

The Confessor's Tongue for June 11, 2023

1st Sunday after Pentecost: All Saints, St. Luke of Crimea

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.

The Apostles' Fast

The Apostles' Fast, also known as the Peter & Paul Fast, begins the Monday after the Sunday of All Saints (tomorrow!) and lasts until June 29, the Feast of the Foremost of the Apostles SS Peter and Paul. For those on the Old Calendar, the Fast lasts until July 12. The Fast is of variable length, depending on the date of Pascha and Pentecost. If Pascha is early, the Fast is longer; if Pascha is later, the Fast is short.

It is tempting to disdain and disregard this Fast as an inconvenience in the midst of summer pleasures, but coming as it does after the feasting of the Paschal season and the fast-free week after Pentecost, it serves as a needed corrective to man's tendency to indulge to excess and to relax his spiritual vigilance after the labors of the Great Fast and Pascha.

This year, the Fast is seventeen days—not so long as to be burdensome but long enough to make a needed serious spiritual effort. Here is the opportunity for spiritual correction, for recalibrating our spiritual lives, for directing our hearts to seek God with renewed fervor, or, if we lack fervor, for crying out to God to rekindle the flame of zeal within us. This opportunity should not be lost!

Each should take some time today to plan for the fast. Our prayer rule should be strengthened by adding Psalmody and additional prayers with renewed attention and feeling. Prostrations should be added each day to help humble ourselves before God and to intensify our prayer. Sessions of praying the Jesus Prayer may be added. Each should diligently read the Scriptures each day: something from the Gospels, something from the Epistles, something from the Old Testament. Additionally, each should find an edifying and instructive spiritual work with which to nourish his soul.

Those things in our life that distract from good prayer should be curtailed or drastically reduced: light reading, movies, concerts, frivolous activities. They should be replaced with prayer, spiritual reading, church services, charitable activities, and good honest work attending to things that may have been neglected at home.

The law of spiritual life is that we reap what we sow. If we sow to the flesh, we reap fleshly, sinful things. If we sow to the spirit, we shall reap a spiritual harvest. If we make the effort to sow abundantly to the spirit during the Fast, our efforts will be rewarded with a rich harvest. If we disregard the fast, we should not be surprised if we make little spiritual progress.

June 11: St. Luke of Crimea

Saint Luke, Bishop of Simferopol and Crimea, the Blessed Surgeon, was born Valentin Felixovich Voynov-Yasenetsky in April 14, 1877.

Doctor of Medicine, Professor, and State Prize winner, since 1944 he was the Archbishop of Tambov and

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Michurinsk, and later of Simferopol and the Crimea. While he was serving the church as an Archbishop, he was also practicing as a surgeon and taught and published many books and articles on regional anesthesia and surgery. He is now known to be a world-famous pioneering surgeon.

In November of 1995 he was announced as a Saint by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and was officially glorified by the Patriarchate of Russia May 25, 1996. He is commemorated by the church June 11 the anniversary of his falling asleep in the Lord.

Born with the name Valentine Felixovitch Voynov-Yassentsky on April 27, 1877 in Kerch (east Crimea), his family members were civil servants to Lithuanian and Polish Kings. The family was impoverished over time but Saint Luke remembers that he received his religious inheritance from his pious father. His first true understanding of the Christian faith came from the New Testament given to him at his high school graduation by his principal.

He had an outstanding secular training. Having exceptional drawing abilities, he graduated the Kiev Academy of Fine Arts. He decided however against pursuing art in favor of a career where he could help people who suffer, and chose to be a physician.

In 1903 at the age of 26, he graduated from Great Prince St. Vladimir Medical School at the University of Kiev, and for a long time worked as a local district physician. An extraordinary medical student, he excelled at anatomy. His superior knowledge of anatomy served him throughout his surgical career.

Out of compassion to the blindness that beggars were experiencing due to trachoma, Saint Luke studied ophthalmology at the Kiev ophthalmologic clinic. In a very short time he acquired a significant amount of ophthalmologic training. His knowledge of this subspecialty helped him treat not only his trachoma patients, but many other serious eye conditions as well.

Another important event in Valentine's life was the marriage to his wife Anna, a nurse. They had four children. The family was transferred frequently to various regional health care facilities and from the very beginning Valentine never requested funds from his patients, nor would he turn anyone away because of his ethnic background or personal beliefs. When his wife died, God in setting the path for Valentine's Sainthood provided the family with Sofia Sergeevna who would be the joyful surrogate mother of his children during the harsh times ahead. Valentine never remarried.

