

Going Deeper

Lecture by Fr. Peter Heers, 2018

–[Part II]–

Part 2: https://www.slocc.com/assets/files/audio/2018/Fr.%20Peter%20Heers_p2.mp3

[So in a nutshell **after all this, these presuppositions we need to have before the spiritual life can be within us, the end of it is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit which comes about through the working of the name of Christ within our soul.** So just as we offer in the Divine Liturgy, by the clergy on the altar every Sunday, **every minute we need to offer the name of Christ in our soul, this altar that we have within us needs to be a sanctuary and a sacrifice to God of our soul; our spirit...**] up to God, 'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy.' In such a soul, the spirit of man and the spirit of God will unite. There will be no obstacle for the salvation of our soul. There will be nothing to obstruct the coming of the holy spirit. And then we will have our own personal Pentecost. We will participate ourselves in the feast of Pentecost and we will be able to say of ourselves, *this is* salvation. We will have no doubts.

Instead of trusting in others, now, as I said earlier, it's very important to trust in the lives of the saints and in the witness of the saints, the path. But we also want to get to the point where we can say 'My Lord and My God!' like Thomas after he put his hand in the nails [holes]. So that's my introduction and I can go on for another hour and a half....

Let's hear some questions about all that I've unpacked for you. Is it new, first of all? Or is some of it new? I hope something's new.... Because I don't want to come here and tell you what you already know, that would be a waste of time wouldn't it. **So something I hope is new, something provoked you to say 'oh, ok, this is what it means to be a spiritual person, to be a man of God, it means to have the spirit of God dwelling in us and this process is not learning more about God and being a good expert in theology.**

I'm so tired of academic theologians, I'm one of them but I'm so tired of them. You know I spent so many years at university. We talk, talk, talk, but that's not a theologian in the Orthodox tradition. **A theologian is one who prays, a theologian is an ascetic, a theologian is one who can speak of God experientially.** The great theologians are, Gregory the theologian or all people... and we need to remind ourselves, the theologians and our academic institutions need to remind themselves, he said, famously, **'Nothing is more important than purification of the soul because only then can you speak of God.'**

And of course that has nothing to do with sitting in an armchair and reading thousands of books and then regurgitating them. This is what many theologians do. So, that kind of theology

we don't want to for our church, we don't have any need of it. We need people who have experience of God. The true theologians are the ones who saw Him, like Paul, he wasn't there to see Him in the flesh, but he saw Him in the spirit and so he's... how many of you read the Epistles on a regular basis? Oh, not a lot of hands! It is so... I teach them now, thanks be to God, it's such a great blessing, although I like ecclesiology much better, it's my forte, but I love the epistles of Saint Paul, they're so deep and rich, and you can read them again and again and again and it's just more and more detail about the spiritual life comes out so **make this a goal of your life, that you're going to have 2 books that are going to be next to your bed; the Synaxarion, the Lives of the Saints**, and there's 5 volumes in 3 different versions in English now, thanks be to God. When I left for Greece 20 years ago, I don't think we had any of that. Three different version; we have the Ormylia, lives of the saints which includes the contemporary saints. We have the great Synaxaristes which is the classical one from the great Church of Christ in Constantinople and we have the St. Dimitrios of Rostov Lives of the Saints which are much longer and very good for children, actually, very descriptive. Choose one of them, I suggest the Ormylia's version, **have that right there before you go to bed and next to it the Gospel and the epistles. And even if you read one line from each one of them, don't miss a day. You cannot live a Christian life without those two things on a daily basis.** Like, eating junk food all day instead of some real food. I want you to have a good diet here, to not walk away hungry.

So let's hear the first question, somebody's got to have a question.

Q: "You mentioned working *in Christ* and *for Christ*. How effectively in every day life [inaudible] [can we be – Ed.]... working *for Christ* or *in Christ*? How do you begin?"

