

## **Reading material in preparation for March 2004 Pilgrimage of Pastors, “Kenosis and the Freedom of Liberality”**

### **Mark 10.17-23**

[17] And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" [18] And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. [19] You know the commandments: `Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" [20] And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." [21] And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." [22] At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. [23] And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" [24] And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! [25] It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." [26] And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" [27] Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." [28] Peter began to say to him, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you." [29] Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, [30] who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. [31] But many that are first will be last, and the last first."

### **Luke 9.23-26**

[23] And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. [24] For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. [25] For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? [26] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

### **2 Corinthians 8.1-15**

[1] We want you to know, brethren, about the grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedo'nia, [2] for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part. [3] For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, [4] begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints -- [5] and this, not as we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. [6] Accordingly we have urged Titus that as he had already made a beginning, he should also complete among you this gracious work. [7] Now as you excel in everything -- in faith, in utterance, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in your love for us -- see that you excel in this gracious work also. [8] I say this not as a command, but

to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. [9] For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. [10] And in this matter I give my advice: it is best for you now to complete what a year ago you began not only to do but to desire, [11] so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. [12] For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he has not. [13] I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, [14] but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their want, so that their abundance may supply your want, that there may be equality. [15] As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack."

## **2 Corinthians 9.1-15**

[1] Now it is superfluous for me to write to you about the offering for the saints, [2] for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedo'nia, saying that Acha'ia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. [3] But I am sending the brethren so that our boasting about you may not prove vain in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; [4] lest if some Macedo'nians come with me and find that you are not ready, we be humiliated -- to say nothing of you -- for being so confident. [5] So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren to go on to you before me, and arrange in advance for this gift you have promised, so that it may be ready not as an exaction but as a willing gift. [6] The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. [7] Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. [8] And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. [9] As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever." [10] He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your resources and increase the harvest of your righteousness. [11] You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God; [12] for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. [13] Under the test of this service, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; [14] while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you. [15] Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

## **Philippians 2.5-11**

[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, [10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### **Philippians 3.7-16**

[7] But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. [8] Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; [10] that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11] that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. [12] Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. [13] Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [14] I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. [15] Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. [16] Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

### **Reflection on “The Feeding of the Five Thousand”**

The Active Life, by Parker Palmer -- excerpt

"In the story of the feeding of the five thousand, as throughout His active life, Jesus wanted to help people penetrate the illusion of scarcity and act out of the reality of abundance . . . Hunger and foods, of both the literal and metaphorical sorts, are the dominant images in this story. I want to translate these images into the generic terms of scarcity and abundance. The crowd that seeks a teacher does so because it finds truth scarce; Jesus teaches to reveal truth's abundance. The disciples, asked to feed the crowd, are sure that food is scarce; Jesus performs a 'miracle' to reveal how abundant food is even when there is none in sight."

"The quality of our active lives depends heavily on whether we assume a world of scarcity or a world of abundance. Do we inhabit a universe where the basic things that people need - from food and shelter to a sense of competence and of being loved - are ample in nature? Or is this a universe where such goods are in short supply, available only to those who have the power to beat everyone else to the store? The nature of our action will be heavily conditioned by the way we answer those bedrock questions. In a universe of scarcity, only people who know the arts of competing, even of making war, will be able to survive. But in a universe of abundance, acts of generosity and community become not only possible but fruitful as well..."

"In the story of the loaves and fishes, Jesus makes a dramatic attempt to break people of the scarcity habit by revealing the reality of abundance. He does this by acting in ways that challenge the people to look below the illusion and perceive the truth. The illusion is scarcity and the reality is abundance."

