



278. Sept. 20/Oct. 3, 1979 Great Martyr Eustathius

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Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Father Hilarion,

Christ is in our midst!

I had planned to write you after our Pilgrimage about your spiritual son, John Van Deerlin, and here almost two months have slipped by. Laziness and distractions! Anyway, he arrived safely before the first day of the Pilgrimage and stayed for several days of courses. He started off a little “smart” and wanted to discuss things that were beside the point (why is marijuana worse than alcohol? etc.), but he was humbled a little and seemed to get the point. He had a problem at first with “communism,” and after my talk (where I had discussed communism, I thought, from a spiritual rather than a political point of view), he wondered whether he had wandered into a “California right-wing group.” But after some gentle discussions, he calmed down and took the rest of the lectures and courses very seriously. He even began reading Gulag and was enlightened about the Tsar by one of our 18-year-old converts. In the end he left a good impression, and with maturing in the faith he could be a sober Christian. We confirmed for him what you had told him about jurisdictions and receiving Communion. Of course, he is still fresh and a little vague about his Orthodoxy—but we’ve come to prefer this to the super-correctness of some of our new converts. We remember him fondly, and he promised to write.

Of late, it seems, we’ve fallen into even more disfavor with “Boston.” Fr. Herman wrote Fr. Panteleimon a note asking if the monastery could help with some translations from Greek, to which we received a disdainful and critical answer by Fr. Mamas, condemning our use of Bp. Theophan’s translations of St. Symeon the New Theologian, etc. I replied with a brief note to the effect that “expertness” was not the highest of virtues (having in mind his boasting of knowing Syriac and Greek and translating St. Isaac from the original), and that our St. Symeon booklet was a humble venture, having as its protection the spiritual authority of Bp. Theophan. I thought at the time: what if this provokes an “open letter”?—but the note was so obviously personal to Fr. Mamas that I thought no more of it, thinking also that the “open letter” era was past. But alas! In a week we received his reply, accusing us of Old-Believerism, the spreading of “pious fables,” and various heresies (including teaching the “baptism of the dead”!), and having such a disdainful tone to our poor Russians (including Vladika Andrew) that it hurt. I didn’t answer his accusations, but wrote him a personal reply, telling him frankly that he needed a good dose of warm-heartedness and simplicity and warning him that obedience was not the infallible panacea he claimed it was. (In effect he had written that he couldn’t be criticized because he acts under, obedience, which is an infallible guide.) To this there has been no reply.



Just recently I came across some letters to us from Boston 12 years ago—and what a difference! They were just strugglers then, and too bogged down in daily labors to be writing such long-winded epistles. What has happened? I fear it is not for the good. The “correct” converts who follow the “Boston line” are going down a blind alley, I think—that’s not where the real Orthodox life and concern should be today. I hate to think of where it will end. Fr. Lev Puhalo, I think, is an example of where this mis-directed zeal can take one.

Well, enough negativism. We are trying to direct our missionary labors to a simple kind of flock, and we do have responses from it. Fr. Dimitry Dudko still seems to us to be nearest the center of the true spiritual concern today, and there are even signs that the “revival” in Russia is beginning to touch the Russian youth abroad. People who were at the conferences in Toronto and Angwin (the latter was a very boring and academic thing last year) have told us that the Russian young people are “waking up”—glory be to God, if only it will be in the right spirit!

Please pray for us. We remember you with much love. We don’t know yet when Fr. Herman [letter ends]