

# HEAVENLY REALM

A COLLECTION OF LAY-SERMONS BY FR.SERAPHIM ROSE  
WHEN HE WAS THE ORTHODOX LAYMAN, EUGENE.

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# Heavenly Realm

In 1984, two years after Fr. Seraphim's repose, Platina published a collection of lay sermons that Eugene Rose had written for the San Francisco Cathedral bulletin back in the 1960's. The book, titled *Heavenly Realm*, is out of print, however the lay sermons have been re-collected from various places. Several years after Fr. Seraphim had submitted his lay sermons for publication, he looked back as a priest on the value of his earlier new-convert writings – he assessed the value of those sermons both for the reader and for himself as the writer.

What Fr. Seraphim told to Fr. Alexey Young  
from *Letters*, page 22

*August 16/29, 1971*

*“... Nonetheless, even without a newspaper, it doesn't hurt for converts to share ideas with each other.*

*Some years ago I wrote brief articles somewhat in the same vein, at the insistence of Archbishop John, who wanted at least a page or two of English material in the San Francisco diocesan bulletin (now defunct). I don't know who if anyone read them, and looking back on them now I find them, despite the "feeling" I put into them, somewhat "abstract," the product of thinking that hadn't had too much experience as yet, either of Orthodox literature or Orthodox life. Still, for me they served as important function in my understanding and expression of various Orthodox questions, and even in my Orthodox "development," and Vladyka John "pushed" that.”*

# GOD IS DEAD

The striking phrase, "God is dead," is the poetical expression of modern unbelief. Much is expressed in this phrase that is not to be found in the more prosaic expressions of modern atheism and agnosticism. A vivid contrast is established between a previous age when men believed in God and based their life and institutions upon Him, and a new age for whose inhabitants, supposedly, this once all-illuminating sun has been blotted out, and life and society must be given a new orientation.

The phrase, itself apparently coined by Nietzsche almost a century ago, was for long used to express the views of a comparatively few enemies of Christianity, chiefly "existentialists"; but recently it has caused controversy by being accepted in radical Protestant circles, and now it has become a concern of common journalism and the mass media. Clearly a responsive chord has been struck in Western society at large; the public interest in the "death of God" has made this phenomenon one of the signs of the times.

To understand what this sign means, one must know its historical context. By its very nature it is a negation - a reaction against the otherworldly Christian world view which emphasizes asceticism and the "unseen warfare" against the devil and the world in order to obtain eternal joy through communion with God in the Kingdom of Heaven. The founders of the new philosophy declared the Christian God "dead" and proclaimed man a god in His place. This view is merely the latest stage of the modern battle against Christianity which has resulted today in the virtually universal triumph of unbelief.

The contemporary controversy, however, centers about a new and unusual phenomenon: it is now "Christians" who are the unbelievers. Yet in a sense this too is the logical culmination of an historical process that began in the West with the schism of the Church of Rome. Separated for over nine centuries from the Church of Christ, Western Christendom has possessed only a steadily-evaporating residue of the genuine Christianity preserved by Holy Orthodoxy. Today the process is nearly complete, and large numbers of Catholics and Protestants are hardly to be distinguished from unbelievers; and if they still call themselves "Christians," it can only be because for them Christianity itself has been turned into its opposite: worldly unbelief. One may observe in this what one Orthodox thinker has called "the self liquidation of Christianity": Christianity undermined from within by its own representatives who demand that it conform itself entirely to the world.

A strange parallel to this new "theology" has become common of late in the "liturgical" life of the West. Widespread publicity was given earlier this year to a "rock-and-roll" service in the Old South Church in Boston, in which teenagers were allowed to dance in the aisles of the church to the accompaniment of raucous popular music. In Catholic churches "jazz

masses" become more and more frequent. The ostensible intention of those responsible for these phenomena is the same as that of the new radical "theologians": to make religion more "real" to contemporary men. They thereby admit what is obvious to Orthodox observers: that religious life is largely dead in Western Christendom; but they unwittingly reveal even more: unable to distinguish between church and dancehall, between Christ and the world, they reveal that God is dead in their own hearts and only worldly excitement is capable of evoking a response in themselves and their "post-Christian" flocks.

To what does all this, finally, point? Our Lord, when prophesying of the advent of Antichrist, spoke of *the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place* (St. Matt. 24:15); and St. Paul speaks of the very enemy of God sitting in God's temple and being worshipped in place of God (II Thes. 2: 4) -- and this will occur, according to St. John Chrysostom, "in every church." Does not this "Christian atheism," do not these blasphemous "worship services," does not the acceptance of even the most unseemly and vulgar manifestations in what men still consider holy places, already prepare the way for this end and give one even a foretaste of it?

For Western Christendom God is indeed dead, and its leaders only prepare for the advent of the enemy of God, Antichrist. But Orthodox Christians know the living God and dwell within the saving enclosure of His True Church. It is here, in faithful and fervent following of the unchanging Orthodox path -- and not in the dazzling "ecumenical" union with the new infidels that is pursued by Orthodox modernists - that our salvation is to be found.

*Eugene Rose*

# Archimandrite Sebastian Dobovich

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Dec. 1965

On November 30 was the 25th anniversary of the death of Archimandrite Sebastian Dobovich, an important figure in the history of Orthodoxy in America. Few Orthodox in America are perhaps aware of the promising beginning that was made by Orthodox missionaries in the 18th and 19th centuries. From Blessed Father Herman and the early missionaries to Alaska, through Bishop Innocent [later Metropolitan of Moscow], to the first Orthodox bishop of San Francisco at the end of the last century, a serious attempt was undertaken to make the riches of Holy Orthodoxy accessible to Americans. One of the most notable examples \_ and results – of this missionary endeavor was the life and writings of Archimandrite Sebastian. Born in 1863 in San Francisco of Serbian parents, he was the first native American to become a priest and monk in the Orthodox Church. Fluent in Russian, Serbian and English, he preached the Gospel in all three languages. He is remembered fondly by many Serbs as the founder and inspirer of many Serbian parishes. In the English language he preached sermons and gave lectures, a number of which he published, together with independent essays, translations, and expositions of the Orthodox Faith. In these he took as his motto the phrase of St. Paul: **speaking the truth in love** [Eph. 4:15]. Without judging those outside the Church, and showing every kindness to them in his relations with them, he nonetheless preached the truth without compromise, condemning all liberalism and indifference in religious matters as "foul treachery" to God's Truth, proceeding from a lack of faith and conviction.

His is an example Orthodox missionaries of today might well heed. The temptation is strong to forget the essentially missionary nature of Orthodoxy, or to substitute for it a weak and timid "ecumenism" that fears to speak the whole truth lest some be offended by it. But one cannot be true to Holy Orthodoxy in this way. Orthodoxy is the one true Church of Christ, the only pure and genuine Christianity; and this fact places upon Orthodox believers the obligation, when speaking of the Church to others, to do so straightforwardly and without adulteration – with love, surely, but above all with love for God's Truth.

