

HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH

THROUGH THE CROSS JOY HAS COME INTO ALL THE WORLD

Rev. Fr. Christopher Foley
frc@holycrossoca.org

645 Greensboro Rd., High Point, NC
336-688-9820

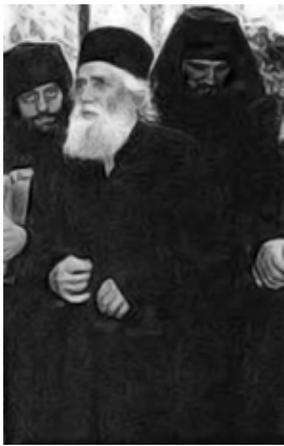
www.holycrossoca.org

JUNE-JULY, 2018

Volume 12, Number 10-11

ON POSITIVE THINKING - PART ONE

“For perverse thoughts separate men from God” (Wis 1:3)



Elder Paisios always urged us to think positively. Our positive thinking, however, should not be our ultimate aim; eventually our soul must be cleansed from our positive thoughts as well, and be left bare having as its sole vestment divine grace granted to us through Holy Baptism. “This is our aim,” he used to say, “to totally submit our mind to the grace of God.

The only thing Christ is asking from us is our humility. The rest is taken care of by His grace. In the beginning, we should willingly try to develop positive thoughts, which will gradually lead us to the perfect good, God, to whom belongs every glory, honor and worship; on the contrary, to us belongs only the humility of our conceited attitude.”

“We must always be careful and constantly question the nature of our thoughts. When someone is preoccupied and trusts his own way of thinking, he becomes vulnerable to the devil, who is capable of transforming us into sly persons, even when we are honest by nature. The older fathers never trusted their own thoughts. Even for minor problems to which they had to give answers, they prayed to God, or fasted, as a way to “force” divine grace to reveal the answer according to God’s will; and after they got the “information”, they gave the answer.

In our days, when someone has a serious problem and asks for advice, we tend to interrupt him and provide an answer without letting him finish his question first. In this case, we do not only seek the assistance of divine grace,

but we also misuse our logic, which was granted to us by God. We are ruled by our own thoughts and unhesitatingly rely on them, very often having to face the disastrous results of our acts.”

“Almost all of us consider our thoughts to be simple and natural, therefore, we spontaneously rely on them. On the contrary, we should neither trust, nor accept them. We must not have any thoughts in our mind or heart, neither positive ones, nor negative ones, for this space inside us belongs to the grace of God. We are obliged to keep it clean, not only of our various thoughts but also of the slightest and most elusive slip of the mind. We can only achieve this, if we fervently love Christ and unhesitatingly trust Him. As a result, we humble ourselves, and divine grace, naturally, will be revived inside us, for it is only granted to the humble ones; “God opposes the proud, but gives Grace to the humble.” (1Pet 5:5).

“We must have positive thoughts, otherwise none of the spiritual fathers- not even the saints- can help us. When Jesus was on the Cross and all the terrible events were taking place, two thieves were also being crucified with Him. “And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour” (Mk 15:33). “...And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs were also opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs, after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” (Mt 27:51-53). Each one of them had a different attitude towards Him, even though they were both placed next to the same God; a God who had never been blamed for, or accused by anyone for the slightest sin. On the contrary, many people were benefited by Him: some had cured of a specific disease, others had been resurrected and all these miracles took place in public. Now, even nature was reacting against the injustice done to Him.

The thief placed on the left cross had created inside his mind a “factory”, which produced only negative thoughts. “...One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying ‘Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us’.” (Lk 23:39). Although he could see what was going on around him, he never questioned himself about it. The one on the right, who had a positive way of thinking, reacted as follows: “But the other rebuked him saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom’.” (Lk 23:40-42). Both thieves had the same almighty God placed between them who could help them. The negative thinking of the one on the left prevented God from helping him, whereas the one on the right- who had committed terrible crimes and was legitimately being punished- was able to “move” Jesus with his positive attitude. And He said to him: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Lk 23:43). We should keep in mind that God “cannot” help us, even if He really wants to, unless we acquire a positive way of thinking. Concerning the spiritual progress of a disciple monk, it is more important for him to develop good thoughts than to be guided by a spiritual father who is considered a living saint...”

