



REUNION



Volume 4 No. 4

SPECIAL EDITION

June 2, 1994

THE IMMEDIACY OF THE TASK

Very often there is a shrill cry in these pages: a cry for obedience to God, a cry for growth from obedience into a form of union with Him for Love of Him, for reunification of His Church, for moral propriety in all things.

Whatever form it takes, it is the same cry in each instance. We are all given God's law upon the instant of conception, and we carry it in our souls though it be buried by our worldly self interests and enflashed by our fallen nature.

There is an immediacy in these pages, for the time is short; very short. May it be the end of the world? Perhaps. But more important is the shortness of the life on Earth we each have; and in that very short life we must be purified and made worthy of Christ.

The time is short. Do not waste it.

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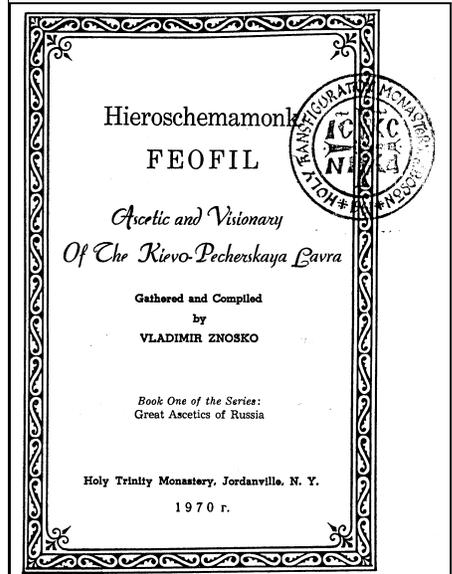
SPECIAL EDITION BEGINS THE STORY OF FEOFIL Hieroschemamonk

From time to time the ability to present the life of a saint in detail avails itself to us. St. Feofil, for he is a saint, is one whose life has been written of rather thoroughly, and whose life is extremely thought provoking.

It will be presented over the next several months in REUNION, including the cover, foreword, and illustrations, beginning in the next column.

With the exception of the few other articles listed in the CONTENTS on page twelve, this issue serves as the introduction to the life of this Fool For Christ and Startis.

FEOFIL



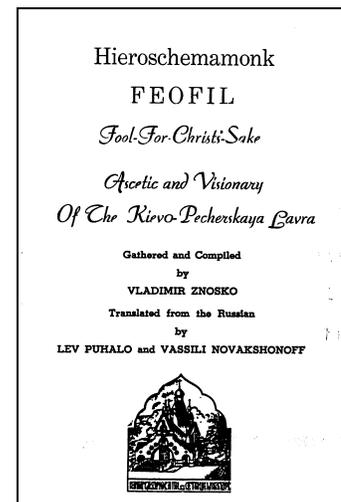
Fair Thee Well My Own Lillie Marlene

Fair thee well my own Lillie Marlene, were the last words spoken by this elderly gentleman to his wife, as he lay dying on the living room floor after suffering a massive heart attack.

The old soldier, with millions of American, British, and German troops, had lived through the rigors of WWII, partly through the thoughts of love engendered by the German Song "Lillie Marlene", and focused on the sweetheart who awaited him back home. In the more than half century which followed, this rotund Romeo was Father of and Daddy to six children, thirteen grandchildren, and three great grandchildren. He engaged in a career as a newspaper reporter and editor, being most proud of his status as a reporter rather than as an editor; and as a researcher and annalists for a major governmental watchdog agency, as fund raiser and public relations executive for a major University, and as director of research and statistics and legislative liaison for the Chamber of Commerce.

But more than anything else, and second only to his love of God, Elias Alison Mc Colloster, Mack to those who knew him, was permanently, totally, and completely in love, with Rita Rennette Bernard Mc Colloster, his wife of all those years. His last words were spoken as the bugle called, and like the loving soldier in Christ's army that he is, my Daddy's last thoughts were of love for his own Lillie Marlene.

Mitered Archpriest Father Paul (Lee S. Mc Colloster)



The text of this story has been scanned into the publication. Where possible, spelling and other aspects of the story have been made to accommodate modern usage, but only where such changes are either neces-

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The sole purpose of this publication is to comply with the teachings and instructions of Jesus Christ, second person of the Trinity God, and to further His kingdom.

There is no subscription fee, but a donation of \$20.0 per year, or any other amount, to Holy Innocents Orthodox Church, 311 Hickory Ave., Harahan, Louisiana 70123, USA, will be appreciated. We try to publish between four and twelve issues per year but do so without guarantee due to staffing.

Telephone at Holy Innocents is (504) 738-3502; FAX C/O (504) 737-7707; Compuserv "E" Mail Lee S. Mc Colloster 74014,1372.

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ANGLICANISM A COMMENT ON THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

For all practical purposes, the Church of England has been headed and run by women who have been guided by materialistic men for the past century. Beginning with Queen Victoria, and continuing through to this very date, it has been a system bequeathed with the task of leading British, and in the Americas, Episcopal, society. It has not been worthy of the task.

Anglicanism today has proven itself to be a system bereft of theology; it is not a religion for a religion, even paganism, adores a god or gods, but Anglicanism has proven itself to adore the human state and to ignore the direct instructions from God.

This is no surprise. In seceding from the Roman Jurisdiction, the Church in England removed itself from the lawful authority of the Kingdom of Christ Jesus, that its king could disobey the moral teachings of the Church, and marry again and again and again. The King found it expedient to murder a wife now and then, that he might have the color or appearance of propriety in his "re-marriage". The final color of legitimacy was removed centuries ago, when the Church of England denied the existence of the Sacraments except for the Sacrament of Baptism. In denying the existence of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, it removed the possibility of transmitting Apostolic Authority and Succession whereby the power and authority given by Christ to the Apostles has been transmitted through the ages. (John 20:21 - *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*)

Prince Charles is destined to be the new head of the Anglican Church when his mother retires or dies. It has been repeatedly reported in the press, that Prince Charles has a moral outlook which is somewhat dubious, more along the lines of King Henry or a Sartyr than along the lines of St. Seraphim of Savrov.

