

Orthopraxis

Vacation Questions

Q. I will be traveling this summer and visiting Orthodox parishes where they don't know me. Should I inform the priest of the church I am visiting? If so, should I inform him if it is my intent to take communion? What is the proper way to do this? Will "I wish to take communion while I am visiting" suffice? Also, if confession is required, would it be improper to ask if I could confess with my own priest before I attend?

A. Yes, it is always proper to consult with the priest of a parish you are visiting, especially for the first time, before receiving communion. You can do this by phone, by email, or the evening before at Vespers/Vigil. Just say that you are visiting and would like to know if it is possible for you to receive communion, and what does the priest/jurisdiction require in this case.

In connection with your last question- I think that just about any priest is going to accept if you confessed with your own parish priest the night before you intend to receive the Holy Mysteries. But this may not happen or be practical while traveling. The Russian Orthodox Church, ROCOR, and the Serbian Orthodox Church will nearly always require Confession either the night before or the morning of the Divine Liturgy. That's why it's particularly helpful if the priest of the parish you visit can answer your questions beforehand. But if Confession is required, don't worry. It's good for you!

Father Basil

Lives of the Saints

St John (Maximovich), Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco (1966) July 2

This brightly-shining Saint of our own day was born in Russia in 1896. In 1921 his family fled the Russian Revolution to Serbia, where he became a monk and was ordained a priest. From the time of his entry into monastic life he adopted a severely ascetical way of life: for the rest of his life he never slept in a bed, sleeping only briefly in a chair or prostrated before the icons. He ate one meal a day, in the evening. Teaching seminarians in Serbia, he instructed them each day to devote six hours to divine services, six hours to prayer (not including the divine services!), six hours to good works, and six hours to rest (these six hours obviously included eating and bathing as well as sleeping). Whether his seminarians followed his counsels we do not know, but he himself not only followed but exceeded them.

In 1934 he was made Bishop of Shanghai (in the Russian Church Abroad), where he served not only the Russian émigré community but a number of native Chinese Orthodox; from time to time he served the Divine Liturgy in Chinese. When the Communists took power in China, he labored tirelessly to evacuate his flock to safety, first to the Philippines, then to various western countries including the United States. He served as Bishop in Paris and Brussels, then, in 1962 was made Archbishop of San Francisco. Throughout his life as monk and hierarch he was revered (and sometimes condemned) for his ascetical labors and unceasing intercessions.

During his life and ever since, numerous miraculous healings of all manner of afflictions have been accomplished through his prayers. Once, in Shanghai, a caretaker, investigating strange noises in the cathedral after midnight, discovered Bishop John standing in the bell tower, looking down on the city and praying for the people. Years later, when he visited Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, the priest responsible for hosting him found the saint walking through the

halls of the monastery, standing outside the door of each room and praying for the monk or seminarian sleeping within. When the Archbishop had prayed outside each room, he returned to the beginning of his circuit and began praying again; and so he spent the entire night.

Even as Archbishop, he lived in near-absolute poverty. His appearance was striking: His cassock was made of blue Chinese "peasant cloth," crudely decorated with crosses stitched by orphans who had been in his care in Shanghai. His Bishop's "miter" was often a cloth cap to which he had glued paper icons. Even in the United States, even while serving the Divine Liturgy (which he did every day), he went barefoot in all seasons. (Eventually, after he was hospitalized with an infected foot, his Metropolitan ordered him to wear shoes; thereafter, he wore sandals). Needless to say, he was an embarrassment to those who like their bishops to make a more worldly appearance, but among his various flocks throughout the world, there were always those who recognized him as a Saint in his own lifetime.

Following his repose in 1966, a steady stream of healings and other miracles was accomplished through his intercessions, and in 1996 he was glorified as a Saint of the Church. His incorrupt and wonder-working relics can be venerated at his cathedral in San Francisco. At St John's funeral, the eulogist told his mourners (and all of us): because Archbishop John was able to live the spirituality of the Orthodox Church so fully, even in modern, western, urban society, we are without excuse.

Footnote: An acquaintance of Monk John once met him on a train in Serbia. When asked his destination, Monk John replied, "I'm going to straighten out a mistake. I've gotten a letter meant for some other John whom they intend to make a bishop." The same person met him again on his return journey and asked if he had been able to resolve his problem. John answered, "The mistake is much worse than I thought: they did make me a bishop."

Nota Bene: The Feast is celebrated on the Saturday nearest the 2nd of July in parishes of the Russian Church Abroad. This year it falls exactly

on the second. At the Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Joy of All Who Sorrow in San Francisco, VIGIL will be Friday evening July 1st at 6:00 PM. Divine Liturgy will be on Saturday, July 2nd, at 9:00 AM. Fr. Basil has been blessed to serve, and God-willing, will be there. All St. Nicholas parishioners are encouraged to come and participate in this Grace-filled celebration!

