



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

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Visit stsymeon.com

✘ April 21, 2013 ✘

Fifth Sunday of Lent

St. Mary of Egypt

Sixth and Final Week of Great Lent



✘ Wednesday, April 24, 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy

✘ Friday, April 26, 6:30pm Presanctified Liturgy of Lazarus (no meal)

Holy Week

✘ Sat. April 27 10:00am Lazarus Saturday Divine Liturgy – Parish Workday

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday!

✘ Sat. April 27 6:00pm Palm Sunday Vespers w/ Blessing of Palms

✘ Sun. April 28 8:30am Palm Sunday Matins

✘ Sun. April 28 10:00am Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy

✘ Sun. April 28 5:00pm First Bridegroom Matins

✘ April 29 & 30 - Holy Monday & Tuesday ~ 6:30pm Bridegroom Matins

✘ May 1 - Holy Wednesday 6:30pm Holy Unction

✘ May 2 - Holy Thursday 10:00am Mystical Supper Liturgy

6:30pm 12 Passion Gospels

✘ Holy Friday Services ✘ May 3 ~

✘ 10:00am Royal Hours

✘ 4:00pm Vespers – Shroud to the Tomb

✘ 7:00pm Lamentations at the Tomb

✦ All Night Vigil at the Tomb ✦

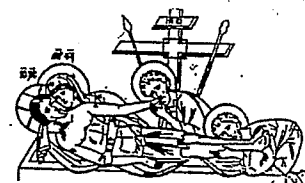
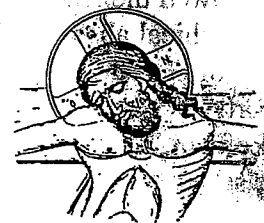
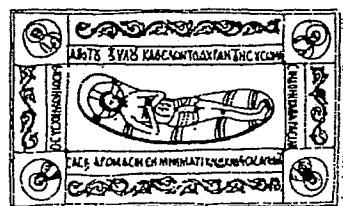
✘ Holy Saturday ~ May 4 10:00am Divine Liturgy

⇒ Pascha Preparation following – your help is needed

✘ Holy PASCHA ✘ Begins Saturday, May 4 at 11:30pm

✘ Pascha Sunday May 5 3:00pm ~ Paschal Agape Vespers

✘ Bright Monday May 6 10:00am Divine Liturgy w/ Procession



✘ That God may forgive us, let us forgive others. We are all on this earth as temporary guests. Prolonged fasting and prayer is in vain without forgiveness and true mercy. God is the true Physician; sins are leprosy. Whomever God cleanses, God also glorifies. Every merciful act of men, God rewards with mercy. He who returns sin with sin perishes without mercy. Pus is not cleansed by pus from infected wounds, neither is the darkness of the dungeon dispelled by darkness, but pure balm heals the festering wound, and light disperses the darkness of the dungeon.

St. Nicolai Velimirovich

This and That

Q. What has Christianity given to society that is most often overlooked by Christianity's critics?

Chuck Colson: I think the critics of Christianity are looking at the modern ideas of liberalism and believing that freedom from all restraints and the desire to do anything you desire to do is sort of the summum bonum (sum of all good things), the element of virtue and life. And what they're missing is that that undermines the very protection they themselves enjoy the most. It is like somebody sitting on a branch and sawing off the branch they're sitting on.

The ideas that you can determine for yourself the meaning of life, that there are no restraints, that you have absolute autonomous control over yourself, that all of the world revolves around you, [these ideas] leave you vulnerable to all the various scientific assaults upon human life, whether it's abortion, assisted suicide, genetic engineering, or cloning. You yourself become vulnerable. The price of your freedom is human vulnerability. I don't think the postmodernist has figured out yet how self-refuting his own belief system is.