That this man is apparently destined to lead the Church of England, apparently is quite fitting, considering

the current total lack of Christian morality and the total lack of following of Christ's teachings in the Anglican Church.

Consider the Anglican and Episcopal approval of the "ordination" of avowed and practicing homosexuals and lesbians. St. Paul expressly and explicitly condemns homosexuality (*Romans 1:25-27, Who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections. For their women have changed the natural use into that which is against nature. And, in like manner, the men also, leaving the natural use of the women, have burned in their lust one towards another, men with men working that which is filthy. . .*)

God the Father had something to say about homosexuality to the Prophet Ezechiel, when He condemned it: (*Go in and see the abominations which they commit here [Ez 8:9]. Surely thou seest, O son of man, what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every one in private in his chamber; for they say: The Lord seeth us not . . . [Ez 8:11-15].* And what did the Father order? That those not marked with the Thau (Hebrew letter in the form of a Cross), be killed.

Considering just the "ordination" of avowed practicing lesbians and homosexuals, there can be only one conclusion. If the Anglican-Episcopal "church" ever were Christian, it is no longer.



THE THREE DAYS OF DARKNESS AND THE DEPTHS OF HELL

To help you understand this comparison, we first must explain something of what the Three Days of Darkness purports to be. This relation does not necessarily mean the concept is being endorsed.

The three days of darkness is an event many mystics believe will occur in or near the last days, or near the end of the millennium of one of the Three Persons of The Trinity.

It basically is a time when the sun will go down, and as night falls over each portion of the Earth, the night will last three days. The Devil and his followers will be given free reign over the Earth during those three days. Those caught outside at that time will be totally at the mercy of the Devil, and most of those caught outside will die and die horribly - whether they be good or evil. Those inside have the best prospects of surviving, but even they will be subject to horrible torture and death, again whether they be good or evil.

The only protection, or in some scenarios, the best protection, will be a blessed candle, preferably of bees wax or containing a high bees wax formula. This blessed candle should be lit by the youngest person present, preferably a child who has been baptized, and it is possible it can only be lit with matches or flint and steel.

Here is the crux. Those who claim to have had visions of the Three Days of Darkness, almost unanimously advise those who are inside,

Denial of assistance to anyone is a hallmark of Hell. If the Three days of darkness do occur, give assistance even at risk of life.

not to open their doors once the doors are closed. You are not supposed to let anyone in, even if they claim to be a family member, for Satan and his followers will be able to imitate anyone, even your most precious loved one. If Satan gets inside your house, apparently he and his followers will

torture and kill you in a most horrible manner.

Let us turn now to an ancient Christian story which exemplifies the selfishness of hell.

One day God sent one of His angels down into hell. The angel grasped hold of one of the damned, and began to carry the damned soul up towards heaven. As the angel and the damned soul left the depths of hell, thousands of other souls grasped hold of the first damned soul and layered themselves in a tremendous burden for the angel as he moved towards heaven.

The damned souls closest to the angel kicked and shoved those on the outside layers, causing them to lose their grips and fall back into hell. But an amazing thing happened. The fewer damned souls the angel carried, the more he labored and the slower he rose towards heaven. Eventually he carried only the first damned soul he had picked up, and one other damned soul, but with only these two souls he could barely drive towards heaven. Eventually the first damned soul pried the second damned soul loose, causing it to fall into the depth of hell. But with only one damned soul to carry, the angel found the burden too heavy, and the weight of the single damned soul not only dragged the angel down towards the depths of hell but quickly became too heavy for the angel to hold, and he lost his grip on that last soul. The last soul fell back into hell, and the angel shot up to heaven, freed of his single burden.

Upon his return to heaven, the angel asked God, "When I carried many souls, the burden was light and I was attaining the lower reaches of heaven. But with only one soul, I could not carry the weight, and that last soul weighed so much he was torn from my hands. Why was that?"

Then God explained to the angel what had happened; as the damned souls clung to each other in their attempt to leave hell, they were each focused on God and heaven, and the pos-

sibility of attaining eternal happiness with God. They provided mutual strength and support, and the angel derived his greater than normal strength from them. Thus, in their temporary selflessness (which was founded in God), they were each a conduit for spiritual strength from God through to the angel.

When, in their selfishness and desire to insure the angel did not have too heavy a burden to carry them to heaven, the damned souls began prying their fellow damned souls from this route to salvation, they one by one ceased to be conduits for God's strength to the angel, and thus the angel was unable to carry the burden of sin with which each damned soul was enlabeled.

If Satan tells you ten things, nine of them may be true, but at least one of them will be false, for the Father of Lies uses the truth to spread acceptance of his false message.

If the three days of darkness really do occur, do not take the Satanic advice of locking everyone out of your protected area.

Denial of assistance to anyone is a hallmark of Hell. If the Three days of darkness do occur, give assistance to everyone to whom you can, even at the risk of your own life.

You will not be damned for doing your best to emulate Our Saviour. He gave His life for us. You can at least put your own life at risk for your fellow pilgrims. Remember, Our Saviour Himself said, "**Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**" (John 15:13)

If someone who sounds like your daughter or your son is calling for you from outside your door, and demons are raging all around outside tearing people apart, is it better to save your flesh for a little while by not taking a risk and opening the door to your child, or is it best to save your immortal soul by taking a chance and opening the door? And what good you offer to your child, Jesus offered to us all. We are supposed to act likewise.

