

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA



Vol. II: Abbot Nazarius

Little Russian Philokalia

LITTLE RUSSIAN
PHILOKALIA
VOL. II

Abbot Nazarius of Valaam

Translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose



SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA BROTHERHOOD
PLATINA, CALIFORNIA 1983

COPYRIGHT 1983 by
ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA BROTHERHOOD
PLATINA, CALIFORNIA 96076

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Preface	7
2. The Life of Blessed Nazarius	11
3. The Counsels of Elder Nazarius	
I. On the Love of God	25
II. On Christian Asceticism (Podvig)	28
III. On Monasticism	31
IV. On Prayer, Especially in Church	37
V. Concerning the Time After Church Services	39
VI. On Remaining in One's Cell and on Leaving It	41
VII. On the Liturgy and Partaking of the Divine Mysteries	43
VIII. Concerning Trapeza (Meals)	48
IX. On the Daily Cleansing of Conscience	58
X. Instruction for the Evening and Night	58
XI. Concerning One's Spiritual Father and Counsellor of Conscience	62
XII. On Not Judging One's Neighbor	63
4. Indication of the Most Essential Spiritual Dispositions and Virtues	
1. The Prayer of Jesus	66
2. Self-reproach	66
3. Self-knowledge	67
4. Meekness	67
5. Humility	68
6. Obedience	69
7. A Clean Conscience	69
8. Silence	70

9. Have Not Your Own Will	70
10. Repentance	70
11. Patience	71
5. The Life of Elder Hilarion of Sarov and Valaam	73
6. A Short Spiritual Ladder <i>by Elder Hilarion</i>	77
I. Prayer	77
II. Self-reproach	78
III. Self-knowledge	78
IV. Meekness	79
V. Humility	80
VI. Obedience	82
VII. The Conscience	83
VIII. Silence	85
IX. The Will	85
X. Forgiveness	85
XI. Patience	86
XII. Various Instructions	87
7. Stichera Verses Written in Honor of Elder Nazarius	88



PREFACE

The second volume of the English language *Little Russian Philokalia*, is dedicated to the great refounder and abbot of Valaam Monastery, the humble monk of Sarov, Nazarius. The timeless quality of his teaching, a standard monastic counsel within a fundamentally Orthodox Christian society, is basically no different from that of fourth century Egypt, fifth century Palestine, sixth century Gaul, or Ireland, Sinai, Britain, Italy, Syria, and later Mt. Athos, from which it took its roots. But the timeliness of his exposition is so vital precisely because most of these lands have lost the basic Orthodox *Weltanschauung*, world-view, or sense of unanimity, especially in the Western world, where Orthodoxy today is being rediscovered, not the way it originally was when it bore the stamp of the Catacomb mentality of the Early Church, but through the prism of academic opinion and complacency, which makes everything it touches a plaything of arbitrariness; such an interpretation of Orthodoxy cannot fit into the already existing, "unfashionable," "outdated," but genuine *suffering Orthodoxy*, as St. Gregory the Theologian used to say.

Abbot Nazarius, like St. Anthony the Great, was illiterate (he never learned to write) and spoke mostly *how* to practice basic Christianity in order to attain *sobriety* (nipsis) and be genuine. He did *not* give any leeway for idle meditating, theorizing, fantasizing, which is so akin to contemporary neophytes who discover Orthodoxy and immediately, with the same psychological fervor of "searching for truth," strive to remodel their discovery into their own liking, thus depriving themselves of *smirenomodrie* (humility of wisdom) which alone guarantees fruitfulness in Christ, and without

which there is no salvation. Hence, the message of Elder Nazarius is very simple—how, practically, to join the army of the “Unseen Warfare” and be one with the militant Church upon earth and one with the triumphant Church in Heaven.

His friend and fellow struggler from Sarov, Theophanes, remembers him thus:

“Father Nazarius was a simple man, unlearned, did not know how to write. Metropolitan Gabriel [of Petersburg †1804] used to inquire of Father Nazarius: ‘Who is the worst one in your brotherhood?’ to which he would answer: ‘They are all good.’ ‘You mean to say there is not a single bad one?’ ‘Your Eminence,’ came the answer, ‘I am the only bad one.’ Once Father Nazarius chanced to pass by a village where he saw children playing; he stopped the carriage, summoned the children, and asked: ‘Who is the best among you?’ The children pointed out a boy—‘He is the best one here.’ ‘Why?’ he asked. ‘Because,’ they answered, ‘he is humble; you scold him and it is nothing to him.’ ‘Take the example from him,’ said the elder. He lived in the desert [of Sarov] for seven years. I used to visit him there. He would wear boots without changing them for six years straight, his garment was ragged.”

Another of his contemporaries, Abbot Maximus of Pesnosh Monastery, while still a youth, visited Valaam with the intent to stay there because of the fame of Elder Nazarius was so great. His biographer wrote:

“At that time, in the northern monastery of Valaam, the new monastic typicon from Sarov was being installed by Father Nazarius. Maximus arrived in Valaam and was accepted and thought to remain there forever. But Father Nazarius, who keenly watched for the spiritual development of young monks, noticed in him a spiritual zeal not in keeping with his years, and once during spiritual conversation told him this parable: ‘Once upon a time, there lived a novice in Pesnosh Monastery who began to occupy himself with the Jesus prayer prematurely. The Elder stopped him but he did not listen. Then he moved to our Valaam monastery and continued to occupy himself with the same type of prayer. Here too, they forbade him. But he remained obstinate. Because of that, he fell into the enemy’s deception (*prelest*). One feast day he jumped down from the tall belfry and killed himself, thereby depriving himself of both temporal and eternal life. That occurred quite recently,’ the elder added.”

Just these two passages from his contemporaries give enough indication of the tenor of his concern for the spiritual welfare of the people around

him. And being a saint, we believe his concern extends even towards us, his venerators of the 20th century.

Prior to his Valaam abbotship, he lived a typical monk's life of Holy Russia, struggling to acquire the power of humility, being one in spirit with the rest of the Sarov monks. In Valaam he continued to practice the same age-old basic monasticism which attracted followers. His loving simplicity and his state of perpetual inspiration, burning in him at an even pace, as is apparent from his Counsels, worked wonders upon young newcomers. Without much pain, it transfigured them into veritable soldiers, members of the ascetic regiment of God's army.

His Valaam years, just as later the years of his Sarov retirement, gave the following outstanding spiritual heroes, who were to influence subsequent authors of the Russian *Philokalia*.

INNOCENT, his successor as abbot (†Sept. 22, 1828), was a visionary of the spiritual world who managed to restore and govern several other neighboring monasteries.

EUTHEMIOS, Hieromonk (†Oct. 1, 1829) was in the direct line with Paisian disciples. His spiritual son, the famous Abbot Damascene (†1881), even superceded Abbot Nazarius in the monastic flowering of Valaam and elsewhere.

STS. HERMAN, JUVENALY, and IOASAPH, of the Alaskan Mission of 1794; they not only became apostles to America, but managed to combine missionary work with a high, classical form of hesychasm here in the New World.

BARLAAM, Abbot (†Dec. 26, 1849) who spent time in desert living with the young St. Herman; there he acquired such zeal that led him to follow the Paisian disciple Leo to Optina, where he took part in the Skete's literary patristic activity.

ABEL, "the Prophet" (†Nov. 29, 1831), to whom the fates even of Emperors was revealed which he did not hesitate to disclose even at the cost of great suffering.

CIRIACUS, (†May 20, 1798) converted from the Old Believers, he was a fervent ascetic and desert'dweller who was not a stranger to mystical experiences.

HILARION, (†Nov. 12, 1841) his cell-attendant and correspondent, who took down all his precious sayings and even composed some himself. Thanks to him we have the Counsels. His closeness to St. Seraphim indicates his oneness of mind with that great Saint.

ST. SERAPHIM, (†Jan. 2, 1833), the great embodiment of Orthodox mystic experience, he was under the direct influence of Abbot Nazarius, and acquired from him the first edition of the Paisian Slavonic *Philokalia*.

RIGHTEOUS MARK, (†Nov. 4, 1817), he took upon himself at times the great ascetic exploit of foolishness for Christ's sake. Endowed with a gift of clairvoyance and healing, he constantly beheld, like St. Seraphim, the Bright Resurrection in his heart, which would overflow at times while he wandered day and night through the dense Sarov forests, not knowing "whether he was in the body or out of the body."

May our Lord, Who sees the difficulty of our times, help and inspire the contemporary English-speaking Orthodox world through the prayers of our fathers among the Saints, Nazarius and his spiritual army of God-bearing fathers. Amen.

Abbot Herman
Annunciation, 1983

THE LIFE OF
BLESSED NAZARIUS

ABBOT OF VALAAM

who is commemorated on the 23rd of February
and the 14th of October



Although not yet officially canonized himself, the Blessed Elder of St. Herman of Alaska, and probably of St. Seraphim of Sarov as well, was the direct progenitor of a whole century of great ascetics of Valaam Monastery, whose lives comprise a splendid "Valaam Patericon," an adornment of the Church of Christ, and could be an abundant source of inspiration for true Orthodox Christians today.

The following Life—an essential part of the spiritual legacy of St. Herman himself—has been compiled and translated from material published in the late 19th century by Valaam and Sarov Monasteries.



AT THE TIME when Niphon was Abbot of Sarov Hermitage (1806-1842), there in retirement lived Abbot Nazarius, a man of virtue who loved the solitary life of silence in the wilderness. Out of a desire for desert dwelling, he left Valaam, where he was Abbot, and came to dwell in the wilderness three miles from Sarov Hermitage, where he lived in asceticism, spending his life in prayer and serving as an example of virtuous life for the brethren.

In his forest cell, where he pleased God by the ascetic feat of complete reclusion, transported in spirit he was wont to say, following St. Basil the Great: "O life of solitude, house of heavenly learning and divine knowledge, school wherein God is everything that we learn! O desert, paradise of sweetness, where fragrant flowers of love now blaze with fiery color, now shine with snow-like purity. With them is peace and quiet; and those who

live beneath them remain unmoved by the wind. There, is the incense of complete mortification, not only of flesh, but, what is more praiseworthy, of the will itself, and the censer of perpetual prayer burns ceaselessly with the fire of divine love. There, are diverse flowers of virtue, resplendent with diverse adornments, blossoming with the grace of unfading beauty. O desert, delight of holy souls, paradise of inexhaustible sweetness! Thou art a furnace, the power of whose blazing flame the Three Youths make cool by prayer, and by means of burning faith they extinguish around themselves the fierce flame in which both arrows and chains burn away, but those in chains do not burn, only the bonds of sin are loosed, and the soul is led up to the singing of divine praise, exulting: *Thou hast burst my bonds asunder: I will offer Thee the sacrifice of praise*" (Ps. 115: 7. 8).

ABBOT NAZARIUS was born in 1735 in Tambov Province, in the village of Anosov. His father was a church reader, Kodrat, and his mother was named Mavra. His name in the world was Nicholas. Having come to love God, he left the world in his early youth. From his youth he was distinguished by his piety, and in the 17th year of his life he went to Sarov Hermitage, in order to lead the monastic life there. In 1760 he was tonsured a monk with the name Nazarius. In 1776 he was ordained Hieromonk.

A strict fulfillment of the monastic Rule was the constant concern of Nazarius. His whole later life was a labor of asceticism. From his very youth he loved the Lord, sought Him and clung to Him by the learning and keeping of His commandments. The reading of the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers was the daily food of his soul. His soul became so penetrated by the thought of Divine things that the only subject of his conversations was what might profit the soul. As for worldly things, he knew not at all how to speak of them. But if he opened his mouth in order to speak of ascetic labors against the passions, of love for virtue, then his converse was an inexhaustible fount of sweetness. And both he himself, and those who listened to him, forgot the hour and the time in sweet converse. His words were correct, straightforward, and sharp. He did not like to begin a conversation without the word of God as a foundation; and so he taught others, in order that soul-saving counsels should be founded not on one's own mind but on the word of God. Severe and seemingly inaccessible in appearance, by his words he attracted the hearts of all to love and obedience toward him.

Himself humble, to everyone who asked his instruction he taught first of all humility. He spent his life unchangingly in fasting and non-acquisition; for his clothing he had scarcely more than rags. He wore his shoes for six years.

About 1774 he retired into complete seclusion in the forest of Sarov. There his severe ascetic life so excited the envy of the demons that they more than once attempted to frighten him and lead him astray. He himself related later that there once came to him the thought of planting turnips, thinking to himself that the brethren would come, take these turnips, and would receive healing. No sooner had he conceived this prideful thought than he suddenly felt that someone had struck him on the head as if with a stick, and so powerfully that he could not stay on his feet, and he fell to the ground, smelling a stench and foul odor in the air. From this he was so frightened that he was scarcely able to crawl to the monastery.

The fame of the ascetic life of the desert-dweller Nazarius reached St. Petersburg. At that time Metropolitan Gabriel had decided to re-establish the monastery on the islands of Valaam, which for over a century had lain in virtual desolation. He sought an able and spiritual monk as Abbot, and his choice rested on Father Nazarius, of whom he had heard much from his cell-attendant Theophan, who was a close friend of Nazarius. In 1781 he summoned Nazarius to this work from Sarov, in order that in Valaam Monastery there would be introduced the Rule of the Sarov Hermitage. Father Nazarius humbly declined the heavy burden of becoming an Abbot, setting forth his unworthiness; and Abbot Pachomius of Sarov, wishing to keep the great ascetic, reported about him to Metropolitan Gabriel as of a man of little intelligence and inexperienced in spiritual life. The hierarch, however, penetrated the secret of Fr. Nazarius' humility and replied: "I have many of my own 'wise' men; send me your fool." Thus the fathers of Sarov unwillingly were compelled to let their humble ascetic go, and in 1782 Fr. Nazarius was confirmed as Abbot of Valaam.

THE MONASTERY OF VALAAM, situated on the islands of Lake Ladoga, with the coming of Nazarius soon became a great monastic citadel, bringing into reality the great Orthodox monastic ideals. Among the ever increasing number of the brethren there shone forth some truly great ascetics, uncanonized saints. But when Nazarius had come to Valaam there was just one tonsured monk, besides some novices and two lay priests, both of whom

drowned shortly after his coming, so that Fr. Nazarius for almost a year had to conduct all the church services himself.

During the course of Abbot Nazarius' twenty-year governance, the Monastery was completely rebuilt and re-established. The Monastery's chief benefactor was Metropolitan Gabriel himself, who had the utmost love and respect for Fr. Nazarius. Even more remarkable than the outward was the inward renewal of the Monastery. Fr. Nazarius installed in minutest detail the whole Sarov tradition. He introduced a strict order into the church services and re-established the three kinds of monastic life which Valaam had had almost from its foundation many centuries earlier: cœnobitism, skete-life, and anchoritism. He began the building of the Great Skete in the woods beyond the Monastery enclosure as well as other sketes, and encouraged anchorites—making himself the first example of eremitic life.

The glory of Abbot Nazarius' deeds spread beyond the bounds of Russia, so that even from the Holy Mount of Athos monks came to Valaam and with wonder beheld a monastic way of life which they preferred even to that of the Holy Mountain.

The students of the great Elder Paissy Velichkovsky brought to Metr. Gabriel copies of the Slavonic manuscript of the *Philokalia* and other patristic writings, which the hierarch undertook to publish. Those who were occupied in the work of editing these writings in preparation for their publication, in accordance with the Metropolitan's instructions, had constantly to verify all obscure points with several spiritual elders, who knew in practice the elevated teaching contained in the *Philokalia*. Among these elders the first was Fr. Nazarius. "These fathers," Metropolitan Gabriel told the editors, "although they do not know the Greek language, out of experience know better than you the truths of the spiritual life and therefore understand more correctly the teaching contained in this book." Since its publication in 1795 the *Philokalia* has been an essential part of the Valaam tradition. It is known that St. Herman had the *Philokalia* in Alaska, where it was used by many people. When Fr. Nazarius returned to Sarov, it was through him that St. Seraphim obtained the *Philokalia*.

When Metropolitan Gabriel was forming a Spiritual Mission to be sent to America, he had Abbot Nazarius select its members from among his monks. This Mission left in 1794 and converted thousands of pagans to the Christian Faith. It is remarkable what love and devotion these preachers of

God's word preserved for Fr. Nazarius, as may be seen from the letters sent to him from America. His devoted disciple, the head of the Mission, Fr. Ioasaph (Bolotov), was later consecrated bishop and left the first scholarly description of Alaska.

ONCE, AT THE TIME of a naval war with the Swedes near Petersburg in the reign of Catherine II, great fear came upon the residents of Petersburg. Metropolitan Gabriel had locked himself up in seclusion and was praying, when suddenly Elder Nazarius came and demanded that the Metropolitan be told that he had come. The cell attendant replied that Vladika had left word that he would not receive anyone. To this Fr. Nazarius answered: "This is something else. There is no need for him to 'receive' me. He might not have any business with me, but I have some business with him. I will simply go to him."

After finally being allowed to see Vladika, Fr. Nazarius resolutely told him that he should be calm and have expectation of victory and safety. He even pointed to the sky in the direction of the sea, indicating the souls of warriors — those who had given their lives in battle — ascending to heaven on bright clouds. Metropolitan Gabriel immediately informed the Empress of this. Later, when Fr. Nazarius' words were fulfilled in reality, the Empress graciously received the Elder together with Metropolitan Gabriel.

Father Nazarius was once on monastery business in Petersburg, and was walking on the street with another Elder. At this time the Grand Duke Paul (the future Emperor Paul I) was crossing the Neva River in a carriage. Seeing the Elders in humble attire, he stopped the carriage and asked them: "Where are you from, and what kind of Elders are you?" And discovering that one of them was Abbot Nazarius, he thanked him for the successful re-establishment of Valaam Monastery and said that he had heard much of Abbot Nazarius, who was renowned for his spiritual experience and his care for the good of the Monastery.

