

# **BURNING BUSH**



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## SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Rev. Fr. John Konkle

I want to share a few thoughts or reflections about this Sunday of Orthodoxy. It will take me a while to get to the theme, as I will start out in sort of a strange way.

God is love, St. John tells us in his first epistle. And it is so clear, really, from the Gospels, and the holy writing of the New Testament—but especially from the Holy Fathers—that God expects only one thing from us; one and only thing: that we also become love, that we become by Grace what He is by Nature. And He is love.

*The Ladder of Divine Ascent* of St. John Climacus, is commonly read during this season of the church year. The thirtieth step of that *Ladder* is the step of love. It is the culmination of all of our efforts. All of our ascetic efforts culminate in love. And he describes this movement, this culmination, in this way: “Love, by its very nature, is a resemblance to God in as much as it is humanly possible” (Step 30:7, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, MA, 1991, pg 225). The profound thing about that statement is that Christ showed us how this was humanly possible, because He was the perfect human. He came to show us not so much how God loves, but how a *human being* loves. And then St. John goes on to say that, “Love is the inebriation of the soul,” a soul that is totally given over, totally filled with the Holy Spirit. It is sort of reminiscent of St. Paul’s words, “Don’t be drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.” This willingness of the Apostles and the Holy Fathers to compare our life in the Spirit to being inebriated, to being drunk, to being so given over to another force, to another power, so sacrificed of our will, but not given over to *any* power but to the power of the Spirit working within us.

Love is expressed so vividly in our Lord’s high-priestly prayer, and I want to read a little longer section so you can get this context in which He is praying first for his disciples, and then for those who believed through them. He said, “I do not pray for these alone”— that is, his disciples—“but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (Jn.17:20). Every one of us here believes in Jesus Christ through the Apostles. The word that the Father gave to His Son, and the Son gave to His disciples, has been given to us. And what does He pray for us? That, “They all may be one, as you Father *are* in Me and I in You; that they also may be one in Us.” Not just *one*, but *one in Us*. “That the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. I in them and You in Me; that they be made perfect in one,

and that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me” (Jn. 17:21-23). God’s love for us is not different than His love for His own Son, who is eternally-begotten. It is this profound thing: “Father I desire that they also, whom You gave Me, may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me. For You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (Jn. 17:24-26). The sum total focus of our Lord’s prayer culminates in this very simple point. When our Lord pours out His heart to His Father, before He goes to the Cross, on the very night in which He was about to be betrayed, His prayer culminates in a very simple request: Lord, let the love that You have loved Me with be poured out into their hearts. Be in them. That is the one thing that God longs for us: that we enter into that love. It is so profound, so amazing.

There are all these things that we worry about every day. Our day is composed of numerous distractions, disturbances, irritations and impatience that we easily forget that there is really only one thing that matters: and that is that we become this kind of conduit of God’s love, from Him into us and through us into the world. This is such an astounding text. The love which the Father has for the Son is to inebriate our souls. Orthodox so often talk about theosis, and rightly so, and this is what theosis is: to be this love; to let God so invade every corner of our life that this love that the world knows nothing of is manifested to it. And then as Jesus says in His prayer that the “world might believe” that the Father sent the Son.

Now, I say these things as sort of a preface to what may have been said earlier at today’s Liturgy in the parishes, thoughts regarding the celebration of this feast. Here at the monastery Fr. David (Oancea) in his sermon talked about some of the history of today’s feast. I just want to repeat a little of that even if you have already heard it, but with a certain thread in mind. As you likely know, from the 8<sup>th</sup> century into the early 9<sup>th</sup> century there was this destruction of the icons. We hold these icons now and process with them because they have been restored, but the destruction of the icons went on for nearly a hundred years—with a short break in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century, and then picked up again in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. And this destruction of the icons was carried out primarily by the emperors. In the synaxarion for today’s feast there is this list of emperors who were horrendous, and who caused great destruction, great chaos in the Christian world over this issue, culminating in one name: Theophilus. And of Theophilus, after this long list of terrible emperors, it says that, “Theophilus left the other devotees of iconoclastic madness in second place.” All of his predecessors for the

previous hundred years were in second place, compared to his destruction of the Church, and of the Church's veneration of icons. It is said of Theophilus that he had given many of the Holy Fathers over to outrageous torments and chastisements on account of the precious icons, and this for a period of twelve years of his life as emperor.