*Excerpted from The Active Life, Parker Palmer*

### **Stewardship: Scarcity or Abundance?**

*by Carolyn Bowker -- excerpt*

“Recent scripture spoke to me about the abundance God provides in our lives. The early Jews were making their journey, doubting their path, feeling the loss of what they had, overwhelmed with scarcity in the wilderness. Later the Gospel spoke about Jesus breaking the five loaves and two fish into an abundance of food, so that all were fed and more was provided. Prior to breaking the bread and fish, the disciples questioned the scarcity of what was available, asking Jesus to send the people into town to get fed. Jesus told the disciples that they were to feed the crowd. When we focus on our own ideas and our needs and the needs of our families, we can easily fall into scarcity thinking. This is where I began my thinking when it came to Stewardship. I never thought there was enough money to give God 10 percent and still pay the bills. I never thought there were enough hours in the day to add time for spiritual giving. However, when we focus on God's plan for each of us, we can more easily recognize the abundance in our lives. Stewardship is not about money, but about spiritual growth and increasing our faith journey. You can start by recognizing the small daily abundances in your life. Once able to recognize the daily abundance in our lives, then we can make a shift in how we give of our time, treasure and talent as a spiritual journey,”

*Excerpted from a newsletter article by Carolyn Bowker, pastor of St. Jude the Apostle Episcopal Church <http://saintjudes.org/src/View/Vol19is9.html>*

### **“The Practice of the Desert Mystics”**

By Linus Munday – excerpt

#### ***What Did The Desert Mystics Do?***

They went into the desert to pray – pure, undisturbed prayer was their aim ... and their daily challenge. Their secret was to make it so that, in their lives, God was unavoidable.

#### ***Why Did They Do It?***

Well, one might go so far as to say they did it because it was the "easiest" way --or, at least, the surest way, to holiness. Thomas Merton, at the beginning of another hard Lent almost six years after entering the austere life of the Trappist monk, wrote:

The greatest joy in life is to give up yourself altogether for the honor and glory of God, to know you belong to Him entirely, that your will is owned, possessed by His love.

Anything that tends to that end, any sacrifice, therefore, brings joy and happiness, even though it may be bitter to the flesh. However, there is nothing especially bitter about our fast. I am glad to be able to take at least what our present Rule offers.

Merton added the next day, "If it is this way when we do penance, what is it going to be like in heaven?" But why did they really go through all that trouble and sacrifice to become Desert Mystics? Because they believed this particular thing was what God wanted them to do. It was the right thing to do. To them, the quest for God meant "ascetical withdrawal" from the world and the renunciation of society, marriage, family, property, the ordinary comforts and pleasures and ambitions most humans experience.

The Desert Mystics show us that “spiritual dryness” is a common experience for all who seek God, and that willingly entering into this dryness (place of renunciation) is the only way to the “Oasis”. As Thomas Merton puts it in his New Seeds of Contemplation: “We

do not go into the desert to escape people but to learn how to find them; we do not leave them in order to have nothing to do with them, but to find out the way to do them the most good. But this is on a secondary end. The one end that includes all others is the love of God... However, the truest solitude is not something outside you....; it is an abyss opening up in the center of your own soul. And this abyss of interior solitude is a hunger that will never be satisfied with any created thing.”

What would you think of the idea of gathering up all of your possessions, stacking them in a big pile (yes, the computer and the big-screen TV and the microwave and that great novel you're reading) ... and then just walking away? Or: What would you think about taking all your ideas, your plans, your brilliant Microsoft Word documents, putting them all onto a single hard drive or master diskette, and then hitting the “delete” button? Well, this is pretty much what the Desert Mystics did. And they did it without looking back (very much). The secret? While they know just what they were walking away from, and while they know just what they were deleting, they knew even better what they were walking toward ... and what they were intending to create of themselves there in the desert... The Desert Mystics know the Gospels; they were familiar with them and studied them feverishly. And so it was that Jesus' exhortation in Luke 17.33 that “Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it” did not fall on deaf ears. Nor did the passage Jesus spoke about riches and renunciation go unnoticed or unheeded” “Truly, I tell you, there is not one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age and in the age to come eternal life” (Luke 18.29-30).