I was with a bunch of newspaper reporters once and the publisher was bragging he had taken the Ten Commandments off the classroom walls in his city. And then about five minutes later, he is complaining about all the stealing in the classrooms. It's like putting a sign up, "Someone Steal!" I'm very optimistic that post-modernism is running its course because it's not intellectually sustainable and it's built on internal contradictions that will ultimately cause it to crumble.

Does the Left-Wing Christian really exist? I think not, if we mean someone who equates leftism with Christianity... They simply put a veneer of Christian imagery on the banalities they have picked up from Marxist professors. I would say there are whole denominations... of which this can be said.

There are, of course, Christians who swallow the lies of the Left, just as there are Christians who have swallowed the lies of every dominant political class, whether the lies are derive from capitalism or from monarchical absolutism. I would say, however, that the monarchist lies have some congruity with a Christian view of God the Father, and that the lies of capitalism are consistent with a Christian insistence on moral liberty.

Leftism, being a revolution against the created order and human nature is far more destructive, but I agree for the sake of argument that an otherwise good Christian might be taken in by Leftism. That having been granted, there is no quarter to be given people who insist on cloaking their leftism--Marxist, feminist, homosexualist, one-worldist, environmentalist, in Christian garb.

~ Thomas Fleming

The Demons brag on their accomplishments in the corruption of the human soul: From *As One Devil to Another*, a book by Richard Platt, p. 93

The triumph of Subjectivity over Objectivity is one of the most amusing by-products of the Modern Era, affectionately known in Hell as the Age of Narcissism, which we have fashioned in our own Image and Likeness, making pervasive a degree of egocentricity only just less virulent than our own, and bringing with it the erosion of respect for authority (in a universe of one, there is no authority to respect), the destruction of manners (there is no need to be polite, or to consider the needs, wants, and desires of someone who is not there), and a monstrous sense of entitlement almost as muscular as our own (if other people aren't there, you are entitled to everything).

We have disabled Art for most of its function, the broadening and uplifting of the human soul, through the implementation of one of our oldest, yet most effective, weapons: the Big Lie. A small but vocal minority proclaims that something which is manifestly preposterous is indisputably true - that jewel-encrusted rhinoceros dung is Art, for example. Then they shout down opposing views and bludgeon them into silence, demonstrating that argument is useless against them, and personally attacking anyone who dares to speak the truth.

St. Mary of Egypt:

Light of Repentance

OF ALL THE BRILLIANT LIGHTS OF REPENTANCE, there is no example so dramatically pure and cleansing as Saint Mary of Egypt. Through holy repentance, she, a most sinful harlot, became a woman and servant of the Lord, most pure.

At an early age, she began the life of a debauchery, making herself a slave to her lustful desires. After many years spent serving the devil, she saw a crowd preparing for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (This is in the 5th century when the original Cross was still in possession by the Church in its entirety. Now there are fragments here and there.). Seeing an opportunity to continue her wicked life she entered the pilgrimage boat and journeyed to the Holy City. On the day of the Feast, three times she tried to enter the Church, but was held back by a mighty force each time. Exhausted, she realized then that her unclean life prevented her from entering the Holy Church. With tears from a heart newly opened, she turned to the Icon of the Mother of God on the porch of the Church, lamenting over her sins. And the merciful Theotokos allowed her to enter the Church to see and venerate the Life-giving Cross and then the Pure Virgin guided her to the desert to begin a life of profound repentance.

With great joy, St. Mary hastened into the Jordan desert with three loaves of bread. There she prayed, fasted, and struggled with the passions which tormented her for seventeen years. After many years the monk Father Zosimas found her emaciated by fasting and darkened by the sun. Saint Mary told him that she had been laboring in the desert for forty-seven years. Being led by the hand of the Mother of God, she told him how the loaves of bread lasted but a few years, from then on, she lived only by trusting in God. When passionate thoughts would assail her, she would throw herself down upon the hot desert earth weeping over the memories of her sinful life. There she would lie until a sweet light from Heaven fell upon her humble, suffering soul.

