

# The Voice



*"Their voice has gone out into all the world;*

*and their proclamation to the ends of the universe."*

September 2004

Issue Three

## The Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross Вселенское Воздвижение Честного и Животворящаго Креста

### **Тропарion – Tone 1**

O Lord, save Thy people, And bless Thine inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians Over their adversaries. And by virtue of Thy Cross, Preserve Thy habitation.

### **Kontakion – Tone 4**

As Thou wast voluntarily raised upon the Cross for our sake, Grant mercy to those who are called by Thy Name, O Christ God; Make all Orthodox Christians glad by Thy power, Granting them victories over their adversaries, By bestowing on them the Invincible trophy, Thy weapon of Peace.

### **Тропарь – глас 1**

Спаси, Господи, люди Твоя, и благослови достояние Твое, победы православным христианом на сопротивных даруя, и Твое сохраняя Крестом Твоим жительство.

### **Кондак – глас 4**

Вознесыйся на Крест волею, тезоименитому Твоему новому жительству щедроты Твоя даруй, Христе Боже, возвесели силою Твоею православныя христианы, победы дая им на сопостаты, пособие имущим Твое оружие мира, непобедимую победу.

### **Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:**



On September 14/27, the Holy Orthodox Church brings out the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for veneration by the faithful. This solemn and holy day is a day of fasting and prayer, a day when we recall that Jesus Christ, the Son of God died on the Cross, taking upon Himself all the consequences of our sin, in order to free us from them. The power of His Cross is revealed in liberating His faithful from guilt, shame, sin, and the fear of death. The power of sin no longer has dominion over us. Through the Cross we are redeemed, cleansed and sanctified. Through the Cross we are given Life!

During this feast, we are reminded by the Gospel to “take up our cross and follow” Christ and we are strengthened by the joy of Christ’s Resurrection *for behold through the Cross joy has come into all the world.*

But, what does it mean to deny oneself and take up our cross? Saint Innocent of Alaska writes: *To deny oneself means to give up one's bad habits, to root out of the heart all that ties us to the world; not to cherish bad desires and thoughts; to quench and suppress bad thoughts; to avoid occasions of sin; not to do or desire anything from self-love but to do everything out of love for God. To deny oneself means, according to St. Paul, to be dead to sin and the world, but alive to God.*

In following St. Innocent’s instructions, let us, brothers and sisters, find strength and comfort in the precious Cross, for It is a symbol of victory over death and the perfect expression of self sacrifice. Let us exalt the Cross not only in words and songs, but in deeds – in acts of love, in expressions of compassion towards those in need, in forgiving our brothers and sisters and in practicing truly selfless acts of mercy. In doing so, we “fulfill the law of Christ” and thereby strengthen our families and parish through love and faith in Christ God.

**Fr. John Vass, Rector**

## The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross of the Lord

The pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind. The Emperor Hadrian (117-138) gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Lord, and to build a temple of the pagan goddess Venus and a statue of Jupiter.

Pagans gathered at this place and offered sacrifice to idols there. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian sacred remains, the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This took place under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) after his victory in the year 312 over Maxentius, ruler of the Western part of the Roman empire, and over Licinius, ruler of its Eastern part. In the year 323 Constantine became the sole ruler of the vast Roman empire.

In 313 he had issued the Edict of Milan, by which the Christian religion was legalized and the persecutions against Christians in the Western half of the empire were stopped. The ruler Licinius, although he had signed the Edict of Milan to oblige Constantine, still fanatically continued the persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the 313 Edict of toleration extend also to the Eastern part of the empire. The Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Emperor Constantine, having gained victory over his enemies in three wars with God's assistance, had seen in the heavens the Sign of the Cross, and written beneath: "By this you shall conquer."

