

“Blood and Soul”: Metropolitan Tikhon on Saint Patriarch Tikhon

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated an opening Memorial Service for the victims of the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and their aftermath at Villanova University’s Corr Hall Chapel in conjunction with the opening of an exhibit titled “Blood and Soul” on Wednesday, February 8, 2017. The major exhibit, which runs at the University’s Falvey Memorial Library through September 1, highlights the 100th Anniversary of the enthronement of Saint Tikhon, the former Archbishop of North America, as Patriarch of Moscow in 1917, as well as the Revolutions that occurred the same year.

At the conclusion of the Memorial, Metropolitan Tikhon delivered the following reflection on Saint Patriarch Tikhon and the important role he played in the life of the Church in America as well as his homeland. A photo gallery of the service and exhibit opening also is available on the OCA web site and Facebook page.

Remarks on Saint Tikhon of Moscow Blood and Soul: The 1917 Revolutions of Russia Villanova University February 8, 2017

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

I would like to express my thanks to the University of Villanova for the invitation to participate in the opening ceremonies of this exhibition—Blood and Soul: The 1917 Revolutions of Russia. This is not the first time that this fine institution has taken the initiative to address topics of such historical significance, especially those relating to the Christian Churches sojourning in those historical contexts.

In particular, we are grateful to all those associated with the Falvey Memorial Library and the Russian Area Studies Program for their efforts in co-sponsoring this exhibit and a special thanks to Archpriest John Perich, who is curating a large portion of this exhibit and has provided many relevant archival and historical items from his own collection and from the Metropolitan Museum which is located at Saint Tikhon’s Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania.

This exhibit is taking place in this year when we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the enthronement of Saint Tikhon, the first Patriarch of the restored Patriarchate of Moscow and All Russia, which had been abolished for two hundred years, since the time of Peter the Great. Even in the midst of the turmoil of the 1917 revolutions, and perhaps precisely because of the confusion that reigned in Russia at the time, the Orthodox Church saw fit to restore this ancient position of Patriarch, and by God’s providence, Saint Tikhon was

elected to fill it.

Before he became the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Saint Tikhon was a great missionary of the Orthodox Church in our lands and is now known as the Enlightener of North America. One of his greatest accomplishments was the founding of the Monastery of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, located adjacent to Saint Tikhon’s Seminary and, for today’s memorial service, we have had the privilege of hearing the prayerful singing seminarians from Saint Tikhon’s Seminary and Saint Vladimir’s Seminary, both of which are institutions of the Orthodox Church in America which hold firmly to the vision of Saint Tikhon for the Church in North America.

While these may have been components of his apostolic work here in North America, it may be suggested that the vision of Saint Tikhon was, in fact, an extension of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as expressed in the Gospel of Saint John, where our Lord Jesus Christ says, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.”

When he arrived in North America, Saint Tikhon offered his first sermon at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco on December 23, 1898. In that sermon he recalled the words of the prophet Hosea in reference to the calling of the gentiles and says, “By the will of God, I, too, in my unworthiness, was called to apostolic service here, and so now I too will say to those called ‘not my people,’ ‘You are my people;’ I will call ‘beloved’ the one called ‘not my loved one.’ Until now, we had been strangers to each other, and did not know each other. Henceforth, the Lord Himself is placing us into a bond of closeness, into a mutual relationship of bishop with his flock and flock with her bishop.”

He goes on to speak of the relationship between a bishop and his flock as that of Bridegroom and Bride: “Understanding in this way my relationship to those I am to shepherd, and being betrothed to the Aleutian flock, I have left my beloved country, my elderly mother, my kinsfolk and acquaintances dear to my heart, and traveled to a far-away country, to a people unknown to me, in order that henceforth you may become my people and my beloved.”