"Well, as I said...the two things mean this... it's not a sentimental or an issue of you know, desiring Christ or listening to Christian music or anything like that.... **What it means is being deep in prayer to Christ, and in the mysteries. So are you going to confession? If you're not going to confession on a regular basis you're not *in Christ* and *for Christ*. Are you communing on a regular basis?** With these presuppositions that I talked about. Let me talk a little more practical. This always happens to me by the way. I say all this theory and people say 'OK, well, what about .. what do you do now?...' OK, alright I expected that question, answered. Good question, I appreciate it. So let's talk about... **we're going to commune on Sunday and, how do we go to communion? What's the basis,** OK? I meet many people who have not been taught that well, **we have pre-communion prayers that we say every time we commune, we fast on Wednesday and Friday,** I think that's a prerequisite. Now, what kind of fast you do, you work out with your spiritual father but **you cannot ignore the fast and go to communion on Sunday. On Saturday night, you're in church.** You're not out partying, you're not out wasting your mind. **Your mind is not out floating around in whatever, but it's focused on Christ. You begin Saturday night for Sunday morning. Vespers, or vigil** if you're in the

Russian tradition. And **you say the prayers of pre-communion. And you go early to church on Sunday. These are all basic, fundamental, practical things that one needs to do if we're going to talk about preparing ourselves for holy communion.**

Another thing which people don't talk about but I like provoking people so I'm going to talk about it. **We don't have sexual relations if we're married, two to three days before holy communion and one to two days after holy communion.** Who remembers the prophet Moses on the mountain before he went up? What did he say to the people of Israel? Abstain from your wives before this presence of God. Why? Is it evil? No! Food is not evil and we abstain from that! People are confused very easily I'm very surprised. Oh, the church teaches that these are evil things. Of course not! In the context of marriage, it's very obvious that they're blessed. And they're blessed because God blessed them. And that's all they need to be blessed. Blessing means God blesses them. Did He bless it? He blessed it, it's blessed. So they're blessed within the context of marriage but not any kind of sexual relations, but sexual relations which have their goal at least, openness to procreation. There are many sexual practices to this today which are NOT blessed. People think they're blessed. And if we do these, we will not be preparing ourselves to receive the grace of God. I won't say any more than that.

You can talk to your spiritual father about what that means practically. But that is actually, believe it or not, an important part of preparation because people are ignorant. They don't understand that **I can't do whatever I like and go to holy communion. So we abstain from sexual relations two to three days before holy communion and one to two depending on the holy father you talk to** – it's different – all contemporary spiritual fathers teach different things. But that's a part of the preparation.

So what is it that the Lord said? Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand! We change, we re-orient ourselves to God. We re-orient our mind, our heart, our soul, our nous and we are focused on God and that's how we're going to prepare for holy communion and we're going to live *in Christ and for Christ.*

But the *for Christ*, let me talk about that a minute. **What does it mean to live *for Christ*?** Well, **there are many people who are Christians and they say they love Christ and I believe they really do but they still live the Church as a religion and I mean that in a negative sense.** Now that term can be used positively and there are Church Fathers that use it positively. In fact, in scripture we have a positive reference to religion. But here I want to say it in the negative sense. Why? Because there's an aspect of it that can be negative, it can be really unprofitable. **The religions of the world are essentially human expressions of desires or offerings to God. OK, that's a human ascent. And that human ascent may be praiseworthy but if it's only in the Church a human ascent and not a divine/human synergy, it's not of the Church an expression of life *in Christ.***

What do I mean? So if we approach, for instance, just a simple thing. We bring artoklasia, what do you call it in English? Artoklasia... so blessed bread, right? So we go on

Saturday night on a feast day and we have our artoklasia. In the Greek Church it's very, very prominent. In Greece this is especially a beloved thing and you have many women coming on the feast days or special days that they have something happen that they thank God. This is a good thing, not a bad thing. But it's not done according to the order of the Church, and it's really not done for Christ, it's done because 'I would like God to bless my child', 'I would like to have....' It's a bit superstitious. I want something. So **what is religion that we don't want to do? We don't want to do a kind of religion. What is it? I give in order to get. I go in order to take. That is a selfishness that's mixed in with our religiosity. We want to live for the person of Christ. For Christ. Totally for Christ without any kind of presuppositions, any kind of desires to give me something back. That's true love.**

If you advance in true love in your marriage, you're not going to be saying 'Oh, I'm with this woman because she really gives me XYZ.' Right? I'm with her because I love her, nothing else. I don't want anything from her. I don't want people to say... there's no other ulterior motive but 'I love her.' This is what we want to get to with the person of Christ. So obviously, again, I have to repeat the obvious. **You need to KNOW Christ. And if you don't know Christ how are you going to love Him? If you KNOW Him, you will love Him. There's no option, there's no other option. You can't know Him and not love Him. So, if you don't know Him, you don't love Him.**

So again, you go back to the well of knowledge and what is it? Of course the life of the Church. And prayer is the most important. You have to start to pray to God. That's the basic, that's the heart of our life in Christ. Continually turning to him throughout our lives, throughout our whole day with the Jesus Prayer, morning and evening, with morning and evening prayers.