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, St. Constantine sent his mother, the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to St. Makarios, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

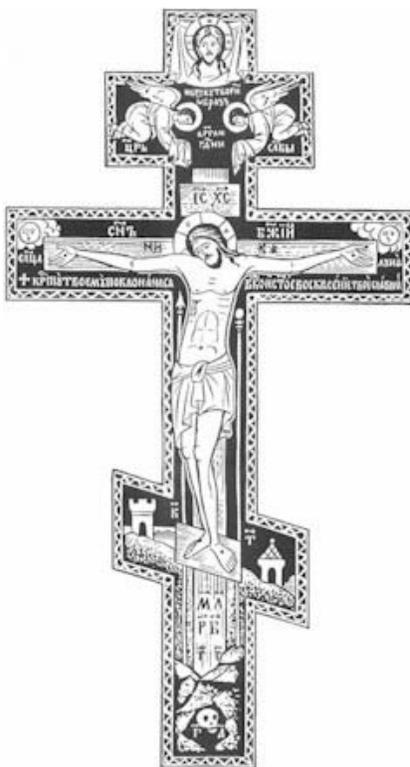
Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and the statues in Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful.

Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by the name of Jude who stated that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. They demolished the pagan temple and, after prayer, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Body of the Lord. In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Savior was crucified, Patriarch Makarios alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead one, he came to life. Having beheld the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found.

Christians came in a huge throng to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching St. Makarios to elevate the Cross, so that even those far off might reverently contemplate it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders raised up the Holy Cross, and the people, saying "Lord have mercy," reverently prostrated before the Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Life-Creating Cross another miracle took place: a grievously sick woman, beneath the shadow of the Holy Cross, was healed instantly. The elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Kyriakos and afterwards was consecrated Bishop of Jerusalem.

During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ



(see October 28). The holy empress Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Savior, building more than 80 churches, at Bethlehem the birthplace of Christ, and on the Mount of Olives where the Lord ascended to Heaven, and at Gethsemane where the Savior prayed before His sufferings and where the Mother of God was buried after her death.

Saint Helen took part of the Life-Creating Wood and nails with her to Constantinople. The holy emperor Constantine gave orders to build at Jerusalem a majestic and spacious church in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, also including under its roof the Life-Giving Tomb of the Lord and Golgotha. The temple was constructed in about ten years. St. Helen did not survive until the dedication of the temple, she died in the year 327. The church was consecrated on September 13, 335. On the following day, September 14, the festal celebration of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross was established.

Another event connected to the Cross of the Lord is remembered also on this day: its return to Jerusalem from Persia after a fourteen year captivity. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Phokas (602-610) the Persian emperor Khozroes II in a war against the Greeks defeated the Greek army, plundered Jerusalem and captured both the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord and the Holy Patriarch Zachariah (609-633).

The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years and only under the emperor Heraklios (610-641), who with the help of God defeated Khozroes and concluded peace with his successor and son Syroes, was the Cross of the Lord returned to the Christians.

With great solemnity the Life-creating Cross was transferred to Jerusalem. Emperor Heraklios in imperial crown and royal purple carried the Cross of Christ into the temple of the Resurrection. With the emperor went Patriarch Zacharios. At the gates by which they ascended Golgotha, the emperor suddenly stopped and was not able to proceed farther. The holy Patriarch explained to the emperor that an angel of the Lord was blocking his way. The emperor was told to remove his royal trappings and to walk barefoot, since He Who bore the Cross for the salvation of the world from sin had made His way to Gol-

gotha in all humility. Then Heraklios donned plain garb, and without further hindrance, carried the Cross of Christ into the church.

In a sermon on the Exaltation of the Cross, Saint Andrew of Crete (July 4) says: "The Cross is exalted, and everything true gathers together, the Cross is exalted, and the city makes solemn, and the people celebrate the feast".

Reader Michael Bishop/Courtesy of [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org)

## Styles of Crosses



There are many crosses used throughout the world, but two stand out among the Orthodox. The equilateral "Greek Cross" has been used since the fourth century when a cross and the following appeared in the sky to the Emperor Constantine: "In this sign conquer." Constantine had the cross and the initials "IC XC NIKA" - "Jesus Christ Conquers" - emblazoned on the shields of his soldiers.



The "Three-Bar Cross" is also ancient, appearing in early Byzantine art, and is found today in Churches of the Slavic tradition. It was the custom to nail to the cross a placard describing the crime for which the criminal was being so shamefully executed.

The top bar is the title board which Pilate hung on the Cross to identify the one crucified as "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" in Greek [INBI], Latin [INRI] and Hebrew. The second bar is the bar on which the Lord's hands were nailed.

