



Contemporary Cases of Miraculous Help

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Preface.

The stories of God's miraculous help, related here, are all from the twentieth century. They make up an insignificant part of what is known through oral tradition and of what is described in other books. The idea for this collection came about after meeting with Lidia Vladimirovna Kaleda — the wife of the wonderful pastor Father Gleb Kaleda. She showed us a neatly hand-bound typed collection named "The Uninvented Stories" that she found, going through Father Gleb's extensive archive. We were struck by the simplicity and sincerity of the stories, most of them collected during the Soviet rule, at a time when you could find yourself sitting in the "big house" for such a work.

All of our storytellers are calm, soberly-minded people that could in no way be suspected of abnormality or hallucinations. In addition, these are people of deep faith, for whom it would be unheard of to sin and make up such tales. We deemed it necessary to begin this book with pastoral teachings on the basics of the Orthodox approach to miracles, that help to discern true miracles from false ones.

The subject of miracles is further complicated by the fact, that it is connected with a person's worldview or ideology, and his attitude toward God and the supernatural. Staunch materialists, on principle, will not recognize anything as supernatural, even though these manifestations are not rare.

The opposite attitude to unexplainable phenomena is found among people who consider themselves to be Christians, but are not living in the Spirit: they are ready to subscribe any unexplainable event to the category of miracle. At present, there is a certain attraction to all that is mysterious and "not of this world." Everyone remembers the stir about barabashkas (kitchen witches), UFO's, mediums with "voices from outer space," and the desire to communicate with spirits, and so on.

This type of gullibility is dangerous, because it turns people into prey for all sorts of charlatans, and

even worse, draws them into the realm of fallen spirits, who are very sly and crafty. For this reason, the Church insists that everyone have a *sober* attitude toward the mysterious and to *investigate* whether they are a manifestation of God's good Providence or the enemy's. This collection is published with the goal of helping people better understand this issue.

Miracles and Reality.

What is a miracle and how should it be treated? We will try to define a *miracle* from a scientific point of view.

Science is built on facts and on theories that explain them. A fact is that which any person, anywhere, can repeat under the proper conditions. Of course, it is also important that he have the proper training, but it is completely irrelevant whether he is honest or not, an egotist or an altruist, believer or unbeliever. Besides that, this fact must be recorded by our sensory organs or with the help of an apparatus. Miracles are real — but they are not ordinary facts that can be produced and repeated at will.

True, there is one *miracle* that is *always* performed during the Liturgy, which is the *miracle of the Eucharist*. But it is inaccessible to the sensory organs; this miracle can be experienced only by the believing soul.

There is another well-known miracle, *The Holy Fire* or *Holy Light*, which repeats itself every year in Jerusalem on the Orthodox Pascha. All who congregate at the Tomb of the Lord when the Fire comes down see this miracle, and everyone can touch the flame with their hands, which does not burn for some time. This has been tested by thousands of witnesses. The candle burns, and a hand or even a beard can be held in the flame of the candle without being harmed. This can be done by anyone. Even from a scientific point of view, this is a fact known to the whole world. And so — is the whole world flocking to convert to Orthodoxy? — No such phenomenon is observed. Why? Because one fact is not enough for the formation of an entire ideology. There needs to be a theory explaining the fact.

There can be several theories, and each one explains the same fact differently. Each person must choose for himself what the theory should be. The problem is, that there is no logical transition from one theory to another. Axioms lie at the base of any theory (initial propositions accepted without proof) and then, naturally, a reason is found for everything. Subsequently, everything depends not on *who*, but on *what*. *What* — is matter, the screws of the mechanism; that, which dictates the development of the event. But which set of screws to use depends not on *what*, but *who*. It is this *who* that chooses. In Orthodox theology, this "who" is called a *person* (in Greek-hypostasis). A person takes the first illogical step, and then, functions by logic. It turns out that everyone decides which theory to accept individually.

Science follows those theories that, by explaining previous facts, can predict subsequent facts, or show how and when to record facts yet unknown. As long as the theory "works," it is trusted. Even if we know that it is not 100% true, we can comfortably apply the theory within its functioning boundaries. This explains the presence of sometimes very primitive theories in science. The logic is, that if there is no need for something more, then facts not explained by a particular theory can be disregarded, there is no need to rack one's brain over it.

