



St John's Church News No 26: June 2011

**РУССКАЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНАЯ ЦЕРКОВЬ
СВТ. ИОАННА ШАНХАЙСКОГО, ЧУДОТВОРЦА
ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Military Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 2AN**

**His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias
Most Rev. Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of ROCOR
Very Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain**

For this newsletter in electronic form: www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/zchurchnews.htm

Confession and Contact / Исповедь

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Расписание Богослужений / Services in June

Thursday 3 June: Ascension Day / Вознесение Господне

No service in Colchester / Богослужения нет в Колчестере

Saturday 4 June

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 5 June: The Holy Fathers of the First Universal Council / Свв. отцев 1 - ого Вселенского Собора

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная Литургия

Saturday 11 June

5.30 pm: Pentecost Vigil / Всенощное бдение накануне праздника Пятидесятницы

Sunday 12 June: Pentecost – Whitsun – The Feast of the Holy Trinity / Пятидесятница – Св. Троица - Сошествие Св. Духа на апостолов

10.00 am: Hours and Liturgy. Vespers with the Kneeling Prayers / Часы и Божественная Литургия. Вечерня с коленопреклонными молитвами

Saturday 18 June

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение накануне праздника Всех Святых

Sunday 19 June: All Saints / Неделя всех святых

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная Литургия

Monday 20 June

Beginning of the Apostles' Fast / Начало Петрова поста

Saturday 25 June

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 26 June: All the Saints who have shone forth in Rus / Неделя всех святых, в земле Российской просиявших

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная Литургия

Baptisms in May

Sunday 1 May: Mihail Asandei

Saturday 14 May: Leo Hartford

Weddings in May

Sunday 1 May: Tatiana Pokrovskaya to Rene Schellekens

Sunday 29 May: John Cargill to Marina Andrews

Patronal Feast: Saturday 2 July
Престольный праздник: Суббота 2
ИЮЛЯ

Всеpravославный епископ

Похвальное слово святителю Иоанну (Максимовичу)

Идеал православного монашества — с уединённой молитвой и безмолвием — мало понятен западному миру. Практичная Европа и расчётливая Америка даже святость хотят измерять в категориях «общественной пользы»...

Но XX век многое изменил — и на карте мира, и в людских головах. Когда через границы бывшей Российской империи хлынул поток эмигрантов, которые хранили русские иконы и строили православные храмы, — мир встретился с Православием лицом к лицу. Настоящим откровением о Православии стал для мира наш земляк — святитель Иоанн Шанхайский и Сан-Францисский. Своей удивительной жизнью он многое сказал и Европе, и Америке, и Китаю — о любви, о милосердии, о монашеском подвиге. И об истинной Церкви, которой принадлежал всей душой.

О грешниках писать и говорить легко, поскольку «от нихже первый есмь аз». Частично — опыт, частично — воображение помогут продумать любую ситуацию из той области жизни, где царствуют *похоть плоти, похоть очей и гордость житейская*. Гораздо тяжелее говорить и писать о святых. Адекватного опыта нет. Рискуешь либо сорваться на щенячий восторг и неумные похвалы, либо впасть в сомнение. Обе эти крайности соприкасаются и даже сливаются в духовном мире, где земной глаз ничего разглядеть не может. Именно сомнение любит прятаться за пышными похвальными фразами, и именно любителям дифирамбов больше других угрожает отпадение в неверие.

Похвала святому — это не свидетельство лояльности, подобное стихам о вожде, которые пишут, чтобы не расстреляли. Наши слова самому святому зачем? Если о святом человеке и говорить, то лишь затем, чтобы через его опыт открыть глазам церковного народа некую важную грань духовной жизни. Может — несколько граней, но обязательно — актуальных, не для красного словца и не в копилку эрудита, а для жизни.

Вот я собрался говорить об Иоанне (Максимовиче) и, как всегда в подобных случаях, некоторое время молча сижу и к себе прислушиваюсь. В голове — тишина, не от отсутствия мыслей, а от удивления пред масштабом личности. В руках — лёгкая дрожь от величины задачи. Всего не скажешь, значит, надо говорить главное. Что?

Начну с литургии. «Весь от Бога освящен священнодействием Пречистых Тайн», — так об Иоанне говорится в тропаре. Служил он часто, почти ежедневно, независимо от того, много или мало людей было в храме. Любил служить как простой священник и потреблять Святые Дары после службы. Потреблял долго и в это время молился над Кровью Иисусовой. Один Бог знает жар тех молитв. Помню, в книге о Паисии Святогорце говорится, что некий священник, потребляя Святые Дары, всегда плакал, и его смущало, что «гадкие» слёзы капаят в Чашу. Отец Паисий сказал ему: «Помолись обо мне, чтобы Господь дал мне твои „гадкие“ слёзы». Видимо, у владыки Иоанна было что-то подобное, и больше этого было. В любом случае, из алтаря он не выходил долго. Мог ещё читать Евангелие, мог молиться по чёткам. Покидая святилище, со вздохом мог сказать: «Как не хочется уходить из храма».