# The Ascension of Our Lord

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon June 1964

**"God is ascended with jubilee,  
and the Lord with the sound of a trumpet."  
[Psalm 46:5]**

On the feast of the Ascension of our Lord we celebrate the fulfillment of this prophecy of King David, which is used as the prokimenon of the day. What does it mean for Orthodox Christians? It is not only Jesus Christ Who has ascended; for He has raised human nature itself to the heavens. We too shall rise from the dead and, if we are judged worthy, will rise with our regenerated, spiritual body to heaven, where, as the Blessed Augustine says, "all the people of God shall be made equal to the angels."

But the thought of this promise reminds us also of our responsibility. The risen Lord is no longer with us in the flesh, but only through His invisible Holy Spirit. The interim between the First and Second Coming of Christ is for us a time of witness and testimony of Him Whom we worship without seeing. The Lord, just before His Ascension, commanded His disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" [St. Mark 16:15]; and He told them, "ye shall be my witnesses ... unto the uttermost part of the earth" [Act 1:8].

Christ has been with us for forty days, and we have rightly feasted; we must now, being filled with the Holy Spirit of God, strive to spread His Gospel and be His witnesses before the world. For everything that we do, or fail to do, we shall be judged by Him Who shall return to earth in the same way He ascended to Heaven. With such a sobering thought in mind, how can we not be zealous to make His truth known, so that all may join in the joyous cry of this feast, "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Thy glory over all the earth" [Psalm 107:5].

# The Prayer of the Good Thief

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon April 1964

For Orthodox Christians this Feast of Feasts, the Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, is already Heaven on earth. He Who first rose from the dead has opened to all the gates of eternal life, and those who have properly prepared for this great Feast, in accordance with the commandments of God and the disciplines of His Church, have already now a foretaste of this life. On this day, as it will be in the Kingdom of Heaven, all is joy, and glory, and light.

The season of preparation for the Feast is long and difficult. Yet so great is the mercy of our God to us that He does not reject those who are late in preparing themselves. Those who begin only at the sixth or the ninth hour, or even at the eleventh hour, as our Father in Christ St. John Chrysostom tells us, are welcome at the Feast as those who have fasted from the very first.

Indeed, the Church of Christ remembers especially, not only in connection with the events of the Saving Passion of our Lord, but also at every celebration of the Divine Liturgy, one who turned to the Savior only at the very last moment. This is the Good Thief who hung on a cross beside our Lord, and whose prayer is the prayer of every Orthodox Christian: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

We are all, whether we realize it or not, in the position of this thief. Like him we have been condemned by our sins as unworthy of this life; like him we have nothing to hope for in this world and face only suffering and a miserable death if we hope for no other life than this. But if, like him, even in our suffering and unworthiness we yet turn to the God Who condescended to share our human weakness, even to such an ignominious death, and believe that He has the power to fulfill the promises He has made to us, – then is our condemnation revoked, our sins forgiven, our unworthiness overlooked, and our pain and sorrow and death swallowed up in victory and joy and eternal life.

By such faith, which is affirmed in the radiant services of the holy day and week, we are lifted above this earth and offered a glimpse of the life to come. We already know in some measure the meaning of the promise with which our Lord answered the prayer of the Good Thief, and nowhere in the Holy Scriptures are there words more full of hope and encouragement for us: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise."



# The Radiant Feast

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon April 1965

The Resurrection of our Lord, the Feast of Feasts is called in the Church calendar "radiant" or "bright," as is every day of the week that follows. And indeed the dominant theme of the Feast, felt especially acutely by those who have attended many of the dark, somber services which the Orthodox Church prescribes for Great Lent and Passion Week, is one of brilliant, dazzling light. During the Matins of the Resurrection every light in the church is lit, the clergy is attired in bright vestments, every believer holds a lighted candle, and the constant theme of the hymns and canticles is one of light.

"The Day of Resurrection! Let us be illumined, O ye people! Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ radiant with the light ineffable of the Resurrection... Now are all things filled with light... Let us behold Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Who lighteth the life of all mankind... Holy is this redeeming and radiantly-effulgent night, the harbinger of the bright and beaming Day of the Resurrection, on which the Light Eternal that hath no bounds shone forth in the flesh from the grave for all mankind."

The brightness of the Feast of the Resurrection is symbolic of many things: of purity, of life, of the everflowing joy and grace of the Feast. But it is also much more than a symbol; it is already a foretaste of what every Christian lives for: eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Canon of the Resurrection we hear: "Shine, shine O New Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." The New Jerusalem is the Kingdom of Heaven, in which everything and everyone shall be filled with light; "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father [St. Matt. 13:42].

Already in our perishing world this light has become visible. It is the light of the Transfiguration of our Lord that blinded the Apostles on Mt. Tabor; it is the light with which the Prophet Moses shone after he had spoken with God on Mt. Sinai so that his face had to be covered with a veil; it is the light with which St. Seraphim of Sarov and others of the great saints have shone. It is the light seen with his inward eye by every Orthodox Christian who lives the life of grace in the Church through the sacraments, the life lived so intensely by the recently-canonized Orthodox pastor, St. John of Kronstadt, that he could feel and exclaim: "All is fire, all is light, all is warmth." Those who have received Holy Communion on the Feast of the Resurrection, after having fasted and mourned with the Church throughout Great Lent, already know something of this radiant joy.

If we can begin such a life in this corruptible flesh, can we even imagine the life that we shall lead in the spiritual body with which we shall be resurrected in our Lord? Then the darkness of sin will no longer obstruct the action of grace in us, and we shall shine with the

light of the spiritual Sun, our Lord Jesus Christ, and all who shall attain to that Kingdom will live in effulgent light.

# The Great Fast, Our Exile

By the Waters of Babylon,  
Lay Sermon by Eugene Rose, March 1965

This weekend, at the Sunday Vigil of the Prodigal Son, we will sing Psalm 135.

["By the Waters of Babylon" is the entire Psalm 136, sung to a plaintive melody, after the Polyelos Psalm during Matins. It is only sung in church the three Sundays that precede Great Lent, Sunday of the Prodigal Son, The Last Judgment (Meatfare) and Forgiveness (Cheesefare). It is significant that this same hymn is chanted at the beginning of the service of monastic tonsure. —ed.]

**"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion".**

In these words of the Lenten psalm, we Orthodox Christians, the New Israel, remember that we are in exile. For Orthodox Russians, banished from Holy Russia, the Psalm has a special meaning; but all Orthodox Christians, too, live in exile in this world, longing to return to our true home, Heaven.

For us the Great Fast is a session of exile ordained for us by our Mother, the Church, to keep fresh in us the memory of Zion from which we have wandered so far. We have deserved our exile and we have great need of it because of our great sinfulness. Only through the chastisement of exile, which we remember in the fasting, prayer and repentance of this season,

Do we remain mindful of our Zion?

