

Letter to a prisoner

The three most important questions in the universe

Martyrs

Personal testimony

July 13/26, The Holy Martyr Serapion, The Holy Martyr Marcian

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Priest Seraphim Holland, PO 37, McKinney TX 75070 Date: July 13/26, The Holy Martyr Serapion, The Holy Martyr Marcian

I am writing this letter to you (... ..) because you know Scotty. I also know Scotty as “Thomas”. I got to know him when he came to me because his son had been killed, and we shared that terrible membership in a club – that of having a son who died too soon. From our comforting one another, I shared with him the only thing I care about, that is the purpose of our life and how to fulfill it. Because of that purpose, God was merciful to me and I became an Orthodox Christian almost 40 years ago. I have now been a priest for over 23 years, and 20 of those years I have been going in the prisons.

Thomas eventually was baptized into the Orthodox faith. He tells me that he shares his books with all of you, and I am very glad for that. I don’t mean for this letter to be impersonal, but there is only so much time to write a letter, so I’m writing one letter to be sent to each one of you individually. I hope to make your acquaintance very soon, so that we can have a personal relationship together. I want very much that you would write me a letter and tell me whatever you want to tell me about yourself or your ideas or your religion or your plans or desires. If you write me a personal letter, and I will do my very best to write one back as soon as possible.

I’m glad to have anyone come to our services, if they are interested in them. Those that are interested in the church, I will teach about the church and bring into the church. Those were not, are still welcome. I have a style of ministry that I have called “cross my path” ministry. That is, anything or anybody that crosses my path must’ve crossed it for a reason. Since God’s Providence brought a person across my path, I must respond in some way. It doesn’t matter who that person is.

I make no apologies for the fact that all I care about is living according to Christian dogmatic truth. Truth is of absolutely no use to us unless we live according to it. A person who knows the truth does not change their life because of it is like a person who has the phone book memorized. That is of no utility whatsoever. Such a person is also, to be honest with you, like the devils. The Lord Jesus Christ told us that they believe and tremble. They actually know the truth, and they have rejected it. A man can know the truth and reject it in a passive way or in an active way. No matter which way he rejects it, if he does not live according to it does him no good whatsoever.

Over the years, I have formulated the most important questions that I think a man must answer. I’m continually fiddling with it a little bit, but right now, I teach that there are three major questions that must a man must answer in order to live a fulfilled life.

The first question is: “**Who is God**”? If we understand who God is, we will understand why He does the things that He does, and we will know how to obey Him. There is a Christian answer to this question. All men have

answered this question, but only the Christian answer is complete and correct. Everything begins with God, since He created everything. The Orthodox Church continually dogmatize about God – that is in our prayers, we say very exact theological things about God. When I was a Protestant, I heard very little dogma about God, except that God is a Trinity, and Jesus Christ saved us from our sins. We go into much more detail, because God is revealed that detail about himself to us. If God has revealed about himself to us, it is incumbent upon us to believe the things that He has told us.

The second question is: **“Who is Man?”**. The first chapter of Genesis describes the creation of man, and provides us with the most important dogma regarding man. I’m not going to spoil the surprise. Perhaps you know it. Part of the answer to this question is answering the question: “what is our purpose in life?”. Our purpose has everything to do with why God created us and how He created us (that is, what qualities did He give to us, what attributes?).

The third question is: **“Who is Jesus Christ?”**. This of course is about the second person of the Trinity, and also about the incarnation of Jesus Christ so that he became man. In answering this question, we must understand why Jesus Christ became a man, and must have a precise dogmatic understanding of who Jesus Christ is after he became a man. We must also understand what the result of his ministry on earth was. A detailed answer to this question will incorporate the dogma about Christian baptism, the Ascension, the Transfiguration, and the giving of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost, as well as of course, the resurrection.

I think this is a good beginning for an introductory letter. If there’s anything you want to ask me about or discuss, you will find I’m very available for these kinds of things.

