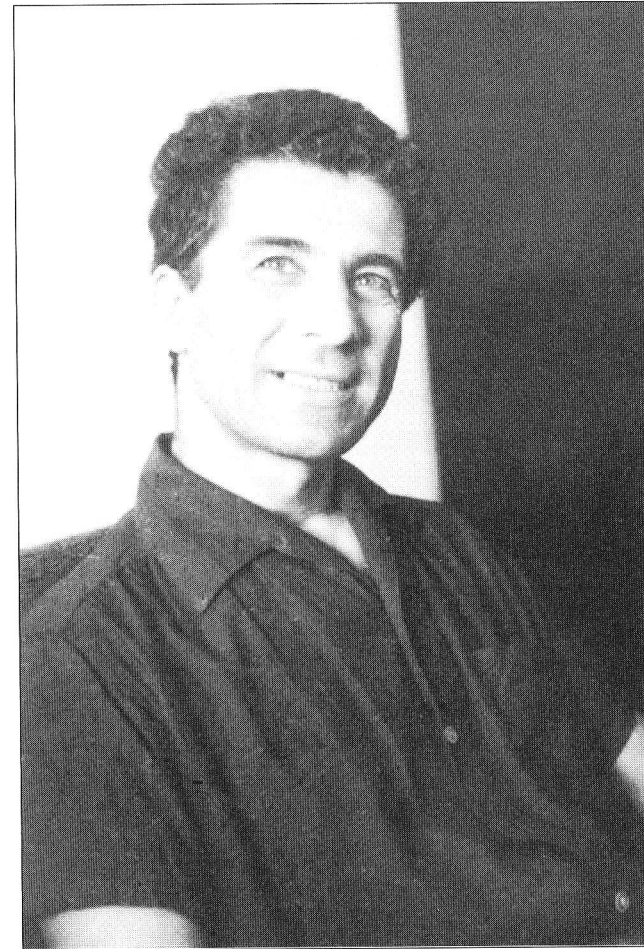


from that cell would knock on the neighboring cell, and the people there would start their prayers. This prayer went around the prison day and night, without any stopping. During one year we prayed and prayed and prayed. Sure, the Securitate knew it. After one year they decided to put a stop to our prayers. It was then that they started "reeducation." "Reeducation" means that they would introduce into our cell a group of inmates who had already been "reeducated," and they would start to torture us. To stay with your torturer for two or three weeks, day and night, and to be tortured all the time: you cannot imagine it! Day and night to be tortured, every minute to be insulted, to be hit, to be beaten, to be obliged to say things against God, against your parents. The aim of the "reeducation" was to change your mind, to change your attitude, to make you a new man. This lasted in Pitesti for three years. Many of us died. Many of us became crazy. The rest made a compromise.

After two years, we were spread into other prisons to spy on the inmates. And there we lost all hope. There we had no vision. Nothing in front of us. Only darkness and remorse. But there we met the priests and the monks, and they knew the history of Pitesti. They received us with love and understanding; and they told us about repentance, about the love of God, about the possibility of becoming, again, a Christian. Then I understood why Jesus Christ said, *Ye are the salt of the earth.... Ye are the light of the world* (Matt. 5:13-14). These priests and monks were truly *the light of the world*.

Then I made my vow. I said to Jesus, "If I go out of prison, if I do not die in prison, I will become a priest." I made this vow, and Jesus noticed it. During those years, until 1965, many of us died; but I went out in good shape. I tried to study theology, but at first I was not allowed to. I studied the French language and became a teacher of French in a secular school. But I was very unhappy because I had made a vow to God and I wanted to become a priest.



Fr. George some time after his release from his first imprisonment, and before he was ordained to the priesthood.

9. BRINGING CHRIST TO THE YOUTH

I taught my students, but every summer I took them to visit the monasteries. I did not tell them much about God, but going with them from monastery to monastery for a month

each summer—this worked upon their souls.... I put them in the monasteries to instruct them. The monks and nuns always said something edifying to them. My students saw me praying, and they prayed with me. They asked me for the prayers, and they asked the monks to give them prayers. The monks had some small booklets that they gave to them. And many of these students became priests. I met some of them afterwards in the seminary.

I was thirty-eight years old when I was in the university with the young students, and they were nineteen and twenty. They called me “Father,” not as to a priest, but because I was like a father to them.

I saw that these young people had no support, no strong foundation under their feet. They were lost. They didn’t know God, but they didn’t believe in the Communist ideas, either. So, they believed nothing. I think they were a lost generation. Later, after I was received by the patriarch into the seminary, I decided to give something to the Romanian youth—to give them a direction, to give them a light, to clarify their ideas and illumine the darkness in front of them. Being a teacher in the seminary, I talked to my students. They had come from a secular school; some had a religious education from their families, some had no such education. I encouraged them to make friends with students from the secular universities.

The group around me started to have prayers. In the beginning, I had twenty students with me, and every night we went into the chapel of the seminary to pray. We didn’t say anything because there were a lot of agents in the seminary. This group increased: in a few months I had more than one hundred students, both theological and secular students. It’s surprising—the students in the technical schools came more than the students in the theoretical schools. I had engineers, architects, etc., but very few students of literature. These students from the polytechnic were very dedicated. I think that this was because they had nothing except

their technical education, nothing spiritual. They discovered that there was another world—a spiritual world.

10. THE SEVEN HOMILIES TO THE YOUTH

After having this group of other people gather around me, I told them I wanted to take action to evangelize the youth. And they started to talk to one another. When I started my time of preaching, I had more than four hundred young people: seminarians, theologians, students from the lay universities.

I decided to start my preaching time during Great Lent. For this I entitled my sermons, “Seven Homilies to the Youth.” Some of you have perhaps already read them in my book. I did not say extraordinary things in them. I just addressed my words to the youth. I told them that they are created in the image of God. God gave them a special dignity because He created them, the youth, in His image, and He gave them freedom. Freedom means dignity. Dignity means responsibility. We have to answer to God if we use our freedom in a bad rather than a good manner. I told them that their dignity was the greatest in the world. No animal has this responsibility, only man. I told them that they had the right to know the Communist philosophy, to know idealist philosophy, and to know theology. Philosophy and technology, I said, are only on the level of high school. Only theology has a doctorate, because theology is working with absolute Truth, Divine Truth. The other ones are on the human level.

I said afterwards that a regime that wanted to destroy churches and to build restaurants and taverns in their place was a regime that was not sure of its situation. (At that time they had started to destroy the churches.) Never can a restaurant replace a church in the soul of a human being. I said, come, let us build a new church. In every place where a church has been destroyed, let us build a church of the heart. They can destroy the churches of stone but

never can they destroy the church in our hearts. So, between us and them there is a spiritual fight, and in that fight we are sure to be victorious because we have God with us.

I told them about life and death. I told them that St. Basil the Great said that true philosophy is to think about death. I told them that, with any human philosophy, the first problem is life and death. If you don't understand life, you don't understand death, and in that case you are simply animals. But God promised us eternal life. What does that mean for us? You are now very young men, I said. You have a body. This body is like a box. In a short time, the body dies and will be deposited into the earth and become earth. But we have something more precious than the body. The body is very precious for us because it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. I Cor. 6:19). But don't give your whole attention to the body. Think that you are something more precious, that you have within you a soul.

Amazing! They listened to it. They started to ask me about the soul. I remember one student of the polytechnic said to me, "Father, until now we learned half of the truth. And now we understand that half of a truth means a whole lie." It is true.

During the homilies I said, "Someone is calling you. It is the sweet calling of Jesus Christ. Don't stand on the threshold of the Church. Take courage, and discover Jesus Christ. He has been waiting for you for a long time—before you were born, Jesus has been waiting for you. Because He knew everything before you were even put into the womb of your mother. Jesus knew about you and He prepared something very good for you."

And I said, "I saw you, young man, in the street. You are very savage. You are aggressive. You don't love anything. Why? Who taught you to hate? Who refused to teach you to love? I saw your father and your mother ashamed because of you. You are like an animal in a cage. Who has the right to put you in prison, who has the right to punish you if no one taught you what is the meaning of virtue, what is the meaning of faith, what is the

meaning of goodness, what is the devil, and Who is God? A society that is not able to teach you both sides—good and evil, light and darkness—has no rights over your freedom, no rights over your body, because they did not give you the possibility to choose. You are not responsible. Only if you know both sides of things and make your choice in freedom, are you responsible. Now Jesus Christ calls you and tells you what it means to be good, what the soul means, what it means to love. Not sexual love, not orgiastic love, but true love, Christian love."

You've heard it. Every priest says such things in church, right? But these young people had never heard such a word, because the priests were afraid to speak like that in the churches.

I decided to do it. I knew that I would be arrested, that I would finish my life in prison. I never hoped to be free. I was sure that I would die in prison. Nevertheless, I made this decision although the Securitate and even my colleagues tried to stop me and started to threaten me. I have to confess that sometimes I was very, very afraid. I even decided to stop. The director of the seminary said to me, "Father, you will destroy the seminary. The Communists are now ready to destroy it because of your meetings. They don't want to have students influenced like this." They begged me to stop. I was ready to stop. I called my group of students and told them, "I have to stop so as not to endanger the seminary." But they said, "Father, it's too late. We have to go on. You have no right." So I started again. I said, "I will go to prison"; and they said, "We will go with you." And, really, they tried to go with me into prison. "If they arrest you," they said, "we will ask the Securitate to take us with you." I don't think it is possible in free America to hear such words from students.

God placed His blessing on us. He placed His blessing on the souls of the Romanian youth, on the students. He gave me the words.

