COME, RECEIVE THE LIGHT

Sixteen Bible Studies...II

Theodore Stylianopoulos

Come, Receive The Light

An Interpretive Guide to Sixteen Bible Studies II

by

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A WORD TO THE READER

With the publication of *Sixteen Bible Studies II* a labor of love has come to an end. Thanks be to God for the many treasures of the Bible and the opportunity to share them in Christ.

These thematic lessons touch on central aspects of what it is to be a Christian. Intended for both young adults and adults, they are written within the tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Not long ago the Youth Department of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America published *Come, Receive the Light* (Good News New Testament in Today's English Version, 1976) in collaboration with the American Bible society. Included in this work, was a series of Bible Study outlines. The present lessons are interpretive aids for studying those outlines. They can be used in numerous ways for private or group study.

Two principles guided the writing of these lessons. First, it was important to help the reader genuinely work through the Bible Study outlines in *Come, Receive the Light.* Secondly, it was necessary that the present lessons themselves have in some sense their own integrity and be fully grounded in the tradition of Orthodox faith and worship.

Sixteen Bible Studies II follows the Bible Study outlines in *Come, Receive the Light* (pp.377-94). This second volume is slightly different from the first in two ways. On the one hand, use of the outlines is more selective. Many texts are given in *Sixteen Bible Studies II* that do not appear in the corresponding outlines. To give these lessons greater unity and integrity as an Orthodox expression of Bible Study, the proposed themes of the outlines are frequently not followed. Naturally any reader can himself or herself work through the suggested passages in the outlines.

On the other hand, *Sixteen Bible Studies II* offers more passages from the Bible for the reader's study. Readers of *Sixteen Bible Studies I* made this suggestion and the point is well taken. So in this second volume the reader is more deeply engaged with the New Testament itself. The reader will frequently be amazed at the riches the Bible contains. In group study there may not be sufficient time to work through all of them. In that case, the group has to be selective. Setting a time limit for each section of a lesson may be helpful.

HOW TO USE THE LESSONS

The lessons have been written for both private and group study. In private study, the reader should choose a quiet fifteen minutes each day or at least three times a week and prayerfully work through a section of a lesson. In this way the reader can complete one lesson per week. When doing subsequent sections, review the previous section(s) of the same lesson.

In group study, some lessons may be completed in one session (from one to one and a half hours) and others may require two sessions. It is important to proceed slowly and to encourage discussion. Group participants may prepare ahead of time, but not necessarily. Lack of home preparation should not discourage participation. Fill-ins and similar exercises can be done during the sessions while those who may have prepared ahead of time can meditate on their answers and be ready for discussion. The lessons should be read out loud section by section by differing members of the group. Ample time should be allowed for the exercises and for discussion. Whenever the discussion seems to come to a halt or seems to digress, the group should simply turn to the next section of the lesson.

The success of the group study is dependent above all on the spiritual attitude of the participants. Such attitude should be marked by prayer, spiritual alertness, sharing in faith and love, and application.

A *prayerful attitude* is the awareness that Christ is there in your midst. Recognize and welcome His presence. Be thankful and call upon Him to help you. The excitement of Bible Study is the experience of faith that God is there at each class, speaking to each person through the truths of the Bible and seeking to touch the life of each person by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Being prayerful means that a person is seeking not only to be intellectually informed but also spiritually transformed. Being prayerful means that a person is open to give his or her life to God.

A *spiritually alert attitude* goes hand in hand with prayer. It is an inquiring attitude about the truths of the Bible, the reality of life, and a person's own values and commitments. What does the Bible say? What does it mean? What does it mean for me? What do the lessons teach? how do they bear on my life? What changes of attitudes or values on my part do they imply? What problems do they create? What course of life do they offer? These and similar questions help the reader to be spiritually alert.

A sharing attitude is the willingness to show loving concern for each other's spiritual growth. Group participants study together not only to receive but also to give. What is most precious is to give of ourselves. One of the main purposes of group Bible study is to support each other in the spirit of Christian love. Group members should share, not dispute, each other's views. No person should be placed in a defensive position or feel that he or she is rejected. While clarifications may be asked or alternate views may be given, this should be done in the spirit of Christ. Learn to listen. Don't interrupt. Do not inquire into personal issues. Do not judge. Do not refute. Try not to talk about people in the third person plural: "They do this," or "Society is this way or that way," and so on. What is relevant is to find truth and light so that we may live genuinely as Christians, and not to condemn people's shortcomings or bewail society's ills. True sharing of faith is the willingness to share our life with God and with one another for mutual spiritual uplifting. The leader, too, is a servant who guides the discussion along and does not seek to dominate others. In all things let faith be active through love, as St. Paul says (Galatians 5:6).

An attitude of *fruitful* expectation is a concern for conclusions, results, and application. It is not enough to be uplifted by participating in Bible Study, and then to forget about the session until the next meeting. How can you apply the truths you learned? What are you going to do about new insights? How? When? How can you help each other during the week? Such practical concerns and continuing mutual support encourage real spiritual growth. Members of a study group should share their Christian lives by serving in various areas of their local Church and other philanthropic projects.

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 1

How To Worship

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Glory to God in the Highest; on earth peace, and good will to men. We sing to You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give thanks to You for the splendor of Your glory. Amen."

Scripture
Read John 4:23-24 and write verse 24 here:

_____

_____

Heaven On Earth

One of the oldest documents of Russian history tells how Prince Vladimir dispatched emissaries to many places of the world to find the true religion for his people. When the emissaries came to Constantinople, they entered the great Church of St. Sophia (Holy Wisdom, which signifies Christ). They witnessed the celebration of the Divine Liturgy with many Priests and Deacons and thousands of faithful. Upon their return to Kiev, they described their experience to Prince Vladimir in these words:

"We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty."

The worship of the Orthodox Church is impressive. Since the conversion of Russia in the tenth century, many have received the Orthodox Faith because of the majesty of its worship. The word ORTHODOXIA (ORTHODOXY) MEANS BOTH RIGHT DOCTRINE AND RIGHT GLORY (THAT IS, WORSHIP). To this day, one of the greatest strengths of the Orthodox Church is its unsurpassed liturgical tradition.

What most impressed the Russian emissaries about the worship at the Church of St. Sophia?

_____

What was the "only thing they knew" because of that impression?
That God _____

How did they describe their experience at St. Sophia?

_____

Look up in a dictionary the word "worship" and discuss its meaning. Why is God alone worthy of worship? Does God need our worship? What is then the purpose of the worship of God? What is it called when people worship a person or a thing? Why is that a great sin? Record some of your thoughts here:

God Is Spirit

For years Jews and Samaritans argued about which was the right place for the worship of God: Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim. So when the woman of Samaria was talking with Jesus at Jacob's well, one of the first things she asked Him was to resolve this problem.

Jesus took neither side but gave an entirely new answer which became fundamental for Christian worship: true worship of God can happen only by the power of God's Spirit. Why? Because "GOD IS SPIRIT, AND ONLY BY THE POWER OF HIS SPIRIT CAN PEOPLE WORSHIP HIM AS HE REALLY IS." (John 4:24).

What really counts is not geography but the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is why the outline invites Christians to "Recognize the Spirit Within Us."

The gift of the Holy Spirit, which we receive through Baptism, gives us the capacity to seek and to discover true worship of God. It is the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, rather than ceremonial beauty as such, which makes possible true worship of God. The Holy Spirit lives in every baptized Christian. HE, THE SPIRIT, IS OUR CONTACT WITH GOD.

Read I Corinthians 3:16 and write it here:

_____

_____

The outline on "How to Worship" (p. 377) asks that we "CONSIDER THE QUALITIES OF WORSHIP," and provides many texts as suggestions. Look up the following texts and list aspects of worship that they suggest:

Aspects of worship	Texts
_____	Hebrews 12:28
_____	
_____	
_____	Luke 2:37
_____	
_____	Ephesians 5:18-20
_____	
_____	
_____	
_____	Romans 11:33-36
_____	

Discuss the above qualities or aspects of worship. Which are most important? How can you apply them to your life and your worship of God? How do you respond to St. Paul's doxology in Romans 11:33-36 about the greatness of God which is beyond human manipulation and control? Write here some of the useful comments:

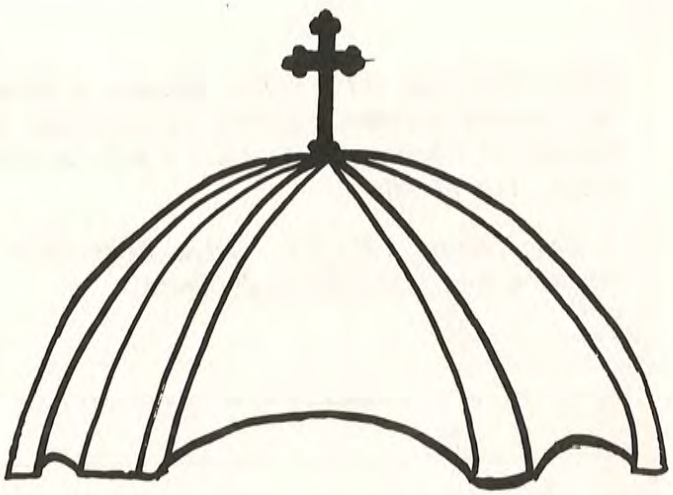
Which of the above texts did you find most interesting or thought-provoking? Why? Write the text here in part or in full:

Worship Through the Sacraments

The Sacraments (mysteria) are rites of prayer in which we MEET GOD IN HIS PERSONAL FAITH. They are not mechanical or magical actions working in a superstitious way. Their power lies in the promise of Christ to be with the Church until the end of the ages and to hear the prayers of those who sincerely seek Him. The faith, sincerity and personal prayer of the participants in the Sacraments are indispensable. The unprepared or careless participant does not cancel the power of the Sacraments for others, but he or she receives judgement and not healing because of lack of faith and lack of sincerity.

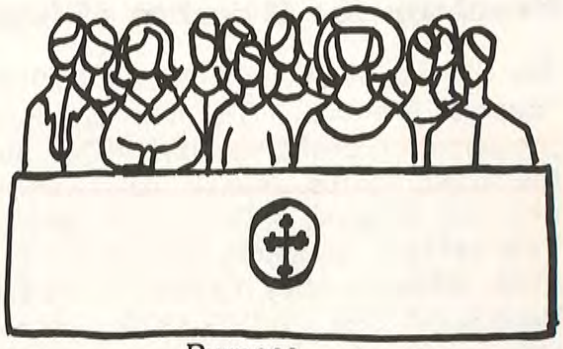
Think of the Sacraments as blessings for different purposes. In recent centuries, because of Roman Catholic influence, there has been a tendency to speak of "seven" Sacraments in the Orthodox Christian tradition. (See the outline on "Worship in the Seven Sacraments," pp.377-78). But the Church Fathers did not make this distinction. Although we have certain primary Sacraments,

such as Baptism and the Eucharist, it is best to think of all rites and services of the Church as sacramental. EVEN BLESSING OURSELVES WITH THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, WHEN DONE WITH FAITH AND SINCERITY, UNITES US WITH CHRIST.



What is the purpose of the Sacraments? It is the sanctification of all existence. Your outline points to Ephesians 1:9-10 and applies it to the significance of the Sacraments. read Ephesians 1:9-10. What is God's plan according to verse 10? Write it here:

Discuss how God "brings all creation together" under Him through all the sacramental blessings of the Church. Consider the purpose of each liturgical service and add to the list below:



Sacramental Blessings	Purpose
Holy Oil	Forgiveness and healing
Baptism	becoming a member of Christ's body
Marriage	
Blessing of the Water	
Blessing of a new home	
Blessing of a new car	

Since the Holy Spirit is the power and our guide in the sanctification of all—persons, relationships and things that we have and use— consider the importance of the Sacrament of Chrismation for every Christian. If time permits, look up the prayer of Chrismation in the Service of Baptism and discuss it. How does Chrismation occur? What parts of the human body are "sealed" with Holy Chrism? What is the purpose(s) of Chrismation according to the above prayer? Record here some of your ideas and findings:

Your outline (p. 377) invites readers to look up four passages about the Holy Spirit (under "Sacrament of Chrismation"). Let's look at two of them. For example:

2 Corinthians 1:21-22. How does verse 22 describe the gift of the Holy Spirit?

I John 2:27. What are the two concluding admonitions of this verse?

Proclaim the Worship of God

The last section of your outline (p.379) is entitled "Express Worship." The texts speak about the proclamation of the worship of God throughout the world. Birds, animals, nature and the stars proclaim the glory of God in their own way. But THE ENTIRE COSMOS EXISTS SO THAT HUMAN BEINGS MAY COME TO KNOW AND WORSHIP THE LIVING GOD, and not themselves or anything else in creation. See how the Book of Revelation proclaims the universal worship of God and the ultimate consequences of God's greatness in the following passages:

Read Revelation 14:6-7. What is the eternal message of Good News announced by the angel? Top whom is it directed? Write here the first part of the angel's message:

Honor_____

Read Revelation 21:1-8 and answer the following questions:

What is the significance of the vision of the new heaven and the new earth?

What is the promise and warning of Christ in verses 7-8?

For further discussion:

Let each participant share with the others th most interesting truth he or she learned about tru worship of God by working through this lesson Of all the Orthodox rites and Sacraments, whic is the most meaningful for you? Why? Is there subtle danger in the beauty of worship? What i it? What is the difference between "pomp" an "beauty" in worship? What attitudes can help u experience true worship of God? Discuss an write some of your ideas here:

Prayer: Sing the hymn *Se Ymnoumen*. Ther *"O Lord our God, save Your people and ble Your inheritance; safeguard the fullness Your Church in peace, and sanctify those w love the beauty of Your House. For Yours is t Kingdom, and the power and the glory, now a forever. Amen."*

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 2

How To Live God's Love

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I will love You, Lord, my strength; the Lord is my fortress, my refuge and my deliverance. Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen."

Scripture:
Read I John 4:16b and write it here:

_____

_____

God's Love

An ecumenical Churchman, the late Archbishop Sonderblom of Sweden, once interpreted the three major Christian traditions in terms of the three great Apostles, Peter, Paul and John. He put it roughly this way: The Roman Catholic tradition has an accent on authority and is represented by Peter. The Protestant tradition emphasizes faith, preaching and mission, and is represented by Paul. The Orthodox tradition is defined by a mystical vision of the love of God and is represented by John.

While generalizations are dangerous if absolutized, they may be helpful in drawing our attention to the special flavor of our particular Christian tradition. It is true that THE ORTHODOX CHURCH, THROUGH ITS PRAYERS, LITURGY, AND SPIRITUAL LIFE, HAS DEVELOPED A VISION OF PERSONAL COMMUNION WITH AND MYSTICAL LOVE OF GOD. It has given the title "Theologian" (one who knows God and can speak of Him) to just three Saints: St. John the Beloved Disciple, St. Gregory of Nanzianzus, and St. Symeon the New Theologian (an eleventh century Orthodox mystic). All three had deep personal experiences of God and wrote much about God's love. In what aspects of the Orthodox Church have you recognized God's love?

Discuss and write down some of your ideas:

The outline on "How to Live God's Love" (p. 379) begins with three categories which draw our attention to God. This means that the love that we are talking about is ALWAYS RELATED TO GOD AS OUR SOURCE OF LIFE. It comes from God. It is anchored in God. It is active through God's grace. Write here the first three categories of the outline (p. 379):

Recognize _____

Understand _____

Relate _____

Let's take one text from each category to see what St. Paul and St. John say about love in relationship to God.

Read Ephesians 3:14-19 and complete the following:

What is the heading of this passage in your Bible?

_____

For what things does St. Paul ask and pray in verses 16-19?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Read Romans 8:14-17 and complete the following:

Who are God's sons? _____

_____

What does a son or daughter cry out to God in prayer by the Spirit's power (vs. 15)?

_____

How does the Holy Spirit inwardly tell us that we belong to God (vs. 16)?

_____

What things are we called to share with Christ according to verse 17?

_____

_____

Read John 14:21-26 and see how love of and obedience to God are connected:

Who truly loves Christ according to His own Words (vs. 21)?

_____

_____

What is Christ's promise to those who love Him and obey His teachings (vs.23)?

_____

_____

What is the Holy Spirit called Who teaches us spiritual truths and makes us remember the teachings of Christ (vs. 26)?

_____

So...

THE MORE WE COME TO KNOW GOD, THE MORE WE COME TO KNOW DIVINE LOVE. THE MORE WE RELATE OUR LIVES TO GOD, THE MORE WE ARE ABLE TO LOVE WITH GOD'S LOVE. THE MORE WE GIVE OURSELVES TO GOD THROUGH PRAYER, THE SACRAMENTS, AND CHRISTIAN LIVING, THE MORE WE BECOME BELOVED DISCIPLES OURSELVES, WE ARE UNITED WITH GOD, AND GOD DWELLS IN US.

_____

Christian Love — Agape

"I love chocolate cake!" the little girl exclaims to her mother. "I love you and I want to marry you!" the young man says to the girl of his choice, "I love

you and I want to help you," says one friend to another. "I love the sea!" exclaims the fisherman. "I love my car," confesses the man. I love you, grandpa!" cries the little boy as he hugs his grandfather. "Love one another just as I love you," Christ commanded (John 15:12).