But since many of us... live in the external world literally, our thoughts are in what we're going to do, and what's going on in the world, and who said what, that's where we live. Our thoughts are not here or there but in the created order. We have to begin with encountering Him in the Scriptures and the Lives of the Saints. We have to know Him to love Him. Do everything for the person of Christ without wanting anything back. Just loving the truth. You know? Truth is a criteria of salvation.

Look at what St. Paul says in his epistles when he's talking about the antichrist, and the coming of the antichrist. And he says that 'Many ... will follow him because they have not the love of the truth.' He doesn't mean truth in ideas only or even mainly. **Truth in ideas would be the about, learning about God or about the reasons for being of the things of this world.** Right? And that's an important aspect of truth, absolutely, that's part of the revelation and also part of the creation of God. **We see in God his handiwork and so that leads us to God that still is ABOUT God and not knowledge OF God. Experiential knowledge of God. And all that is good, but it's not enough. We have to go deeper. We have to come to the knowledge of God experientially.**

We have ... to seek like Thomas and say 'Now, I experientially know that He is good and He is the grace of God that I have experienced. That's our goal. And even if we don't reach degrees of the saints we see, in the lives of the saints, that's fine. But that's our goal and we have to go for that, and nothing less.

So, we have to love the person of Christ. The person of Christ. Saint Gregory Palamas says famously that 'Those who are not of the Truth are not of the Church.' So that's the criteria, forgive me, that's the expression. And that's the criteria. What does he mean 'those who are not of the truth'? **It doesn't mean the ideology, the knowledge about God, he means this knowledge of Christ experientially.** They've come to experience the grace of God.

So being in the church, truly being in the church, this is what it means. It means to participate in the mysteries AND to do it fruitfully so that we, day after day we see a change within us. So, let me give you an example of Judas and Peter... Judas did not repent, although the scriptures in English say he repented which is unfortunate. An older version I think of the term which is no longer really applicable. He didn't repent. The Greek word is μεταμέλεια not μετάνοια. Μεταμέλεια means remorse. He came to remorse. He felt terrible about what he did. He didn't repent because repentance would have meant he got up and he went back to Christ and he sought forgiveness.

The prodigal repented. And what did it mean to repent for the prodigal. You all know this story of the prodigal. So he's in, he's in the far land. He's in with the pigs, eating the food of the pigs. And he comes to himself, says the scriptures. That self-knowledge is essential. In fact, **there is no true self-knowledge if there is no God-knowledge.** In Greek it works really nicely, θεογνωσία is God knowledge and αυτογνωσία is self-knowledge. Those two things are inseparable. They have to come together. **The more you know yourself the more you understand and know God and the more you know God, the more you know yourself.** And so he came to knowledge of himself. And he said 'what am I doing in this far land? My father has so many workers' and he understood that he was far from the father's house and he had to get up and go back, and when, still not repenting. Not quite. He's changing his mind. But it's not just an intellectual event. **It's not a rational event to change to repent, to change your mind but you also change your orientation** so he got up and he walked and went back to the father. When he arrived in the embrace of the father, then repentance was fulfilled. He returned.

So another way to understand our path to repentance and fulfillment, become fruit-bearing the mysteries is that we return to God and we're in communion with God and that's not... when he hugged his father, he felt the love of his father. He felt peace. He felt the virtues, I'm sorry, the fruit of the virtues. **The fruit of the holy spirit; peace, love, joy.** **So if we have that, then we are beginning to live a spiritual life. If we don't have that then we're in depression, we have faithlessness. We're besought by passion we cannot overcome at all. We're completely enslaved to it. We're still on that journey. And of course, it's a continuous process. Repentance is not a one-time event. It's a continuous process throughout our whole**

life until we die. We are returning to God. So repentance, this is essential for us if we're going to live *in Christ* and *for Christ* and the mysteries are going to be fruitful. I have to get up and change.