**"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..."**

Weak and forgetful, even in the midst of the Great Fast we live as though Jerusalem did not exist for us. We fall in love with the world, our Babylon; we are seduced by the frivolous pastimes of this "strange land" and neglect the services and discipline of the Church which remind us of our true home. Worse yet, we love our very captors - for our sins hold us captive more surely than any human master - and in their service we pass in idleness the precious days of Lent when we should be preparing to meet the Rising Sun of the New Jerusalem, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is still time; we must remember our true home and weep over the sins which have exiled us from it. Let us take to heart the words of St. John of the Ladder:

*"Exile is separation from everything in order to keep the mind inseparable from God. An exile loves and produces continual weeping."*

Exiled from Paradise, we must become exiled from the world if we hope to return.

This we may do by spending these days in fasting, prayer, separation from the world, attendance at the services of the Church, in tears of repentance, in preparation for the joyful Feast that is to

end this time of exile; and by bearing witness to all in this "strange land" of our remembrance of that even greater Feast that shall be when our Lord returns to take His people to the New Jerusalem, from which there shall be no more exile, for it is eternal.

# "Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen"

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon May 1963

It is well to remember these words of our Lord, which we heard in the Great Fast, even now when the joy of His Resurrection is still fresh in our hearts. Shall we who have been called to the Feast be chosen to partake of the greater Feast of the Kingdom of Heaven?

How quickly does earthly feasting dull our awareness of heavenly things! How many of us, having experienced the spiritual benefits of the Fast, begin to forget them now and use the Paschal season as a time of relaxation from spiritual labor! But if we lose now what we gained then, we are worse off than before; for he who does not progress in the spiritual life does not merely stand still – he goes backward.

"For what purpose," said our holy Father John of Kronstadt, "does the Lord add day after day, year after year, to our existence? In order that we may gradually put away, cast aside, evil from our souls and acquire blessed simplicity." This task does not end as long as we live; spiritual effort must be continuous. For Orthodox Christians the Paschal season is not merely a yearly remembrance, not merely the recurrence of an unchanging cycle. Each year brings us closer to death and to the judgment of our eternal destiny; but we are not properly preparing for this event if every year does not also find us in closer union with our Lord, with more secure faith in His Kingdom, with less attachment to the world.

If the strenuous effort of the Great Fast is not required of us in this season, neither is complete relaxation allowed, nor forgetfulness of the lessons we learned in the Fast. At the future judgment it will be asked of us not only how we spent the Fast (for we know that even those who come at the eleventh hour are welcomed), but perhaps even more how we spent the Feast: soberly, prayerfully, watchfully, remembering that the Bridegroom comes at midnight when men least expect Him; or gluttonously, forgetfully, as the world spends its days, the slave of every passion and every temptation.

Let us feast, but soberly, and in full awareness of why we feast: because our Lord has opened to us the gates of the Kingdom wherein feasting shall be eternal. Let us spend this time not renewing our attachment to the things of this world, but even while using the good things of the earth, remaining detached from them and looking beyond them to the Kingdom to which we are called.

"Of what," said Father John, "do we not deprive ourselves through our voluntary short-sightedness! Like flies we adhere to earthly sweets, and do not wish to rise up, to tear ourselves away from them. Blessed is he who despises the joys of this world; there shall be no end of his bliss."

# The Meaning of Affliction

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon July 1963

Among the innumerable spiritual lessons we may learn from the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, one of the most important is that of the meaning of affliction. Most men in their days, as in our own, sought "peace" and "security"; but the Apostles were in continual peril and uncertainty, often hungry and cold, beaten, stoned, persecuted, imprisoned, and finally martyred. Far from despairing over their lot, they rejoiced in it, knowing that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom 8:18). They knew the necessity of pain and affliction for the spiritual life. Through the bearing of tribulation one learns patience and hope (Rom 5:1-3); the greater one's suffering, the greater is one's consolation in Christ, and the better one is able to console others in distress (II Cor. 1:4-5); even dissensions and divisions among the faithful are necessary so that the true servants of Christ may be separated from the false (I Cor 11:19). But perhaps the most valuable thing to be learned from affliction is the knowledge of one's own weakness; for then one comes entirely to depend upon the strength of Christ. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor 12:10).

Today the power and seductiveness of the world are stronger than ever. Everywhere Christians are tempted to take the easy path, to seek "peace" and "security" and flee from pain and affliction, to view life as an occasion for the enjoyment of earthly blessings, instead of a time of trial in which our eternal destiny is to be decided. But God expects more than this from those who glory in the name of Orthodox Christians. So that we will not forget Him and His eternal Kingdom, God mercifully sends us troubles, distress, sorrows, persecution; these are to awaken us who sleep and show us where our true home is. Let us remember the example of the Holy Apostles, and especially the burning fervor and faith which sustained them in all their trials; let us heed the many exhortations of the Apostle Paul, as well as those of our shepherds today who continue to speak and tell us to prepare, in pain and tribulation, for the Kingdom of eternal glory and joy. Weak as we are, no trial is too great for us if our strength is of Christ. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).

# Christian Love

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Sept 1963

Of no subject did our Lord and His Apostles speak more often than of love; love is the very foundation of the Christian life. “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (I Jn 4:16). It is the greatest commandment of our Lord, and the chief sign of his followers. “A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn 13:34-35).

Today, when the spirit of Antichrist prevails in the world, men again speak of love; many who call themselves Christians cooperate with unbelievers and pagans thinking to build a “new age” of “brotherly love” and “peace on earth.” But these are a worldly “love” and “peace” that are no more than a deceptive imitation and mockery of true Christian love and peace. “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay; but rather division” (Lk 12:51). The lot of the Christian in this life is one of constant warfare with the world and its temptations; and even love, if it be not the love of Jesus Christ, can be such a temptation. “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt 10:37).

Christian love seems difficult to the world, primarily because its reward is not in this life, but in the life to come. Those who preach worldly “peace” and “love” do not believe in the future life, or else they believe in it half-heartedly, regarding it as something vague and distant. For the Orthodox Christian, on the other hand, the whole meaning of love resides in its fulfillment in eternal life. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16). The worldly man, if he loves his fellow man, does so out of pity for his weakness and mortality, and from concern to make his short life pleasant while it lasts; such love has no power over death, and it ends with death. The Christian, however, loves his fellow man because he sees in him one created in the image of God and called to perfection and eternal life in God; such love is not human but divine, seeing in men not mere earthly mortality, but heavenly immortality.

Our Lord has warned us: “Ye shall be hated of all men for My name’s sake” (Matt. 10:22), and in time of persecution Christians may well be tempted to doubt, to fear, and even to hate in return. But Christian love, which is not bound by death, is powerful enough to overcome these temptations. Our Lord has commanded us: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you” (Mt 5:44). In these commandments the standards of the world are reversed and overthrown, and the way is opened to the Kingdom of Heaven, which is to be an eternal Feast of Love.