On the slanted bottom bar were nailed our Lord's feet. In the prayers of the ninth hour the Church compares the Cross to a type of "balance of righteousness". "In the midst of two thieves, Your Cross was revealed as a balance-beam of righteousness; For while the one was led down to Hades by the burden of his blaspheming (the balance points down), the other was lightened of his sins to the knowledge of things divine (the balance goes up), O Christ our God, glory to Thee!"

## WHY

### DO WE WEAR A CROSS?



In pre-Christian times, the Cross was the instrument of a shameful and horrible death. The ancient Romans invented it and used it everywhere in order to intimidate the peoples whom they had subjugated. Everyone looked on this instrument of execution the shameful Cross with horror.

But a remarkable change took place with respect to the Cross after Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on it. The Lord suffered and died on the Cross. He took horrible sufferings upon Himself in order to save us from sins. The Cross received great glory, such as no other object made by the hands of man has possessed.

The Cross became the sign of our salvation, through which we receive the power of God the grace of God.

The Cross is the first and greatest Christian sacred object. When the priest sanctifies water, he immerses the Cross in it, and the water becomes holy. When we wear the Cross on our breast, our body constantly touches it, and from this touch it too is sanctified. The Cross that we wear protects us from all kinds of danger.

...In Communist Russia, believing people, our brothers and sisters, would wear a Cross at great risk, since there could be much unpleasantness from the godless for this. But these remarkable people were not afraid to confess their faith, and they would fearlessly wear a Cross.

One ought not to look upon the Cross as some kind of jewelry like a bracelet or brooch. The Cross must adorn our soul and not our clothing, and must constantly remind us that we are Orthodox Christians, called to live according to our faith, which is founded on the Savior's sufferings on the Cross.

Parish Life, September 1994

## Prayers by The Lake<sup>1</sup>

### Holy Hierarch Nikolai (Velimirovich)

#### XCV

*Submitted by Martha Elliott*

*Children and saints* cling to You, O Lord, the rest rebel against You.

Children and saints are the boundary between the Kingdom of existence and the shadow of nonexistence.

You have been entrusted with the guardianship of the most precious treasure that God has. And this is a very great honor.

One, who was never born and was never entrusted with the guardianship of anything, will be more blessed than you, if your guardianship is an abomination and mortification.

Do not care only about keeping the bodies of your children safe, for even foxes do the same for their foxlings. But care about God in you children. Once God is cared for He will take care of all the rest. And what you have been accumulating for your children so strenuously, He will effortlessly gather for them quickly and easily.

Do not drive God out of your children, for you will deprive them of their peace, their happiness, their health, and their prosperity.

Even if you leave the entire world to those whom God has left, you will have left it to starving people, who will devour it all and still die of hunger.

Do not ensure a piece of bread for your children, but a piece of the soul and the conscience. Your children will be ensured and you will be blessed in two worlds.

Care for this property of another better than your own, and your reward will be immense.

Royal children have been entrusted to your guardianship. Truly, the King will give no small reward to those who guard His princely progeny, and have not erased the Father's name from those children's memory.

Through children the King is looking at you with amazement, and is awaiting your re-

<sup>1</sup> *A Treasury of Serbian Orthodox Spirituality, Vol. 5, (Grayslake, Ill.: The Free Serbian Orthodox Diocese of the United States of America and Canada.)*

sponses. If your responses are deathful, you will be taking care of corpses.

Children and saints cling to You, my Lord, the rest rebel against You. Children and saints are your way of testing the world.

Be careful, my soul, and make no mistake.

## The Childhood of the Theotokos

Submitted by Martha Elliott

The Orthodox Church celebrates twelve great feasts plus the feasts of feasts of Pascha. Eight of these great feasts are feasts of our Lord; four are feasts of Mary. Two of these feasts are in the early fall and celebrate the birth and the childhood of Mary. These are the Nativity of Mary, celebrated on September 21, and the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, celebrated on December 4.