... One of my favorite Merton quotes and one I keep tacked on my office wall: “When humility delivers a man from attachment to his own works and his own reputation, he discovers that perfect joy is possible only when we have completely forgotten ourselves. And it is only when we pay no more attention to our own deeds and our own reputation and our own excellence that we are at last completely free to serve God in perfection for His own sake alone.”

### **Some Prayers**

Lord, help me to empty myself,  
Rather than fill myself,  
So that there might be room enough  
For you.  
Amen.

Holy Spirit,  
Light the fire of your love within me.  
Help me to understand that it is only in  
Letting my own desires be consumed  
That I become free to serve You and Your will.  
May the Desert Mystics  
Inspire in me an intense devotion  
To be more and more like Jesus,

Who reigns with and the Father.

Amen.

*Excerpted from A Retreat With The Desert Mystics, by Linus Mundy*

### **The symbolism of Clerical Attire**

The color of the ordinary cassock and clerical attire is black. For the regular parish priest, the cassock is totally black.

The symbolism of the cassock is as follows:

- the collar symbolizes obedience and voluntary servanthood
- the Sash or cincture around the waist – chastity (a spirit of contentment with that which God has provided)
- the color black, poverty both spiritually and temporally.

The life of the clergy is to be an example of the priority of storing up treasure in heaven rather than riches on earth. Moreover, black is a color of mourning and death. The Christian is to be continually dying to self to rise with Christ and serve Him. The black cassock worn in the company of others gives witness of the call all Christians have to the same life of surrender and divine provision.

*Fr. Thomas Brindley*

*“The Rule for Camaldolese Benedictine Oblates” -- excerpt*

### ***ASCETICISM and DISCIPLINE***

The Church shares in the mystery of Christ her head, which is a mystery of death and resurrection. Sealed by the Spirit, "the pledge of our inheritance", the Church longs for the fulfillment of God's kingdom as she awaits "Our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1,4/Titus 2,13). Monks and oblates humbly welcome the Word that has taken root in them, with its power to save, and they strive to be continually converted by that word and to be doers of the word and not merely listeners. All Christians strive to follow the poor, chaste and obedient Christ according to the particular circumstances of their lives. This means lives that are marked by simplicity, sharing, chaste loving and continual surrender to God's desire for them and the world. Oblates seek to undertake those ascetic disciplines necessary for their life in the world as extended members of the New Camaldoli and Incarnation Priory. The daily dying to selfishness, to control, to possessiveness, to activism, to addictions and anything else that hinders the oblate's transformation in Christ is the basic asceticism. A life of moderation, integration, focus, wholeness, and depth must be sought through whatever practices help in this regard (i.e. fasting/ retreats/good spiritual reading/spiritual direction). Moderating the use of television, media, alcohol, etc., would also be helpful forms of asceticism.

*Excerpted from “The Rule for Camaldolese Benedictine Oblates”*

*<http://www.camaldolese.com/rule.htm>*

## “Models of Self-Emptying Love”

by Fr. Alexander Webster -- excerpt

**St. Tikhon of Zadonsk:** Canonized in 1861, the mystical works of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (1722-1783) became standard texts in Russian seminaries and were widely read beyond theological schools. An inspiration to Dostoevsky, St. Tikhon was one of the models for Elder Zossima in Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*.

St. Tikhon taught kenoticism in word and deed. Fr. Georges Florovsky referred to "his unremitting concentration on the memory and contemplation of Christ's sufferings" even to the point of falling at times "into a helpless torpor, confinement, and immobility, when everything around him was dark, empty, and unresponsive." Nadejda Gorodetzky observed that the saint believed that the true basis of Christianity was the "voluntary self-abasement of Christ, both in His premundane life as the Son of God and in His earthly life."

Perhaps the best testimony of St. Tikhon's practice of kenoticism is the memoirs of one of his monk servants at the Zadonsk monastery, Ivan Yefimov. Yefimov wrote that during his first few years at Zadonsk, St. Tikhon "had a violent temper" and punished his attendants severely "for the slightest fault." But the saint prayed to God for some measure to teach him patience and humility. In a dream about an infant in a church the saint was slapped on the left cheek by the child with such force that the saint awoke. He deemed the dream a sign from God and henceforth "began to acquire patience and humility." Whenever he rebuked his peasant servants such as his cook and suspected that he had offended the attendant, the saint "would bow before him, asking to be forgiven."