Любая литургия служит «о всех и за вся». Любая литургия есть событие вселенской важности. В службе сжимается вся история мира до размеров геометрической точки. И

прошлое, и будущее мира сворачиваются внутрь, как свиток, как небо в Апокалипсисе, к центру, и служащий священник видит и то, и другое вместе. Вот одна из цитат благодарения: «Поминающе вся о нас бывшая: Крест, гроб, тридневное Воскресение, на небеса восшествие, одесную седение, второе и славное паки пришествие». Второе Пришествие тоже вспоминается! Служащий священник или епископ выходит за рамки временных условностей и становится активным участником всей человеческой истории. Призваны к этому все служители алтаря, хотя не все это понимают и чувствуют. Так и в море купаются многие, но ныряют на глубину и достают со дна сокровища единицы. Иоанн нырял в глубину и доставал оттуда настоящие сокровища.

Его можно смело называть всеправославным епископом. Его сердце жило не только тревогами и проблемами русской эмигрантской общины и не только мыслями о судьбе покинутой Родины, но и тревогой о Православии как таковом. В своём стремлении к глубокому единству христиан в молитве и вере архиепископ Иоанн откопал и очистил колодцы, засыпанные песком исторического забвения. Это — память о тех святых, которые просияли на Западе до Великой схизмы XI века. Святой Дунстан, святой Колумба, Ансгарий Бременский, Патрик Ирландский и многие другие древние святые Запада — это представители подлинного вселенского Православия, забвение о которых сильно обедняет наше чувство церковности. Владыка Иоанн отыскивал и переиздавал их жития, находил обращённые к ним молитвы, посещал места их трудов и страданий, обретал частицы мощей и прочие реликвии. Труд этот нуждается в продолжении, и плоды его будут удивительны. Но начинать всегда сложнее. Начинать — значит дерзать. Начинать — значит преодолевать инерцию столетий и разгонять сладкое марево поместной замкнутости. Для этого нужен апостольский дух и молитвенная неотторжимость от Главы Церкви — Христа.

Как владыка молился, молиться способны единицы. В своих монашеских трудах он подражал земляку — Мелетию Харьковскому, который проводил ночи, стоя на молитве, а спал только сидя на стульчике. В наш расслабленный век, в нашу эпоху влюблённости в телесный покой и удобства такие труды кажутся просто невозможными. Но они были. Тому свидетели — многие. Митрополит Антоний (Храповицкий) поражался подвижническому духу тогда ещё иеромонаха Иоанна и называл его Ангелом во плоти. Тёплое солнышко Сербской земли, великий умница и сам — подвижник, епископ Николай (Велемирович) указывал на Иоанна (Максимовича), если его спрашивали, есть ли сегодня святые, подобные древним.

Первой любовью будущего подвижника были жития святых. Он читал их всю жизнь и знал так хорошо, словно жил в их обществе. Кроме этого, с момента монашеского пострижения он не расставался с Библией. За внимательным чтением Священного Писания святителя можно было застать всегда, когда он находился в келье. Он старался вычитывать или прослушивать весь круг ежедневных служб. Где бы ни находился — в самолёте или в автомобиле — в три часа пополудни всегда открывал дорожный Часослов и читал 9-й час. О нём можно сказать то, что в посмертных воспоминаниях и похвалах говорили многие об отце Иоанне Кронштадтском: он жил в Церкви. То есть не заживал в церковь, не работал в Церкви, не жил за счёт Церкви, не уважал Церковь издалека. Он именно стремился жить Церковью ежесекундно и стал от неё не отделим.

По этносу — украинец, по жизни — изгнанник и гражданин мира, по духу он был русским православным святителем, а также монахом-подвижником и даже — юродивым, совмещая в своей малой жизни почти всё лучшее, что связано с понятием Православия.

Это самое богатство Православия вообще и русского Православия в частности владыка Иоанн по воле Божией обнаруживал перед лицом западного мира.

Западное секулярное сознание требует от христианства практической пользы, которую понимает как социальное служение. В необходимость подвига и силу молитвы это секулярное сознание не верит и считает их излишними. Владыка Иоанн показал в себе самом именно Православие как подвиг. Саму церковную историю он оживил и сделал очевидной. При этом благотворительность, столь любимая неверующими человеколюбцами, явилась через него тоже. Архиепископ Иоанн создавал приюты, каждое воскресенье посещал больницы, устраивал столовые для бедноты, в шанхайских трущобах выкупал младенцев у опустившихся родителей, чтобы затем устроить их воспитание. Всё, что связано с милосердием, проистекало из его трудов, как мощный и свежий поток из источника. Но это было именно чудотворное милосердие, рождённое подвигом и ночной молитвой, а не сентиментальностью и желанием похвалы.

