



## 092. Aug. 16/29,1971 The Holy Napkin

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Date : September 2, 2016

Dear Brother in Christ, Laurence,

Thank you for spending the feast day with us. Our services for some reason today took 3 hours, so you were probably to Williams before we finished. With Uspeniye we go on autumn time, and getting up time becomes pre-dawn, as you aptly reminded us.

In the last few hours we've reflected a little on your problem and will offer the fruits of it, in the form of a few principles and recommendations, which perhaps, when put together, will help you on the way to a decision.

1. Keep the "spiritual" and the "worldly" distinct: both spheres have their own logic. Your decision to join us, and later on to remain with us, God willing, should be taken according to spiritual logic; but preliminary questions such as trip, job, etc., are still subject to worldly logic. It is a dangerous mistake to start applying spiritual logic too early or in the wrong place, for that can hinder one later from making a safe retreat back to the world. Our wandering and ex-monks are living examples of what not to follow; if one is to live in the world (and one can do so fruitfully, from the Christian point of view), it should be with the independence and advantages of anyone else living in the world, and not with the handicap of the spiritual crippling that comes from not knowing where one belongs, trying to mix monastic and worldly life, having regrets about past decisions, etc.

Monastic rules give precisely a trial period of at least 6 months, during which time one's worldly rights, while as it were suspended, remain intact. Therefore it is simply not appropriate for you to make a once and for all decision now about staying with us. We welcome you and hope that you will eventually make this decision, since it appears to us that you would be most fruitful here; but that decision belongs at the end of the trial period, during which period all previously incalculable questions should be resolved. Therefore, definitely, if at all possible, you should take a leave of absence, so that if you do decide to return to the world you will have maximum freedom and security in which to bring forth what fruit you can bring forth in the world (the calendar is a good first fruit) without using up your psychic-spiritual energy on vain regrets and job insecurity.

2. One of your important debts to the world is the visit to your mother, which from what you have said and the way you apparently feel, should be made if at all possible this year.

3. The first two principles being, apparently, mutually exclusive, perhaps you should change some other element in the equation to make them both possible. What about visiting your mother, relatives, and Boston on your vacation (3 weeks?) on borrowed money which you would pay back



after Christmas (when your \$400 debt will be finished?), and then joining us in spring instead of November? Of course, I don't know what sums of money this would involve or how long it would take you to pay it back, but your trip would obviously have to be as modest as possible.

Beyond this we don't know what to say or recommend, as we don't see any other alternatives. Pray about it to Vladika John.

We forget to mention: Father Theodoritos (Mt. Athos monk, formerly John Mavros, who wrote articles and helped us set type in 1965) is now visiting Fr. Panteleimon, and will be coming to S.F. this week or next to spend several weeks with his brother. He would like to visit us, and Fr. Panteleimon is giving him your phone number. Please do whatever you can to get him here: giving instructions (in case his brother might bring him), notifying us where and when to pick him up (we'll be going to the PO at least every other day) in case he comes by bus or plane, or maybe even bringing him yourself (we'll gladly pay for your trip). He's written two books in Greek, of which we are getting a partial Russian summary made: one on the life of St. Nectarios, another consisting of anti-ecumenist dialogues. In any case you would do good to meet him — his brother, Anthony Mavros, is [in] the phone book; call him if he doesn't call you in a week or two.

Pray for us. And watch out; besides the human factor, the devil is likely to try and disturb you or mix you up in future weeks. Don't trust your feelings too much, and make sense at least by worldly logic. [Letter ends.]