The same holds true when choosing a position in spiritual life. So the fire doesn't burn, so what? You say that your God is the most powerful? He will chastise me and send me into eternal torment if I am not for Him? If so, then I am all the more against Him. Your God demonstrates His power before me: 'I can walk on water and you can't; I can turn rocks into bread, while you will die in the desert without Me.' So, I'll die, but I won't submit! I am free and will not become a slave.

This is what undeniable facts can lead to. Brave and free men may not be convinced, but instead, be challenged to rebel. A fact is a thing that cannot be denied, but can be fought against. Even if we die, we have the right not to bow before any power. Fact is a well-known **coercion** or **compulsion**. Any theory can be thrown out and replaced by another that is more compatible to a personal ideology, but with facts you can either fight or submit to them. There is no other option. That is why the Lord has not made miracles a *fact* of our everyday life. They would force a person to make a choice.

The miracle of the Holy Fire is repeated every year, but is not obtrusive because it is observed only by those who wish to see it. It is sent by God as a heavenly joy, to increase understanding, as a fatherly reminder, and as a confirmation for the doubting.

For each person who has, in one way or another, come into contact with a *miracle*, it has had the *power of a real fact* and, consequently, to a certain extent has been an act of coercion unto faith and changes in their way of life, often quite radical. Here we come upon a contradiction: God is Indescribable and Unspeakable Love, Unlimited Mercy, and *miracles* are God's manifestation of His Love and Mercy to mankind, suffering and despairing in his day to day existence. The only gift that a grateful man can give God is reciprocal filial love. But love can only be given or received freely. If even we can understand this, then the Lord God — all the more so. That is why He does not force Himself upon us, does not *spiritually coerce* us. He told us '*Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you (Mt 7:7).*' Therefore, supernatural, miraculous help is given to those who are *ready* to ask. He who is *ready* to ask is not far from love.

Some say, "Show me a sign and I will believe." Fools! Fools that have never read the Gospel and don't know that the Lord, tempted by the devil in the desert, *rejected* miracles as a *means to subjugate man*. The Lord does not perform miracles so that people would believe in Him. God does not need anyone *to believe in Him*, He needs only that they would *love* Him. And not because He cannot exist without human love, but because man will *never rise from the earth*, he will never reach the Kingdom if he does not learn to love — to love his Creator, his neighbor and brother, because love is the only source of Eternal Life.

Therefore, miracles surround a person who believes and loves God on all sides. They are as real to him as the physical world. And if a person reads about, or even sees, how an ascetic walks on the sea as if it was dry land, in order to pick up an icon that had miraculously appeared there, then, for him, it is as much reality as when he is standing on a road and does not sink.

Of course, every miracle is a fact that reveals the innermost, precious life of the human soul, and a person does not always find it necessary or helpful to tell others, fearing to be misunderstood or laughed at. For the Lord has broken the laws of the material world for his sake, condescending to his trouble or weakness. But telling others about the experiencing of a *miracle* may be helpful, sometimes even necessary, not only in the framework of the family or church, but on a wider scale. When human will suddenly defies the Divine Providence of God, He must sometimes find some means to make a mass of people understand immediately. An example of this is the appearance of the Mother of God to Tamerlane on the day of the Meeting of Her Vladimir icon in Moscow. From the point of view of material laws, Tamerlane's retreat with his innumerable hordes from Moscow, which was guarded by a relatively small guard of the Moscow Prince, is absurd. Only a biased researcher would consider this historical *fact* anything other than a *miracle*.

There are many similar miracles in our history. A recent miracle was the fall of the Soviet government. Anyone who was well acquainted with the Soviet system of guarding the safety of the government, will undoubtedly consider this a miracle. It seems that God has his own plan for our Motherland.

