

The Restoration of the Orthodox Way of Life

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by Archbishop Andrew of New-Diveyevo

This is dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. Anatole P. Timofievich, the Convent's spiritual co-struggler and physician since its very foundation.

In recent years Archbishop Andrew, founder of New-Diveyevo Convent in Spring Valley, New York, where the memory of St. Seraphim is sacredly kept, has deservedly been given much honor, especially in 1971 on the 50th anniversary of his ordination as a priest, and in 1973 on his 80th birthday, when he was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. Many came to him just to receive his blessing, knowing of him as a kind of "last Russian Orthodox Elder," and hoping to obtain through him some contact with the genuine tradition of Orthodox spirituality which is fast dying out today. And to be sure, he was a living link with the Holy Fathers in a literal sense, for he was a disciple of the last two Optina Elders, Anatole and Nectarius, and it was under his *epitrachilion* that the last Elder, Nectarius, died in 1928. But it is not for this that he is most important to us today; it is rather for his teaching, received from these holy Elders, on *how to survive as an Orthodox Christian in the anti-Christian 20th century*.

This teaching, while solidly Patristic, is not a teaching from books, but from life. The four excerpts from his writings that are presented below tell the main events of his life, which is one of great trials and sufferings, taking place in conditions of revolution, anarchy, arrests, catacomb services, exile, bombings, evacuations. But in these sufferings alone—as helpful as they are to spiritual life—is not to be found the key to his teaching; others have suffered similar trials fruitlessly. In every place where historical circumstances have driven him—Kiev, Berlin, Wendlingen, New York State—a close-knit Orthodox community has formed around him; and this is closer to a key to understanding his teaching. Such communities, rare today among Orthodox Christians, do not arise spontaneously, but only in especially favorable circumstances, *if there is present a conscious Orthodox philosophy of life*. This conscious Patristic philosophy is what, most of all, we can learn from Archbishop Andrew. Let us try to set down here the main points of this philosophy—which, of course, is not a "systematic" philosophy based on abstractions, but a living philosophy derived from Orthodox spiritual experience.

First, Orthodoxy is not merely a ritual, or belief, or pattern of behavior, or anything else that a man may possess, thinking that he is thereby a Christian, and still be spiritually dead; it is rather an *elemental reality or power* which transforms a man and gives him the strength to live in the

most difficult and tormenting conditions, and prepares him to depart with peace into eternal life.

Second, the essence of the true Orthodox life is *godliness* or piety which is, in the definition of Elder Nectarius, based on the etymology of the word, "holding what is God's in honor." This is deeper than mere right doctrine; it is the entrance of God into every aspect of life, life lived in trembling and fear of God.

Third, such an attitude produces the Orthodox Way of Life which is not merely the outward customs or behavior that characterize Orthodox Christians, but the whole of the *conscious struggle* of the man for whom the Church and its laws are the center of everything he does and thinks. The shared, conscious experience of this *way of life*, centered on the daily Divine services, produces the genuine Orthodox community, with its feeling of lightness, joy, and inward quietness. Non-Orthodox people, and even many not fully conscious Orthodox Christians, are scarcely able to imagine what this experience of community might be, and would be inclined to dismiss it as something "subjective"; but no one who has wholeheartedly participated in the life of a true Orthodox community, monastic or lay, will ever doubt the reality of this Orthodox feeling. When Archbishop Andrew tells of his lifelong and successful search to find and even create the lost "quietness" of his Orthodox childhood, he expresses the desire of everyone who has drunk deeply of Holy Orthodoxy to find the place, create the conditions, and acquire the state of soul wherein to live the full and authentic Orthodox life, one in mind and soul with other similar strugglers. Even if this ideal is seldom attained in practice, it still remains the Orthodox ideal.

Fourth, without a constant and conscious spiritual struggle even the best Orthodox life or community can become a "hothouse," an artificial Orthodox atmosphere in which the outward manifestations of Orthodox life are merely "enjoyed" or taken for granted, while the soul remains unchanged, being relaxed and comfortable instead of tense in the struggle for salvation. How often a community, when it becomes prosperous and renowned, loses the precious fervor and oneness of soul of its early days of hard struggles! There is no "formula" for the truly God-pleasing Orthodox life; anything outward can become a counterfeit; everything depends on the state of the soul, which must be trembling before God, having the law of God before it in every area of life, every moment keeping what is God's in honor, in the first place in life.

