



ST. VLADIMIR

Fire & Light

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✠ July 15, 2012 ✠

Holy Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

Holy Great Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles (1015)

St. Donald of Ogilvy (716)

Today let us praise
the mystical trumpets
of the Spirit,
the God-bearing Fathers,
who stand in the midst
of the Church,
singing true theology...

⇒ **Note: Father is away at the Diocesan Assembly this week – Monday thru Friday.**

The famous visit of St. Vladimir's envoys to Byzantium: The story is relayed in the Chronicle of Nestor:

"Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices in which they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we cannot dwell here any longer."

On Despondency

Just as a moth devours a garment and a worm devours wool, so also does depression devour a man's soul --- persuading it to avoid good company, and allowing it neither to accept a word of advice from true friends, nor to give them kind and peaceful answers. Rather, it lays hold of the entire soul; and fills it with bitterness and disgust. It then suggests to the soul that it should shun other people, since they are the cause of its agitation; and does not allow it to recognize that its sickness does not come from without, but lurks within it --- manifesting itself only when the temptations that assail [the soul] are brought out into the open through ascetic struggle.

For a man can never be harmed by anyone else, except by way of causes that lie within himself.

Self-Esteem

- St. John Cassian

In the whole range of evil thoughts, none is richer in resources than self-esteem; for it is to be found almost everywhere, and like some cunning traitor in a city it opens the gates to all the demons.

-- Evagrius the Solitary

⇒ **The Fathers of the Church and the pronouncements of the Church are what they are. If you want to follow them and/or continue to struggle to follow them please do so and join me in doing so as I struggle as well, but never be dismissive of them. It's when you are dismissive and stop struggling and start "Re-Defining" is when trouble starts and sin enters in. Finally, the Church is our sanctuary, but it is also a dividing line as Christ did not come to give the world peace, but a sword. He gives US peace NOT the world. Never has and never will.**

- Peter Papoutsis

Everything in this life passes away—only God remains, only He is worth struggling towards. We have a choice: to follow the way of this world, of the society that surrounds us, and thereby find ourselves outside of God; or to choose the way of life, to choose God Who calls us and for Whom our heart is searching.

- Fr. Seraphim Rose (+1982)

This and That

On America

--The signs are ominous. Tension rises in America. Incomes fall, foreclosures rise, jobs go east, police powers increase, trust in government evaporates, and expectations for the future decline. An unfocused edginess germinates. It is not a recipe for domestic tranquility. ~ Fred Reed

Language and Evolution

Do materialists really think that language just "evolved", like finches' beaks, or have they simply never thought about the matter rationally? Where's the evidence? How could it come about that human beings all agreed that particular grunts carried particular connotations? How could it have come about that groups of anthropoid apes developed the amazing morphological complexity of a single sentence, let alone the whole grammatical mystery which has engaged Chomsky and others in our lifetime and linguists for time out of mind? No, the existence of language is one of the many phenomena - of which love and music are the two strongest - which suggest that human beings are very much more than collections of meat. They convince me that we are spiritual beings, and that the religion of the incarnation, asserting that God made humanity in His image, and continually restores humanity in His image, is simply true. As a working blueprint for life, as a template against which to measure experience, it fits.

...Turn to the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge - "Read the first chapter of Genesis without prejudice and you will be convinced at once . . . 'The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'." And then Coleridge adds: "'And man became a living soul.' Materialism will never explain those last words." ~ A.N. Wilson

Egotism's Disguises

--I know quite a number of people who quietly pride themselves on what they find in themselves as a modest and unassuming character; they are deeply tainted with a moral smugness they cannot for the life of them recognize. Even self-hatred can serve as one of egotism's disguises.

Farewell to Mayberry

--Re: Andy Griffith's death at 86. Unfortunately, the type of television exemplified by The Andy Griffith Show died long before its star did. Long gone are the days when the networks aired prime time series that parents could safely allow their children to watch, much less a prime time in which such shows actually dominated the competition. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a network even making a show like The Andy Griffith Show today. After all, The Andy Griffith Show was wholesome and innocent and completely devoid of vulgarity or sexual immorality or even any topical references to current events, much less propaganda for favored Hollywood causes. There hasn't been a show like that on prime time network television in many years. And those responsible for what prime time network television has become deserve much worse than a visit to Sheriff Andy Taylor's jail, better known to fans of the series as "The Rock."