Amazed at the purity of her life, the greatness of her asceticism, and the grace of her words, Father Zosimas fell upon the ground before her. Many wonderful and beautiful miracles followed until her blessed repose; and in these things, the world is shown by her the beautiful and holy life open to all who desire to repent. While there is still time, let us all repent with this harlot made holy, so that we may become as she was when she went to her Lord, and not as she was when she served the devil.

Through the prayers of our Holy Mother Mary, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us!

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FOR CONSIDERATION –

The Sufferings of the Holy Ones

Why is so much said and written about the sufferings of holy men and women? Because these Saints are counted as victors — and how can there be victory without struggle, pain and suffering? In ordinary, earthly warfare no man is reckoned as victorious and heroic who has never been in battle, who has not endured and suffered to a very considerable extent. All the more is this so in spiritual warfare, where the truth is clear and where self-assertion is not only of no use but is a real hindrance. He who knows no struggle for the sake of Christ, either with the world or with the devil or with his own self - how can he be counted among Christ's soldiers? How, indeed, among Christ's fellow victors?

Saint Mary of Egypt spoke of this gigantic struggle to the Elder Zosimas: "For the first seventeen years in this wilderness, I struggled with my mindless passions as with fierce beasts. I wanted to eat meat and fish, which I had eaten abundantly in Egypt. I wanted to drink wine, and did not even have water here. I wanted to hear lustful songs. And I wept and smote my breast. I prayed to the pure Mother of God to remove these thoughts from me. When I had wept enough and done enough smiting of my breast, I then saw a light that flooded over me from all sides, and was filled with a wonderful peace."

This and That

“Not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” Alexis de Tocqueville, 19th century

Traditionalist America has always held homosexuality to be unnatural and immoral, ruinous to body and soul alike, and where prevalent — as in Weimar Germany — the mark of a sick society. This belief outrages millions. Yet it is as old as mankind and was held universally in the Christian West until this century. Moreover, it is grounded in biblical truth, tradition.... Patrick Buchanan

Consider the idols to which European Man has burnt incense since losing his faith: Darwinism, Marxism, Bolshevism, fascism, Nazism, now globalism — the idea of a secular paradise where mankind's needs are met by the state and people spend their lives consuming cultural and material goods until the time comes for the painless exit... Patrick Buchanan

A Decadent Generation

We must have no carelessness in our dealings with public property or the expenditure of public money. Such a condition is characteristic of undeveloped people, or of a decadent generation.
~ President Calvin Coolidge, America's most frugal president (1920's)

Food as entertainment and as an emotional drug rivals sex in our culture for pandering to our passions. Fasting is almost as reviled and ignored as chastity. — Michael Baumann

Russia is one of the freest nations in which to homeschool:

“We have complete freedom of home education in Russia, in terms of legality,” Pavel Parfentiev, a family rights advocate in Russia, said. “The Russian Federation is sort of a champion of human rights in this particular area, so of course I think it is a good example for both Germany and Sweden where home educators are persecuted,” he said.

We need to remember that every church that has accepted a moral parity between homosexuality and heterosexuality has suffered precipitous decline. The most obvious is the Episcopal Church which is a shell of its former self. Close behind is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), the Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and others. Once a church adopts the homosexual agenda, people leave.
Fr. Johannes Jacobse

We are contorting ourselves over a group, however loud and affluent they are, that constitutes 1.4% of the population, according to recent, very thorough CDC analysis. The Orthodox Church's teachings on homosexuality have been pretty clear for two millennia — anyone who pretends otherwise is a liar and a deceiver, and we know, in the words of our Lord and Savior, who those people are working for.
~ Internet comment

One cannot be in communion with God as long as one identifies oneself with the passions and desires. Those passions and desires do not lead to salvation because they are all fallen. As Romans 1 clearly points out, indulging them is a form of idolatry.
Michael Baumann