Fifth, the greatest danger to the Orthodox way of life in modern times is what Archbishop Andrew calls "humanism"—a general term encompassing the whole vast intellectual (and now also political) movement which has as its ultimate aim to destroy Christianity and replace it with a this-worldly, rationalistic philosophy in which man, in effect, becomes a god unto himself. The manifestations of humanism are many, from the Renaissance in the West and the heresy of the Judaizers in Russia in the 15th century and before, through the brazen atheism and Revolution of the 18th century, to Communism and every other philosophy in our own day which places the ultimate value in this world and leads men away from God. Humanism takes possession of men

in various ways, not usually by a conscious intellectual conversion to it, but more often by laxness and unawareness in spiritual life. The Orthodox answer to this danger—whose ultimate end is the reign of Antichrist—is a *conscious Orthodox philosophy of life*.

This teaching is profound, and few perhaps are they who are capable of following it to its end; this living link with a time and a tradition much richer than our own is no longer with us in the flesh. But his teaching must not die with him. By God's Providence, the celebrated writer Solzhenitsyn came this year to New-Diveyevo, and Archbishop Andrew took advantage of this opportunity to communicate this teaching, even if in the briefest form, to him, a typical example of the awakening—but still unformed—religious consciousness in Russia today. But this teaching is not only for Russians, who either have known Orthodoxy thoroughly incarnated in life, or else (like Solzhenitsyn) are drawn by their blood with longing for something their ancestors had; it is the teaching of life for all conscious Orthodox Christians.

Let those who deeply love and treasure Orthodoxy now take this teaching and—even as Archbishop Andrew did with the teaching of his beloved St. Tikhon—live by it, and thereby regain and restore even in our barbarous and anti-Christian times, the Orthodox Way of Life.

I. THE BATTLE TO PRESERVE THE ORTHODOX WAY OF LIFE

(Excerpts from the address of Archbishop Andrew on the day of his ordination as bishop; *Orthodox Russia*, no. 5, pp. 6ff.)

I grew up in a pious family.... I was surrounded by that Orthodox way of life which for generations had been created by Holy Russia. In our family, life proceeded according to the church calendar, according to the yearly church cycle. Feast days were as it were the signposts of life. At home there were constant Divine services, and not only *molebens*, but all-night vigils also.

A strong impression was made on me by the early-morning Divine services, to which our mother took us and to which we went no matter what the weather, fall and winter: After these Divine services one always felt a kind of extraordinary inspiration, a kind of quiet joy.

Our family was wealthy.... And the religious outlook with which our life was penetrated was naturally reflected in deeds also: we participated in the building of churches, set out tables with food for poor people, sent donations to prisons, hospitals, work-houses.

Of course, there were also sorrows, and illnesses, and deaths. But they also were accepted in the light of Christ. The awareness that "Christ is risen, and the life of man will be in the Resurrection of Christ" helped us to bear our misfortunes and reverses. Everything was experienced lightly and joyfully, without the strains so characteristic of many people.

This feeling of joy, this Christian way of life, were characteristic not only of our family, but also of the society which surrounded us.

After the Revolution of 1905, in place of the hopes and agitations there came disillusionment and desolation. People became as it were closed in on themselves. They were occupied with empty things, with little egoistic interests, visits, concerts, the theater. In human relations dryness and officialness reigned.

And I [attending the St. Petersburg Polytechnical Institute], coming up against this cold alienation, this desolation, for the first time experienced a feeling close, if not to despair, then to despondency, and my soul cried out: "I cannot." Why did my soul cry out? Why did this cry burst out? "I cannot"?

I felt that I could not live as people around me were living. I felt that I was lacking that life, that Orthodox way of life, which had surrounded me in my childhood and youth, that lightness of heart which I felt. I had the impression that I had been deprived of the air which I had breathed.

I had to have life. And I began to seek....

[The lectures on Dostoyevsky of a certain professor] revealed sides of life which I had somehow not recognized earlier.... I became acquainted with a Christian student group. But this group did not satisfy me. It was inter-confessional. But I, raised from childhood in the conditions of the Orthodox way of life, needed precisely the confessional way; I needed the Sacraments, the feeling of sanctification, prayer.

All this was given to me by Archpriest John Egorov.... He became the leader of a group of students who had left the Christian student group. I spent five years in his "school," where there were 25 of us students, and for me there was opened up the elemental reality of the life of Christ's Church, by which Holy Russia had lived. I understood that the Divine services are not merely a ritual, but that in them are revealed the dogmas of faith. They are the foundation of man's reception of Divinity.