"Sheriff Andy Taylor set a cultural norm for decent behavior. Which is, as it turns out, pretty rare. Greatest show ever." ~ Tom Piatak

--How do politicians, judges, corporate moguls, media talking heads, generals, and college presidents manage to be completely free of any sense of shame? Surely some of them had mothers who taught them that lying, stealing, perversion, and dirty tricks on other people were not good. ~ Clyde Wilson

--*The Episcopal Church* is in the news again for the usual reasons. First, a few days ago it was reported that the Episcopal Church suffered a 23 percent decline in attendance from 2000 to 2010. Second, on Tuesday the Episcopal Church approved rites for blessing same-sex unions. Many commentators made what seems to be an obvious connection supposedly supported by sociology: liberalism in religion leads to the decline and death of denominations. Leroy Huizenga

On the Relevance of the Holy Fathers

"Orthodoxy does not change from one day to the next, or from one century to the next. Looking at the Protestant and Roman Catholic world, we can see that certain spiritual writings get "out of date." Sometimes they come back into fashion again, sometimes they go out. It is obvious that they are bound up with worldly things, which appeal to people at one time, or rather to the spirit of the times. This is not so with our Orthodox holy writings. Once we get the whole Orthodox Christian outlook - the simply Christian outlook - which has been handed down from Christ and the Apostles to our times, then everything becomes contemporary. You read the words of someone like St. Macarius, who lived in the deserts of Egypt in the 4th century, and he's speaking to you now. His conditions are a little different, but he's speaking right to you . . . He's going to the same place, he's using the same mind, he has the same temptations and failings, and there's nothing different about him. It's the same with all the other Fathers from that time down to our century . . . They all speak the same language, one kind of language, the language of spiritual life, which we must get into

"The genuine, unchanging teaching of Christianity is handed down in unbroken succession both orally and by the written word, from spiritual father to spiritual son, from teacher to disciple. There was never a time when the Church was without Holy Fathers, or when it was necessary to discover a "lost" patristic teaching. Even when many Orthodox Christians may have neglected this teaching (as is the case, for example, in our own day), its true representatives were still handing it down to those who hungered to receive it. How important it is for us, the last Christians, to take guidance and inspiration from the Holy Fathers of our own and recent times, those who lived in conditions similar to our own and yet kept undamaged and unchanged the same ever-fresh teaching."

Fr. Seraphim Rose (1982), quoted in the *Seeking the Kingdom Blog*, Fr. Benedict Crawford

“We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth...”

The famous visit of St. Vladimir's envoys to Byzantium- the story is relayed in the Chronicle of Nestor:

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HOMILIES OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

THE PRAYER OF A HOLY MAN

I knew a certain holy man who prayed thus. He used to say nothing before these words, but simply thus: "We give Thee thanks for all Thy benefits shown forth upon us the unworthy, from the first day until the present; for what we know and what we know not; for the seen, for the unseen; for those in deed, those in word; those with our wills, those against our wills; for all that have been bestowed upon the unworthy, even us; for tribulations, for refreshments, for hell, for punishments, for the Kingdom of Heaven. We beseech Thee to keep our soul holy, having a pure conscience: an end worthy of Thy loving-kindness. Thou that didst love us so as to give Thine Only-Begotten for us, grant us to become worthy of Thy love. Give us wisdom in Thy word and in Thy fear, O Only-Begotten Christ! Inspire the strength that is from Thee, Thou that gayest Thine Only-Begotten for us, and hast sent Thy Holy Spirit for the remission of our sins. If in aught we have willfully or unwillingly transgressed, pardon, and impute it not. Remember all that call upon Thy Name in truth; remember all that wish us well or the contrary, for we are all men."

Then, having added the Prayer of the Faithful, he there ended; having made that Prayer as a kind of summing up, and a binding together for all. For God bestows many benefits upon us, even against our will; many also, and these greater, without our knowledge even. For when we pray for one thing and He does the reverse, it is plain that He does us good, even when we know it not. —
{On Colossians, Homily 10}