During his early career he published many scientific treatises and eventually became the head surgeon and professor of surgery at the hospital in Tashkent in March 1917. In October, Lenin took over the government and civil war erupted in Tashkent in January 1919. Lenin's government disfavored any religious witness. Valentine was under constant threat, especially when treating party members but he refused to operate under any circumstances without the Icon of the Mother of God. His results were outstanding.

"I ought to tell you that what God did to me as amazing and incomprehensible...My pursuing surgery completely satisfied the goal I always had to serve the poor and the suffering, to dispose all my strength for the comfort of their pains, and to help them in their needs."

These are some of the introductory comments from the memoirs of Saint Luke, that were kept by his secretary, E.P. Leikfeld. His words are not vainglorious, but a commentary on how God's plan was fulfilled through the life and example of Saint Luke. Living in the Ukraine during the oppressive period of communism, St. Luke stood out among his fellow physicians both as a surgeon and as a Christian. Even the communists coveted his talents for healing the body.

Despite the dangers from the Lenin regime he fearlessly attended theological discussions arranged by Archpriest Mikhail Andeev. During this period when clergymen and pious people would prove their faith in blood, providence led the Archpriest to invite Valentine to the priesthood. Thus in 1921 at the age of 44 Valentine was ordained a priest. For two years, this exceptional individual was active not only in his pastoral work but in public and scientific activity.

Eventually Fr. Valentine was arrested and put on trial, falsely accused of giving inappropriate surgical care to injured Red Army soldiers. At his trial in his characteristic fearless way he denounced the prosecutors claims by explaining:

"I cut people to save them. You, Mr. Public Prosecutor, why do you cut their heads off?"

Certainly the charges were never proven but since the Party had to be infallible Fr. Valentine was convicted to sixteen years imprisonment.

Towards the end of his life he was worried if it would be permitted to chant "Holy God" at his funeral. He last celebrated the Divine Liturgy on the feast of the Nativity of Christ in 1960, and his last sermon was on Forgiveness Sunday. His repose was June 11, 1961, the day of commemoration for "All Saints who shone forth in the Land of Russia".

The government made every effort to make Saint Luke's funeral as inconspicuous as possible. Buses were provided to hurry the funeral procession along the side-streets to the gravesite so there would be little fanfare and recognition. God had different plans for Saint Luke and a popular uprising occurred at the funeral. The faithful refused to be hurried. They boldly ignored, at peril to life and limb, the roadblocks to the central corridors. The mayor was angered because of the roses spread on the roads, and flung a basket away claiming that the roses were litter and trash on the streets. To the dismay of the government and to avoid an uprising, they conceded to allow the funeral to proceed for three and a half hours without interference. The roads were full and cars stopped everywhere. People had climbed on balconies, onto rooftops of houses. Such a funeral was a tribute of honor. The authorities wanted a silent event. It was witness to God's Glory that throughout the walk there was a constant chant of "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal have mercy on us".

Saint Luke's prayers to have "Holy God" chanted at his funeral during the atheistic times were answered!

On March 17, 1996, St. Luke's remains were disinterred, with an estimated 40,000 people taking part. It is said that an indescribable aroma arose from his relics, while his heart was discovered incorrupt, a testament to the great love he bore towards Christ and his fellow men. Three days later on March 20, 1996, his relics were transferred to the Church of the Holy Trinity.

His relics continue to work countless miracles, in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Simferopol, at Sagmata Monastery in Greece, and throughout the world.

Introduction to the Lives of the Saints St. Justin of Chelije

On this Sunday of All Saints, St. Justin helps us understand the importance of the saints in the life of the Church and their place in her life. May the Lord inspire us with love for those who have gone before us in the Faith and move us to learn from them. Fr. J