Have you ever thought about the many different ways in which we use the word "love" as we apply it to people close to us or to things that we like? Perhaps the word 'love" is overused. But there are DIFFERENT KINDS OF LOVE. There is love in marriage, love in the family, love among brothers and sisters, love among friends, love among teammates, love among co-workers or people in the same profession. There is love of people, love of nature, love of music, love of sports, love of science, love of teaching and so on. Often divine love is distinguished from human love. The ancient Greeks distinguished between sexual love *(eros)* and the bond of love between friends *(philia).* Christ and the Apostles spoke of love as agape. When we talk about God's love expressed through human love we mean Christian *agape.*

What is Christian love - *agape*? Christ spoke of it as the GREATEST COMMANDMENT and equated love of God and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). St. Paul defined it as THE HIGHEST GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT — the most important sign of our communion with God (I Corinthians 13:1-13).

Your outline (p. 379) invites readers to experience what Christian *agape* is by "Following Directions on Living God's Love," "Helping Others," and "Loving One Another" as Christians. Let's go over some of the texts suggested as examples:

Read I Corinthians 13:1-13

Paul says that a person may have all kinds of spiritual gifts and talents, but if you have no love, what are you (vs. 2)?

_____

The greatest definition of Christian *agape* is found in verses 4-7. Write below the attributes of Christian love according to St. Paul. (At home, read through these verses again, substituting your first name each time you come to the word "love," and see to what degree Christian *agape* dwells in you).

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____

What are the greatest gifts of Christian life according to verse 13?

_____

Read James 2:14-17 and see how faith is expressed through loving deeds toward those in need:

What proves genuine faith (vs.14)?_____

How does James describe faith which offers sweet words but does not follow up with deeds (vs.17)?

_____

Read John 13:34-35.

What is the new commandment?_____

_____

What do Christians demonstrate when they practice this commandment?

_____

_____

_____

Love Drives Out Fear

Love and fear are sometimes related. It may be that we love the people we fear. More often we fear the people we love. Also, without love, inner fears, suspicions, and anxieties seem to take hold. Under the theme "Let His Love be Evident in You," your outline (p. 379) includes a magnificent

passage written by the Disciple of Love which speaks about love and fear and is an excellent conclusion to this lesson on "How to Live God's Love."

Read I John 4:7-21.

What is the heading of this passage in your Bible?

_____

How did God show His love for us (vs.9)?_____

_____

What makes a person a Christian (vs.15)?_____

_____

What happens as the Christian grows in love (verse 18)?

_____

If someone says he loves God, but hates his brother, he is_____ (vs.20).

The command that Christ has given us is this:

_____

_____(vs.21).

Write here your favorite verse of the whole passage (I John 4:7-21):

For Further Discussion

Discuss what you learned about Christian *agape*. How can Christians be filled with divine love which drives out fears, suspicions and anxiety? Share practical ways of sharing Christian *agape* at home, church, and in the world and record some of your ideas:

Prayer: Sing *Eidomen to Phos* or another hymn. Then: *"Apostle John, Beloved of Christ, deliver us from darkness by your prayers. For the Lord accepted that you place your head on His bosom at the Last Supper: He will also accept your prayers. Pray to Christ, our God, O Theologian, that He may grant us peace and abundant love. Amen."*

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 3

How To Know The Will Of God

Prayer:

"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let us the faithful praise and worship Christ Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit is everlasting. He was born of the Virgin Mary for our salvation. He willingly suffered the Cross and in His Resurrection granted life to the world. Amen."

Scripture:
Read Romans 12:2 and write it here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Knowing the Will of God

How can a person know God's will? Christ frequently spoke about God's will and followed it to the Cross. The Apostles prayed that God's will be done in their work. The Church Fathers and Saints taught us that THE HIGHEST GOOD IS TO KNOW WHAT GOD WANTS US TO DO AND TO DO IT. The possibility of knowing God's perfect will is the highest gift, and the opportunity to fulfill it is the most urgent task, for every person who breathes. Because God is both good and perfect, the Father of boundless love, we can trust that whatever His will involves for us, it will lead to the best outcome for our lives.

Have you ever thought about God's will for you? You face choices and you have to make decisions about values, goals, life-styles, work, friendships, purchases and so on. WHAT ROLE DOES GOD HAVE IN ALL THIS? So you decided to be a nurse or a coach. But is this God's will for you? How important is it to know God's will? What are the difficulties in knowing God's will? Can you share any helpful experiences? Discuss some of these questions and record here some helpful comments:

_____

God Gives Evidence of Himself Through Christ

Did you know that...

Knowing God's will is NOT SOMETHING MAGICAL or something meant for a select few.

God did not give life to human beings so that He could then leave them in the dark about the meaning of existence.

For every person, to know God's will need not be a matter of hit or miss BUT AN UNFAILING POSSIBILITY.

How?

Consider...

God has provided Christ, the great Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, Church Fathers, and Saints to tell us about Himself. God has given us the Bible, the Church, Tradition, Church leaders and other fellow Christians to guide us to Himself. GOD'S PROMISE IS THAT EVERY SINCERE SEEKER WILL FIND HIM AS A PERSONAL FATHER AND WILL COME TO KNOW GOD'S WILL FOR HIS OR HER LIFE. Life is like putting together a great puzzle with different-sized pieces: if the big pieces are set in place, then it's easier to know where the little pieces fit. If the basic commitments in your life are true and authentic, then you will be able more clearly to know what God's will is for your personal decisions and the details of your life. What are some of the "big pieces"?

Read I Timothy 2:3-6.

What two things does God want of all people (vss.3-4)?

_____

_____

What is the greatest proof that God wants everyone saved (vss.5-6)?

_____

_____

Read Ephesians 1:11-14 and complete the following:

All things are done according (vs.11)_____

_____

You believed in Christ, and God (vs.13b)

_____

_____

The Holy Spirit is the_____of God's promises (vs.14).

Read John 6:35-40.

Why did Christ come down from heaven (vs.38)?

_____

What is God's will (according to verses 39-40)?

_____

_____

_____

So. . .

THE CENTRAL PIECE IN THE MOSAIC OF OUR LIVES IS JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD AND REDEEMER. ONCE WE HAVE PLACED HIM AT THE CENTER OF OUR LIVES—FOR HE IS THE SUPREME EXPRESSION OF GOD'S WILL FOR US—THEN WE CAN LOOK FOR OTHER IMPORTANT SIGNS THROUGH WHICH WE CAN KNOW GOD'S WILL.

The Church Is a Sign of God

"Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples," said the Risen Christ to the Apostles, "Baptize them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20).

CHRIST SET UP THE CHURCH TO BE A CLEAR SIGN OF HIS KINGDOM. It is the Church of Christ, the Apostles, the Church Fathers, and Saints—the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Its total Tradition includes the Bible, the Ecumenical Councils, the Creed of Faith, the teachings of the Holy Fathers, a rich and most profound worship, and an unbroken continuity of Church leaders extending from the days of Christ and the Apostles to our present Bishops.

By making the above claims Orthodox Christians do not deny that God works among all nations and races. God equally loves all peoples and works with them as He knows best. Nor do they deny the activity of the Holy Spirit among other Christian Churches. The Spirit cannot be limited but moves where He wills. Nevertheless, the Orthodox Chuurch in its historical and sacramental totality is "the Church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (I Timothy 3:15). Despite its shortcomings, it provides sure evidence of God through its truth, worship, wit-

nesses, leaders, and people for those who seek to know God's will.

Read Ephesians 2:19-22 and complete the following:

All the people of God are members of (vs.19)

_____

The foundation is laid by (vs.20)_____

_____

The cornerstone is (vs.20)_____

Read Hebrews 12:1-4.

What are the great figures of faith called (vs.1)?

_____

On whom should we keep our eyes fixed (vs.2)?

_____

Against what are we to struggle (vss.1 and 4)?

_____

Read Thessalonians 5:12-13.

What are Christians called (vs.12)?_____

Whom are they to respect and love according to St. Paul and why (vss.12-13)?

_____

_____

What should Christians maintain among themselves (vs.13)?

_____

You are a member of the Orthodox Church by Baptism. What has the Church meant in your life? In what ways have you come to know God's will through the Church? How can your local Parish be an effective witness of the Orthodox Faith? What can each Orthodox Christian do to help the Church fulfill its divine mission? Discuss and write here some of your thoughts:

_____

Knowing God's Will In Your Own Life

God has given us Christ, the Church, the Bible, the Saints, and Christian guides. God has provided concrete models and objective standards by which to live. But how can a Christian know God's will for THE INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS AND PERSONAL DETAILS of his life?

The Church Fathers teach that, once we make the commitment to the above gifts of God and honor them in good faith, we must LOOK TO PERSONAL PRAYER AND TO THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR HEARTS in order to know God's will about particular aspects of our lives. As long as we abide in Christ and keep our conscience free of evil (that's what being "holy" means), we can use our best judgment and look for God's will in all things. God will show us through our hearts, other people, or events what is right. His will may involve suffering. We may momentarily fail. But whatever happens, we can trust that God can teach His faithful servants precious lessons even through bad experiences. (See, for example, Romans 8:28).

When a Christian follows God's will, he or she experiences the fruits of the Holy Spirit: peace, kindness, self-control, patience, joy, and love.

But if the heart if full of anger, resentment, exaggerated enthusiasm, hostility, or doubt, then the Christian is off God's path and must turn to God in repentance before he hurts both others and himself any further. Only a pure heart is ready to receive the Spirit and clear knowledge of God's will. (See again Romans 12:2 which you wrote at the beginning of this lesson).

Read Luke 22:39-46.

What posture of prayer did Jesus take at Gethsemane (vs.41)?

_____

What was the burden that He shared with His Father (vs.42a)?

_____

What was Jesus' resolution (vs.42b)?

_____

What did Jesus instruct His disciples (vss. 40 and 46)?

_____

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What did St. Paul pray about to God three times (vss.7-8)?

_____

What was God's answer (vs.9)?

_____

_____

What was St. Paul's response to God and why (vss. 9-10)?

_____

_____

_____

Read I Corinthians 2:11-16 and complete the following:

It is only a person's own_____that knows all about him (vs.11).

We have received_____sent by God, so that we may know_____

_____(vs.12).

What happens when someone lacks the Spirit (vs.14)?

_____

We, however, have_____

_____(vs.16).

How do you react to the above passages? What is the lesson that can be drawn from the Gethsemane experiences of Christ and St. Paul? Why does God sometimes answer in a different way than expected? Have you had a "Gethsemane experience" about a decision or a concern? Do you have any suggestions about how to keep trusting in God in a crisis? How can we grow spiritually so that we may in some measure acquire the "mind of Christ" to know God's will?

Prayer:
"Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 4

How To Know and Use Your Gifts

Prayer:

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. O Lord, sanctify those who trust in You. Give peace to your world, to Your Churches, to Your Priests and to all Your people: for every good thing and every perfect gift is from above, coming from You, the Father of Light; and to You we offer glory and thanksgiving, and worship, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen."

Scripture:
Read Romans 12:1 and write here the first sentence of St. Paul's appeal:

_____

_____

Recognize the Source of Your Gifts

"Thank you, Daddy, for the gift!" said the young boy, pounding-in his new baseball glove. His father looked at him with a good feeling because he thought that the boy himself was a precious gift to him. But the parents were also gifts to the boy, although he didn't quite realize it yet. And all the other brothers and sisters, and the love they had for each other, and the experiences they enjoyed together, and all the things they had — they were all gifts! It is beautiful to LOOK ON EVERYTHING IN LIFE AS A GIFT.

In a true sense everything is a gift from God: the air we breathe, the natural resources we use, our intelligence with which we invent new things. The whole world is a magnificent bundle of gifts from God. During the Divine Liturgy, just before the moment of consecration, when the Priest elevates the bread and wine, he chants on behalf of all the congregation: "THY OWN FROM THY OWN, WE OFFER TO THEE" (that is, we offer to You these gifts from Your own gifts)! This prayer is an echo of David's prayer of thanksgiving: "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from Thee, and of Thy own have we given Thee." (I Chronicles 29:14). There is nothing in the universe, except evil, which does not ultimately come from God.

Your outline (p. 381) invites you first to "Recognize the Source of Your Gifts."

Read John 1:1-5 and complete the following:

Before the world was created, _____

already existed (vs.1). _____

Through him _____;

_____

_____ (vs.3) .

The Word was _____ (vs.4).

The _____, and the

_____ (vs. 5).

Your outline (p. 381) has in view the spiritual gifts we have received as Christians. Read I Corinthians 12:4-7 and complete St. Paul's statements:

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same _____ gives them (vs. 4).

There are different ways of serving, but the same

_____ is served (vs. 5).

There are different abilities to perform service, but the same_____gives ability to everyone for their particular service (vs. 6).

The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in _____(vs. 7).

Have you ever thought of life in terms of gifts? Why is it so easy to make use of the gifts and forget the Giver? What do you regard as the highest gift?

Why? How are we helped when we refer all things to God and recognize Him as the Source of all gifts? Share your ideas and record some of the comments here:

Variety of Gifts - Purpose of Gifts

In the early days of Christianity, some Christians in the Church of Corinth became vain about their spiritual gifts of wisdom, preaching, speaking in tongues, and others. They began to compare them and to brag about who had the better gifts. The Apostle Paul who had founded the Church in Corinth appealed to them for unity in Christ. His guidance included three main points: (1) there is a variety of gifts but the same Holy Spirit provides all of them; (2) gifts are intended to serve people and build up the life of the Church, and (3) love is the highest gift, which all Christians should have, and through which they can know how properly to use all the other gifts (I Corinthians, chapters 12-14).

The second and third themes of your outline (p. 381), reflect points one and two of St. Paul's above advice. Just as St. Paul appealed to the Corinthians of his day, so the outline invites you today to "Notice the Variety of Gifts" and to "Recognize the Purpose of Gifts." Under these themes, the outline includes some important statements.

Notice the Variety of Gifts

There are many kinds of gifts

No one receives all the gifts

All receive some gift

Gifts are like functions of the human body

Recognize the Purpose of Gifts

To build up the Body of Christ – the Church

To minister to others

To attain maturity in Christ

To discern false teaching

Let's go over some of the passages as examples. Read I Corinthians 12:7-11.

Write here the variety of gifts listed by St. Paul. (The list is not meant to be rigid or exhaustive. By faith St. Paul means special faith, and the gift of speaking in tongues was primarily exercised in the

early Church):

Write here St. Paul's conclusion (vs. 11):

The Church is like a body with many parts. Read Romans 12:4-8. (A longer similar passage is I Corinthians 12:12-31, which you may also read).

How are we one body (vs. 5)?

How are we to use our different gifts (vs. 6)?

List some of the gifts of Christian service (vss. 6-8).

What is the essential purpose of gifts? Why did Christ provide gifts? Read Ephesians 4:11-16.

Christ "gave gifts to mankind" to prepare

(vs. 12).

The purpose of Christian service is that we shall

(vs.13b).

Who is the head of the whole body (vs. 15)?

So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body builds itself up through

(vs.16b).

Which of the above passages is most sriking to you? Why? Are Christians today, just as the Corinthians in the early Church, tempted to compare gifts within the Church and divide themselves through lack of love? APPLY ST. PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF THE BODY TO YOUR LOCAL PARISH and see how its different organizations and functions contribute to Christian growth. Is the head of the body Christ? What are some of the unused gifts? How can parishioners become more aware of their gifts and how can they be encouraged to use them? Discuss and record here some of the suggestions:

Develop And Use Your Gifts

What kinds of gifts are there?

Many persons have natural talents such as creative imagination, musical aptitude, mechanical skill, analytical insight, leadership qualities, business acumen, athletic abilities, craftmanship and the like. Can you think of others?

Many are drawn to professions and vocations: teacher, architect, lawyer, priest, engineer, electrician, doctor, social worker and so on.

But every king of job, insofar as it provides service to others, is a gift. EVERY TASK CAN BE CARRIED OUT IN GOOD FAITH AND FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. "I am not washing dishes, but am making a home!" exclaimed a mother of four.

All Christians can by God's grace develop positive

attitudes, helpful dispositions, and meaningful virtues: trustworthiness, joy, patience, hope, kindness, self-control, generosity, and love. St. Paul called these gifts "fruits of the Holy Spirit."

What is the greatest gift?

Each human being in his or her uniqueness is the greatest gift,more precious than a billion stars.

Someone has said: "Your life is God's gift to you; what you do with it is your gift to God."

St. Paul put it well when he wrote: "Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him." (Romans 12:1).

Your outline (pp. 381-82) invites you to develop and use your gifts for God's glory! Read I Peter 4:10 and write it here:_____

_____

_____

_____

What counts most is not the kinds of gifts we have but rather what we do with whatever gifts God has given us. Read Matthew 25:14-30.

The Master called his servants and_____

_____(vs. 14).

How many gold coins (that is, "talents," a monetary term in the days of Jesus) did the master give to each of the three servants (vs. 15)?

_____

What was the reward to the first and second servants (vss. 21 and 23)?_____

_____

What reason did the third servant give for hiding his "talents" (vs. 25)?_____

What profound truth is articulated somewhat strongly in verse 29?_____

_____

_____

How can a custodian or sanitation worker labor for the glory of God?; What about a lawyer or salesman? What is the true purpose of every honorable job? Although it seems essentially an excuse, isn't it also true that some, perhaps many, people do not develop and use their gifts because they are "afraid"? How can they be helped not to be afraid nor to use fear as an excuse? What is the difference between the use and abuse of gifts? Discuss these questions and record some of your ideas:

Prayer: *Sing Se Ymnoumen.* Then,
Our Heavenly Father, we thank You for all Your gifts. We thank You for Christ our Lord. We thank You for our families, our friends, and all the people we know. We thank You for the trees, the lakes, and the mountains. We thank You for each day. Direct our lives according to Your will. Purify our minds and hearts so that we may recognize Your abundant love all around us and glorify You for ever and ever. Amen.