Another story by Yefimov illustrates how deeply this spiritual transformation affected those around St. Tikhon:

*One day the saint heard of a squire who mistreated his serfs. His Grace intervened and betook himself to the lord of that estate in order to remonstrate with him. The hot-blooded nobleman started to dispute. The Bishop answered him gently but firmly. The anger of the nobleman grew, and finally he forgot himself so far as to strike the Bishop on the cheek. His Grace then left the nobleman's house. But on his way, true to the evangelical precept, he resolved to return to the man who had insulted him and to beg forgiveness for "having led him into such a temptation." So, going back, he fell at the feet of his host. The story goes on to say that this unexpected act of the pastor who knew no anger so deeply impressed the nobleman that he himself fell on his knees at the Bishop's feet, imploring forgiveness. From that day on his behavior toward his serfs was completely altered.*

Elements of this anecdote apparently inspired Dostoevsky in his characterizations of Prince Mishkin in *The Idiot* (the slap in the face) and the Elder Zossima (prostrating himself before Dimitri Karamazov) in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

In his letters and treatises St. Tikhon revealed an unyielding kenotic commitment to voluntary suffering, forgiveness, nonviolence and nonresistance. He exhorted those imprisoned for failure to pay debts: "Remember that you are co-sufferers with the martyrs and confessors, and Christ our Lord was bound for our sins. After this you will reign with Christ with whom you suffer." Always mindful that "a vindictive heart" or a state of anger pleases Satan more than any other passion, St. Tikhon counseled unreserved forgiveness: "We offend one another; therefore, we must forgive one another." He knew in his heart that reconciliation is of far more lasting value than enmity toward another: "If you make peace with him, your love will be remembered until you die." In his will the saint added, "I have forgiven, and I forgive, all who have offended me; may God forgive them in His gracious mercy. I too pray to be forgiven wherein I have offended anyone, being a man." We may easily concur with Gorodetzky's conclusion: "Any form of vengeance, injustice or violence, whether it came from those in power or from their subjects, was to him a breach of brotherly love -- a civil war."

There is no clearer evidence of St. Tikhon's pacifist aversion to the violence and lack of both forgiveness and voluntary kenotic suffering inherent in war than a letter written in September 1773 toward the close of the Russo-Turkish War. He bluntly referred to that war as an occasion "for breaking the divine law, dishonoring the Law-Giver, and causing the loss of men's souls." As a result of the war, the saint perceived a providential punishment for the Russian Christians: "We see our fatherland sighing and groaning because of the bloody war in which we are engaged with the Moslems." St. Tikhon's opposition to war is revealed most eloquently in the following passage:

*Once more our fatherland groans and sighs as foreign arms are turned against us: once more all are seized with confusion and fear; once more our brothers are wounded; once more is Christian blood shed; once more are thousands killed; once more is heard the weeping of fathers, mothers, wives, and children. The issue of this public calamity is as yet unknown, but I do know that without God's help we can expect no good. For we are saved, not by arms, but by God's omnipotent aid. But God has mercy upon those who repent, and saves them; He defends those who trust in Him and not in gold or other things, who appeal to Him with true devotion.*

*Excerpted from the article Models of Self-Emptying Love, by Fr. Alexander Webster  
<http://www.incommunion.org/incommunion/webster.asp>*

## **"Looking Unto Jesus"**

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

*"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Make level the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left" (Proverbs 4:25-27).*