So if we're going to confession and we say our sins and we feel terrible for them and we leave and we do them again, who are we like? Peter? Or Judas? Peter returned he became a disciple he was re-established... The Lord re-established him. He became an apostle. He became the greatest ? of the apostles. We have to... **repentance means we have to make progress. Repentance means there's fruit, repentance means return, repentance means communion. In other words it's key, and we're misunderstanding in English.** The Greek word for forgiveness is συγχώρεσε. Συγχώρεσε. And what does it mean? **It means to be in the same place or space, συν χώρο, to be together at the same place.**

So forgiveness, which seems to us very opaque, at least to me, I don't know about you but we say forgiveness, forgive me. What do we usually think of? Well I don't hold a grudge against you. And that's why in Protestant theology many people think that the person who changes is God. **What changed? WE changed, not God. God never did anything, to change for. He doesn't have any need to change. WE change, and we returned to God and we are then again in communion and that's salvation.** Συγχώρεσε, truly being forgiven, is being in communion.

So you see again, here, it's not enough to feel bad about something, it's not enough to be, to beat yourself over these terrible things you do. But you have to change, you have to *trust* God to change and you have to have His grace to change. You have to return to Him. It's, all of it is necessary, the very narrow road to return to God. So, remember, συγχώρεσε means communion, forgiveness means communion with God. It doesn't mean, He doesn't have a grudge against me and it's a legal thing or moral thing and we're OK again. And if you have something between yourselves and you're not again in communion you're not forgiven, you haven't forgiven the other. **Communion, the spirit of God dwelling uniting us, one to another, that's here, not after death.**

Father, you had a question?

(Father Theodore): @20:00 Fairly regularly. So I would like to hear from you that ... we are late for communion, that we are keeping the fast, we are going to vespers on Saturday night, we're doing the pre-communion prayers, is my list while you were talking... We're going to church early, God bless you for saying that. Always wonderful when a visiting priest [reinforces] what I'm saying. We are fasting from the marriage bed, if there's anything else you want to add to that list. What can we expect to be... **how do we begin to experience God?** What is the most, you know...

(Father Peter): **He's already there. He's already there. He's closer to us than we are to ourselves.** We have to...

Fr. Theodore): Yes. It's activated. It's manifest.

(Fr. Peter): The key, the key sign I think and I 'm glad you asked because I tend to do this I get carried away, my thoughts and I forget to say certain things. I appreciate that. **The key sign I think of the presence of God is humility, compunction, contrition, and the fruit of it is going to be obedience.**

So there are many stories in the lives of the saints. There are men of God, St. Symeon on the pillar and he was this man of God, but they were afraid that it was all self-will and that he was in delusion and the bishop sent an entourage and they, to tell him to come down immediately and the bishop says, if he does not do obedience then he's obviously not of God. And he came down. He began to come down immediately and they said 'stay.'

So there are certainly these criteria, these signs of the presence of God. **You cannot talk about the presence of God and there be a manifestation of egotism and pride which is the manifestation of the enemy.** Because the enemy of our salvation fell from his great heights being the brightest star, how? If we understand the opposite, it will help us understand what it means to be with God. So, Lucifer was the greatest light in the angelic realm and he reflected more than any other angel the brightness of God's divinity. He reflected. What was his fall? Not giving due glory to the source of divinity, the source of the grace, but saying that it belonged to him, saying that it was his already. That it belonged to him by nature or it was not actually, the origin was not of God but in him. That is essentially the fall of Lucifer, not giving glory... and so **the person who does not in everything recognize that whatever it is good in me is of God has not attained to the presence of God. It's impossible to have the presence of God when you do not recognize the presence of God in everything you do. Everything good that you do if it's good, if it's blessed if it's of a spiritual guide. So humility, compunction, contrition. When we pray we feel compunction, we feel contrition. Prayer without compunction and contrition is problematic or at least it's not... fruitful. That's the aim, to pray with a contrite heart, a broken heart.** That is, I think, one of the key things. And then every... I mean one could go on all the fruits of the spirit are a sign of the presence of God. And I think peace would be a sign of the presence of God