In the reign of Paul I, the Elder Nazarius was once invited in Petersburg to the house of a certain K., who at that time had fallen into the Tsar's disfavor. The statesman's wife begged the Elder: "Pray, Father Nazarius, that my husband's case will end well." "Very well," replied the Elder; "one must pray to the Lord to give the Tsar enlightenment. But one must ask also those who are close to Him." The statesman's wife, thinking he was refer-

ring to her husband's superiors, said: "We've already asked all of them, but there is little hope from them." "No, not them, and one shouldn't ask in such a way; give me some money." She took out several gold coins. "No, these are no good. Haven't you any copper coins, or small silver ones?" She ordered both kinds to be given him. Fr. Nazarius took the money and left the house.

For a whole day Fr. Nazarius walked the streets and places where he supposed poor people and paupers were to be found and distributed the coins to them. Towards evening he appeared at K.'s house and confidently said: "Glory be to God, all those close to the Tsar have promised to intercede for you." The wife went and with joy informed her husband, who had become ill out of sorrow, and K. himself summoned Fr. Nazarius and thanked him for his intercessions with the high officials.

Fr. Nazarius had not even left the sick man's bed when news came of the successful end of K.'s case. Immediately K. in his joy felt already stronger, and he asked Fr. Nazarius which of the Tsar's officials had shown the more favor to him. Here he found out that these "officials" were paupers — those close to the Lord Himself, in the words of Fr. Nazarius. Deeply moved by the piety of the Elder, he always kept for him a reverent love.

BUT ABOVE ALL Blessed Nazarius was a true father to monks and nuns, possessing a tried experience and knowledge of the spiritual life in practice: its trials, its pitfalls, its paths to the ascetic heights. His watchful eye was keen, his actions precise, and his word had great spiritual power; for he was burning with an unquenchable flame of sobriety and love of truth. This alone worked miracles of spiritual instruction for monks.

One brother, the later Schema-monk Kiriak, was converted to Holy Orthodoxy through an evident Divine manifestation, after which he came to Valaam to Fr. Nazarius and became a zealous ascetic. After his conversion his prayer was always accompanied by a mysterious heavenly fragrance, a sign of grace to him. But one day, becoming excessively critical, in the manner of converts, he allowed himself to judge the Abbot, Fr. Nazarius — and immediately, being in church, he sensed a foul odor about him. After some agonizing confusion he realized and confessed his sin to the Abbot. Having forgiven him with love, the Blessed Nazarius said: "If you lose grace, it will not be easy to gain it back again." And indeed, it took him a long time of

hard labor, through the prayers of Blessed Nazarius, to have this grace abide in him once more.

A certain Peter B., a disobedient disciple of Fr. Nazarius' friend, the renowned Blessed Abbot Theodore of the Sanaxar Monastery, left the latter's cœnobitic monastery out of pride, claiming that community life was not spiritual enough for him, and settled alone deep in the forest. He lived there for three years without any spiritual direction. He took the Lord's words, *If thy hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off* (St. Matt. 18: 8), contrary to their proper understanding and decided to put these words into literal practice. Thus he chopped off his left hand. The blood had begun to flow abundantly, when suddenly he heard a stern voice — apparently an angel of God — saying: "What a presumptuous thing you have done! Tie your arm or you will die." He immediately tied the arm and did not feel great pain. When Fr. Nazarius heard of this he immediately recognized that Peter had fallen into *prelest*, and he was amazed at God's mercy to the poor man. Wishing to save him he deliberately went all the way from Valaam into the forest where he was and took him back to Valaam with him. Later he tonsured him, giving him the name of Paul. He lived in Valaam for some time and died and was buried there.

Father Nazarius was well known for his spiritual direction of nuns in various convents, especially during the latter part of his life. Once when he was travelling he stopped at the house of a noble family, Diartievs, who at that time were about to marry off their young daughter against her wish. The young Helen, seizing the opportunity, revealed to Fr. Nazarius her soul's desire to become a nun, and she begged him to intercede with her parents for her. Fr. Nazarius implored the parents to let the girl serve Christ, but it was to no avail; they were determined to see their daughter married. When the Elder was about to leave the house, Helen implored him to tell her what she should do. "Be a fool for Christ's sake," said the holy man; "cover your mind with madness, and by such a path you will save your soul and please God!" Such was the Elder's answer, coming not from his own reasoning but from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and spoken with the boldness of one having spiritual authority and clairvoyant insight into the girl's future.

And from that very moment the girl took upon herself — rather, was given by the Holy Spirit — this most severe ascetic exploit of foolishness for Christ's sake. She let the parents go through with the wedding ceremonies,

although she answered negatively to the priest's question. After the service, when all the guests were solemnly seated at the wedding banquet, she got up and jumped from a window into a mud puddle and began wallowing in the mud, to the horror of all present. Thus on her wedding day, in her bridal attire, she became the bride of Christ and was recognized by all as a madwoman. Then for many years she wandered homeless until finally she was taken in by a convent at Arzamas, where she achieved great sanctity as a clairvoyant eldress, finally reposing in the Lord her Bridegroom on the first day of Pascha. A great multitude gathered for her burial, as for the burial of a saint, and her humble cell was turned into a chapel where the holy Psalter was read ceaselessly, until the coming of the godless yoke of Communism.

IN 1801, HAVING earned well a rest from the heavy burden of governing the monastery, Fr. Nazarius retired for a life of solitude and divine vision a mile inland from the monastery. While he was still abbot he had had a cell built for him, where he occasionally would retire in silence. But his love for Sarov Monastery, the place where he had laid his ascetic beginnings and given his monastic vows, kept summoning him to return there. So, after three years of seclusion in Valaam, he decided to retire to Sarov. He took with him his disciple, Fr. Ilarion, bade farewell to Valaam, and crossed the waters of Ladoga. At one of the rest halts the following incident occurred, which vividly illustrates the power of Fr. Nazarius' Orthodoxy in practice.

Having come on a Saturday to a certain village in a small cart with their own horse, they asked lodging at the priest's house. The priest gladly received the travellers, and after conversing with Fr. Nazarius he came to have great respect for him. The time came for the All-night Vigil before Sunday. But Fr. Nazarius noticed that the priest was not making preparations to serve the Vigil, and he asked him: "Batushka, do you then have the Sunday Vigil in the morning?" The priest replied that he very rarely served and had no intention to serve even the next morning. "Although my parish is large and there are no schismatics, still, none of the peasants come to church on feast days. They gather only for amusements in the church yard. They don't even take a look inside the church. The church is always empty. To such an extent have they grown cold toward the Church, and because of them I have grown lazy, thinking: when they don't come to church, there is no one to celebrate the service for."

Fr. Nazarius remarked to the priest that he was severely mistaken, and that this was a temptation from the enemy of our salvation. "If your parishioners do not fulfill their most important obligation, nonetheless you, being a pastor, should fulfill your own obligations without fail. A church of God can never be empty. From the time of the church's consecration, there is in it the guardian of the Lord's Altar, an angel; and what is more, even if your parishioners do not come to the Divine services which you celebrate, the church will always be filled with angels, the guardians of their souls. For at every Divine service, in their flaming love toward their God, the angels of God are the first ones who both concelebrate and attend with hymns of praise. And it is they who would fill your church while you serve. When you yourself zealously fulfill your obligations for the salvation of your own soul, and if you would pray for your flock that the Lord would warm their hearts and convert them to repentance and prayer — then the Lord, for the sake of your prayers, would command their guardian angels to approach their souls and arouse them to prayer and instil in them zeal for the Divine services which you celebrate in the holy temple, where you offer for them the sacrifice of mercy before the Lord in the Divine Eucharist. And what answer will you make in the day of the Lord's terrible Judgement for the doom of your own flock, when you on your side use no means for their conversion and salvation?"

Touched to the heart by the just words of Fr. Nazarius, the priest replied: "Help me, O Elder, and instruct me. I will try to do what you advise." Fr. Nazarius said: "Very well; now let us go to God's temple. Order the bell to be sounded for the Vigil and the Reader to prepare for the All-night service. And Fr. Ilarion and I will help you."

The bell was sounded for the Vigil and the service began. And indeed, in the beginning there was no one in church. Then no more than ten people gathered in church, old men and women. Fr. Nazarius read the Six Psalms, and Fr. Ilarion the Kathismata. After the reading of the Gospel, it was brought out to the middle of the church. Fr. Nazarius and Fr. Ilarion went to reverence and kiss it, but those present, out of habit, did not do so. The Elder went up to them and explained to them concerning the benefit of the sanctification to be received at this moment from venerating the Holy Gospel. And the old people came, kissed the Gospel, and thanked the Elder. Father Nazarius spoke with them and advised them to tell those at home and their

neighbors how profitable it is to participate in the Divine services and be sanctified by venerating and kissing the Holy Gospel as well as other holy objects in church.

After the Sixth Song of the Canon Fr. Nazarius read from the spiritual instructions of the *Prologue*. Several of the old people managed to go home and call their own people to church, until some thirty people had gathered. As the people left the church, the Elder spoke with them on the necessity and benefit of praying in God's temple.

In the morning the priest celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and Father Nazarius, at the time of the sermon, read from a book of spiritual instruction; rather more people were in attendance at the Liturgy than had come to the Vigil. Having rested after dinner, the Elder saw that many people had gathered in the yard around the church, and the priest explained that on all holy days the people gather for their own amusement. "Let us go too," said Fr. Nazarius to the priest. "Take the book of the Lives of Saints." Having chosen a convenient place near the church, they sat down, and the Elder had the priest read out loud the Life of the saint commemorated that day. The old people were glad to see Fr. Nazarius after having made his acquaintance the night before, and were the first to go to him. He persuaded them to sit down and listen to the Life of the saint. Once in a while he stopped the reading and himself gave instructive comments. The number of listeners increased, and Fr. Nazarius rejoiced with his whole heart that Orthodox people had been awakened to listen to spiritual converse.

The next day was the Feast of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, and the priest, at the advice of the Elder, celebrated both the All-night Vigil and the Liturgy, as he did also on all the succeeding feast days. The parishioners showed their evident disposition toward prayer, their number at the church's Divine services increasing from day to day. Fr. Nazarius, persuaded by the priest, spent more than two weeks there, not omitting a single opportunity of conversing with and instructing in true Christian piety both the peasants of this village and those who came to the Elder from neighboring places to take advantage of his instruction; and everyone came to have a heartfelt love for him. The priest, having become his spiritual son, fulfilled his counsels with all zeal, and he saw in Fr. Nazarius a God-sent tool both for his own salvation and for that of his flock. The Elder, bidding farewell to the priest and the parishioners, went on his way.

Some time later, after some deviations in their route, the travellers decided to pass through that village again and without fail to visit the priest; and it so happened that they came to the village while the bells were ringing for the Liturgy on Sunday morning. The people, gathered in large numbers at the church, saw the approaching Elder and almost took him from his cart and carried him into the church. The priest, gladdened by his arrival, was serving the Proskomedia. With tears the Elder thanked the Lord for such a grace-filled change, noting that the church was full of people. The people with reverence crowded around the Elder to receive his blessing, and the priest, having celebrated the Divine Liturgy, and embracing the Elder, indicated to him their mutual joy and told those who stood nearby that such a great gathering of people was the fruit of Fr. Nazarius' prayers. The church could no longer hold the multitude of people, who filled even the church steps.

Having spent some time in that village, Fr. Nazarius begged both the pastor and his flock to continue and grow from this good beginning, devoutly fulfilling their obligations. Then Fr. Nazarius made ready to depart. He was accompanied with tears by the priest with all his parishioners, who had gathered to bid farewell to their Elder, Father, and benefactor (for so they began to call him). They accompanied him for several miles from the village, and the priest remained in correspondence with Fr. Nazarius and to his very death took advantage of his counsels.

HAVING ARRIVED in Sarov, Fr. Nazarius made a secluded cell in the forest on the river Sarovka, three miles from the Monastery, and settled in it. When his strength allowed, he loved in the nighttime to walk in the forest, reciting from memory the ancient Rule of the Twelve Psalms, and he would return to his cell no earlier than sunrise. More than once he encountered bears in the dense forest, but they never touched him, and he would fearlessly walk on, always trusting the will of God. Many hermits and others living apart from the world came to him to verify their thoughts and their life, to see whether they were of God; and the instruction of the spiritually experienced Elder they accepted as the will of God. One of such was St. Seraphim, whose "Far Hermitage" was located two miles up the same river and five miles away from the Monastery. The two saints had a common care, that of the Diveyevo Convent, whose foundress, the holy Abbess Alexandra Melgunova, had a great reverence toward Blessed Nazarius. She had a por-

trait of the Elder, and whenever she had some important project to commence she would turn in prayer to the portrait as if addressing Fr. Nazarius himself, and would ask his blessing. And her prayers were always immediately answered, as are those of all others who do likewise. Shortly before her death in 1789 St. Seraphim promised her that he would take care of her "orphans," as Fr. Nazarius evidently had done earlier.

Under the guidance of Fr. Nazarius, many monastic communities for women sprang up in the region of Tambov, composed of those wishing to live a chaste and God-pleasing life. He directed and instructed the nuns mostly by means of letters. In the latter is revealed the character of his own spiritual life. "I do not know about you," he wrote to one nun, "but as for myself, I feel that I am at fault before everyone and am indebted to all; and how can one become angry at anyone after that? To love very much three or four persons — how very little; that is nothing! It is better to love everyone in the world! I have a loving simplicity: to all the gates of my heart are open. And even though there may be someone who is not happy with me, yet I am happy with him."

On February 23rd, 1809, Fr. Nazarius reposed and was buried in Sarov Monastery.

The Blessed Elder was meek and humble, and his heart was aflame with love toward God, so much so that at no time would he cease to say the mental Jesus Prayer, constantly going over the knots in the prayer rope in his hand. "Let us pray with the spirit and let us pray with the understanding also," he wrote to a nun. "Let us enter into the words of St. Paul: *I had rather speak five words with my understanding than ten thousand words in a tongue* (I Cor. 14: 15, 19). I am unable to express how fortunate we are that we have become worthy to utter these five words. What joy! *Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner*. Just think! O Lord! Whose Name am I pronouncing? That of the Creator, the Founder of everything, before Whom all heavenly powers tremble! Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God! Thou hast shed Thy blood for me, hast saved me, hast come down to earth... Put your understanding and heart together, close your eyes, raise your mental eyes to the Lord... O sweetest and dearest Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God..."

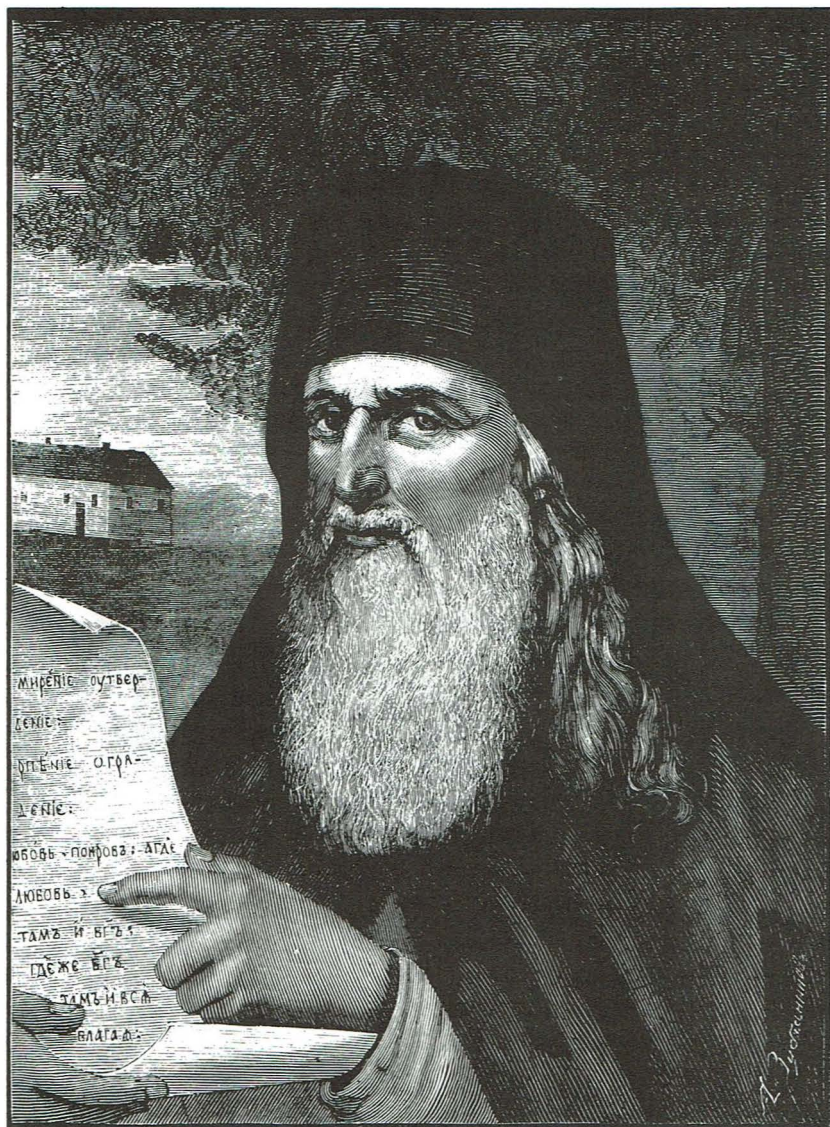
O Lord, through the prayers of our most blessed and most honorable Father Nazarius, have mercy on us, preserve us, and save us! Amen.



BLESSED NAZARIUS, ABBOT OF VALAAM

1735 — 1809





ELDER NAZARIUS OF VALAAM

This famous portrait depicts the elder before
his cell near Valaam's cemetery.

The Counsels of the Elder Nazarius

INTRODUCTION

BELOVED brethren in Christ!

Arise, you that have fallen, open the eyes of your soul, take your fill of the bread which is the word of God, and drink the wine of the chalice of God's wisdom.

