

## Nativity Fast Message of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.  
Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and shall call his name Immanuel...*

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a  
great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep  
darkness, on them has light shined....For to us a  
child is born, to us a son is given; and the govern-  
ment will be upon his shoulder, and his name will  
be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."  
(Isaiah 7:14, 9:2,6 RSV)*

### NATIVITY FAST 2004

#### To the Reverend Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of New England

Dearly beloved:

The words spoken by the Prophet Isaiah some 700 years before the coming in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ continue to speak to us some 2,000 years after His birth. We are walking in deep darkness. But a Light has been given, a Child is born, a Son is given, to those who would receive it.

We know the fulfillment of the prophecy. "Immanuel" – "God with us" – is the greatest gift the world has ever received. God shares Himself with us by giving us His Son.

We are entering into the holy time of the Nativity Fast, forty days of preparation, reflection, repentance, prayer and fasting. These days make us ready to receive the One born of the Virgin. These days enable us to transcend the mundane and even profane "preparation" of the world for this Birth – the consumerism, materialism and hedonism, with endless parties, "sales," and "special financing." These days enable us to look at something – Someone – other than ourselves.

MESSAGE TO 2

## Youth Rally '04

### Overcoming illness and weather

**Y**outh Rally 2004 was held at the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Boston Camping and Retreat Center in Contoocook, New Hampshire from Monday, August 9, until Saturday, August 14. This is the same site at which the last several Youth Rallies have been held.

According to the Diocesan Guidelines for Youth Rally as presently constituted, all diocesan youth who have completed fifth grade and have



*Staff and youth participants at Rally '04*

not yet celebrated their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday are eligible to attend the Youth Rally. Adult volunteers serve as cabin and activity counselors.

Diocesan Youth Director, Fr. John Hopko, served as Rally Rector and Director. Fr. Dennis Rhodes served as the Rally Chaplain. Matushka Cynthia Voytovich served as Choir Director. A total of fifteen other adults volunteered as Youth Rally Staff in various capacities, primarily cabin and activity counselors. This year, for the first time, criminal background checks were conducted on staff members.

This group gathered twice before the Youth Rally for orientation and training. The staff did a fantastic job during Rally. They truly deserve our gratitude and thanks. Their self-sacrificial commitment made Rally possible.

Although forty young people pre-registered

RALLY TO 7



**O.N.E. (ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND)**

Diocese of New England, Orthodox Church in America  
Published monthly except for July-August

*His Beatitude, Metropolitan HERMAN, Locum tenens*  
*The Very Reverend John J. Dresko, Editor*

**Advertising:** This publication will accept advertisements. However, we reserve the right to refuse any advertising that we find unacceptable for a publication of this type. **Rate:** \$50.00 per quarter page, \$100.00 per half page, \$175.00 per full page.

**Subscription:** Distributed free of charge to diocesan members. \$10.00 per year or any part thereof for others. Subscription outside of U.S.: \$15.00 (U.S. Currency).

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**Hardware:** This issue was composed on an Apple Power Macintosh G5 with 1.5 gb RAM, a Umax Astra 3450 scanner, and a Hewlett-Packard LaserJet 5MP laser printer. **Software:** Microsoft Word X & PageMaker 6.52. Reproduction done at GT Graphics, Forestville, CT.

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**Please mail donations and subscription requests to: V. Rev. John Dresko, 95 Butternut Lane, Southington, CT 06489.**

## ON THE DOCKET

A listing of upcoming events in the Diocese.  
Please forward any dates you wish to be included to the Editor.

November 5-6, 2004

*Connecticut Bible Lecture Series*  
*Father Paul Tarazi*  
*Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, CT*

November 6-7, 2004

*International Festival*  
*Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Waterbury, CT*

November 8-9, 2004

*St. Nectarios of Aegina Celebration*  
*Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, CT*

November 11, 2004

*Metropolitan Council Meeting*  
*OCA Chancery, Syosset, NY*

November 13, 2004

*Food and Craft Fair*  
*Three Saints Church, Ansonia, CT*

November 14, 2004

*90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration*  
*All Saints Church, Hartford, CT*

November 17, 2004

*Diocesan Council Meeting, 6:30 P.M.*  
*Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT*

### MESSAGE FROM 1

Beloved brothers and sisters, I urge you to use these days wisely. Join me in the Fast. Take time daily to pray a little more. Read the scriptures. Take some of the money you would spend on this season and help someone less fortunate. Let us make sure that the Lord does not come to us only to find an empty space yet with no room for Him.