I delivered my sermons every Wednesday. I started at 9:00 PM and I finished with the discussion after midnight. Then I had to

walk six miles from the school to my house. Every time I was attacked by the Securitate, by different agents posing as drunk people who insulted me. The theology students were not allowed to go out after midnight, so the students from the engineering school would accompany me to my house. They kept me from being attacked.

Every Tuesday, I did not know what I was going to say during my sermons on Wednesday. During the whole week, the Securitate, the hierarchs, and the directors of the seminary—they all pressured me. I had no time to think about what I was going to say. I was afraid. My wife was absolutely afraid. I had a son who was thirteen years old; he was watched by the Securitate and was persecuted in school. From all sides they pressured me. So I had no time to think. But Tuesday night, God illumined my mind. In the morning I knew what I had to say. It was not me who said the words, but it was the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I am so convinced that God spoke through my mouth. Since then I have never been able to say such things. My mind, my soul was exhausted. Can you imagine? I was alone. Absolutely alone, having around me four to five hundred students—young men without any power. I was their support, I was their prophet. They knew nothing without me. And the Securitate was sure that, in arresting me, they would destroy the whole group; but the group was not destroyed.

The Securitate had legions of agents, and even the hierarchs were working with them against me. They closed the door of the church; I preached in front of the church. They closed the gates of the seminary; the students climbed the walls and came to hear the word of God in a new manner. They could have arrested me at any time, from the first week. They did not arrest me because God did not allow them to. So I finished the seven sermons. We had a vacation for Pascha. During the vacation, I was attacked by the Securitate. I was threatened on the telephone by unknown people. They said they would come into my house and destroy me

and my wife—put a curse over me and my family. I was insulted with dirty words. I had a most unhappy Pascha. Many times I cried in my soul. But after Pascha I came back to the seminary, I met my students from the university, the students of theology, and they encouraged me again.

I decided to give a new sermon. I didn't care about the Securitate, I didn't care about my hierarchs. I cared about the students. I announced to my students that I had to say something to them. This was because there were two groups condemning me: the theology students reproached me that I addressed more of my sermons to the secular students than to them and that they needed my help more than the other ones. On the other hand, the secular students accused me that my sermons were too theological and that the theological student doesn't need as much help, so I could neglect the theological student to speak in their language. I wanted to explain to them why I had addressed them in such a manner, because, in fact, there was no high theology in my sermons. I addressed them to everyone. It was very easy for everyone to understand them, and they understood, but they needed more. Also, I wanted to tell what kind of blackmail the Securitate tried to submit me to.

II. ARREST

The next Wednesday I was to deliver my eighth sermon. But God said, "No—stop. You asked Me for seven homilies; I gave you seven homilies. I could have let you be arrested after the first homily, but I promised to give you the time to utter seven homilies. Now, an eighth one is not allowed."

I was expelled from the seminary and put under house arrest. So, by being expelled from the Church, I was at the mercy of the Securitate. There was no clerical protection for me. I knew that I would be arrested in a short time.

My bishop, Roman, had been a monk since he was twelve

years old. He was a very spiritual person, and I loved him very much. As a bishop he was still a monk, but he was very afraid.

A group of very good intellectuals, who had been present for my sermons, went to Bishop Roman and asked him to save me. He said, "If I save Fr. Calciu, what will happen to me?" Nothing could have happened to him. The worst thing that would have happened was that he would have been obliged to leave his throne and to go to the monastery. But he was scared.

One day Bishop Roman called me into his office. Bishop Antonie was also there. This bishop was a very well-known agent of the Securitate. So, when I saw Antonie there, I knew that I would be arrested.

The next Sunday I went to the chapel of the seminary because Bishop Roman was serving there. At the end of the Liturgy, when he left the church, he saw me and asked me, "How are you, Father?" I said, "Your Holiness, I came here to kiss your hand because you are committing a very big sin." He was struck in the face by my words, because he understood that I knew he was a participant in my arrest. He was so shocked. He did not allow me to kiss his hand, and left the church. I was on the steps of the church looking at him, and all the time he avoided my eyes; he looked everywhere but not at me. I had made a test. I wanted to penetrate his soul. If he had the courage to look in my eyes, I could be convinced that he was not guilty. But when he avoided my eyes, I understood that I was sentenced to prison. The following Thursday I was arrested.

LECTURE TWO RETURN TO THE DEVIL'S LAIR

I. ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT

BEFORE I START, I would like to read some verses for you: *For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe* (I Cor. 1:18–21).

Please don't pay any attention to my foolish words. Don't look for the sensational in my speech. Look for the humility and the power of God which preserves us. This same power has preserved me just to come here and tell you about the suffering of the Church in a Communist country and how God is working wonders for His servants.

I told you that when I had delivered the "Seven Homilies to the Youth," after Pascha I wanted to deliver an eighth homily, explaining to the students what had happened to me during the vacation of Pascha and how the Securitate had tried to blackmail me, to discourage me, knowing well that I had the intention to continue with my preaching. I had just announced before I had finished my seven homilies that my intention was to start a new cycle of preaching—something about Christianity and culture. Because our culture was Christian. I wanted the young men to



Fr. George with his students at the Theological Institute in Bucharest, class of 1976. This picture was smuggled out of Romania in 1985.

FIRST HOMILY THE CALL

March 8, 1978

*The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus,
of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.*

ACTS 1:1

THE TIME HAS come, young man, for you to hear a voice which has been calling you. It is a voice you have never heard before, or, perhaps, one you have heard but which you did not understand and to which you paid no heed. It is the voice of Jesus!

Do not shudder, do not be amazed and do not smile suspiciously, my young friend! The voice which calls you is not that of a dead man, but of One Who has risen from the dead. He does not call out merely from history, but from the depths of your own inner being. The words written and read today [from the New Testament] issue out of depths within you, yet they are unknown to you. Perhaps you have been ashamed or afraid to delve inside yourself and discover them. You believed that within you lay a wild beast, a sepulchre of instincts from which there would rise frightful spirits of passions. You did not see the face of an angel, and yet you are an angel. If this has never been told you before, Jesus is telling you now, and His testimony is true. No one has proved Him a liar.

What do you know of Christ, young man? If all you know is what they have taught you in atheism classes, you have been deprived, in bad faith, of a truth—of the only truth which can set you free.

What do you know of the Church of Christ? If all you know can be reduced to the concepts of Giordano Bruno,¹ about whom you have heard in classes of so-called scientific atheism, then you have been spitefully thwarted from experiencing the light of true culture and the brilliance of spirituality, which is the guarantee of human freedom.

Friend, where did you ever hear these words: *Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, ... and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you* (Matt. 5:44)? If you have never heard these words, my friend, who hindered you, and with what right? Who prohibited you from knowing that there exists a better way, more just and simple than that on which you now wander blindly? Who has pulled the veil over your eyes so that you would not see the most wonderful light of the love proclaimed and lived by Jesus unto the final end?

I have seen you on the street, my friend, young and handsome; and suddenly everything changes in you: your face is disfigured, your instincts break loose, ravishing your being in elemental fury, and you become violent. Where did you learn such violence, young man? From whom? I have seen your mother meek and tearful and your father with his face stunned by pain, and I knew that you did not learn it from them. From where, then?

Lend your ears and listen to the call of Jesus, the call of His Church. Outside of her, your reckless violence will lead you to judgment and imprisonment, where your soul may be irrevocably destroyed. I have seen you in pain before the magistrates, where your actions have assumed horrible dimensions. I have seen you afraid, cynical, and full of bravado. All these attitudes showed me how near you are to the edge of destruction. And I ask myself once more: who bears the guilt for your fall?

¹ Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) was an Italian philosopher whose enthusiasm for nature led him to hold an extreme form of pantheistic immanentism. Since the nineteenth century his name has been associated with anticlericalism.—ED.

Come to the Church of Christ! Here only will you find consolation for your ravished soul. Only in the Church will you find certainty, because only in the Church will you hear the voice of Jesus saying meekly to you: “Son, all your sins are forgiven. You have suffered much. Behold, I have made you whole; go and sin no more.”

No one has ever said such words as these to you. Yet you hear them now. Rather, you have heard of class hatred, political hatred—always hatred. “Love” is a strange word to you, but now the Church of Christ shows you a better way, the way of love. Up until this moment you were a slave of your instincts; your body was a simple instrument through which your instincts expressed themselves. But now you hear the words of Jesus, through His Apostle, pleading with you: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (I Cor. 3:16).

You have been told that you descend from the apes, that you are a beast which must be trained; but now you discover an astonishing thing: that you are the temple of God and in you dwells the Spirit of God. You are being called, young friend, back to your dignity as a metaphysical being; you are raised up from the low place in which false education has sunk you to the sacred office of being the temple in which God dwells.

We call you to purity. If you have not forgotten the meaning of the word “innocence,” if there is still an area within you of undefiled childhood, you will not resist this call.

Come to the Church of Christ—to learn what innocence and purity are, what meekness is and what love is. You will find your place in life and the purpose of your existence. To your astonishment you will discover that our life does not end in death, but in resurrection; that our existence centers on Christ, and that this world is not a mere empty moment in which non-being prevails.

You will receive hope, and this hope will make you strong.
You will receive faith, and this faith will save you.

You will receive love, and this love will make you good.

This, my young friend, is the first word which Jesus addresses to you in the midst of the turmoil of this world, through the thicket of your passions, with which no one has taught you to fight, and out of the transparent dreams of innocence which still haunt you from time to time.

Jesus is seeking you; Jesus has found you!

Radu Voda Church
Wednesday of Cheese-fare Week²
March 8, 1978

² The last Wednesday before the beginning of Great Lent.—ROM. ED.