From the Fathers

The Mind of the Fathers

by Hieromonk Seraphim (Rose) of Platina

It is very difficult in our times to be looking to heaven, because of all the weight, the dead weight of worldliness which lies upon us. If one applies oneself constantly, however, one can begin to do it. Even with a little bit of struggle, if applied constantly, one begins to form for oneself a whole different viewpoint, a whole different way of looking at life, a whole different possibility for action. Any kind of spiritual activity that is to come out of our world today, any kind of Orthodox missionary activity, apostleship, etc., must be on the basis of such a view of things. It must be based on looking first at what God wants, first at what is the higher side, first at what the Holy Fathers think, and only then looking down at the practical means one has to use, at money problems, and even at things like sicknesses, because they are all sent for our good, and we have to find how to bring the good out of them. If one does not do that, one is weighed down, especially in our days. If a person is in a place of leadership, such as a priest in a parish, and if he is going to look back and look first at the people, he will see that 99% of them are going to drag him down, because they have their problems and passions, confessions weigh him down, and so on. If this side becomes too important for him, it simply drags him back and he cannot lead them to heaven. Of course, a pastor or any kind of spiritual leader must be leading to heaven first himself and then the others, by looking first to the other world. We don't have to imagine what that other world is like or have opinions about it, because we have the whole treasury—much of which is now available in English—of the writings of the Holy Fathers.

Recently we have had such great fathers as Bishop Ignatius Brianchininov (+1867), who was one of the sharpest ones to speak about the apostasy, and also one of the greatest ones to speak about the Holy Fathers. We must get into their language, into their way of looking at things, because that is Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy, of course, does not change from one day to the next or from one century to the next. Looking at the Protestant and Roman Catholic world, we can see that certain spiritual writings get out of date. Sometimes they come back into fashion again, sometimes they go out. It is obvious that they are bound up with worldly things, which appeal to people at one time, or rather to the spirit of the times. This is not so with our Orthodox holy writings. Once we get into the whole Orthodox Christian outlook—the simply Christian outlook—which has been handed down from Christ and the apostles to our times, then everything becomes contemporary. You read the words of someone like St. Macarius, who lived in the deserts of Egypt in the 6th century, and he's speaking to you now. His conditions are a little different, but he's speaking right to you now, in the same language; he's going to the same place, he's using the same mind, he has the same temptations and failings, and there's nothing different about him. It's the same with all the other fathers from that time down to our century, like St. John of Kronstadt (+1908). They all speak the same language, one kind of language, the language of spiritual life, which we must get into. When we do that, we can save ourselves; and, as St. Seraphim says, "When you acquire the Spirit of Peace, the Holy Spirit, you can save thousands around you." It is not for us to calculate whether thousands around us will be saved. It is only for us to acquire the Holy Spirit, and what God will do with that is His doing.

Focus on the Faith

The Fourth of July **By Archpriest Basil Rhodes**

The Fourth of July is always a time for celebration in our land. It is a

chance for family and friends to gather together for barbeques, outdoor activities, and fireworks. On Independence Day, the cause of our celebration is freedom, freedom from a cruel, repressive government, and freedom from a tyrannical king. This freedom is not only about liberation "from," but also liberation "to;" freedom to chart our own course, to work for our own goals, and to reap the fruits of our own labors.

It is common practice in our churches to offer a Prayer Service (Molieben) of Thanksgiving on the "Glorious Fourth," and here, in the Pacific Central Deanery, it has been our custom for nearly 100 years, to make a pilgrimage to Fort Ross and offer the Divine Liturgy there at the chapel in thanksgiving to God for this wonderful country of ours.

While this civil holiday may not be found on our ecclesiastical calendars, we can certainly derive some spiritual food from it, right along with our hot dogs and ice-cold beverages! The Fourth of July can be an opportunity for us to recall that there is a spiritual struggle for independence that goes on in our lives every single day. The tyrannical king is the devil; his cruel government is this fallen world and death; the overwhelming tax burdens and the tax collectors are our sins along with the demons who wait in the aerial toll-houses to accuse us at our death.

Nothing is better than spiritual freedom. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "If the Son (of God) therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36.) But in order to gain this freedom, this freedom which is in Christ, there needs to be a revolution, a revolution in us! Now the word "revolution" literally means to turn. Isn't that what repentance is? A turn? A change of direction? A change of mind? Repentance is a spiritual struggle, a spiritual war against the tyranny of evil. Repentance is a noetic revolution and an ascetic strategy that employs spiritual armaments given to us by the grace of God. St Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but have Divine power to pull down strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought

to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5.)

So, then, the Fourth can serve as a good reminder to us that we need to keep up the struggle and “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12.) It’s only when we let our guard down, relax our efforts and resolve, that we find ourselves slipping back into the clutches of our Adversary and the tyranny of his fallen order.

“Stand fast therefore” (says St. Paul) “in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1.)

Upcoming Events

July 3 –St. Eugene’s Children’s Camp

Off to camp with kids and counselors.

July 4 - Pilgrimage to Fort Ross

July 17 – Parish Financial Health Check meeting

After Liturgy