# “God is Fire”

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Nov. 1963

“God is fire”: in these words the Chosen One of God, St. Seraphim of Sarov, reminds us not only of the splendor of the Divine Glory, but also of our own opportunity and hope; for no one can approach God who does not himself become fire. This is no mere figure of speech, but a spiritual truth demonstrated in the lives of many saints. Christian hermits who would otherwise have frozen to death in winter frosts were kept warm by inward spiritual fire; and even the layman Motovilov, by the special grace of God, was permitted to experience this warmth in the presence of St. Seraphim and to see the Saint as though in the center of a dazzling sun.

Such fire, as St. Seraphim tells us, is the tangible manifestation of the grace of the Holy Spirit; it was given to the Apostles at Pentecost and is given anew to every Orthodox Christian in Baptism. In our spiritual blindness and coldness we neither see nor feel this fire, save perhaps in rare moments of fervent prayer and communion with God, and even then in small measure; but no one can approach God except through this fire. When our first parents were expelled from Paradise, God set a fiery sword to guard the Tree of Life; and even today, in the prayers before Holy Communion, we pray that the fruit of the new Tree of Life, the Most Holy Body and Precious Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, will not burn us in our unworthiness. St. Seraphim said, “Our God is a fire which consumes everything unclean, and no one who is defiled in body or spirit can enter into communion with Him.” So it is that the damned in Hell would experience nothing but pain even in the very presence of God; they are unclean, and the Divine Fire can only burn and torment them. Yet the very fire that burns the unworthy can also consume impurities and make worthy those who, though unworthy, still love God and desire to be His sons. We pray before Holy Communion, “May Thy most precious Body and Blood, my Savior, be to me as fire and light, consuming the fuel of sin and burning the thorns of my passions, enlightening the whole of me to adore Thy Divinity.”

St. Seraphim compared the Christian believer to a lighted candle that kindles other candles without diminishing its own light, thus helping to distribute the heavenly riches of divine grace. So must the Christian believer be, burning with love of God and zeal to serve Him, and filled with the fiery Presence of His Holy Spirit. If he is such a flaming candle in this life, he shall be something even much greater in the next life; “then,” our Lord tells us, “shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father” (Mt 13:43). In our present unworthiness we can hardly conceive of such a state; for “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him” (I Cor 2:9). Such a state is the goal and meaning of the Christian life; it is what every Orthodox Christian lives for.





# The Other-Worldliness of Holy Orthodoxy

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Jan. 1964

It is often said of Holy Orthodoxy that it is “other-worldly.” This is true, and it is its strength; but the full significance of this fact is often forgotten or neglected even by Orthodox Christians themselves. It means that we believe in and govern our lives by invisible realities, that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (II Cor 5:7). It means that our daily lives are an unseen warfare, “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). It means that we daily pray to and receive help, in the battle against the invisible enemy of our salvation, from supernatural beings of whom the world does not even recognize the existence: from the Most Holy Trinity, from the Mother of God, and from numerous angels and saints. It means that we live by standards that are often not merely beyond the comprehension of the world, but are directly opposed to the wisdom of the world; that we do not find the end of life in success, prosperity, and earthly happiness, but rather welcome - if these be God’s will for us - affliction, sickness, pain, humiliation; that we do not indulge the passions of the natural man but, with the aid of the disciplines provided by the Church, crucify them, knowing that “if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom 8:13). It means that we do not lay up treasures for ourselves on this earth that will be destroyed, but that we keep always in mind the final destination of the soul; that we try to live in such a way that we may escape the dreadful flames of Hell that await those who reject our Lord or are careless in serving Him, and strive with all our might to be among those to whom our Lord will say, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34).

# The Fear of God

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Aug. 1964

St. Seraphim of Sarov, in his “Spiritual Instructions” speaks of the “fear of God” and how it is the first absolute necessity for anyone who wishes to lead a true Christian life. It is profitable to be reminded of this since it is all too easy for Christians to take for granted God’s love and mercy and forget with what care we are commanded to serve Him. The words of the Psalmist, said St. Seraphim, must be engraved on the mind of every Orthodox Christian: “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling”, as well as the strong warning of the prophet: “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently”.

Enemies of the Church of Christ have quoted such passages to accuse Christians of believing in a ‘religion of fear.’ But they, having renounced God, are incapable of understanding this Godly fear of ours. It is a fear based upon the nature of God we worship. The Apostle exhorts us “to serve God acceptable with reverence and Godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.” St. Seraphim of Sarov also spoke often of God as a fire; and if the impure and unbelieving can only be burned by this fire, Christians who approach God with reverence and faith become filled with an indescribable warmth and joy and love. If then we fear God, it is because we know His greatness and our own smallness, how that we are cold and empty, truly nothing, without Him; and our fear is the care we take to serve Him Who is our only happiness, so that He will not depart from us in our unworthiness and carelessness, but will always dwell near us.

He who is filled with this fear has no other fear, not even of the devil himself. “Do not fear the devil,” said St. Seraphim. “He who fears God will overcome the devil; for him the devil is powerless.” True fear of God means absolute trust in Him and love for Him, and one who possesses these is prepared for every good work; nothing is impossible to him. Every fervent Christian knows from experience the truth of the words: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” [Proverbs 9:10].

## Concerning Hope

[From the *Spiritual Instructions* of St. Seraphim]

All who have firm hope in God are raised up to Him and enlightened by the radiance of the eternal light” wrote St. Seraphim of Sarov in his “Spiritual Instructions”.

If a man has no care whatever for himself because of love for God and virtuous deeds, knowing that God will take care of him, such hope is true and wise. But if a man takes care for his own affairs and turns with prayer to God only when unavoidable misfortunes overtake him and he sees no way of averting them by his own power, only then beginning to

hope in God's aid, - such hope is vain and false. True hope seeks the Kingdom of God alone and is convinced that everything earthly that is necessary for this transitory life will unfailingly be given.

The heart cannot have peace until it acquires this hope. It gives peace to the heart and brings joy into it. Concerning this hope the most holy lips of the Saviour have said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That is, have hope in Me, and you will have relief from labour and fear.

In the Gospel of Luke it is said of Simeon: "And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." And he did not lose his hope, but awaited the desired Saviour of the world and, joyfully taking Him into his arms, said: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart into Thy kingdom, which I have desired, for I have obtained my hope - Christ the Lord.

# The Feast of Mid-Pentecost

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon May 1965

For too many of us, perhaps, the weeks following the radiant Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ are a time of relaxation and even of indulgence; the rigors of the Fast being ended, the body revels while the spirit grows weak. But if this is unfortunately so, it is our own fault and not the fault of the Holy Church; for she never ceases to draw our minds upward and instruct us as to what thoughts and actions are appropriate for Orthodox Christians in this holy season.

