

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

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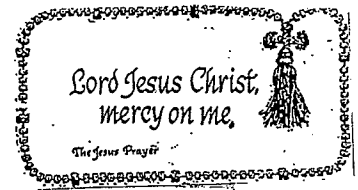
✠ **October 28, 2012** ✠

St. Job, Abbot & Wonderworker of Pochaev (1651)

Martyrs Terence, Neonila of Syria & their children (249)

St. Demetri of Rostov (1709) St. Theophilus, Fool-for-Christ of Kiev (1853)

St. Arsenios of Cappadocia (1924)



🕯 St. Symeon Church 35th Anniversary Celebration!

⇒ **Anniversary Banquet (B&A Warehouse) ~ Guest Speaker, Fr. Jacob Myers**

✠ **Wed. Oct. 31 6:30pm Akathist Service (Confessions) No Vespers next Saturday.**

✠ **Sat. Nov. 10 3:00pm ~ Baptisms: Sarah, Theodore, Hope & Samuel Reese, and Jeremiah Burton**

Anniversaries, A Time to Remember

When we celebrate a milestone in the life of our parish, it is right and noble to remember our Founders and Benefactors and Ancestors and the hard work and patient labors of love they offered in building up a church in Birmingham, or wherever we're from. We remember that they did so in order to have a place to which they could hasten to receive healing for soul and body....Through the hymns they heard; the icons they venerated; the sanctifying incense and the holy Mysteries they received; the rules for prayer and fasting they practiced; the commandments they learned to keep; the lives of the Saints they heard and celebrated; the vocations they had blessed; through these they received the healing they sought and so learned to love God and neighbor.

May all anniversaries serve to increase our appreciation for St. Symeon's- our gratitude towards its founders and our love towards our fellow parishioners!

The Church of the First Century ~ Fr. Stephen Freeman

The Church of the first century, founded and nurtured tirelessly by the Apostles, was grounded in this oral tradition. It included stories of the Gospels, early hymns (such as Philippians 2:5-11), creedal material (1 Corinthians 15:1-5), and such things. Most especially, its inner life and character as the worshipping community of Jesus were formed in a manner that consistently reflected the Gospel itself. The incarnate God, crucified in weakness, dead, descended into Hades, raised from the dead in power, triumphant over death and hell, exalted to the right hand of the Father, coming again to bring the fullness of His Kingdom, formed the shape of the early Christian life. Salvation was through union with Christ.

That union was initiated in Baptism and sealed by the gift of the Spirit. It was nourished in the Eucharist of His Body and Blood. It was reaffirmed by a life marked by humility, hospitality, care for the poor, and obedience to the way of the Cross (even obedience unto death). It was guided by that inner life, expressed in the teachings of the Apostles, maintained by the Bishops whom they appointed within the Church. The sheep knew the voice of their Shepherd.

✠ True love is like the flame of a candle. However many candles you light from the flame, the initial flame remains unaffected. It doesn't lessen at all. And every freshly lit candle has as much flame as the others do.
~ Blessed Elder Epiphanius of Athens (+October 28, 1899)

Pre-Halloween

Giving the Devil his due...

St. Anastasios of Sinai

"Q: How is it that the soul of a man frequently inwardly utters certain shameful, unclean and foul words, and entertains similar thoughts --- involuntarily and unintentionally?"

A: "Thoughts of these kind occur to many people as a result of their pride. God permits Satan to tempt them, in order that - being humbled - they might come to repentance and rid themselves of their arrogant attitude. Still others, who are devout and God-loving, are vexed by blasphemous thoughts because the demons envy them; for this reason, even certain holy and virtuous ascetics living in the desert fall into such thoughts."

"The Devil, being a spirit, imperceptibly whispers such ungodly words into the ears of our incorporeal soul against its will; and he, the loathsome one, does this especially when we are standing in prayer, or kneeling before God and imploring Him for help in fighting against blasphemous thoughts. Often he attacks us at common worship and when we are about to partake of the dread Mysteries --- wishing to alienate us from God, and to impede us from bowing our heads before Him and communing of the life-giving Mysteries."

"Now that we have understood the craftiness of the Evil One, let us pay no attention whatsoever to such a temptation. Rather, when the Devil begins to say such things to us, let us tell him: 'May your toil return upon your own head, you wicked and unclean demon, and may your blasphemy come down upon your own head [cf. Psalm 7:16]; for I worship the Lord my God, and Him alone shall I serve all the days of my life [cf. Matthew 4:10]. But as for you, in return for this blasphemy, you will have a more severe punishment as an apostate from God, who utters ungodly words against Him.' In this way, and in no other way, can one overcome the demon of blasphemy."