(Fr. Theodore): **Would it be fair to say that at some point in these ascetic practices we start experiencing, that we start, and then make a list, we start acting, doing, speaking, thinking, and laying?** That is new and natural to us, to a degree natural but also not of the old man. **You know, like it just, somebody else hit me and I just don't react the way that I used to....**

(Fr. Peter): Yeah. Let's talk about that. **We're provoked... the passions are provoked all the time.** We fall. Right. And we get angry or we judge. What's going on there? Well, what's going on there is that the nous, the soul, the spirit of man was not directed and focused on God but was lost in creation or in himself and there was... that in and of itself is a sense of pride, arrogance. **The only way one can get ahead of the temptation and not fall into it is if he has the remembrance of God and is in the presence of God. Because it's impossible for us to get ahead of the lightning action of the passions.**

The passions are in us and immediately they're at work with, they're provoked, we see some delicious food, we've already eaten a meal and we want to eat it. Even if we don't eat it, we lust after it, OK? **The only way that is not going to happen is not because we do something more, better and quicker but because we get out of the way and God is in us and prevents us or let's say saves us from this inclination and we are in the grace of God.** So a way to understand this is... our whole movement is actually negative. **The human movement is negative and the saving grace is the presence of God.** So we cannot... get ahead of the passions or get ahead of the sin ever on our own strength. So, that's a sign that we don't have the grace of God, at least not to the degree that we need it to become... to have him reign within us. The reign is not within us. **So, prayer and watchfulness is the key. It's at the center of everything and if that's not happening within us...** that's why, again, the Jesus prayer is so SO important because it becomes... it works within us and His presence within us is actually what prevents us from falling into the sin. I don't know, maybe I'm not going into detail...

(Fr. Theodore): **So when I see the cake and I realize rationally that I'm not lusting after it like I always did, or not running over to get it even though I'm full...**

(Fr. Peter) : **Yes, you've made progress.**

(Fr. Theodore): Then I'm realizing that...

Fr. Peter: If you are, if you were, you know, and it's a good point because maybe some people will think 'well, maybe I really can't measure the spiritual life. OK, right? I just go about my life and I hope in God.' No, it's not true. It's not true. **If you are living the spiritual life, you understand it. You recognize it. You recognize the passions to a certain degree. And the more you live it the more self-knowledge you obtain, the more you see and then the more the grace of God allows you to get ahead of the passions.**

So, if you today are a slave to Coca Cola or you just cannot have under 4 cups of coffee every day and if you don't get the 4th cup you're crying, sorry Father to reveal your [passions]... if that's the case, and you can't do any better, then... if however you did that a year ago but today that's not even a thought, you don't even think about it, I'm just giving you bad examples but you understand what I mean. Then yes, you've made progress.

Give Glory to God, though because it's God's grace within us that has allowed us to make the progress. We should see progress in our spiritual life. We should see change. We should see repentance. We should come to the knowledge that we should feel the peace of God within us and the joy of Christ within us, absolutely. This is what we're doing. Why would anybody struggle with the spiritual life if you don't have this as a result of the spiritual life?? Why?

(Fr. Theodore): [changes] where a person starts recognizing that things are changing in them because of their ascetic practice I guess I'm not reacting to situations that I know I would have in the past. I just am not giving in to the temptations when things happen, {} transformation.

(Fr. Peter): **They key is self-condemnation or self-critique, continually looking at ourselves, not our brother. Looking inside, praying to God continually, not just looking but continually praying to God 'I have this passion, I have this problem.' Recognizing our weakness, our inability to do anything, really without the grace of God. That's a continual process of prayer. I cannot do it without you, I am pathetic.**

The opposite is, you know, I remember people in the village, I would be like 'You ought to come to church, you ought to come to confession.' They would say 'I'm a good person, I don't need confession.' I was like 'You need confession *especially*. If you're telling me you don't need to come to confession, you're the first in line tomorrow.' So this is the kind of thing. That's the recognition actually that you don't know anything. **So the opposite, if you're recognizing continually how much you need... you know the saints... the paradox of holiness is that the closer they get to God the more they see how far they are. And the farther you are from God the more you think you don't have the need of God, it's a paradox.** So they see... So it's kind of like we're in darkness and we look at ourselves and of course we're filled with all these spots that we're wearing and we're in a perfectly white t-shirt or something, or dress shirt, right? And it's filled with garbage. But we're in total darkness and we don't see any of it. The more you approach the light the more you see all this, right? And the more... the light and everything is illumined, the more you see how much you {} So there's never a time that you're going to say, 'I've arrived.' There's never a time you're going to say 'I've arrived.'