In this way, for the Orthodox person, *miracles* are just as real a manifestation of life as any other manifestation. This is all providentially given to us by God. Some of us need material help, some of

us need relief from physical sufferings, while someone needs enlightenment, encouragement to examine their relationship to life — and right before their eyes a Holy icon begins to exude oil. Every miracle of God has its particular good purpose, and for this reason an Orthodox person considers it a sin to seek *a miracle for the sake of the miracle itself — for the satisfaction of his own curiosity.*

If the supernatural happens in the life of a believer, an appearance of light or an Angel during prayer, for example, Orthodox believers who sincerely love God will reason thus: "God knows that I love Him, but my love is not dependent on handouts, if, of course, it is not dictated by some real necessity. Consequently, this is someone else, in the likeness of God, trying to demonstrate to me his "love." God does not make empty plays. That means this is probably someone trying to deceive me. Why should I be shown what I already know if it is not necessary for the fulfillment of my obedience. These types of "empty" miracles are most likely worldly manifestations hostile to God, and therefore I will not pay attention to them. If I am praying to God, then how can this manifested Angel be distracting me from prayer? If it is an Angel of the Lord, then he would not do that. That means that he is not of God. And if he is not of God, then it is dangerous to get involved; I am not yet spiritually strong enough."

That is a sound attitude for an Orthodox person towards such "noisy" effective and enticing "miracles." Fortunately, not all miracles are like that, but it is important to be able to discern between them. On this issue, the natural criterion that helps to divide the wheat from the tares is the voice of the Church. The Church, like a living organism, in ways known only to God, throws out everything empty and false, leaving only that which leads its children to God and life everlasting.

Father Savva Scherbin

How to Treat Miracles.

The distinguishing feature of a true miracle of God is its beneficial result. If, after a miracle is performed for him or near him, a man comes to repentance and faith in God, if he begins to reform and live a more virtuous life, then it is probable that the miracle is authentic. But, if a person becomes arrogant after coming in contact with a miracle, saying, "I am not like everyone else, I am one of the select," then it is a deception. Confidence in one's selection and in one's spiritual power is particularly characteristic of modern healers and psychics.

These words of Christ apply to those priding themselves in miracles: "Many will say unto Me in that day (of judgment), 'Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils?'" But He will answer, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity... For not every one that saith unto me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven" (Mt 7:21-23). But the will of the Father is to create and renew mankind for Eternal Life, not to nurture selfishness and arrogance. It is the simple question of getting personal benefit from those gifts that were received in some way, opening a door to a different reality, either by accident or on purpose. The history of the Orthodox Church knows many ascetics who, in their lifetime, performed miracles, but none of them ever charged anything for their help. In addition, any voluntary offerings that were brought by thankful people were handed out to the needy.

Besides, all that is evil always gives a feeling of unhealthy anxiety, exaltation, *the loss of sobriety*, that is, of the normal interpretation of surrounding reality. A person should rationally and soberly evaluate every situation in life. The loss of sobriety is dangerous, because after a person has come

into contact with demonic enticements, he will act as if he agrees with you, no matter what you say, all the while thinking to himself, 'Say whatever you want, but in this case you are ignorant, — because I know.' This inward voice belongs to the evil one; he separates a person from God and other people. A person becomes unreachable and impenetrable; he guards himself from everyone with a shield of pride and is not about to listen to anyone.

Therefore, if you have seen a miracle in your life, it is important to talk to a priest, in order to receive an objective evaluation of what has happened. Never ever talk to any sort of sorcerer, medium or witch, because this will not work towards your salvation, but to the strengthening of your personal selfishness and conceit.

In our time, a majority of people considers physical health to be the most important thing in life. However, one should take into consideration that sometimes one "pays" too much for "healing" — if it is received through a sorcerer or psychic. When healing does not come from God, then a person inevitably loses something spiritual: his faith in God is weakened; he loses the desire to pray or to read God's Word. Sometimes, by the healing of one organ or sickness, another, hidden sickness is received, even more dangerous than the first. Therefore, keep in mind the words of the Lord: *"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father...and then He shall reward every man according to his works"* (Mt. 16:24-27).