"How, then, could we simultaneously wish to insult and blaspheme our only God, Whom we love and revere so much? Such a thing is completely impossible and inadmissible. This temptation is not caused by us, but by demonic activity. For, if it came from us, we would surely utter with our mouth these words that we form in our minds. In point of fact, however, we choose rather to be consumed by fire than to utter such blasphemies."

"If we want to resist evil thoughts and expel them from ourselves, we can do so with God's help --- having recourse to unceasing prayer and the other remedies against evil. However, this pernicious thought of blasphemy - even if we vehemently desire to cast it out, to call upon God to help us fight against it, and to undertake, in so doing, every kind of asceticism and hardship - we cannot drive away; precisely because it is completely foreign to our nature and involuntary --- deriving solely from satanic influence. Therefore, if we have blasphemous thoughts, we are exempt from blame and condemnation in the sight of God; for God requires us to give an account only for our voluntary passions and thoughts, which we are capable of intercepting but fail to intercept, and not for those that assail us against our will."

St. Anastasios the Sinaite

Divine Grace

✠ "He who is ever vigilant and calls upon Divine Grace is vouchsafed the aid that comes from it. After swiftly laying low the Enemy, Grace puts him under a man's feet, glorifies the man, and is itself glorified through this victory. Without the help of Grace, the heart is incapable of engaging in spiritual warfare, of acquiring compunction, of giving thanks to the Master as it should, or doing any other good. Rather, it is poor and destitute of goods; and foul and abominable thoughts dwell in it, like an owl in a ruined house [Psalm 101 (102):7]."

St. Mark the Ascetic (5th C)

One Heart and Soul

From Life Transfigured, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA

Throughout our lifetime we find ourselves as part of a community, be it a family, a parish, or a monastic community. When we think of being a member of a community, we are often mostly aware of the struggles that go with it. Yet it is through community life that purification, deification and salvation can come.

Community life is ordained by God. We know that God, the Holy Trinity, is a Divine Community. The Three Persons of the Holy Trinity act in a communion of love. Each Person of the Holy Trinity is distinct, yet the three are united and act in free cooperation with one another.

Since the time of the early Christian Church, community life has been the model. The first Christians held everything in common. Scripture tells us that, 'The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common' (Acts 4:32). In commenting on this, Archimandrite Vasileios in his book *Hymn of Entry* says, "They left their possessions and their lives 'at the feet of the Apostles.' They would open their hearts and confess their hidden pains and their personal struggles in front of all the brethren" (SVS, 1984, p. 29).

To this day, life in a community is very important. It becomes the arena of our salvation, the place where we can practice the Gospel teachings. Attending beautiful church services and listening attentively to the Scriptures can be a most pleasant experience. But what is difficult, what is the test, is to practice those very teachings as soon as the Liturgy is completed, be it during the parish coffee hour with people who irritate us, during the drive home when the children demand our attention in more earthly cares, or on Monday morning in the workplace. These are the moments when we are called upon to act in a Christian manner: to love as Christ taught us to love. "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Mr. 5:46) Those who learn to apply Christ's teachings in every little moment in life, towards everyone they meet, will become like Christ. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

But we are living in a time when the value of community life is not understood and when it is often avoided as much as possible. These are days of isolation. We often do not know the people who live next door. The people we do "know," we know only on a very superficial or polite level. It is ironic that even in a parish we can be complete strangers to those with whom we share the Body and Blood of Christ week after week. As Bp. Hierotheos Vlachos has commented:

"Today, unfortunately, the urban attitude has made us get used to an inhumane way of life, where we live together and do not know one another. This has also been extended into the ecclesiastical area. We partake of the divine worship, while being strangers to one another. We are strangers prior to the divine Eucharist and we remain strangers after it. We are hermetically closed in ourselves, jailed in the dreadful prison of the senses and passions, especially the passion of self love, which is the root of all other passions (The Illness and Cure of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition, 1993, p. 20)."

