



Monastic Musings

Living in and Practicing the Presence of God

Spring/Summer 2019

*This edition is dedicated to the memory
of an old friend of the Community.*



Very Reverend David Michael Allen, CMDR USN (retired), completed his watch on this earth on April 11, 2019. Fr. David was 71 years old and had served as a priest within the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America from June 1995 when he was ordained as a priest until his death. He served with the US Navy and retired from there after completing over 20 years. He was a veteran of the Viet-Nam war and served in many naval assignments during his career.



Fr. David, the boatswain pipe has notified you that your watch here on earth has been completed, but your new watch as an angel of God has just started. May you continue to serve proudly as you always have done.

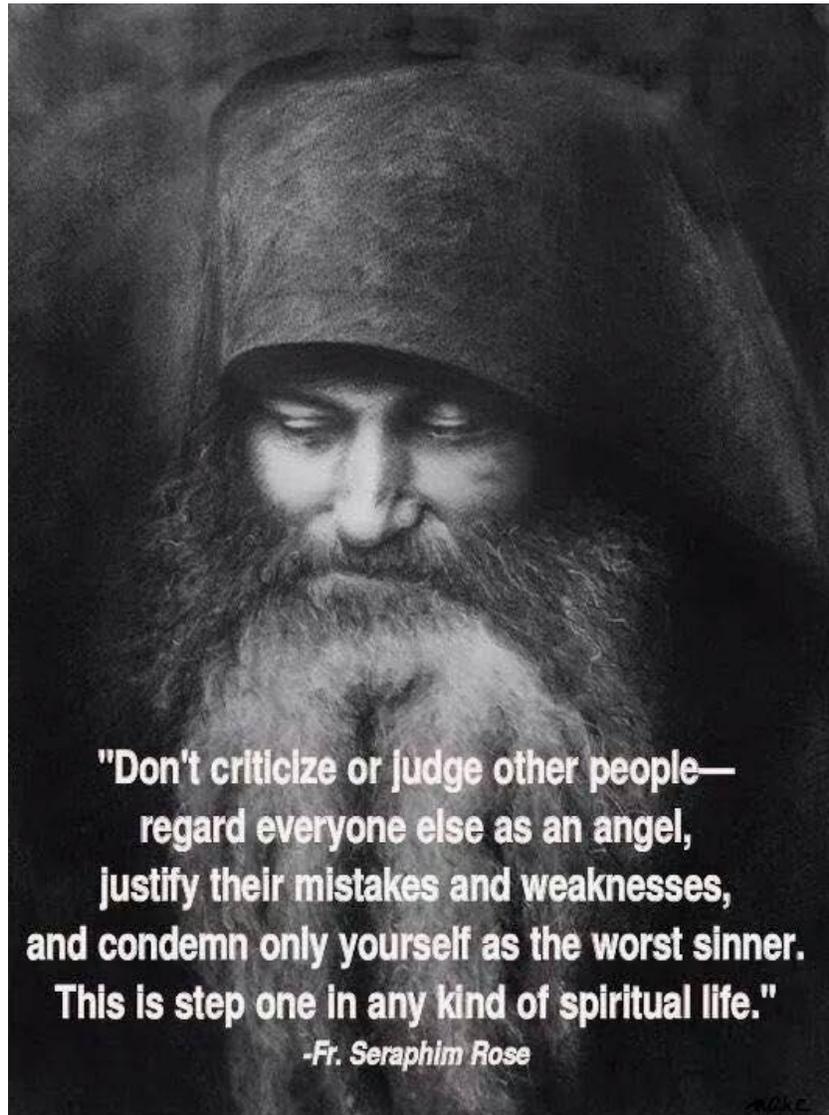
Welcome to a New Year

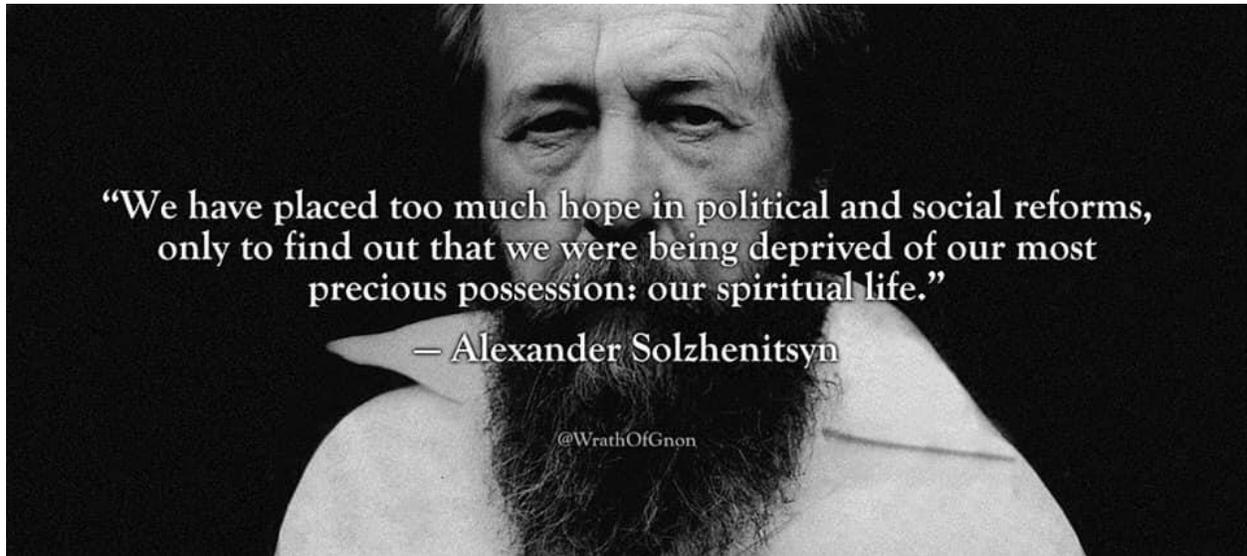
by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

Starting with this newsletter, the Community will be publishing twice a year. The Community members felt that it was better to decrease the number of publications and allow for more in depth writings.

As I sit at the computer, it is hard to really decide what I want to write about. There is so much going on in this world – good and bad. I have many topics that have passed through my thinking only for me to say, no I am not wanting to “touch that subject for the following reason ...”. I know part of the issue is the political atmosphere present within the United States over the last couple of years. I know for me personally, it is so difficult to teach others about the love of our Creator,

when there are so many who call themselves Christians teaching hate filled ideas. So I have decided to do something radically different with my “writing” this time. I have gathered some quotes from some Orthodox saints that I will offer here to you. These quotes are from **A Light In A Dark World, Eastern Orthodox Patristic Memes and Quotes**, a group found on Facebook. Thank you my brothers and sisters for such wonderful spiritual sharing!