Therefore the safest position on miracles — is to **not seek miracles**. A true miracle of God most often comes when a person's soul is prepared to receive it, prepared to believe in God and follow Him. Then the Lord sends help to the searching soul by sending a miracle — deliverance from danger, help in a difficult situation, or healing. In all cases, one should humble oneself before the Lord, and not insistently demand the fulfillment of one's desires by Him. It is best to say to Him, "Lord, if you deem it necessary, then give me of Your mercy. If You foresee something different for me, then may Your will be done!" That is the soberest position for a believer to take on miracles.

Priest Alexander SOYUZOV

‘Ask and It Shall Be Given Unto You ...’

Stories About Divine Help

Healed of eczema.

My grandmother had a sister Ludmila, a year and a half older than she. Her hands were covered with eczema from early childhood. Whenever they tried to find help — everything was in vain. They always had to bandage her wrists. Close to their village there was a spring, which was considered holy. People came to visit this spring from the entire province. Once a year, there was a religious procession with singing, holy banners and icons from the village church to the holy spring. It was a huge procession.

I don't know why they did not use this method of treatment earlier. That year, my grandmother was about 5 or 6, and she remembered everything very vividly. The entire family joined the procession to the holy spring. The dean of the village church, Father Gabriel, the grandfather of my grandmother and her sister, led the procession.

They approached the spring. Father Gabriel led his granddaughter and put her next to the water. My grandmother, clutching her sister, also made her way there, to see everything. They started to read the Gospel and prayers. While the prayers were being read, upon Father Gabriel's signal, the girl had to plunge her hands into the water and hold them there for a while.

‘Look, Ludushka, pray now. Pray a lot,’ Father Gabriel said to her. She did that. After this, they bandaged her hands again and went home.

In the evening, when the bandages were taken off to apply a new dressing, everyone saw the clear pink hands. There was no trace of eczema or scars. The disease never returned.

Never drink!

I knew one pious family: a husband, wife, and their young daughter. It so happened, that the husband returned home very drunk on Christmas Eve. The upset wife and daughter put him to bed, and he fell asleep straight away. Soon he woke up in the state of great worry and anxiety, absolutely sober, and wished to go to church immediately. To the daughter’s question, what happened to him, (his wife had already gone to church) he answered:

— I just saw the Lord in my dream. He told me: ‘Remember the Holy Feasts, respect your parents, don’t ever smoke or drink.’

One Must Ask for Divine Help.

I married early. I had faith in God, but my job and every-day fuss placed it on a back burner. I lived without praying to God or fasting. To put it simply, I grew cool towards faith. It never even entered my mind, that God would hear my prayer if I addressed Him.

I was living with my husband and children in Sterlitamak. In January my youngest child, a boy of 5, suddenly fell ill. We sent for the doctor. He examined the child, and said that he had acute diphtheria, and prescribed treatment. We waited for improvement, but it did not come.

The child weakened awfully. He did not recognize anyone anymore. He could not take the medication. Terrible wheezing escaped from his chest, and it was heard in the entire apartment. Two doctors visited him. They looked at the sick child in sorrow, talked to each other with preoccupation. It was obvious that the child would not outlive the night. I could not think about anything, and was doing everything necessary for the sick boy mechanically. My husband was beside the bed, afraid to miss the son’s last breath. It became quiet in the house, only the awful whistling wheeze was being heard.

The church bell started to peal for Vespers. Almost unconsciously, I dressed and told my husband:

— I will go to ask for a molieben for his recovery.

I entered the church. Father Stephan approached me.

— Father, — I told him, — my son is dying of diphtheria. If you are not afraid, serve a molieben at our house.’

— We are required to send off the dying everywhere, and go without fear, wherever we are invited. I shall come to you directly.

I returned home. The wheezing was still heard in all the rooms. His little face was completely blue, and his eyes were rolled up. I touched his legs: they were totally cold. My heart wrung painfully. I do not remember if I cried. I cried so much in those terrible days that it seemed that I cried all my tears out. I lit the votive and prepared the necessary things.