Until the coming of the Lord Christ into our terrestrial world, we men really knew only about death and death knew about us. Everything human was penetrated, captured, and conquered by death. Death was closer to us than we ourselves and more real than we ourselves, and more powerful, incomparably more powerful than every man individually and all men together. Earth was a dreadful prison of death, and we people were the helpless slaves of death. [1] Only with the God-man Christ "life was manifested"; "eternal life" appeared to us hopeless mortals, the wretched slaves of death. [2] And that "eternal life" we men have "seen with our eyes and handled with our hands," [3] and we Christians "make manifest eternal life" to all. [4] For living in union with the Lord Christ, we live eternal life even here on earth. [5] We know from personal experience that Jesus Christ is the true God and eternal life. [6] And for this did He come into the world: to show us the true God and eternal life in Him. [7] Genuine and true love for man consists of this, only of this: that God sent His Only-Begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him (1 John 4: 9) and through Him live eternal life. Therefore, he who has the Son of God has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life (1 John 5: 12)—he is completely in death. Life in the one true God and Lord Jesus Christ is really our only true life because it is wholly eternal and completely stronger than death. Can a life which is infected by death and which ends in death really be called life? just as honey is not honey when it is mixed with a poison which gradually turns all the honey into poison, so a life which ends in death is not life.

And what else are the Lives of the Saints but the only Orthodox pedagogical science?

There is no end to the love of the Lord Christ for man: because for us men to acquire the life eternal which is in Him, and to live by Him, nothing is required of us—not learning, nor glory, nor wealth, nor anything else that one of us does not have, but rather only that which each of us can have. And that is? Faith in the Lord Christ. For this reason did He, the Only Friend of Man, reveal to the human race this wondrous good tidings: God so loved the world that He gave His Only-Begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. He that believes in the Son has eternal life (John 3: 16-36). As the one true God giving people what no angel or man can give them, the Lord Christ alone in the human race had the boldness and right to declare: verily, verily I say unto you: he that believes in me has eternal life (John 6: 47), and he has already passed from death unto life (John 5: 24).

Faith in the Lord Christ unites man with the eternal Lord Who, according to the measure of man's faith, pours out in his soul eternal life so that he then feels and realizes himself to be eternal. And this he feels to a greater degree inasmuch as he lives according to that faith which gradually sanctifies his soul, heart, conscience, his entire being, by the grace-filled Divine energies. In proportion to the faith of a man the sanctification of his nature increases. And the holier the man is, the stronger and more vivid is his feeling of personal immortality and the consciousness of his own and everybody else's immortality.

Actually, a man's real life begins with his faith in the Lord Christ, which commits all his soul, all his heart, all his strength to the Lord Christ, Who gradually sanctifies, transfigures, deifies them. And through that sanctification, transfiguration, and deification the grace-filled Divine energies, which give him the all-powerful feeling and consciousness of personal immortality and personal eternity, are poured out upon him. In reality, our life is life inasmuch as it is in Christ. And as much as it is in Christ is shown by its holiness: the holier a life, the more immortal and more eternal it is.

In other words, our vocation is to fill ourselves with the Lord Christ, with His Divine life-creating energies, to live in Christ and to make ourselves christ.

Opposed to this process is death. What is death? Death is ripened sin; and ripened sin is separation from God, in Whom alone is life and the source of life. This truth is evangelical and Divine: holiness is life, sinfulness is death; piety is life, atheism is death; faith is life, unbelief is death; God is life, the devil is death. Death is separation from God, and life is returning to God and living in God. Faith is indeed the revival of the soul from lethargy, the resurrection of the soul from the dead: "he was dead, and is alive: (Luke 15: 24). Man experienced this resurrection of the soul from death for the first time with the God-man Christ and constantly experiences it in His holy Church, since all of Him is found in Her. And He gives Himself to all believers through the holy mysteries and the holy virtues. Where He is, there is no longer death: there one has already passed from death to life. With the Resurrection of Christ we celebrate the deadening of death, the beginning of a new, eternal life. [8]

True life on earth indeed begins from the Resurrection of the Savior, for it does not end in death. Without the Resurrection of Christ human life is nothing else but a gradual dying which finally inevitably ends in death. Real true life is that life which does not end in death. And such a life became possible on earth only with the Resurrection of the Lord Christ the God-man. Life is real life only in God, for it is a holy life and by virtue of this an immortal life. just as in sin is death, so in holiness is immortality. Only with faith in the risen Lord Christ does man experience the most crucial miracle of his existence: the passover from death to immortality, from transitoriness into eternity, from hell to heaven. Only then does man find himself, his true self, his eternal self: "for he was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15: 24).