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 5

How To Be a Peacemaker

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Our Father, we thank You for this day. Help us to live it according to Your will — in faith, love, and peace. Forgive us if we hurt someone. May Your Name be blessed forever. Amen."

Scripture:

Read I Corinthians 1:3 and write it here: _____

_____

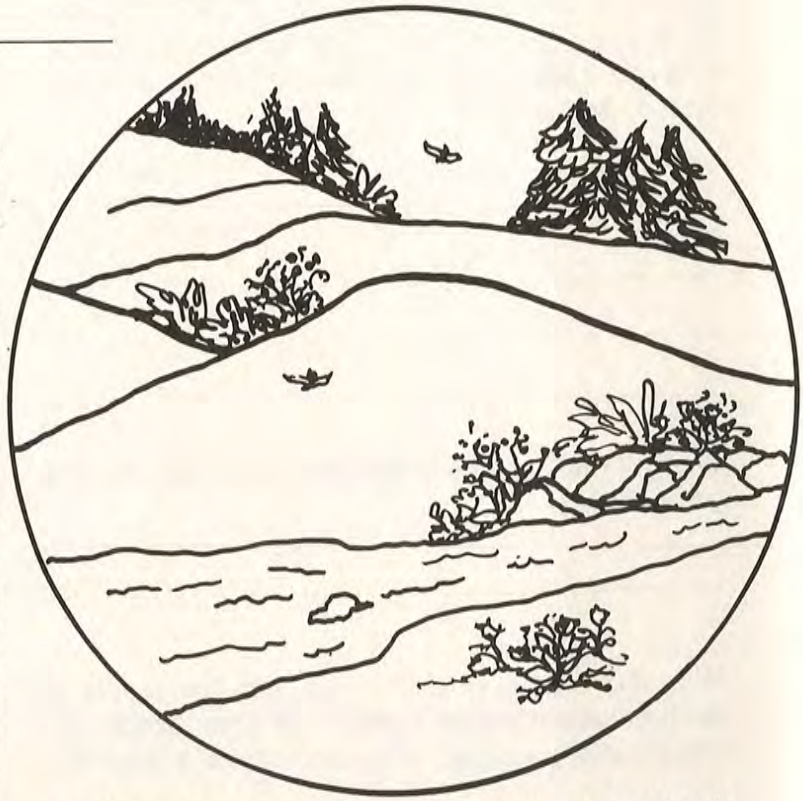
What is Peace?

How we may long to have in our hearts the peace that we see in the country-side on a spring morning — the hills, trees, birds, and streams blending into one harmony of happiness.

We seek peace, but our hearts are often troubled. Our home should be a place of peace but living with others involves tensions. The whole world wants peace, and talks about it a lot, but few seem to be peacemakers.

Are human beings destined forever to live with an unrealizable hope for peace? Television, radio and newspapers constantly report the problems and tensions of society. Homes involve deep psychological pain when families break up because parents can't live together. Stories of fraud and corruption are not infrequent. People do not seem really to care about others but are suspicious, cynical, and caught up with themselves. The number one ailment of the country is deep anxiety. No wonder people seek to escape into drugs, cults, heavy drinking, frequent entertainment, fanatical devotion to sports, and weekend trips.

THERE ARE REAL PROBLEMS IN GROWING UP. Sometimes a person is a problem to himself as he tries to find out what he wants, how to handle his feelings, what values to choose, what to do, and how to do it. Life confronts us with school, tasks, responsibilities, and work. It is a continuous struggle. And then there is the whole issue of relating to others — family



members, friends, teachers, co-workers, and all kinds of people we meet. Finally, there is the whole personal struggle with God — does He exist, is He really there when I try to pray, and why do I so often fail Him? SO PEACE IS NOT A SINGLE THING TO BE POSSESSED BUT A WHOLE VISION / AN EXPERIENCE, TO BE REACHED. Peace does not depend on one factor but on a balance of many factors.
God's vision of life is reflected in the Beatitudes (the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount). Read Matthew 5:3-12.

Complete the list of those who are blessed ("happy") and their promised reward according to Christ:

Happy are those who:	Christ's Promises:

The Beatitudes apply not only to the next life but already to the present one — day-in and day-out. What are some of the needs, qualities, and attitudes of those who are called "happy" and are blessed by Christ?

What is the heading of Matthew 5:3-12 entitled in your Bible?

Why do God's vision of life and the reality of society seem poles apart? Is true peace and happiness possible? Why do we sometimes find problems even in the Church, a place where we expect to find peace? What is the Christian's responsibility? Where do we seek peace? How can you be a peacemaker without compromising the truth within yourself, at home, school, Church, and society? Socially, you cannot have peace without justice, but how can you achieve justice without peace? Are there different kinds of peace and what are they? Share ideas and record some of them:

Recognize The Source of Peace

The philosopher Kierkegaard wrote a well-known work entitled Either/Or. He wanted to suggest something of the importance of a clear decision regarding the Christian faith. Looking for peace,

a person is confronted by a similar either/or decision. Either a person is going to anchor his or her life on God and seek God's peace, *or* a person is going to center his or her life on himself or herself (ego) and seek man's peace. There can be only one ultimate commitment which sets all the other priorities in order. Jesus said: "It is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does." (John 14:27). The Epistle of James uncompromisingly asks: "Don't you know that to be the world's friend means to be God's enemy?" (James 4:4).

The world may promise peace and may work for peace but it can never deliver true peace. Neither material goods, nor negotiations, nor honors, nor enticing escapes have ever produced enduring peace among nations or in men's hearts.

God promises peace and gives peace in Christ -- an invincible peace which the world cannot take away. The peace of God is based on God's victory over evil, sin, death, and Satan --the worst enemies of humanity. "God made peace through His Son's death on the cross and so brought back to Himself all things on earth and in heaven." (Colossians 1:20b). God is "the God of love and peace" (2 Corinthians 13:11c). Who grants enduring peace because He gives new life through the Holy Spirit. Recall St. Paul's strength and peace in jail (Philippians 4:4-7). Recall the lives of other Apostles, Martyrs, Church Fathers and Saints. They had the peace of God. They lived in Christ. Whoever abides in Christ has the peace of Christ.

God saves us through Christ. Read Romans 2:22-25 and complete the following:

God puts people right (with Himself, that is, He saves them) through _____

_____ (vs. 22).

Everyone has _____ and is _____

_____ (vs. 23).

But by the free gift of God's grace all are

_____

_____ (vs. 24).

God offered Him, so that by His death He should become the means by which people's sins are _____ (vs. 25).

Read Romans 5:1-5.

Through Whom do we have peace with God (vs. 1)? _____

Into what condition has Christ brought us, in which we now live (vs. 2a)? _____

_____

What is the living testimony of our hope which does not disappoint us (vs. 5)?

_____

_____

Christ grants divine peace to His followers. Read John 20: 19-23.

What did Christ tell the disciples twice (vss. 19b and 21a)?

_____

What did Christ give the disciples (vs. 22)?

_____

How To Be A Peacemaker

Much of the social environment of our age is marked by activism: speed, noise, doing things, going places, being with people, and meeting obligations. Activism brings pressures to the mind, heart, and soul. Anxiety begins to build up.

THE CHRISTIAN'S MAIN RESOURCE IS GOD.

The communication channel is prayer. In I Peter 5:7 (RSV) we read : "Cast all your anxieties on God, for He cares about you." In a similar way, St. Paul urges: "Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking Him with a thankful heart." (Philippians 4:6).

To have peace, one must be at peace with God deep in one's heart. This is what St. Isaac meant when he said: "Be peaceful with yourself and heaven and earth shall be peaceful with you." To be a peacemaker, a person must have inward peace. One marvels at the PEACE OF CHRIST. The same peace He gives to all who abide in Him — not a sentimental, fragile feeling dependent on not having one's hair ruffled in life, or not meeting up with any difficulties, but a solid well-being, a sense of joy and stability in God, which gives power to act with confidence and control. This is Christ's gift to those who trust Him. This is a result of our growth in Christ.

There are no pre-conditions to casting one's anxieties on the Lord Who cares about us. You can just do it any time and any place. You can simply say, "Lord, You take over." That's the first step. It seems too good to be true, but that's just WHY HE CAME —TO CARRY OUR BURDENS. Remember this again and again. Then, with His help begin sincerely to live the kind of life He expects us to live. The Christian life is meant to be lived in depth, filled with prayer and worship, a daily experience, which deepens our love for God and for our fellow human beings. As we struggle, we grow in Christ's peace and are able to share it with others at home, among friends, and everywhere we go.

Read Colossians 3:12-17 and complete the following:

As the people of God, you must clothe yourselves with _____, _____ ,

_____, _____, and

_____ (vs. 12b).

You must forgive one another just as _____

_____(vs. 13b).

The_____that Christ gives is to guide you in the_____

you make (vs. 15a).

Christ's message in all its richness must_____

_____(vs. 16a).

Sing to God with_____

_____(vs. 16c).

Everything you do or say, then, should be done_____(vs. 17).

Read Romans 12:14-18 and complete the following:

Ask God to_____ those who persecute you, not to_____(vs. 14).
Accept humble _____(vs. 16b).

Can you define peace? Is peace ever a weakness? If so, when? Is it possible to try to be a peacemaker and lose your peace? Is it possible to retain your own peace while courageously speaking the truth and facing up to difficult people? Explain. How can Christians be more active peacemakers in society and the world? Discuss and write here some of the helpful comments:

Prayer:
"Christ, our Lord, we pray for the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls. Lord, bless us and keep us. Shine the light of Your grace on us and grant us peace. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 6

How To Love People

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Christ, our Savior, when You illuminated all things at Your coming, You healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and forgave the publicans. Let Your light also shine upon us, Your servants. Through the prayers of Your Mother, Christ, our God, keep us in Your divine teaching and save us. Amen."

Scripture:
Read John 15:12 and write it here:

_____

_____

Accept The Command To Love

The average person thinks of the commandments of God as burdens. But the Saints and Church Fathers called them "life-giving" commandments. Observe them in good faith and you discover authentic life through them. This is especially true about the commandment of love. "Love in order to live," someone has said. The elder Silouan writes: "Without love, life is a burden." Love seems to make everything easier. Where there is love, there is also good will, joy, sacrifice, forgiveness, enthusiasm, and energy to do things. Teens, parents, babies, elderly, children — all of us have a basic need to be loved and to love.

Christ spoke of love as THE NEW AND CENTRAL COMMANDMENT for His followers on several occasions. In John 13:34-35 He commands us to love one another as He has loved us. Genuine love among Christians is evidence to others that Christ is in our midst and that we are His followers. In John 15:9-17 Jesus has some more things to say about love.

Read John 15:9-17 and complete the following:

I love you just as _____

_____ (vs. 9).

I have told you this so that _____

_____

_____ (vs. 11).

The greatest love a person can have for his friends is _____

_____ (vs. 13).

I do not call you servants . . . Instead I call you _____

_____

I chose you and appointed you to go and _____

_____

_____ (vs. 16).

This, then, is what I command you:

_____ (vs. 17).

Read Matthew 22:36-40.

What is the greatest and most important commandment? _____

_____

_____

What is the second most important commandment like it? _____

_____

How do you respond to the above passages? What truth is most significant for you? Why? Which of the two greatest commandments do we more often forget and neglect, love of God or love of neighbor? Why? What does it mean for you that JESUS MADE LOVE THE SUPREME COMMANDMENT FOR HIS FOLLOWERS and that He united love of God and love of neighbor? Discuss some of the above questions, as time permits, and write some of the interesting ideas here:

Learn Whom You Are To Love

One of the greatest parables of Jesus is that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Do you recall why Jesus told this parable? A young lawyer had come up to Him to ask how to receive eternal life. Jesus had him refer to the greatest commandment of love of God and love of neighbor. But then the lawyer asked: "WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?" Christ responded with the unforgettable story of the Jew who was beaten and robbed, neglected by fellow Jews, and finally helped by a supposed enemy — a Samaritan. This parable teaches us to love and to help, without discrimination, whomever we meet in need. But the depth of our love is tested when we meet up (or think about) our "enemies" — supposed or real. Remember Jesus on the Cross? He forgave His crucifiers. What He lived by example, He also taught by His words.

Read Matthew 5:43- 48.

What does Christ tell us to do to those who hate us and those who persecute us (vs. 44)?

_____and _____

What reasons does Christ give for such love (vss. 45b and 48)? _____

_____

_____

What is Christ's promise to those who love and pray for their "enemies" (vs. 45a)?

_____

Talk about the difficulty of loving persons who seem to be against you. Have you heard the expression, "I don't like you, but I love you?" Is it valid? Why or why not? Jesus taught that we should PRAY FOR THOSE WITH WHOM WE HAVE DIFFICULTIES — pray for their well-being and for our better relationship with them. Many Christians who have sincerely persisted in such prayer have discovered a new power to love difficult people and often miraculous avenues of reconciliation. Have you ever practiced such prayer to Christ? What other helpful ways can you suggest of responding to unpleasant situations and difficult persons?

Learn To Love

Can we "learn" how to love? We know that only as God shares His love with us can we sincerely love our fellow human beings. Christ often invites us to abide in Him, and to remain in union with

Him, through faith, prayer, and Holy Communion. Genuine Christian love is beyond our reach without the power of God's grace. Yet a Christian cannot just sit back and wait for an infusion of Christ's love before acting. Christ responds to us according to His perfect will. For our part, WE NEED TO PUT OUR FAITH INTO ACTION. Our commitment to Christ is tested in everyday living. A CHRISTIAN CAN *WILL TO LOVE*; he or she can DECIDE TO LOVE and ACT ON THAT DECISION whether in normal or difficult circumstances. Someone once said: "You have to put feet on your compassion." Christ is all around us and in us, ready to help us before, during and after our actions, so that we may "learn" how to love.

Read Romans 12:9-11 and complete the following:

Love must be completely _____ (vs. 9).

Love one another _____

_____ (vs. 10).

Be eager to show _____

_____ (vs. 10).

Serve the Lord with _____

_____ (vs. 11).

Read I John 3:16-18.

How do we know what love is (vs. 16)?

_____

What practical application does St. John draw from the above truth (vss. 16-17)?

_____

_____

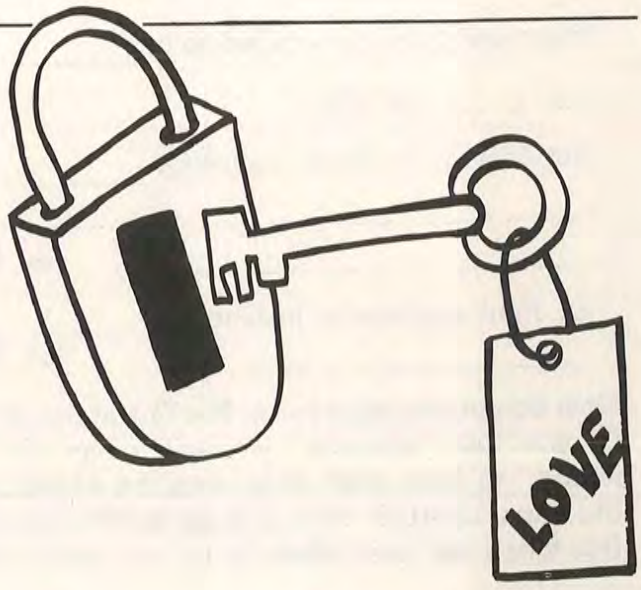
If our love is not to be just words and talk, but true love, how is it to express itself (vs.18)?

_____

Discuss any of the above statements. Is it insincere or hypocritical to "force" oneself to love and to practice love despite the fact that we may not feel like it? Why or why not? Can you think of LITTLE THINGS to do daily at home, school, Church and work THAT BUILD UP TRUST AND LOVE among us? Share your ideas and write some of them here:

Recognize The Results Of Love

No on would want to argue against the results of Christian *agape*. It fills people's hearts and minds, in the words of St. Paul, "with those things that are good and deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable: (Philippians 4:8). Under this theme, your outline (p. 383) lists several important ideas. LOVE IS THE KEY TO ALL RELATIONSHIPS. Love gives evidence of being Christ's followers. Love is discerning. Love is the basic motivation in serving one another. Let's look at some of these more closely.



Read Romans 13:8-10.

What is the Christian's only obligation according to St. Paul (vs. 8)?
to _____

What command summarizes the whole Law (vs. 9)? _____

What two conclusions does St. Paul draw in verse 10? _____

_____

_____

Read Philippians 1:3-11.

What word describes St. Paul's feelings in this passage?

_____(vs. 4).

Where does St. Paul's deep feeling for his fellow Christians come from? _____
_____(vs. 8).

If love keeps on growing, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment, what else occurs in a Christian's life according to St. Paul's prayer?

_____(vs. 10)

_____(vs. 10)

_____

_____(vs. 11)

Read Galatians 5:13-14.

What are Christians called to be? _____
_____(vs. 13).

But what is St. Paul's warning? _____
_____
_____(vs. 13).

St. Paul's advice is: Instead, _____
_____(vs. 13).