There are stories about how he became quite ill and his wife, who we honor today, Empress Theodora, cared for him in his illness, but he eventually died, right before the beginning of Great Lent, and Theodora was absolutely distraught. She herself had icons; she wore one inside of her clothing, she had icons in her personal possessions, hidden from her husband. After the death of Theophilus, there were various very prominent ascetics and monks from throughout the region who came to Constantinople to plead for the restoration of the icons. And the synaxarion mentions that Theodora asked them to make supplications for her husband. Although they disowned Theophilus who had persecuted all of their fellow Christians at the time—seeing her faith, they were nonetheless convinced. And St Methodius, who was the patriarch at the time, assembled all the people and all the clergy, and all the hierarchs, and the leading figures from Olympus, (where there was a great monastic presence), and there is this long list of great saints, and many others from the great City of Jerusalem who came to Constantinople, all assembled in the great Church (Hagia Sophia) at the request of St. Methodius. All night long they prayed and made supplication to God for Theophilus, for this person who had been persecuting them for twelve years. They all prayed with tears and fervent entreaty throughout the entire first week of Great Lent. The Empress Theodora did the same, together with the women of the court and the rest of the people. At the end of the first week, on Friday, after keeping vigil for an entire week Theodora finally fell asleep, so great was her faith that she made it also through the nights. And while she was asleep it seemed to her that she was standing beside a large cross, and that certain men were traversing through the road and creating a tumult, carrying various instruments of torture. And in the midst of them was the Emperor Theophilus, her husband. He was being led in fetters with his hands tied behind his back. On recognizing him, she followed after those who were beating him; when they reached the bronze gate she saw a man magnificent in appearance, seated in front of the icon of Christ, and they placed Theophilus in front of it. Grasping the feet of the man with that magnificent appearance the Empress entreated him on behalf of the emperor. Opening his mouth with reluctance, the man said: “Great is your faith, O lady. Know therefore that on account of your tears and your faith and also on the account of the supplications and entreaty of my servants and my priests I am granting forgiveness to your husband, Theophilus.” He then said to those who were leading him away to release

him, and hand him over to his wife. After receiving him she departed rejoicing, and at once she awoke. Such was the vision of the Empress Theodora. Immediately she went back and talked to the patriarch, Methodius, and he performed another test, by which it was confirmed that God had forgiven Theophilus. On this occasion then they proclaimed Sunday, to be the restoration of icons in the church in Constantinople and across the empire. I chose to say this because when we think of the triumph of Orthodoxy, we think of it primarily in terms of these icons being brought out of the closets, back into the life of the church. But this aspect of the story, of the Empress Theodora, seems so profound to me, that it transforms the feast of the triumph of Orthodoxy into a triumph of love.

In our world today marriages hardly ever stay together. The slightest thing can break up a marriage. The Empress Theodora was married to the man who was the greatest persecutor of Christians in a century and she did not cease to love him. And when he died, she called all the people, all the great ascetics and fathers of the Church of the time to “Pray for my husband, the one who persecuted you, the one who harmed all of your friends, who tortured them, who made you confessors; I want all of you to pray for him.” So today’s feast is brought about by the triumph of love, the love of a woman for her husband who was absolutely undeserving of love. He did absolutely nothing to merit the love of his wife, to say nothing of the love of his subjects. And yet, because of her love for him, the empire could love him. And because of her love, and the empire’s love, God forgave him. God released him. What a profound thing, I think.