Then, the examination and study of the works of the Fathers of the Church and the Patristic writings revealed to me the paths of life.

When I had gone through the whole course taught by Fr. John, I had literally come back to life. I sensed the elemental power of Orthodoxy, I sensed that air of life which it gave. I understood in what this life consisted. I came to know that freedom of conscience which we receive through the Sacrament of Repentance.

After this preparation I came, in fact, upon an Elder—Fr. Nectarius, disciple of the great Elder Anatole of Optina.... Elder Nectarius showed me my path, the path of pastoral service, and prepared me for it with the help of his disciple, Fr. Vincent. He taught me that the confession of faith must be in godliness. The Divine must enter into every side of our life, personal, family, and public. And so in 1921 my pastoral activity began in my native Romny....

I was soon deprived of my flock and sent to Kiev under surveillance. There it was very difficult for me at first, but then I became close to a group of outstanding Kiev pastor-ascetics, who became my instructors and friends. Their activity and battle for human souls took place during

the frightful time of the revelling of the atheists, against a background of demonic carnivals, in the heat of persecutions against the Church and believers, of massive arrests and executions. And all of them gave up their lives for what was already in my heart—for the quiet which I had experienced in childhood, for inward life, for strengthening oneself in faith, for the Orthodox way of life, for Holy Russia.

God had mercy on me then and delivered me from prison. On my shoulders lay the heavy responsibility to continue the work of the martyred ascetics....

The Germans came to Kiev. Churches were opened. The Lord helped us to re-establish the Protection Hospital Convent, in the church of which I became priest. Again one had to help people, feed them. We managed to re-establish the hospital, a home for the crippled and aged. But the famine was not only bodily, but spiritual as well. People who had been starved for the Church, for the Orthodox way of life, streamed into the churches. One had to quench their hunger. Then, after two years under the German Occupation, we had to throw everything over and be evacuated. The Soviets came. Together with a group of people close to me, I ended up in Berlin. I was assigned as chief priest of the Berlin cathedral. For the course of nearly two years, under ceaseless bombings, Divine services were celebrated every day in the cathedral. The Lord helped us to preserve the Divine gift of the Eucharist of Christ so as to strengthen and confirm in faith the souls of our Russian people who had fled from Communism or who had been brought by force to Germany. The church was constantly filled with Russian youth, who for the most part knew neither their homeland nor God nor the Orthodox way of life, but now instinctively were drawn to the Church, to Christ. One had to help them, caress them, teach them, instruct them.

But the war was approaching its end. Again one had to be evacuated—this time to Wurtemberg, to the small town of Wendlingen. There, in the difficult period which set in after the capitulation of Germany, being in constant fear of repatriation, our small group, under my guidance, erected a church and immediately instituted the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist. And we began again to create a quiet order of life, to create the Orthodox way of life. The Divine services were celebrated daily, life proceeded in godliness from Sunday to Sunday, from feast to feast. All around there blustered passions, animosity, an animal like battle for survival. Many began to look on us as naive people who were not living in accordance with the times. But we lived, lived in God. Little by little, the attitude toward us changed. Pilgrimages began. People who had gone to the depths of despair found peace of soul and a quiet joy with us and went away enlightened and calmed.

And then a new move—to America. And again one had to begin everything from the beginning. In the autumn of 1949 Archbishop Vitaly [of Jordanville] and Archbishop Nikon entrusted to me the establishment of a women's monastery wherein to gather together nuns scattered in various countries of the Diaspora, and to establish for them the quietness of Christ and the Orthodox way of life. This assignment seemed beyond our powers. But the idea of establishing here, in America, a little corner of the Orthodox way of life, saturated in that elemental power of the spirit by which I had lived and breathed since childhood, took hold of me, and I agreed, trusting in the help of God. And the Lord did not abandon us.

Nuns were gathered together. About a thousand D.P.'s were brought over from Europe, of whom a significant number settled around the monastery and formed, so to speak, a large Orthodox family.... Most important, the Lord helped to create in New-Diveyevo that which had filled my soul from childhood. In the conditions of emigration, when the Russian people, confused in the midst of foreign conditions of life and non-Orthodoxy, were caught in the whirlpool of fate, the Lord helped us to establish in New-Diveyevo the Orthodox way of life, a church atmosphere of the quietness of Christ and of godliness; to establish Holy Russia in a foreign land.