We live in a time when the stress is on the individual rather than on the person. We become a person through entering into relations with other persons. "Love," says Bp. Kallistos Ware, "cannot exist in isolation, but presupposes the other. Self love is the negation of love. . . Hell is not other people; hell is myself, cut off from others in self-centeredness" (The Orthodox Way, SVS, 1979, p. 334). Another contemporary Orthodox theologian, Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, stated it this way:

"The person lives in communion with other persons in such way that their lives intermingle: one doesn't know where one's life starts, and where the other one's is ending. . . like in a continuum. I cannot be without the other one, the other one cannot be without me. There can be no joy in an isolated life separated from the others. . . The real happiness is that somebody is thinking of me and manifests himself as such. . . The more I give, the wealthier I become....Kindness does not exist in isolation. Evil starts and ends up in isolation. Evil is isolation
(Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, The 'Person' is a Different Entity from the 'Individual' The Dawn, Vol. 16 #10, October 1993, p. 4-5).

It is our love, our sacrifice for one another, that leads to eternal life. There is a proverb among Orthodox people that says what we give away here on this earth will be waiting for us in Heaven. How true especially with our gifts of love, kindness and service. Fr. Vasileios explains: "In love also they see the way of sacrifice that leads directly and surely to eternal life. No effort which is offered out of love for God remains in vain. Everything which is offered and given up for love of the brethren is saved, kept intact, multiplied in eternal life" (Hymn of Entry, p. 125).

So we see that life in community is the very earth for growing beautiful, loving souls.

Our neighbor is an "integral part of our spiritual existence" (ibid.). Let us love one another, seeing Christ in our neighbor, losing ourselves for God and neighbor only to truly find ourselves, so that, as the Apostle John said, "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren" (1 Jn. 3:14).

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***Hosanna!* "What does come first? Education, employment, position, family? *Worship!*"**

A ray of light has trouble reaching into the center of a cyclone or the eye of a hurricane; and approaching troubles calmly, in gentleness of heart, can bring a quietude in which these situations may be seen with greater objectivity. This then can help us learn to accept what cannot be changed and change what can be changed. In this manner, we imitate Christ Who said, "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt. 11:29). The saintly elder has learned to accept both good news and bad news with tranquility. This may sound unattainable but it only means bowing to the will of God. "In peace let us pray to the Lord," sings the Liturgy.

This submission is learned over the course of our lifetime, little by little, as we endure sufferings. Rung by rung the ladder is climbed—skipping rungs could perhaps cause a great fall. Each rung must be climbed, passed, overcome. A ladder without rungs, or with one missing, is not for climbing but for kindling wood! Day by day we live—each minute must be lived, and one will be our last. We prepare for what is ahead by the way we meet challenges and choose priorities now.

What does come first? Education, employment, position, family? *Worship!* If God comes first, all else follows. Abraham, Moses and Joshua built altars after their successful exploits, never forgetting their powers came from God. The pilgrims at Plymouth journeyed to New England to be free to worship God, and they offered a Thanksgiving Day table. Job lost all, but continuing to love the Creator, everything was added unto him. In the contentment of his early life he recognized God's power. Later, in his loss he still recognized God's power. In loss and in gain, God is. And that is all that truly matters. Not the loss. Not the gain. God. To see Him in time of trouble is the great gift of the Comforter.

Pray always, even in hopelessness, for prayers are buoyant life-jackets in deep waters which cannot drown our triumphant belief. God hears our *Hosannas!* ("Save now!") and the Ark opens its little window. Prayers are always answered—negatively or positively. If the latter, we call it the answer, or even a miracle. But the miracle is the prayer itself, our communication with God Who is and can say I AM. If the focus during prayer is on our desire for a particular answer, we miss the point. When our focus is on God and the fact that He "has done all things well" (Mk. 7:37), and we say "Thy will be done," we begin to live joyously, in purity of heart, worshipping God Who put us on earth to know Him. And to know Him is to love Him.

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THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

By Fr. Michael Pomazansky (+1988).

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Likewise, His Body, the Church, proclaims the same faith, adheres to the same dogmas and performs the same Mysteries as those instituted by the Apostles and preserved by God's grace through the members of the Church to the present day.

With so much talk today among the heterodox concerning the "unity of the Church" and the "coming together of the Body," it is important that Orthodox understand the teaching of the Church on this matter. Below is an excerpt from the forthcoming book, Dogmatic Theology, by Fr. Michael Pomazansky which gives a concise explanation of the Orthodox definition of the "oneness" of the Church and contrasts this with popular misconceptions of those outside the Church.