Father Stephan came and started to serve the moleben. I carefully took the child in my arms, together with the feather bed and the pillow, and took him out into the room. He was too heavy to hold while standing, and I sank into an armchair. The service continued. Father Stephan opened the Holy Gospel. With an effort, I rose from the armchair. And then a miracle happened. My boy raised his head and listened to the Word of God. Father Stephan finished reading. I kissed the Gospel; so did the boy. He entwined his arm around my neck and listened to the service that way to the end. I

was afraid to breathe. Father Stephan raised the Holy Cross, made the sign of the cross with it over the child, let him kiss it and said: 'Get better!'

I put the boy to the bed and went to see the priest out. When Father Stephan left, I hurried into the bedroom, surprised that I did not hear the usual wheeze that tore at the soul. The boy slept quietly. His breath was even and calm. With tenderness, I went down on my knees, thanking the Merciful God, then I myself fell asleep right on the floor: my strength had left me.

The next morning, as soon as the bell pealed for matins, my boy got up and with a clear ringing voice said to me:

— Mama, why am I still in bed? I am tired of it!

Is it possible to describe, how joyously my heart began to beat! I immediately warmed some milk, and my boy drank it with pleasure. At 9 o'clock our doctor quietly entered the hall, looked in the front corner, and not seeing a table with a cold little corpse, called me. I answered him in a cheerful voice:

— I will be right there.

— Is he really better? —the doctor asked me in surprise.

— Yes, — greeting him, I told him. — The Lord has shown us a miracle.

— Yes, only thanks to a miracle could your son recover.

On February 18, Father Stephan held a thanksgiving service at our home. My boy, completely healthy, prayed diligently. At the end of the service, Father Stephan said:

— You should write about this case.

I sincerely hope, that at least one mother, after reading these lines, will not fall into despair in the hour of sorrow, but will keep her faith in the goodness of those mysterious ways, along which the Divine Providence is leading us.

'Russian God, Help Me!'

The girl's name was Sarah; she was the daughter of very rich Jews. There were five more children in the family besides her. The family lived in B. The father had a harsh temperament, and both the children and the mother were afraid of him.

Once the father was leaving on a very important business matter. Remembering something, he put his hand in his jacket's pocket and took out a piece of paper, folded into quarters.

— Oh, I don't feel like going back, — he said. — Sarah, take this document, it is very important, and put it in my office, — he called to his daughter, running past him. — Put it on the desk, under a book. But do not lose it, or I will take your head off, — he shouted after her.

Sarah put the paper in the pocket of her dress and had just turned toward the office, when her older sister called her to look at a new hat, the present of her fiancé. After that, Sarah looked out the window and saw that the neighbors' kids had gathered in the yard, ready to start an interesting game. Forgetting everything, she joined the players.

The paper was in her pocket, and she was jumping and playing till late at night. The maid put the dress in the wash, and the next morning brought her another one.

The father sitting down at table asked Sarah in surprise:

— Where is that paper that I gave you yesterday?

Only then did Sarah remember it.

Everyone started to search, but Sarah knew very well that it was all useless: the paper was in the pocket of her dress and she had not taken it out, and afterwards the dress was taken to be washed.

No doubt, the paper was thrown away.

Shaking with fear, she confessed it all to the father. He looked at her and said severely:

— It was a bill of exchange for 10 thousand rubles. In two weeks I was to protest it. I don't care if it is not here, I must have it. Get it wherever you please — or...

Sarah closed her eyes, horrified. Her father never made empty threats. The futile searching began. At first, everyone in the house was involved in it, but having realized its futility, they abandoned it. Sarah lost her sleep and appetite. She stopped playing with the other kids, and was hiding from everybody in the far corners of the garden. The place she preferred most, was the one adjacent to the yard of an elderly Russian woman. She lived alone in a poor shack; she did not have any property except a multi-colored cat and a greening kitchen garden. The branches of three apple trees were swaying, and three currant bushes were sprawling there.

In the summer, the woman was constantly busy in her wretched yard, but often, leaving the work and standing up straight, she prayed. Her kind face became kinder during the prayer, she often shed tears, but she did not notice them and only crossed herself.

Sarah was observing her through the hole in the fence, and when the woman was praying, she felt lightness and joy. The fear for her father receded. But then, as the woman finished praying, the horrible thoughts started to overcome Sarah again, and she visited the bank of the river to find a place where she could drown herself.

