



221. June 9/22, 1976 St. Cyril of White Lake

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Brother Macarius [Schaefer],

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ. Many thanks for the excellent photographs and the news.

We understand very well your situation as you describe it in your letter. Of course, what you say is “correct” as far as it goes. But you are allowing yourself to make one basic mistake: you are making yourself the judge of your own spiritual state. In your present stage of knowledge and experience, you are not able to see whether you need an aspirin or an operation—so try to humble yourself a little to the extent of seeing that you don’t know what is best for you! But then what is the answer? To find a stricter place? Not now—if you do you will probably regret it; it is very doubtful that this will give you the spiritual growth that you need and are looking for. Neither “strictness” nor “freedom” is a guarantee of spiritual growth. Some people under “freedom” become spiritually loose and never grow, but we have also seen those trained under relative “strictness” who have also made no growth, but on the contrary have thought that they have grown while actually falling into the diseases of vainglory and pride, believing that their instructor was taking care of these problems for them. Under both forms of life one must walk in fear of God and with discernment.

Your answer—if I may be so bold as to tell you—is to be patient, enduring with good hope all the temptations that come your way, and withholding your judgment as to whether you-need an aspirin or an operation—until you have acquired more knowledge and experience—which is why you went to Jordanville in the first place. Your opinion will be much more sound after several more years of seminary and experience in an Orthodox community. You are too young in Orthodoxy to be evaluating your spiritual growth—that is actually a sign of your pride. Be patient, endure, observe, learn— and when the time comes there will come ways of testing your real spiritual growth.

In a word, the temptation to leave Jordanville, after committing yourself to the seminary and the life of a novice, seems to come from the devil on the “right side”—to knock you off the path which will give you the best progress, for a seemingly good and plausible reason. Do you remember how today’s Saint, Cyril of White Lake, thought that he would be more spiritually profited by sitting in his quiet cell than by laboring in the noisy kitchen? And that it did not turn out at all as his inexperienced judgment thought it would? Take that as your example and warning when these thoughts come to you from the “right side.” The “noisy kitchen” can give you much valuable spiritual experience, even if it might not seem so at the time.

The feeling of emptiness, worldly vanity, helplessness against temptations—will pass; but you should accept all this now as your cross, struggling according to your strength, and not being so



proud as to think that you should be above them.

Now, about an immediate concern: we have written to the new Abbot, Vladika Laurus, asking him to “lend” you to us for the summer, for a specific purpose: to help us finish printing the Life of Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky. This would be a tremendous help to us. By ourselves we simply cannot do it this summer or maybe even this year, and our summer helpers probably won’t be much help. One of their biggest problems, by the way, is the opposite of what you say you want—they can hardly bear being told that they’ve done something wrong or being bawled out! Br. Nicholas has also offered to help us, but I doubt that Vladika would allow you both to come at the same time—so we’re asking for you first!

Assuming that your offer still holds, and that Vladika Laurus will bless—do you have money for plane fare to get here, one-way? If not, we will manage it. We would want you to come straight here, without taking off your podrasnik—coming from one obedience to another.

We ask your prayers for us especially in the days ahead and on June 19/July 2, the tenth anniversary of Vladika Johns repose. With all the troubles and rumors in the Church, we wish to ask his help very fervently for our further labors. This is the post-Paschal “apostolic” time of the Church year, and there is much apostolic labor still to do in Christ’s Church!

With love in Christ our Saviour,
Seraphim, monk