There are other instances of this sort of intense love that is so profound, and I was struck by one earlier this week, when reading the Canon of St. Andrew. Many of you know Fr. Roman loved the services of the Church and loved, it seemed to me, to collect the service books of the Church, in different translations, different languages. And he always had them sort of very organized on the shelf. It was like little precious objects— as they indeed are. And I noticed that there was very little writing in these books. Occasionally he would put a reference or clarify a rubric in them, but very, very little notation in these books. The reason I noticed that is because I am always struck, every Lent, when I read the Great Canon of St. Andrew that there is one verse—actually two-thirds of a verse— that is underlined. And as I recall, it is the only text that I have seen underlined in any of the books that I have read here from Fr. Roman, so it stands out to me. And what verse would he choose to underline, out of all these texts? “By two wives understand action and contemplation. Leah is action, for she had many children; and Rachel is knowledge, for she endured great toil.” That is what Fr. Roman underlined. The part that he did not underline, the rest of that verse, says, “For without toil, O my soul, neither action nor contemplation

will succeed.” Of course we are talking about the Patriarch Jacob, and the verses that are immediately preceding this say, “The ladder which the great patriarch Jacob saw of old is an example, O my soul, of approach through action and ascent to knowledge. If you wish to live rightly in action and knowledge in contemplation be made new. In privation Jacob the patriarch endured the burning heat by day and the frost by night, making daily gains with sheep and cattle, shepherding, and wresting in serving to win his two wives.” The two wives represent action and contemplation. I have no idea when he underlined it, but ever since I saw it there I felt like he underlined it for me, and I am still trying to understand it. “By two wives understand action in contemplation. Leah is action, for she had many children; and Rachel is knowledge, for she endured great toil.” The part that he did not underline, the rest of that verse, says, “For without toil, O my soul, neither action nor contemplation will succeed.”

If you remember the story of Jacob, he went to his uncle, his mother’s brother, to work for him. And he goes to this well, and up comes this woman who is a shepherdess, who turns out to be Rachel, and he says to himself, “Oh this is the woman of my dreams!” And he wants to marry her, and Laban accedes: “You just have to work seven years for her.” And Jacob says, “Well, I’ll gladly do that.” So he works seven years for his uncle and then he gets tricked and he gets the older sister Leah instead. And Laban says, “Well, you can have her too, but you have to work seven more years.” So Jacob is this patriarch who labored fourteen years so he could have the person that he loved. He toiled tirelessly, faithfully, not complaining. It is a profound story, really, when you think about it. Jacob is this great example to us of the power and the importance of love—not to lose sight of it, not to give up, and how everything else can fall away. And in the context of that toil, we are told by St. Andrew, we will be forced in our own lives to cultivate two characteristics. One of them is action, and one of them is contemplation. Either alone will leave us somehow shortchanged. This pursuit, this desire, to see love fulfilled, love culminated, love completed, will require that we do something. What did we hear two weeks ago, at the Sunday of the Last Judgement? Who are the sheep? The sheep are the ones who visit the sick, visit those in prison, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty. They do, they act. Acts of mercy, in the simplest ways to those who God puts in our lives. We have to be people of action. This love which God manifests to the world is a love that acts. It is hard to imagine how many times in her life the Empress Theodora died to herself as she saw what her husband was doing. And yet she still honored him, she still remained faithful to him, she still loved him, in the simple day to day actions of their lives, that we know nothing about. But we know how the story ends, and that she did not draw back from those actions.

There are many other ways to describe the actions that we need to have in the context of loving one another, but maybe the most profound one, besides these very simple expressions of acts of mercy, is forgiveness. We have to be people that are radically forgiving of one another. Not just not holding grudges, but really setting people free.