If sorrow should come to you—then with good will and love examine what is written here, and believe that with the aid of God's grace you will be comforted.

Confirm yourself in this truth: that every Divine writing that is in agreement with the path of salvation instructs, teaches, chastizes, and strengthens, that our path might be ever according to God.

I

ON THE LOVE OF GOD

WE ALL HAVE the desire to follow a higher calling, to that place where from of old an eternal dwelling has been prepared for us, filled with unspeakable joy: *For our life is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour* (Phil. 3: 20). And thus he who wishes to receive that eternity must unfailingly know in what consists God's love for us, and our love for God. And just as He loved us, so must we also love Him. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son for us, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (St. John 3: 16). And in another place the same Apostle writes: *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begot-*

ten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as the cleansing of our sins (I John 4: 9, 10).

But in what manner He has cleansed our sins we shall examine in greater detail. Isaiah declares that He took upon Himself the form of a slave; and He had no form nor comeliness, but His form was ignoble, and inferior to that of the children of men (Is. 53: 2, 3). He endured cruel tortures, in order through them to blot out our crimes, He accepted a shameful death, in order through this to give us life and salvation. And so, when He did not spare Himself only for us, should not we, Christians, love Him? Should we not walk in His steps?

Let us listen to the Apostle who said: *For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps (I Peter 2: 21).* And how did He suffer? *Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by Whose bruises ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray without a shepherd; but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls (I Peter 2: 24, 25).* And thus we should have toward Him such love and obedience as He demands of us. Did not He Himself with His own most pure lips say: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind (St. Luke 10: 27)?* And in another place Moses said: *And these words, all that I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart and in thy soul. And thou shalt speak of them sitting in the house, and walking by the way, and lying down, and rising up (Deut. 6: 6, 7).*

From this we see that one must unceasingly keep in remembrance God's love toward us, and seek a perfect love toward Him. But this is acquired by the fulfillment of God's commandments. *If thou wilt love Christ: Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow Me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven (St. Matt. 19: 21).* In doing this you show Him perfect love. *He that hath My commandments, He says, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him (St. John 14: 21)*

One must know that without good deeds you do not show love toward Him; *for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified (Rom. 2: 13).*

And thus, see how good and merciful is the Lord. He gave Christians the law for no other reason than for the destruction of our malice, for a cleansing from sins, and for the conquering of the passions that war against God's law.

Therefore, we must not only keep God's commandments, but must also offer gifts in accordance with the commandments: just as the holy Fathers offered, each according to his strength, one five talents, another ten, another thirty. In the same way we also must prosper in doing good and in love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The holy Apostle Paul terrifies with a curse him who does not wish to love Christ: *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema* (I Cor. 16:22).

And St. Basil the Great, in his first homily on love toward God, teaches in these words: "We have received the commandment, O brethren, to love God, to desire and thirst after Him alone; we must have Him ever unfailingly in remembrance; and just as infants think of their mothers, so should you think of yourselves that we are created in His image and likeness, that He made us immortal in soul, and that in word and mind we are honored above all creatures and endowed with unutterable goods. For us He came down from the heavens and reconciled us with God and the Heavenly Father, saved, justified and made us sons and inheritors of His Kingdom."

O God, our Saviour! Set love on fire within us, that we might love Thee as it pleases Thee!

Are we worthy of His love, being dust and ashes? Nonetheless, He loved us.

What discontent we feel, not having love toward Him! How we suffer without Him, tossed on the waves of calamity! But even though we sometimes reject Him, He does not turn away from us. We flee Him, but He seeks us and calls us to Himself, saying: *Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden* (St. Matt. 11: 28).

Our God! We reject Thy love, but Thou dost not cease to love us. We not infrequently accept the suggestions of satan more than Thy law. We, not sparing ourselves and our own salvation, are diligent in works of malice. And notwithstanding this, a man often says: I love God. What a contradic-

tion! He thinks that he loves God, but does not fulfill His commandments. What kind of love is this? It is nothing but hypocrisy!

When you say: I love Christ God, then look at what He commands you: *Ye should do as I have done to you* (St. John 13: 15).

If you love Christ God, then endure as He endured, and do all that is pleasing to Him. He taught and did. Unfailingly your love also should be such as does good, endures, is disturbed by nothing present, and in everything ever thanks Him not with words and tongue, but with very deeds. You must love Him with heart, with mind, with your whole soul, strength, and mind.

And if you love Him in this way, then listen to Isaiah who says: *Will a woman forget her child, so as not to have compassion upon the offspring of her womb? But if a woman should even forget these, yet I will not forget thee, saith the Lord Almighty* (Is. 49: 15).

II

ON CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM (PODVIG)



AND SO, EVERYONE should love God with faith and hope and strive to fulfill His works, traditions, and commands. But what are His works, traditions, and commands? Behold, beloved, they are these: This age is not rest and repose, but a battle, warfare, a marketplace, trading, a school, a sea voyage. For these reasons you must labor in asceticism, not become despondent, not be idle, but exercise yourself in the works of God.

Know, that for every battle there is a victory; gather your strength, fight, gain the victory; for often the opposing forces go about and like lions roar and seek whom they may devour. Take care, lest you be vanquished.

Look carefully: here they sell crowns; acquire them, lest you return empty without a purchase. Strive not to deprive yourself of God's grace. Otherwise you will be a stranger to reward, and, more than that, you will be evilly judged and will perish.

Examine what the Prophet Jeremiah writes: *Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death* (Jer. 21: 8). Like unto this also speaks Sirach: *Before a man are life and death* (Sirach 15: 17). And Isaiah speaks to one who wishes to fulfill the law: *If ye be willing and obedient to Me, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it* (Is. 1: 19, 20).

John writes: *He that is of God heareth God's words* (St. John 8: 47), and he who is not of God does not hear them. And the Lord, consoling those who are afflicted, says: *Ye shall weep and lament;... ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy for you* (16: 20).

And again the Lord says: *Verily, I say unto you, if a man keep My saying, he shall never see death* (St. John 8: 51). And again He says: *He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life* (8: 12). And in another place: *If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be* (12: 26). And *If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them* (13: 17).

But what must we know that we may be blessed? Christ teaches us this, and His teaching is nothing else than His life, concerning which He instructs us in Matthew, saying: *Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (St. Matt. 7: 13, 14). And again it is written: *Take My yoke upon you.... for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light* (11: 29, 30). And again He instructs: *Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life* (19: 29). And in another place He says: *If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple* (St. Luke 14: 26, 27).

And in the catholic epistle of John we are advised: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world (is) the lust*

of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life... And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof (I John 2: 15-17). And again the same Apostle says: The whole world lieth in evil (5: 19).

James writes: *Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (St. James 4: 4).*

Paul teaches: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5: 15-17).*

And like unto this speaks Sirach: *Understand, that thou goest in the midst of nets, lest thou be caught (Sirach 9: 18). And Job proclaims: Is not the life of man upon earth a warfare? For his days are like the days of a hireling (Job 7: 1).*

Examine carefully: is there not a battle and warfare every day? Flesh rises up against spirit, and spirit against flesh. Hear Paul, who speaks of this: *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7: 23, 24). And in another place he says: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the spirits of wickedness in high places (Eph. 6: 12). Therefore in another place, writing to Timothy, in order to strengthen him in the trials coming upon him, he counsels him to endure in this way: Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (II Tim. 2: 3).*

But it is not enough only to suffer. To suffer and do good: this is pleasing to God and profitable to ourselves. *For what profit is it, writes the Apostle Peter, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called (I Peter 2: 20, 21).*

How can we monks, above all, not accept such soul-saving counsels? How can we not be moved by such good instruction?

Beloved, let us accept with love these words of the Apostle, in which he teaches, confirms, and instructs us, saying: *Be sober, keep vigil; stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-*

plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of obedience; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. That is, Praying always with all prayer and supplication in vigilant spirit, it behooves us to oppose the snares of the devil (Eph. 6: 14-18).

Enough has been said concerning the fact that Christ our Saviour, the Prophets, Apostles, and all Saints, with great compassion and love call upon us and exhort us as much as possible to remove and separate ourselves from the beguilements of the world.

Christ praises Mary in what is good, saying: *Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her* (St. Luke 10: 42). Thus we too should choose the good and preserve ourselves from the world, for it lies in evil.

III ON MONASTICISM

EXAMINE FURTHER with care what commandment Christ the Saviour gives. He says: *If any man will come after Me, he must unfeigningly deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me* (St. Matt. 16: 24). This following must be nothing other than a complete departure from the world. Isaiah the Prophet cries out: *Go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing* (Ps. 52: 2). And Jeremiah speaks of the same thing: *Flee out of the midst of Babylon* (Jer. 51: 6). And David cries out: *Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness, for I have seen violence and strife in the city day and night* (Ps. 54: 8, 10).

Know that the Son of God came down to earth not in order to ruin human souls, but to instruct us in the true path. He, by the example of His life and not by words alone, taught us to despise the world. The Lord had

no place of repose in the world, and those who followed Him He commanded to flee it. Beguiling and deceptive is the life of the world, fruitless its labor, perilous its delight, poor its riches, delusive its honors, inconstant, insignificant; and woe to those who hope in its seeming goods: because of this many die without repentance. Blessed and most blessed are those who depart from the world and its desires.

Run, O beloved, run to the peaceful and most glorious monastic life; put on the praiseworthy yoke which the Son of God Himself named His easy yoke and light burden. The holy Apostles loved this yoke and handed it down to the faithful; the God-bearing and God-inspired Fathers, aided by the grace of God and by skill, prospered in this way of life, and they advise us how we also should labor in it.

Behold, O beloved, and know that the monastic life is founded on Divine commandment, in accordance with the teaching of the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles. Of it the Lord has said: *He that is able to receive it, let him receive it* (St. Matt. 19: 12). It is to it also that the words of the Apostle apply: *I would that all men were even as I myself* (I Cor. 7: 7). Even before the Law of Moses the ascetic life shone out in Enoch and Melchisedec, under the Law in Elijah and John the Baptist, and in the times of grace in whole congregations and legions of monks.

Behold with diligence, how many are those who, having lived well-pleasing in the monastic form of life, have gone to God and dwell now with angels. And if even you, O beloved, desire the silent and good monastic life, then choose for yourself the good part.

Know, then, that by the monastic vow you must force yourself in everything to cut off your own will. Submit yourself to the Lord, walk with love on the path of your fathers without going astray, without dozing, but keep vigil diligently. You must unfailingly acquire virtues; and so seek them day and night and, having come to know them, learn and labor in them. Be a true Christian, who, having given vows to God and raising in your heart a dwelling place for virtue, fulfills them without friction.

Guard yourself, lest you appear empty before God. If you bear something good with you, do not praise yourself for this; but rather prosper in the doing of good and, according to the measure of your God-pleasing works, manifest yourself as new, right, and well-tried in everything.

Offer to God as a gift and sacrifice not whole burnt offerings of irrational beasts; rather, as the most worthy offering sacrifice your own self every day, even as all the saints mortified themselves for the sake of Christ. But how did they mortify themselves? They loved not the world nor what is in it. Therefore, do you also imitate them in this. You wish to be a monk: this means to leave the old and make yourself new. Yesterday you were in the image of the world; but now you have put on a different one; and think thus differently, speak differently, look differently, walk differently, act differently: and everything will be new.

Reflect that you are a monk; and you should be a monk not only in name, but you should be "different"* also in life, as against worldly life. St. John of the Ladder, in his first chapter on renunciation of the world, writes that not everyone who is baptized will be saved, but he who does the works of God. He said nothing about monks; but we see that through this he speaks also to monks: not everyone who is tonsured will be saved, but he who keeps the monastic vows; and that not all in a monastery are monks, but only those are monks who do the works of monks.

Christ the Saviour with His most pure lips uttered: *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.* And again He said: *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them: depart from Me, for I never knew you* (St. Matt. 7: 21-23). And in another place He says: *Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become humble as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (18: 3). And again: *Jesus saw how His disciples prevented children from coming to Him, and He was much displeased, and said unto them: Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven* (St. Mark 10: 14). And again: *Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* (St. Luke 6: 46.) Or do you not know that *blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it* (St. Luke 11: 28).

The holy Apostle James writes: *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only; for if any be a hearer only, and not a doer, he deceives himself,*

* The Slavonic word for monk, *inok*, signifies "different" (from the world).

and beholds his face as if in a mirror, and then forgets what he was (St. James 1: 22-24). Consequently, only he who fulfills the law is saved. *Not the bearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified* (Rom. 2: 13).

Believe the words of God, on which the Prophets and all the laws of God are confirmed. The Saviour says: *It is easier for everything to perish or for heaven and earth to be transformed, than for one tittle of the law to fail* (St. Luke 16: 17). And again: *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away* (St. Matt. 24: 35).

And now let us examine in what consists the offering in sacrifice of one's own self.

It is not irrational beasts, which God does not desire, that one must offer in sacrifice; rather, we must mortify ourselves every day, just as all the saints mortified themselves for the sake of Him Who died for us. They loved not the world nor what is in it, but brought a gift pleasing to God from a pure heart, and for this they were called the sons of God. Do even as they, if you wish to be called a son of the Holy One.

Behold and hasten to appropriate holy sonship, in which condition you must be. Monasticism is nothing other than sonship to God, from beginning to end.

A monk must unfailingly be a doer of all the Lord's commandments, an emulator of the state and order of the bodiless ones, a knower of God and of all love toward Him and his neighbor.

A monk must in everything hold to God's words, and not in the least attend to the voice of feelings and passions.

A monk must have his mind illumined from above, his body undefiled, his mouth inclined to silence, his tongue pure.

A monk must have in heart and soul unceasing sorrow for his sins, frequent tears and sighs, an ever-present memory of death and of the Last Judgement, a renunciation of himself in everything, estrangement from the world, disdain for his own body and for everything pleasant to the senses; that is, he must willingly take up hatred against himself, the old man, and for the purification and renewal of himself he must subject himself to cruel, narrow, difficult, sorrowful ascetic labor, while at the same time having un-murmuring patience and love with thanksgiving.

A monk should be without anger, not cunning, not proud, lowly in everything, not acquisitive, without self-love; he should have a meekness that tends to keep silent, profound humility, submission and obedience to all who live in good order. In his body he should be as a stranger, and, so to speak, dead; while his spirit he should prepare as a dwelling for the Holy Spirit. Rejoicing and singing, he should remain unceasingly in prayer and the reading of Divine books. Such is what a monk should be, and such is the foundation he should place for the fulfilling of his vows, so that he may offer to God not only gifts of visible labors, but also sacrifices of soul and spirit.

Attend diligently to what Christ the Saviour said in Matthew (St. Matthew 5: 20): *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*. That is, if you wish to enter into the kingdom of heaven, you must unfailingly surpass by far in virtues the sinners who live on the earth, and live like an angel on earth; for the kingdom of heaven is in Christ. In another place it is said: *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force* (St. Matt. 11: 12). That is, one must suffer privation in labors of body and soul. As Christ endured, and His disciples, and as all the saints labored and renounced the world, their desires, inclinations, and all worldly desires, preserving Christ's commandments with all zeal and fervent love — so too, if you also desire to obtain the needful heavenly kingdom, you should also endure privations and put on your neck the yoke of Christ's work. This yoke burdens the body, but it transports the soul to the heavens. Therefore, do not murmur when you find yourself in fastings, in vigils, in submission, in solitude and silence of soul, in hymnody, in prayers, in tears, in handiwork, in the bearing of every tribulation that comes to you from demons and men.

If you will live thus like an angel, you will obtain within yourself the kingdom of heaven; for Christ says: *The kingdom of heaven is within you* (St. Luke 17: 21). Then in your soul nothing worldly can sustain itself; then you will know that you are Christ's obedient novice, that you have taken up His cross — that is, tribulations, labors, and virtues — and that you are fleeing from the midst of this world, and are abandoning all its beguilements, its works, and are approaching the Jerusalem on high. Then from the sacred Scripture you will receive clear and tried evidence that without perfect renunciation of the world you cannot be a perfect monk. And that is why it is not easy to receive the kingdom of heaven. However, enter into yourself and seek.

Strive, O beloved, as well as you can, to cast away everything worldly and fleshly. Obey this my profitable offering, accept my counsel with zeal and fervent love, and behold what kind of a beginning of renunciation you must make.

In order to know the true path, in the beginning you must unfailingly attend to these saving words: (1) Christ says: *No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God* (St. Luke 9: 62); (2) the holy Apostle Peter says: *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn back; but it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again* (II Peter 2: 21, 22).

And so, know that he who for God's sake renounces the world and all that is in it, must unfailingly fulfill his vow and ever diligently strive as quickly as possible to draw near to God and most sincerely cling to Him. And if, entering deeply within yourself, you will carefully test yourself in this, you will find that you have not in the least removed yourself from the world as yet and have not freed yourself from all worldly desires; and therefore you must unfailingly, with your whole heart and mind, take great care over renouncing the world and mortifying the flesh, and you must dispose yourself to this practice exactly as if you were learning the most excellent of arts—for there is no art on the earth more full of wisdom or excellence than this—in order that you may come to know with precision all the passions which ceaselessly make war within you, and that you may gain the wisdom to conquer them by means of fasting, i.e., continence. Strive in all respects to accustom yourself to a virtuous life, so that your leaving the world will not be in vain.

Take this brief instruction as your rule and go by it, until the grace of Christ shall visit you and enlighten you and raise you up into the image of a perfect man who fulfills the commandments of Christ. From the beginning you must unfailingly have for the monastic life great zeal, fervent love, and the warmest disposition toward it; then you must search into the Holy Scripture and believe all the traditions of the Holy Fathers concerning what kind of life must be led by the beginner, by the advanced, and by the perfect, who desire to be clothed in the form of monasticism, and concerning how one must force oneself to these conditions and confirm oneself in them, and how one must act to purify oneself from sins and to receive the kingdom of heaven.

