habits of daily life can we fast from: television, gossip, radio.

For example, we are obsessed with noise in the society in which we live. Silence, for whatever reason, unnerves us! So we surround ourselves with noise. Radio in car. Television when home. Noise desensitizes us to spiritual combat. Fast from Radio and Television.

Fasting reminds us of our dependence on God. Genesis Chapter 3. The temptation of Adam. To become God without God. To become self-reliant. To be self-dependent. Fasting reminds us that our life is dependent on God! Not just what you eat, but the amounts that you eat!

As you are hungry, when you see that cheese pizza with pepperoni, that should remind you of how hungry you should be for the righteousness of God, of our lord in our lives!!!

There are two types of fasting that is practiced during lent. The first is the ascetic fast the second is the total fast. The ascetic fast consists of a dramatic reduction of food so that our constant hunger may reminds us to keep our mind on Him. The second is the total fast which is practiced prior to the participation of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The second pillar of fasting is prayer!

Pre-Sanctified liturgy on Lent. What is going to give us the strength: the Eucharist.

Lent is this Journey, this Pascha. A journey to the empty tomb. A preparation to receive the resurrected Jesus Christ and for the renewal of our own baptismal vows.

Private prayer must be strengthened!!!

Third aspect of fasting: Fasting and almsgiving!

Isaiah 58: Fasting and almsgiving are absolutely connected. Give to the poor the money you save from not eating meat. ■

Some Principles for Christian Living

Make the Lord #1 in your life. Remember that He loves us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to save us. We should love Him therefore so much that we offer our whole life to Him.

- Remember, Jesus said the first commandment is for us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second one is like it: to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Matthew 22:37-39)
- If we love God, we want to talk with Him. So, please set aside a regular amount of time every day to pray to God. Besides our evening and morning prayers and our prayers before meals, we should set aside a special time every day (5 to 10 minutes at the beginning) just to pray to God. You can use the Church prayers as well as your own words.
- If we love God, we should listen to what He says to us. Therefore, we should also read a little bit of the Bible every day as part of our quiet time with God. Start with any book of the New Testament and read a little bit of it in order every day. Pray that God will help you to understand it and to live by it.
- We are all brothers and sisters in the family of the Church. Be active in the sacramental life of your Church - Sunday liturgy, Holy Communion, Holy Confession, etc.
- Make your love for God shine through every part of your life - the way you act with your friends, the way you act at home, the way you think, the way you talk, and the way you act in general.
- Try to love all people and to see them as God's children in spite of their faults, weaknesses, and bad points. Just as God loves us even though we do so many bad things, so we too should love and forgive all our brothers and sisters in Christ. (Remember the saying, "God loves the sinner but not the sin".)
- If ever you fall into any sin and evil, ask God to forgive you right then and there. If we are truly sorry, God will always forgive us. Then with God's help, do your best to replace this sin with the opposite good. For example, if you have been mean to someone at school, try to do something nice for them the next day. Remember also, that just as we need a periodic checkup with our doctor for our physical health, so too we need a periodic checkup with our priest in the sacrament of Holy Confession for our spiritual health.
- Rejoice in the Lord! The fact that God loves us should give us deep and lasting joy in our lives. The fact that God loves us is what gives us strength and courage and hope to overcome our pains and sorrows and losses. Our lives should therefore radiate with Christian joy. ■

Clergy Etiquette

The following is a guide for properly addressing Orthodox clergy. Most of the titles do not exactly correspond to the terms used in Greek, Russian, or the other native languages of the national Orthodox Churches, but they have been widely accepted as standard English usages.

Greeting Clergy in Person. When we address Priests, we should use the title "Father." Bishops we should address as "Your Grace." Though all Bishops (including Patriarchs) are equal in the Orthodox Church, they do have different administrative duties and honors that accrue to their rank in this sense. Thus, "Your Eminence" is the proper title for Bishops with suffragans or assistant Bishops, Metropolitans, and most Archbishops (among the exceptions to this rule is the Archbishop of Athens, who is addressed as "Your Beatitude"). "Your Beatitude" →

➔ is the proper title for Patriarchs (except for the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople, who is addressed as "Your All—Holiness"). When we approach an Orthodox Presbyter or Bishop (but not a Deacon), we make a bow by reaching down and touching the floor with our right hand, place our right hand over the left (palms upward), and say: "Bless, Father" (or "Bless, Your Grace," or "Bless, Your Eminence," etc.). The Priest or Bishop then answers, "May the Lord bless you," blesses us with the Sign of the Cross, and places his right hand in our hands. We kiss then his hand.