One other thing I remember from Fr. Roman—since this is what inspired this part of my reflection—is from an interview, where he is talking about the Jesus Prayer. Fr. Roman said, “The first step should be the prayer itself—praying the prayer. If you repeat and recite the Jesus prayer the rest comes naturally. Man cannot become dispassionate without falling on his knees and asking God for this grace, because everything comes by the grace of God.” This aspect of contemplation is what reveals to us that our actions are not simply our actions. Our actions are by the grace of God, enlivening us, infusing us, awakening us, moving our very limbs. “Everything comes by the grace of God. Attaining dispassion is not the result of personal effort, but it comes by the grace of God. So you must fall on your knees. See yourself as a sinner, and ask for God’s help. Prayer and the purification of passions happen at the same time,” he says, “that priority must be given to prayer. Some say there is no pure prayer without first attaining dispassion. But I say that whether pure prayer or forced prayer, prayer must be the beginning of any spiritual activity.”

So I think everything that we do has its origin in us turning to God. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon says over and over again, “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity” (Eccl. 1:2). All our good works are going to perish. And then he says, except “...whatsoever God does, it shall be forever” (Eccl. 3:14). That will abide forever.” Only those things which God does in this world are going to be the things that truly abide. He can do them through you and I. He does not act apart from our wills associating, aligning themselves, with His will. He does not come down to be a magician, and tap us on the shoulder and somehow violate our will. He comes down to be like He was with the Mother of God, waiting for the response, “Be it done to me according to Your word.” And so, as with Fr. Roman, every single one of our actions should be initiated by this movement first toward God in prayer, and then outward into the world of action to those that God gives us.

Finally I want to say this: often in our lives we feel totally inadequate at loving other people. I think this is the normal case. We can get all encouraged and wound up, we read a book, or whatever it is, and want to go and be different. And then we go and we fail. But again, referring to St. John in his first epistle, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love because He first loved us” (4:18). This is the most profound aspect of love: we love because He first loved us. When we try

to go out and love others and we fail, we learn one very simple thing about ourselves, that we have aspects of our life that have not been cleansed by the love of God. When we fail at loving others it is because we have in some way closed God out of our life, and we do not thereby have the resources to offer that love to them. Whether it is in forgiveness or whether it is an act of mercy or whether it is being patient with someone, giving them a listening ear, saying an encouraging or a kind word, whatever it might be. When we find ourselves frustrated, discouraged, discouraged that we are not able to love another in the way in which the saints were able to love, the way in which the holy Empress Theodora was able to love her husband who did not deserve it, then we realize that however pious, or proper and reverent we might be, that there are portions of our lives that we are blocking out from God. And insofar as we block out God's love in our life, it will not flow through us. Until we are transformed by it, we can not be a part of transforming anyone else. I do not think this is an occasion for discouragement. I think that everything in our lives becomes a trigger to remind us of God. So often when we fail we get discouraged and downcast, and this is a great gift to Satan, because he loves to have us discouraged. God has no interest in having us discouraged. When we are discouraged, we just fall and we stay down on the ground and we do not get up. God always wants to raise us up. So when we face some failure in our lives, some inability to be patient, when patience is called for, some inability to call up the kind, supportive and encouraging word, the inability to resist gossip, the inability to overcome anger and envy, strife, to put aside divisiveness in our families and our parishes, when we fail in these respects we have to see it as a trigger to say, "Lord, what is it in my life that needs your love? What am I blind to? What do I not see?" There are two aspects to this: one is we have to stop looking at other people, just like the prayer of St. Ephraim, Lord, do not let me judge other people, let me see my own sins. Take my eyes off the other people. The second thing is not carrying on a conversation with ourselves. Often when we fail, we think, "Oh! I cannot believe that I failed again. I am never going to be any better. This is my problem. I can not ever get over this. Nothing is ever going to change. I have had this problem for ten years, twenty years, thirty years, my whole life. I got it from my parents. They got it from their parents. It is never going to change." But as long as we are talking to ourselves there is no opportunity for God's grace to intervene. This sort of self-monologue that we have creates a little seal around our heads; we live in this little made up world of our own, thinking about other people, focusing on other people with our own thoughts, and focusing on ourselves with our own thoughts, is not all that different; Both leave God out of the picture. Not only do we

not focus on other people, but in a certain sense we do not focus on ourselves either. We must say, “Lord, You show me.”