I thought I would end this letter by discussing the martyrs that I listed at the top of the page. Our calendar for the year commemorates holy men and women who fought the good fight and finished the course before we lived. We venerate their memory, and honor Them, as examples of how to live a Christian life, and also as an encouragement for us, that we can also become holy and be saved. We celebrate the “saints” (the word “saint.” merely means “holy one”, and certainly, there are those who approach perfect holiness in this life, but in the next life, all those in Christ are holy), because it is very clear from the Scripture and from the experience of the church that those who have died and are in Christ are not dead. Their flesh lies in the grave, but their souls are alive and aware. This is because of the resurrection. Jesus Christ Himself told us that God is not the God of the dead but of the living and all live to Him.

We particularly venerate the martyrs, because their love for Christ was so intense that they were willing to witness about Him even under the threat of torture. We think in common usage that a martyr is someone who is been killed because of their belief in Christ. The word actually means “witness”. We should all be martyrs, because we should all witness regarding Christ by the way we live, and the things we say. Those who have been called to the highest witness, where they have given up their life, we venerate as martyrs. There are countless martyrs, and most of them we do not know about, but God knows their names. The Christian calendar has the names of thousands of martyrs, but they are only a very small amount of all of the martyrs. We believe that the martyrs have great boldness before God, because God has recognized their zeal and their courage, and He listens to them. He listens them because He chooses to listen to those who truly love Him. Therefore, we believe that there is great power in

the prayers of the martyrs, because “the effective and fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth (accomplishes) much” (this is from the epistle of St. James), and the martyrs are among the most righteous of men and women.

Our calendar contains amazing things about the martyrs. Here is a little bit about the martyrs we commemorate today.

The Holy Martyr Serapion suffered for Christ before the Emperor Severus (193-211). As a Christian he was brought to judgment before the governor Achilles. The holy martyr firmly announced to the pagans about his faith in Christ and he was subjected to inhuman torments, after which he was thrown into prison.

Healed by the Lord Jesus Christ, he was brought to the judgment place and he presented himself before the judge completely healthy. The enraged pagans sentenced the saint to burning. Thrown into a bon-fire, he gave up his soul to God (+ c. 205).

The Holy Martyr Marcian, a native of Lyceian Iconium, while still at a youthful age converted many to Christ by his fiery preaching. For his zealousness the idol-worshippers subjected the saint to bodily punishment, and then sent him to Cappadocia to the governor Perennias, who now by persuasion now by threatening, attempted to turn away the youth from the Truth -- Christ. Saint Marcian fearlessly testified about the truthfulness of the Christian faith and he accused Perennias of worshipping soul-less idols. The enraged governor gave orders to subject the saint to severe torments, but in his sufferings the saint remained steadfast in his faithfulness to Christ. They cut off his head when he prayed, giving thanks to God for his fate (+258).

When we read about the martyrs, we should question ourselves – do we believe enough in Christ be a martyr if he calls us to this ascetical feat? There is no need to be particularly courageous or strong. If we have faith in Christ, and live according to this faith, God will give us the strength.

I come to your unit on the ... and the of the month, at ... AM. Please write and I-60 to the chaplain and ask to be laid in for this service.

I will finish this letter by including my personal testimony. This is an invitation to you to also tell me about yourself.

“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth”

The reason I pursued Orthodoxy and was found by it.

Personal testimony of Priest Seraphim Holland

“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

NOTE: READ THE END NOTES!

NOTE 2: REALLY READ THE END NOTES! THEY ARE PART OF THE STORY.

Here is my “testimony” which I wrote long ago and have updated a little. The personal testimony was an important part of being in Campus Crusadeⁱ. We all had to have one, and used it as an evangelism tool. The idea is a sound one – we should be able to explain why we believe. Of course, our most important testimony is how we live, but it is a good idea to be able to lucidly present our personal history if called upon.



As I would said in those days, “PRAISE GOD!” I have found the truth. Nowadays, I say basically the same thing, “**Slava Bogy**” (Glory be to God)ⁱⁱ.

I am a convert to Orthodoxy, baptized on Holy Saturday, in ice cold water, in Indianapolis Indiana, April, 1980. I am an Orthodox priest, having been ordained just before Great Lent, 1995 after having been a deacon for 5 years. I am married, and have five children, and 14 grandchildrenⁱⁱⁱ. I have served as a pastor since July 3, 1994 at St Nicholas (<http://www.orthodox.net>), which was at the beginning a mission parish under the omophorion of then Bishop Hilarion of Washington, and now is a parish in the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest, in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (an autonomous part of the Russian Orthodox Church).