I ask your forgiveness, sisters and brothers, as we enter this precious time. May we rejoice together in the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,



†HERMAN  
Archbishop of Washington  
Locum tenens of the Diocese of New England  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

# Around the Parishes

## *New Haven, Connecticut*

Natalie Marie Ciarleglia, infant daughter of Gary and Tanya Ciarleglia was baptized on Sunday, September 5. May God grant all of you good health and many years!

Saturday, September 11, Father Michael held a Molieben service for all the people who are in the teaching profession (college, public, private, Sunday School, tutors, teachers aides, etc.). We thank all of them for their dedication to the education of our youth. Father Michael also served a Molieben on Sunday, September 12 for the entire church school, students, teachers and parents as they started the new church school year.

Sunday, September 25, we were please to welcome the Very Reverend Joseph Fester, executive director of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards. Following liturgy, Father Fester, in an effort to promote stewardship, gave a presentation on FOS and asked the parishioners to help with the work of the OCA's ministries through voluntary gifts.

We are privileged and honored to host a choral concert of Russian sacred and folk music (Monday evening,

## OUR DIOCESE

PEOPLE  
PLACES  
EVENTS

November 15, following Daily Vespers), performed by eleven children (ages 8 & 9) from Saraktash, in the Orenburg region of Russia. They are the adoptive children of Father Nicholas and Matushka Galina Stremsky. Residing in a poor region of central Russia, they suffer many hardships, struggles, and sometimes hunger as part of their daily lives.

The Stremsky's are the largest family in Russia with **fifty-three** adopted children. Father Stremsky is the rector of Holy Trinity Mercy House. Since 1992, they have been raising children taken from the orphanages. Father Nicholas' parish saw that there were many elderly in their town who also were unable to care for themselves and had no one to help them, so they established Mercy House, a home for poor elderly people. The parish then opened a school for all the town's children. All proceeds from this concert will be donated to help the family and the Mercy House.

— submitted by *Barbara Ann Dixon*

## *Southbury, Connecticut*

We have moved into our new home, where we celebrated our first Great Vespers together on Saturday, September



*Nikki Saunders' Chrismation, October 3, 2004. Nikki on right, with her sponsor, Pauline Driscoll. This was the first Chrismation in the new church building in Southbury, CT.*

4<sup>th</sup>. After celebrating our last Liturgy in our former auto parts store, we moved to a nearby dance studio, temporarily before finally arriving in our new church building. What a joyful blessing! Our Live Wires Sunday School program is now busily underway in its new quarters, and our services are on a normal cycle.

On Labor Day weekend, we were once again awed and overwhelmed at God's blessings and the true sacrifices and commitments of countless families, friends, neighbors and parishioners, who together helped meet our \$100,000 matching grant goal. We are so grateful and appreciative of each and every offering made as an effort to help us build a light house for God's love. Our consecration is set for June 4, 2005. Planning has begun!

As an extension of our new home we hope to open our doors and reach out to our community in as many ways as possible. Throughout the year we will be holding open houses for our neighbors and local communities of faith. We welcome all to come and join us for our annual celebration of the Eve of St. Nektarios on Monday, November 8 at 7:00 P.M. We will celebrate Vespers, followed by a procession with the Relics and anointing with blessed oil. Please join us if you are able, and plan to stay for our delicious dessert buffet as well.

If you are planning to join us during the next few months, please note our Vespers will be held at 5:00 P.M. starting November 6. Divine Liturgy remains at 9:30 A.M. each Sunday.

Fr. Paul Tarazi will be presenting the Connecticut Bible Lecture Series at our mission on Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, November 6<sup>th</sup>. The subject will be The Psalms, and promises to be an educational and interesting time. The lecture series will be sponsored by FORCC and Christ the Savior, with help from the Eastern Orthodox Christian Women's Council.