Случаи исцелений по молитвам владыки Иоанна трудно исчислить. При этом, как истинный Христов ученик, владыка не лишал молитвы и иноверных. Посещая больницы, он мог, по просьбе родных или самого больного, остановиться надолго для молитвы у постели католика, протестанта или иудея. Часто, очень часто безнадежные дотоле больные выписывались на следующий день из клиники при неопишемом всеобщем удивлении. Но, как это всегда бывает у святых, его любовь не простиралась до безразличия в вопросах вероисповедания. Иоанн Шанхайский был против смешанных браков и обучения православной молодёжи в инославных училищах, так как это угрожало потерей веры. Он терпеть не мог новейших обычаев, вроде празднования Хэллоуина, видя в этом непозволительную степень обмирщения. В богословии он не был ни консерватором, ни либералом. Его богословие было живым, поскольку оно было литургичным. На каждой службе — проповедь. В посланиях пастве — ни одного лишнего слова, всё по делу, во всём — ясность и строгость, уравновешенная любовью. Знаменателен один пример. Будучи приглашённым в иезуитский колледж, владыка остановился возле иконы Архистратига Михаила. «Это — наш покровитель», — сказал местный патер. — «Это вам так кажется, что он — ваш покровитель», — ответил владыка. Зная близость Иоанна к небесной жизни, нетрудно понять, что это не были просто слова. Вера святых отцов, вера поруганной и оставшейся вдали Родины, Православие было для него единственной Истиной. Особенно трогательно то, что жизнь святителя вся была тому подтверждением.

Подражать Иоанну трудно. Чаще всего — вряд ли возможно. Можно дёрнуться, начать, но затем устанешь, замедлишь ход и скатишься ниже той точки, с которой начал движение. Что делать? Всем нельзя не только быть Моцартом. Всем нельзя даже Моцарта играть. Дай Бог хотя бы Моцарта слушать, что для многих уже — высота недостижимая. Так же и в подвижничестве.

Сам владыка Иоанн осознавал невозможность подражания своему образу жизни для каждого клирика или монаха. Одного молодого священника, стремившегося к строжайшему посту, он даже лично заставлял есть колбасу, научая через это тому, что пост — не цель, а средство. Но не только ради подражания стоит знакомиться с жизнью подвижников. Есть и другие радостные плоды.

Например, такая мысль: Церковь жива! Разменявшая третье тысячелетие своей земной истории, Церковь, рождающая таких светильников, — жива! Если мы знаем святых, подобных Иоанну Шанхайскому, то сомнение в благодати Святого Духа, которой

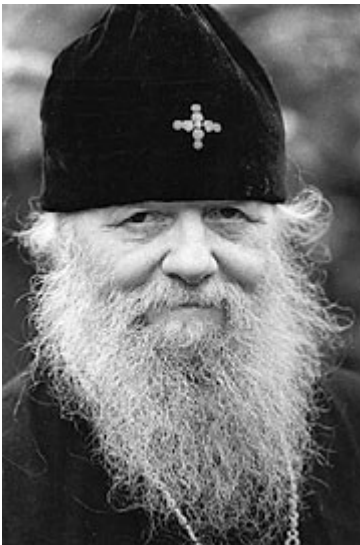
напитано Тело церковное, — смертный грех. Нам есть откуда черпать мудрость, у нас есть источники, в которых можно омыться и очиститься. Мы можем быть светлы и сильны, терпеливы и радостны, каждый — в свою меру. Пить мудрость и черпать силу мы можем из тех же источников, что и приснопамятный владыка: из Божественной литургии, из Писания и Предания, из преданности Церкви странствующей и общения с Церковью торжествующей.

[Протоиерей Андрей Ткачев](#)

29/10/2010

КРАТКОЕ СЛОВО АРХИЕПИСКОПА ИОСИФА (ЧЕРНОВА) НА ПОЛЁТ ЮРИЯ ГАГАРИНА В КОСМОС

Предлагаем Вашему вниманию рассказ о том, как приснопоминаемый архиепископ Алма-Атинский и Казахстанский Иосиф (Чернов) (1893-1975) произнёс слово в церкви о первом полёте человека в космос. Вспоминает шофёр Владыки¹¹.



Митрополит Алма-Атинский и Казахстанский Иосиф (Чернов).

Апрель 1961 года. Впервые в истории человечества совершен полет в космическое пространство.

Владыку вызывает к себе уполномоченный Вохменин Степан Романович и говорит: «Иван Михайлович, надо сказать проповедь в отношении этого “чуда”».

Я везу Владыку домой, он на заднем сидении сидит, смотрю в зеркало, вижу — Владыка так пальцами крутит (всегда так делает, когда активно думает). «Так вот, — говорит, — Захар Иванович, давай будем готовиться. Проповедь надо сказать о Юрии Гагарине». — «Ох, ох! — отвечаю, — что же Вы будете говорить, Владыка!?» — «Что-то буду».

Приехали домой. Я наблюдаю. Он ходит по комнате. (Обычно, если к проповеди готовится, то ходит, с собой разговаривает).

Наступил день, когда надо произносить проповедь. Владыка вышел, как обычно, и начал примерно так:

«Братья и сестры! Вы знаете, в какое время мы живем, какой прогресс совершается в мире! Много ученых изобрели много хорошего! А слышали вы — последнее событие произошло: наш молодой человек — Юра Гагарин — побывал в космосе! И оттуда вернулся! А ему, когда он полетел, Хрущев Никита Сергеевич сказал: “Юрочка, посмотри, есть там Бог, или нет?”

И так продолжил Владыка: «Юрий Гагарин Бога не видел... а Бог его видел! И благословил!»