SECOND HOMILY LET US BUILD CHURCHES

March 15, 1978

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter,
and upon this rock I will build My Church; and
the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Matt. 16:18

DO YOU REMEMBER, young friend, how I told you last time that a new voice is calling and that this is the voice of Jesus? But to where and to what does He call you? What alluring promise to assuage your thirst for knowledge and truth does the Savior make?

The voice of Jesus calls you to His Church.

You live within a family, within a society, within a world. You are bound to your family by the unbreakable bond of blood, which you cannot deny and which seeks vengeance, if ever you betray it through your suffering. You live in the midst of your nation, which you feel to be one metaphysical entity—not a group of isolated individuals, but one immense and united soul in which you are the whole and in which the whole lives through you. And, finally, you exist in a world of suffering and joys, to which you respond because something in you unites and binds you inextricably to all your fellow human beings.

Where then is the Church of Christ to which you are called?

She is everywhere. She holds within her all human life, and, more, she contains all heavenly beings, too. For the Church knows no history; her history is the spiritual present. Family and society

bear within them the tragic fate of their own limitations within the boundary of history. History is, by definition, the chronology of unhappiness, yet the road to salvation. But you, my young friend, are called to the Church of Christ, which was conceived in God's eternity and which bears within her perfection, just as the world bears within it its own limited nature. Society considers you simply a component part, one brick lined up alongside other bricks. Your freedom in it is to function as a brick, fixed for all time. This freedom is the freedom of constraint, and in this lies your tragedy. For your true freedom lies within you, but you know neither how to discover it in its true meaning, nor how to use it when at last you have found it. You have been told that you are not free, that freedom is the understanding of necessity, and that necessity is imposed upon you from the outside by factors entirely exterior to yourself, as in a lifeless construction.¹

The Church of Christ is alive and free. In her we move and live through Christ, Who is her Head, and have full freedom, because we learn the Truth and the Truth makes us free (cf. John 8:32).

You are in Christ's Church whenever you uplift someone bent down in sorrow, when you help someone elderly walk more easily, or when you give alms to the poor and visit the sick. You are in Christ's Church when you cry out, "Lord, help me." You are in Christ's Church when you are patient and good, when you refuse to get angry with your brother, even if he has wounded your feelings. You are in Christ's Church when you pray, "Lord, forgive him." When you work honestly at your job, returning home weary in the evenings but with a smile upon your lips, bringing with you a warm and kind light; when you repay evil with love—you are in Christ's Church.

¹ The essence of political totalitarianism is underlined here. However, the problem is more general: true freedom does not come from outside, but from within us, its basis being not material but spiritual. Christ represents the supreme freedom which raises us above all worldly enslavement.—ROM. ED.

Do you not see, therefore, my young friend, how close the Church of Christ is? You are Peter and God is building His Church upon you. You are the rock of His Church against which no one and nothing can prevail, because you are a liberated rock—a soul that is fulfilled within His Church and not one condemned to stagnation.

Let us build churches, my friend. Let us build churches from the depths of our hearts ablaze with the light of the Sun of Righteousness, Who is Christ Himself, Who has told us that by faith we are free from sin. Let us build the churches of our faith which no human power can pull down, because the ultimate power of the Church is Christ Himself.

Feel for your brother at your side, ever present, and never ask, "Who is this man?" Rather say, "He is no stranger; he is my brother. He is the Church of Christ just as I am."

Look back, my friend, and be filled with awe; look forward and rejoice. History is a series of set events out of which arises from time to time living witnesses of princely faith, now embodied in our churches and monasteries. Treasures of the Romanian Christian soul, they represent the spirit which gives life to our national tradition. All which falls outside this spirituality is destined to perish. Mountains have been leveled, forests have burned, people have died, but churches have remained alive and monasteries continue offering the incense of continuous prayer to heaven. If we destroy the churches which express the national identity, we cannot affirm the continuity of a Romanian spirituality, nor can we maintain that we have preserved unaltered the tradition and soul of Romania. There are no references to Romanian princes destroying the foundation of churches, or of Michael the Brave² ordering the disappearance overnight of an

² Michael the Brave (1558–1601): Prince of Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia. He is regarded as one of Romania's greatest national heroes for being the first ruler to unite the Romanian principalities.—ED.

Enea Church.³ There is no wine cellar or *Dunarea* tavern,⁴ old or new, to equal a single stone from the foundation of the Enea Church. Nor can any scientific atheism or scientific argument stop you, dear friend, from inquiring about the meaning of life and about God and salvation.

This search is the proof of your freedom in the face of any constraint and in the face of matter itself. It is your road to the Church, the gate through which you will enter. Do not waver on the doorstep, friend. Come in! How many years will you stand in the shadows of the Church without knowing her? How many years will you hear the voice of Jesus saying to you: *Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out* (John 6:37)?

The world will cast you aside; it oppresses and alienates you. Jesus receives you, comforts you, and returns you to yourself. Come and build churches with us. Let us reconstruct in our own souls an Enea Church—princely, Christ-centered, alive, and immortal—until we actually see her raised up again on her site, a steadfast witness to our Christian Faith and to our national identity.

Without churches or monasteries we are aliens. Whoever destroys churches, destroys the very substance of our material and spiritual endurance on this land given to us by God. Young man, you are no longer alone. You are in the Church of Christ.

Radu Voda Church
First Wednesday of Great Lent
March 15, 1978

³ A church in Bucharest destroyed by the Romanian Communist government. See p. 71 above.—ED.

⁴ A tavern was built on the site of the destroyed Enea Church. *Dunarea* is the Romanian name for the Danube River.—ED.

THIRD HOMILY HEAVEN AND EARTH

March 22, 1978

*We, according to His promise, look for new heavens
and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

II Peter 3:13

YOUNG MAN, I am addressing you again today because I have chosen you from all those to whom I could be speaking, for you are most ready to hear the word of Christ. You are noble and pure; atheist education has not yet managed to darken the heaven within you. You still look upward, you can still hear the summons from exalted realms. The soaring of your spirit heavenward has not yet been barred through arbitrary concepts. The desire for heaven still exists within you; materialism has not yet made you its prisoner.

Therefore, I call you, young man, seven times. Seven are the praises of the day to God, according to the Psalmist: *Seven times a day have I praised Thee for the judgments of Thy righteousness* (Ps. 118:164).

Today we will speak of heaven and earth.

I will not frighten you, my friend, with colorful descriptions of the end of the world. We stand before death daily. Its presence is more suffocating than life itself, more real than life. Death is our nightmare every moment. You live with death by your side, friend, and yet you have not grown accustomed to its presence because you are alive and authentic—more alive and authentic than you realize yourself.

Heaven and earth—the concepts remind me of a poem I

once heard recited by the poet himself on television. He held up his right arm as he spoke. His face was a picture of forced inspiration and his voice recited in a monotone, as he tried to induce some kind of trance among his hearers. Each verse was supported by a chorus of children chanting an artificial litany spontaneously prescribed: "Can you count us, heaven, one, two ... three ..." and so forth up to ten. It was a curse, a defiance, thrown up at heaven. The poem was essentially saying that heaven might be able to count the poet and his companions one, two, three ... well and good, but it could not vanquish them. That was the basic idea. He was an atheist poet, patterned for the materialists.

But to which "heaven" did he address himself? Was it to the vault made up of the successive strata of the atmosphere? If so, his monologue was senseless. The poet was obviously addressing someone who could hear and even count, at least that is what one surmises from the conviction with which he spoke. How strange! For it was not a matter of inventing a trivial personification for the sake of the poem's rhythm, but the poet himself actually believed in the depth of his being that his appeal or invocation was being heard and that it was an act of heroism. He addressed the metaphysical heaven which he was striving to diminish and to deny—by affirming it!

It is this heaven I want to talk to you about, my friend.

In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth (Gen. 1:1). He created a heaven and an earth, a transcendence and an immanence, an aspiration for perfection and a material manifestation; a spaceless, timeless existence, on the one hand, and a space subjected to time, on the other. From the moment of creation to the present we have kept within ourselves the nostalgic memory of our union with God's heaven. We have never forgotten that there is a place in heaven to which we, or rather, heaven within us, aspires.

Tell me, young man, how much have you believed the

statements which you have heard repeatedly to the point of obsession—at school, on the radio, on television, in the newspapers, and at young people's meetings—that you descend from apes? And how honored did this revelation make you feel?! Noam Chomsky¹ has said that the most stupid human beings can learn to speak, but the most intelligent ape has never reached such a height of achievement.

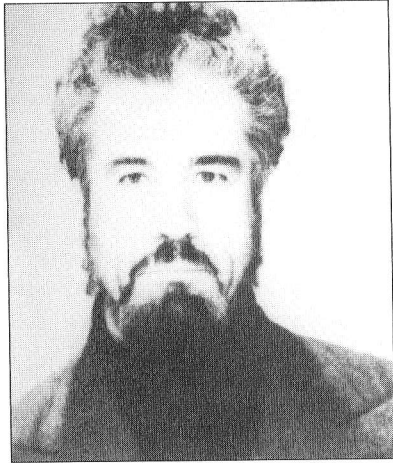
And now, behold, a voice from heaven addresses you: "You are My son!" And again, the voice confirms this for you, as it did before for Jesus when He lived in the world, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again* (John 12:28).²

You are heaven and earth; darkness and light; sin and grace. I know, friend, that you are tortured by questions concerning the meaning of your life in this world, and concerning the purpose of the world in general. Do the ready-made authoritarian statements in answer to your limited questions satisfy you: namely that "heaven is fiction, matter is everything, and it is matter speaking to you through your internal and external senses"? Matter organized its own structure and evolution by certain laws of great complexity before even the slightest rudiment of the human brain was formed. Thus, once the higher brain of man appeared—the only means by which matter recognizes itself—it could no longer recognize itself. And from that time until now human intelligence has been struggling in a sterile and vain effort to discover laws which heedless matter fixed in a period when there was nothing but darkness and unconsciousness!