IV ON PRAYER, ESPECIALLY IN CHURCH

EXAMINE, O beloved brother, the following counsel, which serves for the salvation of our souls: At midnight unfailingly arise before morning worship, stand before God, and pour out to him your wholehearted prayer for some time, in the way that will be indicated below.

When the time for morning worship arrives, with all zeal arise and hasten to the beginning of the Church's Divine service; and having come to church for the common prayer, stand in the appropriate place, collect all your mind's power of thought, so that you will not dream or fly away in every direction, following evil qualities and objects which arouse our passions.

Strive as well as you can to enter deeply with the heart into the church reading and singing and to imprint these on the tablets of the heart.

Pay heed without sloth, do not weaken in body, do not lean against the wall or a pillar in church; but put your feet together straight and plant them firmly on the ground; keep your hands together; bow your head toward the ground and direct your mind to the heavenly dwellings.

Take care, as well as you can, that you do not dare, not only to speak about anything, but even to look at anyone or anything with the eyes. Pay attention to the church reading and singing, and strive as much as possible not to let your mind grow idle.

If, in listening to the church singing and reading, you cannot understand them, then with reverence say to yourself the Prayer of the Name of Jesus, in this way: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.* Strive to put this prayer deeply into your soul and heart; say it with your mind and thought, do not allow it even for a short time to depart from your lips; unite it as well as you can to your breathing and with whatever strength you have strive at the same time to force yourself to heartfelt contrition, so that you will repent of your sins with tears. If there are no tears, there should at least be contrition and moaning of heart. See to it that the church services do not proceed without this.

At the same time, strive to preserve a deep silence, so that during the singing or reading or listening you may have an undistracted mind, a faultless

heart, and pure thoughts; because through this you can sate your soul with spiritual food, which is the Word of God.

At the same time, do not exalt yourself, but be humbled (St. Luke 14: 11); *for the Lord opposeth the proud, but unto the humble He giveth grace* (Prov. 3: 34).

Implant this in your heart and soul, and diligently watch lest you exalt yourself. And if from this you receive tears, then strive that these tears might serve for the benefit of your soul and might wash away your impiety and iniquities.

In such repentance and wisdom of humility you should remain always, praying and expecting that the grace of God might visit your soul from above with divine illumination.

I beg you, O lover of virtue: accept all these words with heartfelt love and place them as the foundation of your virtue. For whoever desires to live devoutly and please God does every work of God not carelessly, but with zeal and fervor, that he may be the sooner transfigured into a perfect man in the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Standing in God's temple, picture to yourself that you are in heaven itself, that you stand before God with the higher powers and do with them everything that they do. In picturing this to yourself, make a rule for yourself that under no circumstances will you leave church before the end of the service.

If you stand thus perfectly in order as said above, and from this standing you become very tired, or you become exhausted from some bodily illness or old age, then sit wherever there is a place in church, in order not to tempt your brother.

Examine yourself, whether it be not despondency or laziness that make you tired, whether it be not distraction of mind and bodily passions that make you lose your strength and manly courage. Reflecting thus, accuse yourself of impatience, of infirmity, of weakness, of laziness, and again be ashamed before God and His angels and men, and reflect in your conscience that *he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved* (Mk. 13: 13).


If while standing in prayer you become completely unable to endure some natural necessity, or if some great affliction strikes you, accuse yourself likewise, just as written above.

Or if you leave church on an obedience assigned to you, even then reflect within yourself, with self-effacement, that you have been deprived of remaining with and enjoying the presence of inhabitants of heaven.

And if you will thus reflect and accuse your own soul, and if you endure unto the end, you shall proceed from strength to strength and shall receive invisibly from God health of body and enlightenment of soul.

V

CONCERNING THE TIME AFTER CHURCH SERVICES

N LEAVING CHURCH for your cell at the end of the services, take care as much as possible not to stand with anyone or say anything. And above all preserve yourself from harmful idle talk and laughter; but go quickly to your cell, not ceasing to utter with the lips of your mind and thoughts the Prayer of the Name of Jesus.

Having come to your cell, close the door and, if you can, stand and with fervor, attentiveness, and thanksgiving pray a little for yourself, your parents, benefactors, and for the whole world; make several prostrations or bows with prayer.

After this take a book and read a little.

If you are exhausted from toil or illness or old age, as said above, and have not the strength to fulfill this, then, for these reasons, you can omit these labors; and instead of them pray a little sitting or lying down with the prayer rope.

After doing all this, arouse your mind and thoughts with prayer, as much as you can; take care lest your thoughts soar off to objects not useful or harmful to the soul.

Thus should you do and guard yourself unfailingly after every church service. Having rested a little and done what is set forth in this instruction, if for bodily labors you have some work assigned to you or a general obedience, take it up as if it had been assigned you from Christ himself, and not from a man. Therefore, arise quickly, serve with love, labor without murmuring, wearing out your flesh.

If you have no work assigned to you, do whatever handiwork you have, or by reading a book fill and instruct your soul, or do anything else that does not hinder our salvation.

Pay special heed to this: that you be never idle in your cell. For idleness is the first teacher of every evil, and if it becomes rooted in a person, he will have to undertake many labors in order to root it out.

While performing the above mentioned handiworks or obediences, with whatever strength you have, preserve on your lips, in your mind and thoughts, prayer and most precious and soul saving silence; and at the same time guard yourself as much as possible from looking off to the side, which distracts the mind, deceives the feelings, and not infrequently also burdens your conscience and soul.

Strive as much as possible to pay heed to yourself, to keep attentive vigil over your soul and feelings, and likewise over the handiwork or obedience with which you are occupied.


Guard yourself lest you be in any way tempted by seeing anything or anyone, or hearing anything, and lest you judge your neighbor in anything or do anything brazenly against him. Flee brazenness like poison, for it is most harmful to a man and leads him to haughtiness.

Do always what is commanded you, or what you have previously been blessed to do regularly, or what is asked you; but by yourself do not dare to undertake anything in general, whatever it may be.

By this rule governing yourself thus or preparing yourself for obedience, should you be performing an obedience and there be someone else with you on the same obedience, then bow low to him with humility, and say the prayer in a low voice. Having received a blessing, do the obedience as indicated above with prayer, with love, with zeal and full attention. Do it not as if before men, but absolutely as before God and His angels; for you are not working for men, but are laboring for God Himself. Reflect that everyone who does the work of God carelessly is accursed, and is a pleaser of men; and preserve yourself as well as possible from carelessness and pleasing men.

VI

ON REMAINING IN ONE'S CELL AND ON LEAVING IT

UARD YOURSELF diligently also in this: Do not leave your cell before the proper time, except for some essential need: in order to listen to your neighbor for the sake of love, or in order to serve the infirm, or if you are sent somewhere on a deed of love by the abbot or your neighbor, or to your spiritual father who instructs you according to God — in these cases, go.

Observe diligently this also: If you go out of your cell for the reasons indicated, which have a blessing, then strive while going as much as possible not to glance anywhere to the side, and lest your eyes become curious about anything.

But if on the way you unexpectedly meet someone, or you see something harmful, or you see certain ones conversing among themselves at the wrong time — then guard yourself from standing or sitting with them; even guard yourself from the thought of whether you should stand with them and listen to what they say; but bow to them in silence and go by them on your own errand. And if they shall say something to you or shall stop you, then again bow to them saying: Forgive me, I am on an errand and I must hurry to fulfill my obedience; and hasten on your errand or to whoever sent you. Reflect on these words: *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners* (Ps. 1: 1).

Having come to him to whom you were sent, likewise strive as well as possible not to say anything superfluous, nor to sit without need; but having fulfilled what was entrusted to you, return quickly to your cell with a peaceful spirit.

Watch yourself as well as you can in this also: If there begin to whisper in your ear, like the serpent to Eve, thoughts of pride or judgment against your neighbor or vainglory, do not be senseless to the intention of that soul-harming deceiver. Unfailingly he will rise up against you with thoughts of conceit, trying to persuade you that everyone is doing things wrongly and only you are doing everything correctly and well. Guard yourself as well as you can from falling into this. Strive not to allow into your mind thoughts

of judging your neighbor. The tempter will not cease to present to you such thoughts in order to cause you to praise yourself, saying in your mind: How well I did this or that! I did not stand with those who were talking idly, or I did not do this or that; now I have fulfilled the commandment of Christ. Guard yourself as well as possible so as not to receive into your heart and soul thoughts of self-justification and self-praise; for in them a soul-destroying evil is concealed. Quietly, quickly, unnoticeably, into the soul and heart, as if by small and fine cracks, even sometimes by means of completely unsuspected thoughts, there enter, settling in and penetrating to the very depths of the heart, the passions of disdain and judgment of one's neighbor, vainglory, conceit, and pride, and others like these. In order firmly to prevent their entry into your soul, you must with your whole heart and soul present yourself as a total stranger, a fool, as one unwise, incapable of thought, and possessing nothing. Begin to scold and judge yourself with your whole soul by the following thoughts: What shall I begin to do and what can I say, a senseless wanderer, a criminal before God, clay, a worm? Not only am I unworthy to say anything to a man, but I am unworthy even to hear anything from men; I am against God, lazy and careless concerning the work of God, full of every kind of impurity. Can I draw near to those whom God, the Seer of hearts, finds worthy, having mercy on and preserving them, and against whom I the unrepentant have dared to rise up with offending thoughts? If I begin to speak with them, and God reveals to them my unclean thoughts and feelings, then with justice they will chase me away like a stinking dog. Take such a reflection and an estrangement as your rule, so that you may remove yourself from vain human conversations; and guard yourself against laughter, judgment, blasphemy, harmful idle talk, soul-destroying vainglory and highmindedness.

Be very careful also in case the thought should come to eat something or to go to anyone's cell on your own will. Sometimes the tempter incites you to think that for this you have a need that can be blessed, when in reality there is no such thing; in such a case guard yourself as well as you can against leaving your cell; strive to vanquish this cunning thought. But if after dispassionate reflection you fully recognize that you have a need that can be blessed for going out, such as to visit the sick or some other need as set forth above—then go, observing what was said above. And when you are already setting out to go to someone, observe this rule: say to yourself on the way to his cell—I am going to so-and-so's; but do I, unrepentant one, dare to disturb a holy

man who is occupied in thoughts of God, in prayer, and who remains in holy silence? And here present before your own eyes your sins and say to yourself, not with your lips but with your soul and heart: If I enter the cell and the father or brother sees me, unclean one, will he bear my uncleanness? Will he not begin to scold me and chase me out of his cell like a stinking dog? Will he not say from a disturbed soul: Why have you come to disturb my holy occupation and to defile my cell? Leave, you who are careless about your own soul! And if such a thing happens to me, will I be able patiently to bear the accusation with thanksgiving? Prepare yourself, unrepentant one, for patience, so as not to receive rather shame through impatience, and so as not to cause offense to a holy man.

You should reflect thus, and do it not as one merely playing with thoughts; but, acknowledging your inner uncleanness and unworthiness, you should truly abase yourself with your whole heart and soul. Act in this way and make this your rule. For if you shall reflect thus and humble your soul with self-accusation and acknowledgment of your sins, then you shall go from strength to strength by God's grace, and Christ Who raises up the humble will not leave you, but will visit your soul with spiritual joy and inexpressible sweetness. Only do all these things as set forth above, with your whole heart and soul and mind. For the Sweetest Jesus loves those who labor with humble wisdom, and those who desire with heartfelt and fervent love a perfect correction, and He desires all of us to come to knowledge of the truth.

In such a holy reflection you should remain wherever you may happen to be — in your cell, or on an obedience until the very Divine Liturgy, or on some other service for the Church.

VII

ON THE LITURGY AND PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE MYSTERIES

HAVING COME to the time of the Divine Liturgy, hasten to be there if possible at its beginning, and enter the church with exaltation and with fervent love. Take your place and do everything as was said above concerning morning worship.

Stand with fear and trembling, picturing in your mind and soul and heart the Son of God, Who for your lawless deeds was killed and offered in sacrifice for the salvation of all who believe in Him.

And if you have the intention to partake of the Divine Mysteries, with the permission of your spiritual father, before this spend a week in true fasting, that is, in special abstinence from abundant and pleasing food and drink, in accordance with a given rule and according to your strength. Try to keep yourself in watchfulness, in love toward God and in diligent prayer, with contrition of heart, groaning, lamentation, heartfelt sighing and tears. Know that the defilements of soul and body are cleansed by nothing so much as by tears, contrition of heart, heartfelt groans and sighing. At the same time you should reflect on this also: You are of course indignant at Judas the betrayer and likewise at those who crucified Christ and pierced Him with nails and spear; but pay heed to yourself as well, lest you, too, be guilty as a betrayer of the Body and Blood of Christ. Judas betrayed Christ once; but do you not betray Him many times when you are unfaithful to His word and His commandments? He suffered wounds from His crucifiers once; but do you not give Him wounds many times by your very passions and sins which are displeasing to God? For he bore suffering for every sin of ours.

Enter within yourself with your soul, heart and thought: do you not see within yourself an abyss of passions and sins — blasphemy, theft, gluttony, sensuality, drunkenness, envy, cunningness, deceit, hatred of your brother, rancor, evil speech, judgment of your neighbor, slander, lack of love, unkindness, pride, wrath, anger and every impurity? Having such baseness within yourself, will you not be careless over your soul, careless in cleansing yourself by most zealous and fervent prayer and other God-pleasing works and true repentance?

Strive as well as you can, by heartfelt contrition, sighs and frequent tears, to wash away the filth of your soul and body. Be careful lest you receive the Holy of Holies with your unpurified soul as judgment to yourself. Pay diligent heed lest you unite yourself to those who crucified and killed Christ, lest you become like to Judas the betrayer. Behold what you are eating: what is this food? Is it not God Himself that you receive? What are you being fed? Is it not true manna come down from heaven, so that you may live forever?

Understand that you are partaking of the unspeakable Mystery of mysteries, the Sweetness of all sweetnesses, and the Holy of all holies, from which you yourself become holy. And for this you must unfailingly have within yourself great and firm faith, and you must separate yourself completely from all faults, and make your soul and body pure and as holy as possible; for you are preparing an entrance for the Holy within you. Behold, with what inconceivable honor you are honored when you partake of this Divine Mystery. The most pure Angels are invisibly present, tremble, and cannot behold from terror, while you, of clay and full of every uncleanness, partake of this; you, with your passions and sins an enemy of Christ God, are united to the Divine and Holy and become one body and one flesh with Christ, as He Himself says: *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him* (St. John 6: 56).

Oh, lover of virtue! Examine diligently, I beg you: Whom do you dare to receive within you? It is the Most Holy God Himself. With Whom do you wish to be in a single union? With Him Who created us. Be fearful and tremble; for most Divine fire touches your lips, which are full of idle words, foul words and every uncleanness; take care lest it burn you, unworthy one. What is it, with which your tongue, which has spoken so much that is evil and unjust, desires to be refreshed? With the blood of the Terrible Judge! Be fearful lest you fall under His just judgment.

O inconceivable God! Who can express Thy might? Who can worthily praise Thee? Who can fathom the abyss of Thy mercy?

Reflect, O brother: For this sacred food and drink, which are the Body and Blood of Christ, all our forefathers from the first-created Adam, and all the prophets hungered and thirsted, but did not receive them; but you, so distant from them by your unworthiness, partake of this Divine meal. Thank God for His unspeakable mercy, that He makes you worthy of this. And at the same time understand this also: that even if you had or shall have the purity of angels or the holiness and sanctity of St. John the Baptist — even then, without the special mercy of God, you could not be worthy of this Divine Mystery. And if someone think to himself: I am a priest and therefore worthy; then on the contrary, he would be unworthy to serve as a priest. For as it was in the womb of the Most Holy Virgin, so here on the altar by the good will of the Almighty God and the action of the Holy Spirit, there are the Body and Blood of Christ. Behold how this is above nature, conception and

human reason; and therefore no one can worthily partake, save for he who in profound humility believes and has steadfast hope in the Lord.

Behold what Christ the Saviour says with His most pure lips: *This is My Body*. He says; not the image of a body do I give, but My Body, under the appearance of bread; take and *eat* unto the remission of sins. *This is My Blood*, not an image of blood, but My Blood, under the appearance of wine; *drink... unto remission of sins* (St. Matt. 26: 26, 27, 28). Wherefore you, too, must diligently examine with what fear, trembling and true humility, self-abasement and heartfelt contrition, sighs and tears, with what fervent love, undoubting faith and hope, reverence and joy and great thanksgiving from your whole heart and soul, you must approach this Divine communion. You must unfailingly approach according to this instruction, namely: approaching the holy altar, picture to yourself that in actuality you have become worthy to be at the Last Supper together with Christ and the holy Apostles.

When the holy doors are opened and you hear: *with the fear of God...*, fall down in terror before the Almighty God and Judge; and strive as well as possible not to let out of your thoughts what has been said above, but picture it all to yourself and reflect on it. With your arms folded in the form of a cross and pressed to your breast, bend your head a little, have a reverent look, your eyes filled with tears, and recite the prayer: *I believe, O Lord, and confess that Thou art truly the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Who came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. And I believe that this is Thy Pure Body and Thy own Precious Blood. Therefore, I pray Thee, have mercy on me and forgive my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, in word and deed, known and unknown. And grant that I may partake of Thy Holy Mysteries without condemnation, for the remission of sins and for life eternal. Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, accept me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of the Mystery to Thy enemies; I will not give Thee a kiss like Judas; but like the thief do I confess Thee: Remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom. May the communion of Thy Holy Mysteries be to me not for judgment or condemnation, O Lord, but for healing of soul and body. Amen.* Recite it with your whole soul with sighing, with fear and trembling, and heartfelt contrition. Stand trembling and reflect, lest you eat the Lord's Flesh and drink His Blood unto judgment. Beg the most merciful God that at least in this moment He might visit you with His Grace, that you might have contrition and warm feeling and shed fervent tears.