It is God’s responsibility—forgive me for being so blunt—it is God’s responsibility to show us our sins. The Holy Spirit is the one Who comes to convict the world, you and I, of our sins. God does not need our self-analysis. God knows us a lot better than we know ourselves. So, when we fail we turn to God, and say, “Lord, You show me my life. You are the light that comes into the world.” If we do not run from that light, He will show us those aspects of our life that need His light. He will cast out that darkness in our own lives, and in doing that we will experience His cleansing power, His redeeming power. We will feel our spirit set free in some simple way. And in the midst of that freedom, we will be able to love a little more. We will be able to have a kind word for someone. Judgment will not be as easy for us to make. So little by little, letting ourselves experience God’s love, we will be precisely what it is that makes us more like Him. Making us by grace what He is by nature. So when we say, in the liturgy, “Let us love one another that with one mind we may confess,” we express very clearly and very vividly that the foundation of our doctrinal teaching in the Church is love.

The triumph of Orthodoxy, in the Church, and in a sense in the world, is not simply an abstract doctrine. It is not even simply a great feast one day a year in which we process around the church, and hold up icons. The triumph of Orthodoxy is this radical love that the world knows nothing of. And that love is what it is that gives life, and light, and really, flesh, to the doctrine that we believe.

So, my brothers and sisters, my encouragement for you today is really very simple: make the triumph of Orthodoxy the triumph of love. Every time you venerate an icon, know that this is God’s love poured out to you. God wants to inebriate your soul, to make you radically changed and transformed that you become His icon in this world to those whom He places in your life.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. ■

Lecture by Rev. Fr. John Konkle given at the Dormition Monastery on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

## GREAT LENT AND PASCHA: THE CONSUMMATE MODEL FOR HEALING TRAUMA

*Our hearts are restless until they rest in you. (St. Augustine of Hippo)*

In his interview with *Road to Emmaus*, ‘The Opposite of War is not Peace’<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Timothy Patitsas delves into the Orthodox understanding of trauma and healing, after laying out his and other scholars’ understanding of trauma in relation to *The Iliad*, which, he says, is now generally accepted by classicists as having been composed and performed to provide therapy to soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress after the Trojan War. *The Iliad* and Orthodox Tradition approach the healing of trauma from a common starting point. That is, both see war as inherently evil, although at times it is a necessary evil, being the lesser of many evils. Regardless of whether a war is being fought to defend good or evil, it causes trauma to the souls of those involved – to the losers and to the winners. This, Patitsas stresses, is an entirely unavoidable (yet, in a manner, invisible) cost of war. Citing Jonathan Shay, M.D. PhD (author and much sought-out clinical psychiatrist) and S.L.A. Marshall (a U.S. army historian), Patitsas notes that throughout history, soldiers have mostly chosen not to kill (this was found to apply to ‘about 85% of trained soldiers’ in a study of World War II), because they ‘know that they are killing a part of their own soul if they do kill, and when it comes right down to it, most people would rather die physically than spiritually.’<sup>2</sup>

Patitsas moves from discussing the specific trauma of war to discussing trauma in general, in light of Orthodox Tradition. This roadmap, if you will, for healing trauma will then be overlaid that of the journey of Great Lent to Pascha to demonstrate how this season of the liturgical year is itself the prime path to healing all trauma which plagues the human soul.

What stands out as an overarching rhetorical question in Patitsas’ interview is this: how can one suffering from trauma of any kind ever hope to arrive at healing without first coming to an understanding of *what* exactly trauma is, what causes it, and what counters it? Asking such a question provides a framework within which to look at trauma.