# On Death

by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh (†2004)

## AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT

**D**eath is the touchstone of our attitude to life. People who are afraid of death are afraid of life. It is impossible not to be afraid of life with all its complexity and dangers if one is afraid of death. This means that to solve the problem of death is not a luxury. If we are afraid of death we will never be prepared to take ultimate risks; we will spend our life in a cowardly, careful and timid manner. It is only if we can face death, make sense of it, determine its place and our place in regard to it that we will be able to live in a fearless way and to the fulness of our ability. Too often we wait until the end of our life to face death, whereas we would have lived quite differently if only we had faced death at the outset.

There is a patristic injunction, constantly repeated over the centuries, that we should be mindful of death throughout our life. But if such a thing is repeated to modern man, who suffers from timidity, and from the loss of faith and experience which prevails in our time, he will think he is called upon to live under the shadow of death, in a condition of gloom, haunted always by the fear that death is on its way and that then there will be no point in having lived. And death, if remembered constantly and deeply, would act as a sword of Damocles for him, suspended over his head by a hair, preventing the enjoyment of life and the fulfilment of it. Such an approach to the saying must be rejected. We need to understand mindfulness of death in its full significance: as an enhancement of life, not a diminution of it.

Most of the time we live as though we were writing a draft for the life which we will live later. We live not in a definitive way, but provisionally, as though preparing for the day when we really will begin to live. We are like people who write a rough draft with the intention of making a fair

copy later. But the trouble is that the final version never gets written. Death comes before we have had the time or even generated the desire to make a definitive formulation. We always think that it can be done tomorrow. 'I will live approximately today. Tomorrow is when I shall act in a definitive way. It is true that things are wrong, but give me time. I will sort them out somehow, or else they will come right of themselves'. Yet we all know that the time never actually comes.

The injunction 'be mindful of death' is not a call to live with a sense of terror in the constant awareness that death is to overtake us and that



we are to perish utterly with all that we have stood for. It means rather: 'be aware of the fact that what you are saying now, doing now, hearing, enduring or receiving now may be the last event or experience of your present life'. In which case it must be a crowning, not a defeat; a summit, not a trough. If only we realized whenever confronted with a person that this might be the last moment either of his life or ours, we would be much more intense, more much attentive to the words we speak and the things we do.

**T**here is a Russian children's story in which a wise man is asked three questions: What

is the most important moment in life? What is the most important action in life? And who is the most important person? As in all such stories, he seeks everywhere for an answer and finds none. Finally he meets a peasant girl who is surprised that he should even ask. 'The most important moment in life is the present – it is the only one we have, for the past is gone, the future not yet here. The most important action in this present is to do the right thing. And the most important person in life is the person who is with you at this present moment and for whom you can either do the right thing or the wrong'. That is precisely what is meant by mindfulness of death.

The value of the present moment may be realized when someone dear to us has a terminal illness and, more particularly, when we are aware that he or she may be dead within minutes. It is then that we recognize the importance of every gesture and action, then that we realize how slight the differences between what we usually consider the great things in life and those which are insignificant. The way we speak, the manner in which we prepare a tray with a cup of tea, the way in which we adjust an uncomfortable cushion become as important as the greatest thing we have ever done. For the humblest action, the simplest word, may be the summing up of a whole relationship, expressing to perfection all the depth of that relationship, all the love, concern and truth that are within it.

If only we could perceive the urgency of every moment in the awareness that it may be the last, our life would change profoundly. The idle words which the Gospel condemns (Matt 12:36), all those statements and actions which are meaningless, ambiguous or destructive – for these there would be no place. Our words and actions would be weighed before they are spoken or performed so that they might be culminating point in life and express the perfection of a relationship, never less.

Only awareness of death will give life this immediacy and depth, will bring life to life, will make it so intense that its totality is summed up in the present moment. Such precisely is the way in which the ascetics fought against mindlessness, lack of attention and carelessness, against all the attitudes which allow us to miss the moment of opportunity, to pass the other person by, not to notice the need. One of the chief things that we are called upon to learn is awareness – awareness of our own self and of the other person's situation, an awareness that will stand the test of life and death. All life is at every moment an ultimate act.