† † †

The unity of the Church follows of necessity from the unity of God; for the Church is not a multitude of persons in their separate individuality, but a unity of the grace of God, living in a multitude of rational creatures, submitting themselves willingly to grace...

Alexei Stepanovich Khomiakov

[Russian intellectual and religious writer of the 19th century]

† † †

The ninth Article of the Symbol of Faith indicates the four basic signs of the Church: *We believe ... in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.* These attributes are called essential, that is, those without which the Church would not be the Church.

In the Greek text the word "in One" is expressed as a numeral (εἰς μίαν, eis mian). Thus the Symbol of Faith confesses that the Church is one: (a) it is one as viewed from within itself, not divided; (b) it is one as viewed from without, that is, not having any other beside itself. Its unity consists not in the joining together of what is different in nature, but in inward agreement and unanimity. *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* (Eph 4:4-6).

Depicting the Church in parables, the Saviour speaks of one flock, of one sheepfold, of one grapevine, of one foundation stone of the Church. He gave a single teaching, a single baptism, and a single communion. The unity of the faithful in Christ comprised the subject of His High-Priestly Prayer before His sufferings on the Cross: the Lord prayed *that they all may be one.* (Jn 17:21).

The Church is one not only inwardly, but also outwardly. Outwardly its unity is manifested in the harmonious confession of faith, in the oneness of Divine services and Mysteries, in the oneness of the grace-giving hierarchy, which comes

in succession from the Apostles, in the oneness of canonical order.

The Church on earth has a visible side and an invisible side. The invisible side is: that its Head is Christ; that it is animated by the Holy Spirit; that in it is performed the inward mystical life in sanctity of the more perfect of its members. However, the Church, by the nature of its members, is visible, since it is composed of men in the body; it has a visible hierarchy; it performs prayers and sacred actions visibly; it confesses openly by means of words, the faith of Christ.

More than any other aspect of the Church, the close bond between the Church of Christ on earth and the Church of Christ in heaven distinguishes the Orthodox Church from all other Christian confessions. For how can one speak of a single body if its members are not in harmony one with another? And this harmonious existence is not only with those present bodily in the Church today, but also with those who have gone before and who now belong to the Church triumphant.

The Apostle instructs those who have come to believe in Christ and have been joined to the Church as follows: *Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.* (Heb 12:22-24). We are not separated from our dead brothers in the faith by the impassable abyss of death: *they are close to us in God, for all live unto Him.* (Lk 20:38). The Church hymns this relationship in the kontakion of the feast of the Ascension of the Lord: *"Having accomplished for us Thy mission and united things on earth with things in heaven, Thou didst ascend into glory, O Christ our God, being nowhere Separated from those who love Thee, but remaining ever present with us and calling: I am with you and no one is against you."*

The holy Apostles, departing from this world, put off the earthly body, but have not put off the Church body. They not only were, but they also remain the foundation of the Church. The Church is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.* (Eph 2:20). And, being in Paradise, they continue to be in communion with believers on earth.

In this bond of the Church with the saints, and likewise in the Headship of the Church by the Lord Himself, may be seen one of the mystical sides of the Church. *By Thy Cross, O Christ, there is a single flock of angels and men; and in the one assembly heaven and earth rejoice, crying out, O Lord, glory be to Thee.* (Wednesday Matins, Tone 1).

The Orthodox teaching of the Church, which in itself is quite clear and rests upon Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, is to be contrasted with another concept which is widespread in the contemporary Protestant world and has penetrated even

into Orthodox circles. According to this different concept, all the various existing Christian organizations, the so-called "confessions" and "sects," even though they are separated from each other, still comprise a single "invisible Church," inasmuch as each of them confesses Christ as the Son of God and accepts His Gospel. The dissemination of such a view is aided by the fact that side by side with the Orthodox Church there exists outside of her a number of Christians that exceed by several times the number of members of the Orthodox Church. Often we can observe in this Christian world outside the Church a religious fervor and faith, a worthy moral life, a conviction—all the way to fanaticism—of one's correctness, an organization and a broad charitable activity. What is the relation of all of them to the Church of Christ?

Of course, there is no reason to view these confessions and sects as on the same level with non-Christian religions. One cannot deny that the reading of the word of God has a beneficial influence upon everyone who seeks in it instruction and strengthening of faith, and that devout reflections on God the Creator, the Provider and Saviour, have an elevating power there also. We cannot say that their prayers are totally fruitless if they come from a pure heart, for *in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* (Acts 10:35).