Scripture tells us little of the birth and early years of the Mother of our Lord, beginning the story of Mary with the visitation of the Angel Gabriel. In Orthodox tradition, however, there is a story of Mary's conception, birth, and childhood that emphasizes the faithfulness of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, and their grateful dedication of their only child fully to God. This story is found in The Protoevangelium of James, an apocryphal gospel attributed to James the Less, the brother of our Lord. The fact that Joachim and Anna had remained childless into old age reminds us of the story of Abraham and Sarah and Zacharias and Elizabeth, also faithful couples whose prayers for a child were answered by God. This is a very human story, taking us through the range of emotions experienced by the unexpected birth of a long-desired child. Dedicating Mary to God sets the pattern for the Orthodox upbringing of all children as all of our children should be raised in the temple of the Lord.

The following excerpts are from The Protoevangelium of James.<sup>2</sup>

1. In the records of the twelve tribes of Israel was Joachim, a man rich exceedingly; and he brought his offerings double, saying: "There shall be of my superabundance to all the people, and there shall be the offering for my forgiveness

*e hand of Providence, of every means of healing, bitter though it may be, that is offered. Do great catastrophes fall on you? Be obedient to God's will, as Noah was. Is sacrifice demanded of you? Give yourself into God's hands with the same faith as Abram had when he went to sacrifice his son. Is your property ruined? Do your children die suddenly? Suffer it all with patience, cleaving to God in your heart, as Job did. Do your friends forsake you, and you find yourself surrounded by enemies? Bear it all without grumbling, and with faith that God's help is at hand, as the apostles did.*

**Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, Homilies, Vol. 1**

to the Lord for a propitiation for me." For the great day of the Lord was at hand, and the sons of Israel were bringing their offerings. And there stood over against him Rubim, saying: "It is not meet for thee first to bring thine offerings because thou hast not made seed in Israel. And Joachim was exceedingly grieved, and went away to the registers of the twelve tribes of the people, saying: "I shall see the registers of the twelve tribes of Israel, as to whether I alone have not made seed in Israel." And he search and found that all the righteous had raised up seed in Israel. And he called to mind the patriarch Abraham, that in the last day God gave him a son Isaac. And Joachim was exceedingly grieved, and did not come into the presence of his wife: but he retired to the desert, and there pitched his tent, and fasted forty days and forty nights, saying to himself: "I will not go down either for food or for drink until the Lord my God shall look upon me, and prayer shall be my food and drink."

2. And his wife Anna mourned in two mournings, and lamented in two lamentations, saying: "I shall bewail my widowhood; I shall bewail my childlessness." And the great day of the Lord was at hand; and Judith her maid-servant said: "How long dost thou humiliate thy soul? Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand, and it is unlawful for thee to mourn. But

<sup>2</sup> *Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 8.*

take this head-band, which the woman that made it gave to me; for it is not proper that I should wear it, because I am a maid-servant, and it has a royal appearance." And Anna said: "Depart from me; for I have not done such things, and the Lord has brought me very low. I fear that some wicked person has given it to thee, and thou hast come to make me a sharer in thy sin." And Judith said: "Why should I curse thee, seeing that the Lord hath shut thy womb, so as not to give thee fruit in Israel?" And Anna was grieved exceedingly, and put off her garments of mourning, and cleaned her head, and put on her wedding garments, and about the ninth hour went down to the garden to walk. And she saw a laurel, and sat down under it, and prayed to the Lord, saying: "O God of our fathers, bless me and hear my prayer, as Thou didst bless the womb of Sarah, and didst give her a son Isaac."

3. And gazing towards the heaven, she saw a sparrow's nest in the laurel, and made a lamentation in herself, saying: "Alas, who begot me? And what womb produced me? Because I have become a curse in the presence of the sons of Israel, and I have been reproached, and they have driven me in derision out of the temple of the Lord. Alas! To what have I been likened? I am not like the fowls of the heaven, because even the fowls of the heaven are productive before Thee, O Lord. Alas! To what have I been likened? I am not like the beast of the earth, because even the beasts of the earth are productive before Thee, O Lord. Alas! To what have I been likened? I am not like these waters, because even these waters are productive before Thee, O Lord. Alas! To what have I been likened? I am not like this earth, because even the earth bringeth forth its fruit in season, and blesseth Thee, O Lord."