Any other questions?...

[Question inaudible]

(Fr. Peter): You're talking about this doctrine of tolerance where it becomes relativization of religions?

[Response inaudible]

(Fr. Peter): So you have to accept every religion? Oh, well. This is a great change in the last 50 years. We used to, we used to say to everyone of another religion that we accept them in spite of their religion because of the falsehood of their religion, we embrace them.

Now, they expect us to say we accept their religion on account of everyone. And this is the exact opposite of what should be the norm. We embrace every human being, as the image of God and we love them and we should, through them, love our Lord.

But it would be the equivalent of saying, there is a group of doctors and you know, 3 of the 5 or something are teaching the total nonsense in terms of how to heal and what kind of things you do in a surgery etc., etc. They're quack doctors. And it would be the equivalent of saying, well I could never actually say they're quack doctors, it's perfectly acceptable and we accept that they're doctors like anyone else. **But what they teach is totally nonsense. We could never accept what they teach, we can embrace them as human beings.**

So I think it's pretty obvious, it's really basic but how do you deal with it in that context? **Well if the other person has no ears to hear then why even open your mouth?...** God is not calling us to...

This is a good opportunity to talk about freedom. I really wanted to talk about freedom.... So **God respects the freedom of every human being to the most amazing extent that we don't.** And this is apparent too, especially for me, maybe there are many more but this comes to mind in the gospels. Two passages which are very clear how much He respects the freedom of the other human being. And the point I'm bringing this up is that we don't have... **if people don't want to listen, then it's over! We don't need to talk to them. We don't beat people over their head to listen to us. That's... there's no requirement to try to convince people who don't want to listen.**

But in the gospel we see two passages and I'll begin with the rich man. You know the rich man, he comes to Christ 'what can I do to inherit the kingdom of God?' He says, keep all the commandments.' I've done that from my youth.' Everybody knows the passage, right? What can I do? Sell everything and give it to the poor. And he says, what does he say? He actually doesn't say anything in the gospel, what does he do? He turns around and leaves. And

then the Lord says the famous words that are so hard for the rich man 'Well then, who can be saved?' Notice what the Lord did. He didn't say 'Young man, let me sell you some other kind of salvation. Come back, we can make a deal.' He let him go. He let him go. Why? Because the presupposition of salvation is trust. He can't trust the master enough to follow after Him and sell what he has. There's nothing the Lord can do, he respects that freedom.

Number 2 – the Lord is walking now with his own disciples, twelve and the others and he turns to them, it's very... it's an amazing passage... he turns to them and he says 'Do you want to be my disciple, you have to eat my flesh and drink my blood.' Think about that. You're there. You hear this person tell you, you have to eat... It's insanity! I mean who does this? Alright? And they turn and they leave. This is a very hard saying, hard saying of our Lord. What did our Lord do? 'Hey, come back, it's metaphorical! I didn't really mean it! You don't have to eat MY flesh! It's something else. It's spiritual...' He doesn't say anything. He lets them go. He turns to his disciples. This is even more amazing. To Peter, and he says 'Will you also depart?' Think about that. Think about that. The twelve that he's chosen. That he knows will become the preachers or repentance to the whole world, enlighteners of the whole world, he says 'Do you want to go away? Go.'

It's mind boggling. Would we ever do that? We would resort to every last rational trick in our power to keep people and to not have them leave. And he says, Peter says 'We cannot leave. You have the words of life.' And they don't leave, of course. They crucify their intellect and they follow him because they've already come to trust him. That's what that means. You have the words of life – we trust you! We can't understand what you're saying. We have no idea what this means but we trust you and we're not leaving. THAT's the kind of trust, that we need to have to be disciples of Christ and He will never resort to anything less than this. He wants this. He looks for this. He's not going to explain it all and make it easy. He's not going to do it. He's going to say 'crucify your intellect' because that's the way you enter the kingdom. It's a narrow way and you have to do that before you enter into the kingdom.

These two passages blow my mind. So beautiful because at one and the same time He is presenting to them this very narrow path and letting them go and yet if they can overcome that, they'll become true disciples.