*"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with*

*patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1,2).*

There is a goal; there is a prize. We have been called with high purpose - a purpose so great that the Spirit of God has considered it worthwhile to fill the Bible with the truth of it and with the continuous urge in relation to it. For the Bible from beginning to end has to do with a course in relation to a goal, an end, a prize: it is just brimful of Divine speaking concerning Divine purpose, a very great purpose. We find this, of course, in a very strong way in this letter to the Hebrews, with its insistent call - "Let us go on". Moreover it gives us the great ground of confidence that the end can be reached, the goal attained, the prize received, the purpose accomplished, in that Christ has got there, Jesus has already gone this way and is there, and He has gone the whole way, the same way as you and as all those who are called according to His purpose are called to go. He has taken our level, accepted all that we have to know or may know on the course, and has gone through to the end. The fact is stated that He is there, and His being there is a tremendous triumph, for it is the assurance that we can be there also.

"Looking unto Jesus". More correctly that would be stated "looking off unto Jesus". We are coming to that again in a moment, but there is a ground of confidence. We can have assurance about this matter of attaining. One illustration of this is given in this letter to the Hebrews. It is as though the writer saw a ship out on the sea, being grievously battered and thrown about by the storm, in the grip of the wind and the current, and then, if it were possible, one brave representative taking the anchor on a long chain and dropping it within the quiet, peaceful harbour, leaving it there for the ship to pull on, in the sure knowledge that it will come in because it has a vital link with something already there. That is the picture the Apostle presents of this matter. We have this confidence, this hope, "as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil" (Heb. 6:19).

There is confidence to be had, but there is also - and this is kept continually in view throughout both Old and New Testaments - there is also the possibility of failing, of falling short, of missing the mark. Illustrations are given of this. The possibility is always there - not of losing our salvation, that is not the point - but of failing to attain to the full purpose of God in our salvation.

### **THE PERILS OF WRONG WAYS OF LOOKING**

This possibility of failure and missing the mark, of coming short, is related to our looking. It seems to me that it is all summed up in that way - looking. This matter of looking, therefore, is very important. It depends entirely upon where our eyes are and where they are kept. In the Word of God there are many directions in which people are warned against looking, because of the hazards to the whole progress and course of things toward the goal; the hazards of a wrong look, of a false direction, of the eyes getting off the mark.

*The Backward Look*

There is the one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back, and is therefore not fit for the kingdom (Luke 9:62). That is the backward look. It is the look which Israel took in the wilderness. "They turned again and tempted God, and provoked the Holy One of Israel" (Psa. 78:41). They looked back and spoiled their furrow, they spoiled their whole course. They failed to enter in simply because they looked in the wrong direction, that is, they looked back.

You know that that was one of the troubles in New Testament times. The letter to the Galatians was written because of that peril. They were beginning to look back. There was a voice from behind; the voice of the Judaizers was calling them from behind: 'Come back' - not to the world, not to ungodliness, not to forsake Christ; but to come back to a religious life which was less than that fullness of Christ to which they had been called; to a religious life which was not a spiritual life. They were in danger of looking back. They had indeed already half looked back and had come to a standstill. They had been going on, but now they had stopped going on, and the question was - would they continue to go on or would they go back? That letter was written to induce a going on. This letter to the Hebrews was written for the same purpose. The peril of a backward look is always there, in some way or another.

#### *Looking Around*

And then we are told of some people who looked around when they were commanded not to look around. "Look not around thee" (Isaiah 41:10, margin). I think that is what Peter did. When he was beginning to walk on the water he took his eyes off the Lord and looked around and he went down (Matthew 14:28-31). His eyes changed their direction and he began to look around. "*WHEN HE SAW* the wind" (verse 30). That is what Israel did when the spies went out and came back with their wrong report. They looked around - walled cities, giants, all kinds of difficulties. They looked around, they got their eyes off the Lord. Only two of them kept their eyes in the right direction and they went through eventually to the end. "Look not around". That is, do not allow circumstances so to lay hold of your vision and to fasten upon your outlook that they control your movement. "Let thine eyes look right on" - not around.