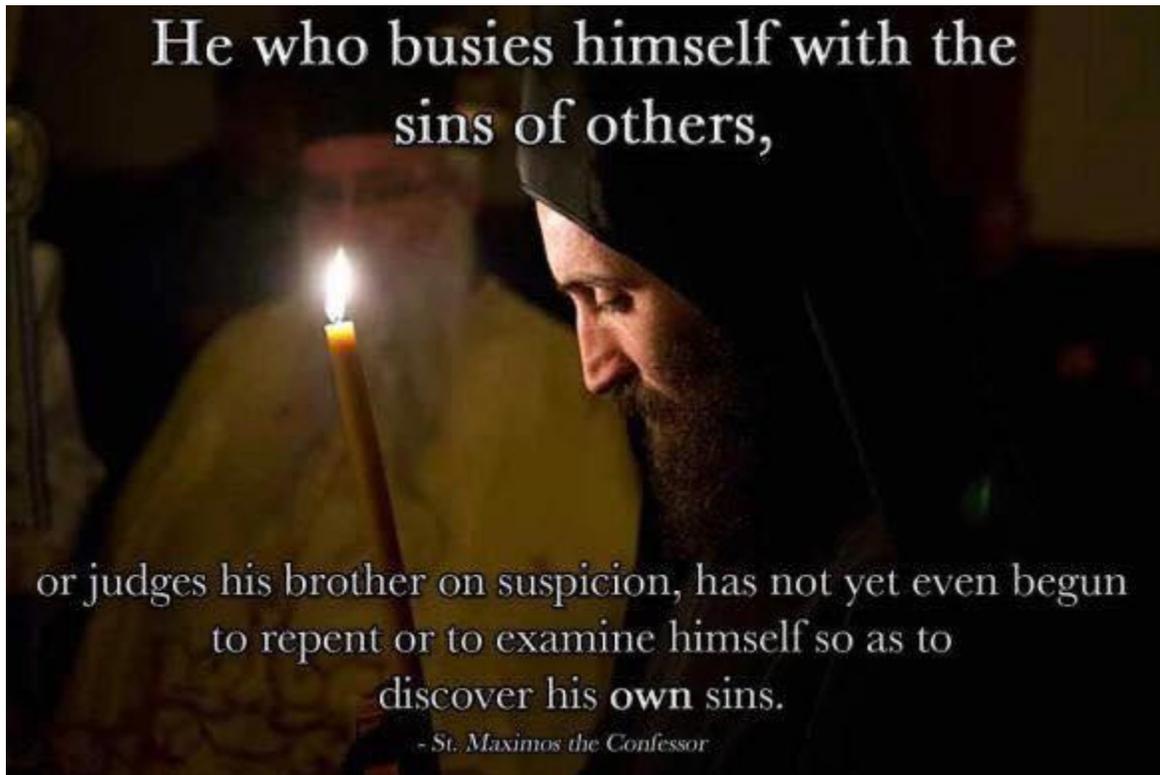




“We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms,
only to find out that we were being deprived of our most
precious possession: our spiritual life.”

— Alexander Solzhenitsyn

@WrathOfGnon



He who busies himself with the
sins of others,

or judges his brother on suspicion, has not yet even begun
to repent or to examine himself so as to
discover his own sins.

- St. Maximos the Confessor

May we all learn that our spiritual life is the most important thing for each one of us. It is through our spiritual life that we are able to nurture those around us to lead positive loving lives. It is through this that we are able to see the TRUE CHRIST in those who we meet in our daily walk.

It has become time to listen to the ancient spiritual fathers and mothers to learn how to live our daily lives in the way God has always wanted for us.

Avoiding the Crowds by *Father Ron Lahti*

Amma Syncletica said, "There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the town, and they are wasting their time. It is possible to be a solitary in one's mind while living in a crowd, and it is possible for one who is a solitary to live in the crowd of his own thoughts."

This saying from one of the Desert Mothers is encouraging to me as a "monastic in the world". I've lived in cities most of my life. Even though I now live in a comparably smaller city than Boston or New York, I am still surrounded by crowds and noise and bustling. All of the activity could be a distraction to anyone who is trying to live in a mindful, prayerful way. But, as Amma points out, there is a way to live in peace and prayerfulness even in the middle of the crowds – whether crowds of people or the crowds of our own thoughts.



The eastern fathers and mothers have shared their experiences of "collecting their minds into their hearts". That is to say, they learned a way of keeping aware of where their thoughts were settling at any given time and to keep from drifting into the memories of the past or fantasies of the future. The elders have left us many ways to work on this awareness. Jews still wear *tzitzit* – those fringe or strings hanging from a small garment or prayer shawl – and they keep their heads covered to constantly remind them that there is One in whose Presence they always stand. Eastern Christians learned *hesychasm* – stilling the mind in the "heart" (the Presence of G-d within) – through the constant repetition of the Jesus Prayer. Western Christians wear a scapular or cross or carry rosaries. Buddhists wear or hold a *mala* (prayer beads). In the Zen Buddhist tradition one is taught to always ask "Where am I?" at any given moment – in fact in the Plum Village communities of Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Han, a bell is sounded throughout the day at irregular intervals inviting anyone who hears it to take note of where their thoughts are and collect them to the task at hand.