Though pronounced a decade before the Russian Revolution, these words could have come from his lips during those most difficult times in 1917 and in the years of persecution and unrest which were to follow. Even in the midst of the chaos in Russia, he remained above a Pastor to his flock, revealing the practical application of the Lord’s words: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” **Con’t Page 8**

Patriarch Tikhon Con't

Saint Tikhon was no hireling, but indeed a true shepherd who gave his life for his sheep in North America, just as he did during those times of terrible persecution and temptation. He remained steadfast in watching over his sheep and keeping them safe within the ark of the Church on whatever continent they found themselves and in whatever circumstances.

Once again, I share his words, offered in America for the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, but prophetically applicable to his later martyric witness in Russia: "Even as towering waves, once they have crashed against the ship, yet again blend in with the sea, and one can neither see them nor distinguish them from other waves, so also the enemies of Christ, once having risen up against God's Church, again return to the void from whence they sprang up while the ship of the Church continues, as before, on its victorious voyage."

In order to help in overcoming the division and brokenness of the world, he heeded the words of the Lord: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."

Saint Tikhon was a true missionary and laborer with Christ in this mission of bringing the lost sheep into the fold. But he labored in a truly humble and deeply Christian manner. In the Akathist Hymn composed in his honor, he is called an "example of meekness in authority." And it is with this Christ-like spirit of meekness that he led the Church in Russia, just as he accomplished his missionary work. In another place he would say, "most importantly, the Orthodox Church accomplishes her [missionary] task in silence, with humility and godliness, with an understanding of human frailty and divine power."

The great example of Saint Tikhon is an example and an inspiration for all of us who strive to fulfill the commandments of Christ in the community we have been planted or that to which we have been, or will be sent. It is truly a testament to his great Christian witness that St Tikhon, as he faced false allegations and imprisonment at the end of his life, was yet able to cry out, "Let my name die in history that the Church may live!"

Indeed, he fell asleep in the Lord in the midst of great darkness, a long and dark night of darkness. But we are here today to celebrate his name, which, in fact, did not die in history, but remains with us, not only as a name but as a witness to the power of Christ and the glory of the resurrection, as an inspiration to us all, whether we live in Russia or America, and a glorious saint who unites us with one another and with the hosts of heavenly powers and all the saints who are gathered in love around our Great and Good and Divine Shepherd, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom, together with His Father and the Holy Spirit, are due all glory, honor and worship, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen

What's Wrong with Suicide?

By Lawrence Farley

Eventually every pastor will be faced with the question of what to do about the theological issue of suicide, either because he will be asked to preside at the funeral of someone who has taken his or her own life, or because he will be asked to offer prayers for their repose. What is the proper response, both theologically and pastorally? May one legitimately preside at the funeral of a suicide or offer a memorial service (such as a *Panikhida*) for their repose? What are we to think about their final eternal destiny?

It is no good pretending that the weight of Christian history does not offer a dark view of the matter. The classic view, at least in the West, was expressed well by G. K. Chesterton (d. 1936). In his book *Orthodoxy*, he wrote comparing the martyr to the suicide in the following words: "A suicide is obviously the opposite of a martyr. A martyr is a man who cares so much for something outside him, that he forgets his own personal life. A suicide is a man who cares so little for anything outside him, that he wants to see the last of everything. One wants something to begin: the other wants everything to end.... The suicide is ignoble because he has not this link with being: he is a mere destroyer; spiritually he destroys the universe.... One man [the martyr] flung away his life; he was so good that his dry bones could heal cities in pestilence. Another man flung away life; he was so bad that his bones would pollute his brethren's".

Ouch. Well, no one ever accused GKC of mincing words. And putting aside the intensity of his prose, he does express the attitude of the Church of his day which steadfastly refused to bury a suicide in consecrated ground. And this attitude was well understood for some time before Chesterton put pen to paper. Even Shakespeare's Hamlet knew that "the Everlasting has fixed His canon 'gainst self-slaughter".

