



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No. 82 September 2015



Loving Our Enemies:

A Word from St Silouan the Athonite

Although it is natural and usual to love those who love us and to do good to those who do good to us (Mt 5:46-47; Lk 6:32-33), to love our enemies is distasteful to our nature. One can say that it isn't in our power but is an attitude that can only be the fruit of grace, given by the Holy Spirit. This is why St. Silouan the Athonite writes, "The soul that has not known the Holy Spirit does not understand how one can love one's enemies, and does not accept it."

The Staretz repeatedly says that love of enemies is impossible without grace: "Lord, You have given the commandment to love enemies, but this is difficult for us sinners if Your grace is not with us". On the contrary, St. Silouan always teaches that this attitude is a divine gift: "One can only love one's enemies through the grace of the Holy Spirit". This grace does not suddenly erupt in the soul, but rather shows itself in a divine process of teaching: taking into account the weakness and the difficulties of man, the Holy Spirit progressively teaches him to love and teaches him all the attitudes and ways which will allow him to do so.

Staretz Silouan insists that because love of enemies is a fruit of grace, it is essentially through prayer that it can be obtained. Several times he urges us to "ask the Lord with our whole being to give us the strength to love all men." He also advises to pray to the Mother of God and the Saints: "If we are incapable [of loving our enemies] and if we are without love, let us turn with ardent

prayers to the Lord, to His Most Pure Mother, and to all the Saints, and the Lord will help us with everything, He whose love for us knows no bounds.”

Yet obtaining the grace to love one’s enemies presupposes other conditions. The love of enemies is completely bound to the love of God: we have seen that the principal foundation for the love of enemies is the love that God shows to all His creatures equally and His will that all people should be saved, and Christ gave us a perfect example of such love throughout his earthly life. The love of God leads man to accomplish His will and to imitate Him as much as possible, and so also to love his enemies. The Staretz also notes that he who does not love his enemies shows that he has not learned from the Holy Spirit to love God.

To love one’s enemies is also tightly bound to humility. The Staretz often associate these two virtues. Almost all the difficulties we encounter in loving our enemies are linked with pride: it is from pride that flows the affliction that follows upon insults, hatred, bad temper, spite, the desire for revenge, contempt for one’s neighbour, refusing to forgive him and to be reconciled with him. Pride excludes the love of enemies and love of enemies excludes pride: “If we love our enemies, pride will have no place in our soul.” The fact that humility goes hand in hand with love of enemies proves the presence of grace and the authenticity of love: “If you have compassion for all creatures and love your enemies, and if, at the same time, you judge yourself the worst of all people, this shows that the great grace of the Lord is in you.” Indeed humility is the indispensable condition to receive and keep the grace that teaches us to love our enemies and gives us the strength to do so. The Staretz advises: “Humble yourself, then grace will teach you.”

The Staretz sometimes also stresses the role played by penitence in connection with humility. “Regard yourself the worst of men,” he advises. This is an attitude of great humility that of its nature implies penitence. He who counts himself the worst of men necessarily thinks others better than himself; he will judge and blame himself, and not judge and criticize his enemies, for he tends to estimate them better than himself.

The insistence on prayer, humility and penitence shows that, although St. Silouan recognizes a determining role of the action of grace in acquiring love of enemies, he does not neglect the role played by the efforts that man makes. The Staretz is very conscious of the importance of the initial action; this is why he says, “I beg you, try,” and states, “In the beginning, force your heart to love your enemies.” The efforts one makes must manifest themselves in a general way in a straight intention and constant good will, stretched toward the realization of God’s command. God will not fail to respond.

For the person who feels discouraged by such a demanding task, St. Silouan reassures him: “Seeing your good intention, the Lord will help you in everything.” The Staretz who felt in himself so acutely human powerlessness and weakness seems to think constantly of these words of the Apostle: “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Phil 4:13) and witnesses in his own experience the mighty help that everyone can receive from God. The Staretz would say that for Christ there are no enemies – there are those who accept “the words of eternal life,” there are those who reject and even crucify; but for the Creator of every living thing, there can be no enemy. So it should be for the Christian, too, who “in pity for all must strive for the salvation of all.”



The St Elizabeth Convent of Minsk, Belarus

St Elizabeth Convent, a Russian Orthodox community in Minsk, Belarus, bears the name of the holy Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth. It was founded in 1999 on the outskirts of Minsk and originated from the Sisterhood bearing the same name. The Convent currently counts just under a hundred nuns and around 300 sisters of mercy. Taking up the ministry of our patron saint, the sisters of our Convent provide spiritual and social help to the sick and the suffering.