What do you think of this game of non-intelligence which annuls all human intelligence, even the collective one? Do you

¹ Noam Chomsky (born 1928): a famous American linguist, the father of generative grammar.—ROM. ED.

² Every Christian, by virtue of the Mystery of Baptism, is a son of God, not by nature but by grace and adoption. In this context, "glorifying" has the meaning of theosis. "God became man so that man might become God." (St. Athanasius the Great, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 54.)—ROM. ED.



Photograph of Fr. George taken while he was under investigation, following the preaching of his Homilies to the Youth.

not see that the most elementary logic obliges you to admit the presence of an intelligence outside of this world?

But I call you to a much higher flight; to total abandonment; to an act of courage which defies reason. I call you to God. I call you to the One that transcends the world so that you might know an infinite heaven of spiritual joy, the heaven which you presently grope for in your personal hell and which you seek even while in a state of unplanned revolt.

This heaven, with its divine hierarchy and its divine light gradually descending only to return to its source which is God, does not count us in twos or fives or tens. For, my friend, in the eyes of heaven you are not a piece in a machine which drives you around; in the eyes of heaven you are a soul, a whole being, so free in your actions, so priceless in your worth, that God Himself, the Second Person of the Trinity, came into the world to be crucified for you.

How ridiculous it seems to you now—the curse of the poet who believed so much in heaven that he needed to have a chorus of children to hide behind as a shield! Do not believe, my friend, in the all-powerful nature of matter. This earth is finite. We can

destroy matter in minutes through fission and achieve oblivion if we do not admit the presence of God. The absolute claims of materialism are supported on a limited premise. You realize that the attributes of matter—such as infinity, eternity, and self-creation—are purely spiritual notions. To deny the existence of heaven is to deny all existence which does not fall into the orbit of my feelings. To deny the spirit means to admit that, for those moments when I close my eyes or block my ears, the world becomes non-existent.

And now, my friend, I want to recite to you the most beautiful poem ever written about heaven and earth. It is the beginning of the Book of the Evangelist John: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not* (John 1:1-5).

How can darkness confine light, or matter confine the spirit, or atheism destroy faith and annul freedom? The heavens count each of you, one by one; for each of you is a unique and unrepeatable creation, my friend, O man.

Radu Voda Church
Second Wednesday of Great Lent
March 22, 1978

FOURTH HOMILY FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP

March 29, 1978

He that hateth Me hateth My Father also.

John 15:23

SO, MY DEAR friend, we are halfway along the road on which we started together that first Wednesday before the Lenten Fast, called "Cheese-fare Week." On that occasion the call of Jesus resounded for the first time in your ears, hungry for truth; and your soul, yearning for the absolute, followed it.

At that point I was alone, but I knew that my voice was not *one crying in the wilderness*, for the words were those of Jesus. I knew that the words with which I called you, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his paths straight* into your hearts (Matt. 3:3), would penetrate your ears. And I was not mistaken. For look, how many we are today to confess, even if only within our hearts, faith in Christ and love for one another.

Why have I been calling you, my friend, and why have I put my soul into your hands, young one? Why have I believed in you to the point of implicating you in my actions of faith, and even to the point of placing my very life on the line for you?

Why? Because my spirit knew your soul even before you heard my words or even before we set eyes on each other. I knew of your disquiet and troubles, of your unhappiness and suffering. I understood long ago that your badness was but a shield against the world, and that your bravado was but a defense for your wounds. For you are my friend; we are bound together by a friendship which no one and nothing can destroy, because our

freedom is guaranteed by Jesus Himself. And our love is founded upon the Resurrected One, Who says to us, *Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you* (John 15:15).

Who has ever confessed such truths to you? On all sides you are surrounded by an atmosphere of secrecy, as within a conspiracy devised by the powerful of the day. A selective network prevents anything reaching you other than that which subjugates you to a certain idea or imposed concept. Where is your freedom to choose and where is the power of your word? Where is the exercise of that noble freedom given to you by God, based upon having the satisfaction of fulfilling your responsibility in history? Why then am I surprised that you do not know what this freedom is or how to use it? Why should I be amazed that you actually know nothing of friendship or love, or to whom to give them or how to preserve them?

Who in this world would be your true friend, or who would give his soul for you? In any social group to which you would belong, you are always excluded by the fundamental arguments themselves, which justify its existence as a social phenomenon.¹ Every exclusion based on these grounds puts you in the position of a slave. It is a social and philosophical secret which you are far from understanding. You are offered only the conclusion, authoritatively. Yet, if you were unfit to learn the road by which the conclusion came, how can you be fit to know the conclusion itself? And if you are fit to know the way, then why the mystery? Is someone afraid of your right to judge? or of your freedom? or of your friendship? Could religion or faith be an object of prohibition?

Slavery to ideas is as serious a form of slavery as any other. But

¹ The exact wording in the typed manuscript is unclear. It surely refers to the justification of the existence of various social groups. The attempt to avoid the Marxist terminology, "social class," is obvious.—ROM. ED.

Jesus offers you, through His Church, the deep mystery of His Divinity and His friendship. You are no longer called a slave but a friend, because you discover the mystery of Divine things.

You have avoided choosing Jesus as your friend for too long. Perhaps you were afraid of the ocean of spiritual freedom into which you would have to plunge. But Jesus has chosen you to hear His voice. He did so a long time ago: *Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain* (John 15:16).

The choice was made long ago, for Jesus has always loved you, young friend, but now you have responded to His call. In responding you are ordained to go and bear fruit that will remain. To be a prophet of Christ in the world in which you live; to love your neighbor as yourself and to make each man your friend; to proclaim through your every action this unique and limitless love which has raised man from the level of a slave to that of a friend of God; to be the prophet of this liberating love which delivers you from all constraint, giving you back wholly to yourself so you can offer yourself freely to God.

The most humiliating bondage is that which forbids you any theological flight, any attempt to transcend the immanent and its captivity. "You are a slave of my will," it seems to say to you, "and my will forbids you to believe in anything other than what I direct you to believe."

Why are you forbidden the right to leave the space in which you are kept a prisoner of feelings and reason? Why is only that which belongs to this dimension imposed upon you as reality and the rest dismissed and decreed as fiction? And subsequently, why are you not allowed to penetrate this so-called fiction with your own knowledge and thus shatter it? Is it that there lies somewhere the fear that this "fiction" is more real than that which is imposed upon you as "reality"?

A philosophical or theological system, especially if it is a way of life, cannot be destroyed from outside. From this standpoint

it remains unassailable to its besieger. Phrases like "religion is the opium of the people," or "religion was created by the exploiting classes," cannot even raise a smile today. They are purely and simply ignored.

Yet you, for you are young, are asked to take seriously the half-baked arguments of the atheist "bible" or the anti-catechism [column] from *Scinteia Tineretului*,² which hold fast only because of the prohibition preventing you from responding to them. In Christ freedom means liberation from sin and death, but on the social level—the struggle for ideas. In our country atheism takes a forced course, becoming more and more narrow. But life does not lie in the authority of the state. Faith, however, is on full wing, for it is a fact of life.

Authoritarianism creates bondage, faith gives freedom.

I read in *Contemporanul*³ (November 11, 1977) an article entitled "With Atheists on Religion," which contained declarations of some young people in an interview carried out by the magazine reporter. Every investigation into religion is for us a source of disquiet and fear because, according to officialdom, to be a believer is tantamount to betrayal of one's country. Nevertheless, in this interview the young people, who were all Party members, replied according to their beliefs, and their faith made them free. I suggest that you all read this article in *Contemporanul*—the official literary organ of the materialist ideology of the Romanian Communist Party. You will see there that the young people interviewed set themselves free from the bondage of terror that would have made them hide their true Faith and declare formal statements about atheism. They overcame their instinct of self-preservation and affirmed publicly and courageously their Faith and the freedom to choose it. They openly chose Christ and

² *Scinteia Tineretului* (Young People's Spark) was the Romanian Communist Party youth paper.—ED.

³ *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary) is a Romanian literary magazine.—ED.

His Church. All were young people like you, my friend, as good and generous as you, as brave as you. They were our friends. As a consequence, some of you wrote them precious words of encouragement, through which you wanted to tell them that they were not alone, that the best believe as they do, love as they do, and wish to express themselves as freely as they have done.

Friend, we are bound by the infinite love of Christ. Our faith in Him binds us together as One Body. Our common friendship binds us together, for we are all Christ's friends. Do not be afraid to affirm that you are His friend. Do not be afraid to reject an atheist ideology which has no other aim than to kill your soul as a metaphysical entity, or to cripple it within you. Do not be afraid to affirm that our nation has been Orthodox Christian since its inception, and that thirty years of enforced atheism and imposed [anti-Christian] propaganda cannot stop our people's aspiration towards the absolute.

Believe and love. Faith will make you free; love will unite you. You will be free in union with Jesus, and you will abide in His love.

See how high you have soared, my friend; you are now a friend of Christ! For this I love you, young one; for this I believe in you.

Radu Voda Church
Third Wednesday of Great Lent
March 29, 1978

FIFTH HOMILY
THE PRIESTHOOD
AND HUMAN SUFFERING

April 5, 1978

*Thou art a priest forever
after the order of Melchizedek.*

Hebrews 5:6

PERHAPS YOU HAVE been asking yourself, my young friend, why I have even been addressing you, and by what authority? What right do I have to give this message which is disturbing you and obliging you to face up to disquieting questions? Why have I come to confirm your own misunderstood fears and to open up to you perspectives which are so new and unexpected that they may break down your fragile balance of defenses?