Given this negative view of suicide and the presumption that a suicide would be eternally lost, we may still ask the question, "What's so wrong with suicide?" Obviously suicide is always a tragedy and always to be avoided, but why did our forefathers feel that those committing the act were to be reprobated in this way? Please note here that I am discussing active suicide, the act wherein a person takes his or her own life or arranges for another to take his or her life, not the issue of what is sometime called "passive euthanasia", wherein a person allows himself to be "unplugged" from life-support machines in a hospital and let death take its course. That is also an important issue, but it is not the one I am discussing here.

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Suicide Con't

I think it is important to examine the question of motivation when assessing the relative morality of any act. That is, one must look at the question of why a person commits suicide, and what he or she hopes to accomplish in others by the act. In some cases the motivation is to inflict hurt and pain upon others. That person wants to kill himself so that those finding the body afterward will be filled with shock, trauma, and terrible lasting anguish. The subtext of the suicide note reads, "You'll be sorry for what you've done to me!" This act of suicide is not simply aimed at extinguishing one's own life, but more importantly uses this self-destruction as a way of inflicting grief upon the survivors. It is as much an act of aggression as of self-harm. In this scenario, if the suicide's body were not discovered, the act of suicide would have no point. The man killing himself does not want to simply die, but to reach out beyond the grave and hurt others. If he simply vanished by (for example) throwing himself off a ship into the sea leaving his surviving family to believe he was still alive somewhere in the world, the act of suicide would have no point, for the whole purpose of the act was to inflict pain upon those discovering that he had killed himself.

Given this motivation, one can readily see why some might be so opposed to the act, and why it opined that the dead man's chances for eternal bliss were so slim. But not all suicides (or, as I suspect, actually very few suicides) spring from this motivation. Of the people I knew who killed themselves, their primary motivation was not to inflict guilt or pain upon those surviving, but simply to make their own interior pain stop. This is the way it is, I am told, with those who kill themselves when they are clinically depressed. They do not want to die; they just feel that they cannot go on living in such pain, and suicide seems to them to be the only way to make the pain go away. Such people deserve our sympathy and our prayers—including our corporate liturgical prayers. It may be that some liturgical tweaking could be done with the prayers normally used at Christian burials expressing the ambiguous and tragic nature of the situation and accentuating the mercy of God. That would be for bishops to decide and to bless. But it seems to me that clergy should be allowed to preside at such funerals, and to offer the comfort of the Church's intercession for the dead. Indeed, the bishops of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas—the forerunner of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA—had a decade ago [issued a pastoral letter](#) tending in this direction. In the case of suicide, as with so many other things, motivation is everything.

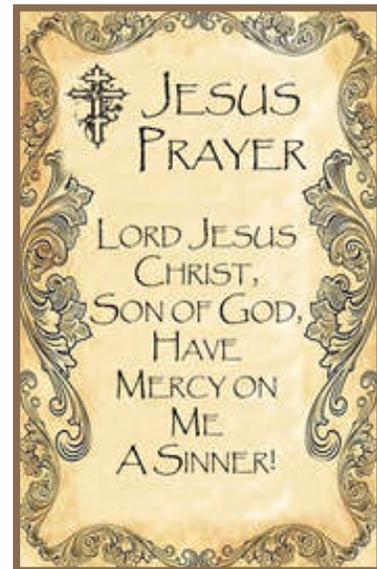
CrossRoad Summer Institute open to H.S. juniors, seniors

This year's CrossRoad Summer Institute will be held on the campus of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology here in June and July 2017.

The ten-day program is especially designed for Orthodox Christian high school juniors and seniors—ages 16 through 18—who wish to "step outside their comfort zone to encounter Christ in the face of their neighbors" while exploring ways to make major life decisions in the context of their Orthodox faith. Courses in theology and Scripture will be offered, in addition to excursions into Boston and its environs, parish visits and engagement with the city's homeless. Fellowship—including a day at the beach—rounds out the Institute's agenda.

CrossRoad Session One will be held June 17-27, while Session Two will gather July 5-15. The Institute—organized annually by Hellenic College's Office of Vocation and Ministry—is open to Orthodox Christian students of all jurisdictions.

