



# HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX Parish Church Newsletter

Future Site: Potomac View Road (behind NoVa).

July 2010

**Remembering Fr. John Meyendorff on the 18th anniversary of his sudden exodus, 22 July 1992.**

*We give excerpts from a 1990 interview “rediscovered,” translated from French, and circulated by Fr. Robert Arida in Boston.*

**Is the Orthodox Church still Eastern?”**

Father John: Western Christians very often tend to identify Orthodoxy as a religion of Greeks, Russians, of certain peoples of the Middle East or the Balkans. They identify Orthodox tradition with one or some of the cultures which are a little peripheral relative to my culture in the West. Nevertheless we find ourselves in a period where that division no longer has a *raison d’être*, simply because there are Orthodox who live in the West,... they form an integral part of Western culture. Given this fact, they are no less Western than the other Westerners.

From another perspective, if one speaks of theology, of thought processes, one is able to say that the Orthodox of

Western Europe, in fact already since the 19th century, have adopted certain scientific conceptions, certain methodological approaches that are unique to Western civilization. Consequently, it is no longer as in the time of Byzantium where those of the East and West were speaking two different languages, had very different social structures and lived in a different intellectual world.

Presently, we better understand one another than was the case at the end of the Middle Ages or the beginning of the 19th century. Thus, we are better prepared for discussing Christian unity, to be able to separate that which is truly the Apostolic Tradition and that which is human tradition. Today, Orthodoxy is only of value and interest if it presents itself as a witness of the Apostolic Tradition, and not simply as the inheritor of Byzantine or Russian civilization.

**What is the future for these communities in the West?**

Their future and their mission are to

witness to Orthodoxy in an atmosphere of dialog....

I would underline, however, that there exists a certain problem in the midst of Orthodoxy itself pertaining to the subject of these communities. There are... some people... in the traditional Orthodox countries, who, when it comes to the standard of ecclesiastical responsibilities, occasionally do not express total confidence in those Orthodox of Western formation....

We in the West have, on this precise matter, to confront them in their dissent and to ask them if they truly believe that the Orthodox tradition—the tradition of the Church—is a universal and catholic tradition, not to be limited to some eras of human culture. At the same time, our witness obliges us to say the same thing to those in the West. Our Orthodox communities in the West are obliged to speak to both parties, they are obliged to speak to all those who would place fetters on the witness of Orthodoxy.

**The future council and the question of the canonical unity of all the new Orthodox Churches in the West.**

If the preparation continues as it has until now, it has no chance to succeed in so far as those who are primarily involved with this problem are **not invited**. I believe that everywhere this is beginning to be understood a little.... Those primarily involved, *i.e.*, the Orthodox of the “diaspora,” are participating in this preparatory work: they write, they speak, one recognizes that they exist; but their participation remains extremely limited. Certain traditional centers of Orthodoxy do not consider it acceptable to accord them a place. It is altogether deplorable. I hope that the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is the first in being responsible for the preparation of this council, will find the means to unblock these impasses that are rather artificial....

**What is the state of the Orthodox Church in the U.S.?**

We have a permanent conference [SCOBA] uniting the bishops of different jurisdictions, but it does not function very well. In fact, the different priorities, which stand out among the members of this organization, arouse certain tensions.

For its part, the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America does not consider itself to be part of the “diaspora,” but a local Church. The attitude of the Archbishop of the Antiochian Patriarchate in

**HALF-WAY THROUGH THE WEEKS OF MATTHEW**

**JULY**—DAY 14 HOURS, NIGHT 10

22 Thu 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the sudden exodus of Fr. John Meyendorff (+1992)

25 Sun 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Doyle**

**AUGUST**—DAY 13 HOURS, NIGHT 11

1 Sun 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Ellmore**

6 Fri ↓ Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ — *Bless grapes and fruit*

8 Sun 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Hawkins**

15 Sun Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos — *Bless flowers*

9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Honshul**

22 Sun 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Lepnew**

29 Sun 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Lynch**

**SEPTEMBER**—DAY 12 HOURS, NIGHT 12

5 Sun 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Matyuf**

12 Sun 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Morrow**

14 Tue ↑ Elevation of the Life-giving Cross

19 Sun The New Church Year

10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy — **Coffee Hour: Smith**

America—Orthodox Americans of Syro-Lebanese origin—equally tends to refuse this notion of “diaspora.” Our priority consists in defining the existence of Orthodoxy in America in terms of a local Church. Elsewhere there are many Greeks who agree with this principle....

### ***The situation in Eastern Europe.***

Until the present, the hierarchy in these countries is, to a certain extent, more or less compromised. Whether they wanted to or not, they were obliged to participate in the chorus of praise for Ceaucescu, Zhivkov, Stalin.... It is evident that the Church will have, hereafter, the possibilities of spreading anew. The Synod of the Romanian Church came to publish a declaration where it expresses its repentance and hope for renewal; I still do not know of similar declarations in Bulgaria or in the [former] USSR.