#### *The Too-Near Look*

Then there were some people to whom Paul spoke: he told them that their look was much too near. He said, 'You only see what is immediately before your eyes, your vision is merely of things near you, these are the things that influence you'. Too short a range of vision leads to your life becoming smaller than the Lord would have it; you become far too easily satisfied and contented in the realm of the things of the Lord; you have a small, narrow horizon - you are not looking right on. Things near - that may apply in different ways. The things that are near are always the things that are most likely to upset us, to limit us, to disconcert us. We do become so occupied with the thing that is nearest. When we are right up against a situation and something is right up against us, we are in such danger of thinking that is all, that is everything, that we forget we have negotiated many such an obstacle before which we thought was going to be the end of everything for us.

We learn our lesson so slowly. Here is another thing right at hand, right before our eyes; another mountain, another hedge, another real difficulty; and again we think - 'This is going to spoil everything, this is going to be the end of everything'. All we see is the thing near at hand.

But to look right on means surely to say this - 'Yes, this is a difficulty, but there is another side to it, it is not going to be the end'. It is one of the things that is included in 'laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset'. What is "the sin which doth so easily beset"? It is this, that the big difficulty of today blots out tomorrow, seems to get right in the way of any future at all. That is the easily besetting sin. Do not have too near a view, do not have too small an horizon. "Let thine eyes look right on". There is something very much more than the difficulty of the day, the very present thing, the near thing. The Lord will teach us as we go on that we can reckon on very much more than the things which are up against us now. We shall go on and leave them behind. Do not let us take them as the limit. Whatever they are, they are not the end.

### *The Selfish Look*

Again the Apostle said, speaking to some believers, "...not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). What did he mean by that? Here, surely, is the selfish look. I think perhaps he meant this, amongst other things: 'Do not be always affected in your lives by how things touch you, whether you stand to gain or lose by this or that; do not all the time be looking at everything in the light of how it affects you'. "Not looking each of you to his own things". That is the wrong kind of looking, the wrong direction. It will limit us, and make us small and self-centred.

### *The Inward Look*

And how much the Apostle had to write about another kind of looking, the inward look. A very great deal of his writing was with the object of getting people to stop looking inside. I think there is nothing more calculated to arrest progress than looking inside. What are we looking for inside, at any rate? Well, of course, we are looking to find something that will satisfy the Lord and give us encouragement, make us feel good, and we never find it. There is nothing more discouraging than this looking inside. It is the wrong kind of looking.

## **THE SALVATION OF LOOKING UNTO JESUS**

It is clear, then, that much is dependent upon our looking, and the Apostle was right when, after writing this long letter so fully bringing into view the great object - partnership with Christ - and urging to go on, he summed it all up in this fragment: "Looking off unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith". Looking away from the things behind, looking away from those around, looking off from the self-matters altogether, looking beyond the things that are so near, obsessing us now; looking off from ourselves unto Jesus. This is a theme touched upon in our recent book, *Pioneers of the Heavenly Way*. "He looked for the city" (Heb. 11:10); "They looked for a country" (Heb.

11:14). How much was bound up with the look! How they had to battle with this matter of where the eyes wanted to rest, a too early satisfaction of the eyes, a wrong satisfaction of the eyes, a substitute for what God was after. But the Lord was constantly drawing their eyes away from lesser things, causing them to look and look, and that look led them on. As we said in the book (*page 36*), they thought from time to time that now they had found it - but they found that it was not so. The eyes of their heart were not satisfied and they had to move on a bit further. The look kept them on the move. It was a look which was heavenly and not earthly.

Now the passage from Proverbs that we have placed at the head of this article says this - "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Make level the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established (ordered aright)". There is a great deal packed into that, but it just means this: Get God's purpose clearly and fully in view - nothing less, nothing other - and adjust the whole of your life to it; adjust your life to the ultimate.