Perhaps, by uncovering for you the purity and innocence which you did not recognize, I have made you even more vulnerable in this wicked world. I have made you more open to suffering, and it is natural that you should ask what is the purpose of suffering. Has it a finality or is it just a blind happening, a fate traced by the stars, or an endless ocean in which you swim without hope of reaching any shore?

I speak to you in the name of Christ and His Church, in the name of the priesthood to which Christ called me, because nothing in this world is an interplay of unconscious, arbitrary happenings. All things stem from a cause and hold fast towards an end which stands outside this world. The cause is God, the end is God. He is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega (cf. Apoc. 1:8 and 22:13).

But what is the image of this world? What certainty does it offer us, what happiness awaits us at the unknown corners of life, what consolations in misfortune?

I will not begin with life or death, neither with the beginning nor the end; but with the given: that which happens to us every day.

Have you asked yourself, young person, what is your purpose in the world and whether everything is reduced simply to that? If we were born to be slaves of matter—even if only as a philosophical justification—then the end of your life is slavery.

If our freedom is reduced to need and logic, then our freedom is slavery.

If all our knowledge is reduced to a sterile and never-realized understanding of the laws of matter, then our knowledge is slavery.

If our love is reduced to the struggle for existence, and our sacrifice is for the perpetuating of the species, then these things too are but slavery.

And finally, if all our convictions spring from an imposed, official doctrine, then they cannot be but slavery.

And in all this series, young friend, where is the place for your soul?

You sense that there exists, away from all the materialism with which you have been intoxicated, and far from the atheism which has been imposed upon you like a violent ideology, something vaster, more authentic, and yet closer to you personally than all that which suffocates you in this materialist bath. Your spirit within you propels you towards that “something,” as towards a world only envisioned and suspected. This world sees its own image, like the blue sky glistening in the sun, through the grid of prohibitions which this society imposes on you.

You must know, friend, that neither an atheist ideology, nor the materialist order, no matter how authoritatively it might be imposed upon you, is capable of raising up an absolutely

impregnable wall between you and the spiritual world. The soul cannot be made prisoner. This is a law which the materialists refuse to recognize at their own peril. On the spiritual level there is no captivity without hope.

Your teachers speak to you of atheism and secretly go to church! Behold a crack through which the golden light of the spiritual dimension reaches you. Your ideological leaders thunder and hurl lightning against religion, uttering the most foul curses, yet at the moment of disaster they make the sign of the Cross, asking for God’s help—as, for example, during the earthquake of March 4, 1977. Behold another crack through which the soul escapes the suffocating locker which the official ideology diligently built up for you.

In atheist meetings those obliged to speak condemn those who believe or who were caught in the criminal act of going to church. Yet away from the lying words, far from their false-toned platform proclamations, you discern their fear of being discovered as also having religious beliefs. The lie in which they so lamentably swim breaks down once more the wall of your incarceration, and you say as the sweet light breaks through, “Whence this unnatural light? It is a light foreign to our world.”

I spoke to you about these things in my previous four sermons. I will continue to speak about them—for I am a priest of Christ. God has revealed to us through love the mysteries of His works. And Jesus has commanded me to make it known to you so that you will say no more, “I did not know it.” I speak so that you might know that you can fly, and that only spiritual flight is truly exalted. The flight of materialism is flight with broken wings.

I speak openly to you about all these things because the Church of Christ has come out of the catacombs. She shines blindingly on the soil of this country which is highly esteemed in our hearts.

The Enea Church was destroyed—but who among us, Romanian and Christian, can forget it? A tavern, a symbol of

a concept which considers the Church a plague, will be put in its place. A tavern—so once more the people will be happy!... Woe to the architect who builds there, binding his name forever with the destruction of something that was a demonstration of the Romanian genius of construction and faith. Woe to the officials who believe that they can win glory and power by the destruction of churches and the construction of bars. Woe to the concept that considers an Agapia Inn more valuable than the Agapia Monastery. Woe to those who consider that the Romanian Patriarchate is a piece of history which can be placed in a museum, and who have not understood that it has a real life which is always present. It is not a historical relic but a living soul. Woe to those who bow to force, allowing destruction which will never be accepted by history.

I have said all these things to you because I am a priest. And because we are priests we obey the command of God which says that a burning light cannot be hid under a bushel but must shine before all (cf. Matt. 5:15).

I have said all these things, young friends, that you might judge if it is right before God to listen to men rather than to God (cf. Acts 4:19). For He Who gave Himself upon the Cross for the salvation of the world commanded us not to hide the Divine Truth. I have said all these things to you that you might understand that through faith we shatter walls and break down the bonds of prejudice and abuse, even if we shall have tribulation in this world (cf. John 16:33).

There is a continual battle between good and evil, between right and wrong, between freedom and captivity of ideas, between purity and corruption. All these battles take place on only one field of combat—the heart of man. I, a priest of Christ, address this heart; for as Pascal has said, “The heart has its own way of thinking, which reason ignores.”

What, then, does the priesthood mean? It means to be an enduring witness to human suffering and to take it upon your own

shoulders. To be the one who warms the leper at his own breast and who gives life to the miserable through the breath from his own mouth. To be a strong comfort to every unfortunate one, even when you yourself are overwhelmed with weakness. To be a ray of shining light to unhappy hearts when your own eyes long ago ceased to see any light. To carry mountains of others' suffering on your shoulders, while your own being screams out with the weight of its own suffering.

Your flesh will rebel and say, “This heroism is absurd, impossible. Where is such a man, where is the priest you describe so that I may put my own suffering upon his shoulders?” Yet, nevertheless, he exists! From time to time there awakens within us the priest of Christ who, like the Good Samaritan, will kneel down by the side of the man fallen among thieves and, putting him upon his own donkey, will bring him to the Church of Christ for healing. And he will forget himself and comfort you, O man of suffering.

Who else could be moved by your suffering today? Who else would bear your burden, giving you words of comfort? From whom else would you hear today the words of Christ: *Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Matt. 11:28).

I have seen you, my young friend, bullied by your elders, mocked and insulted for the simple crime of being young. I spoke to you then as one in weakness and pain, as a sensitive and defenseless being. Then I saw you, to my horror and joy, bow and kiss my hand, that of a priest of Christ who brought you comfort.

Because you have overcome death, to which atheist doctrine had condemned you, because you have been exalted above the ruins of fallen materialism through your youth and faith, I speak to you the words which Jesus spoke through the Apostles to the Gentiles. They sound absurd to the prisoner of matter and materialism, to those who substitute taverns for churches and

indecenty for suffering. But to you they will resound full of spiritual meaning and truth:

The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? (I Cor. 1:18-20).

Where are all these men, my friends? There are none of them left. But you have remained here alive and whole in the Church of Christ, a holy people, won by God, a foundation stone on which the Orthodox spirit of the Romanian people is built. You are its only salvation and preservation through this age.

Radu Voda Church
Fourth Wednesday of Great Lent
April 5, 1978

SIXTH HOMILY ABOUT DEATH AND RESURRECTION

April 12, 1978

*Verily, verily I say unto you,
If a man keep My saying,
he shall never see death.*

John 8:51

WE WILL TALK today, friends, about death and resurrection. What a strange and contradictory pairing for your ears which have heard only of death and life! You know nothing, my young friends, but the logical meaning of affirmation or of negation. Forcibly held by the materialist straitjacket, you know that water flows to the valleys, that fire burns and clouds contain electrical current. But this information is intended to make you sleep easy, with your ears bent to obedience and your understanding restricted to what is given to you. The universal remedy is offered to you like a message in a fortune cookie.

The deans of atheist ideologies have received "illumination" which has placed them in possession of absolute truth: the substitution of one glaring error for another only a little less flagrant. The only problem is that each new error is imposed on you as an absolute truth. The attempt to criticize such an ideological truth is considered a dangerous heresy. The officials of atheism begin at once to hunt the witch.

"The poles of our existence stretch between life and death," every materialist concept states. You, O man, are destined to be born and die by a caprice of nature, or by the simple play of

passion. You have no destiny. You follow the law of necessity and quantity, which through some miracle becomes quality, and you must accept this as the only law governing your life and death.

This means that you are the most unfortunate being on earth, for neither plants nor animals have any consciousness of life and death, but you do. You know that you live, and you especially know that you will die. Your whole life unfolds under the somber perspective of death. If our modern world has not increased at all the chances for life, it has multiplied infinitely the possibilities for death. Civilization and Death, the tragic horsemen of the Apocalypse, have been ravaging our planet for centuries. And no angel of the Resurrection is evident on the horizon; no archangel flashes through the heavens with his thunderous voice, to the dreadful horsemen, "Stop! In the Name of the Lord, stop!"

In the material heaven of the atheist, there are written the dismal words: "Nothing exists but life and death." And after them, a striking prohibition: "It is forbidden to believe in the resurrection!"

Friend, what has atheism given you in exchange for its dispossessing you of faith in the Resurrection? What gift has it given you for taking away from you Jesus, the Risen One? To what serene celebration has it called you when it made you labor on Pascha and Christmas? What purification and spiritual rest has it outlined for you after the Christian celebrations were soiled with the dirt of denigration and violent verbal slogans?

At another time, men sought to live out the time of God, dimensions stretching out towards infinity; today, with our eyes on the clock, we boringly measure time by meetings, like a curse. At another time we reconciled ourselves at Pascha to our fellow men with the words of the Paschal hymn: "Let us embrace one another. Let us speak, brothers and sisters, also to those who hate us, and in the Resurrection let us forgive everything." Today

on Pascha we are offered picnics, with alcoholic orgies which inevitably end up in violence.

You know, young ones, that an idea is valid, not through the fact that it exists, but through its positive effects. So judge for yourself, my friend; compare and appreciate. But above all, commit yourself. For you must choose between good and evil; between meekness and violence; between life and death.