So, what is trauma and what causes it? Patitsas defines it as ‘anti-liturgy.’ Liturgy is total communion (‘union with’). In union, ‘I’ relinquishes its apartness *from*, by joining in union *with*, others. Liturgy is

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<sup>1</sup> Patitsas, Timothy. 2013. The Opposite of War is not Peace: Healing Trauma in *The Iliad* and Orthodox Tradition. *Road to Emmaus* Issue No. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Patitsas

‘the cognitive, bodily, totalizing act that steadily increases communion instead of cutting it...[and] that purifies and knits the character together’. Anti-liturgy, in complete contrast, ‘unravels the character,’ creating chaos in the soul, and rending apart the bond between the mind and the heart — this is trauma. The ensuing dissimulation of the person causes deep suffering. Trauma ‘excommunicates’ a person (it brings it out of communion). It is isolating, and the sufferer not only loses the ability to trust others but even to trust themselves. The traumatized person loses the ability to sense, to feel, and often they seek to further excommunicate and isolate themselves, in order to avoid further trauma. In reality, this only exacerbates the internal ripping apart of the person.

Trauma, says Patitsas, is ‘practically the ultimate teacher [as] few other experiences so powerfully form our view of the world.’<sup>3</sup> But what this teacher imparts, he says, is ‘mostly lies.’ It has some truth, but mostly ‘heretical truth’ and ‘false knowledge.’<sup>4</sup> Even the effort to define trauma brings to light how oxymoronically deceptive it is. The victim of trauma is unable to recognize *true* truth and knowledge, because the charade of trauma’s “truth” so deeply permeates their perception of the world.

Trauma is essentially an ‘unknowing.’ In communion (liturgy) one ‘knows’ and is ‘known.’ When ‘I’ communes (unites) with an ‘other,’ they become one. They know each other, and through that they know *themselves*. The integrity of the person is not lost in this knowing union, but it ceases to be ‘other’ and apart. What is foreign becomes familiar. Trauma, however, is unknowing. Knowledge of the other is cut off and prevented, because the union has been torn. With this separation, the other becomes something apart. The soul is isolated, and no longer knows even itself.

Relating this to the history of salvation, trauma is a result of the Fall. The Fall, in a manner, is the ultimate Unknowing: of God, the other, and of self. It therefore is the original trauma, and the resultant individual sufferings and traumas are all its spawn. (How ironic it is that this unknowing came after eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—perhaps because this knowledge was taken apart from the understanding that accompanies communion.) This perspective shapes the Orthodox interaction with sin (which traumatizes the soul) and the sinner, for the sinner is then the *sufferer*, who needs above all comfort and healing, not condemnation and further isolation.

So, the question follows: is healing possible and *how* is trauma healed? Yes, assures Patitsas, healing is certainly possible following such a tragedy of the soul. As was mentioned above, trauma warps the sufferer’s

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<sup>3</sup> Patitsas

<sup>4</sup> Patitsas

perception of truth and maims his or her ability to feel, and for this reason (as healing requires consent and co-participation) the path to healing is often quite arduous and steep. The sufferer (at least initially) trusts no one fully – not even, or perhaps especially— themselves, and they doubt every hint of a feeling within themselves. St. Theophan the Recluse expresses well this predicament of the unreliability of a traumatized person’s judgment when he says, “When there is confusion in the soul, of whatever kind, do not at such a time trust its judgment; for what the soul tells you then will not be the truth”<sup>5</sup>

The laying of a foundation for healing must begin with empathy, Patitsas says. At this stage it is not productive to go over details of the trauma (be it abuse or war or any other kind of trauma). The sufferer is not ready, and reliving the memories will cause more harm than good. To begin reestablishing trust and a knowledge of *true* truth, empathy must be given within the context of communion. The sufferer must be brought into liturgy, out of isolation. The goal is not only to bring the person into union with others, but also to bring about a renewed union *within* the person. The heart and mind that have been torn apart must be welded back together. Whereas conventional psychology seeks to bring the heart and its movement into the mind, where it can be dissected and rationalized, Orthodox liturgy seeks to bring the hurt mind down into the heart and to place its rational processes under subjection to the higher movements of the heart (where God is). Trauma is senseless. It cannot be rationalized. Trying to do so (as in the conventional approach) brings more confusion, and eventually despair, to the injured soul.

