

St. Demetrius Orthodox Church

JULY 2010

Continued from last month

Our Constant Need Growing in the Grace of God!

By Bishop Maximos

How Do We Grow in Grace?

In II Peter 3:18, Saint Peter instructs us to grow in the life of grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We must then ask, how does one grow in this life of grace and knowledge? There are seven points to consider regarding our growth in grace:

1) Awareness

The first point to consider is our awareness of the presence of Christ's grace. Christ's life in us. Awareness is the beginning of growth in the life of grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. What is given to us at our Christian baptism, completed with confirmation and what in theological language is called "baptismal grace, has to develop and bear its fruit as we grow in our spiritual life. What is given to us "mystically" at our baptism, as a potential, has to become "actualized" later on in our lives. In order for this to happen, the awareness of the presence of Christ's life in us is absolutely necessary. The duty of adult Christians is to cultivate this awareness in the younger ones in the faith.

2) Maturity

Awareness leads to the initial spurt of growth of the life of grace in us and our knowledge of Christ. The seeds of that life of grace, faith and knowledge have to be cultivated, after we become aware of their presence in us. Practice makes perfect. By living according to the standards of new life in Christ, we grow to maturity, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, the cunning by which they lie in wait to deceive. (Ephesians 4:13-14).

3) Renewal

The next important point regarding growth and knowledge of Christ is renewal, for life is renewal. A life which is not renewed day by day ceases to be life. It become stagnation and death. The life of grace, a life in the Spirit, is the life to which the Psalmist aspires when he prays "Create in me a clean heart. O God, and renew a steadfast Spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). He also write, "You send forth Your Spirit. (and) they are created: and You renew the face of the earth" (Psalm 104:30). The creating and renewing Spirit of God is the moving force behind our growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ, a life of constant renewal.

Continued on page 2

Newsletter Sponsorship

In memory of my husband Myron Sears; parents Nicholas and Rose Klimovich and Uncle Peter Klimovich offered by Olga Sears, sons and their families.

May Their Memories Be Eternal!

In memory of Don A. Lazaroff 9 year anniversary July 6 from Olga and the family. We love you and miss you always.

Continued from page 1

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4) Commitment

What the Spirit of God renews in us, as we grow in the life of grace and knowledge of Christ, is our basic Christian commitment to Christ and to new life in Him. No growth is possible for us without renewing this commitment regularly. Our common worship as a Church encourages us each time we gather to commit, or rather recommit, "ourselves, and one another, and our whole life unto Christ our God." We cannot grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ without making this personal commitment to Christ and to the new life in Him that was given to us once for all as an eternal promise by God. We grow in His life as we renew our commitment to Him each day.

5) Our Goal is Perfection

There is no limit in space and measure regarding our growth in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The measure of our Christian perfection is the infinite perfection of God, for as Christ said: "Be perfect just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48). There is no ceiling above us as we grow in the life of grace and the knowledge of Christ, for the road of both is infinite. We live the life of grace and we know Christ "beyond acquisition" always overextending ourselves, for there is nothing beyond the call of duty in the life of God's grace. The Lord's saying is always true concerning our Christian walk: "When you have done all those things which you are commanded of, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do" (Luke, 17:10). The great Apostle Paul expresses that same attitude in Philippians when he states: "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended (Christ's perfection); but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). Saint Paul's Christian attitude of pressing on is reflected often in the theology of the Church Fathers, represented by the doctrine of *Epektasis* (beyond acquisition, beyond measure) of Saint Gregory of Nyssa. As Christians, we are always called to outdo ourselves, to always reach further beyond and "shoot for the stars" in that process we can experience a kind of spiritual momentum as we grow in the life of grace beyond the limits of our human existence. This is what the New Testament calls "the unfathomable knowledge of God in Christ."

6) Eternality

The process of our growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ is not only unlimited and infinite in terms of space, but also in terms of time. For the same Saint Gregory of Nyssa repeats the biblical message that the process continues on into eternity. For if the life of grace is love, and if knowledge of God in Christ and through Christ is not a mere intellectual knowledge, but a knowledge through experience, a knowledge in communion with God created by love, this love is an eternal relationship with God. We continue to grow in this relationship unto the ages of ages—forever!

7) Without Merit

Finally, our growth in grace and knowledge of Christ is not our personal doing, nor is it due to our personal efforts. It is a free gift, given by God through His Son in the Holy Spirit. Everything is a gift and "every good gift" and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). There is nothing that we have which we have not received as a free gift from God. If we have received everything, how can we boast, as if we have not received everything? (I Corinthians 4:7). It is by the grace of God that we are what we are (I Corinthians 15:10). Although we may try hard to achieve spiritual heights in our lives, whatever we achieve is not ours, but God's gift (Ephesians 2:8). The life of grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ does not depend upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy (Romans 9:16).

Continued

Continued from page 2

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God the Father offers us the gift of divine grace and knowledge through Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. It is up to us to accept this gift and allow it to bear its fruit. I implore you to accept the challenge of this eternal growth in the life of grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a free gift, equal to the precious jewel which is the Holy Kingdom of God present in our midst. For Christ the King has established His Kingdom once and for all. Appropriately the generous grace of God, as He offers Himself and His Holy Kingdom to us. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you to fully discover and appreciate his gift of divine life. Take full advantage of God's grace in your everyday life. Commit yourself to grow in grace and knowledge of Christ, experiencing Christ's resurrected life of blessedness and bliss. In this life we now enjoy the foretaste which will grow for all eternity, now and in the endless ages, "according to Christ's

Bible Questions

The answers to last month's questions:

1. Who was Adonijah the son of? **Haggith**
2. Who did King Solomon ask to kill his brother Adonijah? **Benaiah the son of Jehoiada**
3. What was the name of Naboth's wife? **Jezebel**
4. Ahab wanted to trade or buy land from Naboth—what was growing on the land? **A vineyard**
5. What was in the Ark of the covenant? **Two stone tablets which Moses had put there.**

The following answers may be found in the Book of Ezra

1. In building the temple in chapter 3, where did the cedar trees come from?
2. What did King Darius decree in Chapter 6?
3. Who was Ezra the son of?
4. Ezra gathered Israelite family heads to make a return journey with him. From where to where?
5. In Chapter 10 Ezra made a proclamation as to what?

Relay For Life

This is St. Demetrius' 9th year participating in the American Cancer Society's 24 hour Relay For Life. Relay packets are available at the candle stand. **What can you do?** We need *walkers!* Just an hour or two of your time would be appreciated. *Show up for the event!* **Food** - Monica Dellas will be organizing this area. **Purchase a luminary**, \$ 10 each, in honor or in memory of a friend or loved one who has found the battle against cancer! (Luminaries are due Sunday, July 4th to be in the Program Book). **Make a contribution.** Please make checks payable to the **American Cancer Society.**

There will be a Panikhida at the site (same site as last year) on Friday night at 8:30 pm.

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Please remember in your prayers

For Good Health

Van Christoff
Jack Anderson
Winnie Wangler
Michael Wangler
Kalliopi Anastasiadis
Pavlos Anastasiadis
Mary Lazaroff
Elaine Kleiner
Helen Tannis
Phil Lazaroff
Milan Koprivica
John Stamcos
Herb Foor
Patty Canales-Baker
Ted Backos
Lisa Pritt

Departed

Deno Demos
Ted Chames
Ellen Koprivica
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