But it is not yet enough to establish a monastic life; one must *preserve* it. For there is always the danger that life can be converted into a hothouse, a greenhouse, where it will be supported by artificial warmth, and as soon as the source of warmth ceases to operate, life will perish.

Therefore, there must be a constant source of life. Just as the earth and its vital juices constantly nourish vegetation, so our life also must be ceaselessly nourished by that elemental power which the Church of Christ gives, which is incarnated in the Orthodox way of life, in the Divine services, in fastings, in prayers, in vigils, in all that which embodies our Holy Russia. This is the elemental power which places in the mouth of the man who is leaving his earthly existence the last words, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and gives him the possibility to depart into eternal existence with the name of Christ.

II. HUMANISM VERSUS TRUE CHRISTIANITY

(Translated from the article "Orthodoxy, Bolshevism, and Our Emigration," in *Orthodox Russian*, 1969, no. 18, pp. 3ff.)

In America there is no Stalin, no Communism, no persecutions against the Church. Therefore, emigrants who do not know actual spiritual life might think that Orthodox life in America should be an ideal of Orthodox life and that one should live just as the old Russian emigrants live here. But have our Russian emigrants found here what is the true ideal of the Christian—godliness, the acquisition of peace of heart through repentance? Have they found that elemental reality which the Church should be and with which a man departs into eternal life—sanctity, purity, sobriety?

Alas, it seems to me that the life not only of non-Orthodox Americans, but of Orthodox Russians as well, proceeds not according to the laws of the Church, but according to the principles of humanism. Very many of those who consider themselves Orthodox are actually Christians only in form, but they live according to their own understanding, complying only with the commands of their flesh. American life, with its satiety and comfort, acts extraordinarily in favor of the acceptance of humanism. And therefore it is not astonishing that laymen often make demands to their pastors to go "in step with the times," and the pastors often fulfil these demands....

But the religious-moral foundations do not change; why, then, should priests change? Against contemporary man the same temptations, the same passions and seductions battle that tempted men a thousand years ago. Sin remains sin forever, and not a jot or tittle of the law of

Christ changes: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Seek ye first the of God and its Kingdom righteousness, and all else will be added unto you." The most important thing is to create a pure heart and keep it that way. Here there can be no talk of reforms. The Lord Himself has already given us everything needful in His Church.

But here the question arises: how can we apply to ourselves this wealth given by the Lord? Let us turn to the history of the Church at a time when humanism was striving to supplant true Christianity and replace it with an outward, false Christianity [the 18th century]. Then it was that the Lord raised up a hierarch who gave us for our life the method of true Christianity. In the *On True Christianity* of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk you will find everything needful for the inward life of man. St. Tikhon speaks of the Word of God, which must be incarnated in life, of spiritual wisdom, of the human heart, of sin, of repentance, of Christian good deeds, of the holy Church, of the duties of a Christian. In our emigrant epoch humanism manifests itself with fearful power. Our church lie proceeds for the most part outwardly; inward life is being forgotten. The slogan of humanism in our times is again: "Appear to be a Christian, but live according to the laws of the flesh," and involuntarily we ask ourselves the same tormenting question, which stands always before us: What should we do? The work of St. Tikhon, *On True Christianity*, is the answer to this question.

This work of St. Tikhon became the foundation of my whole pastoral life. In 1921, in blessing me for pastoral work, Optina Elder Anatole told me: "Take the *On True Christianity* of Tikhon of Zadonsk and live by its directions."

III. GODLINESS: TO KEEP WHAT IS GOD'S IN HONOR

(From a sermon delivered at a priests' conference at Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York, in 1966; *Orthodox Russia*, 1966, no. 19, p. 8)

What to do? With such a question I appealed in 1921 to an Optina Elder.... After going through the frightful revolutionary years of 1917, 1918, and 1919, when everything was collapsing and being destroyed, I came to a state which was simply pathological: why fight when everything is coming to an end? My outlook was transmitted to my close ones. The Revolution, the chaos as it were, confirmed my words for those around me.

I became a priest, but the conditions of my soul remained the same. And thus it was that I went to Optina to the Elder with the question: What to do?

The most important thing the Elder [Nectarius] told me was this: "The Church of Christ goes as it were on a railroad track. The path of the rails is known, it is defined, but you and I must pay attention to what happens in the coach which is on the rails. In the coach occurs the personal life of a man. A man goes in and out of the coach, and there will be an end to the rails, but the end of each person is separate: one leaves the coach earlier, another later, and here it is that Christian *godliness* is necessary.