4. And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood by, saying: "Anna, Anna, the Lord hath heard thy prayer, and thou shalt conceive, and shalt bring forth: and thy seed shall be spoken of in all the world." And Anna said: "As the Lord my God liveth, if I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God; and it shall



minister to Him in holy things all the days of its life." And, behold, two angels came saying to her: "Behold, Joachim thy husband is coming with his flocks." For an angel of the Lord went down to him, saying: "Joachim, Joachim, the Lord hath heard thy prayer. Go down hence; for, behold, thy wife Anna shall conceive." And Joachim went down and called his shepherds, saying: "Bring me hither ten she-lambs without spot or blemish, and they shall be for the Lord my God; and bring me twelve tender calves, and they shall be for the priest and elders; and a hundred goats for all the people." And, behold, Joachim came with his flocks; and Anna stood by the gate, and saw Joachim coming, and she ran and hung upon his neck, saying: "Now I know that the Lord God hath blessed me exceedingly; for, behold, the widow is no longer a widow, and I the childless shall conceive." And Joachim rested the first day in his house.

5. And on the following day he brought his offerings, saying in himself: "If the Lord God has been rendered gracious to me, the plate on the priest's forehead will make it manifest to me." And Joachim brought his offerings, and observed attentively the priest's plate when he went up to the altar of the Lord, and he saw no sin in himself. And Joachim said: "Now I know that the Lord has been gracious unto me, and has remitted all my sins." And he went down from the temple of the Lord justified and departed to his own house. And her months were fulfilled, and in the ninth month Anna brought forth. And she said to the midwife: "What have I brought forth." And she said: "A girl." And said Anna: "My soul has been magnified this day." And she laid her down. And the days having been fulfilled, Anna was purified, and gave the breast to the child, and called her name Mary.

6. And the child grew strong day by day; and when she was six months old, her mother set her on the ground to try whether she could stand, and she walked seven steps and came into her bosom; and she snatched her up, saying: "As the Lord my God liveth, thou shalt not walk on this

earth until I bring thee into the temple of the Lord.” And she made a sanctuary in her bed-chamber, and allowed nothing common or unclean to pass through her. . . . And when she was a year old, Joachim made a great feast, and invited the priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and all the people of Israel. And Joachim brought the child, and gave her an everlasting name to be named in all generations. And all the people said: “So be it, so be it, amen.” And he brought her to the chief priests; and they blessed her, saying: “O God most high, look upon this child, and bless her with the utmost blessing, which shall be forever.” And her mother snatched her up, and took her into the sanctuary of her bed-chamber, and gave her the breast. And Anna made a song to the Lord God, saying: “I will sing a song to the Lord God for He hath looked upon me, and hath taken away the reproach of mine enemies; and the Lord hath given me the fruit of His righteousness, singular in its kind, and richly endowed before Him. Who will tell the sons of Rubim that Anna nurses? Hear, hear, ye twelve tribes of Israel, that Anna nurses.” And she laid her to rest in the bed-chamber of her sanctuary, and went out and ministered to them. And when the supper was ended, they went down rejoicing, and glorifying the God of Israel.

7. And her months were added to the child. And the child was two years old, and Joachim said: “Let us take her up to the temple of the Lord, that we may pay the vow that we have vowed, lest perchance the Lord send (someone) to us and our offering be not received.” And Anna said: “Let us wait for the third year, in order that the child may not seek for father or mother.” And Joachim said: “So let us wait.” And the child was three years old, and Joachim said: “Invite the daughters of the Hebrews that are undefiled, and let them take each a lamp, and let them stand with the lamps burning, that the child may not turn back, and her heart be captivated by the temple of the Lord.” And they did so until they went up into the temple of the Lord. And the priest received her, and kissed her, and blessed her, saying: “The Lord has magnified thy name in all generations. In thee, on the last of the days, the Lord will manifest His redemption to the sons of Israel.” And he set her down upon the

third step of the altar. And the Lord God sent grace upon her; and she danced with her feet, and all the house of Israel loved her.

8. And her parents went down marveling, and praising the Lord God, because the child had not turned back. And Mary was in the temple of the Lord as if she were a dove that dwelt there, and she received food from an angel. . . .

*When the Church celebrates The Nativity of the Theotokos and the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple, let us remember the faithful couple, Joachim and Anna, whom we commemorate at every Divine Liturgy, as a model of prayer, fasting, generosity, and dedication to the Lord. And let us remember that the Theotokos, the Mother of our Lord, was once a little girl, the child of loving and faithful parents.*

## Charity

### Unites Baltimore and Odessa

The following is a letter to Holy Trinity's Charity Committee recently sent by the Orphanage "Warm House" in Odessa, Ukraine.