I was raised Roman Catholic, with a basically unbelieving father (who subscribed to the "Man Upstairs" kind of "God" so many Americans believe in, which basically thinks you need to be "good" to go to heaven without any further qualification or definition). I saw many inconsistencies and lukewarmness among the Roman Catholics, and when I was a certain age (probably 12 or 13), my mother did not require me to go to church. I had become disenchanted with Roman Catholicism, because my mother had told me that I was no longer required to fast from meat on Friday, because the church had decided to lift the fasting rule for anyone younger than 16. This struck me as patently ridiculous, since it was easy enough to have cheese pizza or fish on Friday^{iv}, and I was young and healthy, and had no need to eat meat on that day too, just as I did on most of the other days of the week. I thought that if they were changing a fundamental way of life that they had followed for such a long time, with such a paltry explanation, they were doing something wrong. How little I knew then! I would learn later how much of Christian faith and practice had gone by the wayside among the Roman Catholics.

I was not a believer, although I believed that there must be a God, and I was searching. I went to college, studying pre-med, and later switched to Chemistry. I had a great desire to "make a difference", but had reached a crisis, because I saw how temporal life was. I was fortunate to get a summer scholarship to do chemistry research, and lived at Purdue that summer, rooming with a "Navigator".

The Navigators are a Protestant "Para Church" organization, with "Protestant Evangelical" Theology. He was a wonderful guy, and may God have mercy on him. He was used to plant a seed. I wish I remembered his name so I could pray for him out of gratitude. We talked a lot; I read the bible a lot. As an almost last-ditch effort, the Evil One so flummoxed me that at one point I wondered if God even existed. This was just for a moment, because the thought

of atheism is ludicrous, given the evidence of God, which He put within us, and everywhere. I prayed, thought, did research (badly), and played a lot of basketball.

When I came home, I had a "Protestant" conversion experience, akin to the way Campus Crusade for Christ incorrectly presents a *small part* of the story in their "4 Spiritual Laws". I was all by myself, in my room, late at night. I changed, or rather, the Holy Spirit helped me to change. I cannot say what I "was" at that point. According to Evangelical thought, I was "saved". I know now that this was the beginning of the path to Holy Orthodoxy, which I had never heard of^v.

I went back to school for my Junior year, and went to the Roman Catholic Church on campus. They were wonderful folks. I went on retreats, and got to know two of the priests and other folks really well. I was unhappy though, because they did not think the same as I did. All that I was learning and feeling - it did not connect with my experiences with them. When I attended a mass in which "liturgical dance" was used to express "worship", I knew I had to go.

I attended two campus fellowships, in an order I don't remember. One was charismatic/Pentecostal, and was called "The Upper Room". I loved the folks there, but never bought into the Pentecostal doctrines about tongues. They seemed willing to let their *experiences* rule in this area, even though they were insistent on using the bible as the only source of doctrine in all others^{vi}. For a long time, I puzzled over this inconsistency, and am sure that this was part of my "Road to Orthodoxy", as it helped me to formulate THE QUESTION, which I will describe soon.

I also attended and participated in another Evangelical fellowship. The most I remember about this place is that they once had a service with a rock band and played the kinda-sorta Christian songs from the Doobie Brothers. That was pretty much the extent of their theology. Loving Jesus was pretty much it.

Contemporaneous with all this was my involvement with Campus Crusade for Christ. I owe them a great debt, although they don't see it that way. We all at Campus Crusade for Christ, more or less, agreed on the modern innovation regarding the substitutionary atonement^{vii}, and that we "believed in" and loved Jesus, and everybody believed in the Trinity (although this was not dealt with in any great depth, for example, nobody talked about the Nicene or the Apostle's creed, and the important nuance regarding the filioque^{viii} was unknown, and if it had been known, would have been brushed off as totally unimportant), and that we all had to fulfill the "Great Commission"^{ix}, we diverged pretty quickly in our beliefs after that.

One would believe the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, another would feel that the "Lord's supper" is an important symbol, to be observed at least monthly, another would feel that observing it was tantamount to being too "religious".

We were young, proud, and stupid, and believed that we were not "religious" – we were "Christian".

One would believe that we could "pray" to saints (ask their intercession, just like we asked of each other), and others would squirm over this idea, feeling that it was perilously close to idolatry.

