

(James 2:19). The demons even believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Luke 4:41). The *third* kind of belief is to rightly believe in God and be Christian not only in name but also in action and way of life. Without love, faith is empty; with love, it is the faith of a Christian; without love, it is the faith of a demon.

The Prospora

Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate

In the early days the word *prospora* (from the Greek, meaning 'offering') was used to designate the food offered by Christians, the best portion of which was used for the Eucharist, and the remainder for the love-feast (*agape*) after Liturgy. When Liturgy was separated from the love-feast the word came to designate only the bread used during the celebration of Liturgy. This bread was usually round and flat and bore the imprint of a cross. Later the inscription *IC XC NI KA* ("Jesus Christ Conquers") accompanied the cross; it recalls the inscription on St. Constantine the Great's banner, but is earlier in origin. The *prospora* used by the Egyptians and Syrians had several large crosses in the middle surrounded by many smaller crosses. Bread with the seal of the offerer was also used.

From the 6th century several Churches decreed that the outward appearance of the *prospora* used for Liturgy be identical in all the parishes of the given Church.

Today the Russian Orthodox Church uses *prospora* which consist of two round parts, "signifying that Jesus Christ, having two natures, divine and human, in His hypostatic union, offers Himself as a heavenly and earthly sacrifice to His Eternal Father through this *prosporon* in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. On the *prosporon*, which represents the Sacrifice on the Cross offered on the Heavenly Altar, the Church has decreed that a cross should be imprinted with the Name of Jesus Christ and the word *NIKA*, signifying the victory of Christ. The use of this seal on the *prospora* of the Russian Church was affirmed by the Great Moscow Council in 1667.

The seal on the *prosporon* is round or square. The square seal and the part, called the Lamb, symbolizes the divinity and humanity of Christ, the Son of God. "If this seal on the bread were round," writes Archbishop Veniamin, "they would signify only (eternity, that is, that the Godhead has no beginning and no end. But since the Son of God, also without beginning or end, was made incarnate and revealed that He was God, Who came to earth for our sake, was made incarnate, truly suffered and was in the likeness of God and the likeness of man, the seal and the bread itself should symbolize both divinity and humanity. Jesus Christ is perfect in each nature." His divinity was perfectly united with His humanity. For this reason the bread should also be square, not round and unleavened. For "since Jesus Christ is perfect, He became a perfect Man, and took

a human soul and body consisting of the four elements. And just as the world has four corners, so, too, the Word Himself, Christ, the Creator of the World, took on human flesh consisting of the four elements, and just as He blessed the four corners of the world, all things heavenly and earthly, as the Incarnate Word, so, too, is this represented by His Cross, whereon He was crucified, and died, and made atonement for us and the whole world" (Veniamin, Archbishop of Nizhni Novgorod, *Nova-a Skrizhal-The New Tablet*, p.166).

For the churches of the *Old Ritualists*, an eight-pointed cross is permitted.

In certain churches and particularly in monasteries, as an exception the seal can depict a feast, an icon or a Saint especially revered in the locality. *Prospora* with such seals are usually intended for distribution to believers and is not used for Divine Liturgy. Local practice does, however, permit a particle in honor of the Mother of God to be removed from a *prosporon* with Her image during the *Proskomede*.

Liturgical Notes

1. When you come to Holy Communion, come with your arms crossed in front of you, normally left over right. Besides covering ourselves with the Cross of Christ by which we are able to draw near to the Holy Mysteries, this has a practical function of keeping us from making the sign of the Cross at the chalice and the attendant possibility of hitting it and possibly upsetting it with our hand. So normal procedure for communing is to come with arms crossed, open your mouth, receive the Mysteries without making the sign of the Cross at the chalice, kiss the chalice, and go and receive the bread and wine to cleanse your mouth.
2. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, we approach the priest to venerate the Cross in this fashion: we make the sign of the cross on ourselves and then we kiss the feet of Christ on the Cross and the priest's hand.
3. When we venerate icons, we cross ourselves and bow twice, then lean forward and kiss the icon, and then cross ourselves and bow a third time. When we kiss the icon, out of piety we normally kiss the right hand of the person depicted, or the feet. On the Icon of Christ made without Hands, we kiss the hair or the towel there depicted. Piety forbids us to kiss the face, lips, body, or other parts of the person represented.
4. If you must wear lipstick to church, please blot it before you venerate icons. The same goes for chapstick and lip balm. The oils in those products are harmful to the icons.