It is one thing to fail morally. We all do that. It is another thing to set up moral failure and even defiance as a new morality. Heretics and apostates do that... **But dogma does not change, and morality does not change.** Human nature has been distorted and disrupted by the Fall. But that does not mean that we as Orthodox Christians accept the “new normal” and declare that the wound is now health. We are not living in the world as God created it. We are living in the world—and with human nature—as man has distorted it. That is the clear teaching of the Scriptures and the Fathers.
Fr. Andrew, internet comment

How to Say No and Resist Temptation (A bit of help from pop psychology.)

by James Clear

One can have no smaller or greater mastery than mastery of oneself. ~ Leonardo Da Vinci
(“I don’t do meat and dairy.”)

Learning how to say no is one of the most useful skills you can develop, especially when it comes to living a healthy life.

Saying no to unnecessary commitments can give you the time you need to recover and rejuvenate. Saying no to daily distractions can give you the space you need to focus on what is important to you. And say no to frequent temptations can help you stay on track and achieve your health goals. This, of course, begs the question: how do we avoid distraction and get past the urgencies of everyday life, so that we can actually live healthy and do the things that are really important to us? It seems like a big task, but research is starting to show that small changes can make a significant impact. In fact, here’s one change you can make right now that will make it easier for you to say no, resist temptation and stick to your health and fitness goals for the long-term.

How to Say No: Research Reveals the Best Way

In a research study published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, 120 students were split into two different groups.

The difference between these two groups was saying “I can’t” compared to “I don’t.”

One group was told that each time they were faced with a temptation, they would tell themselves “I can’t do X.” For example, when tempted with ice cream, they would say, “I can’t eat ice cream.”

When the second group was faced with a temptation, they were told to say “I don’t do X.” For example, when tempted with ice cream, they would say, “I don’t eat ice cream.”

After repeating these phrases, each student answered a set of questions unrelated to the study. Once they finished answering their questions, the students went to hand in their answer sheet, thinking that the study was over. In reality, it was just beginning.

As each student walked out of the room and handed in their answer sheet, they were offered a complimentary treat. The student could choose between a chocolate candy bar or a granola health bar. As the student walked away, the researcher would mark their snack choice on the answer sheet. Here’s what happened...

The students who told themselves “I can’t eat X” chose to eat the chocolate candy bar 61% of the time. Meanwhile, the students who told themselves “I don’t eat X” chose to eat the chocolate candy bars only 36% of the time. This simple change in terminology significantly improved the odds that each person would make a more healthy food choice...

Why “I Don’t” Works Better Than “I Can’t”

Your words help to frame your sense of empowerment and control. Furthermore, the words that you use create a feedback loop in your brain that impacts your future behaviors.

For example, every time you tell yourself “I can’t”, you’re creating a feedback loop that is a reminder of your limitations. This terminology indicates that you’re forcing yourself to do something you don’t want to do.

In comparison, when you tell yourself “I don’t”, you’re creating a feedback loop that reminds you of your control and power over the situation. It’s a phrase that can propel you towards breaking your bad habits and following your good ones.

Heidi Grant Halvorson is the director of the Motivation Science Center at Columbia University. Here’s how she explains the difference between saying “I don’t” compared to “I can’t”...

“I don’t” is experienced as a choice, so it feels empowering. It’s an affirmation of your determination and willpower. “I can’t” isn’t a choice. It’s a restriction, it’s being imposed upon you. So thinking “I can’t” undermines your sense of power and personal agency.

In other words, the phrase “I don’t” is a psychologically empowering way to say no, while the phrase “I can’t” is a psychologically draining way to say no.

How You Can Apply This to Your Life

There are situations everyday when you need to say no to something. For example, the waiter who offers you a dessert menu... or the urge to skip a workout and stay home... or the distracting call of texts, tweets, and updates when you should be focusing on something important.