One thought it was important to revere the Theotokos (the word means "Mother of God", and is an important part of our Christology – Mary bore a man who is also God, and to emphasize this, we call her "Theotokos", knowing, OF COURSE, that man cannot create God, but God can choose to be incarnate, and in one person, Jesus Christ, be completely man and God), and the vast majority said "who is the Theotokos?", and when educated concerning the meaning of this word, shook their heads sadly, evidently forgetting the prophesy in St Luke^x and certainly not understanding the significance of the incarnation.

There were multiple opinions about baptism, "eternal security" (the idea that once you profess faith in Jesus Christ, you will be saved, no matter what you do later in life), "faith and works", fasting, "tongues" and dozens of fundamental Christian doctrines and practices.



I met my wife^{xi} at Campus Crusade for Christ. She introduced me to the Orthodox Church, as she was nominal Orthodox, but really a "nondenominational Protestant" in her outlook. She was excited to find out that I wanted to go to church in Indianapolis with her.

I can still remember the first day that I was at an Orthodox service. I was starting to feel the coldness of the Protestant belief^{xii}, and was looking for the total truth that I was feeling that Protestantism was lacking. This was actually an unformed expression of THE QUESTION.

The service (it was Vespers) was different, the prayer more sober - it expressed what I was really feeling in my soul. They understood that God should be addressed with reverence, and that we should often ask Him for mercy! I was on an *intellectual* mission but was smitten when I heard and experienced Orthodox worship. It was so *balanced*.

I was associated with a lot of very evangelical folks, and really wanted to win souls for Christ (and still do). I was upset however, that it seemed that "winning souls" was all that was important to my peer group. I was further upset that their whole intent was to get intellectual assent from people, then turn them loose. They did not work much on themselves. They did not think very much about the passions, except in a superficial way. They all believed in "eternal security", which seemed to me to be a foolish belief, as they expressed it. Since they were "saved", they did not ask God for *mercy*. They thought of mercy primarily what Jesus did on the cross, and since they had accepted Christ in their life and were saved, they had already received mercy!

All I heard in Protestant circles was off-the-cuff praise, hymns, and prayers used in an evangelistic context, usually what I called the "I just" prayer^{xiii}. I still needed to WORK on myself. Everyone was telling me I was SAVED, but I didn't believe it. I felt I was BEING saved, because of God's great mercy. I was not quite ready to ignore my own passions and somehow still fulfill the "Great Commission". These Orthodox people seemed to have different priorities - and they matched my still forming Christian consciousness much better.

When I heard how many times the Orthodox sing "Lord have mercy", and the other beautiful prayers, I was overwhelmed. I had come home. It took another 9 months before I was Orthodox, because I still quite foolishly tried to prove or disprove Orthodoxy by intellectual research, even though something deep within me had been touched by the Holy Spirit in a way I knew I could never explain or understand. I embarked on a period of study (too much) and prayer (too little) to prove whether Orthodox was the one true church. This leads me to THE QUESTION.

THE QUESTION: Our Lord and Savior promised His Apostles, and by context, and through them, all Christians that He would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Who would lead them (and us) into ALL TRUTH. ("Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."^{xiv}). This promise indicates that there is a source of truth, and that the Apostles were entrusted with it. If this is the case, then one should be able to locate the descendants of those very apostles and be assured that one believes the TRUTH.

Christendom has been shattered into so many sects and beliefs, including not a few ugly heresies. Where is the truth? How does one find it? Some look only to the bible, and the amount of varying doctrines using that very same bible are as great as the sands of the sea. Where is the order? God is simple, and orderly. Would He not have a church that reflects this order and simplicity? If there is one true visible and invisible (of course) church, then a lot of people are wrong. It seems that the only way to find the truth is to find this church. Where is it? Can it be found? It must be there, because Christ promised us that the Holy Spirit would lead us to ALL TRUTH. Certainly among the Baptists and the Methodists, and the Pentecostals, and the nondenominational (arguably, an oxymoron), etc., all cannot have it. At least everyone except one is wrong. Where is the *one*?