We should understand that when the Priest or Bishop blesses us, he forms his fingers to represent the Christogram "ICXC" a traditional abbreviation of the Greek words for "Jesus Christ" (i.e., the first and last letters of each of the words "IHCOYC XRICTOC"). Thus, the Priest's blessing is in the Name of Christ, as he emphasizes in his response to the believer's request for a blessing. Other responses to this request are used by many clergy, but the antiquity and symbolism of the tradition which we have presented are compelling arguments for its use. We should also note that the reason that a lay person kisses the hand of a Priest or Bishop is to show respect to his Apostolic office. More importantly, however, since both hold the Holy Mysteries in their hands during the Divine Liturgy, we show respect to the Holy Eucharist when we kiss their hands. In fact, Saint John Chrysostom once said that if one were to meet an Orthodox Priest walking along with an Angel, that he should greet the Priest first and kiss his hand, since that hand has touched the Body and Blood of our Lord. For this latter reason, we do not normally kiss the hand of a Deacon. [98] While a Deacon in the Orthodox Church holds the first level of the Priesthood (Deacon, Presbyter, Bishop), his service does not entail blessing the Mysteries. When we take leave of a Priest or Bishop, we should again ask for a blessing, just as we did when we first greeted him.

In the case of married clergy, the wife of a Priest or Deacon is also informally addressed with a title. Since the Mystery of Marriage binds a Priest and his wife together as "one flesh," [99] the wife shares in a sense her husband's Priesthood. This does not, of course, mean that she has the very Grace of the Priesthood or its office, but the dignity of her husband's service certainly accrues to her. [100] The various titles used by the national Churches are listed below. The Greek titles, since they have English correspondents, are perhaps the easiest to use in the West:

Greek: Presbytera (Pres—vee—té—ra)

Russian: Matushka (Má—toosh—ka)

Serbian: Papadiya (Pa—pá—dee—ya)

Ukrainian: Panimatushka (Pa—nee—má—toosh—ka), or Panimatka (Pa—nee—mát—ka)

The wife of a Deacon is called "Diakonissa [Thee—a—kó—nees—sa]" in Greek. The Slavic Churches commonly use the same title for the wife of a Deacon as they do for the wife of a Priest. In any case, the wife of a Priest should normally be addressed with both her title and her name in informal situations (e.g., "Presbytera Mary," "Diakonissa Sophia," etc.).

Greeting Clergy on the Telephone. Whenever you speak to Orthodox clergy of Priestly rank on the telephone, you should always begin your conversation by asking for a blessing: "Father, bless." When speaking with a Bishop, you should say "Bless, Despota [Thés—po—ta]" (or "Vladika [Vlá—dee—ka]" in Slavonic, "Master" in English). It is also appropriate to say, "Bless, Your Grace" (or "Your Eminence," etc.). You should end your conversation by asking for a blessing again.

Addressing Clergy in a Letter. When we write to a clergyman (and, by custom, monastics), we should open our letter with the greeting, "Bless, Father." At the end of the letter, it is customary to close with the following line: "Kissing your right hand...." It is not appropriate to invoke a blessing on a clergyman, as many do: "May God bless you." Not only does this show a certain spiritual arrogance before the image of the cleric, but laymen do not have the Grace of the Priesthood and the prerogative to bless in their stead. Even a Priest properly introduces his letters with the words, "The blessing of the Lord" or "May God bless you," rather than offering his own blessing. Though he can do the latter, humility prevails in his behavior, too. Needless to say, when a clergyman writes to his ecclesiastical superior, he should ask for a blessing and not bestow one.