Each Sunday after Easter has a special name drawn from the appointed Gospel reading; between Easter and the Ascension there are the Sundays of St. Thomas, of the Myrrh bearers, of the Paralytic, of the Samaritan Woman, of the Blind Man. Another special feast, to which too little attention is usually paid, occurs on the Wednesday of the fourth week after Easter and is called "Mid-Pentecost." This feast commemorates the event in the life of the Savior when, in the middle of the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles, He taught in the Temple concerning His being sent from God and concerning the living water of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which all those who thirst may receive from Him (St. John 7:14-39).

As celebrated by Orthodox Christians, this feast occurs exactly midway between Easter and Pentecost and serves as a link between them. It continues the celebration of our Lord's Resurrection, emphasizing His Divine nature and glory; for it was proper to no one but to God to conquer death. At the same time it reminds us of the approaching Descent of the Holy Spirit and prepares us for it, teaching us to find in Christ our God the Source of life and grace, He Who sends the Holy Spirit (St. John 16:7), and to become ourselves not merely recipients, but even givers of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (St. John 7:38).

Faith has grown weak in our day, and few live up to this teaching: but even for the weakest there is at least one lesson to be learned from the teaching of this feast of Mid-Pentecost: thirst. Even while feasting on the good things of this earth that are permitted to us in this joyful season, we should yet thirst for what lies above the earth, for the Holy Spirit Whose coming we await even while we enjoy the presence among us of the Risen Lord. Thus we sing in the Troparion of the feast:

Tone VIII

Having come to the middle of the feast,  
refresh my thirsty soul with the streams of piety;  
for Thou, O Savior, didst say to all:  
Let him who thirsts come to Me and drink.  
O Christ our God, Source of Life, glory to Thee.

# St. John, A Prophet

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Oct. 1966

## **ST. JOHN OF KRONSTADT, A PROPHET WHO RAISED THE DEAD**

The newly-canonized Saint of God, John of Kronstadt [1829-1908], whose feast we celebrate on October 19/November 1, is surely one of the greatest of Orthodox Saints. Even in his own lifetime he performed, by the power of God, countless miracles. For believing Christians he was a fervent intercessor, and he healed thousands of the afflicted, whose letters and telegrams reached him every day. He was a prophet as well, and he foretold the coming Divine chastisement of the Russian people for their sins. He prophesied of the dispersion of the Orthodox Russian people to every corner of the globe, where by their presence they would make orthodoxy known to the unbelieving world, as well as of their return to the homeland before the end of the world. And like the Prophet Elisha in the Old Testament [II Kings 4:32-37] he performed even the most impossible of miracles – he raised the dead, thus testifying to the undiminished power of God, which works even in our own day through men of faith and holy life. The following miracle is related by Eugene Vadimov in the book I.K. Sursky, *Father John of Kronstadt*:

The wife of O., while preparing to bear her fourth or fifth child, was taken seriously ill. Her doctors determined that the foetus had died and that a Caesarean section was required to remove it. But first the family sent a telegram to Fr. John of Kronstadt, whom they knew. Fr. John replied: "Leaving immediately, praying to God. John Sergiev."

The next day about noon he entered the O. apartment, where by that time a whole crowd of relatives and friends had gathered. "Where is Liza?" Fr. John asked, entering the drawing-room with his customary rapid gait. "Take me to her, and all of you remain here quietly."

Fr John entered the adjoining bedroom and closed the heavy doors after him. Minutes passed that seemed like half-hours. In the drawing-room it was quiet as a burial vault. And suddenly the bedroom doors were flung open with a loud noise. In the doorway stood a gray-haired old man in a priest's cassock, over which he had on an old stole with a thin, dishevelled gray beard, with an extraordinary face that was red from the intense effort he had exerted at prayer and covered with great drops of sweat. And suddenly there almost thundered from Fr. John fearful terrible words, words that came from another world. "The Lord God has been please to work a miracle! He had been pleased to resurrect a dead child in the womb! Liza will bear a son!.."

"It's incomprehensible!" said one of the doctors who had come for the operation just two hours after Fr. John had left. "The foetus is alive ... I don't understand a thing about it, not a thing ... I affirmed and affirm now that the foetus was dead and that blood-poisoning began long ago." The other doctors understood no more.

The same night Mrs. O. was successfully and quickly delivered of a perfectly healthy boy.

# St. John of Kronstadt

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Nov. 1964

In her canonization and glorification of St. John of Kronstadt, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad not only confirms for her own faithful the sanctity of their beloved and venerated pastor and father, but now holds up his holy example of a life in Christ for the whole world to see. Up to this time, one might say, he has belonged to the Orthodox Russian people. Few outside of faithful Russians have been aware of the last flowering of Holy Russia, of the profoundest Orthodox spirituality that occurred just before the Revolution; St John was the most fragrant blossom of this flowering. In his life of asceticism and constant prayer, in the spiritual care he devoted to the thousands and millions of Orthodox believers who comprised his flock, and above all in the untold miracles he worked during his own lifetime and after his death, miracles which continue to the present day, – St. John is revealed to be beyond doubt one of the greatest of Russian and, indeed, of all Orthodox Saints.

This great Saint has had a special role to play in the life of the Orthodox Russian people. He was a prophet who foresaw the fall of the Russian Empire and the exile of the Russian faithful. Seeing the spiritual cause of this fall in the worldliness and lack of living faith that were so widespread in the last days of the Empire, he called Orthodox faithful to repentance and renewed awareness of their Christian vocation and responsibility. His appeal is still heard today, and if the Orthodox Russian people dispersed in exile throughout the world are still faithful to Holy Orthodoxy – even if only a small remnant – it is in part due to his still-living example and his holy prayers.

But now St. John, while remaining the spiritual patron of the suffering Russian people, has become a Saint of the universal Orthodox Church of Christ. It is no accident that his canonization has taken place outside of Russia, in the still free world into which he foresaw that the Russian people would be sent, and in which Orthodox churches would be erected, as a testimony of Christian Truth before a world that is, despite its pretensions, unbelieving. To this unbelieving world, in all the languages in which his words have been and will yet be translated, he now speaks the same message that he spoke to the Russian people in his own lifetime. This world, with its imposing outward structure that makes it seem to some so secure, is actually tottering, its foundation rotting away from the self-love and unbelief with which it is filled. Its fall is at hand, and the same godless beast that once swallowed the holy Russian land now stands ready to devour the rest of the world and complete his aim to exterminate the last Christians and lead apostate humanity in its worship of Antichrist.

This, perhaps, is what lies before us if we do not return to the path of a righteous Christian life. There are some who would consider such thoughts of the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the terrible Last Judgment, of which St. John constantly reminded us, to be too “negative.” But if his warnings were correct, then we have to fill our hearts not with fear and



terror, but with tearful repentance, with zeal to lead a truly Christian life, and with fervent hope of attaining the Kingdom of Heaven, which is our true home.