And after reciting this prayer with fervor, make a prostration to the very ground; again beg the All-Merciful God that He might make you worthy without sin to partake of this most Divine Mystery; and thus reflecting, gaze steadfastly and with feeling at the holy Chalice and pray that the Divine Fire might not burn you, but might heal your soul and body upon receiving It. Hope and believe that It will consume all sinful thorns which grow in you, if you will do and feel as here indicated. Then, as soon as you see the priest's hand stretched out with the Holy Sacrament and touching your lips, do not think that you are receiving this Divine gift from a priest's hand, but picture and believe with your whole soul that you receive it from the hand of Christ Himself, Who stands invisibly and places it within your mouth. Picture and believe unfailingly that you are now eating precisely the very flesh of the Lord, which has been taken from the living and life-giving composition of His body, and that now you are drinking the flowing blood and water from the very side of Christ; that you see Christ hanging on the Cross and now from His wounds you are sucking blood and light and life. Thus receive communion — thus believe unfailingly; thus picture ceaselessly in your mind.

I advise you to memorize the prayer of St. Dimitry of Rostov, which is profitable at the time of communion, and whose words follow. Approaching with such thoughts and feelings, say within your mind: "Open, O doors and bolts of my heart, that Christ the King of Glory may enter! Enter, O my Light, and enlighten my darkness; enter, O my Life, and resurrect my deadness; enter, O my Physician, and heal my wounds; enter, O Divine Fire, and burn up the thorns of my sins; ignite my inward parts and my heart with the flame of Thy love; enter, O my King, and destroy in me the kingdom of sin; sit on the throne of my heart and reign in me alone, O Thou, my King and Lord." With such good thoughts partake of the Divine Mysteries.

At the same time do not forget frequent sighings and contrition; unceasingly weep, lament, accuse yourself that you are entirely unworthy, that you have not yet divested yourself of the flesh and the world, and have not yet mortified yourself of bodily passions, but are full of impure desires and improper movements of the soul, are slothful toward spiritual labor, are downcast and negligent and cold toward attending to the word of God; that you are the most insignificant and miserable and unclean and unworthy vessel for the reception of the Source of life, Whom the heavens of heavens cannot embrace.

Reflect that it is not an Angel that you receive in the holy Mysteries, but the Lord of Angels and the Judge of all. Reflect also on this: with what joy the holy Forerunner leapt in his mother's womb and bowed down to his Master; and how the shepherds, and the kings with gifts, and Simeon and Anna glorified their Master and bowed down to Him with wonder, fear and joy; how also the other saints and all monk-saints with reverence, joy and thanksgiving, shone like the sun when united in communion with the Body and Blood of Christ, and live with Him forever. With just such a desire and great zeal, do you also hasten to the Sweetest Source of benefactions, and thank the Lord for His unspeakable mercy, that He, the terrible and inaccessible God, does not abhor our miserableness, but unites Himself to us, out of His incalculable love for us.

With all your strength you must thank the Lord, not only in word and thought, but also in deed. Strive as much as possible to preserve yourself from much speaking; have God as your pure and holy occupation; and remain in reverence not only before communion, but after receiving this Sacrament as well, preserve yourself from every evil thing. Strive always to remain with Christ your King and God, and do not separate Him from yourself.

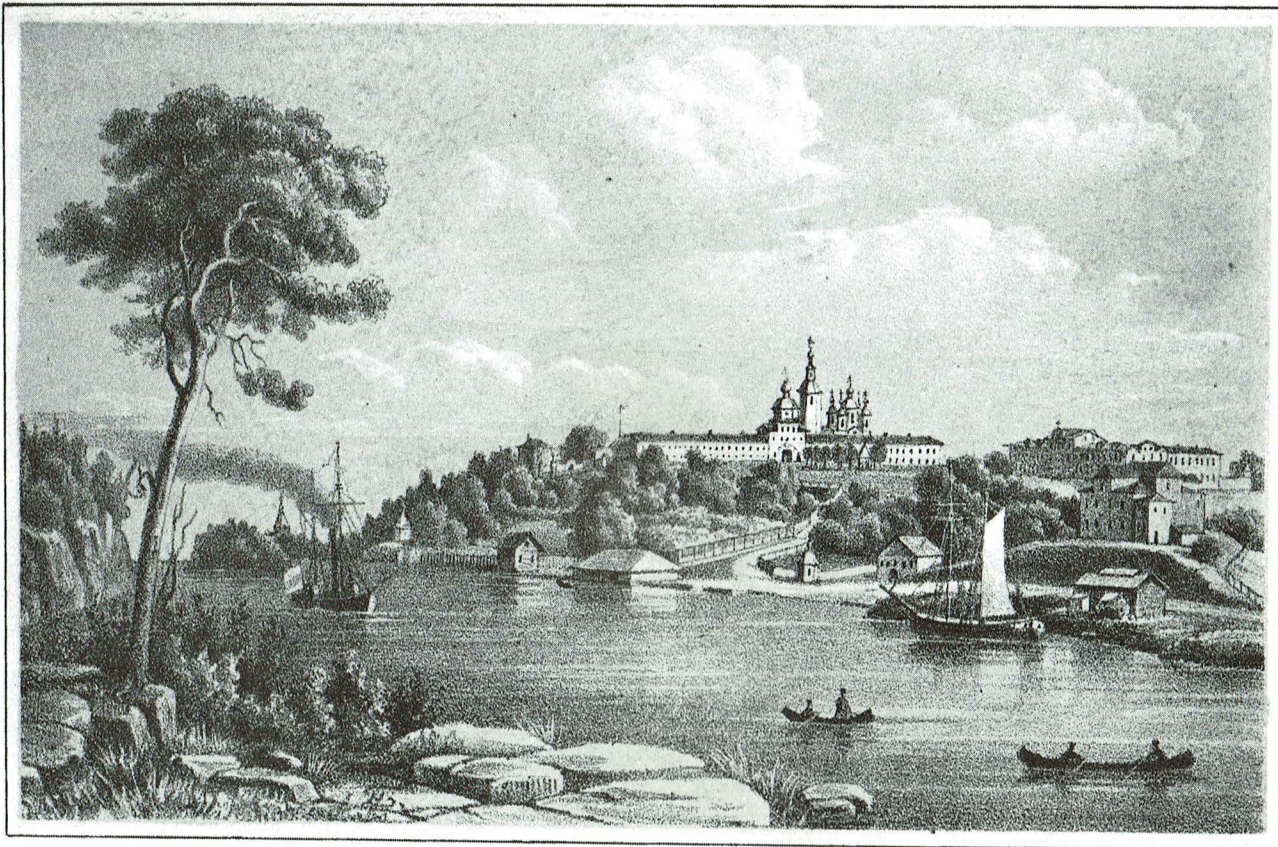
At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, enter your cell in silence of tongue, mind, and every sense; remain in prayer and thanksgiving. Observe at this time also everything that was given you above to be observed after morning worship.

VIII

CONCERNING TRAPEZA (MEALS)



IF YOU ARE ABLE to restrain yourself in such a way that you take food only once a day, and that after sunset, then arrange this for yourself with the counsel and the blessing of an elder who has acquired experience and discernment. However, how you should act with regard to this will be said below at the end of this instruction.



General view of Valaam Monastery;
1864 engraving showing the church built by Abbot Nazarius



1864 engraving of the Great Skete, dedicated to All Saints,
located a mile and a half from the monastery

But if you are not able to eat only once, then as soon as the time comes for trapeza, enter the refectory with everyone else. Do not separate yourself from the brethren.

If it should be your turn to serve the brethren at table, appear with all reverence and fear and joy. Serve entirely as if you were serving Christ Himself and His Angels, and not men.

Have a good disposition and warm love toward all the brethren. Have a joyful heart, eye, and face, being filled with spiritual reverence; attach yourself firmly with your soul to the whole brotherhood and serve it sincerely, without any hypocrisy. Do not permit yourself to think that for this you will receive praise from anyone, but imagine that you are serving God and His Angels, of which service you are entirely unworthy; but glorify God, that the Lord has granted you this service.

Watch diligently lest the proud and vainglorious thought should set itself against you, that in serving the brethren you are doing everything well. Try your best not to permit in yourself the working of the useless, evil, and soul-destroying thought of vainglory. For it artfully enters the soul of a man, so that sometimes he does not notice at all how this thought of his raises itself up and prepares his fall.

Pride settles into a man when he does not yet know himself perfectly. And so, know yourself, and guard yourself by every means from pride and vainglory, as from a great harm for the soul. But you cannot banish them from yourself by any means except by ceaseless self-reproach and belittling yourself.

Dispose yourself in such a way that with your whole heart you can say interiorly: I am not only unworthy to sit with the brethren at table, but I am unworthy even to serve them; and I would not even be worthy to look at them, if God's mercy had not arranged this for me. Send up great thanksgiving to God that He has arranged this for you.

If you are honored to sit together with everyone at table, then think to yourself: Who am I, unworthy one, who have entered here? And how is it that I wish to have a part at table with the holy fathers? Thinking thus to yourself, present yourself as the most sinful of all, a stranger, foreigner, and pauper. And, sitting at table with the brethren, have fear and shame before them, as if you sat before kings and princes. Make yourself devoid of

boldness for anything or before anyone. Always choose for yourself the lowest and if possible the last place. Do not look around you anywhere at all, and do not be curious. Do not look at how anyone sits, or at how he eats or drinks.

Try your best not to have most harmful impudence; do not presume, before the blessing of the priest or an elder brother, to touch anything on the table. Even though there may be present those younger than you, nonetheless reflect that you are unworthy to begin to eat or drink before your brother. Wait until everyone else begins to eat or drink, and then you too eat with thanksgiving, with humility and reverence.

Try your best to eat whatever food there is — whether it be tasty or not, whatever it might be, whether anyone be given much or little; but strive to have a pure mind.

Do not let out of your thoughts prayer to the Lord Jesus, and on your tongue mix it with the food; that is, have the food in your mouth diluted with prayer. From such a dilution you will not taste any unpleasant taste in the food, and you will not envy anyone or anything, whether others are given much or little. Believe firmly that Jesus will sweeten in your throat the food you are offered, and everything will be pleasant to you.

Reproach yourself, reflecting that you are unworthy of such communion; and give thanks, partaking of the common table with the brethren.

Watch carefully lest any murmuring or envy touch your lips, with the thought of eating more of some better food. But if you should happen to experience such a thought in your mind, then deprive yourself altogether of better food, or do not let yourself eat at all that day, so that in future your mind will not presume to accept such a pleasure-loving desire.

And so, partake of the dishes which are offered in silence and with prayer, and do everything as written above. At the same time guard yourself carefully also in this: Satisfy your body with food in such a way that you do not feel full or heavy, but have still a little hunger and thirst. Nourish rather your soul with the God-inspired words and lives of the Holy Fathers which are read during trapeza.

Try your best to keep your soul and body together in attention and concern; nourish your body with foods, and satisfy and adorn your mental soul with Divine words.

At the same time exercise yourself in restraint from foods in the following fashion. If you wish to have perfect restraint in everything at trapeza, then begin to judge thus: While belittling yourself and with heartfelt self-reproach, as mentioned above, believe that everyone present at table is richer than you in virtues, while you are the poorest of all, the most infirm, the most sinful, and thus you should not even be sitting with others at table, or even presume to look at them. Together with these thoughts, bring to mind your sins and your infirmity, and say mentally: Will it not be for my condemnation if I touch the foods that are offered? How is it that the holy fathers bear me and have mercy on me? Am I worthy to sit next to them and partake of the food given by God to righteous men? By my life from my youth up I have greatly angered God my Creator, being a transgressor of His holy commandments. Do you not stand self-condemned in your sins, O my soul? Think, accursed sinner — where are your vows to Christ and your rejection of satan and his deeds? Where is your keeping of God's commandments? Where is your emulation of Christ? Where are your virtues of body and soul which you promised with an oath to perform in Christianity? Where is the vow you gave as a monk? Where is your firm faith in God by which you can cause mountains to move? Why have you not acquired at least a little of it, as a mustard seed? Where is your perfect repentance and your separation from every evil word and deed? Where is your contrition of soul, your lamentation, deeds of mercy, purity of heart, and abstinence from evil thoughts? Where is your dispassion to everything and your perfect love for God and your neighbor? Where is your humility, for the sake of which we become worthy to become sons in eternity? Where is your patience with thanksgiving? Where is the unceasing prayer on your lips and in your heart which Jesus has commanded? Where are your heartfelt tears and your lamentations of repentance? Where is your unceasing remembrance of death and the Last Judgment? Where is your constant remembrance of the reward prepared for the righteous and of the eternal torture awaiting sinners? Where, O man, is your care to remain day and night in unceasing concern for your soul and to keep the Lord's commandments, which are dearer than gold and precious stones? O accursed one! Be fearful lest you perish in the portion of the evil; be zealous for good and live righteously.

Examine whether you be worthy to take your fill together with the holy ones! It would behoove you first of all to repent and beg mercy and receive perfect forgiveness from God Who loves mankind, and then you could worthily eat bread and rejoice with the holy fathers. But you who have not brought forth perfect repentance — how do you presume to partake of and rejoice in the good things prepared for righteous men?

Having reflected thus, at least say to yourself from your whole soul and with heartfelt sorrow: Eat, unworthy one, enough so that you will not die. Dry up your body; confine your insatiable desires; grieve and belittle yourself. Will not the most merciful Lord look down upon this grief and contrition of my heart which are justly deserved? Even though my contrition itself is imperfect and insufficient, will not God Who is endless in mercy still have mercy on me and forgive the great evils that I have done?

Constantly reflecting thus and reproaching yourself, decide for yourself how much you should eat and drink every day to satisfy the needs of nature. Avoid as much as possible not merely overeating, but even eating just enough to be full. Keep in mind what was said above, that one should eat and drink only to the point where one is still a little hungry and thirsty.

At the same time keep constantly in mind Christ the Saviour and reflect thus: How much He suffered for me, a lawless one; He endured not only hunger and thirst, but also great tortures, and crucifixion, and death for my lawlessness. And yet I, negligent one, overflowing with sins and lawlessness, do not wish to endure for the sake of my own forgiveness and salvation? Try your best, with God's help, to acquire patience in the enduring of deprivations and sorrows; ask, knock, seek day and night; and you will obtain from Christ the Saviour help and strength to endure, if you desire this with your whole heart and soul.

With such God-pleasing dispositions, in eating from the table guard yourself against attachment to better or more tasty foods. Beware of this evil serpent who whispers to you as to Eve. To Adam and Eve the forbidden fruit seemed beautiful to look at and good to eat; but inasmuch as they did not wish to deprive themselves of tasting this fruit, they were deprived of much else and were banished from paradise. Therefore, if one food presents itself to your eyes and mind as better than another, and the thought occurs to you:

leave this one alone and take your fill of that better food — then try your best to overcome such a thought and desire. Reproach yourself and think that you are not worthy of that food and drink. And therefore offer it to your neighbor, but yourself do not eat or drink it at all; for your thought desires it by reason of passion. Beware lest through your dainty foods heartfelt contrition be driven out of you. For it is from the passionate desire for pleasant food and drink that evil and soul-destroying excess in eating and drinking are born. Strive by means of self-restraint to bridle yourself a little and thus preserve yourself from a greater attachment.

In order to strengthen yourself in self-restraint, reflect that he who desires to receive from God the forgiveness of sins and purification and to have peace in heaven with Christ, must unflinchingly refrain not only from great passionate desires, but from small ones as well, and even from mental attachments. Reflect always to yourself on the words of Holy Scripture, that nothing defiled or unclean can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Apoc. 21:27).

Pay attentive heed also to this: If you are sitting with the brethren at table and wish to restrain yourself and the brethren begin to offer you some food and drink, bow to them, saying nothing. But if they again begin to force you to take something, then again bow your head and reply in a meek and quiet voice: Forgive me, but I am already full enough. Keep this in mind, that everywhere and concerning everything you should answer the brethren meekly and quietly.

Pay attentive heed also to this: If a brother or one of the pilgrims should come and visit you for the love of God or on some business before the Liturgy, do not dare to permit eating or drinking with them. And act the same way if anyone comes to you after dinner as well.

If you have the strength for it and can restrain yourself, then refrain from supper in the evening. But if you should go to the refectory for supper in order to conceal your self-restraint from the brethren, then go to the refectory and strive to serve the brethren with love in some way in place of supper. But if as a part of your duty or for some other reason it be required of you that you sit with the brethren, then take a little food infrequently so as only to give the appearance that you are eating. Do not forget at this time also what was said concerning dinner: satisfy your body with foods, but nourish your soul with prayer and discernment, or listen attentively to the reading

from the lives of the Holy Fathers and make use of them. Likewise, unceasingly reproach yourself and represent yourself as unworthy of these services or of sitting with the brethren.

Do not seek the first place; guard yourself even from desiring it. Reflect that the presumption of being in the first place is the first and cunning beginning of pride, and that from such presumption great pride also is born. In everything strive with your whole soul to have humility. Keep in mind always these words of Christ the Saviour that *whosoever exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (St. Luke 14:11).

Keep this also in mind: that every evil and diabolic passion in a man is born secretly and settles into him through actions which in the beginning are almost imperceptible. Pay heed and know that passion takes its beginning above all from lack of self-restraint and from filling one's stomach. It is in this net that a man is caught most of all and soonest. This beginning of passion presents itself in appearance as something good, pleasant, and commendable; but it has in itself the hidden poison of all fatal passions. If a man becomes infected with it, many labors will be required to remove it from himself. Whoever will submit to this passion and not reject it with whatever strength he has, is in danger of falling deeply; but whoever restrains himself from it is safe from many passions and will remain unwounded.