What are Christians? Christians are Christ-bearers, and by virtue of this bearers and possessors of eternal life, and this according to the measure of faith and according to the measure of holiness which is from faith. The Saints are the most perfect Christians, for they have been sanctified to the highest degree with the podvigs of holy faith in the risen and eternally-living Lord Christ and no death has power over them. Their life is entirely from the Lord Christ, and for this reason it is entirely Christ's life; and their thought is entirely Christ's thought; and their perception is Christ's perception. All that they have is first Christ's and then theirs. If the soul, it is first Christ's and then theirs: if life, it is first Christ's and then theirs. In them is nothing of themselves but rather wholly and in everything the Lord Christ.

Therefore, the Lives of the Saints are nothing else but the life of the Lord Christ, repeated in every saint to a greater or lesser degree in this or that form. More precisely it is the life of the Lord Christ continued through the

Saints, the life of the incarnate God the Logos, the God-man Jesus Christ who became man. This was so that as man He could give and transmit to us His divine life; so that as God by His life he could sanctify and make immortal and eternal our human life on earth. "For both he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2: 11).

The Lord Christ made this possible and realizable in the world of man from the time that He became man, partook of flesh and blood, and thus became a Brother of man, a Brother according to flesh and blood. [9] Having become man but having remained God, the God-man led a holy, sinless, Divine-human life on earth, and by this life, death, and Resurrection, annihilated the devil and his dominion of death and by this act gave and constantly gives His grace-filled energies to those who believe in Him, so that they may annihilate the devil and every death and every temptation. [10] That Divine-human life is found entirely in the Divine-human Body of Christ—the Church—and is constantly experienced in the Church as an earthly-heavenly whole, and by individuals according to the measure of their faith.

The lives of the saints are in fact the life of the Godman Christ, which is poured out into His followers and is experienced by them in His Church. For the smallest part of this life is always directly from Him because He is life, [11] infinite and boundless and eternal life, which by His Divine power vanquished all deaths and resurrects from all deaths. According to the all-true and good tidings of the All-True One: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11: 25). The miraculous Lord who is completely "resurrection and life" is in His Church in His whole being as Divine-human reality, and consequently there is no end to the duration of this reality. His life is continued through all ages; every Christian is of the same body with Christ, [12] and he is a Christian because he lives the Divine-human life of this Body of Christ as Its organic cell.

Who is a Christian? A Christian is a man who lives by Christ and in Christ. The commandment of the Holy Gospel of God is divine: "live worthily of God" (Col. 1: 10). God, Who became incarnate and Who as the Godman has in entirety remained in His Church, which lives eternally by Him. And one lives "worthily of God" when one lives according to the Gospel of Christ. Therefore, this Divine commandment of the Holy Gospel is also natural: "Live worthily of the Gospel of Christ" (Phillip. 1: 27).

Life according to the Gospel, holy life, Divine life, that is the natural and normal life for Christians. For Christians, according to their vocation, are holy: That good tidings and commandment resounds throughout the whole Gospel of the New Testament. [13] To become completely holy, both in soul and in body, that is our vocation. [14] This is not a miracle, but rather the norm, the rule of faith. The commandment of the Holy Gospel is clear and most clear: as the Holy One who has called you is Holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life (1 Peter 1: 15). And that means that according to Christ the Holy One, Who, having been incarnate and become man, showed forth in Himself a completely holy life, and as such commands men: "be ye holy, for I am Holy" (1 Peter 1: 16). He has the right to command this, for having become man He gives men as Himself, the Holy One, all the Divine energies which [are] necessary for a holy and pious life in this world. [15] Having united themselves spiritually and by Grace to the Holy One—the Lord Christ—with the help of faith, Christians themselves receive from Him the holy energies that they may lead a holy life.

Living by Christ, the saints can do the works of Christ, for by Him they become not only powerful but all-powerful: "I can do all things in Christ Jesus who strengthens me" (Phillip. 4: 13). And in them is clearly realized the truth of the All-True One, that those who believe in Him will do His works and will do greater things than these: "Verily, verily I say unto you: he that believeth in me, the works that I do he shall do also and greater works than these shall he do" (John 14: 12). And truly: the shadow of the Apostle Peter healed; by a word St. Mark the Ascetic moved and stopped a mountain... When God became man, then Divine life became human life, Divine power became human power, Divine truth became human truth, and Divine righteousness became human righteousness: everything which is God's became man's.

What are the "Acts of the Holy Apostles"? They are the acts of Christ which the Holy Apostles do by the power of Christ, or better still: they do them by Christ Who is in them and acts through them. And what are the lives of the Holy Apostles? They are the living of Christ's life which in the Church is transmitted to all faithful followers of Christ and is continued through them with the help of the holy mysteries and the holy virtues.