The Omnipresent Good Provider God is over them, and they are not deprived of God's mercies. They help to restrain moral looseness, vices, and crimes; and they oppose the spread of atheism. However, all this does not give us grounds to consider them as belonging to the Church. Already the fact that one part of this broad Christian world outside the Church, namely the whole of Protestantism, denies the bond with the heavenly Church, that is, the veneration in prayer of the Mother of God and the saints, and likewise prayer for the dead, indicates that they themselves have destroyed the bond with the one Body of Christ which unites in itself the heavenly and the earthly. Further, it is a fact that these non-Orthodox confessions have "broken" in one form or another, directly or indirectly, with the Orthodox Church, with the Church in its historical form; they themselves have cut the bond, they have "departed" from her. Neither we nor they have the right to close our eyes to this fact.

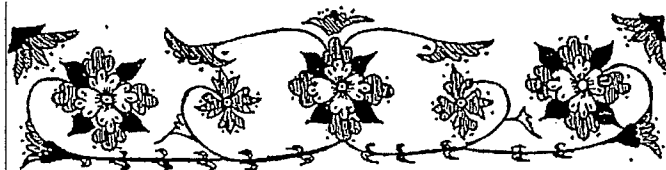
The teachings of the non-Orthodox confessions contain heresies which were decisively rejected and condemned by the Church at her Ecumenical Councils. In these numerous branches of Christianity there is no unity, either outward or inward—either with the Orthodox Church of Christ and/or between themselves. The supra-confessional unification (the "ecumenical movement") which is now to be observed does not enter into the depths of the life of these confessions, but has an outward character. The term "invisible" can refer only to the Heavenly Church. The Church on earth, even though it has its invisible side, like a ship a part of which is

hidden in the water and is invisible to the eyes, still remains visible, because it consists of people and has visible forms of organization and sacred activity.

All of such "uniting" and "equalizing" views indicate a forgetfulness of the principle that there can be many teachings and opinions, but there is only one truth. And authentic Christian unity—unity in the Church—can be based only upon oneness of mind, and not upon differences of mind. *The Church is the pillar and ground of the Truth.* (1 Tim. 3:15).

Note also that in speaking of the Church, we must be careful not to pass judgment either on those within her fold, nor on those still outside, for God alone knows the secrets of the hearts of men. In his book, "The Church Is One," Alexei Khomiakov writes:

"Inasmuch as the earthly and visible Church is not the fullness and completeness of the whole Church which the Lord has appointed to appear at the final judgment of all creation, she acts and knows only within her own limits; and, according to the words of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:12) does not judge the rest of mankind; and He only looks upon these as excluded, that is to say, not belonging to her, who exclude themselves. The rest of mankind, whether alien from the Church, or united to her by ties which God has not willed to reveal to her, she leaves to the judgment of the Great Day. The Church on earth judges for herself only, according to the grace of the Spirit, and the freedom granted her through Christ, inviting also the rest of mankind to the unity and adoption of God in Christ; but upon those who do not hear her appeal she pronounces no sentence, knowing the command of her Saviour and Head, *not to judge another man's servant.* (Rom 14:4)."



By means of the priesthood God accomplishes great and redeeming works among mankind: He purifies and sanctifies people, animals, and elements; He delivers people from the villainous works of the devil; He renews and strengthens; He converts bread and wine into the purest Body and Blood of the God-Man Himself; He marries people and makes marriage honorable and the nuptial bed pure; He absolves sins, heals illness, converts earth into heaven, unites heaven with earth, the human being with Himself; He joins angels and men in one gathering. What do they not lack, the people who have no priesthood? They are deprived of salvation. It is not in vain that the Lord, the Accomplisher of our salvation, is called the Chief Priest.

St John of Kronstadt (+1908)

Two words from St. Symeon the New Theologian:

Give Good Counsel to Your Soul

✠ You may find yourself hampered by someone who sows tares of despondency. He tries to prevent you from climbing to such heights of holiness by discouraging you with various thoughts. For instance, he will tell you that it is impossible for you to be saved and to keep every single one of God's commandments while you live in this world.