How do you respond to St. Paul's statement that "If you love someone, you will never do him wrong; to love, then, is to obey the whole Law" (Romans 13:10)? How can we as Christians be free when we must submit to the one duty of love which leads to serving others? How are freedom and love related? When does freedom become just an "excuse" for anything arbitrary? Discuss and record some of your ideas here:

For Further Discussion

The last theme of your outline (p. 383) is "Express God's Love through Human Love." If time permits, read I John 4:7-21 from the viewpoint of how human and divine love are related. Concentrate your discussion on verses 12 and 19-21. When are divine and human love different? when are they alike? How can a Christian be a channel of divine love, Christian *agape*, in everyday life?

Prayer: Then, sing the hymn of the patron Saint of your Church.

"Christ, our God, You are infinitely glorified. You established our Holy Fathers and Saints as radiant stars of love. Through them, you have led us to the true faith. Most Merciful Lord, glory to You! Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 7

How To Share Christ

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. To You, Lord, we entrust our whole life and hope. Make us worthy to abide in You with a pure conscience; grant us the communion of the Holy Spirit; and give us assurance of the Kingdom of Heaven. For You are our Savior and to You we offer glory now and forever. Amen."

Scripture:
Read 2 Corinthians 5:18 and write it here:

_____

_____

Challenge of Witness

Some of the most moving and dramatic stories of the Gospels are those concerning men and women who were healed by Jesus. The expressions of joy and gratitude in particular are striking. While in the case of the healing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19), only one returned to thank Jesus, many others of those healed were deeply thankful and PROCLAIMED WHAT JESUS HAD DONE TO THEM throughout the land.

A vivid example is the man with the evil spirits (Mark 5:1-20) who roamed among the tombs and whom nobody could control. "My name is 'Mob,'" he told Jesus, because he suffered from a mob of demons. Jesus healed him. The change in the man was so astonishing that the people of that area became afraid of Jesus and asked Him to leave. The former demoniac, though, now clothed and in his right mind, begged Jesus: "Let me go with you!" But Jesus told him: "Go back home to your family and TELL THEM HOW MUCH THE LORD HAS DONE FOR YOU and how kind he has been to you." So the man went all through that area known as Ten Towns, telling what Jesus had done for him.

When a person comes into contact with Christ, he or she cannot remain neutral afterwards. EVERY CHRISTIAN BECOMES A WITNESS OF CHRIST. This witness is not only private but also public. It is Christ's will that people know that we are Christians.

So the challenge of witness continues. Both the words and actions of each Christian are a public statement that he or she belongs to Christ. Jesus said: "If anyone declares publicly that he belongs to me, I will do the same for him before my Father in heaven. But if anyone rejects Me publicly, I will reject him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

It is a command of Christ to witness to Him throughout the world. Read Matthew 28:18-20, and complete the following:

Christ's great commission to the disciples is:

Go, then, to _____ (vs. 19a).

The disciples are to carry out Christ's charge by _____ (vs. 19b),

and by _____ (vs. 20a).

The promise of Christ is:
And I will_____
_____(vs. 20b).

Read Romans 10:11-15.

Who can be saved by faith in Jesus Christ (vs. 12)?

_____

What is God's assurance in the Bible to all (vs. 13)? _____

_____

What must happen before the message of Christ is proclaimed (vs. 15a)?_____

_____

Do you know what missions the Orthodox Church has throughout the world? Does your parish have a missions fund? Can you do something as a group for Orthodox missions during the year? Discuss.

Content Of Witness

THE CHURCH HAS A MISSION. Its entire life is a witness to the world. From the Divine Liturgy to Christian education, from the Sacrament of Baptism to the Blessing of a home, from a meeting of the Parish Council to a Church outing, from a youth retreat to a Church athletic team — the total life of a parish reflects, and should reflect, our Orthodox Faith.

The First Epistle of Peter urges Christians: "Have reverence for Christ in your hearts, and honor him as Lord" (I Peter 3:15a). How do CHRISTIANS HONOR THE LORD through their witness? In three main ways: (1) sharing Christ's life within the Church; (2) proclaiming the Gospel, and (3) sharing their lives and love with others.

Read I John 1:1-4.

What is Christ called in verse 1a?_____

What does St. John emphasize in verses 1b and 2?_____

_____

What is the purpose of announcing Christ (vs. 3)?

_____

_____

What is the result of sharing Christ (vs. 4)?

_____

Read I Corinthians 15:1-11 and complete the following:

I want to reming you, my brothers, of the Good News (that is,the Gospel) on which your faith _____(vs. 1).
Of greatest importance is_____

_____

_____

_____ (vss. 3-4).

The Risen Christ appeared to the following witnesses (vss. 5-8). _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

So then, whether it came from me or from

them, this (that is, the Gospel) is _____ and _____ (vs. 11).

Read I Thessalonians 2:3-9.

What was the principle of St. Paul's missionary work (vs. 4b)?

_____

With what image does St. Paul express gentleness (vs. 7b)?

_____

What was St. Paul's motivating power (vs. 8a)?

_____

What was St. Paul ready to share (vs. 8a)?

_____

What was proof that St. Paul's motives were pure (vs. 9)? _____

_____

Define the Gospel in your own words. How is the Gospel lived and proclaimed through the Divine Liturgy? At what points of the Liturgy are Christians invited time and again to receive Christ? How can we KEEP CHRIST IN OUR HEARTS, AND HONOR HIM THROUGH OUR LIVES, so that we can share His Gospel (the Good News) effectively with others? Discuss.

Witness In The Early Church

Early Christianity was a spiritual explosion. Within three decades after the Resurrection of Jesus there were Christian communities in all the major cities of the Roman Empire: Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, Rome, Alexandria and elsewhere. Within one hundred years, a Christian writer could humbly boast that Christians could be found in every corner of the known world.

How can one explain this phenomenal success which begins with twelve fishermen? The answer is CHRISTIAN WITNESS. The power behind it was THE HOLY SPIRIT. But the Holy Spirit found eager hearts and willing minds. Peter, Paul, John, Andrew, Thomas, James, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy — what a roll call of men of God! Many of them gave their lives for Christ as martyrs. But there were also other thousands, tens of thousands, of rank and file Christians, known only to God, who spread the Gospel in every direction.

Read Acts 2:32-39. This is part of Peter's first sermon after Pentecost.

To what fact were the Apostles witnesses (vs. 32)? _____

What did Christ pour out on the Apostles (vs. 33)? _____

What did the people ask Peter (vs. 37)?

_____

What four things did Peter indicate to the people (vs. 38)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Read Philippians 1:12-20. Paul is in jail but Christian witness cannot be stopped.

What was the result of Paul's imprisonment (vss. 13-14)? _____

_____

_____

What is Paul's sole concern (vs. 18)?

_____

What is Paul's hope (vs. 20)? _____

_____

_____

_____

What is life for Paul (vs. 21)? _____

_____

Your speech should always be _____

_____ and you should know how

_____

_____ (vs. 6).

Christian Witness Today

The message of Christianity has not changed. Christ remains forever the same. The Holy Spirit lives in the Church and is given to every Christian. The same Gospel is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes today.

Christ said to the disciples: "You are like SALT FOR ALL MANKIND. . . You are like LIGHT FOR THE WHOLE WORLD. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. . . . In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16). These words apply to us today, too, as witnesses of Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

What does anyone who is joined to Christ become (vs. 17)? _____

What did God do through Christ (vs. 18)?

_____

_____

and _____

_____

Who is appealing through us when we speak for Christ (vs.20a)? _____

What is our urgent message on Christ's behalf (vs. 20b)?

_____

_____

Read Colossians 4:5-6 and complete the following:

Be _____ in the way you _____ to ward those who are not believers, making good use of every _____ you have (vs. 5).

Which of the passages is the most meaningful for you? What new thing have you learned about Christian witness from this Bible study? How seriously should Christians regard their God-given task of helping their fellow human beings become "friends of God through Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)? Is there need of witness and mission within the Church? How can we within our families and our Church raise our consciousness to the central purpose of Christianity, that is, to live and proclaim the Gospel?

Prayer:
"Christ, our true God, You came into the world and suffered the Cross so that all may be saved. We venerate Your Cross and praise Your Resurrection. Let Your Holy Spirit dwell in us so that we may be Your true witnesses wherever we are, both by words and deeds. O Lord, may we honor You throughout our lives, through the prayers of Your Holy Mother and of all the Apostles. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 8

How To Relate To Authority

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Christ, our Lord, eternal Word of the Father, You humbled Yourself and became man. You took on the form of a servant, You washed the feet of the disciples, and You walked the path of obedience all the way to death, for our salvation. Lord, we marvel at Your humility and we thank You for Your sacrifice. O Savior, glory to You. Amen."

Scripture:
Read I Peter 2:16 and write it here:

_____

_____

Understanding the Role of Authority

There are different kinds of authority. There is the authority of God, the authority of a Church Father, the authority of a Bishop, the authority of a head of government, of a judge, of a parent, of a teacher, a coach, a policeman, a boss, a team captain. There is also the authority of truth, of law, of custom, of talent, of technical expertise, of power, of wealth, of speech, of honor, of friendship, of example, and of love. Can you think of any others?

The true role of all authority is to provide SERVICE. The inner power of authority is TRUTH. The legitimate foundation of authority is GOODNESS. Authority can be used, misused or abused. Some authority, such as that of Satan, or that of a tyrant, or that of a crime boss, is evil.

For Christians the SOURCE OF ALL AUTHORITY IS GOD WHO IS PERFECT LOVE, PERFECT TRUTH, AND PERFECT GOODNESS. Sometimes the Bible accents the authority of God and makes it seem arbitrary. "God has mercy on anyone He wishes, and He makes stubborn anyone He wishes. . . . Who are you, my friend, to talk back to God?" writes St. Paul (Romans 9:18-20). Well, we can never too frequently remember that God is "the merciful Father" (2 Corinthians 1:3) and "the God of love" (2 Corinthians 13:11c). What Abraham offered to do as an example of ultimate faith, that is, to sacrifice his son Isaac, God actually did by giving Jesus to be sacrificed on the Cross because of His love for humanity. God's undisputed authority rests on His boundless love.

Read Revelation 4:1-8. Here the majestic authority of God is accented through a vision. Complete the following:

In a circle around the throne were seated_____ elders (symbolizing the Old Testament Patriarchs and the New Testament Apostles; vs. 4).

In front of the throne _____ _____ were burning (symbolizing the seven spirits of God; vs. 5. See Isaiah 11:2).

Surrounding the throne were_____

_____

(angelic beings representing man and all creatures; vss. 6-8).

The living creatures sang day and night:

_____

_____

_____ (vs. 8c).

Read John 3:16-17. Here God's love is stressed. Complete the following:

For God loved the world so much that He _____, so that

_____

(vs. 16).

God did not send His Son into the world to be its _____, but to be its _____ (vs. 17).

Read Romans 9:14-21. Here St. Paul speaks about the paradoxical combination of God's authority and mercy. Complete the following:

Everything depends, not on what _____, but only on _____ (vs. 16).

Who can resist _____ (vs. 19b)?

Is God unjust? Not _____ (vs. 14b).

St. Paul rightly assumes that God always acts on the basis of mercy. Although God cannot be questioned, He would never "make stubborn," as He did Pharoh, anyone with a pure heart. The King of Egypt was already rebellious and set against God in his heart.

Why is God's authority not more visibly accepted by nations and society, except, more or less, through lip service? Would His authority help or not help governments, institutions and business function more justly? What are the difficulties? Have you accepted the authority of God? What are your difficulties? How can we learn and help others learn that God's authority is based on love? Discuss:

God Has Given All Authority To Christ

The Risen Christ said to his disciples: "I HAVE BEEN GIVEN ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH" (Matthew 28:18). In the Book of Revelation the authority of Christ over all things is symbolized by His opening of the scroll with the seven seals which no one could open (Revelation 5:1-5).

Jesus spoke with divine authority. He cast out evil spirits with the authority of the Holy Spirit. He healed the sick by His divine power. Wherever He went, whatever He taught, and whatever He did, He radiated God's authority. The supreme test of His authority was His victory over Satan, sin, evil, and death — the worst enemies of humanity. Through His self-sacrifice on the Cross, "Christ stripped the (evil) spiritual rulers and authorities of their power" (Colossians 2:15, alternate translation bottom of p. 511).

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST IS AN AUTHORITY OF LOVE AND SERVICE. Its foundation is truth and goodness. Christ served us by setting us free from the powers of darkness, by the forgiveness of our sins, and by His gift of new life. The purpose of Christ's authority is summed up in His prayer to the Father: "For You gave Him (that is, Christ) authority over all mankind, so that He might give eternal life to all those You gave Him" (John 17:2).

Read Philippians 2:6-11. This early Christian hymn, which is quoted by St. Paul, tells of the humility of Christ and His glorification by the Father.

What did Christ always have? _____

_____ (vs. 6).

What did Christ do of His own free will? _____

_____

_____ (vs. 7a).

What was Christ's most profound act of humility? _____ (vs. 8).

What did God give Christ?

_____ (vs. 9b).

What is the supreme title (name of Christ) which all beings are destined to proclaim

_____

_____(vs. 11).

Read Matthew 20:25-28.

What did the rulers and leaders of the heathen have over their subjects (vs. 25)?

_____ _____

What must a disciple of Christ be to others (vss. 26b-27)?

_____ _____

Why did Christ come to the world (vs. 28)?

_____

_____

Read John 8:31-36.

When are we Christ's disciples (vs. 31)?

_____

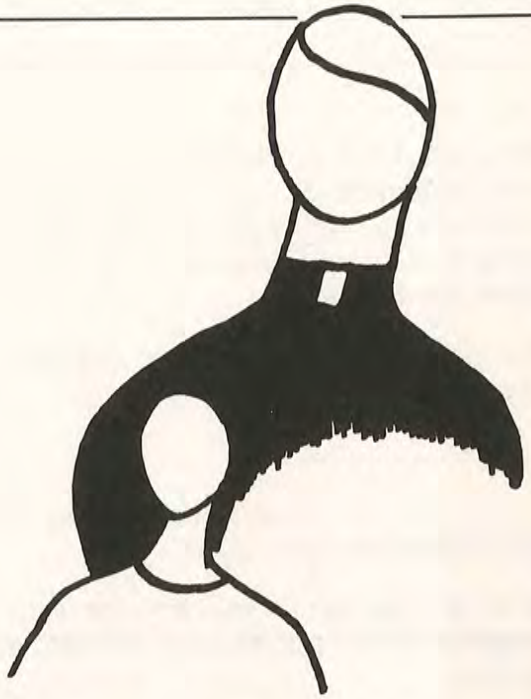
What happens when we know the truth(vs. 32)?

_____

When are we really free (vs. 36)?

_____

How To Relate To Authority



The very word AUTHORITY puts people on guard. Many submit to authority but inwardly resent it. Others rebel against it and fight it all their lives. Still others are able to defeat authority and set up their own authority. Probably few people entirely relax about authority. Each person has free will and tends to resist limits by outside forces. Yet when a person receives authority he or she may easily be corrupted by it and may abuse others.

When a Christian surrenders himself or herself to Christ, he or she does not have big problems with authority. The one perfect authority, Jesus Christ, releases him or her to relate to all imperfect authority on the basis of new life in Christ and all that Christ has taught us. "Live as free people; do not, however, use your freedom to cover up any evil, but live as God's slaves," counsels St. Peter (I Peter 2:16). "Slave" is a strong but apt word to describe the Christian's full obedience to the authority of Christ. St. Paul often called himself "SLAVE OF CHRIST" because he had voluntarily surrendered his will to Christ. St. Paul did not lose his ego but willingly identified with the perfect ego of Christ.

The Church as a community of faith is intended to help us learn how to relate to authority -- parents, teachers, priests, bishops, Parish Council members, and others engaged in Church service. Christ is in all. We learn the value of obedience. We can speak the truth in love. We recognize that the purpose of authority is Christian service. As WE GROW IN CHRISTIAN LIFE, WE NEED NOT HAVE PROBLEMS WITH AUTHORITY BECAUSE WE ALL LOOK TO THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST WHO UNITES US. We learn to put our brothers and sisters first. When we fail, we know how to practice forgiveness as Christ has taught us.

Christians take these precious lessons with them into the world. They treat everyone with respect. They try to serve. They honor the country's laws

as long as they do not violate the teachings of Christ. They pray for civil authorities and help them carry out their functions. They look upon the world as God's beloved people and a potential Church. They try to walk as Christ walked — with integrity, truth and love in all things.

Read Hebrews 13:17.

What does verse 17a say about our Christian leaders? _____

_____

To whom must they give account for the care of their flock (vs. 17b)? _____

How will they work if we obey them (vs. 17c)?

_____

What will happen if we do not obey them (vs. 17d)? _____

_____

Read Romans 13:1-7. Here St. Paul has in view the more authoritarian ways of ancient governments but his advice is still useful as long as the state does not compel Christians to do what is evil. Complete the following:

Everyone must obey state authorities, because _____

_____

_____ (that is, they have been allowed by God; vs. 1).

You must obey the authorities--not just because of God's punishment, but also as (vs. 5). _____

That is also why you pay _____, because the authorities are working for God when they _____ (vs. 6).

Read I Corinthians 9:19-22.

What is St. Paul according to verse 19a?

_____

Why does St. Paul make himself everybody's slave (vs. 19b)? _____

_____

What law does St. Paul observe in this freedom of action (vs. 21c)? _____

Why does St. Paul become "all things to all men" (vs. 22b)? _____

_____

Which of the above passages was most meaningful? What new idea about authority did you learn from this Bible Study? What difference would it make if persons in authority would view their position less in terms of ego and more in terms of love and service? How can we as Christians help them to fulfill their duties without making them feel threatened?