Once, when she felt particularly bad, Sarah went to the cherished corner of the garden and, repeating the movements of the woman, tried to pray herself. She did not know how it should be done, and she crossed herself clumsily and repeated: — Russian God, help me.

Then she started to complain to Him about her troubles and again asked for help. She did this every day, but this did not stop her from going to the river, where she thought to finish her life, for the reprisals of her father were more frightening than death.

Two weeks passed. There came the morning of the fatal day. Sarah did not sleep a single minute, and as soon as it grew light, she dressed, looked at the sisters sleeping in the same room, and quietly left the house. The sun was just starting to rise; there was no one in the yard.

Sarah turned around to see her house, the garden, the large yard, full of out-houses, for the last time and went to the gate. Flinging the bolt aside, she took the door-handle decisively. But what was that? There was a paper, folded into quarters, threaded through the door-handle.

Sarah took it out and mechanically unfolded it. It was the bill of exchange.... The one that her father had given her 2 weeks before. But that bill had become sodden in her dress pocket and was thrown away. How could it appear here?

Having forgotten the fear for her father, forgetting everything, Sarah rushed screaming into the bedroom of her parents. Disheveled, not yet completely awake, the father snatched the paper out of her hands.

— The bill, that very bill! — he cried out. — Where did you get it?

Shaking all over, Sarah told him. The father began to examine the document again. Everything was in order, there was nothing to find fault with, but it differed slightly from the one that was lost — as if it was on different paper, with different handwriting.

Everyone in the house woke up and gathered in the bedroom, happy and excited. Only Sarah did not rejoice over this with the others — the new feeling of something great and incomprehensible was filling her soul. She went to her corner in the garden again.

— You did this — Russian God, — she whispered, and she did not want to go home, but wished to be there and silently think about the extraordinary God, Who took mercy on her and performed a miracle.

‘Keep to the South-West.’

‘There are many inexplicable things in the world. There can be miracles even in our unbelieving time, — said our host, a former seaman, walking up and down the dining room. He invited us to spend a gloomy autumn night over a cup of tea at his place, and we gathered around his samovar (a typically Russian pot to warm water for tea, used in the 19th century) in a friendly circle. Our host was a master at telling stories, and we were expecting an interesting story about one of his many sea adventures.

— Yes, I remember this case very well, — he continued, pulling his gray moustache, — an outstanding case. I was only a warrant officer, a young and jolly youth, full of rose-colored dreams and expectations. Our sailing at that time was very hard and dangerous. Autumn came. The sky was low, with leaden clouds. A cold wind was blowing. We were holding our course. The ocean was making somber noises. I remember that evening clearly. We, the youngsters, having fulfilled our daily routine, went to the cabin and were remembering our relatives and friends.

Suddenly we heard the hasty steps of the captain and deduced from his walk that he was irritated by something.

— Gentlemen, — he said, stopping at the door of the cabin, — who allowed themselves to enter my cabin? Answer me!

We were silent, astonished, and only looked blankly at each other.

— Who? Who was there just now? — he repeated fiercely, and probably seeing the perplexity on our faces, turned around quickly and went upstairs. We heard his fearsome voice from there. We still had not come to our senses when we were ordered to go up. There, the whole crew was at attention. Both the boatswains were upset and disturbed.

— Who was in my cabin? Who dared to play such an insolent joke? — the captain shouted. Silence and astonishment were his answer. Then the captain told us, that as soon as he lay down in his cabin, he heard someone’s words in a semi-consciousness state: ‘Keep to the southwest, to save people’s lives. Your speed should be not less than 3 meters per second. Hurry, before it is too late!’ We listened to this story, surprised. The captain’s face grew dark. We were dismissed. All of us were anxious and bewildered. What will the captain do? Sailing southwest — meant abandoning our course and going in the opposite direction. No one slept till late at night. Soon we understood that, after a long discussion with the chief boatswain, a very experienced, tried seaman, the captain decided to follow the mysterious advice. In fact, the deviation was not so significant and not much time would be lost.