And what are the "Lives of the Saints"? They are nothing else but a certain kind of continuation of the "Acts of the Apostles." In them is found the same Gospel, the same life, the same truth, the same righteousness, the same love, the same faith, the same eternity, the same "power from on high," the same God and Lord. For "the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb. 13: 8): the same for all people of all times, distributing the same gifts and the same Divine energies to all who believe in Him. This continuation of all life-creating Divine energies in the Church of Christ from ages to ages and from generation to generation indeed constitutes living Holy Tradition. This Holy Tradition is continued without interruption as the life of Grace in all Christians, in whom through the holy mysteries and the holy virtues, Jesus Christ lives by His Grace. He is wholly present in His Church, for She is His fullness: "the fullness of Him who filleth all in all" (Eph. 1: 23). And the God-man Christ is the all-perfect fullness of the Godhead: "for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2: 4). And Christians must, with the help of the holy mysteries and the holy virtues, fill themselves with "all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3: 19).

The Lives of the Saints show forth those persons filled with Christ God, those Christ-bearing persons, those holy persons in whom is preserved and through whom is transmitted the holy tradition of that holy grace-filled life. It is preserved and transmitted by means of holy evangelical living. For the lives of the saints are holy evangelical truths which are translated into our human life by grace and podvigs (asceticism). There is no evangelical truth which cannot be transformed into human life. They were all brought by Christ God for one purpose: to become our life, our reality, our possession, our joy. And the saints, all, without exception, live these Divine truths as the center of their lives and the essence of their being. For this reason the "Lives" of the Saints are a proof and a testimony: that our origin is in heaven; that we are not from this world but from that one; that a man is a true man only in God; that on earth one lives by heaven; that "our conversation is in heaven" (Phillip. 3: 20); that our task is to make ourselves heavenly, feeding ourselves with the "heavenly bread" which came down to earth. [16] And He came down to feed us with eternal Divine truth, eternal

Divine good, eternal Divine righteousness, eternal Divine love, eternal Divine life through Holy Communion, through living in the one true God and Lord Jesus Christ. [17]

In other words, our vocation is to fill ourselves with the Lord Christ, with His Divine life-creating energies, to live in Christ and to make ourselves christs. If you set about this you are already in heaven although you walk on earth; you are already wholly in God even though your being has remained within the limits of human nature. The man who makes himself a christ surpasses himself, as man, by God, by the God-man, in Whom is given the perfect image of the true, real whole man in the image of God; and in Him are also given the all-vanquishing Divine energies, by the help of which man raises himself above every sin, above every death, above every hell; and this he does by the Church and in the Church, which all the powers of hell cannot overcome, because in Her is the whole wondrous God-man the Lord Christ, with all His Divine energies, His truths, His realities, His perfections, His lives, His eternities.

The Lives of the Saints are holy testimonies of the miraculous power of our Lord Jesus Christ. In reality they are the testimonies of the Acts of the Apostles, only continued throughout the ages. The saints are nothing other than holy witnesses, like the Holy Apostles who were the first witnesses—of what?, of the God-man Jesus Christ: of Him crucified, resurrected, ascended into heaven and eternally alive; about His all-saving Gospel which is unceasingly written with evangelical holy deeds from generation to generation, for the Lord Christ, who is always the same, constantly works miracles by His Divine power through His holy witnesses. The Holy Apostles are the first holy witnesses of the Lord Christ and His Divine-human economy of the salvation of the world, and their lives are living and immortal testimonies of the Gospel of the Savior as the new life, the life of grace, holy, Divine, Divine-human and therefore always miraculous, miraculous and true as the Savior's life itself is miraculous and true.

And who are the Christians? Christians are those through whom the holy Divine-human life of Christ is continued from generation to generation until the end of the world and of time, and they all make up one body, the Body of Christ—the Church: they are sharers of the Body of Christ and members of one another. [18] The stream of immortal divine life began to flow and still flows unceasingly from the Lord Christ, and through him Christians flow into eternal life. Christians are the Gospel of Christ continued throughout all the ages of the race of men. In the Lives of the Saints, everything is ordinary as in the Holy Gospel, but everything is extraordinary as in the Holy Gospel—both one and the other, uniquely true and real. And everything is true and real by the same Divine-human reality; and the same holy power—Divine and human—bears witness to it: Divine in an all-perfect way, and human—also in an all-perfect way.