Prayer:
"O Lord, Who blesses those who worship You, and sanctifies those who trust in You; save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Give peace to Your world, to Your Churches, to Your Priests and to all those in civil authority. For You are the source of all good things and to You we offer thanksgiving and worship, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 9

How To Deal With Suffering

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Lord God, the father of mercies and of all comfort, we lift up our hearts to You. Remember us in Your love, O Lord, because of Your kindness. Forgive us our sins and deliver us from our afflictions. Have mercy on us and protect us in our trials, for You are our strength and refuge. Amen."

Scripture:
Read Romans 14:8 and write it here:

_____

_____

The Problem Of Suffering

Have you recently visited a home for retarded children, a care center for the elderly, a mental institution, or a hospital?

The problem of suffering is real. There are many sicknesses. Accidents occur on the road, at work, school, or home. People grow old and their bodies break down. Some are born with handicaps. Others who are born healthy suffer because of hunger and lack of medical care. Much suffering is inflicted by man against man. Exploitation. Injustices. Wars. Innocent children get hurt and die. A lot of suffering is also self-inflicted either by overwork, abuses (smoking, drugs, improper diet), or lack of good judgment in social relationships. And there is the unseen mental and psychological suffering of many people as they grow up and throughout their lives.

Have you ever thought about the subject of suffering? Share some of your ideas and experiences. Perhaps you have read Milton, Dostoyevsky, or the Book of Job. Others may be familiar with medical, psychological or sociological works that deal with human suffer-

_____

Look To God For Comfort and Help

For almost all of us the issue is not whether or not we are going to suffer at one point or another in life, but HOW WE ARE GOING TO FACE SUFFERING.

The ordinary reactions to suffering are universal. Apprehension. Fear. Anxiety. Pain. Resentment. Confusion. Anger at people. Anger at God. Lostness. Bitterness. Great intellectuals have looked for single answers. Marx raged against capitalist society. Lenin established communism. Ivan in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* turned to "atheism." None of these have been, or can be, adequate answers to the problem of suffering.

But CHRISTIANS HAVE FOUND THE ANSWER IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST. There are three great answers to the problem of suffering for Christians. The FIRST ANSWER is a promise: evil and death will some day be eliminated by God and suffering will cease with them. God "will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4). The SECOND ANSWER is a reality: Christ has already defeated the powers of evil and death and we need no longer be under their sway. He has "stripped the (evil) spiritual rulers of their power: and "has rescued us from the power of darkness" (Colossians 2:15 and 1:13). The THIRD ANSWER is an assurance: Christ has come to carry our burdens. He says: "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Countless Christian believers in moments of physical and mental suffering have turned to God and have found strength, peace, and rest. A sickness viewed in another light. An accident taking on different meaning. Death faced with hope. A crisis met with courage. Often a blessing comes from the most difficult of circumstances. The Christian is assured that God is near. He cares for us as a loving Father. He suffers with us. He identifies with the afflicted, the poor, and the oppressed of the world. GOD HAS GIVEN US HIS ONLY SON TO SHOW THAT HE SHARED WITH US THE BURDENS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF EVIL IN THE WORLD. So with St. Paul, the Christian exclaims: "If God is for us, who can be against us? Certainly not God, Who did not even keep back His own Son, but offered Him for us all! He gave us His Son — will He not also freely give us all things" (Romans 8:31-32)?

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

How many does Christ invite to come to him? (vs. 28)_____.

What three things does Christ ask of those who turn to Him (vs. 29)?_____

_____

What is His promise to them (vs. 29)? _____

_____

How does Christ describe Himself (vs. 29)?

_____

What does He give us and put on us (vs. 30)?

an_____yoke a_____load

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

Who is our great High Priest? (vs. 14) _____

_____

Why is Christ able to sympathize with our weaknesses (vs. 15)?_____

_____

Write here the conclusion in verse 16:

Read Philippians 4:10-13.

What feeling is expressed by St. Paul? (vs. 10)._____

What has St. Paul learned to be, whether full or hungry (vs. 12)?_____

What is St. Paul's source of strength (vs. 13)?_____

Read Romans 8:26-28.

Who comes to help us in our weaknesses (vs. 26)? _____

What is St. Paul's conviction about those who love God and remain faithful to Him (vs. 28)? _____

Seek Christian Friends

A great resource in dealing with suffering are Christian friends. St. Maximus the Confessor writes: "The friends of Christ love all men sincerely. They KEEP THE BONDS OF LOVE TO THE END. Many have said much about love, yet if you seek it, you will find it only among the disciples of Christ."

In moments of suffering a single telephone call from a sincere Christian friend is uplifting. A CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH. Christian friends pray for each other. They stand by each other with words of encouragement. They help each other with deeds. They carry each others' burdens. The Christ in them reaches out to all. They draw strength from God and uplift all those with whom they come into contact.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11.

How is God described in verse 3? _____

How are we to help others who have troubles (vs. 4)? _____

Just as we have a share in Christ's many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in _____ (vs. 5).

What did St. Paul learn from severe suffering (vs. 9b)? _____

How did the Corinthians help St. Paul (vs. 11a)? _____

Read Romans 15:1-6.

What should those who are strong in the faith do (vs. 1)? _____

The Scriptures gives us _____ and _____ (vs. 4).

What is St. Paul's prayer regarding Christians in vss. 5-6?

Have the same _____

By following _____

So that all may _____

Read Hebrews 3:12-14 and complete the following:

My fellow believers, be careful that no one will turn away from _____ (vs. 12).

You must help one another _____ (vs. 13).

We are all partners with Christ if we _____ _____ (vs. 14).

Think Of Suffering As A Means Of Growth

The outline (pp. 386-87 in your Bible) offers additional themes on suffering. Rich passages are included under the themes "Expect Suffering as a Part of Following Christ" and also the theme "Use

Trouble (that is, suffering) as an Opportunity for Witness." Such passages as 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, I Peter 4:12-19, 2 Corinthians 4:7-15, and Philippians 1:21-29 may be read with great benefit. You may do this as a group or privately.

For the present Bible Study, let's lastly reflect on the outline's (p. 386) theme "Think of Suffering as a Means of Growth." This is a great theme in the Bible. The child cannot walk without bruising its knees a few times. Athletes endure both pain and privation to excel. So the Christian grows through trials, tests, and sufferings. Do not be afraid of mistakes and failures. No one grows without errors and falls. Just get back on the track: turn to God in faith, ask Him for forgiveness, trust in Him, ask Him to help you in your regular prayer. Then go out to meet people and to do your work with a sincere heart strengthened by God's power.

Read Romans 5:1-5 and complete the following:

We now live in this experience of _____ _____(vs. 2).

For Christians who continue to trust in God trouble becomes a source of blessings because: _____

_____

_____(vss. 3-4).

Christian hope is not disappointed, because God has _____

_____(vs. 5).

Read I Peter 1:6-9.

What is the purpose of trials (vs.7a)?

_____

Why is our faith tested (vs. 7b)?

_____

Why should the Christian rejoice in trials (vs. 9)?_____

_____

Read James 1:2-8 and 12-18.

What is the goal of a tested faith that endures (vs. 4)? That you may be _____

_____

How should the Christian pray (vs. 6)?

_____

Where does temptation come from (vss. 13-14)?

_____

What comes from God (vs. 17)?

_____

Review this Bible Study. What passages were most meaningful? What have you learned? How can you deal with a crisis, test, or trial that may come your way? What can we as Christians do for people in old age homes, mental institutions, and other hospitals? If you know someone who is now suffering, how can you help him or her?

Prayer:
"Christ, our God, Who chose of Your own free will to be raised upon the Cross, grant Your mercies to Your people who are called by Your Name. In Your power, gladden our hearts in the midst of trials and strengthen our souls with Your Holy Spirit so that we may help those who are suffering and afflicted; through the prayers of Your Most Holy Mother and of all the Saints. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 10

How To Understand The Future

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Christ, our God, Who at all times and in all places are worshipped and glorified both in heaven and on earth, receive our prayers at this very hour and direct our lives in the way of Your teachings. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, and cleanse our thoughts. Surround us with Your Holy Angels, so that, guided and guarded by them, we may walk in oneness of faith on the way to Your Kingdom. Amen."
Scripture:
Read John 14:2a and write it here: _____

_____

The Gift Of Time

"What time is it?" people often ask. If you think about it, it is a rather profound question. Of course people may only ask casually about a specific time. But each time they do, they implicitly raise the deeper issue about the meaning of all time.
Time is yesterday, today and tomorrow. Movement. Change. The whole universe, and our lives, are in continuous motion. Time is a risk. Change can be threatening. Evil days may lie ahead. Each person walks toward final death. But TIME IS ALSO AN EXCITING OPPORTUNITY. Change can imply creativity, new visions and new situations. THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST IS THAT THINGS DON'T HAVE TO BE WHAT THEY ARE! A person can change and grow toward "the very height of Christ's full stature" (Ephesians 4:13b).
The Bible says that time, and everything else in the universe, is a gift from God and has a wonderful purpose. It does not move in meaningless cycles. It is targeted. It comes from God. It is moving toward the Kingdom of God. Its purpose is God's action to save the world and to reconcile humanity to Himself. The supreme fulfillment of time is Jesus Christ. During the Christmas Liturgy we read a passage from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians which in part says: "When the right time finally came, God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).
What time is it? Jesus referred to the gift of time in the very first words of His message in this way: "The right time has come and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!" (Mark 1:15).

Read Luke 4:16-21.
From what book did Jesus read in the synagogue in Nazareth (vs. 17)?

_____

What was upon Jesus as He spoke (vs. 18a)

_____

What was He to announce (vs. 19)?

_____

_____

What did Jesus say to the people (vs. 21)?

_____

_____

Read Luke 19:1-10.
What was Zacchaeus trying to do (vs. 3)?

_____

How did Zacchaeus respond to Christ's request (vs. 6)? _____

_____

Jesus said to him, "_____

_____ today." (vs. 9).

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-2.
With whom does St. Paul say that we work (vs. 1)? _____

What should Christians not let be wasted (vs. 1)? _____

What is St. Paul's urgent advice to all (vs. 2b-c) Listen! This is _____

_____ ; _____

_____ !

So . . . .

IT IS TIME TO BE PART OF GOD'S FULFILLED TIME . . . TIME MORE FULLY TO ACCEPT THE DAY OF SALVATION IN CHRIST . . . TIME TO UNITE OURSELVES WITH CHRIST AND TO LET HIM CHANGE OUR LIVES ACCORDING TO THE GOOD NEWS OF HIS LOVE . . . THEN WE CAN TURN TO OUR MANY TASKS IN THE WORLD WITH A NEW VISION ABOUT THE MEANING OF TIME AND ALSO WITH CHRIST'S POWER TO MAKE GOOD USE OF PARTICULAR TIME.

Think of your twenty-four hour schedule: sleeping, eating, school or work, television, recreation and so on. How much of your time is devoted to God? How much of it is lived in conscious awareness of Christ? How can you re-order priorities and interests to appreciate God's gift of time and His purpose for it? Discuss:

Don't Be Anxious About The Future

The first theme of the outline on HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE FUTURE is "Don't be Anxious About the Future" (p. 387 in your Bible). The first suggested passage under this theme from the Sermon on the Mount where Christ says: "Do not be worried about the food and drink you need in order to stay alive . . . . Look at the birds . . . . Look how the wild flowers grow" (Matthew 6:25-28)!

Surely the above words of Jesus are not a counsel for laziness. They intend to accent that ABOVE ALL THINGS GOD SHOULD BE NUMBER ONE. It takes great faith to accept those words and to put them into practice. Jesus said them and practiced them because God *was* the absolute reality of His life. He was God Himself. How can the Christian do the same?
Bishop Fenelon spoke of the "the sanctification of ordinary actions." What he meant is that Christ's time becomes the Christian's time. The Christian abandons himself or herself to Christ. The Christian's life is determined not simply by human affairs, plans, like and dislikes, but by Christ. The Christian "lets go" : her or she does not try to control people or situations either by intent or action. He allows God to run the universe. He entrusts the flow of events to Christ. The Christian's responsibility is to do the right thing according to Christ's will with love and without contriving. The Christian lives in prayer. Christ lives His life in the Christian. Ordinary life and time become sanctified. Life is transformed into a sacrament. In the midst of tasks and responsibilities deep faith and peace emerge, such as Christ indicated in the Sermon on the Mount, which dispel worry and anxiety. The Christian learns to live in the fulfilled now-- THE TIME OF GOD'S SALVATION.

Read Matthew 6:24-34 and complete the following:
No one can be_____

_____(vs. 24a).

This is why I tell you:_____

_____

_____(vs. 25a).

Can any of you live a bit longer by_____ _____(vs. 27)?

Your Father in heaven knows that you_____ _____(vs. 32b).

Instead, be concerned above everything else with_____and with _____ _____, and _____ _____(vs. 33).

There is no need to add to the troubles_____ _____(vs. 34c).

Read Ephesians 1:18-23 and complete the following:

I ask (God) that your minds may be opened to see _____(vs. 18).

How very great is His power at work in_____ _____(vs. 19a).

The same power is the mighty strength which He used when_____ _____(vs. 19b).

Christ rules in the heavenly world above all _____,_____, _____,and _____(vs. 21a).

The Church is Christ's body, the completion of_____ _____(vs. 23).

Be Prepared For Christ's Coming

Jesus said to His disciples: "Watch, then, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming . . . . What I say to you, then, I say to all: Watch" (Mark 13:35-37)! St. Paul urges: "Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13)! There are many similar passages in the New Testament about watchfulness, vigilance, and readiness. The early Christians lived with the hope of the imminent return of Jesus. "*Marana tha* — Our Lord, come!" (I Corinthians 16:22), was their prayer.

Today the Church continues to live with the same hope for the return of the Risen Christ and the renewal of all things. The second Sunday prior to Great Lent is devoted to the Second Coming of Christ and to the theme of judgment. In the prayers, hymns, and worship of the Church, there are many references to the expectation of the coming of Christ and His Kingdom.

The Church Fathers stressed a life of prayer and worship. They discouraged speculation about "when" Christ will return in His glory. They deemed it sufficient to be faithful in the present time of salvation and to leave the future in God's hands. WHEN THE CHRISTIAN PRAYERFULLY LIVES IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST, THE LORD "COMES" TO THE CHRISTIAN EVERYDAY. And the Christian remains prepared for the Lord's glorious return.

Read Luke 12:35-40 and complete the following:
Be ready for_____ _____and_____ _____(vs. 35).

How_____are those servants

whose master finds them_____and _____when he returns (vs. 37)!

Be ready, because _____ _____ _____(vs. 40).

Read I Thessalonians 5:1-11.

What adverb describes Christ's coming (vs. 3)? _____.

The Day of the Lord should not take Christians by_____(vs. 4).

Christians should be_____and _____(vs. 6).

Christ died for us in order that we_____ _____ _____(vs. 10).

Read I John 3:1-3.

What are Christians now because of God's love (vs. 1)?_____

When will it be fully clear what Christians are and what they shall be like (vs. 2b)?_____ _____ _____

Everyone who has his hope in Christ keeps _____,just as_____(vs. 3).

Read I Peter 5:8-11.

Who roams around like a lion looking for someone to devour (vs.8)? _____

What is St. Peter's advice (vss. 8-9)?
Be_____, be_____
....Be_____

and_____him.

To what does God call Christians (vs. 10)?
To share _____ _____

How would it help Christians to remember Christ's Second Coming more often? Can you point out references to it in the Divine Liturgy? Do you have a "quiet time" daily to read a passage from the Bible, pray, and be with Christ? Would you be prepared if the Risen Lord returned in glory tonight? Discuss:

A meditation from Fenelon:

"There are many different times in our life . . . none of it should be considered useless. All counts in the sequence of our salvation. God has given us the time and has filled it with countless opportunities for growth and for good. The important thing is to be with Him and abide in Him so that we may know what He wants us to do with our time . . . It is not only a matter of making good use of our time, not wasting it on trivialities, but also of doing that which is God's will for us."

Prayer:
"We know, O Lord, that the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness, holiness and peace in the Holy Spirit. O Christ, our God, bless us and grant us Your grace that we may use our time and all the gifts you have given us according to Your will. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 11

How To Deal With Evil

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Christ, our God, have mercy on us according to Your great mercy. Wash us thoroughly from malice. Forgive us our sins. Deliver us from evil. Grant to us the joy of Your salvation and let your Holy Spirit dwell in us. Amen."

Scripture:
Read Romans 12:21 and write it here:

_____

_____

Take Evil Seriously

Karl Menninger, the famed psychiatrist, wrote a book a few years ago entitled *Whatever Happened to Sin* ? He wanted to draw attention to personal responsibility for wrongs committed in society. Personal and social wrong-doings are not simply expressions of behavioral problems, lack of social adjustment, lack of economic opportunity, errors of casual judgment and the like. Society is numbed by an inundation of evils and has come to understand most of them as accepted aspects of human life. In the same year that the United Nations observed the Year of the Child (1979), there were an estimated 50,000,000 abortions in the world!