It is to nothing but a genuine and profound Christian faith that St. John calls us. In an age when too many pastors preach a “new Christianity” that is only worldliness in disguise, his is a rare and much-needed voice — not for Russians alone, not for Orthodox Christians alone, but for the whole world, if it will but listen.

O holy Saint of Christ, John of Kronstadt, pray to God for us!

# The Veneration of Icons in Holy Orthodoxy

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon March 1964

The first Sunday of Great Lent is celebrated by the Orthodox Church as the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. Originally this Feast was established to mark the restoration of icons after the period of Iconoclasm, and among the anathemas read on that day there is still one directed against "those who insult and blaspheme the Holy Icons." The Orthodox Church, then, places veneration of images on a level with the doctrines of Christian faith; and the central place occupied by this veneration in the life of Orthodox believers is another indication of its great importance.

Why is it so important? One reason is that the use of images answers a very deep need of human nature. Fr. John of Kronstadt has said, "Icons are a requirement of our nature. Can our nature do without an image? Can we recall to mind an absent person without representing or imagining him to ourselves? Has not God Himself given us the capacity to representation and imagination?"

There is yet a more profound reason for the Orthodox veneration of icons. This is the theological reason indicated in the Kontakion of the Feast: **"The illimitable Word of the Father accepted limitation by incarnation from Thee, O Mother of God; and He transformed our defiled image to its original state and transfused it with the Divine beauty."** It is because God has taken human form and so restored this form to its original likeness to Himself, that it is proper for us to reverence images of our Lord, His Most Holy Mother, and the Saints, in whom the Divine image has also been restored.

The art of iconography, having such a high origin, is not an ordinary art; it is sacred. Too many, alas, even among Orthodox believers, try to judge it by secular standards. It is often said that icons in the traditional style are "unrealistic" or "unnatural". But the Saints, too, according to the standards of the world are "unnatural"; and the same may be said of Christian Truth itself. These things must be judged by a higher, spiritual standard. "Realistic" images of the Saints are incomplete because they represent only their earthly appearance. Traditional iconography, such as is still practiced in centers of Holy Orthodoxy like the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, N.Y., depicts the Saints as they actually are spiritually and as we shall finally see them in the Kingdom of Heaven. Such are appeals not to the senses but to the spirit.

That is why genuine icons cannot be painted by an ordinary artist. While he is working, the icon painter must fast, pray, and be in a state of humility and contrition. And the believer who stands before a finished icon must be in a similar state. An icon is not to be appreciated as a work of art; its purpose is rather to help us to pray and to lift our minds and hearts above this earth into Heaven. According to the Holy Fathers who compiled the decrees of

the Seventh Ecumenical Council, at which the veneration of icons was restored, "The more continually the Saints are seen in iconic form, the more are the beholders lifted up to the memory of the prototypes and to an aspiration after them."

In a world that is plunging to its destruction along the path of a thousand enticing novelties, the Orthodox icon, like everything else connected with Holy Orthodoxy, stands out as constant and unchanging, guiding faithful Orthodox along the one sure path to eternal salvation. The constancy of the iconographic tradition and of the Orthodox teaching regarding the veneration of icons, is one of the many signs by which we know the truth of what the Church teaches us on this Sunday of Orthodoxy: **"This is the Apostolic Faith, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Orthodox Faith, this Faith hath confirmed the universe."**

# On the Transfiguration of our Lord

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Aug. 1965

by St. Ephraim the Syrian.

**"And after six days Jesus taketh unto Him Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and He was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow.**

The men whom Christ had said would not taste death until they should see the form and the foreshadowing of His Coming are these three Apostles, whom having taken with Him He brought to a mountain, and showed them in what manner He was to come on the last day: in the glory of His Divinity, and in the body of His Humanity.

He led them up to the mountain that He might also reveal to them Who this Son is, and Whose Son is He. For when He asked them: "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" they said to Him: "Some Elias, some other Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." And so He led them up into a high mountain, and showed them that He was not Elias, but the God of Elias; nor was He Jeremiah, but He that had sanctified Jeremiah in his mother's womb; nor one of the prophets, but the Lord of the prophets, and He that had sent them.

And He showed them also that He was the creator of heaven and earth, and the Lord of the living and the dead; for He spoke to the heavens, and they sent down Elias; He made a sign to the earth, and raised Moses to life again.

He took the Apostles up into a high mountain apart, that He might also show them the glory of His Divinity, and that He might declare Himself the Redeemer of Israel, as He had been foretold by the Prophets, and so that they would not be scandalized in Him in the passion He had taken upon Himself and which for our sakes He was about to suffer in His human nature. For they knew Him as the son of Mary, and as a man sharing their daily life in the world. On the mountain He revealed to them that He was the Son of God, and Himself God.

He took them therefore up to the mountain that He might show them His Kingdom before they witnessed His suffering and death, and His glory became His ignominy; so that when He was made a prisoner and condemned by the Jews, they might understand that He was not crucified by them because of His own powerlessness, but because it had pleased Him of His goodness to suffer, for the salvation of the world.

He brought them up to the mountain that He might also show them, before His Resurrection, the glory of His Divinity, so that when He had risen from the dead they might

then know that He had not received this glory as the reward of His labor, but that He had it from all eternity, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The disciples upon the mountain beheld two suns: one, to which they were accustomed, shining in the sky; and Another, to which they were unaccustomed, which shone for them alone - the face of Jesus before them. And His garments appeared to them white as light: for the glory of His Divinity poured forth from His whole body, and all His members radiated light.

**And there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him:**

And this was the manner of their speech with Him: they gave thanks to Him that their own words had been fulfilled, and together with them the words of all the Prophets. They adored Him for the salvation He had wrought in the world for mankind, and because He had in truth fulfilled the mystery which they had themselves foretold. The Prophets therefore were filled with joy, and the Apostles likewise, in their ascent of the mountain. The Prophets rejoiced because they had seen His Humanity, which they had not known. And the Apostles rejoiced because they had seen the glory of His Divinity, which they had not known.

# Transfiguration of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Aug. 1966

Thou was transfigured upon the mount, O Christ our God,  
showing they glory to Thy Disciples as far as they could bear it;  
may Thy everlasting Light illumine also us sinners  
by the prayers of the Mother of God.  
O Giver of Light, Glory to Thee  
[Troparion of the Feast, Tone 4]

Forty days before He was delivered to an ignominious death for our sins, our Lord revealed to three of His disciples the glory of His Divinity. “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart; and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:1-2). This was the event to which our Lord was referring when He said: “There will be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom” (Matt. 16:28). By this means the faith of the disciples was strengthened and prepared for the trial of our Lord’s approaching passion and death; and they were enabled to see in it not mere human suffering, but the entirely voluntary passion of the Son of God.