Nevertheless, the main problem is knowing if the leaders of these churches are going to be able to exercise their ministry.... I hope, in spite of everything, that there will be a certain continuity, *i.e.*, that there will not be a violent revolution in the Church as had taken place at the political level. Obviously, there were, at times, some deplorable cases, but as a whole, the hierarchy did its best during the course of these long decades. It is always easy in this regard to judge, especially when one lives in the West.

In any case, I hope that the unity of the Church will be maintained and that the solution will not be schism....

The fact that Patriarch Tikhon has been canonized [by the Church of Russia] seems to me quite important for he represents the image and the model of an authentic leader of the Church.... St. Tikhon had been very firm *vis-à-vis* [the exercising of] authority and, when necessary, he was known to adopt a more conciliar attitude for he desired, above all else, to preserve the unity of Church. He shows himself to always be the fierce adversary of all schisms whether it be that of the Renovationists or the Synod Abroad. He was truly convinced that the unity of the Church is something essential, that it is not an institutional unity, but a mystical and organic unity.

It is in this sense that I speak of the continuity which ought to be maintained. One is not able to purify the Church. One is to renew the Church from within, without dividing it. But this can only be done by those people who truly have the sense of this [mystical or organic] unity. At times the “professional” dissidents, the militant nationalists and also the bureaucrats do not have this sense. Consequently, unity is to go beyond bureaucracies, beyond nationalisms, and beyond dissidence.

### ***The division among Christians, is it not a scandal?***

In a way, ecumenism today has lost much of its dynamism. This is a fact. Here the concern is, above all, an institutional ecumenism, an organized ecumenism, a bureaucratic ecumenism with its large gatherings as was done in the 1950s... This sort of ecumenism doesn't end up with the results one was expecting. In my opinion, this was probably inevitable.

We are now in a period which demands patience as well as an attitude that is more honest, more deep, striving to envisage the problems from a more theological and spiritual level. This ought to be done at the local level and not only in the meetings between institutions.

It is well known that a Christian cannot be against unity which we are working towards realizing. Perhaps the Orthodox,

precisely because they are a little allergic to all organizations and their large structures, have a message which consists in presenting an image of catholicity and of unity which is based on the faith and on experience more than on authority or institutions.

The unity of the Church is not accomplished by simply defining organs of authority. This is one of the temptations of the West. From this perspective, we are defining structures of authority before defining the faith. No, we do not proceed according to these criteria. For us, the faith comes first. On the other hand, there are the relativists who tell us that the faith is an indefinable given which then reduces the dogmatic union to a minimum enabling one to act as if one is united to the faith.

### ***The Orthodox have much to learn.***

The temptation for the Orthodox is to be too eschatological, to reduce Christian life to liturgy, to have a sort of contemplation of the Kingdom of God to the point that all responsibility to the world is forgotten. At the same time, within the framework of universal ecclesial institutions, the Orthodox are very afraid when it comes to the papacy to which they react negatively with regards to any manifestation of unity or primacy, as when it comes to Constantinople. It's a pity. It would be necessary to acquire a healthier approach.

It is evident that we need an Ecumenical Patriarch, but he must be truly ecumenical and that he knows how to accomplish this ministry of primacy. If it is a matter of an institution which remains monopolized by an ethnic group based on historical reasons because of the Turks then this is not a solution.... In the past several propositions were made for the Ecumenical Patriarchate to have an international staff and that located close by would be a headquarters for a permanent committee representing the other autocephalous Churches, in a word to have installed a dynamic and permanent conciliarity; but presently this does not exist.

### ***What message is Orthodoxy able to offer unbelief and indifference?***

The message of Orthodoxy is the experience of the Holy Spirit, something essential, precisely that which makes the Church the Church. Only, the Orthodox do not know well how to transmit this experience, nor what are the presuppositions of that action of the Spirit in the world. Here, rather, is where the genius of Western Christianity intervenes and I believe that there is a certain complementarity between the two, a complementarity that has been lost because of the schism....

The Orthodox Church... ought, for its part, to understand how its message should be presented to the world in a way that is at the same time dynamic and stripped of these institutional aberrations that she rejects.

But, in that case, how is it to be done?... How is it to manifest itself? Certainly it manifests itself in the unity of faith. The Orthodox do not put to the test the difficulties regarding this plan. They have among themselves a theological unity, a unity of faith which they carry through well. But, when it comes to ecclesial practice, they are most divided. The existence of parallel jurisdictions in the West is an illustration of that weakness of Orthodoxy which puts in peril the credibility of its witness.

—*Service Orthodoxe de Presse*, No. 146, March 1990  
Paris. Interviewer: Antoine Niviere.