THE APOSTLES AND CHURCH FATHERS TOOK EVIL SERIOUSLY. They viewed personal and social wrongs as symptoms of deeply-rooted evil in the world. The power of evil in men's hearts put Christ on the Cross. Christ died to free humanity from the slavery of sin. St. Paul saw Satan as "the evil god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). St. Peter urged: "Be alert, be on watch! Your enemy, the Devil, roams around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour" (I Peter 5:8). Church Fathers and Saints took the view that the demons, using evil men, would utterly destroy humanity if God's power did not keep them in check.

The outline (pp. 388-89) begins with the admonition to "Take Evil Seriously." In His work, Jesus had to deal with evil. Although He loved sinners, He took an uncompromising position against evil. He forgave those who repented but left no ambiguity about the line between right and wrong.

Read Matthew 18:6-9. Here Jesus talks about individual responsibility with regard to evil in vivid images.

There are things that make people_____
_____(vs. 7a).

But how terrible for_____
_____(vs. 7b).

What option does Jesus say results from good? From evil (vs. 8)?

To enter_____
To be thrown_____

What is the greatest evil (vss. 8-9)?
To lose your_____

Read Mark 7:14-23. Jesus teaches that evil starts in the inner thoughts and will. Holiness is purity of heart.

Not what goes into but what _____ a person makes him _____ (vs. 20).

Evil ideas from the inside come from a person's _____ (vs. 21).

Examples of evil ideas are (vss. 21-22):

_____, _____

_____, _____

_____, _____.

Read Matthew 12:33-36. All actions proceed from the heart as fruit from a tree.

How is a tree known? _____ _____ (vs. 33).

A good person brings good things out of _____ _____ _____ (vs. 35).

When will everyone have to give account _____ (vs. 36)?

What will the verdict be and what will pronounce it?
Your _____ will declare you either _____ or _____ (vs. 37).

Read Revelation 2:8-11. The Church can be attacked by evil and must be alert to fight against it.

What Church is being tested (vs. 8)? _____

What is the test (vs. 10)? _____

What advice is given to the Church (vs. 10)?

What do you think is the influence of mass communication on man's moral sensitivities? Why? Can a person be so numbed as to lose a feeling of good and evil? Why is the line between good and evil blurred for many? How can the Christian acquire Christ's clarity about right and wrong?

Take Action Against Evil

The outline (pp. 388-89) includes two sets of passages on fighting evil: "Resist Temptation" and "Take Action Against Evil." Numerous passages are given as examples. Some of the statements on each passage may be summarized as follows:

Resist Temptation

Remind yourselves of your calling
Conquer evil with good
Temptations can be escaped
Do not use freedom as an excuse
Put on a new self
Put on God's armor
Avoid foolish arguments
Control your tongue
Don't accept society's values without thinking

Take Action Against Evil

Jesus condemns hypocrisy
Jesus cleanses the Temple
Paul rebukes a magician
Paul cleanses a girl of an evil spirit
Do not keep company with someone who willfully sins
Let light shine on evil

In taking action against evil THE CHRISTIAN BEGINS WITH HIMSELF OR HERSELF. Jesus warned that we must correct ourselves before we try to help others: "First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). Humility, not self-righteousness, is the Christian's mark.

The key to spiritual growth and discernment is learning to deal with one's own temptations. If a Christian positively strengthens himself or herself by regular worship, frequent Holy Communion, daily reading of the Bible and other spiritual activities. Then a solid foundation is built to defend against temptations. We may fall and rise again and again.

But WE CAN STAY CLOSE TO CHRIST, SEEK HIS FORGIVENESS, AND CONTINUE TO MATURE AS CHRISTIANS. St. Paul assures that God will not allow us to be tested beyond your power to remain firm, if we desire to remain firm: "At the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out" (I Corinthians 10:13). In this way the Christian becomes more sensitive to what is good and evil, knows how to deal with evil, and then humbly tries to help others.

Read Romans 12:17-21 and complete the following:

If someone has done you wrong, do not_____ _____ (vs. 17).

Do everything possible on your part to_____ _____ (vs. 18).

Never_____,

my friends (vs. 19). Instead, if your enemy is_____

_____

_____ (vs. 20).

Read Ephesians 4:23-32.

How does the new Christian self reveal itself (vs. 24)?_____

_____

To whom must we not give a chance by words or deeds (vs.27)?_____

Whom must we not make sad (vs. 30)?_____

_____

What are some examples of attitudes and conduct that we must get rid of (vs. 31)?

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Read Ephesians 5:3-17.

What are Christians called (vs 3)?_____

In what will no immoral, indecent or greedy person share (vs. 5)?_____

_____

Since you have become the Lord's people, you are_____and must live

_____

_____ (vs. 8).

Learn what pleases the_____ (vs. 10).

Make good use of every opportunity you have, because these_____(vs. 16).

What is the difference between being "tempted" and being "tested," if any? What do you think St. Paul means when he says: "conquer evil with good" (Romans 12:21)? Is it possible to take action against evil and fall into evil? Discuss:

Trust In God - Forgive Those Who Wrong You

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed: "Father, . . . Your will be done" (Luke 22:42). From the Cross, he looked down on His crucifiers and then prayed again to God: "Forgive them, Father! They don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

The above instances are the two supreme acts of trust and forgiveness in the New Testament. Jesus, perfect God and perfect man, directly faced the evil which raced against Him and tried to destroy Him. He was tempted in the wilderness

by the Devil. The strict Pharisees hated Him because He violated the prohibition of work on the Sabbath by healing people. The leaders of the people feared Him and plotted to kill Him. WHAT WAS JESUS' RESPONSE? "LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU" (Matthew 5:44).

God's love prompts Christians to regard all as brothers. They may be difficult, careless, even God-rejecting, but they are still brothers. The Saints looked upon all people, even the most sinful ones, with compassion: they are God's children who have lost their way and need our prayers. They seem to be under the control of evil. If anything can help them, it is God's power working through our prayers, love, forgiveness, and goodness. Any other reaction to them, such as criticism, rejection, or condemnation, will make them all the more difficult and unrepentant. HATE SIN AND EVIL, BUT LOVE IMPERFECT AND SINFUL MAN, AND TRY TO HELP HIM IN GOOD FAITH.

Trust in God when dealing with evil and forgive those who wrong you from your heart. Trusting in God means to have the assurance that His power rules over all. NO GREATER SECURITY AGAINST EVIL EXISTS THAN TO BE UNDER GOD'S PROTECTION. A well-known Psalm states: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High abides in the shadow of the Almighty. He will say to the Lord: 'My wall, my refuge, my God in whom I trust!" (Psalm 91:1-2 90:1-2 in the Septuagint). The Christian who trusts in God finds the courage and the greatness of heart to forgive as Jesus did from the Cross. The growing Christian follows the footsteps of his Lord.

Read John 17:13-15. Christ prays to His Father about Christians in the world facing evil.

Why does the world show hate toward Christians (vs. 14)? _____

_____

What does Jesus ask of His Father (vs. 15)?
Not to _____

but to _____

_____

How are Christians dedicated to God (vs17)?
By means of _____

Read Hebrews 2:13-18. Christ is portrayed speaking to God about His followers and then His saving work is explained.

What does Christ say according to verse 13a?

_____

Why did Christ become man and suffer death?
That He might destroy the _____ (vs. 14b).

And in this way _____

_____

_____ (vs. 15).

Why can Christ help those who are tempted (vs. 18)?

_____

Read Matthew 18:21-35. Jesus teaches limitless forgiveness through a parable.

What did Peter ask Jesus (vs. 21)? _____

_____

_____

What was Jesus' answer (vs. 22)? _____

_____

What is God's will as expressed in verse 33? _____

_____

What is Jesus' admonition (vs. 35)? _____

_____

_____

What have you learned about how to deal with evil? Can you develop a practical strategy in facing temptations? What are some of the difficulties in trusting God when having to deal with evil? How can you overcome them with God's help? What is the value of forgiveness of wrongdoers if a wrongdoer does not, as in the case of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35), appreciate it? Discuss:

Meditation from the Church Fathers:
No one can be saved without temptation.

Prayer:
"Lord, protect us under the shelter of Your wings. Cast away from us influences of the Evil One. Forgive those who hate us and persecute us. Lord, have mercy on us and save us. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 12

How To Think About Non-Christian Religions

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. To You, Master Who loves mankind, we entrust our whole life and hope. Make us worthy to abide in You with a pure conscience. Give us wisdom and understanding. Grant to us Your Holy Spirit that we might walk on the straight ways of Your truth and treat all people with love. Amen."

Scripture:
Read Romans 12:18 and write it here:

_____

_____

Know Your Own Faith

Our globe has shrunk in the twentieth century through the impact of travel, communications and information. In your school there may be many students who were born in other lands, not only Europe, but also South America, Africa, and the Far East. When you go into town, you may see several persons dressed in the clothes of another culture. An unfamiliar Church or Temple may be located not far from your home. Films on television show different parts of the world and aspects of their religions.

So contact not only with other Christian faiths but also with non-Christian religions may be as close as a next door neighbor, a turn around the block, a flip of the television switch, or a student two seats from you. The issue of relating to people of other cultures, languages, and customs has always been a difficult one for man. Unfamiliarity breeds suspicion. The phenomenon of strange fads and cults, which may receive undue attention because of notorious acts or practices, complicates the problem.

How can we as Orthodox Christians think about other Christian faiths and non-Christian religions, and how can we relate to persons outside of the Orthodox Church? A first important answer is this: KNOW YOUR OWN ORTHODOX FAITH. An Orthodox Christian can hardly begin to talk about other religions or feel relaxed about meeting persons of other faiths if he or she does not have a good knowledge of the Orthodox Faith. A strong foundation in the life and teachings of the Orthodox Church provides both security and wisdom in thinking about other religions and meeting persons of other faiths.

LIVE YOUR ORTHODOX FAITH. By prayer. By worship. By Holy Communion. By learning about the fundamental teachings of the Orthodox Church on the Holy Trinity, Christ, Church, Bible, Tradition, man, world, sin and salvation. By practicing what you know in the life of your local parish, family, youth group, school, friends, work, and daily life. THE MORE GENUINE YOU ARE AS AN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN, THE MORE GENUINE ALSO YOUR RESPONSE WILL BE TOWARD PEOPLE AND IDEAS OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

Read Luke 16:1-8. With an extreme example, Jesus admonishes Christians not to be less alert

about their own affairs than worldly people are about theirs.

What is the title of this passage in your Bible? _____

What was the manager doing in his job (vs. 1b)? _____

Describe in your own words what the shrewd manager did when his master called him to account (vss. 4-7):

_____

_____

What do you think is the meaning of the subtle admonition in verse 8? _____

_____

_____

Read Romans 2:17-24. St. Paul talks about some of the Jews but the passage can be applied as well to some Christians.

Some examples of what Jews boasted about are (vss. 17-20):

_____

_____

_____

Describe in your own words how St. Paul counters such boasting (vss. 21-23): _____

_____

_____

Read John 15:1-10. Jesus talks about the vine and the branches. The Church is the Body of Christ. Christians belong to Christ as branches to a vine.

Who is the real vine (vs. 1)? _____

How can Christians grow and bear fruit (vs. 4)?

By being united to _____

What is Christ's promise to those who are united to Him (vs. 7)? _____

_____

What two things happen when Christians bear good fruit (vs. 8)? _____

_____

Respect Other People

When St. Paul traveled through Athens, he reacted like any zealous Christian. "He was greatly upset when he noticed how full of idols the city was" (Acts 17:16). He was soon engaged in a vigorous witness to the Christian faith. Yet, at the same time, it was St. Paul who urged Christians: "Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody" (Romans 12:18). And again he wrote elsewhere: "After all, it is none of my business to judge outsiders. God will judge them" (I Corinthians 5:12-13).

Among the Saints, the elder Silouan (1866-1938) held a remarkably enlightened view of people of other religions and faiths. He would not pronounce judgment on any person, far or near. Sure of his own faith experience, he deeply sensed that GOD HAS HIS WAYS WITH ALL THE WORLD'S PEOPLE WHOM HE LOVES DEARLY. He constantly prayed that all people might turn to God and come to know His love in Jesus Christ. Once another Orthodox monk declared to him with evident satisfaction: "God will punish all

atheists. They will burn in everlasting fire." Distressed with such an attitude, Silouan replied: "Tell me, supposing you went to paradise and there looked down and saw somebody in hell-fire — would you feel happy?" The monk replied: "It can't be helped. It would be their own fault." Silouan said: "Love could not bear that. We must pray for all."

There are several reasons why Christians must respect other people and honor their God-given freedom to make religious choices. First, each human being bears God's image. God loves each soul equally. Every human being deserves love and respect. Secondly, each person carries within himself or herself God-implanted elements and possibilities of truth. A Church Father, St. Justin Martyr, saw "seeds of divine truth" in Socrates, Plato, and other Greek philosophers whom he called "Christians before Christ." It has been well observed that almost every major religion has a Decalogue (Ten Commandments) or something like it. And thirdly, all people have searched and search for God even though their ideas and practices may be inadequate. To respect their ideas and try to understand them, means to respect them as people who cherish their values. God works with all people. The Christian's task is to provide such a convincing witness through his love and work that persons of other faiths may see and choose to follow Christ.

Read Romans 2:6-16 and complete the following:

God will reward every person according to_____ (vs. 6).

God will give glory, honor, and peace to_____ _____what is good, to the_____ and also to the_____. For God judges everyone by the_____ _____(vs. 10-11).

Their_____ shows, and their_____ also show, that the Law is written in_____ _____(vs. 15).

God through Jesus Christ will judge_____ _____(vs. 16).

Read Acts 17:22-34.

How did St. Paul compliment the Athenians (vs. 22)? _____

_____

What was St. Paul's starting point familiar to the Athenians (vs. 23)?_____

What are some of the things St. Paul tells us about God in verses 24-31?

Discuss any striking aspects of the above passages.

Maintain The Truth

At one point during His public ministry, many followers of Jesus found His teaching hard to take, so they left. Jesus then turned to the twelve disciples and asked "And you — would you also like to leave?" Peter answered Him: "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. And now we believe and know that you are the Holy One who has come from God" (John 6:67-69).

TO RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE AND THEIR IDEAS, CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES DOES NOT AT ALL IMPLY THAT WE MUST DEVIATE FROM THE PATH OF TRUTH. It is a mistake to assume that treating others with respect necessarily leads to relativism about one's own faith, just as it is a mistake to suppose that zeal of faith necessarily implies hidden anger or contempt for people of different faiths. Jesus walked freely among sinners, persons who did not think of themselves as being religious at all, even among some tax collectors and prostitutes. HE LOVED THEM WITH

GOD'S LOVE, AND HE CHANGED THEM, WITHOUT COMPROMISING HIS INTEGRITY. His sharpest words in the Gospels are against "religious people" who were sticklers about rules but unloving of people created in the image of God.

The outline (p. 390 in your Bible) suggests several ways to hold firmly to Christian truth: "Study New Ideas Carefully," "Witness to Your Faith," and "Oppose False Teachings." Of course the spirit of Christian love and humility is assumed by these suggestions. Study them, whether privately or as a group, as time allows. Below, additional selected passages are given which in their totality reflect the spirit of Orthodox Faith.

Read Colossians 2:6-12. The anchor of Christian truth is fullness of Life in Christ.

What is St. Paul's exhortation about Christ (vs. 6)?

_____

What is St. Paul's admonition about human wisdom (vs. 8)? _____

_____

_____

_____

When do Christians receive spiritual circumcision (vs. 12)? _____

Read I Thessalonians 5:12-28 and complete the following:

Pay proper respect to those who _____

_____

_____ (vs. 12).

Put all things to _____: keep _____

_____ and avoid

_____ (vs. 21-22).

May the God who gives us peace make you

_____ (vs. 23).

Read II Thessalonians 2:13-17.

What has God done for Christians (vss. 13b-14)? God _____ you as the first to be _____ by the Spirit's power to _____

and by your _____.

What is the Christian's duty (vs. 15)? _____

_____

_____

What does St. Paul pray that Christ and God will do for us (vs. 17)? _____

_____

_____

Review this Bible study. What have you learned concerning how to think about other faiths and non-Christian religions? Can you share helpful experiences with persons of other faiths? How can we maintain the truth of the Orthodox Faith without being either triumphalistic or careless? What can you do in daily life, both privately and communally, to offer a convincing witness to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Faith?

"No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead, he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:15-16.

Prayer:

"Let us praise and worship our Holy Lord Jesus, the light of the world. Christ, our Lord, You truly promised that You would be with us to the end of the ages. Therefore, we hold Your words as an anchor of hope. May Your Name be glorified for ever. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 13

How To Deal With Death

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. O Lord, we are the image of your glory, even though we bear the wounds of sin. Look upon the works of Your hands with compassion. To our departed brothers and sisters give rest in Your Kingdom, and to us the living grant Your mercies for the salvation of our souls. Amen."

Scripture:
Read John 11:25-26 and write Christ's words here:

_____

_____

_____

The Last Enemy

Everything in our being reacts against death because our desire to live is so strong. We are shocked each time we face someone who has died. The death of a loved one can cause trauma in a person. St. Paul himself was relieved when his friend Epaphroditus recovered from a serious illness and called it being spared a great sorrow (Philippians 2:25-27). Our Lord, too, when He contemplated His death on the Cross was almost crushed by sorrow and momentarily prayed to His Father: "If it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me (Matthew 26:37-39).