Conventional approaches to therapy stress “getting it out,” which, he says, ‘has reduced the human soul to a steam engine, and emotional healing to an elaborate system of hydraulic movements – “venting” about sums it up’<sup>6</sup>. Patitsas continues to say that ‘this approach is reductive [and is]...deeply wrong...Modern psychology has nearly destroyed friendship...’<sup>7</sup> Listening alone does little for the trauma victim; empathetic listening, however, is redemptive. The one who listens empathetically, he says, has ‘Christ acting in them...they take all of your pain, all your isolation and trauma...weeping where you can’t, being outraged where you can’t’<sup>8</sup>. This kind of listener feels for the victim until they can again feel for

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<sup>5</sup> Kadloubovsky, E. and E.M. Palmer, trans. 1966. *The Art of Prayer*. New York: Faber & Faber.

<sup>6</sup> Patitsas

<sup>7</sup> Patitsas

<sup>8</sup> Patitsas

themselves.

Truly the most traumatic words imaginable, sounding constantly within the sufferer, are, “I do not know you.” The empathetic listening seeks to know the sufferers deeply, and to gently guide them into knowledge of themselves. Then there is a framework of knowing communion within which to safely process the details and ramifications of the trauma.

A disconnected, unfeeling mind will search for an eternity trying to understand why a trauma has occurred. But a wounded heart that has learned to love despite senselessness will find true healing and contentment, and will calm the restless mind by bringing it into its embrace (which is really the embrace of Christ, who has healed the heart by entering into communion – unity – with it). This salvific healing is the *telos*, or final goal, of therapy and must be held ahead from the very start of the healing process, giving a hopeful light to draw the sufferer along the long path to regaining wholeness.

Let us now return to how all of this relates to our salvation in Christ, in whom this healing is to be found, and to the events through which He enacted and is enacting this healing, which we partake in at all times, but with a special intensity during the seasons of Great Lent and Pascha. As stated above, the Fall was the original Trauma—unknowing, even to the oblivion of death—inflicted upon mankind and all creation. From that event onward, creation suffered with great pain and little consolation. We relive all of this yearly in the Lenten readings from the Old Testament. We remember the “B.C.” of our own lives. We empathize communally with the trauma and pain of all of creation, which we ourselves have experienced. This constantly pulls us out of isolation, knowing that all have suffered in many ways, and draws us into the embrace of liturgy, the context within which all are healed.

What really strikingly models the path to healing trauma, however, is that in Orthodox Lent we do not wallow in these details or merely enumerate them without understanding (which would be the model of conventional psychology). We do not mourn our suffering and death ‘as those who have no hope.’<sup>9</sup> No, from the beginning of Lent all the way until its glorious culmination, we are constantly reminded of the *telos* (end goal). What is this? The regeneration of our beings, the reunification of our hearts and minds, the all-consuming unity with God and the other in the Resurrection and person of Jesus Christ. This “light at the end of the tunnel” is what spurs us on to grasp this healing for ourselves. We walk towards this, because ‘the world [is] such a monster that if your turn around, it will tear you to pieces’ (St Barsanufius of Optina).

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:13b

There is no longer the trauma of unknowing for the healed soul of a Christian, for Christ dwells there and reveals himself to and in us. By knowing Christ we come to know ourselves, because the previously unknown [traumatized] self is now transformed into the likeness of the known Christ.

“I know my own and my own know me.”<sup>10</sup> Yes, His own know him, and in Him know themselves. This is healing. This is wholeness and re-assimilation, which calms all the chaos of trauma on a cosmic scale.

A final thought: the hands of Christ embrace us (perhaps through the empathetic listening of another), and we, who were previously stripped of our ability to sense and feel, sense with hope the profound and knowing empathy of those hands, because they bear the marks of nails. These hands hold together the torn pieces of our being, until we are made whole. This journey into the embrace of Christ, in the context of Great Lent and Pascha, is the consummate model for healing trauma. ■

Dr. Timothy Patitsas is assistant Professor of Ethics at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston, MA.

