



**003 Aug. 28/Sept. 10, 1963**

**Categories :** [Letters](#)

**Date :** May 2, 2016

Dear Nina [Seco],

It has been just about a year since your visit, and already we are almost strangers to each other. That is of course primarily my fault, since I am a hopelessly irresponsible correspondent. However, I will try to write once in a while, hoping that you will do likewise.

I am quite interested in your English-language Orthodox Church and would like to hear to more about it and about the priest. While I am quite satisfied with Church Slavonic myself, and in fact feel myself to be more Russian than American, I realize that one can't expect many converts to go so far. In fact one of the chief difficulties I've had in my own modest missionary endeavors is the linguistic and cultural barrier. People are invariably fascinated by the Slavonic services, but any more intimate contact with the Church seems out of the question to them. What kind of success has your Church had? Do you have any organized missionary activity? I know Vladiko Ioann and Fr. Leonid (at St. Tikhons) want to begin something of the sort here (missionary activity, that is), and Gleb has some ideas of his own on the subject. But so far nothing has been begun.

I remember telling you last year that I would be going to Jordanville this Christmas. However, since I found myself unable to work more than five months, I saved only enough money to live until now, and I've now gone back to work (as a busboy again, but in a pleasanter place). The book I have been writing is in much better form, though still far from finished. It turns out to be a study of the consequences of atheism as contrasted with the consequences of faith (historical-psychological-spiritual-philosophical-theological). I sometimes despair that I am making it too abstract and philosophical, so that no one will be interested in it or read it. Presently I'm working on an essay (which turns out, like the book, to be rather long) on the person and influence of Pope John XXIII in the light of Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor," in which I hope to interest Fr. Konstantin.

Vladiko Ioann, as you must have heard, has been confirmed as Archbishop of San Francisco, and if the diocese is still a long way from real peace, at least there is some kind of order at last. I believe work on the new cathedral has finally begun again. Vladiko Ioann is my favorite among our bishops, even though I find it next to impossible to understand him. He is constandy filled with such a deep peace and joy that it is spiritually beneficial just to be in his presence. I was present at several crucial moments in the past months, when Vladiko was surrounded by excited, weeping, practically hysterical crowds (you know how Russians can be!), but he was exactly the same as ever, still calm and even joyful, denying all the angry accusations against other bishops, and exhorting all to spiritual peace and obedience.



Vladiko Savva was here for several months and did much in defense of Vladiko Ioann. He still has high hopes for establishing a monastery (though Gleb, as usual, is pessimistic about it), but apparently he will do nothing until he leaves Edmonton and is permanently established elsewhere. He was searching for potential monks while he was here, but so far Jon is the only definite one. For myself, I have yet to finish my book and see Jordanville before I make my choice. Do you happen to know any potential monks? And what of your own hopes, are they any nearer realization? There are few any more who think of the monastic life or take it seriously, even among Russians; Gleb's mother, for example, gave me some very "practical" advice on why I shouldn't be a monk.

Recently a girl whom I knew in college wrote me after having disappeared for several years. I had despaired of ever hearing from her again, and the circumstances lead me to believe that there is a spiritual meaning in this reestablishment of contact — in short, I think that Our Lord wishes to draw her to Holy Orthodoxy. The last time I saw her she was a fervent Anglican (High Church), with a great deal of spiritual awareness and a great love for Our Lord. At the same time she has a kind of Dostoyevskian impulsiveness that occasionally leads her into strange adventures. While always dreaming of becoming a nun, she has had several unhappy marriages, for which the fault was not primarily hers (her husband simply left her with an unborn child); or if the fault was hers, then it was the fault of having an overly trusting nature that too easily follows early impressions of people. Right now she's living on a farm with a man she married in despair, and the child from her previous marriage. She seems to be reasonably content, and I know she is capable of suffering a great deal in silence if need be; but, even though she has no intellectual doubts of Christian Truth, she finds her faith to be more or less dead. I'm going to be sending her books and icons as soon as I have some money (she welcomes them), but what she needs most is contact with real believers and fellow pilgrims on earth. Forgive me for burdening you with all this, but if you feel it in your heart to do so, please write her something (I mentioned you to her, but said nothing about you), if only to let her know that Christians still exist. (She senses "something missing" in the Anglican and Catholic Churches, and she was impressed with the genuineness of the Russian Orthodox service the two times she was present at it.) You will both be rewarded, I am sure. Her address is Mrs. Charles Bradbury, Route 1, Ursa, Illinois. (Her name is Alison.)

Please pray for her, and for me, wretched sinner but fellow pilgrim that I am. Jon promises to write soon. Let us hear some thing from you.

Your brother in Christ,