I pursued the answer to this question vigorously. By the end of the second term (when I had met Marina, and THE QUESTION was formulated), I had not resolved it, and was still sufficiently entrenched in Campus Crusade to have signed up for a three month Evangelistic tour in Wildwood, NJ. I lived in a big rooming house with lots of other folks, worked all day at a campground to earn my bread, and either evangelized on the beach or boardwalk at night, or attended worship services, bible studies, and discipleship sessions. I averaged about three to four hours sleep a night.

During this time, I was plagued by THE QUESTION, and prayed much about it. I also studied, from books I had checked out of the library back home (there were big fines when I returned!). The books were mostly from Protestant authors who were giving their slant to history^{xv}, or modernist Orthodox authors who did not sound any different on a fundamental level than the Protestants. I did not know enough to have access to really good quality Orthodox Literature, with one exception. I had a "Jordanville" prayer book^{xvi}. This book had morning prayers and the like, and I forced myself to use them.

Although I had Roman Catholic roots, I had become rather iconoclastic and although I agreed in principle with "prayers to the saints", I did not *really* want to do it. This was no doubt because of the misapplication of the (true) "I am the Way the Truth and the Life" doctrine. People found out about my prayers, and I became the official nut case in the house. My discipler, a wonderful man called Jim Dunn, thought I was apostatizing. We had long conversations, which seemed to me to be harangues, and I grew farther apart from my peers. I can hear his complaints even now: "But if Jesus is your Savior, why do you need to prayer to the Saints? They can't save you". "Why do you want to talk about Mary so much. This is idolatry". "Didn't you invite Christ into your heart? What is all this talk about not being saved yet?"

I had been to the mountain (of Protestant Evangelical doctrine and experience), and my soul KNEW there was something higher. My last month in the house was miserable, because I was no longer a believer according to my peers.

Upon returning to school, there was one last temptation to overcome. This one has a funny twist to it. Marina and I were at the "looking at china" stage, but I was adamant that I would not marry her unless I became Orthodox, and I was adamant that I would not become Orthodox to marry her! This was really a bit of sophistry on the part of the Evil One. After all, I loved her, and I loved the Orthodox Church. I think I just did not want to *appear* that I converted just to marry her. Fortunately, at some point, Glory be to God, I just believed. Completely. On Holy Saturday, 1980, I was baptized and chrismated. I had insisted upon baptism, although I was given the "option"^{xvii}. Shortly thereafter, we were married, the day after the end of the Spring Session.

Upon further reflection, I believe that the *beauty* of Orthodoxy is what attracted me. The discordance of competing Protestant beliefs are ugly to me, and the reliance on doctrine and de-emphasis of worship, liturgical expression, and ascetical endeavor always left me feeling a little hollow. God IS beautiful, and His church reflects Him.

There is so much *beauty* in Orthodoxy that I do not see in Protestantism, and Orthodox are also quite far away from the neo-platonist tendencies of some Protestants. Some emphasize reason so much that they seem to forget that man has a body and a soul, and that God, who is totally free and beautiful, having made man in His image, has given man an inherent love for beauty. The Orthodox, worship God *naturally*, and not just with cold blooded reason, but also with their God given feelings and intuition.

In Orthodoxy, a man is not "saved" in an event. He is transformed, and is like a sapling that grows towards the light, and he loves God more and more, because "He first loved us"^{xviii}. Because of his love for God, and his ascetical struggles (to win the kingdom of Heaven by violence), God helps to change him, and his will slowly, imperceptibly conforms to the perfect will of God. He becomes like God; he shares in the energy of God. We call this process "theosis", and this is salvation. It is not just intellectual assent, and it is not just ascetical endeavor, which some call "works". It is a synergy of the two. The first follows the other, and the other empowers a man to do the first.

Now, years after I first sought for "all truth", believing the Bible, but not knowing who wrote it, or who can interpret it, and wanting to do something "permanent" in life, I am a priest (ordained in 1995), and everything I do, I

do for eternity. If God allows me, despite my sins and imperfections, my ministry, and my prayers, and whatever else I do as a priest will have an eternal effect on some. There is no greater privilege in the world than having the opportunity to live the Gospel personally, and sometimes even transmit it, PERMANENTLY, to some. Slava Bogy!