#### FEAR OF DEATH, LONGING FOR DEATH

We know from experience, our own and other people's, that we are afraid of death or uncertain about it. To be precise, I think that we are more afraid of the process of dying than of the fact of death. Most people might be ready to accept death if they were sure that death would come as sleep, without an intermediate period of fear and uncertainty.

Indeed, there is even something beguiling and attractive about death. How often people say, 'I wish I were dead': it is a way of saying, 'I wish I could be free of all responsibility either to myself or God or anyone else, I wish I could return to the condition of my early childhood when there was no need for me to live responsibly and I could simply play'. Most of us would prefer to play at living rather than to live committedly. Consequently there is a fascination in death, seen as a liberation from the burden and responsibility of life.

But in that sense death must be seen as an adversary, for it is one of the ways in which we are beguiled into turning away from what life offers in terms of a challenge and in terms of relationship. When people say, 'I am not afraid of death', we should always be ready to challenge them and ask whether their acceptance or even longing for death does not disguise a fear of life: 'I am terrified of life and would like to

escape from it at all costs – if only I could go to sleep and never wake up, if only I could leave others to face my responsibilities, all the things which I have left undone or done amiss'. We should not be romantic in our attitude to death.

If we look to the saints we discover an altogether different attitude to death. Their love of death was not founded on a fear of life. When St. Paul says, 'For me to live in Christ and to die is gain [...]. I should like to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better' (Phil 1:21, 23), he is expressing a completely positive attitude to death. Death appears to him as a gate that will open on to eternity, enabling him to meet face to face the Lord who is all his love and all his life.

But this cannot be achieved by wishful thinking. There is more to it than that. In order to be able to long for death in this particular way and to see death as the crowning of our life, as its unfolding to the measureless measure of eternity (to use a paradoxical phrase of St Maximus the Confessor), we must have an experience of eternal life here and now. We must not think of eternal life as something that will come later, as future happiness or future security.

The apostles became fearless only when they themselves became – here and now – partakers of eternal life. As long as they had not received the witness of Christ's resurrection, as long as they had not received the Spirit, they were still afraid and clung in fear to their temporal life. But the moment they had access to life eternal, their fear of losing temporal life disappeared; for they knew that hatred, persecution and murder could do nothing more than free them from this life's limitations and enable them to enter into the boundless depths of eternal life.

And this eternal life was known as a present experience, not only in an act of faith. The same is true of the martyrs. They were ready to die and possessed the sovereign freedom of self-giving because they knew life eternal and had in some measure already entered into it.

#### DEATH AS AN EVENT IN DAILY LIFE

We could learn much about death if we took the trouble to look at our own experience. Death is much closer to us than we imagine, and we all could speak of experiences of 'death' which are in no sense frightening. What I have to say on this subject is neither new nor my own: perhaps more than anything else in my talk it is borrowed from others.

First of all, dying from a practical point of view means to drop out of self-awareness into an oblivion of self. This is something many people are afraid to do. Yet each of us goes to sleep every evening, loses himself completely in sleep, and without any fear. Why? Because we feel certain – to a great extent unjustifiably certain – that we shall wake the next morning. We trust that the next morning will dawn for us, that sleep is a temporary experience. Could we not treat this as a parable of the process by which we die and wake in eternity? For in reality there is a great risk in closing one's eyes and going to sleep.

There is no more dangerous place than one's bed, as noted in the story of the sailor and the peasant, who were considering the dangers of their respective conditions. The peasant insisted that he would never risk his life on the sea: 'It is far too dangerous'. When the sailor asked why he should think so, the peasant replied: 'Where did your father die?' 'At sea.' 'And your grandfather?' 'Also at sea.' 'And you still can't see how dangerous it is to go to sea?'

But the sailor countered the question with his own: 'And where did your father die?' 'He died in his bed.' 'And his father?' 'Also in his bed.' 'And yet you dare to go to bed each night?' In this sense we ourselves face death trustfully and confidently each night. And when this kind of temporary death does not come easily to us, we even go so far as to take sleeping pills or nightcaps. Is it not curious that we fail to draw conclusions from the simplest things of life?

# FORCC News

## Annual Banquet held; scholarships awarded

The eleventh annual F.O.R.C.C. (Fellowship of Orthodox Churches in Connecticut) banquet was held on Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> in the lovely parish hall at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Bridgeport, CT.

