



094. Aug. 29/Sept. 11, 1971. Beheading of St. John the Baptist

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : September 2, 2016

Dear Brother in Christ, Dimitry,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray this finds you safely returned — although from what we hear not all your fellow-pilgrims left unscathed from Mt. Athos!

Alas, I've done it again! My letter has inspired you to take a decision — a leave of absence from the seminary. But after reading your new letter I very much doubt that that is a wise thing for you to do now. If you give up the seminary (and a leave of absence amounts to that), it should be only because it has become a spiritual dead end and because you have at least a promising alternative to it. But what's your alternative — Getting a job (if you can) and waiting for God to do something. Not much chance! You have to show an effort, some kind of “podvig,” first. However discouraging you may find the Jordanville atmosphere, it is still a Church-saturated atmosphere and it gives you valuable Church learning. Whereas a job in the world, with no definite spiritual orientation or goal, is all too likely to be precisely a spiritual dead end for you.

Forgive me again for my frankness, but I sense that you are in great danger. You are floating in a cloud of indefiniteness, no definite goal in mind, waiting for something up happen; and meanwhile feeling somewhat sorry for yourself and piling up some negative experiences and (probably) attitudes. For example: how have you taken your trip fiasco? Are you still thinking: that Nikita did this to me! Or are you thinking as you should: even though by worldly standards I “deserved” this trip, still, God, for my sins and my completely foul, complacent, and self-centered attitude toward serving Him, deprived me of seeing the holy places. Which of these is closest to your attitude? — that should be a key to your spiritual state.

Your letters give this impression: you're a great big spiritual baby who needs, first of all, a good spanking, and second of all some good hard work; and then you might be in a position to start thinking of your spiritual needs. If you are going to take any “advice” from me, I would give this advice: stick through this year of the seminary and do your best to catch up; and only then stop to think about what's next. Pray hard for guidance from God and from the God-pleasers — pray to Vladika John; but pray in the midst of some kind of labor to please God — the seminary is a good such labor — and not in a cloud of indefiniteness unaccompanied by hard labors, without a definite goal. **IF YOU HAVE NO OTHER DEFINITE GOAL, THEN AT LEAST KEEP THE GOAL OF FINISHING THE SEMINARY, ONE YEAR AT A TIME, and God will surely send you guidance beyond that.**



This is primary; other questions, such as frequent communion, will have their meaning and place only after you have sweated through more basic labors and attained a more definite idea of your goal and aims.

Nonetheless, to answer briefly your questions: About frequent communion, we discussed this recently with Fr. Nektas Palassis, and we found ourselves quite in mutual agreement on the question. Our present state “without sacraments” (but actually we do partake of the Mysteries about once a month or sometimes two) is temporary and has its place in our whole “plan,” the first and absolutely essential step of which was to get free of the world and its ties, and not to do anything that will drag us back to it; and the context in which the priesthood has been offered to us so far has only promised to drag us back to the world we had escaped, and so we remain in our present state and await a more favorable sign. But that’s a complicated story which can't be gone into by letter.

As for the restoration of Russia — we can only wait to see what happens, when it will be and what form it will take, and act accordingly. We feel God’s guidance strongly up to this point, and pray he will not deprive us of it in future. May His holy will be done in us all!

With love in Christ our Saviour,
Seraphim, monk

P.s. We don’t recall ever writing up the Munich podvizhnik!