THE MYSTERIES OF THE CHRISTIANS

A Mystery is so called because the things which we see we do not believe; but the things we see are of one kind, and those we believe of another kind. For such is the nature of our Mysteries. I, at least, feel differently upon these matters from an unbeliever. I hear that Christ was crucified, and straightway I admire His loving-kindness to men; the other hears, and thinks it weakness. I hear that He became a servant, and I marvel at His care for us; the other hears and counts it dishonor. I hear that He died, and am amazed at His power, that, being in death, He was not held by it, but rather loosed the bands of death; the other hears, and suspects Him of helplessness. He, hearing of resurrection, says the thing is a legend; I, judging from the facts which demonstrate it, adore the high counsel of God. He, hearing of a layer, thinks it merely water; but I look not simply at the thing which is seen, but at the cleansing of the soul which is wrought by the Spirit. He considers that my body only has been washed; but I am persuaded that the soul also has become pure and holy. I consider Baptism to be the Sepulchre, the Resurrection, the Sanctification, the Righteousness, the Redemption, the Adoption, the Inheritance, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Ministration of the Spirit.

For not by my sight do I judge the things presented to me, but by the eyes of my understanding. I hear of the "Body of Christ;" I attach one meaning to the expression; the unbeliever takes it in another.
{On I Corinthians, Homily 7}

THE TWO FOUNTAINS

The soldiers broke the legs of the others, but not those of Christ. Yet, to gratify the Jews, they pierced His side with a spear, and insulted the dead Body . . . What they did with a wicked purpose fought on the side of the truth, since there was a prophecy, "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced." And not this only, but their enmity was a demonstration of the faith to those who should afterwards disbelieve, such as Thomas, and those like him.

With this, too, an ineffable mystery was accomplished; for "there came forth water and blood." Not without a purpose, or by chance, did those founts come forth, but because by means of these two together the Church is constituted. And the initiated know it, being by water indeed regenerated and nourished by the blood and the flesh. Hence the Mysteries take their beginning, so that when you approach that dread cup, you may so approach as drinking from the very Side.
{On St John, Homily 85.

JULY 13 ~ New Martyr Alexander Schmorell

The Holy Martyr **Alexander Schmorell** was a medical student in Munich during World War II and one of the founding members of the anti-Nazi group, the White Rose. Along with the other members of the White Rose, he tried to rally popular support amongst Germans to try to resist Hitler and the Nazi regime. He was arrested in February 1943, and was executed on July 13, 1943, at Stadelheim Prison in Munich.

Early years

Alexander Schmorell was born in Orenburg, Russia, on September 16, 1917 (September 3 on the Julian Calendar), and was baptised in the Russian Orthodox Church. His father, Hugo Schmorell, a doctor, was German, although he had been born in Russia, and had lived there most of his life, except for a time when he studied medicine in Germany. His mother, Nataliya Vvedenskaya, was Russian, and was the daughter of a Russian Orthodox priest. When Alexander was two years old, his mother died of typhus. His father remarried in 1920. The woman whom he married, Elisabeth Hoffman, was also German, but, like Hugo Schmorell, she had grown up in Russia.

Hugo Schmorell and his family left Russia in 1921 in order to flee the Bolsheviks. With them came Feodosiya Lapschina, Alexander's nanny, under the pretense that she was the widow of Hugo Schmorell's brother. (For this reason, she was buried with the name Franziska Schmorell.) The family settled in Munich, and soon afterward two children, Erich and Natascha, were borne of this union.

Although the family was now in Germany, the language of the house remained Russian. In fact, even with the many years she stayed in Germany, Feodosiya Lapschina never learned very much German. Elisabeth Schmorell was Roman Catholic, as were Alexander's siblings, but in large part due to Feodosiya Lapschina's influence, Alexander remained Orthodox, and his stepmother made it possible for him to attend Orthodox religion classes in Munich.

In the Nazi mindset, the Slavs belonged to the great horde of *untermenschen*, that is, people who supposedly were barely human. This was a mindset that Alexander could never accept. At one point, he had been part of the Scharnhorst Youth, but once they became part of the Hitler Youth (*Hitler Jugend*), he eventually stopped attending.

When he was to be sworn in to military service, he nearly had a breakdown, and told his commanding officer that he could not do it; he could not swear absolute loyalty to Adolf Hitler. He asked to be released from military duty. He was not released, yet amazingly, there were also no repercussions for his refusal to take the oath.