Individually, our responses to these little choices seem insignificant, which is why we don't make a big deal about telling ourselves that we "can't" do something. But imagine the cumulative effect of choosing more empowering words on a consistent basis.

"I can't" and "I don't" are words that seem similar and we often interchange them for one another, but psychologically they can provide very different feedback and, ultimately, result in very different actions. They aren't just words and phrases. They are affirmations of what you believe, reasons for why you do what you do, and reminders of where you want to go.

The ability to overcome temptation and effectively say no is critical not only to your physical health, but also to maintaining a sense of well-being and control in your mental health. To put it simply: you can either be the victim of your words or the architect of them. Which one would you prefer?

Reprinted from JamesClear.com. [James Clear](http://JamesClear.com) writes about strategies that make it easier to live a healthy life (both mentally and physically).

Reconciling with Rome is Impossible

Serge Verhovskoy, Professor of Dogmatic Theology and Ethics, and Provost of St. Vladimir's Seminary, (1960's thru '80's) spoken to the Papal Legate and his delegation visiting from Rome, honored at dinner by the St. Vladimir's Seminary faculty in the 1970's:

"Well, my dears (*That's how he addressed students in his classes, with a thick Russian accent.*) God is our Father, and the Holy Spirit goes wherever He wishes. But inclination is such that, at times, we may actually say something is impossible. The Pope is in heresy. The Pope engages in deceptive attempts to convert our people in our native countries, by "posing" as Orthodox. It is disgusting. So, by your description, Pope seems to be nice fellow, but by inclination, Pope is heretic and will not repent. Until Pope repents, we cannot discuss much with Pope but his heresy. Therefore, reconciling with Rome is impossible."

Everyday Saints

—The work on the translation of the book had an effect on the translator himself.

Author Father Tikhon of Sretensky Monastery explains:

"The translator's name is Julian Lowenfeld. Many consider his translations of Pushkin, Tiuchev, and Lermontov, to be the best there is today. For me it was very important that such a translator decided to be the one to introduce the English speaking public to *Everyday Saints*."

"Julian was raised in a Catholic family but considered himself an agnostic. It took him about a half a year to translate the book, and when the final editing work was being done in Moscow, he came here to our monastery and unexpectedly announced his firm decision to become Orthodox. Julian wanted to be baptized precisely here, in Moscow. He was told, "You can come and be baptized any time."

"Then, without knowing about the ancient Christian tradition of baptizing catechumens on Great Saturday, he arrived in Moscow no earlier or later than Great Friday, and with no other intention than to receive holy Baptism. So, on Great Saturday, we performed the Baptism according to all the rules and canons of the Church. His Godmother was Nun Cornelia, also an American, and one of the editors of the English translation. Of course, I cannot but be overjoyed that the book he translated at least in part influenced him to make that decision."

Confession and Consequences of Our Sin

From an interview with Fr. Valerian Krechetov – Fr. Benedict Crawford's "Seeking the Kingdom" Blog

Some people are disturbed that forgiveness, it turns out, is so easy to receive. A person sins, then repents, then sins again, then repents ... and over and over? Without any repentance?

Why do you say that? Who told you such a thing? At Confession, sin is forgiven; but even so, a person still has to bear the consequences of his sin. The classic example is the repentant thief who was crucified on the cross beside Christ. He repented, and the Lord said to him, *Today you will be with Me in Paradise*. Nothing unclean can enter into Paradise, so we know that the Lord has already purified him and forgiven him his sins; nevertheless, he remained hanging on the cross! And if that weren't enough, the Gospel tells us that the soldiers then broke his legs (cf. John 19:32). A person all the same has to bear consequences for his sins, although certainly not to the degree he deserves to suffer.

Many Christians, although they confess every week, nevertheless remain sinners, in no visible way differing from everyone else. Furthermore, they repent over and over again of the very same sins. It turns out, does it, that Confession hasn't helped them?