The disciples saw also Moses and Elias taking with our Lord, and thereby they understood that He was not Himself Elias or another of the prophets, as some thought, but someone much greater: He Who could call upon the Law and the Prophets to be His witnesses, since He was the fulfillment of both. The three parables of the feast concern the appearance of God to Moses and Elias on Mount Sinai, and it is indeed appropriate that the greatest God-seers of the Old Testament should be present at the glorification of the Lord in His New Testament, seeing for the first time His humanity, even as the disciples were seeing for the first time His Divinity.

The Transfiguration, counted by the Church as one of the twelve great feasts, had an important place in the Church calendar already in the 4th century, as the homilies and sermons of such great Fathers as St. John Chrysostome, St. Ephraim of Syria, and St. Cyril of Alexandria attest; its origins go back to the first Christian centuries. In the 4th century also, St. Helena erected a church on Mount Tabor, the traditional site of the Transfiguration, dedicated to the feast. Although the event celebrated in the feast occurred in the month of February, 40 days before the Crucifixion, the feast was early transferred to August, because its full glory and joy could not be fittingly celebrated amid the sorrow and repentance of the Great Lent. The sixth day of August was chosen as being 40 days before the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14th), when Christ’s Passion is again remembered.

Orthodox theology sees in the Transfiguration a prefiguration of our Lord's Resurrection and His Second Coming, and more than this – since every event of the Church calendar has an application to the individual spiritual life – of the transformed state in which Christians shall appear at the end of the world, and in some measure even before then. In the foreshadowing of future glory which is celebrated in this feast, the Holy Church comforts its children by showing them that after the temporary sorrows and deprivations with which this earthly life is filled, the glory of eternal blessedness will shine forth; and in it even the body of the righteous will participate.

It is a pious Orthodox custom to offer fruits to be blessed at this feast; and this offering of thanksgiving to God contains a spiritual sign, too. Just as fruits ripen and are transformed under the action of the summer sun, so is man called to a spiritual transfiguration through the light of God's word by means of the Sacraments. Some saints (for example, St. Seraphim of Sarov), under the action of this life-giving grace, have shone bodily before men even in life with this same uncreated Light of God's glory; and that is another sign to us of the heights to which we, as Christians, are called and the state that awaits us – to be transformed in the image of Him Who was transfigured on Mount Tabor.

# Weeping Icons of the Mother of God

Eugene Rose Lay Sermon Nov. 1966

Of all the many ways in which the All-Holy Mother of God reveals Her mercies to men, there is one that stands out both as being undeniable (for it is a completely objective phenomenon) and as touching the heart in a most immediate way. This is the phenomenon of weeping icons, in which images of the Mother of God produce tears that are exact replicas, on the scale of the icon, of human tears – originating in a corner of the eye and coursing the side of the face, sometimes as distinct miniature teardrops, sometimes as a flood of tears that moistens the whole face.

America too, so late to receive Holy Orthodoxy, is now the witness of this miraculous phenomenon. Three weeping icons appeared quite suddenly, one after the other, within two months in the spring of 1960 among Greek families in Long Island, New York. The striking nature of this sign has drawn considerable attention to these icons, especially among Orthodox believers, but also among those outside the Church.

It is not, perhaps, well-known that this phenomenon of weeping icons is not new, for there are records of such miraculous icons in Russian Church history as early as the 12th century. Here we will give an account of one from the 19th century, together with an interpretation of its meaning by a bishop who lived at that time. [From *The Orthodox Word*, Nov.-Dec. 1965].

This icon was located in the church of the Theological Academy at the Sokolsky Monastery in Romania. After the Liturgy in the seminary church on February 1, 1854, it was noticed that the icon was weeping. The rector of the seminary, Bishop Philaret Skriban, was among the witnesses of this miracle. He took the icon out of its frame, looked at it carefully, wiped the traces of the tears off with a piece cloth and replaced the icon. He then asked all to leave and he locked the church. When the rector, together with the teachers and seminarians, came to the church for Vespers several hours later, all were struck by the same miraculous flow of tears from the eyes of the Mother of God. The rector immediately served a moleben and read an Akathistos before the icon.

Soon all of Romania knew of the miracle and began streaming to the monastery to venerate the icon. News of it spread throughout Russia also. The miraculous flow of tears occurred sometimes daily, and sometimes with an interval of two, three or four days. Many were thus to see the very miracle of the icon weeping, and those who did not could see at least the traces left by the tears. Even skeptics became convinced of the miracle. A certain colonel was sent to the commanding officer of the Austrian occupation force (during the Crimean war) to investigate the rumoured miracle, and to his astonishment he witnessed the actual flow of tears.



An important testimony of the miracle was offered by Bishop Melchisedek of Romansk, one of its first witnesses. Thirty-five years after the event he spoke of how he had long pondered the question of the meaning of the tears of the Mother of God. He came to the conclusion that such weeping icons had existed also in ancient times and that such an event always foretold a severe trial for the Church of Christ and for the nation. History justified this conclusion in the case of the Romanian weeping icon. During the Crimean war the Principality of Moldavia was occupied by Austrian troops and subjected to severe trials. The Sokolsky Monastery in particular had a sad future: this formerly great religious center of Romania, serving for a hundred years as a seedbed of spiritual culture, was suppressed, the seminary moved elsewhere and the monks dispersed.

The meaning of the weeping icons of America today is not yet evident; at least one of them is still weeping after five years. What is certain is that these tears of the Mother of God speak directly to the heart of every Orthodox believer, calling all to repentance, amendment of life and return to Orthodox faith and tradition in their fullness.

# Tsar-Martyr Nicholas

Eugene Rose Sermon undated

For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one...

(II Thes. 3:8)

That which restraineth the appearance in the world of Antichrist, the man of lawlessness and anarchy, the last and most powerful enemy of Christ and His Church, is - in the teaching of St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers of the Church - lawful authority, as represented and symbolized by the Roman Empire. This idea was incarnated supremely in the Christian Empire: first in Byzantium, when Constantinople was the Second Rome, and then in the Orthodox Russian Empire, when Moscow was the Third Rome. In 1917 the "Constantinian Age" came to an end, the Orthodox Empire was overthrown - and the world, beginning with Moscow, has been thrown into an age of lawlessness and atheism (and in Church life, of apostasy) such as has not yet been seen.

Tsar Nicholas II was the last representative of this ideal of lawful Christian authority, and the age of lawlessness began appropriately with his murder. For Orthodox Christians, however, the new age begins with a martyr: a witness to the Orthodox Faith, faithful to the end to his Church and his sacred calling.

July 4 (17), 1968, was the 50th anniversary of the martyrdom of Emperor Nicholas (following shortly upon the 100th anniversary of his birth), together with the entire Imperial Family, who were barbarously slaughtered by the lawless Bolshevik power in the basement of a house in Ekaterinburg in Siberia. To commemorate this anniversary the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia made an important decision, which is set forth in their Epistle that follows:

Job the Much-suffering, on the day of whose commemoration the Tsar was born, said in his grievous suffering, concerning the day of his conception, as is written in his book: *As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year* (Job 3:6).