Whatever the prop one decides to use, the point continues to be to bring the mind into the control of the soul and to focus one's attention on the present moment and thus act and speak in thoughtful, intentional ways. The result, as many are discovering, is a peaceful heart and increased focus and concentration which brings clarity of thought. If followed and maintained, gathering one's thoughts in the sanctuary of the Heart leads inevitably to fulfilling The Great Life Goal – whether one call it Enlightenment, Oneness with G-d, The Mind of Christ.

God's Sustaining Love
by Rev. Myrella LeClair

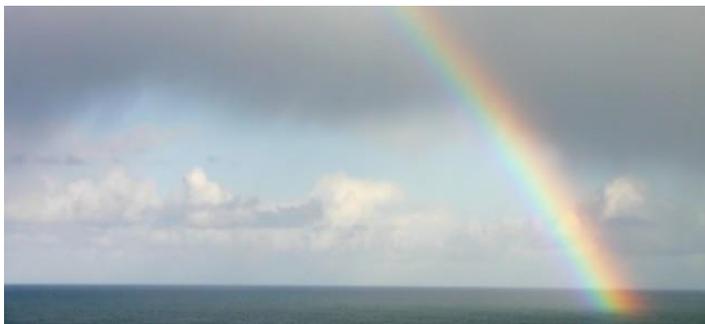
What has happened to our country and to the world? People who profess to believe in Jesus preach hatred and violence toward others. Did not Jesus tell us that his greatest commandment was for us to love one another? There are no "ifs" and no "buts" after that commandment! There is only one "do": "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." So many people seem to be misguided and have chosen to be sustained by hate rather than God's sustaining (life-giving) Love.

I see a parallel between what is happening today and what happened at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Stop and think for a moment: if we truly believed that "Christ is risen and He has deemed us worthy," would we be so very concerned about who has the most power when we need to be enveloping all of creation in God's holy and healing Love? If we only see our own or other's hatefulness, then we have chosen to ignore what Jesus accomplished through His death, resurrection and ascension: our salvation, eternal life, and union with God – that no matter what happens in our earthly lives, we are sustained by the forever present love of God:

"Only the Love of God will protect you in all circumstances. It will lift you out of every trial, and raise you high above all the perceived dangers of this world into a climate of perfect peace and safety. It will transport you into a state of mind that nothing can threaten, nothing can disturb, and where nothing can intrude upon the eternal calm of the Son of God."

(ACIM, Second Edition, Workbook Lesson 50, page 79)

Are our fears generating hatred? Are we responding to hatred with hatred? Do we sometimes feel as if we are walking through the valley of death? If you are being honest with yourself, the answer to those questions will be "yes". We all need to turn to God and remember that "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." This statement from the 23rd Psalm is a powerful statement of truth regarding God's sustaining love for us. We are never alone even when our fearful and hateful thoughts make us feel alone. We can choose to abandon God just as the disciples did when they became frightened and thought that they also were going to be tortured and killed just as Jesus was. Keep in mind, however, that the disciples and people living at that time did not have our awareness of what Jesus had accomplished. We know that Jesus arose in glory and gave us eternal life! He taught us that that true sustenance is given to us only by God.



Now is the time for each one of us to affirm this truth in the face of whatever is occurring in and around us. Jesus told us to be of good cheer for he had overcome the world. He was not just talking about the fact that death could not end life, but that no matter what fears and hatred befall us, we can move through them to the truth of God's sustenance. Throughout the day,

spend time with God and give thanks that you are now and forever sustained by the Love of God. There is nothing to fear!

In Closing

by: Right Reverend Barb Martzall

Let each and every one of us learn to find our personal inner peace constantly throughout the day. Working every moment not to allow our egos/minds to get side tracked from who we truly are – the child of God (or whoever you call your Spiritual Creator), thus we are made in their nature. We are all created to be a loving person – to be walking this world spreading LOVE and LIGHT!

Blessings be upon each and every one of you as you walk through your life.

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**All writings are the views of the author(s) on a particular subject
and are meant to challenge your thinking so as to help you grow in
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