### **KEEP GOD'S END IN VIEW**

One of our words recently to a friend in baptism was the word 'eternal'. I pondered it during the day before passing it on. It took hold of me in this very connection. "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17,18). The eternal is kept in view, and life is adjusted in every way to God's end. How busy the enemy is to circumvent the onward movement and the final attainment, by getting us entangled and compromised in this earth, somehow to slip in something that will be a check, an arrest, a hold-up. Oh, the spiritual tragedies all around by some foolish relationship, some entanglement, some consideration of convenience, some pandering to the satisfaction of the flesh, something somehow slipped in by the enemy; and there it is - you just cannot go right on to God's end. Something is holding you back, some relationship is keeping you tied up, something has come in.

Now this word is - adjust everything to the end, have all your affairs in life brought into line with God's end. When you are considering a relationship, have God's end in view. When you are considering the next step in your life, have God's end in view. When you are deciding where you are going to live and do your work, have God's end in view. When you are deciding what your business is going to be, have God's end in view. Everything brought into line - that is the meaning of this "Make level the path of thy feet" or "Weigh carefully the path of thy feet". We have to say to ourselves, 'Now then, this is an opportunity, a prospect, that seems to hold a lot of good; but first of all, what is this going to mean for the Lord, how does this relate to the full end of God?' Nothing less than that must weigh with us. "Let thine eyes look right on" - not just at this thing, not even at what it seems to promise, but right on. How does it relate to the end? In all things, look beyond; see what is the relation to the full end of God; and adjust accordingly. Get the vision, and adjust life as far as possible in relation to it. "Weigh carefully the paths of

thy feet and order them aright. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left". "Let thine eyes look right on".

Some of you may find yourselves in spheres and conditions where perhaps you will have many a temptation to accept something less, where it seems impossible to have all that you would like to have, where it seems that God's full purpose cannot be realized: therefore you will settle down to something less and other. You may meet all kinds of things to divert you from the course of the on-high calling. The word to you is: "Let thine eyes look right on". Remember your Lord, offered the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof: He refused them and looked right on. Yes, He was offered an easy way out, a way out of the Cross; but no, He let His eyes look right on, He set His face as a flint. His eyes looked right on, and here it is recorded, as we read in the next part of the verse from Hebrews: "Looking off unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God". He set His eyes on God's end. May we have grace to do the same.

*"Looking Unto Jesus", by T. Austin-Sparks*  
<http://www.austin-sparks.net/articles/tas149.html>

### **“When Surrender is Victory”**

Recovered from some papers, author and source unknown

Stop trying to control it all. It's bigger than you. Have you reached the place of asking yourself "who's in charge?" If you recognize that surrender doesn't have to mean defeat, it is a place of acknowledging that you are a co-laborer with God. As quoted by Larry Julian author of God is My CEO, "In the business world, surrender is associated with defeat." In the spiritual realm, however, relinquishing control to God's plan is victory.

The past several months, I've found myself saying daily, "Father God, I relinquish my every victory and my seeming defeat to you today. I declare that I have your wisdom to direct me in my executive decisions. I yield to recognizing where and when I'm to stop and allow you to take the reigns. I choose to not hold onto anything but You... This statement of prayer can be difficult to absorb in the marketplace where the markings of a leader is associated with who is in control -- who's running the show. And today, I too am faced with a test.

I agree that it is extremely important that a leader plans and follows the plan. I also agree that you better have a sound position to take when a circumstance arises outside of your plan and out of your control. That's where and when the real character of the leader in you rises up. Why wait until the unexpected occasion? Make it an expected occasion daily with Him, and when a circumstance arises outside of your plan and out of your control, you will quickly recognize that your vulnerability is really a place of yielding to the higher authority of God.

Signals become confusing when you've been in control for so long. You're trying to be all things to all people; the pressure for decisions is pressing at every door; your confidence

is totally displaced. Whether it is from the burden of grief from loss of your marriage or employment, the death of many employees, the collapse of your business, terminating staff, the struggle with letting go of an habitual sin that has become “dear”, desiring to find comfort in alcohol, the distraction of business or ministry over family and God... God is waiting for you to cast it all on Him.