The White Rose

By 1942, Nazi control of Germany was nearly total. World War II was raging around Germany on all sides. German forces had taken over most of Europe, and German troops were far into Russia and as far as the north of Africa. By this time Hitler's plans for the "cleansing" of Europe were well underway, and Nazi death camps were up and running. It was no secret that any perceived enemy of Hitler's was also liable to be arrested and sent to one of these prisons. Not only that, but the practice of *Sippenhaft* was also widespread, that is, the family and friends of anyone suspected of opposing Hitler would also be arrested.

The events surrounding White Rose were one of the few contexts in German history during the Third Reich where people took the chance to speak out against what Hitler was doing. In the summer of 1942, Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell obtained a duplicating machine and composed four leaflets under the name

The White Rose which called on Germany's people to rise up and resist Hitler. The distribution of these four leaflets was fairly limited and was centered around Munich. This was not the first time that leaflets had been distributed in Germany—for example, some of the homilies of Bishop Clements von Galen which had denounced Hitler's euthanasia program had been written down, typed out, and sent around Germany anonymously. However, the leaflets of the White Rose went further, calling for Germans to realise what was happening, and to resist by any means possible. Contained in the second leaflet, in a passage written by Alexander Schmorell, is the only known public outcry by any German resistance group against the Holocaust.

During the summer of 1942, Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, and Willi Graf were sent to Russia as medics. For Alexander, it was a homecoming of sorts—this was the first time in his life that he could remember experiencing Russia for himself. He told others that there was no way that he could shoot at a Russian, though he said he couldn't kill Germans either. In Russia, he provided a link for his friends to the Russian people. He sought contact with regular people, doctors, and Orthodox priests; he, Hans, and Willi attended Orthodox liturgies together (wearing Nazi uniforms, no less!).

When they returned to Munich in October of 1942, the activities of the White Rose were redoubled. This time, more people were directly involved, including Sophie Scholl (Hans' sister), Professor Kurt Huber, and Traute Lafrenz. Through Alexander's friend, Lilo Ramdohr, contact was established with Falk Harnack, younger brother of Arvid Harnack, who had been arrested in connection with the Red Orchestra (and was also associated with the Bonhoeffers).

In January of 1943, the publication of the fifth leaflet was ready. This time, the members of the White Rose risked their lives to distribute the thousands of leaflets all over greater Germany. Alexander's journey brought him to Linz, Vienna, and Salzburg.

The End of the White Rose

After the fall of Stalingrad, a sixth leaflet was produced. On February 18, 1943, Hans and Sophie Scholl were caught distributing this leaflet at the University in Munich. They were arrested, and a search commenced for Alexander Schmorell. With the help of Lilo Ramdohr and Nikolai Hamazaspian, he tried escaping to Switzerland with a forged passport, but the way was too difficult, and he turned back to Munich. On February 24, 1943, he was arrested when a friend of his recognised him in an air-raid shelter. He was sentenced to death on April 19, 1943, and was executed by guillotine on July 13, 1943.

Religion in the White Rose

Although the White Rose was not a religious group *per se*, it is undeniable that the faith in God that these young people had was one of the primary reasons that they acted with the bravery they did. Alexander Schmorell was the only one of the group who was Orthodox, but the faith they all showed to do what they did is exemplary. Although Alexander's connection to Orthodoxy has, in various books, been played off as merely a way for him to stay more connected with his Russian heritage, or a fascination with ritual rather than with real faith, he attended Orthodox services regularly, and as his friend Lilo Ramdohr said he was somebody who always had a Bible with him and demonstrated a lifelong love of Orthodoxy. In his letters to his family from prison, he writes about the deepening of his faith, that although he is condemned to die, he is at peace, knowing he served the truth. In his last letter, written just before his execution, he wrote his family, "Never forget God!!!"

Epilogue

Alexander Schmorell was buried behind Stadelheim Prison, in the cemetery at Perlacher Forst. After World War II, the American forces came in and built a base behind Perlacher Forst. When they left in the mid-1990s, they had to sell off the buildings and property. One of the buildings left behind was a church.

By providence, at this time, the ROCOR in Munich was searching for a church building. They were able to purchase the American church, and in this way, Alexander Schmorell's home parish is now across the street from where his earthly remains are buried. He is pictured on the iconostasis there, and is expected to be glorified as a saint along with the New Martyrs of Russia.

Glorification

Completing the act of canonization, St. Alexander was glorified as a New Martyr by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. in Munich, Germany on February 5, 2012.