But now I will take you with me onto another plane. To go on this unexpected flight you must renounce the materialistic prejudices which were planted in your mind. You must purify your heart of passions which your educators have cultivated within you since your childhood, calling them by shining and virtuous names. You must wipe out faithlessness and atheism, hatred and lack of respect for men, servility and violence, cowardice and arrogance. And thus purified, you must direct yourself toward the great festival of the Resurrection.

You must understand that the Resurrection of Christ is a renewal of the universe. Through your transformation the whole world is changed. At the Lord's Supper, when Jesus announced His approaching sufferings, these suffering words were to assume a mystical and saving value for the whole world. You must understand that suffering leads to death, but death leads to Resurrection. Yet if there be no Resurrection, if the only reality is death, then we are more unfortunate than stones. For in seeing things without faith, our life endures but from birth until death, which could be a day, or it could be seventy years; for "from the moment of your birth you are old enough to die." What sense, then, has this short interval in the face of the eternity of death? To die like an animal means, simply and purely, to die—like a stone loosened from its pile, or a calf struck by the axe of the butcher in the slaughterhouse. Such a death has nothing human in it. It is a nightmare, for beyond it there is no light, but only a terrible darkness. Human life appears as a tragedy because of such a death and the suffering which goes with it.

Whether a believer or not, no man can escape that ultimate judgment which momentarily precedes the agony of death and which is the tribunal of our own conscience. Who among us will feel totally innocent at that judgment?! Death with its somber absence of perspective terrifies us because our faith has weakened and because, in the general fear which rules the world, death appears no more as a liberation but as a supreme terror. For we have dehumanized death by denying the idea of God, and matter itself cannot dominate the spirit except by force.

The greatest and most rabid atheists of our century, who have not only made of matter a god, and of atheism a new mystical way, but have also used every means of persuasion to kill the true God in you, young friend, are all themselves afraid of their own disappearance, with an incurable, metaphysical fear. That is why they build grandiose tombs for themselves, attaching themselves to their earthly remains with a pitiable devotion. Tragically, they try to substitute their aspirations for eternity with these stones. The drama of their idolatrous lives ends in a more idolatrous death. They have lived in terror of suffering and have desired an instantaneous death, because death itself is nothing else than a useless and unbearable blind alley of suffering. They were not spared even this ultimate act of solidarity with mankind, namely death.

But Jesus has bestowed upon us a death without fear, a reconciliation between death and happiness, for He has brought to us the assurance that death is not the end, but a beginning: the beginning of eternal life—life through resurrection.

To love someone is to say, "You will not die," and to believe what you say. This inarguable faith is in fact the only fundamental truth which we feel in our genuine and profound love. I speak of all types of love. The mother, caressing her child, says to him with a faith that moves mountains, "You will not die." The lover, who whispers to the dear one words full of passion, says in effect with the same deep conviction, "You will not die."

Man's darkened history knows one moment of sunshine, which since then has been poured over humanity: I speak of the Sun of Righteousness, Christ Incarnate, the Son of God, Who came into the world to save it. What necessity could determine the Divine Perfection, Who knows no need, to become man? Nothing, save love. Only love [for man], since it is the only virtue which is both free and liberating. Not passionate love, but compassionate love. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16).

Thus Jesus became Love incarnate, tangible Love, crucified Love. It was so hard for men to believe what they saw—for perfect Love stood before them in human form. They wanted to see Him on the Cross, pushed to the limit, which is suffering and death—to verify His authenticity as if through fire, to see if Love would preserve its identity to the end. And Jesus passed the examination to which mankind subjected Him.

Remember, friends, His words from the Cross: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34). What greater proof of love could anyone give than this? And if you believe it when you tell your loved one, "You will not die," why do you not believe the words of supreme Love when He promises you eternal life? *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life* (John 5:24).

But you believe, and you know that in truth you believe, as I also know it, even if what you believe is not very clear, my young friend. Yet to those who make room in your young conscience for the practice of their violent doctrines, and to those who incarcerate your soul in the narrow forms of atheism, your faith is a reality which frightens them more than anything else.

Ideas are preserved through their truth. An idea which is maintained through force and violence is deeply undermined by

the falsehood within it. If materialists do not speak of death, it is because they are afraid of it and they pass over it in silence, just as they pass over all ideas which cannot be falsified.

Why was March 4 passed over in silence one year after the earthquake in 1977? Because death obliges you to think of God, of the life you have led and your moral responsibility. And they fear your capacity for intuiting metaphysical truth and your spiritual freedom, just as much as they fear death.

I speak to you about death as your single possibility to be victorious. For without resurrection both life and death become nonsense, absurd. The love of God, however, is the guarantee of our resurrection; and the Resurrection is the foundation of our faith in God and in Jesus Christ, His Son. It is the sublime and glorious occasion of a vital affirmation, an invitation to an amnesty of the past, as one French journalist has said; it is an invitation to a commitment in the future.

“Let us forgive all things because of the Resurrection.” Any other attitude means death. He Who died has also risen, and those who saw Him testified to the fact because they sealed it with their own suffering and death. We cannot doubt the truth of their accounts.

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week ... behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow (Matt. 28:1-3).

This is the majestic depiction of the Resurrection of the Lord, the One Who broke the bonds of death and brought to man the unexpected perspective of the universal resurrection.

From now on, young man, be not afraid of death. For Christ is risen, being the first fruits of the Resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15:20).

From the moment you discover this truth, your life has a new meaning. It will not end between four sides of a coffin and remain there—which would make our lives a useless mockery.

But passing through death, life issues forth to the glory of the resurrection.

Go, young man, and tell this news to all. Let the light of your angelic face shine in the light of the Resurrection—for today the angel in you, which I uncovered in my first address, has overcome the world in you. Tell those who until now have oppressed your divine soul: “I believe in the Resurrection,” and you will see them coil in fear, for your faith has overcome them. They will fret and shout to you in despair: “This earth is your paradise and your instincts are your heaven.”

Do not stop on your path, but go on, shining and pure, giving the light of that Resurrection on the first of Sabbaths to all. You, my friend, are the unique bearer of your deification in Jesus Christ, and with yourself you raise up the entire Romanian people to the height of its own resurrection. From death to life and from earth to heaven!

Radu Voda Church
Fifth Wednesday of Great Lent
April 12, 1978

SEVENTH HOMILY FORGIVENESS

April 19, 1978

*Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many,
are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom
little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*

Luke 7:47

WHEN I BEGAN this series of homilies, young friend, I did not know you. I only knew that you existed, that you were aspiring after something which the world could not give you, and I called to you as to my unknown brother, to show you a new road to walk.

I told you of Christ and His Church, of a new heaven and a new earth, of death and resurrection, and, above all, of the love of Jesus for you. Now I call you my brother, not just my neighbor; and I love you not with an abstract love which seeks after its object, but with a love which has found its object. For I know you and you are in my heart, as I am also in your heart. For if you have been coming here regularly to listen to me, you have done so because you have heard the voice of Jesus, that irresistible voice which has awakened you from your materialistic stupor and from the atheist lethargy into which you had sunk. You heard when Jesus said to you, "Come to Me!" and when you turned to Him, He put His ring upon your finger and new shoes upon your feet and the best robe around your shoulders (cf. Luke 15:22).¹

This is because you came wounded and bleeding. You were

¹ From the Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son.—ROM. ED.

oppressed by all that you had learned about the deification of matter and by all the prohibitions, raised by the fetishes of atheism, against your inner searching. Before your eyes, blind until then, was lit a light more enchanting than any song of a Siren. You left behind you the ravenous land of unbelief and the "husks" which you had eaten up until then. You forgot your teachers who said that this was the only food, without which you would die. And you heard the word of Jesus saying to you: *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* (Matt. 4:4).

Friend, when did you come to feed on the word of God, for this is what you are doing. For the word of God you have renounced your rest, your comfortable peace; you have overcome obstacles and prohibitions and have come here to be nourished on the word of Christ. Honor to you, my friend! God will give His word and His grace will be poured upon you in full. For it is written: *Everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened* (Matt. 7:8).

For your persistent asking, my courageous friend, Jesus will reward you. Because you had the courage to fight the habits and inertia which made you their prisoner; because you had the courage to break the restricting barriers which have been imposed upon you, like an uncrossable threshold, by the materialist ideology which believes that authoritarian demands do not need proof and that authoritarianism supplants faith; and, finally, because you had the courage to go forward, once released from slavery to their doctrines, towards that which emerged before you like a tangible love. And the further you advance, the better you understand that this infinite, crucified Love shines for you, O unique and unrepeatable man, as I called you elsewhere.

For your courage, you have received forgiveness. Do you not feel somehow in this spirit of love and quietness, which has now been placed within your soul, an assurance with which to walk on the new road of obedience to Christ? It is the grace of God which

comes to you. At first this grace visits you softly, but when, as you pray, you feel a fiery moment of ineffable joy sweep through your heart, and when on your knees, you feel an inexplicable affection in your soul and an imperative need to weep, know then that the grace of Christ is visiting you. Persevere, my friend, and grace will come more and more often, until it lives in you permanently. You will then know a continuous state of grace, and the inner peace whose source is the forgiveness of Christ will transform itself into spiritual joy, which will invisibly radiate through every pore of your being. You will know the happiness of being forgiven and of forgiving.

Our life is hard as long as our earth and heaven are but matter, and our spirit remains blind as long as atheism is our religion. But if, nevertheless, there exists something that can save you, my friend, even during your call to Christ, before your soul is flooded with the light of faith, then it is the joy of forgiving and of being forgiven. The common life is hard. You must know how to forgive. You must know not only how to forgive—which can bring you the vain satisfaction of pharisaical goodness—but how to be forgiven, which produces in one an utter humility.