### **CONTINUATION OF ICONOGRAPHY PROJECT**

We continue to work on the iconography in the church and more icons have been completed.

On the ceiling of the Nave we now have 9 large icons available:

Nativity; Presentation; Baptism; Descent into Hades;  
Entry into Jerusalem; Resurrection; Transfiguration;  
Doubt of Thomas; Exultation of the Cross.

Donations for these icons: \$ 6,000.00 each.

On the South side wall above the arches we now have 9 icons available:

Wedding at Cana; Calming of the Storm at Sea; Healing of Woman w/Issue of Blood; Raising of Jairus' Daughter; Forgiveness of Sinful Woman; Blessing of the Children; Calling of Zacheus; Cleansing of the Lepers; The Widow's Offering.

Donations for these icons: \$ 4,700.00 each.

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<sup>10</sup> John 10:14

**ONE YEAR MEMORIAL FOR  
FATHER ROMAN BRAGA  
May 14, 2016**

Hierarchal Divine Liturgy starting at 9:00 am.

The memorial service will follow immediately.

A memorial meal will be served. All are invited.

We ask those who plan on attending to call or e-mail the monastery.

**SPRING WORK DAY  
Saturday June 4, 2016**

Liturgy will start at 8:00 am  
Lunch will be served at 12:30 pm  
Dinner will be served at 5:00 pm  
Vigil will start at 6:00 pm

We ask that you bring your own rakes,  
gloves and garden tools if you have them.

**HOLY WEEK / PASCHA/ BRIGHT WEEK  
SCHEDULE OF SERVICES - 2016**

Sat., April 23 (Lazarus Saturday) Fest of St. George:

Holy Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom— 9:00am

Vigil — 6:00 pm

Sun., April 24 (Palm Sunday): Holy Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom — 10:00am

Bridegroom Matins — 7:00 pm

**Holy Week**

Mon., April 25: Presanctified Holy Liturgy — app. 9:30 am

Bridegroom Matins — 7:00 pm

Tues., April 26: Presanctified Holy Liturgy — app. 9:30 am

Bridegroom Matins — 7:00 pm

Wed., April 27: Presanctified Holy Liturgy — app. 9:30 am

Holy Unction — 2:00 pm

Bridegroom Matins — 7:00 pm

Thurs., April 28: 1st Hr., 3rd Hr., 6th Hr., 9th Hr., Typica, Vespers Liturgy of St.

Basil — 9:00 am

Matins with Passion Gospel — 7:00 pm

Fri., April 29: Royal Hours and placing of the Shroud in the Tomb — 10:00 am

Lamentations — 7:00 pm

Sat., April 30: 1st Hr., 3rd Hr., 6th Hr., 9th Hr., Typica, Vespers Liturgy of St.

Basil — 9:00 am

**Resurrectional Matins and Paschal Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom -11:30pm**

**Paschal meal to follow — all are invited to partake.**

**Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup> PASCHA:** Paschal Vespers — 1:00 pm

**Bright Week**

Mon., May 2: Matins — 9:00 am followed by Holy Liturgy (app. 10:00am) and procession to the cemetery. Lunch will follow.

Tues., May 3: Matins — 8:00 am followed by Holy Liturgy (app. 9:00 am). Lunch will follow.

Thurs., May 5: Great Vespers of the Feast (Lifegiving Fount) — 5:00pm.

Fri., May 6: Feast of the Lifegiving Fount - services in English: Matins — 8:30am followed by Holy Liturgy (app. 10:00 am) and Small Blessing of the Water. Lunch — 12:00 noon.

**Sat., May 7: Resurrectional Matins — 9:00 am**

Divine Liturgy — 10:00 am

Lunch — 12:00 noon

Sun., May 8: (Sunday of St. Thomas): Akathist, 3rd Hr., 6th Hr., — 9:00 am

Holy Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom — 10:00 am followed by procession to the cemetery and blessing of the graves.