From OrthodoxWiki

Alexander Schmorell's Letters from Prison (A few weeks before his martyrdom)

Munich, 1 May 1943

My dear parents

I can't really write much of anything new; one day here is like all the others, and the time passes very quickly. Dear Father, dear Mother, if I must die now, you must know that I have no fear of death - no, therefore, you shouldn't worry about it-, I already know that a better life is waiting for us and will bring us back together again. What is difficult for me is that I will have to be separated from you all, all of you, whom I have loved so much, and who have loved me so much. The first thing I feel now is how I have loved you all and how, at our separation, I shall have to lose you all. Please try to overcome the pain of this loss, and don't forget that it is fate that a longer life has not been planned for me, and that it must come to this. Be it God's will, perhaps nothing will happen.

Greet everyone; my most heartfelt to everyone! Many, many hugs and kisses,

Your Schurik

Munich, 30 May 1943

My dear parents,

I can't report anything new here, everything's just the same as always. There is one thing, however, that I want to tell you, so that your pain may be a little bit easier to bear. Should a pardon be rejected, please believe that 'death' does not mean the end of every life, but in fact, the opposite - birth, a transition to a new life, one which is wonderful and will last forever. Death is really nothing terrible. The separation is quite hard. But it will be less so if you think of it this way, that we won't be separated forever, but just for a time - like for a trip - in order for us to meet again forever and in all eternity in a life that is infinitely more beautiful than the present one, and that there will be no end to us being together. Believe this, and then the burden will undoubtedly become easier for you. Hugs & kisses,

Your Schurik

Munich, 18 June 1943

My dear parents!

I can't report anything new to you. Myself, I am healthy and in a good frame of mind. I've recently read something in a very good and meaningful book, that seems to be very fitting for you all: "The greater the tragedy of life, the stronger one's faith must be; the more it seems that we are forsaken, the more confidently we must commend our souls into the hands of God the Father". And the Abbot Theodore von Byzanz writes: "Therefore, I have thanked God for my misfortunes, and bowed myself completely to the unfathomable judgments of His Providence, that in His beneficial manner, He has already known, from the time in which the foundations of the world were laid, the time and place of death of every person." This is pretty much the same as what I have already written you. It would make me very happy, if you would think the same way, it would take away a lot of sadness and pain for you. But I'm not dead yet - and so pray and don't give up hope.

My most heartfelt greetings,

Your Schurik

(To his sister)

Munich, 2 July 1943

My dear, dear Natascha!

I'm sure that you have read the letters that I've sent our parents, so that you're pretty well informed. It will perhaps surprise you, then, when I write that from day to day I become calmer inside, even cheerful and happy, that my state of mind is, for the most part, better than it was earlier in freedom! Where does this come from? I want to explain that to you right now: This whole terrible misfortune was necessary in order to bring me to the true way - and because of that, it really wasn't a misfortune. Above all, I am happy and thankful to God that I had the chance given to me to understand where God was pointing to and through this to be able to go along the right path. What did I know then about faith, from true, deep faith, and of the truth, and above all, about God? Very little! Now, however, I have come far enough, that in my present situation, I am cheerful, calm, and confident, come what may. I hope that you [all] have gone through similar [spiritual] development, and that you [all] and me together - after the deep pain of separation - remain at the place where you thank God for everything. - This whole misfortune was necessary to open my eyes - not just my eyes though, but all of ours, all of us who have been hit with this, and so, our whole family. Hopefully you [all] have correctly understood the way to which God is pointing. Greet everybody from my heart, but you are especially greeted from your Schurik

Munich, the 13th of July 1943

My dear father and mother

Now it shall be none other than this, and by the will of God, today I shall have my earthly life come to a close in order to go into another, which will never end and in which all of us will again meet. Let this future meeting be your comfort and your hope. Unfortunately, this blow will be harder for you than for me, because I go in the certainty, that in my deep conviction, I have served the truth. All of this leaves me with a calm conscience, despite how near the hour of death is. Think of the millions of young men who have lost their lives outside in the fields. Their lot is mine as well. Greet all my dear friends from my heart. Especially, though, Natascha, Erich, Nyanya, Aunt Toni, Maria, Alyonushka, and Andrei. In just a few hours I will be in a better life, by my mother, and I will not forget you; I will ask God to grant you solace and peace. And I will wait for you! One thing, above all, let me leave this on your hearts: Never forget God!!!

Your Schurik

With me goes Professor Huber, who also sends you his most heart-felt greetings!