What are the Lives of the Saints? Behold, we are in heaven, for earth becomes heaven through the Saints of God. Behold, we are among angels in the flesh, among Christ-bearers. And whoever they are, the Lord is completely in them, and with them, and among them; and there is the whole Eternal Divine Truth, and the whole Eternal Divine Righteousness, and the whole Eternal Divine Love, and the whole Eternal Divine Life.

What are the Lives of the Saints? Behold, we are in Paradise, in which everything which is Divine, holy, immortal, eternal, righteous, true, and evangelical grows

and increases. For by the Cross in every one of the saints the tree of eternal, Divine, immortal life blossomed and brought forth much fruit. And the Cross leads to heaven; it leads even us after the thief, who for our encouragement entered Paradise first after the All-Holy Divine Cross-bearer—the Lord Christ—and entered with a cross of repentance.

What are Christians? Christians are Christ-bearers, and by virtue of this bearers and possessors of eternal life, and this according to the measure of faith and according to the measure of holiness which is from faith. The Saints are the most perfect Christians, for they have been sanctified to the highest degree with the podvigs of holy faith in the risen and eternally-living Lord Christ and no death has power over them.

What are the Lives of the Saints? Behold, we are in eternity: no longer is there time, for in the Saints of God Eternal Divine Truth, Eternal Divine Righteousness, Eternal Divine Love, Eternal Divine Life reign and rule. And in them there is no longer any death, for their entire being is filled with the resurrecting Divine energies of the Risen Lord Christ, the Only Vanquisher of death, of all deaths in all worlds. There is no death in them—in holy people: their whole being is filled with the Only Immortal One—the All-Immortal One: the Lord and God Jesus Christ. Among them—we are on earth among the only true immortals: they have conquered all deaths, all sins, all passions, all demons, all hells. When we are with them, no death can harm us, for they are the lightning-rods of death. There is no thunderbolt with which death can strike us when we are with them, among them, in them.

Saints are people who live on earth by holy, eternal Divine truths. That is why the Lives of the Saints are actually applied dogmatics, for in them all the holy eternal dogmatic truths are experienced in all their life-creating and creative energies. In The Lives of the Saints it is most evidently shown that dogmas are not only ontological truths in themselves and for themselves, but that each one of them is a wellspring of eternal life and a source of holy spirituality.

According to the All-True Gospel of the unique and irreplaceable Savior and Lord: "My words are spirit and life" (John 6: 63), for each one pours out from itself saving, sanctifying, a life-creating, transfiguring power. Without the holy truth of the Holy Trinity we have none of that power from the Holy Trinity on which we draw by faith and which vivifies sanctifies, deifies, and saves us. Without the holy truth about the God-man, there is no salvation for man, for from it, when it is lived by man, wells forth the saving power which saves from sin, death, the devil.

And this holy truth about the God-man—do not the lives of countless saints most evidently and experimentally bear witness to it? For the saints are saints by the very fact that they constantly live the entire Lord Jesus as the soul of their soul, as the conscience of their conscience, as the mind of their mind, as the being of their being, as the life of their life. And each one of them together with the Holy Apostle loudly proclaims the truth: "Yet not I live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20). Delve into the Lives of the Saints: from all of them wells forth the grace-filled, life-creating, and saving power of the Most Holy Theotokos, Who leads them from podvig to podvig, from virtue to virtue, from victory over sin to victory over death, from victory over death to victory over the devil, and leads them up into spiritual joy, beyond which there is no sadness nor sighing nor sorrow, [19] but rather everything is only" joy

and peace in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14: 17), joy and peace from the victory obtained over all sins, over all passions, over all deaths, over all evil spirits.