You've been trained and programmed to turn a deaf ear to any semblance of defeat and vulnerability (i.e. throw in the towel; wave the white flag; retreat). God directed surrender, however, spotlights vulnerability. Vulnerability in actuality spotlights our need to be in control and our greater need to relinquish control. Control spotlights a much higher authority. That authority is God. He can lead you from a place of guilt, grief, anxiety to healing -- even relief. Your team may need to see your vulnerability because of their vulnerability. This may be a time of an 'open show' in how to lead in the example of surrendering to God's plan. Let your surrender be found in the eyes of God as yielding to His divine control (Psalm 62). That's when (you know) surrender is VICTORY!

### **FRIENDSHIP AS A REFLECTION OF THE DIVINE**

By Hieromonk Dionysios -- excerpt

Friendship is indeed a reflection of the divine. However, we must examine what exactly true friendship is in comparison to other relationships which are either lesser friendships or which masquerade themselves as friendships.

Let us define the levels of friendships:

The friendship of use is a friendship of utility, one which has the possibility of being led to a true friendship, however in most cases it goes no further than a relationship for a limited period of time in order to fulfill a particular need. An example of such a friendship of use would be a high school student who is poor in reading skills seeking a tutor. The next type of friendship is the friendship of pleasure, and this type is most unable to develop into a true friendship as it can be selfish when lacking in virtue, and as pleasure is impermanent yet pain inevitable, it cannot last very easily when it is faced with pain and suffering or any slight disturbance. Such friendship can be ‘junkfood friendships’ if they exist apart from friendships of virtue, away from a striving for true friendship. Apart from this, they only fill a void in our life yet do not truly nourish and sustain us. An example of such a friendship of pleasure would be a sexual relationship without a commitment, ‘beer drinking’ buddies, or even a relationship where the persons find pleasure not really in each others company but in a particular activity. The highest level of friendship is the ‘althees philia’ which requires a transformation of the persons, it is as two souls united in the path of salvation, seeking the highest good for one another. In Orthodox Theology, the term ‘theosis’ applies as well in the context of the true friendship as theosis implies the process of becoming a partaker in the divine nature, of a transformation of our nature. This is the process of a true friendship, both persons are transformed, and we must realize that the true friendship cannot exist apart from virtue. A true friendship is attainable by any person. To develop towards a true friendship there will be a need for pain and suffering, this is the testing by which the friendship is ‘tried

by fire' to see if it will stand, and through this pain and suffering, kenosis, the self emptying, by which we give up our own will and seek to be fully united our friend and ultimately to God. This idea of kenosis reflects the Divine as this is what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished in His Incarnation, in which He emptied Himself and took upon our human nature as the philanthropic God, the lover of mankind. The pain and suffering are reflective of the Crucifixion by which later the joy and fruits of the Resurrection were made manifest.

As Archimandrite Glykerios says, " The whole purpose of creation and the Divine Economy of the Incarnation is not only that we be saved, to be united, each of us separately, with God, but to unite all of the Faithful with one another; and indeed, to come to such love and unity among themselves, that they will resemble and mirror the inseparable, eternal, and blessed unity of love of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity." As Saint Gregory of Nyssa states, "Christianity is an imitative exemplar of the Divine nature." Before joy can blossom, before a friendship can blossom, it must first endure and understand the opposing force, for then it is pointed to the more profound and the more lasting understanding of what joy is all about. The other necessity for the true friendship to blossom is commonality. Commonality does not mean sameness, it does not imply that we must be identical in order for the friendship to last and be meaningful, rather that we must have a goal in which we share in common. The main building block of the true friendship is trust, without trust there can never be a bridge from the lesser friendships to the realization of a true friendship. The need for friendship exists within our nature itself, as we are created as social beings needing others for our own physical, emotional, and spiritual survival. Indeed, the key to the Kingdom of God rests in our neighbor and friends.

*Excerpted from "Friendship as a Reflection of the Divine", by Hieromonk Dionysios  
[www.stmichaelacademy.org/theo/friend.htm](http://www.stmichaelacademy.org/theo/friend.htm)*