Nothing of the sort. He who constantly labors over himself already differs from other people. Regarding the very same sins, even the Apostle Paul was given *athorn in the flesh*, some kind of pain, suffering, or trial, so that he would not get puffed up. As they say, "Until the last breath, even up to the gates of Paradise, the battle with sin goes on." St Mary of Egypt repented, but for another 17 years she struggled fiercely with sin!

Violent Irritation

The Devil also manifests his presence in our hearts by unusually violent irritation. We sometimes become so sick with our own self-love that we cannot endure even the slightest contradiction, any spiritual or material obstacle-cannot bear a single harsh word. But then is the very time for endurance

...
St. John of Kronstadt

The Sweetest Name

The sweetest Name of Jesus, repeated continuously, and with compunction, and with desire and faith, in the depth of the heart, lulls all bad thoughts.

The evil one will never cease shooting at us with his flaming arrows and trying to overcome and dominate us. But we also have many deadly weapons. In particular the prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me" literally burns him. This is why he tries to tigh us in an indirect manner. But our Christ enlightens us with His holy commandments to fight him.

Elder Ephraim

No Peace of Soul

"Though someone pray much, and fast, but has not love for his enemies he can know no peace of soul. And I should not even be able to speak of this, had not the Holy Spirit taught me love."

St. Silouan the Athonite

Call Out

"When your mind is disturbed by an evil thought, call out with tears and all of the strength your soul to God, saying: 'Lord take compassion on me, a sinner, and banish evil far from me, abolishing its power against me.' God is the knower of hearts, and - as such - He knows which of our innermost thoughts come from our own voluntary and wicked way of thought (whereupon we are responsible), and which are introduced into our souls, against our will, by the malice of the demons (whereupon we are not responsible, as long as we do not give ourselves over to them.)"

St. Ephraim the Syrian

St. Nectarios of Aegina on Fasting

Fasting is an ordinance of the Church, obliging the Christian to observe it on specific days. Concerning fasting, our Savior teaches: "When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father Who is in secret: and thy Father, Who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

From what the Savior teaches we learn (a) that fasting is pleasing to God, and (b) that he who fasts for the uplifting of his mind and heart towards God shall be rewarded by God, Who is a most liberal bestower of Divine gifts, for his devotion.

Fasting was observed by the holy Apostles. In the Acts of the Apostles we read: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said..." And immediately after this, we read: "When they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." And in another chapter we read: "And when they had ordained for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord."

In the New Testament fasting is recommended as a means of preparing the mind and the heart for divine worship, for long prayer, for rising from the earthly, and for spiritualization. Fasting is enjoined in the Old Testament also, and was practiced by the Jews.

The purpose of fasting is chiefly spiritual: to provide an opportunity and preparation for the spiritual works of prayer and meditation on the Divine through the complete abstinence from food, or the eating of uncooked food or frugal fare. However, fasting is no less valuable for physical health, since self-control and simplicity of life are necessary conditions of health and longevity, as dieticians tell us.

Sharing the Grapes

The following story is from the life of St Macarius.

The lives of the ancient Desert Fathers are filled with examples of great men and women who fasted, practiced feats of asceticism, and rejected all worldly things. The following story, though, demonstrates how these practices were manifested in even small ways and how they sewed to teach others then and now by their example.

At one time St. Macarius was sent some fresh grapes. He desired to eat them, but showing self-control, he sent them to a certain brother who was ill and who was himself fond of grapes. When the brother received them he was delighted, but wishing to conceal his self-mastery, he sent them to another brother, pretending that he had no appetite for any food. When the next brother received the grapes, he did the same in turn, although he too had a great desire to eat them.

When at length the grapes had been passed round a large number of the brethren without any of them deciding to eat them, the last one to receive them sent them again to Macarius, thinking that he was giving him a rich gift. Macarius recognized them and after inquiring closely into what had happened, marveled, giving thanks to the Lord for such self-control among the brethren. And in the end not even he partook of the grapes.