So this is the freedom of our Lord and this is why mission is done, how? They become like Christ and people say to the apostles and the priests and the teachers, we're not leaving you, we don't understand all this stuff, we're not leaving you because you have the words of eternal life. They want to be there besides all of this that they can't understand. Because they have experience of the grace of God, they have experience of the presence of God and they know, not intellectually, with the rational intellect but experientially, right. This knowledge is far superior than the rational intellect.

And we in this society have made the rational intellect the zenith, you don't go any higher in knowledge. You acquire knowledge by study, analysis and all the rest. In fact, this is a weak kind of knowledge. And we see it in our own lives. We know other people, who they are, without analyzing it with our rational intellect. We sense it, we intuitively understand who people are. And how much more with God! So, God totally respects our freedom.

So in this context of people who don't understand we're not required... God didn't do it! He didn't do it to the people who were following Him, His disciples, He's not going to do it to the people who are totally clueless and have no disposition to learn. Now! If they turn to you and they say 'what's this thing you're saying? What do you mean by this? Or what... how do you live? Absolutely! Then you turn to them and say 'Come and follow me. Let me show you what we do, how we live.' And the ideal, of course, is for them to see it in you... and want it! That's why we're trying... that's what we're talking about tonight, about how to get to the point where the holy spirit dwells within you and thousands around you will be saved.

That's the way we have Orthodox mission. That's what we should all be striving toward. It doesn't mean we stop publishing books, we stop publishing pamphlets or we... none of that. But we DO it like Christ did it – with total and absolute respect for the freedom. And when we do that, the other people will sense that and they respect it and they follow after... Christ, not us. They see Christ in us and they follow Christ. And then, you know what – there's total unity because it's all about Christ. It's not about me, it's not about you, it's all about Christ. And we're here for Him.

You see, the methodology is so different and the true methodology of the fathers is so different than what passes as the, you know, contemporary way of dialoging, I mean this whole insanity... We need to dialogue, we need to dialogue, we need to dialogue! Actually if you look at the way the Lord acted, it wasn't really through dialogue. He didn't... did he dialogue with a lot of people? The ones I remember, he did a little bit of dialoguing with the Pharisees. And what did he say to the Pharisees? He preached. And he taught. And he called. That's the way of the missionary. But always with total respect for the freedom. And always because they wanted it. They followed him to the desert places. He didn't go knocking on their doors 'hey, I want to come in and tell you about some of this...' like some of the Protestants do. We don't do that. It's not the way of God. I know it might seem counterintuitive, it might seem like 'well, you're retreating into isolation...' Well, no. Don't take it that way. It's not what I'm trying to say. **It's about the methodology of Christ, how He works. We need to study that. We need to study how Christ did it and then imitate Him. It's very different from the way of the world. Very different.**

I hope that was a good answer. Does that help? Maybe I went way beyond your answer. I always do that, take a little and then I stretch it out for miles.

Any other questions?

[Inaudible Question]

(Fr. Peter): In prayer as well. Personal prayer.

The danger in listening to your thoughts or listening to what you think God is telling you? There is danger in that and you should always – the Fathers are very clear about that whether it be dreams, whether it be anything like visions or... of course it happens but the humble soul will always either just take it, set it aside, not give it a lot of attention, and then if the events make something very clear, then we say to our spiritual father, this is what happened to me. So these things, many things can happen. The danger is in the imagination the devil works very cunningly and so we are forever distrustful of our imagination because that's the realm of the demons.

Actually **to really make progress in prayer, the imagination has to be dormant.** And so that's why if something appears... something in ascetic literature if someone appears to an ascetic or something happens, he denies it. And **many times it would have to happen two and three times until it becomes very clear that this is of God.** So that's the initial.. **the humble soul initially says 'I'm not worthy' of God giving me any attention. And if there is a need for God to hit us over the head and say 'this is of God' then we start to pay attention and we would in that context even go to our spiritual father and say 'What do you think? Is this of God?'**

But **we should not pay attention to things that delight us.** For instance some people pray and they feel like they're... what do you call that? Goosebumps! You know and, no one could feel that in prayer and we might interpret that as God's presence. **It may or may not be God's presence. Don't pay attention to it.** This love that we have for Christ has to be undivided...