Many suffer from gluttony and fall into the pit of love of pleasure, so that they lead a worldly life and not a monastic one, having forgotten their monastic vows. And anyone who, having entered monasticism, begins to grieve that he is not enjoying a worldly life of luxury, is near to ruinous passions. Know that lack of self-restraint in food and dainties is the mother of many vices. And thus, discerning that this soul-harming evil leads a man to the abyss, try your best, O beloved brother, to preserve yourself from it. Do not fill yourself with food and drink, and do not give enjoyment to your stomach, lest you die (spiritually). For if you allow yourself to become accustomed to gluttony, you will have to employ many labors and much patience to be delivered from it and to become strengthened in self-restraint.

And pay firm heed also to this: If you begin to keep yourself diligently according to this instruction, the envious demon will not endure it and will either raise against you temptations from the superior, in order to test your

humility and fortitude, or else will arm against you those who are living hypocritically and negligently, and they will begin to reproach and abuse you, and perhaps also to hit, despise, and hate you and thus cause you many sorrows. But in such a case attach yourself all the more to silence and humility. Keep unceasingly the prayer of the Lord Jesus on your lips and in the depths of your heart, so that you will not in the least murmur against them for this nor be at all offended. Accept everything with thanksgiving, reflecting to yourself: How can I, accursed one, become angry in vain at my brother? And at the same time unceasingly keep in mind your own sins; for you too, even if you haven't hit anyone, have reproached, spoken ill of, ridiculed, and by your abuse have wounded your neighbor, and by offending your neighbor you have risen up against Christ the Saviour and wounded Him. Therefore with your whole soul you should acknowledge yourself as worthy of enduring more than you already endure; remember the words which Christ the Saviour spoke concerning a good deed done to one's neighbor, words which should apply equally to every offensive word or deed against one's neighbor. Whatever you have done to your neighbor, He says, you have done to Me. At the same time remember His sufferings even unto death, His immense goodness, and His love toward us, a love that endures our unrighteousness; and consider how easy it is for you to bear small sorrows for His sake, for it will be with His sure help, if you truly desire it. If you will rightly discern in this way, and will endure with love the temptations sent you according to your deeds, you shall soon acquire the help and comfort of Christ the Saviour.

After trapeza stand up with the brethren; give thanks to God, and if a priest or the superior is present, receive his blessing; if neither is present, then bow to the brethren, thank them, and ask forgiveness. Then go in silence to your cell, shut the door, and if you can, make several prostrations with prayer and thanksgiving, and after this take a book, read a little, and reflect on what you have read.

If it is summertime and after trapeza you have need for rest from the preceding labors, then lie down in the place prepared for this and sleep a little; only try your best to keep from sleeping much. Note that if you have done everything at table as said above — if you have eaten and drunk with prayer, eaten in moderation and risen without being full — then you will sleep a lit-

tle sweet and healthful sleep and will soon arise, for your guardian angel will soon awaken you.

IX

ON THE DAILY CLEANSING OF CONSCIENCE



AFTER THE EVENING MEAL you should go to your spiritual father. Bow to him as to Christ Himself, fall to your knees, and open to him the state of your soul for the course of the day that has passed, testing yourself in everything that you have done in deed or have thought evilly, or said, or permitted yourself against your conscience, or over which you have become vainglorious or proud, or in which you have offended anyone or yourself been offended against your neighbor, or over which you have grumbled or judged your neighbor. Strive to notice and accuse even the most refined thoughts which have violated the purity of your conscience. If you cannot remember everything, write down on paper what you should confess. After such a refined and true confession, having received absolution and forgiveness as from God Himself, and having kissed the icon and the Cross, bow to the ground before your spiritual father and go in silence to your cell. Do not allow out of your thoughts the name of the Lord Jesus and prayer to Him; strive especially at this time while walking not to be tempted by anything or anyone, and not to converse with anyone about anything, lest after confession you draw a new tribulation upon your soul and conscience, which would cause a great hindrance to your nightly prayer, and so that you might more surely acquire contrite feeling of heart and soul.

X

INSTRUCTION FOR THE EVENING AND NIGHT



HAVING COME from your spiritual father to your cell, close the door, and first of all give heartfelt thanks to God that He has deemed you worthy of and granted you holy confession and peace of conscience.

But if it is wintertime and you don't need sleep: then after a little prayer and reading, as said above, occupy yourself with handiwork and strive to work with your hands and have prayer inseparably on your lips and in your mind. Be careful not by any means to allow your mind to be idle; and thus spend the time.

When the time comes for evening hymnody, hasten to the beginning as was explained above. After entering the church stand with fear, pay heed to yourself, confess yourself fervently before God, and in everything do as was indicated above concerning standing in church.

If you can restrain yourself, as indicated above, so as to eat only once a day after sunset, then after sunset act thus. Go to the one of whom one should ask food, and not as a brother or novice, but as a pilgrim, and not as one who has fasted, but as if you had already eaten and are asking more.

See carefully also to this, that you come to ask food not thinking that you have earned it by labor and sweat; no, rather think that you are unworthy, but perhaps God will inform this father to give you something to eat. For this you should humble yourself with your whole soul and reproach yourself as one impatient and infirm. Having come with such a disposition, if they give you a piece of bread and some water, give thanks to God and strengthen your infirmity with them.

But if you cannot bear such self-restraint, then sit with the brethren at table and eat together with them; only maintain your self-restraint, so as not to eat to excess.

Observe this also: If you are in the monastery after vespers or after supper, if there is a special rule of prayer in church, do not be absent from this church assembly without extreme need, but participate in it with reverence and zeal just as in the other parts of the church services, as set forth above.

After this pray a little for the monarch [rulers], for the spiritual pastors, for the brotherhood, for the monastery, for relatives, for friends. for benefactors and for the whole world, just as in the morning. Then take up some book that profits the soul and read with attention as much as you like and as is convenient.

After reading, collect your mind and all your thoughts and stand at prayer. Raise your mind and heart to God, and understand as much as you are able with your reason to whom and for what you are praying. Strive to keep your thoughts from being able to soar off to the side and from occupying themselves with anything in this world. In such stillness and deep silence of your mind, stand, bow down your head, put your hands on your breast, join your feet together, close your eyes so that you cannot see anything earthly, and having collected your heart and mind into one whole, behold God sitting on His Throne and judging, surrounded in fear and trembling by Archangels and Angels, Cherubim and Seraphim and all the heavenly powers; behold hell and Tartarus, into which He can condemn you; pray with your mind, make contrite your heart, weep, groan, sigh, judge yourself. reproach your soul because you have angered your Creator and Redeemer by your many iniquities.

Watch carefully lest you imagine in your thoughts the sins of others; for from such lawless fantasies inner fervor is extinguished and heartfelt feeling departs, things which you should have within yourself.

Thus, remaining contrite and repenting, ask mercy of your Creator, that He might forgive you the sins which you have performed and unite you to those who repent, and save you from eternal torments.

Strive carefully to examine and notice this also: from which psalms you come especially to heartfelt feeling, contrition, tears; so that you might especially use such psalms according to your spiritual need.

However, the use of psalms and the form of prayer should be established for you by your spiritual father according to your power; that is, you should find out your power and strength, and in accordance with this set out, with the agreement of your spiritual father, how much is required of you in psalm-singing, how many prostrations, how many bows from the waist, how many mental Jesus Prayers. And watch attentively that in all these activities there be warm love and unflagging desire, so that your prayer might proceed from your whole heart and soul without complaint. Strive not only not to omit anything assigned to you, but beyond this strive to add something every day so that your conscience will not say to you: you still have power and strength to pray and repent over your sins, so why do you not pray more?

However, in case of great need you can shorten your prayer without offending your conscience: namely, in order to serve your neighbor for the sake of God.

Know that necessary and lawful works performed reasonably and without complaint are higher than the ordained arrangement of your prayers, as, for example, when you are sent on obedience where it is not convenient to perform the set rule.

Likewise do not judge yourself if you do not perform the ordained rule of prayer because of illness, or from old age, in which you have not the strength to perform the set rule. In this case you can, sitting or lying down, reproach yourself and make regret for yourself thus: see how infirm I am, how decrepit, and I cannot even pray to God and thank Him for His inexpressible mercies and great benefactions shown to me who am unworthy and infirm.

Remaining in such a God-pleasing order, arrange cell-prayer for yourself after every church service, as much as possible according to your strength: after nocturn, matins, Liturgy, noonday prayer, and vespers. Meanwhile read a little in a book, and do a little handiwork.

Finally, arise, confess to God, repent and beg forgiveness, sign yourself with the Cross and also cross the place where you wish to repose a little from your labors, and thus lie down and until sleep shall come to you do not leave off your lips and out of your mind and heart the Prayer of Jesus, whereby sleep will come to you peacefully and grant you sweet repose; and the guardian Angel who is attached to you will preserve you from every apparition of the enemy. If you awake before the appointed hour, do not be lazy, but arise and pray a little to your God and to your guardian who has awakened you for this, and therefore you should not be lazy. Pray, lest you chase him away from you; and having prayed, lie down again and say the prayer until sleep comes.

XI

CONCERNING ONE'S SPIRITUAL FATHER AND COUNSELLOR OF CONSCIENCE



YOU SHOULD MAKE great effort to see that you confess immediately, if possible, to your spiritual father that in which you have sinned in the hours of the day. If it is not possible to confess this soon, then, as indicated above, you should at least confess everything once a day, after Vespers; and deeds or thoughts of the night, if they occur, should be confessed after Matins. If by some chance it is not possible to do this, for example while travelling or for the lack of a spiritual father, then you can confess, according to need, to a brother of the monastery or to someone else who is close to you who lives a God-pleasing life and has spiritual understanding, that which disturbs your conscience and ask his prayers and blessing. And if you do not have even such a one near you, then in the hearing of the Angels and Archangels, with tears, with self-accusation and reproach and great heartfelt regret, confess to God, beat your breast, and, if your conscience censures and accuses you in anything, place some spiritual punishment upon yourself and do thus until you receive the possibility to confess all this to your spiritual father.

Toward your spiritual father or toward your instructor, to whom you should confess your deeds and thoughts, have love, unwavering faith, and such respect that you judge him in nothing and do not become confused if someone shall criticize and judge him. Even if it should seem to you that he sins, you should still not become disturbed nor lessen your faith in him; but reproach yourself as much as you can, and not him. Say to yourself these words: I, a sinner, have looked upon my father with impure eyes, and in my impurity I judge concerning him, and because of this I do not see his irreproachableness. Accuse yourself thus, pray zealously to the Lord God for his correction, if in very fact he has stumbled. Reflect thus concerning this: The Lord God has permitted a temptation to come upon him; but how can I, a sinner, judge him, seeing neither his deeds nor his repentance? Can I see into his soul? Even if he has sinned, perhaps he has already completely re-

pented and received complete purification from God. Do not allow out of your heart and thought these words also: *To his own Lord he standeth or falleth* (Rom. 14:4); and who am I to judge?

XII

ON NOT JUDGING ONE'S NEIGHBOR

IT IS FITTING to mention here somewhat more at length and more clearly the question of judgment: how everyone who desires salvation should look at himself alone, and not judge his neighbor.

I suppose that it is sometimes better to fall oneself and rise, than to judge one's neighbor; because one who has sinned is incited to self-abasement and repentance, while he who judges one who has sinned becomes hardened in an illusion about himself and in pride. Therefore everyone must guard himself, as much as possible, so as not to judge.

Examine yourself closely, beloved; can you boast that you have never had part in any sin? Even one who has just been born and has lived a single day in the world — even he has participated in sin, according to the prophecy of David: we are conceived in iniquity and born in sins from our mother's womb. Test yourself and your conscience carefully, beloved, whether you be not guilty, if not in one then in another sin, if not in a great then in a small one, if not in deed then in word and thought. Reflect ceaselessly also on this: that no one can be justified before the Lord by his deeds, and no one can be pure before his Creator; all are sinful, all infirm, all in need of God's aid and mercy. And as we are all created by God alone, and He is the Judge of all, how do you presume to take the Creator's judgment upon yourself? How do you judge your brother before God's judgment, before the coming of Christ? Being the same kind of sinner, how do you judge your brother who has sinned, whose deeds you cannot know exactly, not seeing his thoughts or his contri-

tion of heart? Inasmuch as you cannot either give eternal punishment for sin, or forgive and deliver him from eternal torment, how can you judge?

Keep in mind always these words of Christ the Saviour: *Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged* (Matt. 7:1-2). And likewise the words of the Apostle: *And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practice such things. And reckonest thou this, O man, who judgest them that practice such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?* (Rom. 2:2-3.)

Pay heed also, O beloved brother, to this deed of God's Providence, done to make us cautious, so that we might in every way guard ourselves from judging; it is described in the Prologue, under September 27. There was a certain man of holy life. Having heard of a certain brother that he had fallen into a serious sin, he sighed and uttered these words: Oh, this brother has done an evil thing. And for these words, what a terrible vision was given to him! A holy Angel, at God's command, presented to the one who had judged the soul of the one who had sinned, and said to the former: See, he whom you have judged is dead: where, then, do you command that he be placed, in the Kingdom or in torment? The elder was astonished. Again the Angel said to the elder: Since you are the judge of the righteous and sinners: speak, what do you command concerning this humble soul; do you have mercy, or do you give it over to torments? This he said and became invisible. This was so terrible, and so difficult for the conscience of this holy man that he condemned himself to remain the whole duration of his life in sorrow and inconsolable lamentation. Falling to the feet of the holy Angel, he begged forgiveness and was scarcely forgiven; but later, too, he spent his whole life in lamentation.

In the Prologue under October 22 there is another similar story. A man of holy life, John the Sabbaite, speaking of himself, says: I heard a bad word about a certain brother and I said, Oh! And beloved, I was transported in terror in sleep; and seeing myself standing on Golgotha and the Lord Jesus Christ between two thieves, I strove to bow down to Him. And when I approached, behold, I saw Christ turned toward the Angels who were present and saying to them: Cast him out, for he is an antichrist to Me; before My judgment he judged his brother. And being cast out, when I came to go out

the doors, my mantle was held and remained there. And I awoke and said to the brother who came: Evil is this day to me. The brother said: Why? Then I told him all my vision, how I had been deprived of God's protection and grace; and from that day, according to the Lord's word, for seven years I have wandered about the desert, not eating bread or going under a roof or speaking with man; until I saw my Lord and he returned to me my mantle.

Know, O sinner, that it is given to God Alone to justify and to judge His own creation. He sees the deeds and thoughts of everyone and judges each in accordance with his strength and reason: He judges in one way kings and princes; in another way hierarchs, priests, abbots, hieromonks and monks; in another way ordinary people; in one way old people; in another way those of mature years; in another way young children; in one way the healthy; in another way the infirm. And if it is thus: then who can scrutinize the unfathomable decrees of God and condemn his neighbor? It is the Lord Alone Who has created everyone and established everything, Who tests the hearts and thoughts. Therefore examine carefully, whether it be not your own vice that you judge as a sin in someone else, as if you yourself were sinless and without guilt? You torment your neighbor for a small sin, but you do not see and do not feel your own many transgressions. Is this not terrible? The Lord Creator endures for a time your iniquities, while you condemn your brother in a sin and do not reflect that you yourself are arousing the Lord to cease His patience toward you, and to condemn you forever!

O sinner! Restrain yourself from judging your neighbor, even if you have seen him sinning with your own eyes. Strive as much as possible not to judge your brother; for there is one Judge of all, the Son of God. Leave your neighbor's burden to the Almighty, and take care for the burden of your own sins; for you shall give an answer for your own. Do not reject the commandments of God which have been given you; judge not, and you will not be judged. Justify your neighbor and do not judge him, lest you be as a bath which reveals and removes everyone's filth but remains itself always full of filth. Do not rejoice over the fall of your neighbor: for it is only the demons, the enemies of our salvation, who have joy over this, because they themselves have already perished and cannot rise. Strive not to judge, but rather to pray, to weep and lament over him who falls, and to rejoice over him who is rising from a fall and is being saved, lest you yourself be judged by the terrible

judgment of the just Judge. Strive to receive justification before the Almighty, saying ever these words to yourself: who am I to judge my neighbor! I am a sinner and a lawless man. And therefore you should accuse yourself, and not others, according to the saying: *Do thou first confess thy transgressions, that thou mayest be justified* (Isaiah 43:26).



INDICATION OF THE MOST ESSENTIAL SPIRITUAL DISPOSITIONS AND VIRTUES

1. *The Prayer of Jesus*



THE HEAD AND BEGINNING of all virtues is, to the extent possible, unceasing prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ, which is called, by way of abbreviation, the *Prayer of Jesus*; the Apostle says concerning it: *Pray without ceasing* (I Thes. 5:17). That is, one must call upon the Name of God always, whether we be conversing, sitting, walking, working, eating, or doing anything else. At every time and in every place it is fitting to call upon the Name of God. For by this means, writes Chrysostom, the temptation of the enemy is consumed. Beat the warriors, says St. John Climacus, with the Name of Jesus, and a stronger weapon you shall not find either in heaven or on earth. Prayer is the banishment of sorrow and dejection, the germination of meekness and angerlessness, the offering of joy and thanksgiving; and innumerable good things are acquired through prayer.

2. *Self-reproach*

ONE MUST TRAIN oneself in self-reproach, that is, always accuse oneself and not others in one's mind, reproach oneself and not others, and with a severe distrust of oneself accuse oneself of the failings which are covered up by our self-love, accuse oneself of our inclinations to sin. He who has self-reproach has peace, writes Abba Dorotheus, and will never be disturbed. If to such a one there should occur an illness, a wrong, a vexation, or some similar misfortune, he ascribes everything to his own sins and thanks

God. If such a one is punished or reprimanded by the superior, he accepts all this as good and accepts every severe word against himself without murmuring or talking back, as the judgment of God.

