



244. Jan. 28/Feb. 10, 1977 St. Ephraim of Syria

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Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Alexey,
Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm sorry to be so long in writing. It really seems that these last weeks and months have been our busiest ever. I haven't forgotten the last installment for the Sederholm series (by the way, did I mention that we have received a Xerox copy of Fr. Clement's translation of St. Theodore the Studite, the Optina edition of 1872?)—I will try my best to have it done before the beginning of Lent.

If you plan to come on one of the next two weekends, could you bring with you all the tapes of our summer course (both Fr. Herman's and my lectures)? If you aren't coming that soon, could you mail them? We have a use for them.

The Orthodox Word for July-August is almost finished! We feel as though we are dragging a heavy load through a swamp—but there is hope that the new issues will follow very quickly thereafter.

David finally left on Tuesday. All his efforts to repair our truck were to no avail, and he finally towed me in the truck to Redding, where a mechanic had it running in two hours! David now begins his mechanical course in Willits, but whether he has what it takes even to finish it, I don't know. He has "fits" of wanting to carry something through to the end, but they don't last long; inside there seems to be some kind of vacuum. We've given him all we can until he himself shows some signs of walking on his own feet.

The consecration of the Cathedral in S. F. seems to have been quite triumphant. As it turns out, our truck wasn't running and we were a little sick—and so we fortunately remained in our wilderness—and apparently had the only Liturgy in the whole Diocese outside of San Francisco! Yesterday Bishop Nikander of Brazil paid us a surprise visit before his departure for home, and he impressed us very favorably—simple and humble, and totally without pretense or politics. Father Herman had a good talk with him.

Concerning preparation for Holy Communion: the standard preparation is to read the Three Canons and Akathist, as stated in the Jordanville Prayer Book, usually the night before (in monasteries these are often read at Compline for the whole community, after the Creed), and in the morning the Canon before Communion and the Pre-Communion Prayers. If for some reason one can't read this whole rule, one repents and reproaches oneself and does as much as one can; if need be, the Akathist and/or canons could be read in the afternoon or evening after receiving Communion. As for fasting, the general Russian custom is to fast for three days beforehand, but



this is actually a custom which arose with the practice of infrequent communion, and Vladika John once told a woman who wanted to receive Holy Communion but hadn't fasted the day before: "But it wasn't a fast day. If you are keeping the Church's regular fast days, it is sufficient to guard against over-eating, or eating especially tasty foods, for several days before receiving Holy Communion, and especially the day before, but without making a special point of avoiding all non-fast foods, unless you feel the need for it. As for frequency of communion: in your case you should receive as frequently as you can, i.e., just about every time you attend Liturgy. The pre-communion prayers are read aloud in our skete, as in many Russian churches, during the priest's communion.

Our life here has more or less returned to normal, and of course we now have the special consolation of the Divine Liturgy, which is truly a heaven on earth. On the days when Barbara has visited us, I have been able to serve as deacon instead of just being on the kliros; and then indeed one forgets everything else.

How would you like to start a series on Bishop Theophan the Recluse and his message for today?

With love in Christ,
Unworthy Hierodeacon Seraphim