Terrible was the night of the murder of our Tsar.

But the ancient Christians profoundly and graphically called the days on which martyrs were commemorated, days of birth. And the night of the murder of our Tsar shines in our consciousness as the birth in the Russian heaven of the *Martyr-Tsar*.

One archpastor, who had profoundly suffered the dark horror of our disjointed times, has exclaimed: "Russian people, where is the grave of your Tsar?" And we stand paralyzed as if above a world-wide abyss that has swallowed up the last traces of the Tsar... Somewhere in

the Urals have gone into the earth specks of dust from the body and clothing which the executioners and their servants cut, covered with acid, and burned... Sacred specks of dust, already scarcely material...

"And there was no mercy..."

And not only was there no mercy, there was even no funeral. The Church's prayer of absolution was not read over them, before whom for already half a century we feel the guilt of our entire people.

Bowing before these animate sacrifices, rational whole burnt offerings, knowing God and known by God (Oktoechos, Tone 4, Wed. vespers), before the Martyr-Tsar and those killed with him, the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, in awareness of its archpastoral duty, decrees that there be performed the funeral of the Imperial Martyrs and all Orthodox Christians killed by the atheist power who have been deprived of a church funeral.

This great day of the funeral of the Tsar-Martyr and all commemorated with him, who have been deprived until now of a church funeral, will be July 4 (17), 1968, the 50th anniversary of the crime. And may the hearts of all believing Russian people be lit before God, like candles, with one soul in repentant prayer for their passion-bearers. Amen.

This funeral service was accordingly performed in the evening of July 4 (17), 1968 in all cathedral churches of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, and it was received warmly by the Russian faithful, who after half a century have not lost their great love for their Tsar-Martyr and see in him a victim and sacrifice for their own sins. This view is clarified by a vision seen in 1917 by Metropolitan Makary of Moscow, who was in truth *as one of the ancients*:

### ***THE DREAM OF METROPOLITAN MAKARY***

I saw a field. The Saviour was walking along a path. I went after Him, affirming, "Lord, I am following You!" And He, turning to me, replied: "Follow Me!" Finally we approached an immense arch adorned with stars. At the threshold of the arch the Saviour turned to me and said again: "Follow Me!" And He went into a wondrous garden, and I remained at the threshold and awoke.

Soon I fell asleep again and saw myself standing in the same arch, and behind it with the Saviour stood Tsar Nicholas. The Saviour said to the Tsar: "You see in My hands two cups: one which is bitter for your people, and the other sweet for you."

The Tsar fell to his knees and for a long time begged the Lord to allow him to drink the bitter cup together with his people. The Lord did not agree for a long time, but the Tsar

begged importunately. Then the Saviour drew out of the bitter cup a large glowing coal and laid it in the palm of the Tsar's hand. The Tsar began to move the coal from hand to hand and at the same time his body began to grow light, until it had become completely bright, like some radiant spirit.

At this I again woke up.

Falling asleep yet again, I saw an immense field covered with flowers. In the middle of the field stood the Tsar, surrounded by a multitude of people, and with his hands he was distributing manna to them. An invisible voice said at this moment: "The Tsar has taken the guilt of the Russian people upon himself, and the Russian people is forgiven."

The significance of the Tsar is first and foremost, of course, to the Russian people. But his position as Orthodox Tsar, that which restrains the appearance of Antichrist, and especially as Orthodox Martyr, gives him a meaning and importance for all Orthodox believers. Significantly, the question of his canonization (which still has not been accomplished owing to the disordered times and the continued reign of lawlessness in Russia) was first raised not by Russians, but by Serbians.

The Serbian people loved the Russian Tsar with all their heart. On March 30, 1930, there was published in the Serbian newspapers a telegram stating that the Orthodox inhabitants of the city of Leskovats in Serbia had appealed to the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church with a request to raise the question of the canonization of the late Russian Emperor Nicholas II, who was not only a most humane and pure-hearted Ruler of the Russian people, but who also died with the glory of a martyr's death.

Already in 1925 there had appeared in the Serbian press an account of what happened to an elderly Serbian lady who had lost two sons in the war and whose third son, who had disappeared without a trace, she considered also to have been killed. Once, after praying fervently for all who had been killed in the war, the poor mother fell asleep and saw in a dream the Emperor Nicholas II, who told her that her son was alive and was in Russia, where he had fought together with his two dead brothers. "You will not die" - said the Russian Tsar - "until you see your son." Soon after this dream, the old woman received news that her son was alive, and within a few months after this she joyfully embraced him alive and well when he returned from Russia.

On August 11, 1927, in the newspapers of Belgrade there appeared a notice under the headline, "Face of Emperor Nicholas II in the Monastery of St. Naum on Lake Ochrid." It read as follows:

"The Russian painter S. F. Kolesnikov was invited to paint the new church in the ancient Serbian Monastery of St. Naum, being given complete creative freedom in adorning the interior of the dome and walls. While completing this, the artist thought of painting on the

walls of the church the faces of 15 saints, to be placed in 15 ovals. Fourteen faces were painted immediately, but the place for the 15th long remained empty, since some kind of inexplicable feeling compelled Kolesnikov to wait for a while. Once at dusk he entered the church. Below, it was dark, and only the dome was cut through with the rays of the setting sun. As Kolesnikov himself related later, at this moment there was an enchanting play of light and shadows in the church, and all around seemed unearthly and singular. At this moment the artist saw that the empty oval which he left unfinished had become animated and from it, as from a frame, looked down the sorrowful face of Emperor Nicholas II. Struck by the miraculous apparition of the martyred Russian Tsar, the artist stood for some time as if rooted to the spot, seized by a kind of paralysis. Then, as he himself describes, under the influence of a prayerful impulse, he leaned a ladder against the oval, and without marking with charcoal the outline of the wondrous face, with brushes alone he made the layout. He could not sleep the whole night and, hardly had the first daylight appeared than he went to the church and in the first morning rays of the sun was already sitting high on the ladder, working with such a fever as he had never known. As he himself writes: 'I painted without a photograph. In the past I several times saw the late Emperor close up, while giving him explanations at exhibitions. His image imprinted itself in my memory.'

The very phenomenon of the Tsar-Martyr is a source of inspiration to Orthodox Christians. But this is only part of the Orthodox significance of Nicholas II. His personal piety and Christian character, and his active role as Tsar in promoting a veritable Orthodox renaissance, make him the last and one of the greatest representatives of the tradition of Orthodox monarchy, with whose collapse (as we are witnesses) the reign of lawlessness has indeed entered the world!

The story of Nicholas II - Orthodox Tsar has yet to be told to the world, at least in the English language.