Looking at this subject from a different point of view, Elder Paisios stressed and greatly emphasised the specific characteristic of love, that is, that “love is not irritable or resentful” (1Cor 13:4). He used to say that “we should never, even under the worst circumstances, allow a negative thought to penetrate our soul. The person, who, under all circumstances, is inclined to have positive thoughts, will always be a winner; his life will be a constant festivity, since it is constantly based on his positive thinking. Our acts depend on and are determined by the “machine” we have inside us, and not by the “material” we digest, or the environment we live in. I will give you an example, so you can better understand what I am trying to say:

If one has a machine that produces bullets and feeds it with the highest quality material, -let’s say gold- the machine will still convert gold into bullets, golden but destructive bullets; if he feeds it with silver, then it will produce silver bullets; if he feeds it with iron, it will produce iron bullets, or if he feeds it with clay, it will produce clay bullets. In other words, no matter what material he feeds his machine, it still produces bullets, because it was made to manufacture these destructive products. If someone converts the machine into one that produces holy chalices instead of bullets, then whatever material he feeds it, it will always produce holy chalices. If he puts in the machine clay or iron, it will manufacture clay or iron chalices respectively.

I will now tell you a story regarding a very old father from Kap-sala. The old father’s “machine” was the kind that produced only positive thoughts. He only saw the good things in life and he was blind to every evil. Once, a group of people visited him and brought him a small radio as a present. The old father took it in his hands and examined it with lots of admiration. He asked where it was manufactured and the visitors told him in Japan. As he was looking at it, suddenly he was filled with joy and started kissing the radio saying:

“Glory to God!” The visitors asked him why he was glorifying God and he explained to them:

“You see, I am very pleased that the Japanese Christians put the sign of the Holy Cross on the products they manufacture.”

The old father had noticed the positive and negative pole (+,-) of the batteries and thought it was the sign of the Cross. His mind produced a simplistic and positive thought for the radio the visitors brought him. Considering he was an ascetic, he could have developed negative thoughts and get angry at them for bringing him such an unsuitable present.

Someone asked the same old father why he was making



the sign of the Cross when he saw an airplane. And he simply answered: "Don't you see, my child, that its shape looks like the sign of our Holy Cross?"

The old father ignored the negative thoughts associated with the sight of an airplane, such as wars and bombing. His mind was attracted by the similarity of its shape to the sign of the Holy Cross; the sight and noise of the airplane made him think of the crucifixion of Christ."

"A few years ago, I went to Athens for business and I stayed at the house of a fellow Christian. The area was very noisy as the house was located near a central road. My friend told me that he had trouble sleeping at night due to the noise, so he ended up taking sleeping pills. After we had dinner, he took me to my room and told me:

-Elder, this is your room and I hope you will be able to sleep, despite the noise of the traffic.

Next morning, when I got out of my room, my friend said:

- I couldn't sleep all night due to the terrible noise. How about you?

- I have never slept so well, not even on Mount Athos.

- How is this possible, Father Paisios?

Then I told him what had happened since I entered into my room. (At that time the Vietnam War was taking place, and everyday we heard sad stories in the news and I used to pray to God to help people in Vietnam).

When I went into my room, I knelt in front of the bed. I put my head and hands on the bed and started praying for all the soldiers who were fighting and getting killed in Vietnam. I could hear the noise of the traffic, but as my mind was concentrated on the Vietnam War, I converted the traffic noise into the noise of the war tanks that were destroying buildings and killing people. Once in a while, a motorcycle was passing by making a very loud noise that made the windows creak; I immediately associated this noise with the one of the airplanes bombing Vietnam, and

I could see helpless children and old people getting killed. I felt a sweet grief inside me, and I was crying for the situation in Vietnam, and I despised myself for enjoying the luxury of a nice meal and a clean room and for not having any problem. As I was crying, I was filled with a peaceful spiritual calmness, and finally fell asleep kneeling in front of my bed. The traffic noise did not interrupt my sleep at all, as my thoughts were directed to those suffering in Vietnam.

You can do the same thing: Think about wars, the people who are being killed or dying of hunger, the houses that are being bombed; and also think about yourself living in a luxurious home, eating plenty of food, having a job, being safe and sound. Then, the association of the traffic noise with the noise of the war will become a very good reason for you to glorify God and will prevent you from taking sleeping pills. There is only one solution: to have positive thoughts."

-Father Paisios, when I walk in the streets of Thessaloniki, I face the following problem: As I walk, I come across various beggars most of

whom are women holding babies in their arms, and claiming they are ill and in need of financial assistance. I always think they are lying to me. What would you do in my place?

-I, too, came across one of these women who asked for help, he replied. I immediately sympathised with her problem but I had very little money on me. I gave her 500 drachmas and told her: "Please forgive me as I do not have more money on me. However, I will give you my address so you can write to me and send me your own. When I go back to Mount Athos, I will try to collect some money to forward you."