Upcoming Events 2014

16 December: Holy Unction
25 December: Nativity of our Lord in the Flesh
31 December: All-Night Vigil for St. Basil/New Year

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!

The Confessor's Tongue for December 14, A. D. 2014

Twenty-Seventh Sunday After Pentecost; Holy Forefathers

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

On the Mystery of Holy Unction

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

'...and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.' Mark 6:13

The holy Apostles did this, and we are commanded to do likewise. The Apostle James wrote for us: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (5:14-15). One must call no-one but the priests, the elders of the Church, and they must anoint him in no one's name (so that it be not diabolical) but that of the Lord. No one but the Lord will raise him, neither can anyone but the Lord forgive him his sins. By why with oil, and not by some other means? Because it is so commanded; and it is for us simply to show our obedience and faith. Why is it commanded that we be baptized with water, chrismated with myrrh, and communicated with bread and wine? These things are God's choice and God's business, and it is for us to be obedient and to believe. The elements used in the various Mysteries differ, but the grace is one even as the Lord is one, and everything is from the Lord.

Why does the Lord use material means to pour His grace upon us? The Lord does not need these material things, but rather we, as long as we are material, need them. In condescension to our weakness, the Lord makes use of matter. To the immaterial angels, He gives grace by immaterial means.

Of itself, the oil is powerless, as is every material thing on its own, but God's grace is all-powerful. God gives His grace through the oil, and it heals the sick, raises the weak, and restores the insane to sanity.

Oh my brethren, how ineffable is God's goodness! What has the Lord not done for us? What more could we desire? He has foreseen all our needs and provided medicine for them in advance. He only seeks from us that we believe in Him and fulfill His commandments. Is it not blind of us, and shameful, that we often carry out the directions of doctors, mortal men like ourselves, more carefully and conscientiously that we do those of God immortal?

O all-gracious Lord, shatter the stone of our hearts with the power of Thy grace; that we may, before our last hour, show Thee the gratitude we owe Thee, O our gracious and most wise God. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Concerning Spiritual Reading

St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (+1809)

If you *continually* read spiritual books with eagerness and diligence, know that this continuous eagerness and diligence will open your mind and

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make it receptive to spiritual meanings. And what you did not understand the first time you will easily understand when you read it two or three times. For God, seeing your continuous diligence, will illumine your mind to understand what is difficult.

On Living in the Present From *The Diary of a Russian Priest*

Our continual mistake is that we do not concentrate upon the present day, the actual hour, of our life; we live in the past or in the future; we are continually expecting the coming of some special moment when our life will unfold itself in its full significance. And we do not notice that life is flowing like water through our fingers, sifting like precious grain from a loosely-fastened bag.

Constantly, each day, each hour, God is sending us people, circumstances, tasks, which should mark the beginning of our renewal; yet we pay them no attention, and thus we continually resist God's will for us. Indeed, how can God help us? Only by sending us in our daily life certain people, and certain coincidences of circumstance. If we accepted every hour of our life as the hour of God's will for us, as the decisive, most important, unique hour of our life—what sources of joy, love, strength, as yet hidden from us, would spring from the depths of our soul!

Let us then be serious in our attitude towards each person we meet in our life, towards every opportunity for performing a good deed; be sure that you will then fulfill God's will for you in these very circumstances, on that very day, in that very hour.

In the Domestic Church (Our Homes)

It is customary and beneficial to have established an Icon Corner as a place to pray, light candles, kiss icons, make bows and prostrations, place flowers as an adornment to the icons, and offer up the burning of incense. Icon Corners are meant to be areas of spiritual activity. What kind of Icon Corners do you have? How active is it?

Three Kinds of Believing

The Venerable Bede

- 1) To believe God
- 2) To believe that God is
- 3) To believe in God

Truly it is not all the same when it comes to the matter of belief. The *first* kind of belief is to believe that things that God speaks are true. Many, even the wicked, are able to believe that the things God speaks are true; they believe that they are true and do not wish to make them their own because they are too lazy to do anything about them. The *second* kind of belief is to believe that God exists. Even the demons are able to believe, however, that He is God