Since its establishment, the Convent has been assisting 200 orphanage children with psychophysical deficiencies for more than 14 years. Our assistance goes from purchasing continence pads for the bedridden children to the implementation of different activities for their rehabilitation and socialization. We consider it vital to raise children in the atmosphere of love, mercy and diligence.

There is a charity shelter founded on the farmstead of the Convent located 19 miles from Minsk for people who were led astray by the 'rough and tumble' of life (the homeless, drug or alcohol addicts, ex-prisoners and the less able). Over 180 residents live here today. The Convent provides the needy with comprehensive help - accommodation, meals, and necessary medicines - arranges medical examinations for them, and helps to restore their IDs.

A rehabilitation facility for females was established two years ago for female ex-prisoners, the homeless, and mentally challenged women. To support and develop the above ministries, more than twenty workshops and studios operate within the frameworks of the Sisterhood. These include sewing and embroidery shops, a candle workshop, wood-carving, stone and blacksmith workshops, and many more. Some of the people working in the workshops are those who lost all hope in realizing their potential due to various illnesses. But the Lord gave a talent to everyone, and these people have skilled hands and the desire to work. Together with the sisters, these people produce beautiful articles with love and prayer in the Convent's workshops.

Come and support the work of the St Elizabeth Convent on:

Tuesday 8 September

6 pm Compline & Akathist to St Elizabeth the New Martyr

followed by Refreshments & Opportunity to browse and purchase religious and cultural products in aid of the Convent and its ministries



COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE IKON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW
SEPTEMBER 2015

Saturday 5 September

2pm ~ College Day

Moleben, Great Procession followed by Refreshments & Lecture

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 6 September

10.10am ~ Hours & Divine Liturgy (Hieromartyr Eutychius)

Tuesday 8 September

6pm ~ Compline & Akathist to St Elizabeth

Followed by refreshments & opportunity to purchase goods from the Convent of St Elizabeth

Saturday 12 September

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 13 September

10.10am ~ Hours & Divine Liturgy (Sash of the Holy Theotokos)

Saturday 19 September

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 20 September

10.10am ~ Hours & Divine Liturgy (Sunday before the Exaltation of the Cross)

7.30pm ~ Vigil

❖ Monday 21 September (Nativity of Our Most Holy Theotokos) ❖

Saturday 26 September

7.30pm ~ Vigil

Sunday 27 September

10.10am ~ Hours & Divine Liturgy (Universal Exaltation of the Cross)

Notes & Jottings

CROSS

Our friend, Subdeacon Claude Lopez, has carved a wooden Cross for use on Holy Cross Day and has donated it to our church. He writes that it has been blessed by contact with a relic of the True Cross and that *“The little reliquary at the bottom has a tiny piece of stone from Golgotha that was given to me by the Greek Hegumen Dorotheos from the Monastery of Saint Nicholas of Andros”*. We thank Subdeacon Claude for his generosity to our church on this and previous occasions.

LIBRARY AND OTHER BOOKS

We are grateful to James Philpott, who kindly spent three days sorting and categorising the many books that have been donated to the College library. Also, thanks are due to numerous anonymous donors of books for the shop. This contributes towards provision of funds for the Trust. Plans are also afoot for commissioning the construction of further shelves in the library to accommodate our growing collection.

AKATHIST

The text of the Akathist to Our Lady of Mettingham is now printed. This akathist will be sung in church on College Day (5 September) and can be purchased for £2.50 per copy.

IKON DONATED TO THE CHURCH

An ikon of St Demetrios the New of Bucharest (also sometimes referred to as “of Basarabov”, the village in which he was born), has been donated to our church by Nicholas and Mirona Meade. We thank them for this kind gift. There seems to be no certain record of the date of St Demetrios’ birth but it was in about the 12th/13th Century. His feast day 27 October and an account of his life will be included in the October edition of this bulletin.

SPONSORED CYCLE RIDE

The sponsored Cycle Ride in support of Suffolk Historic Churches Trust will take place on Saturday 12 September. The church will open (as usual) and there will be someone available to sign the sponsorship forms of the participants.

NAMEDAYS

To everyone who is celebrating a nameday at this time, we wish them:

MANY YEARS!

1 Sept – **Holy Martyr Timothy of Palestine** – Timothy Levine

8 Sept – **Sts Adrian & Natalia of Nicomedia**, Adrian Cosby, Natalia Weston

11 Sept – **Beheading of St John the Baptist** – John Barry

12 Sept – **St Alexander of Constantinople** – Alexander Bascu

30 Sept – **Martyr Sophia at Rome** – Sophia Weston



There never was, and never will be
a place on earth free from sorrows.
The only sorrow-less place possible
is the heart, when the
Lord is present there.

~ St. Nikon of Optina

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