She took my address and I felt she was touched by my offer. After some time, I received a letter from her which did not include her address. Instead, she had enclosed the 500 drachma bill I had given her, and was asking me to forgive her for putting me in a difficult situation and thanked me for my kindness. I believe that if someone develops posi-



tive thoughts, even in the case of the woman beggar, he will not be a loser, because God, who knows our deepest intentions, will do him justice.

Once, a journalist, who had a negative way of thinking about everything, visited Elder Paisios. He began asking the Elder about various things and making him feel in distress. At one point, he asked him:

- Why are staying here in the peace and quietness of Mount Athos feeling carefree, and you are not going out in the world to help people who have so many serious problems?

The Elder, slightly raising his tone of voice, told him:

- Your mind machine is a broken one and produces only negative thoughts. You misunderstand everything you see or hear. Now, you see me living here and ask me why I am not going out in the world. If I go to live in the world, you will then say that it is unsuitable for a monk and that I should go back to the quietude of my cell. For this reason, I will only tell you one thing: Repair your broken mind-machine and bear in mind the old saying, which says that “traffic lights are made for noisy streets, whereas lighthouses for deserted rocky mountains.”

Priestmonk Christodoulos (1998) “Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain”



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Moleben on our property: We will continue serving a weekly short prayer service on our property in Kernersville. This is a service of supplication (Molieben) that Archbishop Dimitri of blessed memory blessed for the use of parishes in the diocese. Fr. Christopher will be serving it on Friday mornings at 10 AM except where noted in the calendar. Our property is located at 1320 Masten Drive in Kernersville.

Sisterhood of the Holy Myrrhbearers: The Sisterhood will meet at 6:30PM on Tuesday, June 19, and at 6:30PM on July 17.

Men’s Group: There will be a Men’s Group trip to the Hermitage of the Holy Cross from June 15-17, and a

baseball outing at 6PM on July 5.

Order Gift Cards Through Holy Cross! Scrip cards are available from hundreds of retailers and don’t cost any more than the face value of the gift card. It’s a “free” fundraiser to benefit the Holy Cross building fund! Contact Karen Brudnak-Slate.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

| May | Actual | Budgeted |
|---------|-------------|-------------|
| Income | \$9,108.54 | \$12,515.00 |
| Expense | \$8,244.55 | \$10,231.68 |
| YTD | Actual | Budgeted |
| Income | \$60,549.18 | \$62,578.50 |
| Expense | \$50,758.49 | \$53,254.18 |

May Income was a bit low, which puts us below the budgeted amount of \$62,578 for the Year To Date. Thank you for your continued contributions!



HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|-----------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| | | | | | 1 10AM Prayers at the Property | 2 6AM Yard Sale 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 3 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 4 Apostles' Fast | 5 Apostles' Fast | 6 Apostles' Fast 6:30PM Small Compline & Catechism Class | 7 Apostles' Fast 6PM Parish Council | 8 Apostles' Fast 10AM Prayers at the Property | 9 Apostles' Fast 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 10 Apostles' Fast 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 11 Apostles' Fast | 12 Apostles' Fast | 13 Apostles' Fast 6:30PM Small Compline & Catechism Class | 14 Apostles' Fast | 15 Men's Group to Monastery Apostles' Fast NO Prayers at the Property | 16 Apostles' Fast 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 17 Apostles' Fast 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 18 Apostles' Fast | 19 Apostles' Fast 6:30PM Sisterhood | 20 Apostles' Fast | 21 Apostles' Fast | 22 Apostles' Fast NO Prayers at the Property 5PM Open Door | 23 Apostles' Fast 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 24 Apostles' Fast 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 25 Apostles' Fast | 26 Apostles' Fast | 27 Apostles' Fast | 28 Apostles' Fast 6:30PM Great Vespers | 29 Holy Apostles Peter and Paul 8AM Divine Liturgy NO Prayers at the Property | 30 6 PM Great Vespers |



HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX CHURCH



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--------|-------------------------|---|--|---|--------------------------|
| 1 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 6PM Men's Group - Baseball Outing | 6 10AM Prayers at the Property | 7 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 8 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 9 | 10 | 11 6:30PM Small Compline & Catechism Class | 12 6PM Parish Council | 13 10AM Prayers at the Property | 14 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 15 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 16 | 17 6:30PM Sisterhood | 18 6:30PM Small Compline & Catechism Class | 19 | 20 10AM Prayers at the Property | 21 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 22 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 NO Prayers at the Property 5PM Open Door | 28 6 PM Great Vespers |
| 29 9:40AM Hours 10AM Divine Liturgy | 30 | 31 | | | | |



The cell of Schemamonk Nicholas, a contemporary of Elder Leonid on Valaam.