3. Self-knowledge

SELF-KNOWLEDGE is needful; this is the knowledge of oneself and especially of the limitation of one's talents, one's failings, and lack of skill. From this it should result that we consider ourselves unworthy of any kind of position, and therefore that we do not desire any special positions, but rather accept what is placed upon us with fear and humility. He who knows himself pays no heed to the sins of others, but looks at his own and is always repenting over them; he reflects concerning himself, and condemns himself, and does not interfere in anything apart from his own position. He who is exercising himself in self-knowledge and has faith, does not trust his faith, does not cease to test it, in order to acquire a greater and more perfect one, heeding the word of the Apostle: *Examine yourself, whether ye be in the faith* (II Cor. 13:5).

4. Meekness

LABOR to acquire meekness. Concerning the heavenly virtues, meekness and humility, the Lord Himself teaches us, saying: *Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls* (Matt. 11:29). Learn not from angels, not from men, but from Me, He says; that is, from the higher wisdom. May outward meekness be manifest in this: may your walk be meek, meek your sitting, meek your glances, meek your word. The clothing of a man, the smiling of his teeth, and the way he walks inform concerning him. And meekness of the soul is, according to the inner man, the restraint of anger, the taming of rage, and when one, being saddened by another, does not revenge himself even if he can and accepts vexations without causing them in return. Meekness is when one does not vex anyone either in word or deed or in command, but rather gladdens the heart of every man by his manner of acting. *Saith the Lord: To whom will I look, but to him that is meek and silent* (Is. 66:2). The prophetic word says: *The meek will the Lord guide in judgment (in understanding), and the meek will He teach His way* (Ps. 24:9). *For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people, and He will beautify the meek with salvation* (Ps. 149:4). *But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace* (Ps. 36:11).

And concerning the kind of rest and peace which a man receives from meekness, Chrysostom writes, saying: There is nothing firmer than meekness, nothing stronger; it preserves our soul in constant quiet, and strives to lead it as to a harbor, and is the cause for us of every contentment; and nothing so places the soul in rest and great quietness as meekness and humility. This is more honorable than all crowns for one who has acquired these virtues; it is more profitable than every honor and glory. The upright soul, says Climacus, is a co-dweller with humility, while an evil soul is the slave of malice; the souls of the meek are filled with knowledge, but the mind that is prone to anger is covered with the darkness of ignorance. The meek soul receives words of wisdom: *Many are they that are exalted and glorious, but to the meek shall mysteries be revealed*, writes Sirach (Sirach 3:19). He who hates those who grieve him, hates meekness. He who flees those who grieve him, flees also the rest which is in Christ, in the words of Abba Dorotheus. God reposes in meek hearts; while the restless soul presents an open door to the devil. The meek soul is the throne of simplicity of heart; but the mind that is prone to anger is the slave of malice.

5. Humility

STRIVE ABOVE ALL to acquire humility. Humility is the true knowledge of one's nothingness and the despising of oneself, and it is when one, knowing his infirmity, sinfulness, worthlessness, does not in the least raise himself up in his own mind, but considers himself worse than everyone, more sinful than they and the least, and as being beneath everyone's feet. If a humble man has any kind of virtue, he ascribes it not to his own power but to God's help, in accordance with the words of Jesus Christ, Who said: *So ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants* (Luke 17:10); and *For without Me, ye can do nothing* (John 15:5). Humility is understanding yourself and everything about yourself as being nothing. For fleeing temptations nothing can serve better than meekness with humility of spirit and constant vigilance of the mind. Great indeed is the height of humility, according to the words of St. Macarius [the Great]; worthy is this honor and praiseworthy is the wisdom of humility. There is no one higher than one who is humble, and none more glorious than the lowest one in Christ. There is no more successful path leading to heaven into eternal life, than humility according to the witness of truth. Where there

is no light, everything is covered with darkness, and where there is no humility all our works are abominable before God, says Climacus. God dwells in the humble, but departs from the proud. Where there is humility, the glory of God shines forth. Pride is inimical to Christ, but humility is pleasing to Him, in the words of Demetrius of Rostov. Even though one may have performed innumerable good works and accomplished every virtue, but thinks highly of himself — he is the poorest and most wretched of all, in the words of Chrysostom.

The true prosperity of a man in this life, in the words of Saint Ambrose, consists of humility and not of exaltation.

Nothing so makes the heart contrite and the soul humble as to seclude oneself in one's mind and to keep silence with everyone. Humility is the foundation of Christianity.

6. Obedience

STRIVE TO PASS through holy obedience with zeal and without murmuring and with renunciation of your own will. Fulfill your particular duties with attention and understanding, as if they were assigned by the Lord Himself. For it is written: Have the abbot as if he were God Himself, and the brethren as if they were angels of God; he who submits to the elders or the abbot imitates an angel; but he who opposes them opens his heart to the devil. Lord, have mercy! These words are terrible which Saint Ephraim the Syrian wrote. Christ the Saviour showed us an example, having himself *humbled Himself, and become obedient even unto death* (Phil. 2:8). *Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not* (I Peter 2:23); and to speak in another way, the sword is two-edged, which with one edge cuts oneself and with the other one's neighbor.

7. A Clean Conscience

ONE SHOULD HAVE a conscience which is clean and candid, as the Apostle says: *Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense before God and men* (Acts 24:16); *for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly* (Heb. 13:18). For just as it is impossible for rain to fall without clouds, so too without a good conscience it is impossible to be well pleasing to the Lord. What is made manifest is light, and what is not made manifest is dark; therefore let us reveal to our father not only what we say, but also what we think. And there will come a

time when we shall be judged not according to the book of knowledge and understanding, but according to the book of conscience.

8. *Silence*

INASMUCH as silence, in the words of Saint Arsenius, is the root of sinlessness, it is quite necessary for a beginner to have this; let silence be maintained until one is questioned. Speak little, and that quietly; and without need do not speak. He who guards his lips preserves his soul; but he who is bold with his lips dishonors himself. Silence gathers; but much speaking scatters. The Apostle James teaches, saying: Be swift to hear, but slow to speak and slow to anger (James 1:19). He who is silent is great in understanding.

9. *Have Not Your Own Will*

TRY NOT to fulfill your own will, and do not trust your own understanding; thus you will be delivered from murmuring. Take off your will as an unclean garment; for one's own will is sometimes worse than bad works. Obedient novices have all been saved, but those who follow their own will have been harmed, and some have perished. The fall of one who keeps silence is the abandonment of prayer; but for a novice it is the trusting of his own understanding; and I know no other fall for a monk, says Abba Dorotheus, than the trusting of his own understanding. And Peter Damascene says: Let us know of our monastic work, that we can be saved anywhere if we abandon our own desire.

10. *Repentance*

WHEN AS A MAN you have sinned in anything, repent over it before God. If you are reproached by anyone, without any contradiction beg forgiveness with a bow, saying: I beg forgiveness, I have sinned, I am guilty; for it is good, teaches Abba Dorotheus, in answer to any word which we may hear, to say: forgive me. If anyone reproaches you, vexes you, or offends you in any way, do not become angry at that brother, but going away, pray for him to God in this way: Lord, forgive him; and ascribe that offense to the invisible enemy, inasmuch as he teaches us to offend each other. Never lie to anyone about anything, and keep no kind of evil in your heart; inasmuch as he who hates one who has offended him hates meekness, therefore he who flees those who offend him flees the rest which is in Christ. *He that refuseth cor-*

rection hateth himself; but he that heareth reproof loveth his own soul (Prov. 15:32).

11. *Patience*

BEYOND THESE VIRTUES one must be trained in great-hearted patience, so as to endure everything that happens to us without murmuring. We shall have patience when we accept everything that happens to us, both the joyful and the sorrowful equally, as from the hand of God. *In your patience possess ye your souls*, Christ teaches us (Luke 21:19). Endure, O slave of the Lord, and you shall acquire your soul which you have caused to perish through sins. In patience is the assembly of all the virtues by which our souls are saved, as Saint Ephraim says: having acquired patience, one touches on every virtue; for one rejoices in sorrows, and is well-tried in misfortunes, is joyful in danger, ready for obedience, filled with love, glorifies in vexation, is humbled in reproaches, unwavering in misfortunes; he who has acquired patience has acquired hope, and such a one is adorned with every good work. Concerning the many other virtues, such as faith, hope, and love, read yourself the holy books and listen to instruction, through which you shall become wise and shall inherit eternal good things in Jesus Christ our Lord, which may we all receive by His help and Divine grace. Amen.

Where there is no love of God and fear of Him, there is every kind of disorder and evil thing!

THE END OF THE COUNSELS OF THE ELDER NAZARIUS.

GLORY BE TO OUR GOD!



Elder Hilarion of Sarov and Valaam



ELDER HILARION

of Sarov & Valaam



Fr. Hilarion was born in a middle class Petersburg family and came to Valaam Monastery when he was in his early twenties. Valaam at that time was at its height: the Sarov typicon brought by its holy abbot, Nazarius, began to bear fruit. On the many islands, just as during its glorious beginning now a thousand years ago, there again blossomed the three phases of monastic life: coenobitic in its main citadel, hermitic on the distant islands and caves, and the skete type, when two or three monks live in mutual submission. Elder Nazarius was a very experienced spiritual director, inspiring young novices to embrace the high quality of the life of sobriety. One such ascetic was blessed Barlaam, the future abbot (who later went to Optina) and a friend of St. Herman (later of Alaska), who also struggled alone in the desert some miles away, and who originally came from Sarov to join his beloved Elder Nazarius.

Elder Nazarius soon saw good monk material in Hilarion and made him his inseparable cell-attendant after St. Herman with other fathers left on the mission to America. Hilarion also became the abbot's secretary and did all his writing, since Fr. Nazarius could not write himself. When Fr. Nazarius retired from his abbot's duties and, seeking silence, settled in a secluded cell away from the monastery in the forest, Hilarion joined him there.

In 1804 Fr. Nazarius decided to go back to Sarov, and he took Hilarion with him. Remarkable was that journey of the two monks, described so vividly by Hilarion in his Life of Valaam's new founder, Nazarius. Neither of them saw Valaam again. In Sarov they settled in a cell deep in the forest near the Sarovka river and continued their life of silence. Here the devoted cell-attendant put down on paper his elder's inspiring teaching on monastic life, as well as notable incidents from the experiences of his long life. He

describes, for example, how the elder used to spend nights wandering alone in the dense Sarov forests, returning at dawn, where he frequently encountered bears (which, incidentally, were not to be found in Valaam). How could Fr. Hilarion have known of Elder Nazarius' solitary struggles if he himself had not witnessed them and been of the same spirit?

Sarov at that time was adorned with great ascetics; besides the Spirit-bearing superiors, there were desert-dwellers who lived along the same Sarov river—Dositheus, Alexander, the wandering fool for Christ Marko, and of course, St. Seraphim, who took counsel from Elder Nazarius in the art of desert-dwelling and spiritual life. After Elder Nazarius' repose, Hilarion remained a close friend of St. Seraphim to the end of the latter's life. St. Seraphim would send all people for confession to Fr. Hilarion and entrusted him to tonsure his Diveyevo nuns in the riassa.

From his letters of 1828 it is evident that Elder Hilarion, as a result of false accusation, was forced to leave Sarov for some period of penance as a prisoner in the Kazlov Holy Trinity Monastery. Evidently the evil one took revenge on him for his support of St. Seraphim, who was constantly slandered and persecuted and whose glory Hilarion fearlessly propagated.

After Elder Nazarius' death he moved to the monastery proper and became for the rest of his life the leading father-confessor both for monks and pilgrims. Seeing the dire need of recorded spiritual instructions such as those he took down from the mouth of Elder Nazarius, he compiled a whole book from them—the Counsels of Elder Nazarius, to which he gave maximum distribution. He even compiled a little volume of his own instructions, **giving it the name of *A Short Spiritual Ladder*. His few remaining letters** testify beautifully to his humble and meek spiritual attitude. It was also apparently he who headed the Sarov monastic "*Scriptorium*," where monks collected and scrupulously copied not only patristic texts of ancient times, but also preserved for posterity the lives and writings of their contemporary monastic instructors, such as Bl. Theodore of Sanaxar, Theophanes of Solovki, the Sarov fathers, and others. They were published shortly after his death (1849), thanks to Ivan Kireyevsky and the Optina elders, and they became widely distributed and were favorites among the desert-loving Russian monks.

Having labored in monasticism over half a century, he reached his end on November 12, 1841, being 70 years old. He was known to many as a man

of the purest life who instructed and consoled the sorrowing, and as a monk of loving, warm eloquence. His whole life was dedicated to the labor of prayer and love towards others, which is so touchingly reflected in the sermon given by one of his spiritual children at the time of his burial (printed below). Truly this was one of the ancient ones in spirit!



HOMILY SPOKEN AT THE GRAVE OF ELDER HILARION OF SAROV

And so, pilgrim on earth, you have finished your journey; you have crossed the sea of temptations and misfortunes and found your repose for

And so, pilgrim on the earth, you have finished your journey; you have crossed the sea of temptations and misfortunes and found repose for yourself! But what kind of choirs surround you? Behold, our father and instructor: **Your children have come to you from the west and the north and the sea and the east, not to behold your end, but to hear from your honey-flowing lips the words of eternal life; but you sleep, your eyes and lips are closed.**

Arise! Arise! Bless! Alas, he is without breath. . . Father! Where are your promises given constantly to everyone? Just three days ago you said: "Forgive me, brother, farewell"—and left the world.

Alas, the change! Alas, the loss! Where is our father? Where is our instructor? What have we lost? Only the heart knows. Father! Father! Awaken, arise! Miserable poverty begs for alms; give them! Outside the gate a pilgrim awaits your consolation; a sick man, barely breathing, awaits your visitation, prayers, and remission; **one fallen into temptation awaits comfort** in his misfortune; the ringing of bells calls you to the church for singing and prayer; the sons of the Church await you there **with offerings for the Bloodless Sacrifice.** But no, it is true; neither the ringing of bells, nor my voice, nor the voice of all of us is able to awaken you from such a sound sleep! Repose until the sound of the Archangel's trumpet!

O God! Thou beholdest our sorrow, Thou hearest the groaning of our hearts. Thou beholdest the streams of tears which bedew our eyes. We dare

say to Thee: Where do we have an instructor and counsellor for our salvation? Where shall we obtain consolation in sorrows and dangers? And if Thine is the word that Thou wishest all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth and if salvation is acquired in much counsel—then why hast Thou taken this wise instructor, guide, and mentor of our salvation? . . . We do not dare say more. Thy righteousness is righteousness forever, and Thy word is truth: *Earth thou art, O brother, and to the earth dost thou return, just as we all do.*

Therefore, falling down, we pray Thee, O merciful Lord. Show Thy mercy to this Thy servant who has departed from us; enter not into judgment with him, for if Thou wilt see iniquities, O Lord, who will be able to stand, even if he live only one day upon the earth? But receive into the hand of Thy sovereign defense us who have become orphans in the instruction of Thy word and truth, and be Thyself for us the guide and leader on the path of salvation, life, and light!

Let us give a last kiss to our unforgettable father and wise instructor; let us bedew his dust with tears and offer up fervent prayers for his repose in the bosom of Abraham.

And you, our father! We entreat you with our final petition, if the Lord gives you boldness before the throne of His Majesty: Do not forget us, as you promised, visiting our souls and hearts, entreating grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On our lips and in our hearts let there never cease this constant cry: Memory eternal!

Forgive us! Peace be to you! Go in peace to the Heavenly mansion prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Amen.



A Short Spiritual Ladder

by Elder Hilarion

I

PRAYER

The chief and beginning of all virtues is prayer, of which the Apostle has said: "Pray without ceasing." That is, always call upon the name of God, whether when conversing, when sitting down, when walking, when working, when eating, or whenever doing anything else. At all times and in every place it is fitting to call on the name of God; for thus the temptation of the enemy is destroyed, writes Chrysostom. "Beat the enemies," says St. John of the Ladder, "with the name of Jesus," and a stronger weapon you will not find either in heaven or earth.

Prayer is the banishing of sorrow and depression, the blossoming of meekness and angerlessness, the manifestation of joy and thanksgiving, and the obtaining and multiplying of countless good things.

I hope that you will prosper in virtues, and this will be the case above all if you live in heedfulness and not neglect the *prayer of Jesus*. For it is the chief and beginning of all virtues. There is nothing that so much guards against the entry of the evil demon than prayer (the mental prayer of Jesus) and fervent entreaty.

Light in a house is from a burning candle, but the light in the mind is **prayer**. Every temptation and disturbance of the enemy are consumed by prayer. From prayer is born the fear of God, and it, according to the Scripture, is the *beginning of wisdom* (Prov. 9:10). Having this fear, the Prophet cried out: *I beheld the Lord ever before me* (with the eyes of my mind), *for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken* (Ps. 15:8). Then declaring the benefit from it, he says in praise: *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; in His commandments shall he greatly delight* (Ps. 111:11); *surely nigh unto them that fear Him is His salvation* (Ps. 84:9). The fear of the Lord is the father of heedfulness (to the mental prayer of the heart), and

heedfulness is the mother of inward repose. Those who pay heed to their salvation (doers of mental prayer) do not pay heed to the shortcomings of their neighbors. It is such ones who prosper.

Concerning silence it is said: "O silence, chariot that leads to heaven!" The beginning of the cleansing of the soul is silence in the Lord (exercise in the mental prayer of Jesus) . . . The ears of one who is silent (who prays with the mind) hears wondrous things.

II

SELF-REPROACH

One should learn self-reproach, that is, mentally to blame yourself and not others; to reproach yourself and not others, and call yourself foolish and worthless, sleepy and negligent, slothful and careless.

He who has self-reproach has repose, writes Abba Dorotheus, and is never troubled; if there occur, to such a one sickness, insults, persecutions, and any other kind of misfortune, he ascribes this to his own sins and gives thanks to God. If the superior reprimands or scolds such a one, he accepts all for the good and counts it as something from God.

Pride comes to dwell in a man when he does not yet know himself perfectly, and so: know yourself and by all means possible flee from pride and vainglory as a great harm of the soul. You cannot banish these from yourself by any way except by ceaseless self-reproach and belittlement of oneself.