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sary for clarity.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This translation of the book Hieroschemamonk Feofil is slightly abridged in that most of the footnotes which appeared in the original have been blended into the text in this translation. The remainder of the footnotes appear at the end of the text.

A definite effort was made to avoid corrupting the simplicity of the text with academic or "scholarly" rules and attitudes. The names persons and places have been transliterated into English in a method which detracts least from the original Russian.

This book is the first of a series of such translations and the first rule which the translators adopted for this project was, in the words of the beloved Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky), "There is no point in writing (religious works) for the intelligentsia because they will not read them anyway." It is better to write for the people who have not yet lost the desire to understand spiritual matters and to seek their salvation from Christ Jesus. They are the ones who are truly wise.

Translators' Introduction

The Blessed Starets Feofil departed from his earthly life more than one hundred and twenty-five years ago. Is it possible, then, that the example of his life, his teachings and admonitions, can still shine as a beacon-light to aid Christian people in this struggle along the narrow path which leads to salvation

This book has been translated as a personal testimony by the translators, both of whom have been profoundly affected by the Blessed One, to the fact that Feofil is still very much an active starets. He does not limit himself to singing in the Church Triumphant; He is also a trusted intercessor and teacher for the Church Militant.

Aside from the rich spiritual joys presented in this biography of Starets Feofil, the book offers some rare and

valuable insights into the personality of Tsar Nikolai Pavlovich and the saintly Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev. Moreover, the mentality of Old Russia is reflected on every page. In fact, no student of Russian history or culture can claim even a superficial knowledge of his subject unless he has studied the lives of the great saints and ascetics of the Russian Orthodox Church, for the lives and minds of the Russian people have always been welded to the blessed refuge of the Church.



HIEROSCHEMAMONK FEOFIL

We address a special prayer of thanksgiving to God that He, in His infinite mercy, has given us such candles as Feofil. May, all who read this book approach it with mind and heart open for instruction and love.

(Glory to Thee, O God!

Lev Puhalo and Vassili Novakshonoff.



PREFACE

The Blessed Starets, Hieroschemamonk Feofil, is so popular

amongst Kievans and many other Orthodox Christians that, although he demised long ago, his memory remains sacredly and reverently honoured.

It is true that none of his contemporaries who witnessed his monastic podvigs, his life as a fool-for-Christ's-sake, and spiritual glory are still alive. But, amongst the descendants of these people, many recollections of the God-pleasing life and gift of forevision of the Blessed One are passed down from one generation to another.

For more than thirty years' the Starets served as a bright lamp of Evangelical truth for all Orthodox Christians and he was the best example of monkhood at the Kiev-Pecherskaya Lavra for a decade.

As a great teacher of piety, he worked at the improvement of the morals of those nearest him . . . **warning and admonishing everyone and instructing everyone in all wisdom that we may present every person mature in Christ, the Anointed One (Col. 1:28).**

By means of spiritual eyes which penetrated the innermost recesses of men's hearts, the Blessed Feofil saw much. He saw how pride, self-delusion, hatred and violence inhabited the darkness of our ignorance. He saw how, plunging into a chaos of passions not penetrated by a single ray of divine light, people forgot God and, being satiated with sins, became filled with material food but starved for spiritual nourishment—Christians in name only, but in deeds and life, far from it.

Starets Feofil saw much and secretly suffered for all souls. In order to support the failing spirit of faith in us, he, out of love, took upon himself the highest podvig of Christian piety—being a fool-for-Christ's-sake. He dedicated his whole life to

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the doctoring of moral ailments. Using parables, he sternly revealed cruel and unjust people who had forgotten God. With meek reproof and with kindness he comforted and encouraged believing and God-fearing people. **God in His wisdom was pleased through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believed** (I Cor. 1:21).

Out of true piety and love of God, Feofil refused temporary blessings and led his entire life in humility, simplicity, and abasement. He experienced defamation, insult, evil, and hatred from people but, being humble of heart and meek in spirit, he did not even complain to the Lord about his critics, limiting himself only to the prayer uttered on the cross by the Great Sufferer: **"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"** (Luke 23:34).

His memory will not depart and his name will live from generation to generation. People will know of his wisdom and the Church will proclaim his praise.

The descendants of people who knew the Blessed Starets have reverently preserved a multitude of remembrances about his wonderful forevision and the effectiveness of his prayers for those suffering and burdened with ailments of the body and the spirit.

We offer here to the reader only a few of them, collected during interviews with the elder residents of Kiev or given to us by the God-loving startsy of the Kiev-Pecherskaya Lavra.'

We will not hide these things, but will present them for all to see; may the light of the Blessed Starets Feofil appear as a beacon / and may he illumine the world with his deeds which in his lifetime the world did not understand, seeing in the man of God nothing but foolish-

ness.

I.

In the town of Makhново, district of Kiev, at the Church of the Birth of the Virgin, there once lived a priest, Andrei Gorenkovsky. In October, 1788, his wife Evfrosiniya (nee Goshkovsky) gave birth to twins. At baptism the eldest was named Fotna and the younger, Kalliniky. They were both notably beautiful and strong.

It was the custom at that time for mothers to breast-feed their own infants. Evfrosiniya abided by this rule even though it was quite difficult with two children involved. She refused all offers of assistance from wet nurses. To her great amazement, however, Evrosiniya found that her eldest son, Foma, would not take to the breast, stubbornly averting his face from it. In order to save the child from starving to death, the distressed mother was forced to try every possible means of feeding him. Since he refused all forms of milk, his mother fed him with potato water, soft-boiled turnips and carrots.

Such a rejection from her child naturally settled a coldness in the mother's heart towards the baby. To make matters worse, superstitious neighborhood women began interpreting this phenomenon in their own way and dragging in absurd stories, considering Foma to be almost a bear-cub.

Evfrosiniya, because of her own simpleness and ignorance, believed from her soul all these superstitious tales. She became horrified and her bitterness towards Foma grew. -"This-is an exchange," she would say. "They did not want to baptise him and Kalliniky on the same day and so a witch substituted him."

Evfrosiniya tried for six months, by all possible means, to

make Foma behave like a normal child. But all the while she saw in him the embryo of some sort of inclinations, incomprehensible to the simple woman. Deciding that Foma was some sort of moral freak, Evfrosiniya resolved to rid herself of him forever. One evening she called a servant and secretly confided in her:

"I can no longer look at this vampire; I cannot stand him in my own home. Tomorrow, at the very crack of dawn, take him to the river and throw him into it. But swear to me that no-one will know about this except us."

The servant begged and pleaded with the mother to have mercy on the innocent child. No matter how much she pleaded and wept, admonishing Evfrosiniya with God's wrath, the embittered mother was implacable. In the end, the servant had to submit to her.

In the morning, when it was barely light, the servant took Foma in her arms, ran to the river and making a sign of the cross over the child, dropped him into the water. And then a wondrous thing happened. God chose to preserve the child. He came up to the surface of the water and peacefully floated to the opposite shore. There he was cast up onto the dry ground.

On seeing this, the servant became-terrified. Having already committed a crime and fearing the wrath of her mistress, she decided to bring the terrible matter to a swift end. She crossed the stream and picked up Foma in her arms. The child was asleep in a serene slumber. Then, avoiding thought, the servant quickly dropped the baby into the river once more. Again she witnessed God's power, the-waves carried Foma to a little island which had been formed upstream and gently cast him up on the fine sand.

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Shaken by such an undeniable miracle, the woman' crossed a ford and took the child in her arms. Seeing that the baby was alive and unharmed, the servant was flooded with bitter tears of repentance. She took Foma to his mother and, in a voice choked with fear, related to her all that had happened.

"You can kill me, but I will not drown an innocent child! God-Himself, by a miracle, is saving his life and we shall suffer for our cruel murder!"

But the young mother, compelled by an inhuman bitterness, did not believe a word the servant said and began to reproach her. "Shame on you!" she said. "You are pitying this vampire. If we leave him alive, he will bring about much evil. Oh no! It may be better that I drown him with my own hands than to look at this freak which is hateful to my sight."

With these words, Evfrosiniya maliciously seized Foyna from the arms of the frightened servant woman and set out for the river. Not far from their home stood a water mill. Since it was early and no one was around, Evfrosiniya approached it, found an appropriate spot and with a great swing, threw Foma under the wheel itself. Then, thinking that the child was dead, she left. Her conscience seemed peaceful. Then suddenly there was another miracle. The millstone stopped and the pressure of the water caused a tremendous roar.

The miller, startled by the strange phenomenon, ran outside to see what had happened. The wheels, restrained by an unknown power, trembled from the strong pressure of the water driving against them. The water raged ahead, foaming and boiling. Looking down, he heard an infant's wails and in the midst of the

whirlpool he saw the child floating. Then the miller nimbly lowered himself down and, bending towards the stream, pulled Foma out of the water. Hardly had he removed the child than the wheels began to turn again.

The distraught servant who had followed the desperate mother, seeing this new miracle, began sobbing bitterly. She approached the miller and related all that she knew about the child and about the miraculous phenomena of God's power which had saved the child thrice.

"What shall we do now?" puzzled the miller. "If we return the babe to his mother, she will not hesitate to destroy him."

Fearing responsibility for the fate of the innocent child persecuted by his own mother, they decided to relate these incidents to his father.

Neither pleas nor prayers, nor even threats and coercion had any effect upon Evfrosiniya. In the constant saving of the child, she saw only the devil's work. The more that the husband tried to convince her, the more stubborn she became.

"I will not leave him alive. This is not a little child. This is an exchange, a freak. He definitely must be freed of life," repeated the superstitious Evfrosiniya and tried several more times to destroy Foma.

The heart-broken father, seeing how strongly his wife hated her own son, decided to take Foma away from her for a long time. He secretly sought out an experienced wet-nurse and told her the details of the family secret, and gave her the innocent child to be brought up. The hired nurse fed Foma with soft bread soaked in fat and gave daily reports on her charge to the father.

Several months passed and the child developed normally and even strengthened. The wet-nurse proved to be a woman of good conscience. She raised and cared for Foma as

she would her own son. But soon God found it pleasing to call Foma's father from temporary life to eternal. Feeling the approach of his death, the priest, filled with concern for the future of his son, called the good miller to himself and said:

"You were a witness to the miraculous saving of my child. In the name of God I entrust you to take Foma to yourself. Raise him, guard him, and do not offend him."

With joy the miller agreed, accepting his charge as a blessing from God.

Meanwhile, the story of these happenings had spread amongst the people of the district. A wealthy old peasant from the town of Makhново came to the miller and begged for the guardian-ship of the child.

"I have no children," he said, "and I want to make this child my son and after my death I will make him heir to all I possess. Let me have Foma."

The miller, seeing the sincerity of the old peasant, gave in to his persistent requests and, without any vacillation, handed Foma over to him. It was a happy time for the child, living under the shelter of the wealthy man. He was treated with tenderness and love. In time, Foma would become a son and also rich. So it would have been if human plans always agreed with the paths of God's providence. But the Lord moved otherwise. Not long after Foma was embraced into the family of the rich peasant, the benefactor and second father suddenly, without expectation, died.

And so the persecuted child, not yet three years of age, again became an orphan.

The wife of the deceased peasant came into full possession of his estate. Having resolved to take a second husband, she hurriedly set about finding other quarters for Foma. The

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priest of her own village compassionately accepted the child.

"He is binding my hands," the widow justified herself, "and you, Batiushka, can easily lead him along that road which is more becoming to his position as son of a priest."

Agreement was made and little Foma found himself in a new refuge. Thus, from his earliest days, he became acquainted with the spirit of a wandering life. Being yet a newcomer to this life, Foma had already taken upon himself the cross of Him Who, during His life on earth, did not have a place to lay His head.

Foma lived with his guardian until the age of seven. There was no special attention shown him and the priest did not present him with any, deliberate instruction. Foma, left to himself, unwillingly took part in the noisy, games with children his own age. To the surprise of all, the young lad showed no desire for the usual entertainments of his age group. "Foma preferred to go aside to an isolated place and give himself up to melancholy meditation.

Little Foma was accustomed to the wandering spirit. He experienced the sweetness of a child's first prayers to his very soul. Early in life he became used to lengthy fasting and frugality. Gradually he strengthened and became spiritually transformed. God's temple became the dearest refuge of this unusual child. The boy would not miss a single service and, with the first peal of the bell he hurried with great joy to the church where his soul found comfort and incomprehensible rest. Foma was often found before the closed doors of the village church, deep in prayer, as if severed from all his surroundings.

The other children, seeing Foma's closed soul mocked him and made fun of him; he was often subjected to tricks and even beatings.

Foma would go away into the woods, weeping, and remain there for twenty-four, or even forty-eight, hours at a time. Often he would be found by shepherds who would relate wonderful stories about him. The young sufferer understood that man is not born to joy and happiness but to suffering.

Having himself experienced all the bitterness of his young life, he could see that the world often does not behold sufferers; it does not see the tears of the eyes. From his early youth Foma discovered the joy of aiding those in poverty. He refused to keep things for himself and gave all that he possibly could to the poor. Once Foma saw another boy in the street wearing only old rags in place of a shirt. Without even a second thought, he removed his own shirt and gave it to the poor boy, returning home in only his outer garments. His benefactor looked at this differently and Foma received only punishment for his prodigal of charity.

When Foma reached the age of seven, the priest began teaching him to read. But soon after, the priest died and so, with the demise of the good teacher, the young wanderer again became homeless. Foma wept bitterly and inconsolably for his benefactor. He wept less for his loss of a home than for his loss of a wise teacher, who had barely begun to open the world of learning and wisdom to him. After the death of the priest, it was necessary to find a new refuge for Foma. The elder of the church, assuming that after a seven year period the former hatred towards her son would have disappeared from Evfrosiniya, and that she would now feel a maternal tenderness for him, decided to take Foma back home. When the elder arrived at the home of Evfrosiniya, she was splitting wood. How great was the horror and astonishment of the old man when, instead

of receiving her son with love, the mother threw her axe at him in a rage so that the blade of the axe cleaved into Foma's right shoulder.

The elder quickly seized the bleeding child from the grasp of his maddened mother, bound his wound, and took Foma back to his own home. While Foma's wound was healing the elder discovered that an uncle of the boy was a widowed priest living as a starets at the Bratsky Monastery in Kiev. The kindly elder took the child, not yet healed, to, this monk. There, he related to the starets all that he knew about the unfortunate nephew and handed over the boy to be brought up.

there is an ecclesiastical academy at the Bratsky Monastery and at that time there were beginners' classes. The much suffering orphan was assigned to this academy and there began to acquire the wisdom of books.

Taking advantage of his uncle's hospitable refuge, Foma grew up in model behavior and studied hard. In his spare moments he devoted himself to the reading of theological books and solitary praying. He understood the psalms well and derived much comfort and joy from memorizing them.

The pure, child's prayers of Foma were pleasing to God and He softened the heart of the cruel mother, and caused a reconciliation between Evfrosiniya and her repudiated son.

This wonderful event took place thus:

Evfrosiniya was stricken with an incurable illness. Seeing the punishment of the Lord upon her, she began tearfully to repent of her cruelties and persecutions of the innocent son. No matter how hard she tried she could not find peace with herself. During the day her ailment tortured

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her and at night she was tormented with nightmares. In this she saw God's justice. All the while her son wept and prayed for her. Finally, the mother understood her terrible error and began to beg God for His forgiveness. The Lord pitied her. Not long before her death Foma came home to his mother and each had the consolation of a re-union.

"Forgive me, my son," the repentant mother cried out to Foma. "Forgive me, cruel, foolish, terrible that I am. My mind was in darkness and I did not see the great evil created by me. May God's blessings be upon you. Do not curse me, an evil mother, and remember me, a sinner, in your constant prayers."

With these words Evfrosiniya pressed her son tightly against her maternal breast and, making the sign of the cross upon him, she quietly released her soul. The good Foma closed her lifeless eyes with his own hands and handed over the body of his mother for burial.

II.

Foma was an excellent student at the academy but he had no inclination to continue his higher academic studies. He could not accept them as a true means of acquiring that knowledge which leads to the truth of God and His grandeur. Foma chose the Church as his highest school. He dedicated himself to reading and singing and disciplined his mind to constant spiritual thought and prayer. From this time, thoughts about monkhood never left him for a moment and he aimed his goals towards that end.

Foma's good uncle died after a short time and left his nephew with no means of livelihood and without a true shelter. There was no longer any thought of continuing his studies. He left the academy and began to earn

his own-livelihood. In 1810 he went to the town of Chigirin as a reader but, because his voice was quite poor, he was sent to the village of Obukhov as a sacristan.

Foma did not remain there long. The world, which had not liked him since his birth, oppressed him with its rules and laws, and turned his soul away from itself. **"My soul longeth. yea, 't Foma said, "even fainteth for the courts of the Lord"** (Ps. 84:2). Conceiving a deep dislike for the mass of evil intended and dishonourable people, Foma entered the Kiev Bratsky Monastery in 1812, in the very heat of the "Patriotic War."

What unrelatable joy filled the young ascetic. He once more had entered the holy place of the quiet cloister which he had left two years earlier. This time not for study but for prayer, patience, toil, and fasting. He was dead to the world and the world died for him forever.

In the Bratsky Monastery, Foma fulfilled various obediences. He mixed dough and baked bread in the bakery but at that time, proshpora were not baked at the Bratsky Monastery and Foma used to go for them to the Florovsky Monastery for women. Later, he was assigned to the kitchen to make borsch. Then he was appointed assistant in the hospital and finally sacristan and bell-ringer. He especially liked this latter task. At the break of dawn he would rise, go up into the belfry and give himself up to deep contemplation and secret prayer. No one bothered him here. The vain world lay at his feet and in front of his gaze, in all its splendour, he could see only the azure heaven where the Creator of all things visible and invisible dwelt.

In this way several years passed. Redoubling his prayerful podvigs, Foma appeared to everyone as an example of meekness, obedience, humility, and chastity. With all

his soul he desired a rank equal to the angels. He constantly repeated, **"I have longed for Thy salvation O Lord and Thy law is my delight"** (Ps. 119:174).

Foma did not press the matter of his tonsure, which was his heart's desire, wishing first to teach himself the strict implementation of the rules of monastic living. Nevertheless, the head of the monastery noticed in him a fervour towards spiritual podvigs, and honoured Foma with his tonsure on 11 December, 1821. At the time of his tonsure, Foma was renamed Feodorit.

Soon after this Feodorit was appointed keeper of the vestments and on 30 September, 1822, because of his dedication to work in that position and because of his exemplary, strictly monastic life, he was elevated to the rank of hierodeacon.

The new position gave a new thrust to his podvigs. Now able to stand closer to the altar of the King of Glory, Feodorit, with all his strength, tried to imitate the angelic lives of those who had already pleased God and now faced the heavenly throne of the Lamb, Who took on Himself the sins of the entire world. According to his position, Feodorit received a small income but remained a stern faster and had nothing personal in his cell. On the contrary, he was a stranger to acquiring things and even found in this income the means to be charitable to his near ones. Remaining without food for two or three days at a time, he gave away his share of food and money to wanderers, the poor, and to beggars.

O "What is it to me, *is flesh and blood, which one day will turn to dust," Feodorit would say and then redouble his fasting.

He showed a God-imitating love for those near him and willingly fulfilled obediences to those in the

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lowest order, often taking upon himself the work of others, serving like a bought slave. In this way he followed in the footsteps of the Saviour Himself Who came . . . **not to be served but to serve** (Matt. 20:28).

On 6 February, 1827, Feodorit was ordained hieromonk and at the same time appointed steward of the Bratsky Monastery. This rank was bestowed as an honour at the monastery and was greatly desired by many. The position was very solicitous and did not at all correspond to the sincere inclinations of Hieromonk Feodorit. In-order to avoid meeting people-and preferring to remain in complete isolation he promptly requested to be released from the stewardship and refused all obediences. He asked for permission to retire to the caves which had been dug by Saint Feodosy in the village of Lesniki. Having been refused this, Feodorit took the path of special asceticism and took upon himself the great podvig of "fool-for-Christ's-sake." In his feigned eccentricity he concealed the high valour of his character.

He continued to rise from strength to strength in the difficult matter of his spiritual improvement. Thus, Feodorit followed the words of the apostle who said, **If any man among you supposes that he is wise in the world... let him become a fool so that he may become truly wise** (I Cor. 3:18).

Now he had less striving for spiritual improvement because **the Lord had already tried his heart and knew his thoughts** (Ps. 139:23). From his childhood Feodorit was gifted with humility and spiritual purity. He had a strong faith in the help of God Who extracted him from the path of the sand and marsh and set his feet upon solid rock, strengthening his steps Feodorit could say, in

truth, **"My heart Is ready O Lord, my heart is ready!** Having set his feet upon the highest podvig of the monastic life Feodorit, on 9 December, 1834, took the schema (monastic habit) and was re-named Feofil.

For the ordinary monk the schema is an image of bodily death and a struggling upward to ascend into eternity. For the Blessed Feofil, who had prepared himself for the service of God from the first days of his life, it became a sign of the complete repudiation of the world and a spiritual transference to heaven. Death, judgment, and the kingdom—this is what now occupied his thoughts and all the hours of his contemplation.

It was with joy that the Blessed Feofil set out on this narrow and sorrowful path so that, by travelling on it, he could reach the serene state of freedom from the passions of the flesh. Now he was a true warrior of Christ, invested with all of God's weapons against all of mankind's weaknesses and temptations. A stranger to all that is worldly vanity, he disregarded all the conditions of daily life. Feofil did not develop close relationships with anyone and completely closed the temple of his soul from the world which did not like him even from his infancy. Only prayer opened his lips and praises to the Creator moved his tongue.

With lowered eyes he always walked peacefully, deep in thought along the usual path from his cell to the church, never missing a single service. Stopping either at the entrance or near the church doors, which were often closed, he stood motionless to the end of the service. Near him there was always a basket filled with various provisions to be given to those who needed them. He always carried a bucket, bowl; or jug and a small Psalter.

Having increased his podvig. of: foolishness even more, the

Blessed One placed an old coffin in his cell but did not lie in it at night as did many of the ancient ascetics of piety but he kept various provisions and dishes in it. Moreover, on the day of his tonsuring to the schema, Feofil sewed pieces of old rags around his cowl and wore it that way until his death. When these shreds were ripped off on the day of his death, the cowl appeared new and fit for burial.

Every morning the Starets would set out for the Dniepr where he went to get water. At times he would get into one of the boats moored nearby and row to the opposite shore of the Dniepr where, entering into the depths of the woods, he gave himself up to the contemplation of God. He never sought ferry-men but took any boat he happened to see and rowed himself across the river. The owners knew of Feofil's habits and never worried about their missing boats. They never prevented him from doing what he wanted; to the contrary, they even rejoiced if he took their boat.

As a zealous carrier of Divine Grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Feofil did not conceal himself from the attention and reverence of the people. They used to step back from him in a circle and followed him everywhere in the hope of hearing even a single word from him. Thus the Lord placed the lowly on the heights. But the academy authorities had no special sympathy for "the dirty, ragged monk Feofil" and complained constantly about him to the Vladika, pointing out the crowds of curious people searched for Feofil and blocked off the academy, even entering the buildings, destroying silence, and disrupting the pupils' studies. Because of these complaints, the Blessed One received strong reproof and, in order to avoid more difficulty, he found it necessary to hide in the woods from his followers, returning home only after sunset. But even then

the crowds of people found him and waited for him on the shore of the Dniern following him all the way to his cell.

As a result of his zeal, diligence, and flaming love of the Crucified One, God illumined Feofil with the light of heavenly wisdom so that everything secret and incomprehensible in the moral-physical nature was natural, possible, and comprehensible for the Starets. The Blessed Feofil predicted with accuracy not only all the phenomena of the visible world but also all that was hidden in the depths of man's heart. It is said that the grace of God began to appear in Feofil in his very early days while he was still a postulant-sacristan.

In Feofil's time, it was the custom of the sisters of the Florovsky Monastery to go to the Dniepr for water every day. The river water had a high iron content and was healthier and purer than well water. The shortest path to the Dniepr lay through the grounds of the Bratsky Monastery and this was the route taken by the sisters. It was a rule, however, that no postulant could leave the gates of the monastery without the blessing of her staritsa. All those who set out for the river for water were obliged to inform their nearest superior. In spite of this decree, it happened that one of the young postulants, taking advantage of the absence of the staritsa from her cell, went to the Dniepr for water without the required blessing. She came to the river and was just about to dip in her bucket when she lost her balance and dropped her cell key, which she had been holding in her hand, into the water. In her great confusion the poor soul began to sob and wring her hands. How could she present herself to her staritsa? She could not open her locked cell and she would have to explain the loss of the key. Suddenly, from somewhere or other, Blessed Feofil appeared.

"Why are you weeping?" he asked. The young girl told him her grief. "It serves you right, silly. The next time you won't go without a blessing. However, give me the bucket and I will help you."

The postulant handed him the bucket. The Blessed One stooped towards the river and, having made a sign of the cross on the vessel, he scooped up a full bucket.

"Here, take it and go home. Here you have both water and the lost key."

The postulant looked into the bucket and saw her lost key on the bottom. With a joyful cry of gratitude the young girl rushed after Feofil but his footsteps had already vanished.

And so, amazing everyone with the greatness of his spirit and life, the Blessed Feofil was a living testimony of the wonderful strength of the nature of mankind; what kind of power and might are confined in the soul and body of man, if only man will strive to be thoroughly penetrated by the strength and might of Christ's grace.

A naive peasant who was curious to know why the Blessed One could foretell the future and penetrate the innermost parts of man's heart, stepped up to him and asked.

"Father, how is it that you know everything and can foretell the future of people's lives?"

"There is nothing difficult about it," the Blessed One replied.

"Could it really be so simple, Father?" the peasant asked.

"Very simple. Do you want to be able to do the same?"

"Very much so, Father; teach me."

"Well then," instructed Feofil, "pull a small hair from your eyelash and tie two knots in it. When you do that you will be as wise as I am."

"Do you mean that you attained this by such means?"

"Indeed," replied Starets Feofil.

The naive peasant tried to make use of this advice but no matter how hard he tried, he could not even tie one knot in the eyelash.

"That is how difficult it was for me to attain my present condition," said the Blessed One and turned away from the peasant.

Many pupils of the academy, in order to tempt the Blessed One, tried to find him in his cell and converse with him on the subject of spiritual education. They were, however, struck by his simple and wise answers. They were amazed that such a sullen-appearing and untidy schemamonk could expose their thoughts by his sharp expressions. When the more impudent turned the conversation to make mockery, the Blessed One, de-siring to end the useless visit, would sharply break them off:

"Go away from me! There was a time when I studied but now my mind has become dark. If I continue to talk to you, perhaps, for all I know, you might knock me off the true path. Go, go! For it is written in the Scriptures '**But refuse to have anything to do with trifling controversies over ignorant questionings for you know that they foster strife and breed quarrels.**'" (2 Tim. 2:23).

But it cannot be said that all scoffed at the Blessed One. There were occasions then the example of the great ascetic was imitated. At the very beginning of his podvigs as a fool-for-Christ's-sake, there was a student of the academy, **one Pyotr Gavrillovich Kryzhanovsky**. Feofil was still a postulant when a brotherly friendship tied them together. The young friends spent whole hours in soul-saving talks, discussing the fate of mankind, worldly vanity, and fate beyond the grave. The Blessed Feofil saw good strivings and a sympathetic

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heart in his friend and tried by all means to strengthen and increase these good seeds of God's word in his soul.

"Acquaint now yourself with Him," Feofil would say to his friend, **"and be at peace: thereby good shall come so you. Receive, I beseech you, the law from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart!"** (Job 22, 21:22). And if you fulfill your vows the **light shall shine on your ways** (Job 22:28)."

These constant talks created a beneficial influence on the young Pyotr. Impressionable by nature, Pyotr began to meditate and vigilantly took measure of his friend. He could not live without him for a minute. Once they met on the shore of the Dniepr and, sitting down next to each other on the grass, they began to talk.

"My brother! Help me to save my soul," cried Pyotr, turning to Feofil.

"You can do this alone," replied the Blessed One, "as long as there is the desire and the zeal."

"How can I do it? Teach me."

"Repudiate the world a all that is in it; close the innermost part of your soul to everyone; crucify your flesh together with passions and lust and, finding yourself in incessant prayer, select a narrow path which leads to eternal life."

"I swear to God," replied Pyotr, "I am prepared to do what you order me but due to my inexperience and simpleness it will be difficult for me to attain the desired success."

"Then walk in my footsteps and imitate my podvags and you will be saved."

From that time, young Pyotr seemed to be completely transformed. He became silent and contemplative, no longer joking or laughing and he abruptly changed his way

of living. He would spend entire days sitting over his books, or else spending all his time in God's temple and he began to fast zealously. The academy superiors noticed this sudden change in Pyotr and they began to observe him. They attempted to administer strict reproofs to him but nothing mattered. Disregarding worldly rules and customs, Pyotr seemed to be scolding the world. Eventually, Pyotr became disturbed by the authorities' constant watching of him so he chose the grounds of the Florovsky Monastery as a place for his solitary podvigs. There he spent many hours in solitude, seeking some empty corner so that he could sink into prayer. It once happened that Pyotr remained past the hour when the gates were locked and he was trapped within the cloister. In order to conceal himself, he went into the monastery cellar, lighted a candle and began to read the Holy Gospel. Some of the sisters came there for provisions and upon seeing such an unusual sight, they became frightened and raised a clamour. A whole throng came running. Abbess Serafima came to the place of the incident, but the matter was explained, settled, and ended with Pyotr being sent away from the monastery.

"Why do you do this?" Pyotr was asked on the following day by his uncle, Father Andrei Stefanovsky, a priest of the Florovsky Monastery.

"Why don't you stay in the Bratsky Monastery and study or else you will discredit my name and harm yourself."

But Pyotr remained silent and did not respond. Only when he would lose courage and his soul would become seized by despondency, he would run for advice to his teacher and fall sobbing on Feofil's breast.

"Restrain yourself; restrain yourself," the Blessed One would console his faint-hearted friend.

"Take-your share of the hardships and sufferings as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3).

. . . **That enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring hungrily, looking for someone to seize upon and devour** (1 Pet. 5:8). Don't be frightened by your podvig and lead it to its end. It is difficult but through it you will avoid the fire of Gehenna. If your hands are cramped from toil, just wash them with prayer to God and let your feet follow after prayer. . . . **unless a grain of wheat falls onto the earth and dies, it remains just one grain, alive but by itself. But if it dies, it produces many others and yield a rich harvest** (John 12:24). And so, if you want to be fruit-bearing, die in your present image so that you can carry in your heart the feeling that you have already died."

"But believe me, that it is difficult for me. My strength has run altogether low. My relatives do not understand me and with their cries they torment my heart and upset my mind."

"Do not listen to them; behave like a dead person who does not respond to anything surrounding him. If you are praised—be silent. If you are scolded—be silent. If you incur losses—be silent. If you receive profit, be silent. If you are satiated—be silent. If you are hungry—also be silent. And do not be afraid that there will be no fruit when all dies down; there will be! Not everything will die, down. Energy will appear—and what energy!"

We must leave you for now, to contemplate what has been told already, and which will be continued in the next issue of RE-UNION.

**HOLY INNOCENTS PARISH
INFORMATION**

Holy Innocents Orthodox Church, 311 Hickory Ave., Harahan, Louisiana 70123, (504) 738-3502, is a Western Rite Orthodox Church affiliated with The Orthodox Catholic Diocese of Louisiana, of the Holy Orthodox Church, American Jurisdiction (American Orthodox Church). Its lineage is Russian Orthodox, and Eastern Rite Liturgy is observed in special schedules as an accommodation.

His All Holiness Bartholomeaus, Patriarch of Constantinople

His Eminence, Francis (Wm. Francis Forbes), S.S.B., D.D., Metropolitan - Primate

His Excellency, John (John J. Lehman), S.S.B., Bishop

Rt. Rev. Paul (Lee McColloster), S.S.B., Mitered Archbishop - Pastor

SACRAMENTS AND LITURGIES

Divine Liturgy (Mass), every Sunday at 11:00 AM, 8:00 AM weekdays, special schedule Saturdays. All who have been Baptized and Chrismated (Confirmed) are encouraged to receive The Eucharist (Holy Communion).

Baptisms and Chrismation (Confirmation) may be scheduled two or more weeks in advance, for children and adults who have never received these Sacraments, and who desire to join the Church.

Reception of Converts, for those who have been Baptized and Confirmed in another Jurisdiction of The Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, may be scheduled two or more weeks in advance.

Holy Matrimony should be scheduled at least three months in advance, but may be arranged in less time depending on the circumstances. We are not a marriage mill, and will not marry just anyone - interviews are required for those with whom we are not very familiar.

Absolution/Confession, is available from 10:30 AM to 10:45 AM, Sundays, and 7:30 AM to 7:45 AM weekdays, before Divine Liturgy, and on request at virtually all times.

Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction, Holy Anointing) is available after Sunday Divine Liturgy, and with visitation of the sick, is available on request. Please notify us if you, family, or a friend, become ill, are hospitalized, or desire a visit. You need not be ill to request a visit.

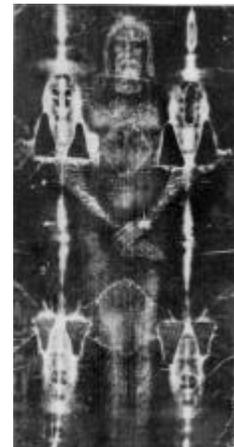
Blessing of a Home is usually done on

the Feast of The Epiphany (January 6), or when a family moves into a new home. It should be scheduled a week or so in advance. The house need not be all "in order".

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311 Hickory Avenue
Harahan, Louisiana 70123