Priest Seraphim Holland^{xix}

Priest Seraphim Holland 2011. [St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas](http://www.orthodox.net/journal/2011-06-07+when-he-the-spirit-of-truth-is-come-he-will-guide-you-into-all-truth+personal-testimony-of-priest-seraphim-holland.html)

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ⁱ "[Campus Crusade for Christ](#)" is a Protestant Evangelical "para-church" organization, in many college campuses. It was founded by Bill Bright, and has the fuzzy doctrines of typical "Evangelical" believers. Not too much doctrine is defined, and there is no tradition of worship, the priesthood, baptism, etc. The standard services are a lot of hymns and lots of "witnessing and "sharing". I met some real intense and wonderful folks, but at the end of the day, it was hard to see what we really agreed on, except that we loved Jesus, used the "[Four Spiritual Laws](#)" (the link is not an endorsement - they are missing a lot of the Gospel, but the part they know, they believe fervently) to share with potential converts, and pretty much believed in the "substitutionary atonement". Their webpage, as of 4/21/2016, says in a headline: "Cru is a caring community passionate about connecting people to Jesus Christ". There is the rub. I learned that we must be connected with the CHURCH, which is the body of Christ. Doctrine matters. Tradition matters. Learning how to think the right way matters.

ⁱⁱ "Slava Bogy", is Slavonic, which is the church language Russians use. I know very little, but use this phrase often.

ⁱⁱⁱ As of 07/05/2018, with 1 still in the womb.

^{iv} "Fish Friday" was so prevalent when I was a child that McDonalds invented the "Filet-o-Fish" sandwich to regain business they lost on Friday because almost all the Roman Catholics were not eating hamburgers on that day! The rule was simple: do not eat beef, pork, lamb, etc, or fowl. It was typical to have fish or cheese pizza, and I remember a commercial that called Friday "Prince Spaghetti day".



^v We had a set of "World Book Encyclopedia" in my youth. Part of the deal with this Encyclopedia was that they would send a "Year Book" each year detailing the past years events, as a supplement. One of those books had a picture of Pope Paul and Patriarch Athenagoras (the Patriarch of the Greek Church, whose see is in Constantinople). It was on the occasion of the two prelates mutually lifting the anathemas of 1052. I remember looking at that picture and coming away with only one piece of information regarding the Orthodox Church. Pope Paul was short, clean shaven, standing straight, and healthy looking. Patriarch Athenagoras looked tall, bearded, and yellow. He seemed to be leaning as he stood, as if he was having trouble keeping his balance. For years I thought that Orthodox must be unhealthy people! I had no idea who they were. A look at the probable picture I saw does not show a leaning Patriarch, but that is what I thought for many years.

^{vi} I remember hearing birds chirping after we finished a hymn, in our worship session, which was rather typical – hymns with hands in the air, lots of "sharing", and usually several "I just" prayers. I went to the leader of the group afterwards, and asked him about this. I truly had no idea what it was, although it sounded beautiful, and appealed to my emotions. He explained that at the end of the hymn, most people spontaneously started singing in tongues, in their "ecstatic prayer language". I told him that I was concerned, because this did not seem to be "biblical", since the Apostle Paul stressed that tongues must be interpreted. He brushed this off, saying that their "experience" proved this was from God. In other words, we believe in ONLY the bible, unless there is something else we want to do! This kind of cavalier attitude really pushed me towards speaking the true church.

^{vii} The Substitutionary atonement was front and center in the core evangelical tool of Campus Crusade for Christ, the "Four Spiritual Laws".

^{viii} "Filoque" is a Latin expression meaning "and the son". The Symbol of Faith, also known as the Nicene Creed, has the sentence: "And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father..." This creed was formulate in the 1st and 2nd Ecumenical councils, and was never changed by the church, but the Latins changed it to read "Who proceeds from the Father and the son..."

^{ix} "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Mat 28:19-20). This was mentioned constantly in Campus Crusade for Christ literature. Of course it is a "great commission", and should be fulfilled, but these zealous and sincere people fell

fall short of “teaching them to observe ALL things”, since they had fundamental misunderstandings about the church, baptism, the priesthood, the Eucharist and many other things that were taught from the beginning in the Christian church.