"The dogmas of faith, faith itself is revealed to us, and none of us doubts it; but the confession of faith must be in godliness. 'No one is good save God alone'—this is to hold what is God's in honor. It is the Divine that must be our concern; it must enter into all sides of our life—personal, family, public. Godliness is disclosed to us by the daily Divine services. At the daily Midnight Service is read the 17th Kathisma, which is a disclosure of God's righteousness by the Prophet David to his son Solomon. And the Church offers the 17th Kathisma in order to reveal our inward being. One of the methods for godliness is given by the Holy Church in a spiritual exercise which trains our mind to the remembrance of the Name of God—'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.' Monastics are given a prayer-rope, but for a priest in the world the prayerful remembrance of his spiritual children can serve for training in the remembrance of the Name of God."

And so: What to do? The Elder said: "Live in such away that what is God's will be in honor; and the first, the chief thing is your mind, which must be in God."

IV. EXHORTATION TO SOLZHENITSYN

"For a hundred years Noah called people to him, but only the dumb animals came." —Elder Nectarius of Optina

On July 22, 1975, the Russian writer A.I. Solzhenitsyn visited Archbishop Andrew in New-Diveyevo Convent and talked with him for more than an hour. Archbishop Andrew greeted Solzhenitsyn, who was then already known world-wide for his flaming anti-Communist talks, with the following brief address (translated from Novoye Russkoye Slavo, July 24, 1975, p. 2):

Dear, deeply-respected Alexander Isaevich:

I have thought much, and am thinking much, about you; and involuntarily, while thinking of you, there arise before me two places in Sacred Scripture. One is from the Old Testament: the image of righteous Noah. It was revealed to him by God that there would be a world-wide flood which would destroy all those who remained in ungodliness. But for the salvation of those who would remain in godliness, those who still preserved all that is God's in honor, God commanded Noah to build an ark. And Noah began to build an ark, and at the same time to call the people to repentance....

But the sky was clear, not a cloud; the whole of nature, as if indifferent to the sins of men, remained solemnly quiet. Men heard Noah, but shrugged their shoulders and went away. The building of the ark was finished, but only the family of Noah entered it. They entered the ark, not yet to escape the flood, but to escape the ungodliness which was everywhere.... And finally the rain came; the water began to rise and inundate everything. Now the frightened people hastened to the ark, but the doors closed by themselves, and no one else was able to enter....

Thinking of you, I involuntarily presented to myself this magnificent figure of Noah calling the people. Thus you also, my dear one, are calling people from the ungodliness of Communism! They hear you, they applaud you. They heard Noah also and, it may be, expressed their

enthusiasm. Yes, they heard... but they did not obey, and perished!

Noah called men from something, from ungodliness. But he also called them *to* something: to godliness, and to a concrete godliness: to the godliness which was in the ark. And here I recall another place in the Sacred Scripture, the Epistle of the Apostle Peter: *This they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth made of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men* (II Peter 3:5-7).

If all this is to be destroyed thus, then what a holy life and godliness we must have! This is what the New Testament Ark is: godliness, preserving what is God's in honor!

In your recent address you said that you were born a slave. That means that you were born after the Revolution. But I saw everything that happened before the Revolution and what prepared it—it was ungodliness in all forms, and chiefly the violation of family life and the corruption of youth.... With grief I see that the same thing is happening here also, and indeed in the whole world. And it seems to me that your mission also is—to call people from ungodliness to godliness!

And the source of godliness is Christ!

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Originally published by St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1976. This is copyrighted and reprinted with the kind permission of St. John of Kronstadt Press. This article is in print in booklet form through this Press. The booklet is very nicely printed and adorned with numerous photos and illustrations. It is well worth adding to one's parish book table or pamphlet rack.

Archbishop Andrew highly recommended *On True Christianity* by St. Tikhon of Zadonsk. Unfortunately, this has not been translated into English. However, there are some very good works that are quite similar, including one by St. Tikhon entitled *Journey to Heaven, or Counsels on the Particular Duties of Every Christian*. Also one should consult these two classics by St. Theophan the Recluse: *The Spiritual Life and How to Be Attuned to It* and *The Path to Salvation*. All of these are available from St. John of Kronstadt Press or any good Orthodox bookseller.