Вохменин удивлялся, что же Владыка будет говорить? А он вот что сказал. Я записал проповедь Владыки на бумагу и передал уполномоченному. (www.pravoslavie.ru)

An Interview with Romanian Orthodox

(In Romanian: <http://sceptik.wordpress.com/2011/03/26/nou-interviu-cu-parintele-andrew-phillips-2011/>)

BM - How aware are today's Christians about the fact that they belong to „another world” (as you have said in the first interview)? Why don't we „resist unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12, 4)?

Fr. A – We are in the world, but ‘not of the world’ (Jn. 15, 19)). In this there is a contradiction, a tension, but tension can always be creative. Today’s crisis, and the word ‘crisis’ in Greek means ‘judgement’, comes from the fact that people no longer recognise that we are not of the world, most are not even faintly aware of it, they see only an earthly destiny for humanity. According to them our destiny is to become compost, for an earthly destiny always ends in death. They find that this diabolical illusion of imagining that we are **of the world** makes their life easier, because it means that they have no responsibilities before the face of Eternity, before God. This is escapism.

To resist, to strive against sin is difficult, for the kingdom of heaven is taken by force, only with great effort (see Matt. 11, 12). And what is the Church, after all? It is the only true Resistance Movement in the world, the only true ‘Liberation Front’. I remember the revolution in Romania in 1989, when you had a ‘National Salvation Front’ under Petre Roman. We knew that it would not succeed, that you would only pass from one tyranny, the Communist, to another, that of Mammon, because it was not the real National Salvation Front. Your true and only National Salvation Front is the Romanian Orthodox Church. But resistance is difficult, because we are lazy. How much easier to swim with the tide, to go with the world than to resist it and all its temptations and vanities. But be warned, that way is spiritual self-destruction. In the West, this is obvious.

BM - Before we proceed to the next question, let's get something clear. First, what's the link between financial troubles and the judgement of God? What if „crisis means judgement” as you say? And second, I'm sure you haven't met Petre Roman personally, or anyone else from FSN. Today, it turns out you were right but how could you've known that then?

Fr. A - All human troubles stem from human sinfulness. If there were no sin, we would still be in Eden. We can use long words like ‘financial troubles’ but in fact it means ‘greed’ – a much simpler word. The point is that all that we do has consequences. We can live in illusion for years, we can get into debt for years, but sooner or later reality will intervene. All human actions have consequences. If the actions are sinful in intention, the results will always be sinful. Indeed, very often, the consequences are far worse than the actions. For example, an irresponsible girl gets pregnant by an irresponsible man; the consequences are going to last for a lifetime, for generations, ‘unto the third generation’ as the Book of Exodus says. And the consequences of sin are called ‘judgement’. ‘We have a financial crisis’, say the politicians. What this actually means, though most politicians are too dishonest to admit it, is: ‘We are being judged by the consequences of our sins’.

Of course, I have never met Petre Roman, but it is very simple. Anyone who promises that he can save you is either a liar or else in a state of self-delusion. Only Christ the Saviour can save. Any conscious Orthodox Christian knows this.

BM - What should the attitude of a believer towards sin be, and after all, how we should define sin, because many consider to be sin only murder, rape and theft?

Fr. A – Sin is everything that separates, distances and alienates us from God, from our inevitable destiny, because we will have to stand before Him at the Last Judgement. Why deny the inevitable and refuse to prepare for it? Preparation for Judgement is to fight against sin now. If we do not do this, then we shall experience standing before the presence of the Eternal God as a burning fire, not as a loving warmth.

BM - Is indifference (in all its aspects) a sin?

Fr. A – Indifference is a disease of the soul, the disease of the Church of the Laodiceans, which happens when our souls begin to die. Once indifference has contaminated our souls, there is only one step from that to hostility to God. Why? Because indifference means emptiness, a vacuum and Satan always fills vacuums. It is not possible for there to be spiritual emptiness, it always gets filled, either with negative or else with spiritual energy. The choice is ours.

BM - Can we consider sinning as an act of treason in front of God?

Fr. A – Yes, sin is act of unfaithfulness, of treason to the kingdom of God. But we should not despair, repentance is always possible. God accepts us back.

BM - What is, in simple words, the first measure that restrains sin? Is it fear of death, fear of God, knowledge of the Scripture?

Fr. A – The first measure that restrains sin is rather a consciousness that God is, that He exists. Until there is a consciousness of the existence of God, like a small flame that burns in our souls, there can be no consciousness of the immortal soul and its destiny. From here grows the consciousness of sin, of spiritual dirtiness, of the need for prayer and repentance, of death, of human destiny, of judgement and retribution. Only when we have a consciousness of God can there be in us fear of Him, fear of judgement and the desire to live a Church life and know and understand the Scriptures and the Fathers.

BM - Father, what is the essence of Christianity? After all, why would we believe, anyway? In today's Romania, many voices claim that the Church has a much too important role in the community, that there are way too many churches compared to hospitals and schools, that you don't need religion, aka doctrine, (of any kind) to keep out of murder and immorality. What should we tell them? Are there many schools and hospitals you have in England?

Fr. A – We believe because God is the reality that underpins the universe. We do not believe that He exists, we **know** that he exists, He is our daily experience. The essence of Christianity is to move nearer to Him.