A three-piece chamber ensemble played music during the cocktail hour while everyone chatted and visited the buffet table, which was laden with sculpted fruit bouquets, and platters of cheese, crackers, dips, vegetables, and Italian sausages.

Dignitaries seated at the head table processed into the hall while the banquet participants sang, led by Fr. Steven Voytovich. Father Demetrios Recachinas, of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, gave the blessing. Dinner was served by Smolen's Catering.

Nina Kosowsky, F.O.R.C.C. president, kicked off the speeches with a litany of thanks to all those who contributed their efforts to the fund-raiser. Next to speak was Eva Vaniotis, chairman of the college Scholarship committee, who announced the names of this year's six scholarship recipients. Each recipient was called to the podium and presented with an Orthodox Study Bible.

The keynote speaker was Protospesbyter John Kaloudis, Development Officer of International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), who gave a short speech that demonstrated the powerful effects that American pan-Orthodoxy can have all over the world.

Nina Kosowsky then presented Father Kaloudis with a check to IOCC on behalf of F.O.R.C.C. The banquet concluded with a Thanksgiving Prayer: We give thanks to you, O Christ our God,/That you have satisfied us with your earthly blessings./Deprive us not also of your heavenly kingdom,/But as you came to your disciples, granting them peace,/So come to us and save us, O Savior!



*Father John Kaloudis speaks at the FORCC Banquet  
(Photo: Lydia Westerberg)*



*(L-R) FORCC President Nina Kosowsky, Fr. John Kaloudis and former FORCC President Bill Balamaci. Presentation of a gift to IOCC.  
(Photo: Lydia Westerberg)*

## Other FORCC News

Our September 16<sup>th</sup> meeting was held at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Park Avenue, Bridgeport. Following the monthly business meeting, Patty Quartucci from Hopeline gave a presentation on their faith based crisis center. Hopeline Programs are offered to middle and high school students in Fairfield county schools.

The November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held at Three Saints Church in Ansonia. Election of officers will take place. Following the business meeting, Matushka Anastasia Timpko (Three Saints Church, Ansonia) will give a presentation on the Lifeline Program offered through the area hospitals.

Please join us. Meeting starts at 7:30 P.M. and ends at 9:00 P.M.

*— submitted by Barbara Ann Dixon*

## PUBLICATION DEADLINES

January Issue

December 1<sup>st</sup>

February Issue

January 1<sup>st</sup>

## RALLY FROM 1

for Rally, in the end twenty-seven participated. This was down from the previous year's total of forty-eight. Our goal for the coming year should be to have at least fifty participants with an appropriately sized staff to guide them.

The theme for Rally 2004 was based upon these words from the Sermon on the Mount: "When you pray..., when you fast..., when you give alms." Therefore, the educational sessions of the Rally were concerned with prayer, fasting (disciplined living), and almsgiving (concrete acts of love and charity).



*Youth Director Fr. John Hopko leads a discussion at Rally*

The daily schedule for Rally followed the rhythms that have been established over the last several Rallies that have been held in Contoocook. Liturgical services are held every morning and evening. Educational sessions are held in the earlier part of each day and other activities, such as time at the waterfront, arts and crafts, sports and games, etc., are held in the latter part of the day. One evening during Rally we went on a field trip to the Canobie Lake Amusement Park. The culmination of Rally was the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the last morning of Rally, August 14<sup>th</sup>, the Eve of the Feast of the Dormition. We were also blessed with visits from our Diocesan Administrator, His Grace, Bishop Nikon of Boston, and from our Diocesan Chancellor, Fr. Michael Westerberg.

Unfortunately, during Rally 2004 as many as a third of the participants (Rallyers and staff) suffered through illness as a stomach virus ran through the camp. Our Rally Nurse, Nona Richards, RN, BSN, with the support of the entire staff, did a wonderful job dealing with the realities presented by this challenge. In addition, the weather was not always what we might have wanted. However, despite these challenges, everyone did a great job of carrying on and having an excellent Rally week. Everyone kept his or her chin up through the tough moments and committed themselves to being part of all the excellent things that go

on at Rally – the worship, the education, the fellowship, and the fun. Feedback following the Rally has been primarily positive and we definitely have something to build on for years to come.