I remember telling you about Jesus and His Church as a holy institution, a spiritual reality whose threshold you found long ago. But only now have you succeeded in breaking the multitude of invisible cords of certain concepts which have dragged you back. I spoke to you of churches scattered throughout this land of ours on which we walk with joyful or sorrowful feet. I have also shown you that we have endured down the ages through our humility and glory, through our indestructible Orthodox Faith. That love of our land and the bond of blood and language have been expressed in our vivid and true history by the erecting of churches by princes and magistrates as living letters of stone which time can never wash away. And even now if we see a church demolished to make room for a tavern, we say, “Never,” with all our agonizing soul, in opposition to those who believe that in



Radu Voda Church (the site of the “Seven Homilies”).

destroying churches and forbidding the word of God in schools, in the press, and even in men’s hearts, they have abolished the One by Whose mercy we live and survive.

I spoke to you about your freedom in Christ and how you should use it. I showed you that minerals do not know death or life except by analogies, but that they have only one state of being; that animals have an unconscious knowledge of life and death, but that you, my friend, know both life and death, and above all, resurrection—even though it is forbidden for you to believe in it. For Christ has called you to deification, not to the simple condition of survival, not even to your present state as man; but He has raised you above the human condition when He said, *Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am* (John 17:24).

These are the things that I have said to you, my young friend, and many similar things—all from the words of Christ. And for

this my brethren hate me and have forbidden you to come and listen to me—you who were thirsty for the word of God and who wanted to know if you were totally condemned or if you had been chosen for a more exalted destiny, for resurrection. They closed the gates on you and erected walls of obstacles in front of you. You who wrote in one of your letters (for each letter I have received from one of you represents all of you) about your search for that which transcends matter and the immanent that is deified nowadays, about your whole hope to embark upon the road of truth and about the joy of catching a glimpse of the One Who is the Truth, the Way, and the Life—you wrote to me several days ago: “What joy to hear talks about God and about a world other than that of matter from a secular professor in a secular college the other day!² It was like an unbelievable dream. And to understand that this layman was enlightened by a spirit of faith which he made known to us not only by his words but also by the light which radiated from his being. Thus I almost envy you theologians for knowing and living that which we do not know and yet towards which our whole being aspires.”

Or you, young professor of thirty-three years of age, who said, “All these years of teaching I have spent driving students from the Church with a club. But now I have understood what led them there and why they returned to the Church, forgiving me. I understand now that if you, pupils in the first class in seminary, believe so strongly and know so much about the deep things of the human soul and about a world which I have forbidden to my students, then I ought to believe more than you.”

Do these words not remind you of Paul on the road to Damascus? For if we admit with Albert Camus that every man passes at least once over the Mount of Olives, we ought also to admit that every one of us has experienced the road to Damascus also—when the voice of Jesus resounded out to us: *Saul, Saul,*

² He was speaking about the poet Ioan Alexandru and his classes. (Noted in the margin of the original manuscript.)—ROM. ED.

why persecutest thou Me?... It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks (Acts 9:4–5).

No man is exempt from suffering. If we suffer, let it be for Christ. If we forgive, let us forgive for Christ's sake. May truth stand before us always. “Truth before peace” is how one engineering student put it as he listened to these “Seven Homilies to the Youth.” And this “peace” is not the peace of Christ in John 14:27, nor the peace between the two world wars as defined by Titulescu,³ but that spiritual and material comfortableness for which we trample underfoot our principles and justice; that state of “tolerance” which helps us to go to bed each night with a compromise in our heart, only to wake up the next morning with a new compromise under our pillow.

And now I will read to you a statement by one of the students regarding the “Seven Homilies,” since several statements have been taken at the Theological Institute, by forcing the students against their conscience to write them. We know what a written declaration means—what a source of fear and terror it releases, as is so often the case. I have chosen one statement from a number of declarations given to me because this one is clearer (not more correct; for all are equally correct).

“I declare that on Wednesday, April 12, at 9:00 PM, I listened to the ‘Sixth Homily to Young People’ given by Fr. George Calciu-Dumitreasa, in the Radu Voda Church, Bucharest. I had also listened to the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Homilies, but in other circumstances.... I declare that I met on this occasion, as well as during his other sermons, a large number of students from the Theological Institute, doctorate students in theology, students from other departments, people whom I had never seen before, as well as a great number of seminarians. The atmosphere in the church was always impressive, and I experienced genuine moments of spiritual exaltation and concentration. With respect

³ Nicolae Titulescu (1882–1941) was a Romanian diplomat who was involved in the League of Nations.—ED.

to the content of these sermons, I declare that I am in total agreement with the ideas expressed by the Father Professor, who did nothing more than elucidate in a realistic way the problems which demand attention, while adhering strictly to the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

“Rev. Professor George Calciu was my teacher for a number of years at the Theological Seminary in Bucharest, from where I graduated, and he has contributed in the greatest measure to our formation as pupils and true servants of the Lord Christ and of the Church of the people.”

Is it necessary to add anything? Except my homage to this student's courage, and to all of you who, trampling over instincts of survival, have placed “truth before peace” and have come here. Perhaps I should also add the joy that these declarations—both written and spoken—have brought me along with your presence in this church. Finally, I should also add my sense of submissiveness to you all, for you are good and you love Jesus more than me, for without being His servants you would not have been predisposed to sacrifice your comfort to come and express your love for God.

Let us pray for all our brethren who love or hate us, those who have done us harm or good, those who have forgiven us or have not forgiven us. Let us forgive everyone everything.

I will close, my young friend, this final “word” to you with a quotation from the homily of St. John Chrysostom which is read on the night of the Resurrection in every Orthodox church, for Pascha—the Day of Resurrection and our joy—is approaching. Then, you will know that Christ is risen and that we will be risen with Him. When I say that you will know, I mean that your heart and soul will discover this certainty of resurrection, which has been long within you and by virtue of which you are here.

“If any have labored from the first hour, let him receive today his rightful due. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him in no wise be in doubt, for on no wise shall he suffer loss. If any be

delayed even until the ninth hour, let him draw near, doubting nothing, fearing nothing. If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him not be fearful on account of his lateness; for the Master, Who is jealous of His honour, receiveth the last even as the first. He giveth rest to him that cometh at the eleventh hour, as well as to him that hath labored from the first hour.... Wherefore, then, enter ye all into the joy of your Lord; both the first and the last.... Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice! Christ is risen, and life flourisheth! Christ is risen, and there is none dead in the tombs!”

I have read these lines to you that you might know them. I have read this homily because Passion Week is before us, before which every mouth is dumb. I have read these words that you might find that, in the days which follow, we will live in spirit and in flesh the Calvary of Jesus. At the top of Golgotha there awaits us forgiveness and resurrection. I have read these truths to remind you that this Romanian people has always climbed the hill of history's Golgotha, ceaselessly re-creating in spirit the way of Jesus and anticipating in faith this Resurrection which you, my friend and brother, will bring forth as a torch burning in your heart.

Radu Voda Church
Sixth Wednesday of Great Lent
April 19, 1978

be changed like that of Jesus on Mount Tabor. For such priests sanctify the world and bring a new spirit of truth and justice, a heavenly love and Christ-centered consolation to a world of suffering.

Our people are like a ripe harvest, waiting to be gathered in for Christ: *Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest* (John 4:35). But where are the worthy harvesters? Lift up your eyes and, I tell you, you will see how few there really are. And the wheat is wasting in the field outside of the Kingdom of God.

Be most diligent harvesters yourselves. Forget your instincts, which are overpowered by your teachers, whose principles are: "I have a mother, father, sons, and daughters, too large a salary to accept the sacrifice and suffering of Christ and His Church." Lift up the eyes of your spirit to the people who believe in you and for whom there exists no other spiritual salvation than in the Church of Christ.

Be harvesters! Be pastors! And above all, pray to God to give this nation good harvesters who will not love parents and children more than Christ, Who seeing the multitude *was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest* (Matt. 9:36-38).

Let us pray to God for the harvest and for the reapers!

A NEW WORD TO THE YOUTH CHRIST HAS RISEN WITHIN YOUR HEART!

In 1990 Fr. George gave the following homily on a trip to Romania. After the fall of Communism in Romania in 1989, Western culture had rushed to fill the void left by the removal of Ceausescu's authoritarian government. American films and music inundated the country, while non-governmental organizations arrived to "educate" and "enlighten" Romanians with Western values at odds with the Orthodox Faith. Seeing the state of this new generation, numerous young people, especially the students of the Romanian Orthodox College Student Association, asked Fr. George to deliver a new homily. Thus, twelve years after his original "Seven Homilies," Fr. George prepared the following new "word" for the young people of Romania.—ED.

*Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping:
and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the
sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the
head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had
lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?*

John 20:11-13

WHAT NEW WORD can I share with my young friends? Since then¹ many long years have passed. A new generation has arisen, tested by a unique experience and, perhaps, touched by a new skepticism born from contact with the Western world, estranged from the right Faith.

¹ The year 1978, when the first seven homilies were delivered.—ED.

Perhaps today, even more so than when I delivered those “Seven Homilies to the Youth,” the soul of the young people—whom I consider as much my friends as I did back then (because I still speak in the name of Jesus Christ)—is increasingly assaulted by mental illnesses. This is brought about by the treacherous propaganda from the West, under the mask of liberal democracy, which often takes on the appearance of Christianity, just as Satan dons angelic light to deceive as many as possible.

Back then you were oppressed through force, which created within you a natural resistance against a system of materialistic thinking and formed within you a mystical dimension. You, my young friend, did not believe anything that was told to you then, because, as you know, under the guise of relative truth, which the rulers of the times had proclaimed as absolute truth, a complete and totalitarian lie was hidden.