At the present time, Romania is undergoing a wave of Westernisation. This began with the fall of Communism and then accelerated with Romania's entry into the EU. There is now a concerted, conscious effort, organised and funded from Brussels, which itself is a colony of Washington, to westernise Romania. And what does 'westernise' mean in the current context? It simply means to make spiritually captive, to secularise. And that means to destroy spiritual life, all awareness of spiritual reality, of the other world, all concept of the Church and eternal salvation. Therefore they create the illusions among the foolish secularists, who are manipulated from the West, that

we do not need the Church, it is a waste of money, you need hospitals, schools, social security, new roads, everything for the life of the body and for the mind without God.

Perhaps Romania does need more of those things, but those things will not save Romania and Romanians from spiritual death. Only the Church can do that. There is Romania here on earth, but there is also a Romania in heaven – all those Romanians, peasants and voevody (princes) who have pleased God. That is the Romania which has eternal significance, that we must be inspired by and look to, not a degouted, westernised Romania, which will look like and behave like any other spiritually kidnapped country, with its glass and concrete blocks, its spiritually ugly culture, emptied of all spiritual and so moral beauty.

BM - Another aspect well observed is that our faith has diminished and it's continuing to diminish further. What killed our faith, father? Is it progress, wealth, propaganda?

Fr. A – What is killing our faith is the ever greater importance that we attach to the world. And as St John the Theologian says, the world lies in evil and the prince of the world is satan.

BM - Because we mentioned the Scriptures, share with us 3 passages from the Scriptures that you love especially. For instance it is still fresh in my memory what happened to Our Lord, after he was tempted in Quarantania, and the devil left: the place was filled with angels (Mt 4, 11). Or when the Apostles were on the way to Emmaus and they didn't reconginze Him (Lk, 24, 13-32). Of course, what the holy Apostle and Evangelist John wrote is really amazing and probably the most beautiful verses from the whole of the Scriptures. But name just a few you like most.

Fr. A – This, of course, is an impossible task! All I can do with such a question is to refer to the first three parts of Scripture that come to my mind.

First of all, I especially love the Gospel of St John. I want to learn it by heart. So my first quotation is the opening verse that we read on Easter Night, the Night of the Resurrection: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’. This is very important to me.

Secondly, there is the verse from St Matthew 6, 33: ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you’.

Finally, there are the words of the Apostle Paul from the First Epistle to the Corinthians 1, 25: ‘The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men’. But in fact that whole chapter is very dear to me, especialy verse 2; and 23: ‘The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified...’

BM - Indeed a tough question, Father, thank you for your answer, I'm glad there's someone else loving the words of St. John, more than others... I think no matter who I ask this question I'll get a profound answer. I wasn't going to ask you, but sine you mentioned it, say something about the (power of the) *word*. God made the world just by thinking of it, Adam named the animals and the nature and they obeyed him and answered his call. Christ healed only by word, and so on... Just how powerful is the word (a more philosophical question I think :)).

Fr. A - Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is the Word and Wisdom of God, ‘by Whom all things were made’, as we confess in the Creed.

Now man is made in the image and likeness of God. Although we have an animal's body, one thing distinguishes us from animals, we have an immortal soul since God breathed on us. This breath or spirit of God gave us an immortal soul and so the faculty of speech. No animal can speak, the most advanced animals can only imitate man, as for example with chimpanzees, which can 'ape' human-beings, with parrots that can repeat human speech, or with dogs which physically resemble their owners and even give them affection. But this is imitation, this is not intelligence, which is a faculty of the soul.

Speech therefore is the sign that we are God-like and human speech is very powerful. You have heard the saying, 'the pen is mightier than the sword' – so even speech written down is powerful, God-like. On the other hand, with speech, man can destroy. Our 'worst enemy is our tongue', say the Fathers. And yet we have St John Chrysostom – the Golden-mouth and St Nikola Velimirovich, the Serbian Chrysostom. True, the words that evil men speak hurt and cause evil, but with time even they are forgotten, but the words of good men and women have go round the world, are translated and are repeated for millennia. It is because the human word is a reflection of the Word of God. Of course, the greatest example of this are the words of the Son of God become human, which have been translated into over 2,000 languages over 2,000 years.

BM - The Holy Scriptures provide advice for all things: family, society, faith, and so on. But if I am to be cynical I would say that many spiritual falls had happened exactly in this Christian space. Towards where is our society heading, Father? The rhythm is becoming more and more hard to take. Music is infected with satanic and immoral verses, television just gives impulse to all evil, at school they learn sex and drugs... What can a true Christian do in these circumstances to keep himself clean from all this junk?

Fr .A – The world is returning to paganism of the first three centuries, that which the Apostolic Fathers combated. What can we do? Pray! To pray is to talk with God, it is a supernatural act. Every second that we pray is a second more that we devote to eternity and not to this world, to what is beyond nature and not to fallen nature. They say: 'Tell me what you read and I will tell you who you are'. I say: 'Tell me who you talk to and I will tell you who you are'. Do we talk to Christ, to the Mother of God, to the saints and angels – or do we talk to TV?

BM - In Romania, the sayng goes: „Tell me who your friends are, to tell you who you are”. A bit different, but works in either ways. So let's become friends with God and His saints, that's good advice...