*Some of the staff with Rally Chaplain, Fr. Dennis Rhodes*

At Rally, it was noted that fully half of the Rallyers came from only three diocesan parishes. This may imply that there are many young people who are simply not hearing the "good news" about Rally. We need the help of the parish clergy to get out the word about Rally. We will work diligently to increase not only the number of participants from throughout the diocese, but the percentage of parishes providing those participants.

Finally, although plans are not finalized, a Rally reunion/Nativity Fast retreat is being planned for sometime in December. Those interested can contact the Diocesan Youth Director, Fr. John Hopko, at:

860-582-3631

or e-mail

saintcyril@snet.net

## PARISHES FROM 3

If you are interested in more information about upcoming events at the mission or would like to view photos of our new building, please check out our website at [www.christsaviorchurch.org](http://www.christsaviorchurch.org). We look forward to your visits and sincerely thank all those who have helped us with prayers, encouragement and gifts during this building process.

*- submitted by Sarah Cole*

**DEATH FROM 5**

There is another way in which the experience of death is familiar to us all. As Romano Guardini has pointed out in his book *The Last Things*, there are several ways of dying in the course of a life. When we move from infancy to childhood, then to youth and adolescence and so to maturity and old age, we imagine that we grow out of one stage into the next. But if we are to develop, a number of things which were previously our condition must die in us: for a youth or adult who preserves the characteristics of his childhood becomes childish, even infantile.

In order to acquire maturity at the next stage of development, we must accept that something in us dies. And this dying may be a painful and difficult process, in a way as difficult as the actual dying of our body in the dissolution of death. Many parents know this all too well. They may long for their child to remain a little boy and they may be deeply disturbed at the sight of the young adult emerging out of the youngster. The process of dying in order to live is going on within us all the time: by contrast with such parents we must become aware of it and participate more actively in it. Then shall we be less afraid of death as an irrevocable loss. Rather shall we learn to regard it as an inevitable part of the process by which we grow into a more mature and complete life.

**DEATH TO SELF**

**C**hrist calls us to die to ourselves. What does this mean? The phrase is ambiguous, like everything else that is said about death. Does it mean self-destruction? Many imagine that it does, and try to apply it in that sense. Fortunately they fail, but they remain wounded by the terror of it. Properly understood, dying to oneself means acceptance of this progressive dying of things within us, until we come to the point when we realize that there is in us a real and deep self that belong to eternity, and a superficial self that has to be dissolved. We must let go of the superficial self in order to live fully.

Many feel that they cannot be aware of their own existence unless they assert themselves and demand recognition; and others of course react by trying to defend themselves against this kind of aggression. We can accept not to assert ourselves, not to impress upon others this awareness that we exist, only if we can believe – and we can believe it only on the strength of experience – that we are loved and affirmed by others.

We must learn to be far greater than we are. It is not enough to know that God loves us and affirms us. We need to be affirmed by our neighbour, by at least one person, who says to us, 'You matter ultimately to me'. Gabriel Marcel insists in one of his books that to tell a person 'I love you' is

tantamount to saying 'You shall never die', meaning as it does 'You matter to me so ultimately that I will assert you before the face of God, even if no one asserts you but God and myself'.

We could achieve a great deal if we were prepared to recognize one another and to say, however tentatively, 'Yes, I am prepared to assert you. Although I am not sure how to do it completely, since your existence so far is a challenge, even an aggression, although I am afraid to do so, yet I will assert you as much as I can'. In this way, we could grow to the maturity that will allow us to assert the other and proclaim his ultimate value whatever the cost. The person who is asserted in such a way can forget about himself and live. Such is the line along which we are called to go.

We must have the courage to struggle through layers of fear in asserting one another ever more, fighting fear, yet overcoming it. At every step we have to renounce ourselves so that the other can be. As St John the Baptist spoke of himself decreasing in order that the Other might increase (John 3:30), so are we called to die progressively to ourselves that the other, our neighbour, may live. So to die means to leave nothing within us except that which is essential to the fullness of life. (*to be con't.*)

*Edited version of two addresses given at the Fellowship Conference, 1978. Published in Sobornost vol.1, No.2, 1979. P. 8-18.*

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