Back then the voice of the priest reached you through the spoken homily at the price of his liberty and even his life, and the truth of Christ consoled a soul wounded by the violence of political language and physical terror.

Back then you were told of Communist internationalism and of an exclusively materialistic existence, which sought to kill the universal love of the Savior. Then you were told that you were a mere instrument, without freedom, in the social and political mechanism, and that only integration into this necessity would bring you freedom. However, Christ is calling you to a greater freedom of a totally different order when He says, *Sanctify them through Thy Truth; Thy word is Truth* (John 17:17) and, in another place: *Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free* (John 8:32).

Is it not so, my friend, that back then the Christian Truth appeared crystal clear and easily understandable to you?

Today, in the net of lies which surrounds you from all sides, are you still able to distinguish the Truth from the lies as easily?

Under the invasion of American and Protestant-style

“evangelization,” in which partial truths of Christianity are preached before a satanic background of rock music and in the form of a “cheap sham spectacle,” full of shrieks and false tears, with miracles and healings falling upon your confused heads, how can you find the true Christ in your heart?

Yesterday, under the terror of Communist atheism, you could robe your soul with the body of the Lord, anointed with myrrh, as when Joseph and Nicodemus put Him in the tomb.

Today, seduced by the infernal rhythm of drums and the barbaric rhythm of sectarian preaching, you no longer find God, and you stand, like Mary Magdalene, crying in front of the empty tomb of your soul.

Who stole God from you? Which gardener has hidden Him from you, so that now you are alone and crying?

Return to the simple truth of the Faith and to the account of the Resurrection of Christ! Run like Peter and John towards the Lord’s tomb, stoop down, enter, and you shall see and you shall believe, knowing the Scripture, that Jesus must needs rise from the dead!

Perhaps yesterday, when Communism tried to wrench any faith from your heart and to form you into a mere cog in the gears of the social machinery, you, out of a spirit of youthful revolt had more of Christ in your soul than you have today.

Today you are attacked from all sides with the sound of the rhythmic drumming of all the anti-Christian organizations, which wish to create an amorphous mass out of the world’s nations, easily led to their intended destination. So it happens in the political world—a few individuals are anointed in secret and installed to govern all people from positions of international power. They determine which nations have the right to bear children and which must abort them; they substitute themselves for God and sketch the destiny of nations according to their pleasures or interests. Whoever does not submit shall perish!

This totalitarianism is expressed, more and more, even

in the life of the Church, through Masonic-style ecumenical international organizations, which actually impose a new religion, a new liturgy divested of sacredness, the Holy Mysteries, and ritual, like a modern theatrical production.

These so-called religious theaters—which you see gathered in all the public marketplaces, led by Western youth—represent the desanctification of Christianity and the Liturgy. Unfortunately, even some Orthodox clergy have taken part in the de-sacramentalization of the Liturgy, as in the case of the brochure *Reconciliation—the Gift of God and the Beginning of New Life*, published in Iasi, Romania, in 1995, where among the editors is found an Orthodox priest (of course, not without the approval of his hierarch). This work, in its liturgical part, is an attack on the sanctity of Orthodox Liturgy and a negation of its Mysteries.

How can you not stand, like Mary, in front of an empty tomb? All these attacks are pointed against you, young man, especially against you, because you are more deprived of protection and you are more sensitive to injustices. Your attackers want to tell you that you are an empty tomb if you don't submit to them.

However, it is written: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world* (I John 4:1).

Who can test today if the spirits come from God when the Orthodox and Catholic priests themselves preach an anti-Christian messianic message, similar to the sects established by rebels against the Church? Who protects you from straying, my young brother? Who is to enrobe your heart with the presence of the true Christ and not with the false christs of this age?

As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the

Father) full of grace and truth.... And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace (John 1:12–14, 16).

You were born, young man, not of the desire of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but from God, Who became flesh for you and of Whose fullness you partook, and grace after grace you have received.

This grace is a shield against fornication, to which your modern teachers push you. They tell you that liberty is the eradication of any obstacle facing you; that a good conscience is a talisman; that honor is an old-fashioned, obsolete notion; that sexuality is an unleashing of the beast within you; that your likeness to Christ is a story created by the priests; and that the love of God and neighbor is a new way of inhibiting your personality. Search in your heart, beyond this diabolical thicket of lies, and you will find the Truth, the only one that shall set you free! And the supreme Truth is the Resurrection, the Resurrection of Christ, as the lever for your own resurrection.

Now we approach Passion Week, which we meet filled with pain and repentance for our participation in the slaying of Christ, not only by the mere decadence of the old Adam but through our actions at every moment and our daily falls. Through these we have wounded Him Who is the ideal of human perfection. The priest will proclaim from the altar “the death of God” again and again during the twelve Passion Gospels in a wearying and haunting way. On Great Friday, we will weep like the Holy Virgin for His death: “O my sweet springtime, O my sweetest Child, where has Thy beauty gone?”² We will be mournful and full of tears, but never despairing, because we know that the time has come when the Son of man will be betrayed and delivered into the hands of the high priests, who will judge, condemn, and give Him over to death, but on the third day He will rise (cf. Matt. 16:21, 17:22–23,

² From the third stasis of the Lamentations, Matins of Great Saturday, in Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, trans., *The Lenten Triodion* (South Canaan, Pa.: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 641.—ED.

20:18–19; Mark 10:33–34; Luke 9:22, 18:31–33). This is why we sing during the Lamentations service: “As a lion hast Thou fallen asleep in the flesh, O Savior, and as a young lion hast Thou risen from the dead, putting off the old age of the flesh.”³

With torn flesh, ravaged by torments, Christ arises as a lion cub, renewed through the total spiritualization of the body. As a lion cub, He comes out of the myrrh-filled linen shroud, leaving it untouched yet retaining its form. As a lion cub He ascends, illumined, through the stone of the tomb without leaving a trace—the stone which the angel would later remove in order to show the women that Jesus was no longer in the grave: *Come, see the place where the Lord lay* (Matt. 28:6).

Christ is Risen!

Paradoxically, the priest who said to you that Christ had died now proclaims, in the brilliant light of the Truth, that He is risen. He knows and he preaches the Truth of the Resurrection with conviction. Friend, you are no longer an empty tomb! The Risen Christ dwells in you and His joy remains wholly in you.

During Pascha of 1981, I was in the prison of Aiud. Early that morning, when the guards were changing shifts, I broke every diabolic rule of the prison by saying to the guard (one of the cruelest): “Christ is Risen!” He hesitated a few moments, in which, like lightning, I saw passing on his face the innocence of childhood, when his mama or grandma led him by the hand to church and when he heard the angelic voice of the priest saying: “Christ is Risen!” After this moment of hesitation, he softly answered me: “In Truth He is Risen!” It was for me the most assuring proof that I was never misled in this regard: the one who was torturing me was confirming the Resurrection of the Lord! I cried in silence, with tears of joy.

³ From the first stasis of the Lamentations, Matins of Great Saturday, in Mother Mary and Archimandrite Kallistos Ware, trans., *The Lenten Triodion*, p. 627.—ED.

Later, Colonel Prisacaru⁴ came to prove to me, there, behind the bars, in cold and hunger, through Marxist arguments, that it was stupid to believe and affirm the Resurrection of Christ. He entered the cell and I said, “Christ is Risen!” He gazed fixated a few seconds and asked me in return, “Did you see Him?” “I did not see Him, Mister Colonel, but I believe in the Resurrection through the authority of those who saw Him risen and confessed it: the Apostles and disciples, the myrrh-bearing women, the soldiers who lay as dead men, penetrated by the light of the Resurrection, the millions of martyrs who, in the moment of their martyric deaths, have had the vision of the Risen Christ. You have not seen the North Pole, but you don’t doubt its existence, through the authority of those who informed you. You have not seen Marx or Engels or Lenin but you believe in their existence and, I assume, in their theories, through the authority of those that speak to you about them....”

I was wasting myself in a stupid and cadaverous argument, using human proofs, dead before they were uttered, when the supreme Truth consists in its simple proclamation. I was encountering in some way the same circumstances as had the holy Apostle Paul when he made use of philosophy before the Athenian citizens, speaking about the irrational, anti-rational act of the Resurrection (cf. Acts 17:16–34). I was slaying, little by little, the spirit of truth which the previous guard had kindled in my cell through the simple confirmation of the Resurrection: “In Truth He is Risen!”...

Young friend, I can enumerate Biblical proofs of the Resurrection; I can send you to the tomb with Peter and John to see how Jesus came out from the linen cloth, without changing its form, or through the rock, without breaking it; I can tell you of all of His appearances to the Apostles, disciples and saints.

⁴ Not the same person as the prison guard and torturer mentioned above.—ED.

They are all, in my mouth, smoke and haze, if the Spirit of God does not speak through me.

Christ has risen in your heart even before I or someone else could tell you. And you knew this fact and confirmed it, the same as my guard, when you cried from the deepest unarguable conviction: "In Truth He is Risen!"

Hristos a Inviat! Adeverat a Inviat!

Do not run after spectacles; do not run after cheap miracles performed on stage; do not run to the senseless babbling of the sectarians: their incomprehensible words are serpents coming out of their mouths! Do not run to the theatrical preaching of any of them: they are all lies; they are all hidden weapons of Satan! Go to the simplest truth, to the most indisputable and even more undisputed:

Christ is Risen! In Truth He is Risen!

Translated from Romanian by Adrian Toma, Elena Chiru, Adrian Ulmer, and Iacob Maziasz.

PART FOUR

DIVINE LIGHT IN THE DEVIL'S LAIR