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF DEATH, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL. Both have their origin in sin and separation from God. St. Paul writes: "Sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and his sin brought death with it. As a result, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned" (Romans 5:12). Although people dread physical death, the death of a soul by its separation from God is even more terrible. Bind yourself to evil and you die. Unite yourself with God and you live. Evil, sin, Satan, and death are called "enemies" of humanity which can be conquered by man's most powerful Friend — God. St. Paul refers to death as the "last enemy" which God will defeat (I Corinthians 15:26).

A most powerful statement on death is in the Funeral Service in the Orthodox Church. In the hymns of this Service, the reality of death is not concealed: "Where are the affections of the world? Where are the vain dreams of delight? . . . All is dust and ashes, or a shadow that passes away." The tragedy of man's corruption is bewailed: "I weep and lament when I consider death, and when I think of those who are laid in the grave. Where is now that moving beauty created in the likeness of God?" THE ANCHOR OF HOPE IS SET ON GOD: "the God of all spirits and of all flesh, Who has destroyed death, overcome the devil, and given life to the world."

Read Romans 7:7-13. Sin tempts man to disobey God's Law and kills man.

Is the Law sinful (vs. 7)?_____

What did sin do by means of the Law (vss. 8-11)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is St. Paul's conclusion (vss. 12-13)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Read Romans 6:20-23 and complete the following:

You have been set free from sin and are the _____ (vs. 22a).

Your gain is a _____

to Him (vs. 22b). Sin pays its wage- _____ (vs. 23a). God's free gift is _____

_____

_____ (vs. 23b).

Read I Corinthians 15:51-57.

Why will the dead be raised and the living utterly changed (vs. 53)?

_____

_____

What are St. Paul's triumphant questions (vs. 55)? _____

_____

Where does death get its power (vs. 56)? _____

_____

What does God give us through Christ (vs. 57)? _____

Have you ever thought about death? Have you recently been to a funeral home? Do you think that modern society tries to hide the reality of death? How? Why are people afraid of death? How do they try to hide their fear? Have you ever encountered a Christian of deep faith who could face death differently? Discuss.

Christ Is Victor Over Death

"He is not here — He has been raised!" said the angel to the women who had come to the tomb of Jesus early on Sunday morning (Mark 16:6). This Easter greeting is the banner of Christianity.

The Orthodox Church celebrates the Resurrection of Christ with special splendor. "Come and glorify Christ Who is risen from the dead," the Priest invites the congregation on Easter night. With lighted candles all sing *Christos Anesti:* "Christ is risen from the dead! He has crushed death by death and bestowed life upon those who lay in the tombs." In the Service for the Departed the hope of resurrection plays a central role. Christ is "the Resurrection and the Life, and the Repose" of the departed Christian.

For thousands of years death held humanity under slavery. St. Paul personifies death as a king *(evasileusen)* who ruled over mankind (Romans 5:14). It was a most terrible and exacting bondage from which no on could escape. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST LIKE A THUNDERBOLT FROM HEAVEN SMASHED THE POWER OF DEATH. In the Byzantine

icon of the Resurrection, Christ is triumphantly portrayed holding in one hand the Cross and in the other Adam who is being raised from death. Under Christ's feet the gates, locks, and keys of Hades, the symbolic bonds of death, are being dashed to pieces. In the figure of Adam is all humanity which now belongs to Christ — all those who believe in Him and can no longer be separated from Christ's love by death nor by anything else in creation (See Romans 8:34-39) Joy is the proper response to Christ's Resurrection — fulness of joy. The sorrowful dirge of death is overcome by THE EASTER SONG OF JOY. CHRIST IS VICTOR. The whole universe resounds with joy at the Good News of Christ Who renews all things through His Resurrection. The Easter message of joy is well expressed in a hymn of the Orthodox Church (Sunday Apolytekion, Third Tone): "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad; for the Lord has done a mighty act with His strength. He has trampled death by death; and is become the first-born from the dead. He has delivered us from the depths of Hades and has granted great mercy to the world."

Read I Corinthians 15:12-22. St. Paul talks about the importance of the Resurrection of Christ as part of the essence of the Gospel.

The Apostolic message is that Christ _____ _____ (vs. 12).

If Christ has not been raised from death, then we have _____ _____ (vs. 14).

We are shown to be_____ about God (vs. 15).

Your faith is a _____ (vs. 17) and you are still _____ _____ (vs. 17).

The believers in Christ who have died are _____ (vs. 18).

We deserve _____ _____ (vs. 19).

But the truth is that _____ _____ as, the guarantee that _____ (vs. 20).

All will be raised to life because of _____ _____ (vs. 22).

Read Romans 8:1-11. The presence of life and death in our lives.

What has the Spirit done for us (vs. 2)?_____ _____ _____

What does control by human nature result in? control by the Spirit (vs. 6)?

_____ _____

What happens to a person who is controlled by human nature (vss. 7-8)?
A person becomes an _____; he does not _____ _____, and he cannot _____ God.

Who lives in the Christian (vs. 9b)?_____
What is St. Paul's conclusion in verse 11?

Then _____ _____ _____ _____

Don't Fear Death

Some psychologists have found fear lurking behind intense human activities, seemingly great achievements, and many human passions. A woman concentrates on maintaining her beauty. A man fanatically exercises to maintain a youthful body. An individual amasses great wealth or creates a powerful corporation. Another individual seeks fame. Still another is compulsively given to sex. What do they all have in common? The answer is fear — fear of death. Their intense activities signal a compulsive struggle for survival — a fearful effort to cheat death despite a sense that they are doomed to fail.

This pervasive fear of death which in subtle ways touches practically all aspects of our lives was clearly understood by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In a remarkable passage, he describes men apart from Christ as "slaves all their lives because of their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:15). The author's central point is that Christ came to share our human nature and to destroy the Devil who had power over death. In this way, CHRIST "SET FREE THOSE WHO WERE SLAVES ALL THEIR LIVES BECAUSE OF THEIR FEAR OF DEATH."

"Take courage! Have no fear!" Christ would urge the disciples. "Be strong and courageous!" the apostles would exhort Christians. The same message of confidence applies to man's fear of death, the last enemy. You as a Christian have been set free by Christ. Fear falling into sin but do not fear death. Death has no power over you. He who believes in Christ "has already passed from death to life" (John 5:24b). "Where, Death is your power to hurt?" tauntingly cries St. Paul (I Corinthians 15:55b). Elsewhere he writes: "I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ, which is a far better thing" (Philippians 1:23b). So St. Isaac the Syrian speaks of a "hope" which springs up in the growing Christian and by which the Christian looks forward in a wholesome way to death and a fuller union with the Lord.

Read John 5:24-29. This is the Gospel Reading for the Service of the Departed.

Who has eternal life (vs. 24)? _____

_____

What power has God given to Christ (vs. 26)?
To be _____

What authority has God given to Christ (vs. 27)?
The right _____

What is Christ's clear teaching in verse 29?

_____

_____

Read I Thessalonians 4:13-18. This is the Epistle Reading in the Service for the Departed.

What do Christians have even in sorrow?
_____(vs. 13).

Because Jesus died and rose again, we be lieve that _____

_____(vs. 14).

Those who have died believing in Christ_____
_____at the

Second Coming (vs. 16b).

Then we who are living at that time_____
_____with them (vs. 17).

What should Christians do with these words of hope (vs. 18)?_____one another.

Read Philippians 1:21-26.

What is life for St. Paul?_____
(vs. 21b).

What will death bring?_____
(vs. 21c).

What does St. Paul prefer? To be_____
_____(vs. 23).

What is St. Paul's conclusion (vs. 24)?

_____

_____

Review this Bible Study. Which passages were most interesting? Why? What new ideas have you learned about death and dealing with death? Have you been to a funeral? What were your thoughts? Your emotional reaction? How can Christians grow in their faith not to fear death and to look forward to our future life with Christ?

Prayer: Sing *Christos Anesti* - Then:
"Let us the faithful adore the Holy Resurrection of Christ, for, behold, through the Cross joy has come to the world! Christ, our true God, Who has power over the living and the dead, establish in the mansions of Your Kingdom those who have departed before us and also have mercy upon us. For you are our Light and our Resurrection and to You we offer glory both now and ever. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 14

How To Deal With Conflicts

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. O Lord, grant us to greet each day in peace. Help us in all things to rely upon Your Holy Will. Bless our dealings with all whom we meet. Guide our thoughts and feelings. Teach us to act firmly and wisely, without embarrassing or embittering others. Give us strength to bear the fatigue of the day. Direct our will. Teach us to pray. Pray Yourself in us. Amen."

Scripture:
Read Romans 8:28 and write it here:

_____

_____

Be Assured Of God's Love and Help

Conflicts are part of human growth. They can no more be avoided than doubts, weaknesses, differences of opinion, problems and trials in life. Conflicts are to be dealt with constructively. A person matures through a certain degree of conflict. But too much conflict can cause anxiety, physical and psychological sickness. breakdown of friendships and marriages, personal injuries, and even death.

The outline (p.392 in your Bible) begins with the theme of trust in God: "Be Assured of God's Love and Help." Remember this always: whatever conflicts you may face or have to face, even those you think are with God. God nevertheless loves you and tries to help you in every way possible without being a partner to evil and without violating your free will. Sometimes you may feel angry at God because of things inside and outside of yourself. But always remember that God is your best friend Who can best help you. Prayerfully submit to His will. Your anger may be an obstacle to knowing what God wants you to do and how to do it. God is ready to help you in order to save your soul and to make you realize that your relationship with Him is the most important thing in life.

"All things work out for the best," it is often said. But this is not always true. What is true is this: "In all things God works for good with those who love Him" (Romans 8:28). Without God, things can turn out miserably. But with God's help, all things work for our ultimate good - for our salvation. You may not get the new car. You may not be accepted at the college of your first choice. You may lose a friend because of your convictions. You may suffer and be persecuted. But as long as you do not join hands with sin and evil, all trials and sufferings bring you closer to God. God has a way of transforming bad experiences into blessings. Christ said: "The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world" (John 16:33)!

Read Romans 8:26-30 and complete the following:

The_____also comes to help us,

_____as we are (vs. 26).

The spirit pleads with_____on behalf of

_____and in accordance with

_____(vs. 27b).

In all things God works for good with those who love Him, those_____

_____ (vs. 28).

Those whom God had already chosen He also set apart to _____ (vs. 29).

God shared _____ with them (vs. 30b).

Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7.

How is God to be served (vs. 3)? _____

_____

Who were examples of faith to Timothy (vs. 5)?

_____

Of what is Timothy reminded (vs. 6)?

_____

With what three qualities does the Spirit fill us (vs. 7)? _____

_____

Read I John 2:1-2.

What is this passage entitled in your Bible?

_____

Christians should not sin, but when they fall into sin what is their recourse (vs. lb)?

We have _____

_____

_____

_____

Whose sins are forgiven through Christ (vs. 2)?

Not _____ sins only, but also the sins of _____

So . . .

THE FIRST STEP IN DEALING WITH CONFLICTS IS TO SETTLE ANY CONFLICTS WITH GOD BY TURNING TO HIM IN FAITH, REPENTANCE, AND CONFESSION. RECONCILIATION WITH GOD AND A GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM ARE THE BASES OF DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHER CONFLICTS.

What conflicts does a person ordinarily face? What kinds of conflict are there in the world? Which are inevitable? Which are necessary? How does our faith in God help us to resolve conflicts? Can you share some examples?

Personal and Social Conflicts

You may ask: "If I am reconciled with God, why doesn't God step in and settle all my personal and social conflicts?" Many wonder why as Christians they continue to experience difficulties. But a Christian lives amidst the problems and conflicts in the world. God wants free obedience.

He does not want to control us by violating our free will, nor does He control others by violating their free will. God allows considerable room for man's free action, and man in his freedom can cause much conflict and even evil.

Our first conflict is personal: the struggle with self. Deep within our heart we try to understand who we are, who to be, what we want, what values to hold, what decisions to make, and how to live. This struggle is usually connected with the decision of whether or not to believe in and obey God. Which way will I follow? God's way or man's way?

St. Paul understood this conflict as one between good and evil, between man's old nature and new nature. He noted the paradox that, although a person often wants to do what is right, he or she ends up doing what is wrong because of being a prisoner to the old nature. Read this passage. According to St. Paul, only God can completely deliver us from this profound inner struggle. See also Galatians 5: 16-26 on a related theme.

What of our inter-personal and social conflicts? Most of these are the result of selfishness, vanity, hunger for power, greed, self-indulgence, dishonesty, desire for revenge and the like. In other words, they are mostly ego problems. If the above struggle with self were more frequently resolved God's way, and people put their ego aside and obeyed God, there would be far more justice, compassion, forgiveness, cooperation, self-sacrifice and, consequently, more peace in society and the world.

The teachings of Christ are clear. Christians do not judge or condemn others. They do not try to take advantage of another person. Whenever conflict arises, they try to settle it with good will and understanding. They extend their hands in reconciliation. They are willing to forgive others. They let the advantage fall to the other person rather than knowingly exploit that person. They would suffer injustices rather than commit them. Does all this sound like a dream community - the Kingdom of God on earth? That's exactly what Christianity is meant to be - and the Church is its experimental model. And that's exactly the cost of dealing with inter-personal and social conflicts in Christ's way.

Read Galatians 6:1-10 (pp. 482-83).

What is the title of the passage?

_____

How should Christians correct one another and why (vs. l)?

In a _____ so that they will not be _____, too.

What does St. Paul call bearing each other's burdens (vs. 2)? _____

What should Christians not do with each others conduct (vs. 4b)? _____

What can people not do with God (vs. 7)?

They cannot make Him a _____

What is the harvest of natural desires? . . . of spiritual desires (vs. 8)?

natural desires: _____

spiritual desires: _____

What is St. Paul's advice in verses 9-10?

Do not become _____

Do not give _____. Do good to _____ and especially _____

_____

Don't Avoid All Conflict

The philosopher Nietzche misunderstood Christianity when he thought of it as a religion of weakness. True, Christianity is not a religion of ego, but Nietzsche's inference does not at all follow. If Christians try to avoid and seek to reconcile conflicts, it is because of love and not because of timidity. The Christian faith is a source of power that has inspired some of the greatest acts of courage. Christ Himself is the supreme example of humble love and unconquerable courage.

Christians do not avoid conflict where issues of faith. truth, and justice are concerned. They speak the truth in love, but they do speak. Only the Christian must see to it well. that he or she does not speak from self-serving motives, nor lapse into fighting and hating people instead of struggling with issues and against evil. Christ said: "You must be as cautious (wise) as snakes and as gentle as doves" (Matthew 10:16b). Love God and love man. Be holy and speak

cautious (wise) as snakes and as gentle as doves" (Matthew 10:16b, p. 25). Love God and love man. Be holy and speak boldly. Both Church and society need to hear prophetic voices which are truly prompted by the spirit of God. (Of course a genuine prophet is also willing to suffer the consequences without personal complaints against man and God).

Read Galatians 2:11-14 about a temporary conflict between apostles.

What did St. Paul do in Antioch and why (vs.11)?

_____

_____

What did St. Peter do that was wrong (vs. 12)?

_____

_____

How does St. Paul interpret what St. Peter and other Jewish Christians did (vs. 13)?
They acted like _____

What was at stake in trying to force Jewish customs on Christian Gentiles (vs. 14)?

They were not walking in line with _____

_____

Read Mark 11:15-18 about Jesus' cleansing of the Temple.

What was Jesus' bold action (vs. 15)? _____

_____

_____

What was the Temple's purpose in Jesus' view (vs. 17)? _____

What was the reaction of the chief priests against Jesus (vs. 18)? _____

_____

Do you feel that Christianity is a religion of weakness? Why or why not? What are the risks of going out to the "real world" with the ethic of Christ? How can some family conflicts be resolved in a Christian way? How can the Christian act boldly but not rashly?

Meditation

The more a Christian is united with Christ, the more he or she knows how to relate without conflicts to others. A Christian does not fight people. The only legitimate conflict is against Satan, sin and evil.

Prayer:
"Lord, in my life I have experienced true peace only when I have fought incessantly against sin; I have felt deep rest only when I did not cease to do Your will; and I was truly free only when I was Your willing servant. O Lord, make my life Yours, for Your glory. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 15

How To Face Intellectual Challenges

Prayer:
"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Christ, the True Light, which illumines and sanctifies every man who comes into the world, let the light of Your countenance shine upon us. Guide our steps on the way of Your commandments, through the prayers of Your Most Holy Mother and of all the Saints. Amen."

Scripture:
Read 2 Corinthians 13:8 and write it here:

_____

_____

What Is Truth

Christ said: "Know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). But what is truth? Thinkers, philosophers, and theologians of all times have pondered this question.

Truth is true correspondence to reality. But reality is multi-dimensional, so truth is also multi-dimensional. All these are truths: George Washington was the first President of the United States. Asia is the biggest continent on earth. Water is made up of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen. The fastest movement known is the speed of light. But there are also other kinds of truths: Man is a social animal. Children need love as plants need sunshine. Friendship is important. Work is honorable. Justice should be equally dispensed. Democracy is the ideal form of government. Each human being is of equal worth. Love is the highest value, and so on. Can you give other examples?

The highest level of truth is about ultimate reality itself. What is the essence of existence? What holds all things together? What gives structure, meaning, value, and purpose to all things? Philosophers have replied that GOD IS THE GROUND OF ALL TRUTH. God cannot be verified because He is greater than all that exists, but everything in the universe points to Him. God said to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 4:14). In the Book of Revelation it is written:" 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8, RSV). It is at this level that Christ said: "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30) and again: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6).