Detailed information and application forms are available on-line.



FROM SCRIPTURES

Peter asked Jesus one day, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Seven times?" Seven times is a lot of times. Some of us have not been able to forgive even one time. But Jesus replied in effect, "Peter, there's no limit to forgiveness. Not seven times but seventy times seven!" In other words, forgiveness is not an act - it is an attitude. An attitude that is born of the fact that we Christians, who have been forgiven a debt we could never pay, are to go out into the world, armed with the spirit of forgiveness: to heal the hurts, right the wrongs, and change society by the spirit of forgiveness.

LIVING ORTHODOX GREAT AND HOLY LENT

By: *Evangelos Sotiropoulos*

It is difficult to truly experience the spiritual fruits of Holy Week, let alone the indescribable joy of Christ's life-giving resurrection, without actively partaking in Great Lent.

Think for a moment about how much time and effort is required to win a professional sporting championship; players and coaches do not show up only in time to hoist the trophy.

By the same token, we should avoid showing up only on Holy Saturday evening to receive the Paschal Light. Living Lent, in order to reap the Resurrection harvest, takes sacrifice.

For Orthodox Christians, Lent is an "arena of virtues" and one reason why Greek Orthodox wish each other *Kalo Agona* (translated accurately but poorly to "good fight") on Clean Monday, the commencement of Lent.

The fight is concurrently corporate and private; the faithful join together often in distinctive divine services, such as the Pre-sanctified Divine Liturgy and the Salutations to the Theotokos, while simultaneously striving secretly in prayer, fasting, the study of scripture and almsgiving.

The Gospel of Matthew (6:14-21) read on Forgiveness Sunday is particularly instructive for our internal fight to repent (change) using the spiritual tools provided to us by the Church:

And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Concerning fasting, we should bear in mind the following aphorism: There is more to Great Lent than fasting, and there is more to fasting than food.

Fasting -- or any other sacrifice we make during Lent -- is not an abstract concept or legalistic arrangement and should not be approached as such. Living Orthodox Great and Holy Lent should be a personal experience -- not a theoretical code or set of rules one needs to follow with absolute

rigidity. What benefit, spiritual or otherwise, is to fast as prescribed by the Church, for example, but be easily irritable and/or miserable during the Lenten period.

The practice of sacrifice during Great Lent is not a one-size-fits-all approach; we should undertake what we can, emulating the poor widow in the Gospel who gave two copper coins out of her poverty and, trusting in the Lord who nourishes those who with genuine love and authentic humility strive to serve Him.

In order to ensure we are on the correct path, though, the need for, and guide of, a spiritual father is essential; otherwise, we may rationalize faulty behaviour and justify inaction.

Christ became incarnate to save mankind; He became man (*Theanthropos*) so we, who are made in his image and likeness, can become "God by grace" as the Church Fathers teach.

The arena of virtues, therefore, is a blessed opportunity for the faithful to inch closer, step by step, to the ultimate aim and destination in life: holiness and salvation in Christ -- the only Redeemer and Savior of the world.

We will make progress towards this purpose if we repent during Great and Holy Lent; if we change our behaviour; if we pay no heed to evil thoughts but instead nourish virtuous ones; if we become humble and forgiving; we will make progress towards eternal life if we love one another - including our enemies - and help our fellow man.

If we contest in the arena of virtues to acquire peace, patience, kindness and self-control (*cf.* Galatians 5:22-23), we will be transformed during Holy Week and experience the Resurrection as a life-altering event. If we contest in the arena of virtues, we will not revert back to our old self but begin our life anew, closer to Christ.

FROM THE FATHERS

We should accept every tribulation without argument, with the thought of the wise thief that we justly receive these sorrows for our sins, for the cleansing and salvation of our souls. With this attitude, every sorrow takes on the quality of sorrow for the Lord's sake, and our personal cross is transformed into the Cross of Christ. And through this we find salvation.

~ Abbot Nikon ~