And do not despair. At times in history the Apocalypse has come very near, at other times it has receded. At present we are in a time of acceleration. This does not have to last. We can turn back. True, we are all in a train that is rapidly heading to the terminus, to the end of the world. But you know trains can break down, they can stop and they can also go backwards, into reverse. Nothing is inevitable with this train. It depends on us.

Trust in the Providence of God. He alone can make good out of bad. So do not believe in the black prophecies and cynicism of those who have lost their faith. Because they have lost their faith, they have also lost their hope. and because they have lost their hope, they have lost their love.

BM - About our society, should we be content and justify our lack of resistance to the idea that there is nothing we can change, should we cease to be the spirit of the „world”?

Fr. A – Every prayer, every fast, every act of going to church, every confession, every communion is an act of resistance to the world and all its upside down pyramid of values. We fight to the end. Everything is in God’s hands. I am opposed to those who accuse other races or groups of conspiracy. There is only one who conspires against us and that is the devil.

It is true that at different times, the devil uses different people, groups of people and ideologies against us. For example, at one time, it was the Communists whom he manipulated to use against us, today the devil has no time for Communism. It is irrelevant to his cause. He has far more efficient helpers today. Unfortunately, many accept these new enemies into their hearts and homes, whereas they would never have accepted Communism. All our enemies are in fact victims of the devil, they have given up their God-given freedom to become slaves of the devil. All these sophisticated, ‘educated’ people, who think they know everything and are going to save humanity with their technology are all weak, manipulated victims of the devil.

BM - I think it's quite interesting, fascinating even, how many things one could learn by interacting with animals and nature. When you plant a seed and care for it to grow, when you feed animals and receive their kindness; the flowers, the birds, it's as though „someone” is trying to tell/teach us something. Won't you say so? Meanwhile, a technological society refuses in a way this teaching.

Fr. A – Who planted the Garden of Eden ‘in the east’? God. We recall God ‘walked in the garden in the cool of the day’. And so any care for God’s Creation is in fact an imitation of God the Loving Father. Man would do better to think of himself as a gardener than a technologist. Technology is an imitation of God, but it is always faulty, it always breaks down, it always has a disadvantage, a side-effect. Why? Simply because God is good, but man is sinful. His sin spread to everything that he makes, creates, touches.

I remember when the Americans got to the moon, they at once had a project to put bombs on the moon. Why? The same thing with space, both the Americans and the Soviets had plans for ‘killer satellites’, for ‘star wars’. As soon as man goes somewhere, he causes problems, so unnecessarily.

Nowadays, people are beginning to return to the idea of ‘protecting the environment’ from their own technology. But if you look at this, it is also harmful because they are trying to protect the environment’ with even more technology. For example, I have been told that electric cars are very harmful because of course they have to get their electricity from somewhere, but also because they cannot be recycled and the batteries they use are very anti-environment.

In general, this environmentalism is just a neo-pagan worship of fallen nature. This word ‘environment’ is completely wrong, anti-Christian, because it is man-centred, because it only talks about what is ‘around man’. A Christian ecological movement would talk about looking after ‘God’s Creation’, not looking after ‘man’s environment’. And so we return to the idea of man as a gardener in God’s garden. Until we return to that, God will never again ‘walk’ among us again.

BM - It seems people are interested only in how to consume more, how to seize. The world is selfish. Even in this blessed land (region) we can observe a decrease in interest in religion. People, when they have troubles, tend to curse God, rather than come back to Him, as once. What determines this stony heart? Could it be because God doesn't meet our selfish claims?

Fr. A - The whole modern Western consumer system is based on egoism: 'I love myself'. This creates stony hearts, capable only of loving themselves. The Western system, which Romania is absorbing now, is all based on the self. What is consumerism? It is self-indulgence, self-flattery, self-love. Because modern culture is selfish, it is destructive of anything collective, of the family, of the nation and of course of the greatest community of all, the Church, which is opposed to individualism. Like Western countries, Romania is now on a course of self-destruction, of spiritual and so cultural suicide.

BM - You know what I think? This welfare brought by technology makes you happy in a way, but in an unnatural way, because it pushes you towards egoism. Struggling for your own interest, you forget about others, while troubles keep you in a state of awareness. When you feel bad, you can see others feeling bad, but when you are well, you don't see them anymore. Man runs after pleasure, but it is all an illusion. At one point you get bored with all the running and desire something else (another pleasuring thing). Why don't we feel satisfied by what we find in these pleasuring things?

Fr. A – Yes, I agree. Consumerism is pure egoism. It all began with the American concept of 'self-service'. What about serving others?

Today I see young people who live in an anti-social world of their own, with MP3s, with laptops, with Facebook, with MySpace, personalised this, personalised that. They are sealed off from others, from reality, in a virtual (= self-centred) world. My, My My. Me, Me, Me. I, I, I.

This dissatisfaction is because these pleasuring things give only short-term pleasure. Short-term pleasure satisfies for a short time the body, the emotions and the mind, but it can do nothing for the soul, which alone is eternal. The whole of modern society is based on providing this short-term pleasure because it is soulless, not eternal.