Christianity is a religion of truth. Its Founder stated that truth sets people free. St. Paul said: "We cannot do a thing against the truth, but only for it" (2 Corinthians 13:8). Christians are positively challenged to pursue truth in all areas of life: religion, philosophy, science, society, economics, politics, law, business and interpersonal relationships. Wherever in all the universe truth is found, it reveals the glory of God.

Read Romans 2:6-11 and complete the following:
God will reward _____ person acording to _____

_____ (vs. 6).

Some people keep on _____ (vs. 7).

Other people are _____ and reject _____,

in order to _____ (vs. 8).

God judges everyone by _____ _____ (vs. 11).

Read Hebrews 1:4-12 entitled The Greatness of God's Son.

The Son was made greater than the _____ (vs. 1).

About the Son, God said: _____ _____ forever and ever (vs. 8)!

You love _____ and hate _____ (vs. 9a).

The earth and the heavens will _____ but You will _____ (vs. 11a).

You are always _____, and Your life _____ (vs. 12b).

Basic Intellectual Challenges

Christianity rests on faith not because its truths are not evident, but because they are not forced on anyone; not because Christ is not the unique Witness of God but because, as God, He is beyond the limited confines of human reason. Faith is a free response to clear evidence that God is real, both in the universe and in Christ.

Consider . . .

Is the whole miracle of the universe and life in it, a creation of chance or of an ultimate cause --God?

Does man and his society acquire more value or less value, greater dignity or inferior dignity, better working relationships or worse working relationships by following God's truths?

Is all the evil in the world -- suffering, pain, injustices, decay and death -- better faced with God or without God?

Consider . .

If the ideals of Christianity — such as love, joy, forgiveness, peace, brotherhood, sacrifice and others — are in their totality unsurpassed among all religions, why wouldn't a person want to embrace them?

If the Bible is the greatest book ever produced in the history of man, why wouldn't a person want to accept its overall authority?

If Christ is the most unique figure Who ever walked on this earth – the most truthful, wise and powerful personality ever born – why wouldn't a person want to accept His claims?

Christian faith says "yes" to the above; atheism says "no," and agnosticism hedges with an "I don't know." But in view of all the evidence, which option is the most reasonable: the affirmation, the negation, or the indecision? The answer can only be this: the Christian faith is the most reasonable, positive, creative, courageous and hopeful option there is by which to live. Granted that man cannot ultimately verify God and Christ, except by faith, because if he could, man would be greater than God. Nevertheless, God has not failed to give true signs of His presence in the world for those who sincerely seek Him .

Read Luke 12:16-20 about the rich fool who tries to ignore God.

What did the rich fool think of doing (vs. 18)?

_____

_____

What was the rich fool's selfish hope (vs. 19)?

Take life _____

What did God say to him (vs. 20)? _____

_____

_____

_____

Read Romans 1:18-25.

What prevents truth from being known in society (vs. 18)? _____

_____

What can be known about God is _____, for _____ made it _____.(vs. 19)

What excuse do men have (vs. 20c)? _____

_____!

What do people fail to do, although they know God exists (vs. 21)?

They do not give Him _____ that belongs to Him nor do they _____ Him.

What do they do with the truth about God and what do they worship (vs. 25)?

_____

_____

_____

Read Matthew 16:13-17.

Whom did the people think Jesus was (vs. 14)?

_____

_____

What did Jesus then ask the disciples (vs. 15)?

_____

_____

What was Peter's response (vs. 16)? _____

_____

_____

Read Mark 14:60-62.

What was the High Priest's question to Jesus (vs. 61)? _____

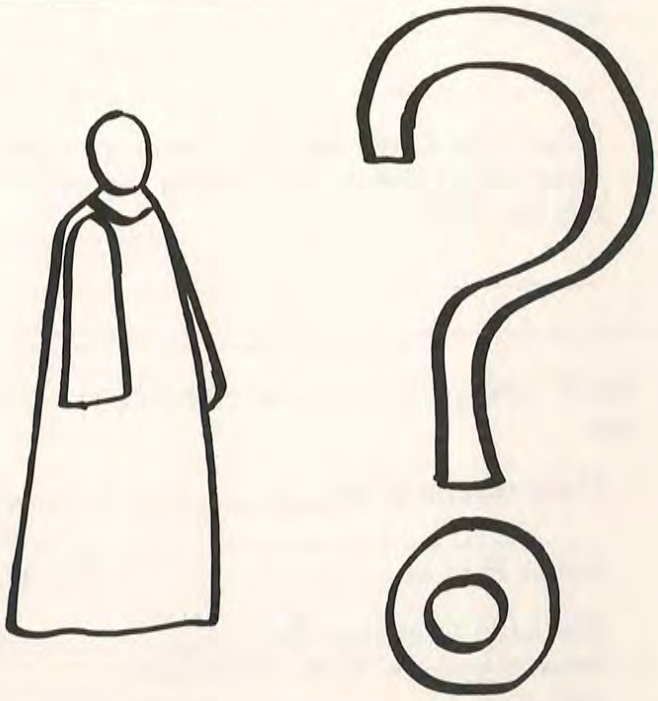
_____

What was Jesus' answer (vs. 62)? _____

Which of the above passages is most striking? If God has given clear signs of Himself (over 90 % of people say they believe in God), why do people not obey Him? What is, then, the role of Christians in society?

Don't Over-Intellectualize Your Faith

The outline (pp. 393-94 in your Bible), offers many suggestions on how to face intellectual challenges. The knowledgeable Christian can "Ask Questions," "Take the Initiative," "Explain and Defend His or Her Views," "Live a Positive Life," and "Depend upon God's Help." The outline gives many passages as examples which can be read with benefit. But note also the theme: "Don't Over-Intellectualize Your Faith." This is a significant caution.



The Christian need not be afraid of questions, problems and even doubts, as long as they are sincere. Without a question, there would be no right answer; without a problem, there would be no solution, and without a doubt, there would be no true faith. It is important to ask the right questions. Sometimes we do not doubt enough, so that our faith might become more discerning and come to rest on more solid ground. But other types of questions, problems and doubts are destructive of human life. For example, when a person doubts the intrinsic goodness of people, or the power of love, or the value of goodness, and above all, the existence of God as a loving Father, he or she diminishes life and there can be only despair, not peace. Many such questions express a lack of courage to live by the above principles rather than an honest search for truth. Some doubts and questions are rationalizations indicating man's unwillingness to obey the truth rather than his eagerness to find it. It is often true that, as Pascal said, "the heart has reasons which reason does not know."

The best proof of the Christian faith is to live it. At a family gathering a Christian was asked by one of her relatives: "Why are you a Christian?" The spontaneous response was: "Because I feel free and happy as a butterfly flying around in a jungle. The difference is that I know the dangers and am still happy!" By living close to Christ, the Christian gains peace and assurance to face even the most unexpected questions. Such assurance is a gift of Christ and not the result of earthly wisdom. The important thing is to abide in Christ. St. Seraphim of Sarov once said: "Acquire the Holy Spirit and thousands will be converted." As a Christian, be ready to explain and defend your views but don't get bogged down in useless discussions. Be ready to converse with clear arguments but do not "argue" with people. Your example of faith and love is far more powerful than any single intellectual argument even to those who always seem ready for an intellectual fight. Let the peace and joy of Christ be the lasting impression on your part as you confront intellectual challenges.

Read Mark 8:34-38.

What must anyone who wants to come to Christ do (vs. 34)?_____

_____

Why cannot a person gain anything if he wins the whole world but loses his life (soul)? Because _____

_____(vs. 37).

What does Christ say about those who are ashamed of Him in this godless and wicked day (vs. 38)? _____

_____

_____

Read 1 Peter 3:15-16 and complete the following:

Have reverence for_____

_____and

honor Him as _____(vs. 15a).

Be ready to explain the_____ you have in you (vs. 15b). Do it with_____ and _____. Keep your _____ clear (vs. 16).

Read Mark 13:9-11. Early Christians are persecuted.

What were some of the persecutions of early Christians (vs. 9)?_____

_____

What is Christ's advice about what to say (vs. 11a)? _____

_____

_____

Who will inspire their words (vs. 11b)?_____

Review this Bible study. Have you as a Christian faced intellectual challenges? What have you learned from this session that you can apply in the future? What is most convincing to you about the Christian faith? Why?

Prayer:
"May the Lord be merciful to us and bless us. May He guide us and grant us peace. Amen."

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Come, Receive the Light

Lesson 16

How To Deal With Prejudice

Prayer:

"In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. O Holy Trinity, have mercy upon us. Lord, forgive us our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, look upon us and heal our infirmities, for Your Name's sake. Amen."

Scripture:
Read Romans 15:7 and write it here:

_____

_____

What Is Prejudice?

The young man was nervous. His family had lived in Holland all his life. But he did not want to go outside to see his neighborhood friends. He had to wear the bright star of David on his back by order of the occupying authorities. It was to mark him out as a Jew. That's prejudice. The same sinister power sent over 5,000,000 Jews to their deaths. Probably no other people have suffered world-wide prejudice as the Jews have. They are the suffering servant of humanity and symbolize all people everywhere who have been persecuted because of prejudice: Africans, Armenians, Black Americans, Mexicans, Greeks, Italians, Orientals, Poles and others. Prejudice can also be found in the home and in the Church. Paradoxically, even those who suffer prejudice can turn around and express prejudice against others without realizing the contradiction.

What is prejudice? The word comes from the verb "to prejudge" — to pass judgment without a full examination or to judge without a hearing. *Webster's Dictionary* gives several definitions under "prejudice":

a damage resulting from some judgment of another in disregard of one's rights . . .

a preconceived opinion without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge . . .

an irrational attitude of hostility against an individual, a group or race.

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH HAS OFFICIALLY CONDEMNED *PHYLETISM* (LITERALLY, "RACISM"), THAT IS EVIL GLORIFICATION OF ONE'S RACE AND CONSEQUENT PREJUDICE AGAINST OTHER RACES. But a Church declaration cannot make prejudice vanish. Each Orthodox Christian must faithfully struggle against prejudice wherever he or she finds it: in himself or herself, in family, Church, school, with friends, at work and so on.

Christ is clear about prejudice. We have His teaching about unqualified love toward all. But we also have His uncompromising words about any form of judgment (Matthew 7:1-2). Write them here:

The Saints of the Church also speak against

criticism, judgment, reproach and condemnation of others with strong words. For example, St. Dorotheos *(Philokalia)* speaks about condemnation as a "poison" which a person can spread with acts, words, gestures or even a look. St. Dorotheos bluntly states that, when someone is involved in judgment or condemnation, he or she "does the work of the devil" and becomes the "devil's helper," because who but the devil desires to work "confusion and harm." THERE IS NO ROOM FOR PREJUDICE IN THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. THE LIGHT OF CHRIST SEEKS TO CLEAR EVERY DARK CORNER WHERE PREJUDICE MAY BREED.

Have you encountered prejudice against you? What was your reaction? What are common forms of prejudice and what are their causes? Do you see prejudice in the Church, and if so, what kind? What can the Christian do to free people from prejudice (both those who suffer it and those who inflict it) in society and the Church? Discuss and write here some of the helpful suggestions.

Christ Broke Down Barriers

One of the most interesting things about Jesus Christ is what H.H. Horn *(Teaching Techniques of Jesus)* called His "SOCIAL FREEDOM." Jesus moved with freedom among widely different people. He was as equally comfortable with His fishermen disciples as with the scholar Nicodemus; with Simon the Pharisee as with Matthew the tax collector; with fellow Jews as with Gentiles such as the Centurion and the Canaanite woman; with the righteous Nathaniel as with the sinful woman who anointed His feet.

Jesus was a "good mixer." HE BROKE DOWN THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BARRIERS OF HIS TIME. HE MINGLED WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE, TRIED TO FULFILL THEIR NEEDS, BUT NEVER LOST HIS INTEGRITY. He never compromised His principles, although He was utterly forgiving to those who turned to Him in repentance. He was open with everyone but never became "one of the boys." Rather, He tried to raise everyone to the status of sons of God.

A measure of the depth and openness of Jesus, the secret to His "social freedom," is reflected in His meeting with the Samaritan woman (John 4:5-42). Unlike pious Jews of His time, He was traveling not around but through Samaria and struck a conversation with a woman by Jacob's well to the surprise of His disciples. Weary from the journey, He was nonetheless calm and ready to converse easily. "Give me a drink of water," Jesus began the conversation. The Samaritan woman expected prejudice from a Jew and she was herself prejudiced against Jews.

"You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan—so how can you ask me for a drink?" she retorted. Prejudice and hostility were READY TO INTERFERE with the possibility of communication, the possibility of being open and helpful to another person, getting to know that person and being enriched by this experience.

Jesus was not put off by the woman's suspicious attitude and was able to win over to Himself both the woman and the entire town where she lived. The whole story is read as the Gospel Reading during the Divine Liturgy on the fourth Sunday after Easter known as the "Sunday of the Samaritan Woman." St. John Chrysostom, in interpreting this passage, emphasizes Jesus'

kindness and patience toward the Samaritan woman. He views CHRIST AS A MODEL OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS for a Christian to follow.

Read Matthew 8:5-13 and complete the following:

When Jesus entered Capernaum He was met by a _____ officer (vs.5).

Jesus healed the officer's _____ (vss. 6 and 13b). Responding to the officer's faith Jesus said: _____

_____

_____

_____ (vs. 11).

Read Matthew 15:21-28. In this passage Jesus tests a Gentile woman's faith.

Of what national background was the woman (vs. 22)? _____

What did the woman ask Jesus (vs. 22)?

_____

_____

What was the woman's reply to Jesus' test of faith (vs. 27)? _____

_____

_____

_____

What was Jesus' praise of and reward to the woman (vs. 28)? _____

_____

_____

_____

Read Ephesians 2:14-18 which tells how the barrier between Jew and Gentile is broken by Christ.

Christ in the Church made Jews and Gentiles _____ (vs. 14).

As Savior on the Cross, He destroyed _____

_____ (vs. 16a).

Christ came and preached the Good News of _____ (vs. 17).

Through Christ all of us are able to _____

_____ (vs. 18).

Christian Openness

The root of prejudice is sin expressed through lack of love, selfishness and pride. CHRIST ABOLISHED THE POWER OF SIN AND DESTROYED THE SHACKLES OF PREJUDICE FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM AND OBEY HIS TEACHINGS. The early Christians experienced an amazing unity in Christ. The ancient Church embraced peoples of various lands, races and languages, and called itself the Universal or Catholic Church. It was an astonishing and unprecedented phenomenon, although it developed not without difficulties. St. Paul sets down a principle which potentially revolutionized human relationships: "There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). And again: "There is no longer any distinction between Gentiles and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians, savages, slaves, and free men, but CHRIST IS ALL, CHRIST IS IN ALL" (Colossians 3:11).

Christians are called to embody a true unity of man under God and to reach out to unite all of humanity In such unity, there can be no prejudice, or discrimination or double standards in any form. That's the ideal, although even the Church itself finds it difficult to apply the ideal. But we must continue to try in the spirit of Christ. CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE PROTOTYPE OF UNIVERSAL OPENNESS, FREEDOM AND UNITY.

An excellent example in the New Testament is the case of slavery. There was no possibility of overturning this dreadful social institution in antiquity.

Christians themselves continued to own slaves. But St. Paul's one-chapter Letter to Philemon shows how the spirit of Christ breaks apart human injustices from within. St. Paul was in jail. There he met a fellow prisoner, Onesimus, a run-away slave, whom he converted to a Christian. When Onesimus was being taken back to his earthly master, Philemon, who was also a Christian, he carried with him St. Paul's Letter to Philemon. Read this Letter sometime. St. Paul writes: "He (that is, Onesimus), is not just a slave, but much more than a slave: A DEAR BROTHER IN CHRIST. HOW MUCH HE MEANS TO ME! . . . WELCOME HIM BACK JUST AS YOU WOULD WELCOME ME" (Philemon, vss. 16-17). These are seeds which eventually helped destroy the institution of slavery itself. But the Christian's struggle against prejudice, discrimination, and all kinds of social enslavement does not end as long as history continues.

Read Acts 10:24-34. Peter visits the Gentile Cornelius.

What did Cornelius do when he met St. Peter (vs. 25)? _____

_____

What was St. Peter's response (vs. 26)?_____

_____

What did St. Peter say to Cornelius as he went inthe house (vs. 28)? _____

What did St. Peter realize (vs. 34)? That_____

_____

Read James 2:1-4.

What is this passage entitled?

_____

What instruction is given to Christians in verse 1? You must never_____

_____

What example is given (vss. 2-3)?
The example of a_____man and a _____ man.

What are the implications of such action (vs. 4)?_____

_____

_____

_____

Review this Study. What passages did you find most meaningful? By what principles can a Christian help do away with personal and social prejudice? How are we to APPLY these principles? Can you do something in your Church or neighborhood to break down barriers and help people be united to each other?

A Meditation from St. Maximos the Confessor

He who is perfect in love and has reached freedom from sin knows no difference between his own people and strangers or between believer and unbeliever, between slave and free, or even male and female. Being above the tyranny of sin and seeing one human nature, he looks equally on all people and is equally disposed towards them all. There is in him "neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female," but all in all is Christ (Galatians 3:28).

Prayer:
"Christ, our Lord, Who illumines and sanctifies every man who comes into the world, bless and guide all people. Break the walls of sin and the barriers of prejudice among us. Help us to be faithful as You were faithful, truthful as You were truthful and open as You were open. Amen."

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