When this happens you should sit down in a solitary place by yourself, collect yourself, concentrate your thoughts and give good counsel to your soul, saying: "Why, my soul, are you dejected, and why do you trouble me? Put your hope in God, for I will give thanks to Him; for my salvation lies not in my actions but in God (cf. Ps. 42:5). Who will be vindicated by actions done according to the law (cf. Gal 2:16)? No living person will be vindicated before God (cf. Ps. 143:2). Yet by virtue of my faith in God I hope that in His ineffable mercy He will give me salvation. Get behind me, Satan (cf. Matt. 16:23). I worship the Lord my God (cf. Matt. 4:10) and serve Him from my youth; for He is able to save me simply through His mercy. Go away from me. The God who created me in His image and likeness will reduce you to impotence."

Fear will fall away...

✠ A man who, instead of avoiding and running away from sufferings of the heart produced by the fear of eternal torment, willingly accepts them in his heart, will be determined, as he progresses, to tighten this bond (of fear) ever more and more, and will thus advance more quickly. It will lead him to the presence of the King of kings. When this comes to pass, then, as soon as he sees - however dimly - the glory of God, his bonds - fear - will at once fall off, his executioner will hasten away, and his heart's grief will turn into joy which will become in him a fountain of life or a spring for ever gushing forth: physically - rivers of tears; spiritually - peace, meekness and unspeakable delight, together with courage and free and unhindered readiness to strive towards every fulfillment of God's commandments. The latter is not yet possible for beginners . . .

✠ One can say the Jesus Prayer while in the company of others, with the mind, quietly pronouncing the words without moving your lips, but mainly one needs humility with the feeling of the Publican.

~ St. Macarius of Optina

✠ Our wickedness shall not overpower the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God; our dullness shall not overpower God's wisdom, nor our infirmity God's omnipotence. ~ St. John of Kronstadt

✠ "Do not be irritated either with those who sin or those who offend; do not have a passion for noticing every sin in your neighbor, and for judging him, as we are in the habit of doing. Everyone shall give an answer to God for himself. Everyone has a conscience; everyone hears God's Word, and knows God's Will either from books or from conversation with other people. Especially do not look with evil intention upon the sins of your elders, which do not regard you; "to his own master he standeth or falleth." Correct your own sins, amend your own life."

~ St. John of Kronstadt

✠ In the world, if we commit an offense, even an involuntary one, we are thrown into prison; let us likewise cast ourselves into prison because of our sins, so that voluntary remembrance may anticipate the punishment that is to come.

Amma Syncletica

✠ How great is the wisdom which the Lord has infused even into little creatures! The turtle-dove covers her nest with onion sprouts to prevent wolves from attacking her fledglings. She knows that wolves usually shun these sprouts. . . Why are you heedless in not making provision against the onslaughts of the iniquitous wolves of the spirit by providing greater security for the life which will follow this?

St. Ambrose of Milan

COUNSELS FOR LIFE

From the teachings of the Elder Epiphanius of Athens (+ October 28, 1989)

On Psychiatric fitness, Demonic Influence, and Holiness

Q. "Many Christians maintain that psychiatric illnesses are due to demonic influence and, with this viewpoint, they reject the use of psychiatric medicines. What do you have to say about this position?"

A. "A certain percentage and, furthermore, a small percentage of "psychiatric patients" are really possessed. The majority, however, of the psychiatric patients are not possessed nor are the manifestations of their psychiatric illnesses due to demonic influence."

Q. "And how can we tell that there is a possession, when it is such?"

A. "The Church diagnoses possession from the position of the sufferer as regards the sacred Sacraments: divine Communion, Confession, etc. Or as regards the Gospel, the precious Cross, the sacred relics or the holy icons and, in general, the sacred things.

At Saint Gerasimus of Cephalonia Monastery they used to place the Holy Scripture or some icon on the back of a possessed person lying face down--that is, without him seeing--in order to exclude the possibility of suggestion--and then the possessed person would tremble, a thing which would not occur when they would place other types of books or objects on him."

Q. "Do we have any example of psychosis among the Saints?"

A. "Certainly. I will off-hand mention to you Saint Olympiada, the deaconess. After the exile of sacred Chrysostom, her Spiritual Father, she suffered depression and this Saint consoled her with his letters reminding her of the divine reward for those who are persecuted in the name of the Lord."

People are often unreasonable and self-centered.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are honest, people may cheat you.

Be honest anyway.

If you find happiness, people may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough.

Give your best anyway for, you see, in the end it is between you and God.

It was never between you and them anyway.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta