

The Way I See It  
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“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ...That you may stand firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents.” How is this possible for our lives in the future?

Let the way you live show your love for God. Make this love deserving of God and His teachings. Try to be persistent in your feeling of strength, growth, and truth. This is your spirit, something you can't handle or hold, but is with you always. Your mind which goes hand in hand with your spirit, strives for the same feelings that your spirit acquires.

We can't be frightened or discouraged by ideas of others or by occurrences in life. You will be confronted by both during life, and your faith will have to be unconquerable to keep on believing. What I have just said expresses my feelings on this subject. Now, how is this possible for me?

It seems many of us think, if we call ourselves Christians, we will also be Christian in the eyes of God. God sees if we are Christian by how we live our lives. God's way of life, as the Bible states, is growing, changing, effort, and sacrifice. We see one example of effort and sacrifice in St. Matthew: “the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

Others have tried to influence my train of thought, just as I have tried to convey my sentiments to them. These ideas, which were conveyed to me, had me wondering if I was really right in my feelings toward God. Not only have ideas, endangered my feelings...occurrences have also made me inquisitive. I have wondered why certain things happen to certain people.

But, faith in God gave me courage, and must continue to give me courage to resist the temptations of others. Jesus tells us that faith and courage are closely related. The story of Peter, who started to walk on the waves, but became frightened and began to sink, shows us we need both faith and courage to overcome evil. True courage expresses itself in love for others and this faith, courage, and love brought me to realize that God must be my choice for a more fulfilling life.

Each of us has a gift, which was given to us very early in life. This is the gift of judgment, the gift of decision! Some of us choose to believe nothing, while others are quite different. I'm glad I'm different. I believe in God and all He stands for. It gives me peace of mind to know that He is always near to help me make the many decisions life puts before us.

Television, radio, and movies present very difficult temptations in the world we live in today. All of these things became habit to me. I took nature for granted and soon became a creature of habit. Then one day when I finally realized this, the things I used to think simple and boring became new and exciting to me. I became observant of nature and the joys of reality. I'm finding something beautiful in everything. So, then the Scripture says, "And not frightened in anything by your opponents." Becoming a creature of habit is one of the hardest temptations to overcome. But, with the help of God and the desire to overcome these temptations, your spirit and the mind together will achieve your goal.

In today's world, it is much easier to hear and understand the ideas and feelings of others. I realize that, being as young as I am, my mind is very impressionable and yearning for new ideas. I've heard many of these ideas and none of these are convincing or full of love and truth as the one of Christianity.

Some of us tend to think that if the times change, so will our feelings. But, this isn't true. Your feelings won't change unless your mind, not the minds of others, wants them to. No matter whether there are riots, arsons, or killings, there will always be good and that's what Christianity strives for.

So when the question is asked, "How is it possible for you to live in tomorrow's world?" I realize my feelings will always be the same. Whether it's today's world, yesterday's world, or tomorrow's world, my faith will be in Christ! That's the way I see it!

A young man once compared organized religion, in general, and the Orthodox Church in particular, to an open draw-bridge: "a very noble and beautiful structure, but up in the air most of the time." Since my arrival in California on Palm Sunday of 1970, I have heard the same complaint from the youth that the Church is totally irrelevant. But you know, those of you who may think that the church is unimportant or irrelevant are wrong...DEAD wrong! The reason for the mass exodus from the Churches is that the people of today cannot be encumbered with rules and regulations...they seek purity of heart and spirit in the woods with a tree rather than with Christ. They run fast and far to escape the hypocrisy of the world. For this I salute them; hypocrisy has ALWAYS been an enemy of His Church. But rather than run and hide, we should stand firm and seek to change the world in the same manner that Christ did.

I think it is particularly funny how many of the young separate themselves from society condemning organized society...but then they themselves organize a society. They condemn the shirt and tie as the uniform of society and seek their individualism in outlandish styles which now become THEIR uniforms of THEIR organized society. They thirst to reject the world yet will never be able to remove themselves from it. Perhaps their motivation is monastic and spiritual, but I doubt it.

And so, run as we will, we can never outrun the hypocrisy of our own lives. We flee the Church and run into the world, abandoning the only port in a storm and running right smack into the eye of the hurricane...the very thing against which we object...the world!

It is wrong to say that the Church is irrelevant to the world in which we live. We CAN say that the Church is the arch-enemy of the world, and its' goal is to make the entire world Church-like and all men God-like.

The primary, basic and singular aim of the Church is to return man to God—to transform and transfigure him, to make him God-like, to give him the fullness of eternity, Eternal Life in the kingdom of God which was brought into his world of sin by Our Lord Jesus Christ. The sacred duty of the Church and of all Christians is not foreign to our youth, even those in rebellion: feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give drink to the thirsty, visit and care for the sick. Many of the young who rebel perform these acts; we perform them as Christians. We don't do these things in the name of Ban the Bomb, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the NAACP, CORE, VISTA, or any other group. We do good works in the name of Christ, because Christ loves that hungry or thirsty person..." If you have done it unto one of these the least of my brethren, you have done it unto Me."

Christ is, and should be, the center of all our lives. Certainly we need a revival of the social Gospel in our Orthodox Church, but we cannot separate these good works from the Church. They can be seen only as the normal course of action for a follower of Christ. Faith and good works are inseparable. Read the passage in the Bible regarding Faith and good actions:

*My brothers! What good is it for a man to say, "I have Faith," if his actions do not provide it? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, "God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!"; -- if you don't give them the necessities of life? This is how it is with faith: If it is alone and has no actions with it, then it is dead. For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without actions is dead. (James 2:26)*

We cannot, as Christians, afford to remain aloof about the things we see in today's world. For instance, a leading TV program presented a skit attempting to compare the Resurrection of Christ on that first Easter morning to the emergence of the ground-hog on Ground-Hog Day. They were forced to publicly apologize on the following week's program. In their apology, which was really no apology at all but justification (as if blasphemy could EVER be justified) they mentioned that "God has a sense of humor" and therefore understood and condoned their little joke about Christ and the ground-hog. So now, some forty million people who watched that show think that God enjoys a good belly-laugh. It will take the Church ten years to offset this ten second remark. God does NOT have a sense of humor...He does NOT have human properties...He is God and we are men, His creatures. Can we likewise assume that just because one man is a thief or a drunkard that God is also a thief and a drunkard? NO! God is God, He is Divine...we are men, and as men we can best learn about God through His Church.

So my dear Orthodox Christian youth, the world is out to get you, and get you it will if you wander too far from, or too long outside the Holy Mother Church. Don't let the world destroy the Church...recognize your obligations as followers of Christ to bring the Church into the world. Don't leave your Orthodox Christianity in your respective parishes; bring it to the world. In public, and with our friends, we all discuss our political

figures of the day, our sports favorites, the astronauts...but it seems to me that I have never heard anyone talking openly about Jesus Christ. Are we ashamed? Are we afraid? Then why do we HIDE CHRIST! Take His teachings, His mercy and display them before the entire world.

To exemplify our attitude we should sing one of the most "orthodox" of all hymns ever written..."ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS"...That's right, a Protestant song exemplifies our Orthodox position:

Onward Christian Soldiers, marching off to war...And WAR it is indeed. It is Christ's war, OUR war, against the evils of this world, against the injustice of this world. But we must wage the battle not as individuals, but as a united and unified army of Orthodox Christians. We must be soldiers whose headquarters is the Church, whose ammunition is the Bible, the word of God, and whose armor is the Body and Blood of Christ Himself received in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Only then will our victory be possible, only then can we hope to establish on this planet the Kingdom of God.