III

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Self-knowledge is to consider oneself incapable and unworthy of all higher responsibilities. To know oneself is to consider oneself worthless, sleepy, negligent, and slothful, and so on; it means to pay no attention to the sins of others, but to look at one's own and to repent of them always; it means to be discerning with regard to oneself and to judge oneself, and not to interfere in anything outward, apart from one's own duty. Test yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, writes the Apostle.

IV MEEKNESS

Concerning the heavenly virtues of meekness and humility, the Lord Himself teaches us, saying: *Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls* (Matt. 11:29). Learn not from angels, nor from men, but from Me, He says: that is, from the Higher Wisdom.

Outward meekness shows itself in this way: Let your walk be meek, meek your sitting, meek your glances, meek your words; let all this be yours, for from these the true Christian is manifest. The dress of a man, his laughter and walk, declare of him.

Meekness of soul according to the inward man is: the restraint of anger, the taming of wrath, and when one is grieved by another, he does not take revenge even when he could, and accepts offenses without offending in return.

Meekness means not to offend anyone by word or deed or command, but to win the heart of everyone by one's manner, according to the Lord's words: "Upon whom should I look, but upon him who is meek and silent?" And according to the words of the Prophet, the Lord will guide the meek in judgement (in sound understanding) and will teach the meek His ways. For the Lord is well-pleased in His people, and will raise up the meek unto salvation. The meek will inherit the earth, and will delight in an abundance of peace (Ps. 36).

And as to what kind of man receives repose and peace from meekness, Chrysostom writes: There is nothing stronger than meekness, nothing more powerful; it preserves our soul in constant quiet, and strives to lead **it as into a harbor, and is the cause of every kind of satisfaction for us; and** nothing else can give the soul repose and great quiet as well as meekness and humblemindedness. This is the most honorable of all crowns for one who acquires these virtues; it is more profitable than all dignity and glory.

An upright soul, says St. John of the Ladder, is a co-dweller with humility, while an evil soul is the slave of malice. The souls of the meek are full of knowledge, but the understanding of an angry soul is covered by the darkness of ignorance.

The meek soul receives words of wisdom; for many are exalted and glorious, but to the humble are opened the mysteries, writes Sirach.

He who hates those who grieve him hates meekness, and he who flees from those who grieve him flees from the repose which is in Christ—in the words of Abba Dorotheus.

God reposes in meek hearts, but an agitated soul is the dwelling place of the devil; a meek soul is the throne of simplicity of heart, but an angry mind is the slave of malice.

V

HUMILITY

One must strive above all to acquire humility. Humility is a true awareness of one's own nothingness, and a despising of oneself. When one, knowing his own infirmity, sinfulness, and worthlessness, is not in the least puffed up in his mind, but considers himself to be worse than all, the most sinful and the least of all, and as under the feet of everyone, then he is humble.

If the humble man has any kind of virtue, he attributes it not to his own strength, but to God's help, in agreement with the words of Jesus Christ Who said: *When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants* (Luke 17:10). *Without Me, the Lord says, ye can do nothing* (John 15:5). Humility is to understand oneself to be nothing. The best helps in avoiding temptations are meekness and humility of spirit and constant vigilance of mind.

Great is the height of humility, according to the word of St. Macarius, and eminent are the dignity and honor of humble-mindedness. There is no one higher than a humble man, or one more glorious than he who is poor in Christ; and there is no other path leading to heaven, into eternal life, than that of humility, according to the testimony of the Truth.

Where there is no light, everything is covered with darkness; and where there is no humble-mindedness, all of our works will be abominable before God, says St. John of the Ladder.

In the humble, God rejoices but from the proud He is driven away; where there is humility, the glory of God shines forth.

Pride is hostile to Christ, but humility is pleasing to Him, in the words of Dimitry of Rostov.

Although one may have done numberless good deeds and performed all of the virtues, if he thinks highly of himself, he is the poorest and most wretched of all, in the words of Chrysostom.

The true good fortune of man in this life, according to St. Ambrose, consists of humility, and not of exaltation.

Nothing so makes the heart contrite and the soul humble as to be solitary in mind and silent before everyone. Humility is the foundation of Christianity.

Pay careful heed to this also: If you begin to preserve yourself diligently according to this instruction, the envious demon will not endure this and will either raise against you (a trial) from the chief of temptation, in order to test your humility and firmness, or will arm against you those who are false and live negligently; and they will begin to reproach you, mock you, and perhaps to strike you, to despise you, hate you, and thereby to cause you many sorrows. But in such a case, all the more cling to silence and humility. Keep unceasingly the prayer to the Lord Jesus upon your lips and in the depths of your heart, so that you might not murmur at all against them or be grieved in the least. Accept everything with gratitude, thinking to yourself: How can I, wretched one, become angered against my brother for nothing? And at the same time ceaselessly remember your own sins; for if you yourself have not struck your neighbor, then you reproached him or spoke evil of him, mocked and wounded him by slanders, and by offending your neighbor you rose up against Christ the Saviour and wounded Him.

Therefore, you must with all your heart acknowledge yourself worthy to endure more than you do. Remember the words which Christ the Saviour spoke about doing good to one's neighbor, and which should be equally applied to every offensive word and deed against one's neighbor: what you do to your neighbor, He says, you do to Me. At the same time remember His sufferings even unto death, His most great goodness, and His love for us that endures our unrighteousness, and judge how easy it is for you to bear for His sake small sorrows, and this with His sure help, if you really desire it.

If you will judge soundly in this way, and will endure temptations with love, you will quickly obtain the help and consolation of Christ the Saviour.

VI

OBEDIENCE

Strive to go through holy obedience with fervor, without complaining, and renouncing your own will. Strive to do your specific duties with heedfulness and discernment, as if they were placed upon you by the Lord Himself, as it is written: Having the abbot as God Himself, and the brethren as angels of God. He who submits to the head, that is, the abbot, imitates the angels; but he who opposes him makes a place for the devil in his heart. Lord have mercy! Terrible is this word, as St. Ephraim the Syrian writes.

Christ the Saviour gave us an image in Himself. He humbled Himself, was obedient even unto death; being reproached, He did not return reproaches; suffering, He did not threaten. But one who talks back is a sharp two-edged sword: he strikes himself with one side, and his neighbor with the other.

Be well disposed and have warm love towards all the brethren. Let your heart, eye, and face be joyful, filled with spiritual reverence; be firmly attached to the whole brotherhood in your soul, and serve all sincerely, without any hypocrisy. Do not allow yourself to think that you will receive praise from anyone for this; but imagine that you are serving God and His angels—a service of which you are totally unworthy. But glory be to God that the Lord has vouchsafed you this service!

Watch carefully lest there arm itself against you the proud and vain-glorious thought that in serving the brethren you are doing everything excellently; strive as much as possible not to allow the unprofitable, evil, and soul-destroying thought of vainglory to act in you, for it enters the soul of a man subtly, so that sometimes he does not notice at all how his thoughts are becoming puffed up and are preparing a fall for him.

Do always what you are commanded to do, or what you have previously been blessed to do constantly, or what you are asked to do; but do not dare to undertake anything in general yourself, no matter what it might be. At handiwork or obedience, as much as your strength allows, keep on your lips, in your mind and thoughts, silence and the most precious, soul-saving silence. Strive likewise as much as possible to pay heed to yourself, to keep vigilant in heedfulness to your own soul and feelings in the midst

of whatever handiwork or obedience you may be occupied with. If anyone is with you on the same obedience, bow low to him with humility and pray quietly. Receive a blessing, work as mentioned above with prayer, with love, with fervor, and with full attention. Work as not before men, but entirely as before God and His angels, for you do not work for men, but labor for God Himself. Keep in mind that everyone who does the work of God negligently is cursed and a pleaser of men; and preserve yourself as much as possible from carelessness and the pleasing of men.

VII

THE CONSCIENCE

One should have a pure and open conscience, as the Apostle says: I struggle to have my conscience ever pure before God and men; *for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly* (Heb. 13:18). Just as it is impossible for rain to fall without clouds, so is it impossible to please the Lord without a good conscience. Therefore we reveal to our fathers not only what we say, but even what we think; for what is revealed is light, while what is unrevealed is darkness. At one time we are to be judged not by the book of knowledge and understanding, but by the book of a pure conscience.

Beloved, carefully examine yourself and your conscience: whether there be some sin, if not in one thing, then in another; if not in something great, then in something small; whether you be guilty, if not in deed, then in word and thought.

As for your sinning brother, you do not see his thoughts, nor his contrition of heart, and so how can you judge him? I think that it is sometimes better to fall oneself and get up, than to judge one's neighbor, because one who has sinned grows hard in fantasies about himself and in pride.

When you sin in the daylight hours, you should, according to opportunity, confess immediately. After the evening meal, you should go to your spiritual father, bow down to him as to Christ Himself, reveal to him the condition of your soul for the course of the past day, examine yourself in everything you have done in deed, or have thought badly, or said, or allowed yourself against your conscience, or about which you have been

vainglorious or proud, or if you have offended someone or been offended yourself against your neighbor, or complained, or judged your brother. **Strive to make note of and accuse even the most subtle thoughts which have violated the purity of your conscience.** If you cannot remember everything, then write down on paper what you should confess.

After such a careful and true confession, having received remission and forgiveness as from God Himself, and having kissed the icon and cross, bow down to the ground before your father and go in silence to your cell, giving heartfelt thanks to God that He has vouchsafed you confession and peace of conscience.

For want of a spiritual father, according to need, you can confess what troubles your conscience to a brother of the monastery, or to some other person close to you who lives in a God-fearing way and has spiritual understanding, and you can ask his prayers and blessing. And if you do not have such a one near you, then, confessing to God in the hearing of the angels and archangels, with tears, with accusation and reproach and great heartfelt regret, beat your breast and, if your conscience reproaches or accuses you of anything, lay a certain spiritual chastisement on yourself, and do this until you have the opportunity to confess all this to your spiritual father.

Towards your spiritual father or instructor, to whom you should confess your deeds and thoughts, have love, unwavering faith, and such respect that you judge him in nothing and are not troubled if others should **accuse and judge him.** And if in actual fact he has stumbled, think troubled or lessen your faith towards him; reproach yourself, and not him, as much as you can and say to yourself these words: I, a sinner, have looked upon my father with impure eyes and make judgments about him out of my own impurity; and because of this I do not see his purity.

Accuse yourself in this way, and pray fervently for him to the Lord God for his uprightness. And if in actual fact he has stumbled, think thus: The Lord God has allowed temptation to come upon him, but how can I, a sinner, judge him, not seeing his deeds or his repentance? Can I see into his soul? Even if he has sinned, perhaps he has already repented entirely and received from God perfect cleansing. Do not let out of your heart and thoughts also these words: *To his own master he standeth or falleth* (Rom. 14:4), and who am I to judge?

VIII

SILENCE

Silence, in the words of St. Arsenius, is the root of sinlessness, and therefore it is very needful for beginners to possess it.

Be silent until questioned; speak little, and then quietly, and do not speak without need.

He who guards his lips, watches over his soul; but he who is bold with his lips, dishonors himself.

Silence gathers, but much talking scatters.

The wise one teaches: Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. The silent one has much understanding.

IX

THE WILL

Do not do your own will, do not invent anything out of your own understanding, and thereby you will be delivered from complaining and will cast off your own will as a shameful garment; for your own will is more harmful than all evil deeds.

The obedient have all been saved, but the self-willed have been harmed, and many have perished.

The forsaking of prayer is the fall of a silent one, but for a novice it is the following of his own understanding.

And I know no other fall for a monk, says Abba Dorotheus, than the following of one's own understanding.

And Peter Damascene says: Let us know, regarding our monastic work, that we can be saved anywhere if we leave off our desires.

X

FORGIVENESS

When you, being human, sin in any way, repent of it before God, and if you be reproached by anyone, then without any excuses, quickly, with a prostration, ask forgiveness, saying: I ask forgiveness, I sinned, I am at fault.

It is good, teaches Abba **Dorotheus**, to reply to any accusation: Forgive me.

If anyone reproaches, grieves or offends you in any way, do not become angry against that brother; but going away, pray to God for him in this way: "O Lord, forgive him"; and ascribe this insult to the demon, for it is the demon who teaches us to offend one another.

Never lie to anyone in any way, and do not hold any kind of evil in your heart; for he who hates those who grieve him hates meekness, and he who flees from those who grieve him flees from repose which is in Christ. He who rejects chastisement hates himself; while he who accepts accusation loves his own soul—the words of Sirach.

XI

PATIENCE

Strive as much as possible, with God's help, to acquire patience in the bearing of deprivations and sorrows. Ask, knock, seek day and night, and you will obtain from Christ the Saviour the help and strength of patience, if you desire it with your whole soul and heart.

One must train oneself in generous patience, so as to endure without complaint all that happens to us. We will possess patience when we accept everything that happens to us, both what is joyful and what is sad without distinction, as from the hand of God.

In your patience possess ye your souls, Christ instructs us. Be patient, slave of the Lord, and you will possess your soul which you have ruined by sins.

In patience is the assembly of all the virtues by which our souls are saved, as St. Ephraim says: He who acquires patience touches on every virtue; for he rejoices in sorrows, is well tested in misfortunes, is glad in perils, is ready for obedience, is filled with love, gives praise when provoked, is humble when reproached, is unwavering in misfortunes.

He who has acquired patience has acquired hope, and such a one is adorned with all good deeds.

Regarding the many other virtues, such as faith, hope and love, read yourself the holy books and listen to instruction, through which you

will become wise and will inherit eternal good things in Christ Jesus our Lord. May we all receive these things through His help and Divine grace. Amen.

XII

VARIOUS INSTRUCTIONS (FROM LETTERS)

To one who is attentive to his own salvation and is sober, every place is a place for saving the soul. "It is not the place that saves, but one's way of life and pleasing of God. . ." I live in the saving harbor of Sarov, but poorly. For it is not the place that saves; Judas was not saved even in the presence of Christ Himself. No matter where you are, you need attentiveness to yourself and sobriety.

I am neither a faster nor a man of prayer, nor a struggler, but on the contrary, I eat and drink and have contact and speak with everyone; but I do everything to the glory of God. In all my sorrows I often remember and cry out with heartfelt sighs the favorite words of Chrysostom: "Glory be to God for everything!"

It is characteristic of generous, valiant souls not to despair in the midst of perils; and it is the work of one who is grateful not only to give thanks to the Lord in good fortune, but to show the same thankfulness in misfortunes as well. **Nothing can embitter the virtuous soul, but everything that he suffers he considers to be gain for himself.** And what can be better than to bear one's lot generously and without complaint? There is nothing more generous than to forget the offenses made against one.

Reflecting on these and similar things and fortifying myself, I tell myself: Endure sorrows, O sinner, and in the sorrows give praise to God. Neither is there any repose without labor, nor any victory without battle. And to him who overcomes, says Christ, I will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of Paradise (Apoc. 21:7).

Sorrows are always followed by joys; guilt draws after itself chastisement.

Do not grow despondent from a fall, but fight; and do not grieve much, lest the enemy, having wounded you much already, should cut your head off—that is, bring you into despair, which is most vile of all sins, as John of the Ladder writes.

Blessed Abbot Nazarius

Sticheras composed in his honor by
Father Seraphim Rose

On "Lord, I have cried," Tone 1, to the Special Melody, "Rejoicing of the Heavenly Hierarchies":

Ye islands of Valaam, rejoice,* be glad, ye forests of Sarov,* in you hath shone forth a wondrous teacher,* the glorious Nazarius,* who enlightened a multitude of monks* with the rays of true Patristic teaching,* and taught all to wage unceasing warfare* against the world, the flesh, and the devil* unto the salvation of their souls.

Dance for joy, ye waters of Ladoga,* leap up, O brook Sarovka,* by your side walked the wondrous anchorite,* the abbot and instructor of many monks,* the wise Elder Nazarius* who could not be hid in the wilderness,* but was placed upon a candlestand* that he might shine for the salvation of our souls.

Instructor of St. Herman,* and converser with our holy Father Seraphim,* O Nazarius, wise in God,* by thine angelic life and teaching,* thou wast a model for holy men,* a theologian by virtue of thy life in God.* Now dwelling in the choirs of those who praise God without ceasing* do thou entreat Him to save our souls.

TROPARION, Tone 5

To the Special Melody "Rejoice, O Life-giving Cross"

Rejoice in the Lord, O most blessed and most honorable Father Nazarius,* together with thy Valaam brethren in Christ:* Thy paternal kindness and deeds of love towards my lowliness* shall in no way ever be erased from my heart:* neither the terrible impassable Siberian wilds,* nor its dark forests;* neither the rapids of great rivers,* nor the mighty ocean can quench these feelings of mine;* for in my mind I imagine my beloved Valaam,* and constantly behold it across the waters of the great ocean.

(From the Letter of St. Herman from Alaska to his beloved Elder, Abbot Nazarius, 1795)

CHRISTIAN
SPIRITUALITY

LITTLE RUSSIAN PHILOKALIA

Vol. II: Abbot Nazarius of Valaam

Christian spirituality is not a retreat of escape from life; on the contrary, it is a withdrawal from the spirit of this world that lies in evil in order to cling to the Source of life itself, Christ the true God.

Philokalia means "love of good." It was the name given to a celebrated 18th-century collection of Greek Patristic texts on the Christian spiritual life, teaching the path to true sobriety and the fullness of union with God.

This *Little Russian Philokalia* is a new collection of ascetic texts drawn from Russian sources, chiefly of the 19th and 20th centuries. The first volume is devoted to St. Seraphim of Sarov (1756-1833), a Russian Saint entirely in the tradition of the early Greek Fathers of the *Philokalia*.

The second volume is devoted to Blessed Elder Nazarius of Valaam (1735-1809), the direct progenitor of a whole century of great ascetics of Valaam Monastery.

THE SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA MONASTERY PRESS
PLATINA, CALIFORNIA 96076

Price: \$5.00