BM - A great Romanian theologian (Fr. Dumitru Staniloae) said that man is pushed towards passions by the fear of death, but paradoxically, in the state that follows sinful pleasure or vanity, man finds precisely the smell of death, spiritual death, of course.

Fr. A – We fear death, because it is unnatural for us. God did not create us for death, but for life. God is called the Creator, the Giver of Life. Death came into the world with the sin of Adam and, as the Apostle says, 'the wages of sin is death' (Romans 6, 23). However, until we accept the reality of our fallenness, our sinful state, we cannot find repentance. And without repentance, there can be no escape from death. We run away from death by asserting our sinful flesh, but then we realise that flesh is mortal. We become materially rich but find no happiness in it and actually regret the past, when we were not rich.

BM - It is at least interesting the fact that we cannot sleep because of earthly worries, but the fact that we won't be saved doesn't trouble us that much. I remember some dialogues from the Desert Fathers: Why are you upset, avva? I still (need to) eat. Why are you upset, avva? I still (need to) sleep. But now, no matter wealth, man just wants more and more... 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Lk. 12, 34)' ?

Fr. A – Like any lie, all sin is a vicious circle, like a drug, an addiction. Once we start, we want to go on. We can only break out of the habit of sin through repentance, though new life, the breaking into earth of heaven. The Greek word for repentance is 'metanoia', which really means 'a change of mind'. And that is what we must do - to change our mind, turn our backs on sin and return to our Father's House.

BM - We spoke about the Scriptures and about the present, let's talk a little about the future. Mankind has always been interested in knowing the future, the last days... Now, people are talking only about this, conspiracies, end of times, poison and so on. Sometimes I feel like we know more about the Apocalypse than God Himself or, anyway, we know more about the Apocalypse but almost nothing about the Resurrection. What impact could this negative and narrow view have on our souls? What brings the end, how can we delay it, and what should be the normal attitude to the topic?

Fr. A – I never recommend anyone to read the Book of the Apocalypse of St John, the only prophetic book in the New Testament. Let us concentrate on the four Gospels, the Apostle and the Psalms. It can actually be dangerous to read the Book of the Apocalypse. Your soul must be ready for it. This whole concern with the end of the world can be negative, with its pseudo-predictions, morbidity and despair. As you say, it is the Resurrection that is really important.

We should not be so concerned with the end of the world, we should be concerned with the end of **our** world, that is our own mortality and then judgement. Christ calls us to save ourselves. We are not saviours of the world. He is the only Saviour of the world. Only if we can save ourselves can we actually help anyone else.

All speculations about the end of the world are futile. Our Lord Himself says that He does not know when the end of the world will come, it is only His Father who knows (Matt. 24, 36). Thus, if human-beings claim that they know when the end will come, that is pure spiritual pride, arrogance, illusion, for they are claiming that they know more than Christ.

We can delay the end through repentance. Every spiritual act is another second of time that the world will last, an extension, extra time gained for repentance. The end will come only when there are no more spiritual acts, when the world, in other words, is spiritually worthless, as it was before Noah.

The normal attitude to the last things is to think of our own salvation and our own mortality. We should not worry about this for we know that God is Love. If we do not think like this, we will fall into despair.

BM - Speaking about narrow views and Protestant thinking, I found respectable clerics or monks who think according to standards defined by them (they make the rule into an aim). I'm not talking about a personal understanding of dogma, I'm referring to the fact that they close what they think into patterns and classify them according to „letters” (...the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life, II Corinthians 3, 6). What is the border line between „letter” and „spirit” as the Apostle Paul says in his Epistle?

Fr. A – We must not be like the Pharisees, who make idols out of rules (you must not heal on the Sabbath, in other words, you must not do good on the Sabbath). If our souls are spiritually alive, then we will know what to do. We must constantly ask ourselves, where does the greater good lie - in following the letter, or following the spirit. Of course, they often coincide, but it is not always the case. Each human soul needs the correct dose of spiritual medicine at the right time.

For example, I can think of a young woman, very zealous for the faith, but zealous ‘not according to knowledge’, who fasted excessively and was proud of this. She came to me in a state of ill health. I gave her a penance (epitimia), not to fast during the Great Fast until Great

and Holy Monday. Indeed, I commanded her to eat as much as she could eat within reason in order to restore her health. I will have to answer for this at the Last Judgement, but later her doctor phoned me and thanked because he said that I had 'saved' her, because she had been making herself seriously ill. So where was the greater good?

BM - Still, Father, we must inform people of what is going on, because after all these years of indoctrination, we are subjects to another kind, of the same type. So, ordinary people don't know about it, because on TV they don't say it, and many lack access to the internet or a credible source. I think is necessary to inform and educate our fellows, so they can take the best decision for themselves.

Fr. A - Of course, we must be aware of what is going on in the world around us and tell others. That is absolutely vital because today the world is being manipulated by dark forces. We must create an Orthodox consciousness, a conscious Orthodoxy. 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves' (Matt 10, 16). Again, I repeat, we are not of the world, but we do live in the world. This does not mean that we live in a ghetto, we live in reality and we must know what attitudes to have towards that reality. That means 'being wise as serpents'. On the other hand, we must strive to keep ourselves 'clean', in other words to remain 'as harmless as doves'. We must keep our integrity, but we must also know about human nature and our enemies who are active in the world around us. If we do not know the tactics of our enemies, how can we resist them?