*Dear Monika,*  
*Peace and grace to you from God and Jesus Christ. Thank you ever so much for your charity. I would love to tell you about my way of distributing the charity. First of all, it takes me much less time to do it, because I have got a lot of helpers. Before it took me about two months, and now only a week and a half. My helpers are: Sister Nina, Brother George, Brother Rafael and Sister Swetlana. Nina, who is raising two orphans, took some parcels for West Ukraine (her children are from the West Ukrainian Orphanage) and for the Orphanage in her village. The parcels to West Ukraine were sent by train. Brother George also took some parcels for the village of Belyayevka. I wish you saw with your eyes how thankful all the people are. They always look forward to your charity. Brother Rafael took some parcels to village of Tairova. Sister Swetlana distributed one parcel in Moldova, the former Soviet Republic. Most of the clothes were for babies because there are a lot of families with many babies. Some poor families in Odessa were also given your charity. Lena is sending her big thanks to you. If your plans don't change, you are very, very welcome to Odessa.*

*With love, Nataliya*

If we approach the Chalice frequently, then we should prepare frequently. And if we prepare frequently, then we include Confession as that integral part of our preparation.

*Let us remind ourselves that pious preparation to receive the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord and God Jesus Christ includes:*

- ❖ *Attending evening Divine Services on the eve of our communion;*
- ❖ *Frequent Confession*
- ❖ *Fasting from all drink and food (and smoking!) from midnight of the previous night;*
- ❖ *Reading the Canon of Preparation to receive the Divine Mysteries the night before and then the Preparatory Prayers Before Communion in the morning before coming to church. This canon and the prayers are found in your prayer book. Read these prayers in the morning before Divine Services, not the newspaper or your emails.*
- ❖ *Reading the Prayers of Thanksgiving after receiving Holy Communion. These are also found in your prayer book.*

## In Prayerful Memory...

*This edition of The Voice is published thanks to the generosity of Swetlana (Tatiana) O'Neill in prayerful memory of her father +Victor. May his memory be eternal! Вечная Память!*

## In Appreciation...

Special thanks are offered to Reader Michael Bishop, Martha Elliott and Monika Handley for their contributing articles to this edition.

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*The Voice is a parish newsletter-journal of Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church (1723 East Fairmount Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21231). The Voice is prepared and distributed by the pastor and parishioners of Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church. Please forward any questions to 410-276-6171.*

## What is Confession?

### Saint Innocent of Alaska

Confession is the oral avowal of one's sins which lie heavy upon the conscience. Repentance cleanses the soul and makes it ready to receive the Holy Spirit, but confession, so to speak, only empties the soul of sins.

Let us present a simple analogy and comparison to confession. For example, suppose you had only one vessel of some kind, which you through negligence or laziness let reach a stage where little by little it accumulated all sorts of dirt so that your vessel became not only unusable but even unbearable to look at without repugnance.

But what if a king wanted to give you as a gift some sort of fragrant and precious balm, one drop of which could heal all infirmities and protect - what then? Would you refuse such a valuable gift only because you had no other clean vessel in which to put it? No! It would be very natural for you to accept such a gift and you would try to clean your vessel. How would you begin to clean your vessel? No doubt, before anything else, you would rid it of all uncleanness; you would begin by washing it with water and, perhaps would even burn it out so that it no longer retained any of its former odors.

Now let the vessel represent the soul given to you by God, which you have brought to such a state that it has been filled with all kinds of transgression and iniquities; let the sweet-smelling balm, given by the king, signify the Holy Spirit, Who heals all infirmities and afflictions, Whom the King of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, freely bestows upon us.

To clean out the vessel typifies the confession of your sins before your spiritual father, and washing with water and burning with fire signifies a sincere and even tearful repentance and a voluntary resolve to endure all unpleasantness, needs, afflictions, misfortunes, and even calamities that befall us.

Now tell me: Is Confession profitable or needful? Certainly it is profitable and even essential; because, just as it is impossible to cleanse a vessel without ridding it of all uncleanness, so it is impossible to purge your soul of sins without confession.