^x Luke 1:46-48 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, (47) And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. (48) For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

^{xi} My wife Marina and I at Purdue. Our first of many "traditional" Valentine's day cakes. Our "Campus Crusade" days were behind us, and I was a catechumen, Feb, 1980

^{xii} It was cold to me, like having a thin blanket when a large comforter was needed. The people were sincere, and as we said back then "on fire" for the Lord, but they seemed to be unaware of the inconsistencies and unanswered questions in their belief. I do not mean to insult anyone and say that their faith was, or is cold, but all the while I was a "Protestant", I did not feel the comfort and warmth I have always felt in the true church.

^{xiii} The "I just" prayer was an extemporaneous prayer which usually had "Lord" or "Father God", "I just" and then some expression of thanksgiving or supplication. It was often repeated several times, which seemed numerically off to me, since there seems to me that there should be only one "I just" in such a prayer. There were times when the prayer would go on very long, or the person would say something that was heretical, or just sounded weird. I never knew what to expect. The prayers of the church are intricate, theological, and I never worry about them being heretical.

^{xiv} John 16:13

^{xv} Such as Philip Schaff

^{xvi} The so called "Jordanville" prayer book was printed at Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville NY, and is a translation of the typical Russian prayer book. I love it to this day, because it is very complete and uses traditional liturgical English.

^{xvii} Giving a catechumen the "option" to be baptized is malpractice. Worse than that happened to me. A priest at Purdue University, who ended up going a bad way, offered me the "option" to have communion before my baptism, reasoning that I had been Roman Catholic, which basically Orthodoxy (to him!), and I had the intent to be baptized. I turned down that option, on the reasoning that I was not having sexual relations with my fiancé, because there was a right time for them (after marriage), and so is there also a right time to take communion. There were many temptations that I did not fully understand at the time, but God protected me.

^{xviii} "We love him, because he first loved us." (1Jn 4:19) This is another "favorite" verse.

^{xix} Autobiographical details.

I was born in Harvey, IL, June 19, 1958. I am the middle child. My sister Susan is about 7 years older, and my brother Chris is about 3 years younger. I lived in Chicago Heights, then Homewood, IL, through High school. These are southern suburbs of Chicago.

I graduated from Homewood-Flossmoor High school in 1976, and attended Purdue University, West Lafayette, In, from the Fall of 1976 through the Spring of 1980. I did not graduate from Purdue at that time, but ten years later, took the requisite courses from the University of Missouri, St Louis (UMSL), and earned a BA with Chemistry major degree.

I met my wife Marina at Purdue, and we were married May 17, 1980, a few days after the Spring term ended, and settled in Indianapolis, IN. We attended the now defunct "Christ the Savior" Orthodox Church in Indianapolis, the Rector was Steven Wallsteadt (who baptized me on Holy Saturday, 1980). We lived in Indianapolis for 4 years, having 2 children then moved to the St Louis area (the community in Indianapolis being without a priest, and later closing because Fr Stephen moved to Denver), to be parishioners in St John Chrysostom Orthodox church. Fr Constantine (later Kallistos after his tonsure) Pazalos was the pastor.

It was here that I was ordained a reader, and a couple of years later, then a sub-deacon, and a few years later, a deacon. In that same liturgy, Fr Christopher Stade was ordained a priest before my ordination to the diaconate. He was to replace Fr Kallistos, who was ill. All these ordinations were by Bishop/Archbishop Alypy, In about 1993 or 1994 my work travels brought me occasionally to Dallas, and I was made aware of a mission holding Readers Services (services without a priest) in that city. Bishop Hilarion asked me to go to Dallas to become the rector of St Nicholas Orthodox church. In July 3, 1994, on the day of the glorification of St John Maximovich, I took up residence in Dallas, as the rector. I was ordained a priest by Bishop Hilarion on the second Sunday of Great Lent, 1995. Since that time, I have continued to be the rector of the parish.

As of 2018, I have 5 children (3 girls and 2 boys) and 14 grandchildren. One of my sons, the youngest, +Daniel, reposed June 11, 2017, when he was travelling in Germany. You can read about him, and many other things related to him, here: <http://www.orthodox.net/daniel>

I am trained as a Registered Nurse, and at the present time, after 2 years of not working in the field, have not renewed my license (July 2018) This gives me time to breath, and to pray. I am back to having only one job, like most normal people. I also am heavily involved in Prison Ministry, and visit prisons weekly, conducting liturgies, teaching, confession, counseling, etc. I am the editor and primary author of our church website: <http://www.orthodox.net>.