And all this, without a doubt, is the practical and living testimony to the holy dogma concerning the Most Holy Theotokos, truly "more honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim," the holy dogma which the saints by faith carry in their hearts and by which they live with zealous love. Again if you want one, two, or thousands of irrefutable testimonies of the life-bearing and life-creating nature of the All-Venerable Cross of the Lord, and with it an experimental confirmation of the all-truthfulness of the holy dogma of the saving nature of the death of the Savior on the Cross, then start out with faith through the Lives of the Saints. And you will have to feel and see that to each saint individually, and to all the saints together, the power of the Cross is the all-vanquishing weapon with which they conquer all visible and invisible enemies of their salvation. Furthermore, you will behold the Cross in all their being: in their soul, in their heart, in their conscience, in their mind, in their will, and in their body, and in each one of them you will find an inexhaustible wellspring of the saving, all-sanctifying power which unfailingly leads them from perfection to perfection, and from joy to joy, until finally it leads them into the eternal Heavenly Kingdom where there is the unceasing triumph of those who keep festival and the infinite delight of those who behold the ineffable beauty of the face of the Lord. [20]

But not only these aforementioned dogmas are witnessed by the Lives of the Saints, but all the other holy dogmas: of the Church, of grace, of the holy mysteries, of the holy virtues, of man, of sin, of the holy relics, of the holy icons, of life beyond the grave, and of everything else which makes up the Divine-human economy of salvation. Yes, the Lives of the Saints are experimental dogmatics. Yes, the Lives of the Saints are experienced dogmatics, experienced by the holy life of the holy people of God.

In addition, the Lives of the Saints contain in themselves Orthodox ethics in their entirety, Orthodox morality, in the full radiance of its Divine-human sublimity and its immortal life-creating nature. In them is shown and proven in a most convincing manner that the holy mysteries are the source of the holy virtues; that the holy virtues are the fruit of the holy mysteries—they are born of Them, they develop by Their help, they are nourished by Them, they live by Them, they are perfected by Them, they become immortal by Them, they live eternally by Them. All the Divine moral laws have their source in the holy mysteries and are realized in the holy virtues. For this reason the Lives of the Saints are indeed experiential ethics, applied ethics. Actually, the Lives of the Saints prove irrefutably that Ethics is nothing other than Applied Dogmatics. The entire Life of the Saints consists of the holy mysteries and the holy virtues, and the holy mysteries and the holy virtues are gifts of the Holy Spirit Who accomplishes all in all (1 Cor. 12: 4, 6, 11).

And what else are the Lives of the Saints but the only Orthodox pedagogical science? For in them in a countless number of evangelical ways, which are completely worked out by the experience of many centuries, it is shown how the perfect human personality, the completely ideal man, is built up and fashioned, and how with the help of the holy mysteries and the holy virtues in the Church of Christ he grows into "a perfect man, according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." [21] And this is indeed the educational ideal of the Gospel, the only educational ideal

worthy of a being made in the image of God, as man is, and which is established by the Gospel of the Lord Christ, established and realized first by the God-man Christ, and afterwards realized in the Holy Apostles and the other Saints of God. At the same time, without the God-man Christ, and outside the God-man Christ, with any other educational ideal, man forever remains an incomplete being, a wretched being, a miserable being, who deserves all the tears of all eyes in God's worlds.

If you wish, the Lives of the Saints are a sort of Orthodox Encyclopedia. In them can be found everything which is necessary for the soul which hungers and thirsts for eternal righteousness and eternal truth in this life, and which hungers and thirsts for Divine immortality and eternal life. If faith is what you need, there you will find it in abundance: and you will feed your soul with food which will never make it hungry. If you need love, truth, righteousness, hope, meekness, humility, repentance, prayer, or whatever virtue or *podvig*, in them, the Lives of the Saints, you will find a countless number of holy teachers for every *podvig* and will obtain grace-filled help for every virtue.

If you are suffering for your faith in Christ, the Lives of the Saints will console you and encourage you and make you bold and give you wings, and your torments will be changed into joy. If you are in any sort of temptation, the Lives of the Saints will help you overcome it both now and forever. If you are in danger from the invisible enemies of salvation, the Lives of the Saints will arm you with the "whole armor of God," [22] and you will crush them all now and forever and throughout your whole life. If you are in the midst of visible enemies and persecutors of the Church of Christ, the Lives of the Saints will give you the courage and strength of a confessor, and you will fearlessly confess the one true God and Lord in all worlds—Jesus Christ—and you will boldly stand up for the holy truth of His Gospel unto death, unto every death, and you will feel stronger than all deaths, and much more so than all visible enemies of Christ, and being tortured for Christ you will shout for joy, feeling with all your being that your life is in heaven, hidden with Christ in God, wholly above all deaths. [23]

In the Lives of the Saints are shown numerous but always certain ways of salvation, enlightenment, sanctification, transfiguration, "christification," deification; all the ways are shown by which man conquers sin, every sin; conquers passion, every passion; conquers death, every death; conquers the devil, every devil. There is a remedy there for every sin: from every passion—healing, from every death—resurrection, from every devil—deliverance; from all evils—salvation. There is no passion, no sin for which the Lives of the Saints do not show how the passion or sin in question is conquered, mortified, and uprooted.