Formal Address. Deacons in the Orthodox Church are addressed as "The Reverend Deacon," if they are married Deacons. If they are Deacons who are also monks, they are addressed as "The Reverend Hierodeacon." If a Deacon holds the honor of Archdeacon or Protodeacon, he is addressed as "The Reverend Archdeacon" or "The Reverend Protodeacon." Deacons hold a rank in the Priesthood and are, therefore, not laymen. This is an important point to remember, since so many Orthodox here in America have come to think of the Deacon as a kind of "quasi—Priest." This is the result of Latin influence and poor teaching. As members of the Priesthood, Deacons must be addressed, as we noted above, as "Father" (or "Deacon Father").

Orthodox Priests are addressed as "The Reverend Father," if they are married Priests. If they are Hieromonks (monks who are also Priests), they are addressed as "The Reverend Hieromonk." Priests with special honors are addressed in this manner: an Archimandrite (the highest monastic rank below that of Bishop), "The Very Reverend Archimandrite" (or, in the Slavic jurisdictions, "The Right Reverend Archimandrite"); and Protopresbyters, "The Very Reverend Protopresbyter." In personal address, as we noted above, all Priests are called "Father," usually followed by their first names (e.g., "Father John").

Bishops in the Orthodox Church are addressed as "The Right Reverend Bishop," followed by their first name (e.g., "The Right Reverend Bishop John"). Archbishops, Metropolitans, and Patriarchs are addressed as "The Most Reverend Archbishop" ("Metropolitan," or "Patriarch"). Because they are also monastics, all ranks of Archpastors (Bishops, Archbishops, Metropolitans, or Patriarchs) are addressed by their first names or first names and sees (e.g., "Bishop John of San Francisco"). It is not correct to use the family name of a Bishop—or any monastic for that matter. Though many monastics and Bishops use their family names, even in Orthodox countries like Russia and Greece, this is absolutely improper and a violation of an ancient Church custom.

All male monastics in the Orthodox Church are called "Father," whether they hold the Priesthood or not, and are formally addressed as "Monk (*name*)," if they do not have a Priestly rank. If they are of Priestly rank, they are formally addressed as "Hieromonk" or "Hierodeacon" (see above). Monastics are sometimes addressed according to their monastic rank; for example, "Rasophore—monk (*name*)," "Stavrophore—monk (*name*)," or "Schemamonk (*name*)." The Abbot of a monastery is addressed as "The Very Reverend Abbot," whether he holds Priestly rank or not and whether or not he is an Archimandrite by rank. Under no circumstances whatsoever is an Orthodox monk addressed by laymen as "Brother." This is a Latin custom. The term "Brother" is used in Orthodox monasteries in two instances only: first, to designate beginners in the monastic life (novices or, in Greek, *dokimoi* ["those being tested"]), who are given a blessing, in the strictest tradition, to wear only the inner cassock and a monastic cap; and second, as an occasional, informal form of address between monastics themselves (including Bishops).

Again, as we noted above, a monk should never use his last name. This reflects the Orthodox understanding of monasticism, in which the monastic dies to his former self and abandons all that identified him in the world. Lay people are also called to respect a monk's death to his past. (In Greek practice, a monk sometimes forms a new last name from the name of his monastery. Thus a monk from the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery [*Mone Agiou Gregoriou Palama*, in Greek] might take the name *Agiogregorites*.)

The titles which we have used for male monastics also apply to female monastics. In fact, a community of female monastics is often called a "monastery" rather than a convent (though there is nothing improper, as some wrongly claim, in calling a monastery for women a "convent"), just as the word "convent," in its strictest meaning, can apply to a monastic community of males, too. Women monastics are formally addressed as "Nun (*name*)" or "Rasophore—nun (*name*)," etc., and the Abbess of a convent is addressed as "The Very Reverend Abbess." Though traditions for informal address vary, in most places, Rasophore nuns are called "Sister," while any monastic above the rank of Rasophore is called "Mother." Novices are addressed as "Sister."

There are, as we have noted, some differences in the way that Orthodox religious are addressed. What we have given above corresponds to a reasonably standardized vocabulary as one would find it in more traditional English—language Orthodox writings and among English—speaking Orthodox monastics. The influx of Latin →



➔ converts into Orthodox monasticism and the phenomenon of "monasticism by convenient rule, instant tradition, and fabrication," as Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna has called it, are things that have also led to great confusion in the use of English terminology that corresponds more correctly to the vocabulary of traditional Orthodox monastics.

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