Today, the whole world is trying to indoctrinate us, to brainwash us and this is much worse than under Communism. That the Communists were wrong was obvious. However, the Western world is far more subtle and its ideology, its 'Sex in the city', is far more dangerous. The Communists were Neanderthals. Who today uses a hammer and a sickle? Now we use a machine assisted by a computer and a tractor guided by a satellite. So the Western world, including the EU, is very sophisticated, but therefore its propaganda is worse than that of the Nazis. The Western world is a form of flattery for human sin. It says: 'Go on, do it, it will make you feel good'. But when we realise the consequences, it is already too late, we are already addicted. If the EU offers big money if we sell our souls to it, then we must say no. But we have to know the price of their money, sometimes it is spiritually neutral, then – and only then - we can accept.

We have to be aware. We are moving towards the end. Obviously, every second that passes means we are a second closer to the end. But this must not become an obsession. It is the same with electronic chips. We do not like them, we know that they are a sign of the end. On the other hand, to make them the main article of our faith and to create a schism is also to play into the devil's hands.

BM - How often do you confess and how often do you take Communion?

Fr. A - I encourage people to come to confession and communion frequently. I recommend once a month, but probably on average people come less often than this. When you live in a country of Orthodox Tradition, like Greece or Serbia, perhaps you do not take communion so frequently, but in Western countries which are spiritual deserts, you have to take an active part in Church life in order to survive spiritually. On the other hand, I also believe in very careful preparation before communion. We must keep the fasts, say our prayers, read the Gospels and the Epistles, read the Lives of the Saints. Our Orthodox Life is a virtuous circle: we need the grace of God from the holy sacraments, but we also need to make great efforts of repentance in order to partake of the sacraments regularly. This in turn gives us the zeal to repent and desire to take communion even more regularly.

Prayer is not enough. If our prayer is sincere, action always follows. As the Apostle James says, faith without works is dead (James 2, 17). A soul that is alive does things. It prays first and then it acts. A soul that is dead has neither faith nor works. A soul that is dying, though not yet dead, can easily fall into a passive pietism, a sort of fatalism, a quietism. This is not Orthodox. For example, too many mention only that God is merciful. Of course, this is true, but God is also a Righteous Judge. The Fathers all say that when we think of the sins of others, we should think of the mercy of God. But when we think of ourselves, we should think of God the Righteous Judge – and tremble. How do we obtain salvation? Prayer and communion, but action always follows. Read Matthew chapter 25, how we must clothe the naked, lodge the stranger, feed the hungry, visit the sick and those in prison. Both literally and in the spiritual sense, I mean the spiritually naked, the spiritually hungry, the spiritual stranger, the spiritually sick and captive.

A soul that is alive goes and does things. Look at St John of Kronstadt. He set up a home for the employed, he helped alcoholics, he took prostitutes off the streets and gave them healthy work and so an income. St Nicholas did the same, so did St Basil the Great. The Orthodox Faith is active, not passive. I think many of the problems in parts of Eastern Europe come from the fact that the Communists did not allow the Church any social activity. And now this passivity has become normal. Of course, we are not Protestants, we must not fall into the opposite extreme of social activism. All action and no prayer. Passivism. Activism. All isms are bad. And Orthodoxy is not an ism. Being socially active is not an ideology for us, it is not an aim, it is just a result of having faith, of obeying the commandments – love God and love your neighbour.

BM - How do you understand, 'I shall not tell Thine enemies the secret, nor give Thee a kiss like Judas', from the prayer before Communion at the Liturgy?

Fr. A - 'Telling His enemies the secret' means being a traitor to Christ instead of confessing Him. And the kiss of Judas is the kiss of the hypocrite. These words are pleas for sincerity from us all, because in our times every sin makes us into a traitor and a hypocrite. And sin has become almost institutionalised in our daily lives. This is very sad. We must take these words as a warning to us. Are we ready to be faithful to Christ, to witness to Him? Are we ready to be martyred for Him? If not, then frankly, we should be ashamed to call ourselves Orthodox Christians and not take communion.

BM - Father, I would like you to talk about the meaning of the nation, not politically but according to the Scriptures, especially from the context of Genesis. Why are there so many nations? Do they have a historic role? Is the past of a nation important? Is the tribute to our ancestors important? Will nations be judged?

Fr. A – God scattered the peoples after the building and fall of the Tower of Babel. So, many different languages were formed and nations were formed. The unity of the nations is not in building a new Tower of Babel, in Brussels or in Washington, it is in the Holy Spirit, in the Day of Pentecost. This is spiritual unity, which allows diversity, whereas the present politically-imposed unity, globalism, is all about destroying diversity, making us the same.

We must love the country where it was God's will for us to be born, because God created its natural beauty and allowed its manmade beauty to come into existence...Every nation has a role to play in the world, in history. We shall only understand this clearly at the end of time and how each nation has performed, both managing and also failing to do God's Will in history, whether it has remained faithful to the best of its past, to the best achievements of its ancestors. Each nation has a guardian angel and each nation through its individuals will be judged at the end of time.