In them it is clearly and obviously demonstrated: There is no spiritual death from which one cannot be resurrected by the Divine power of the risen and ascended Lord Christ; there is no torment, there is no misfortune, there is no misery, there is no suffering which the Lord will not change either gradually or all at once into quiet, compunctionate joy because of faith in Him. And again there are countless soul-stirring examples of how a sinner becomes a righteous man in the Lives of the Saints: how a thief, a fornicator, a drunkard, a sensualist, a murderer, an adulterer becomes a holy man—there are many, many examples of this in the Lives of the Saints; how a selfish, egoistical, unbelieving, atheistic, proud, avaricious, lustful, evil, wicked, depraved, angry, spiteful, quarrelsome,

malicious, envious, malevolent, boastful, vainglorious, unmerciful, gluttonous man becomes a man of God—there many, many examples of this in the Lives of the Saints.

By the same token in the Lives of the Saints there are very many marvelous examples of how a youth becomes a holy youth, a maiden becomes a holy maiden, an old man becomes a holy old man, how an old woman becomes a holy old woman, how a child becomes a holy child, how parents become holy parents, how a son becomes a holy son, how a daughter becomes a holy daughter, how a family becomes a holy family, how a community becomes a holy community, how a priest becomes a holy priest, how a bishop becomes a holy bishop, how a shepherd becomes a holy shepherd, how a peasant becomes a holy peasant, how an emperor becomes a holy emperor, how a cowherd becomes a holy cowherd, how a worker becomes a holy worker, how a judge becomes a holy judge, how a teacher becomes a holy teacher, how an instructor becomes a holy instructor, how a soldier becomes a holy soldier, how an officer becomes a holy officer, how a ruler becomes a holy ruler, how a scribe becomes a holy scribe, how a merchant becomes a holy merchant, how a monk becomes a holy monk, how an architect becomes a holy architect, how a doctor becomes a holy doctor, how a tax collector becomes a holy tax collector, how a pupil becomes a holy pupil, how an artisan becomes a holy artisan, how a philosopher becomes a holy philosopher, how a scientist becomes a holy scientist, how a statesman becomes a holy statesman, how a minister becomes a holy minister, how a poor man becomes a holy poor man, how a rich man becomes a holy rich man, how a slave becomes a holy slave, how a master becomes a holy master, how a married couple becomes a holy married couple, how an author becomes a holy author, how an artist becomes a holy artist...

1. cf. Heb. 2:14-15.
2. cf. I John 1: 2.
3. cf. I John 1: 1.
4. cf. I John 1: 2.
5. cf. I John 1: 3.
6. cf. I John 5: 20.
7. cf. I John 5: 11.
8. cf. *Paschal Canon*, Ode 7 (Translator's note).
9. cf. Heb. 2:14-17.
10. cf. Heb. 2: 14, 15, 18.
11. cf. John 14: 6; 1: 4.
12. cf. Eph. 3: 6.
13. cf. I Thes. 4:3,7; Rm. 1: 7; I Cor. 1: 2; Eph. 1: 1-18,2:19,5:3, 6:18; Phillip. 1: 1, 4:21-22; Col. 1: 2-4,12,22,26; I Thes. 3:13,5:27, 2 Tim. 1: 9; Phlm. 5: 7; Heb. 3: 1, 6: 10, 13: 24; Jude 3.
14. cf. I Thes. 5: 22-23.
15. cf. 2 Peter 1: 3.
16. cf. John 6: 33, 35, 51.
17. cf. John 6: 50, 51, 53-57.
18. I Cor. 12: 27, 12-14, 10: 17; Rom. 12: 5; Eph. 3: 6.
19. cf. *Kontakion* for the departed faithful (Translator's note).
20. cf. First Morning prayer of St. Basil the Great and First Post-Communion Prayer (Translator's note).
21. cf. Eph. 4: 13.
22. cf. Eph. 6:11,13.
23. cf. Col. 3: 3.

Upcoming Events 2023

12-28 June Apostles' Fast
26 June -- 14 July, Priest on Vacation

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!