— Keep to southwest and put a good sentinel on the mast! — we heard the captain’s order to the boatswain. Our hearts beat anxiously. What would happen? Could it be nothing but a joke, a mockery? But who could play a trick like this? Early in the morning we were all up as usual, and crowded on deck. The helmsman silently pointed out a black object in the distance to the captain. We had sailed all night; the morning was gray and rainy. The visibility was poor in the fog. The captain looked through the telescope a long time, called the boatswain and told him something in a low voice. When he turned in our direction, his face was paler than usual. In an hour and a half we saw, with the naked eye, that the black object was something like a raft, and there were two human figures lying upon it. We dropped a boat in the water. The boatswain himself went for the unfortunates. The waves were overflowing the raft, just a little bit more — and it could be too late. Were the people on the raft alive? After a half-hour struggle with the waves and the wind, the boatswain brought the sufferers. They were a young seaman and a child, both unconscious, with faces, distorted by cramps, stiff, almost dead.

What a fuss began on the ship! All of us, starting with the captain and ending with a lowest seaman, tried to do something for the sufferers. Their mysterious salvation amazed us all; they appeared to

us messengers of Providence.

The captain, like a most caring mother, hustled around the child. The seaman came to his senses only two hours later and cried from joy. The child was fast asleep, muffled and warmed.

— Lord! Thank You! — said the seaman, a nice, simple fellow. — Apparently, my mother's prayer reached God!

We all gathered around him, and he told us the sad story of the ship, broken on the stones underwater and sunk. There weren't many people, some managed to escape in a boat, the rest drowned. He miraculously managed to survive on a remaining piece of the ship. The child was not his, but it seized the seaman in the moment of danger, and they escaped together.

— My mother, obviously, prays for me! — said the seaman, crossing himself reverently and looking at the sky. — Her prayer saved me! I was so scared when I was conscious, and the child had seized me — I could not leave him; I was stiff from cold, freezing, the water overflowing me... The child was crying... and I started to pray... And the last thing I remember: death was there, and I cried: 'Mother, dear, pray for me! Pray to the Lord!' Surely, she was praying ardently for me. I always have her letter here in my pocket... Thanks to my dear!

And he took out the letter, written in the weak, simple handwriting of a semi-literate woman. We reread it several times, and it made a great impression on us. The last words of it I remember even now: 'Thank you, my son, for your memory and kindness, for not forgetting your old mother. God will not leave you! I pray for you day and night, my son, and a mother's prayer reaches God. Pray, too, son, and be healthy, and do not forget your old mother, who prays for you. My heart is always with you; I feel all your sorrows and troubles and pray for you! May God bless you and save you and protect you for me!'

The seaman, apparently, loved his mother very much and constantly thought of her. The captain, a childless man, became attached to the rescued child, a seven-year-old boy, and decided to keep him.

The ways of Providence are wonderful! Great is the power of a mother's prayer! There is much in the world that is mysterious, inexplicable, and incomprehensible for our weak mind.

The Miraculous Conversion.

This happened to my grandmother. She was hiding her faith from the authorities. Once she was walking with her friend, an atheist, and they were passing by a church. There was a service, and people were praying. Her friend decided to mock the believers. She entered the church and, during the singing, cried out loud: 'Why are you praying to One Who does not exist?' My grandmother tried to take her out, to persuade her: 'Don't do this, let's go. They are praying, let them pray.' But her friend would not calm down and said loudly, so that everyone could hear it: 'If God exists, may I fall and not get up.'

And suddenly she truly fell and could not get up. They took her out, she asked for some water, and there and then she bought an icon. After that, as my grandmother told me, she became a very religious person, but her infirmity remained for the rest of her days.

The Bear.

Metropolitan Cyril (Smirnov) of Kazan and Sviyaz was sent to exile. One night he was thrown out of the train carriage at full speed. It was a snowy winter. Metropolitan Cyril fell into a huge snowdrift, as if into a feather bed, and was not hurt. He struggled out of it and looked around: woods, snow — no sign of a dwelling. He walked a long way in the snow and, growing tired, sat on a tree-stump. The frost was chilling him to the bone through the worn-out vestment. Feeling that he was beginning to freeze, the Metropolitan began to read to himself the prayer for the dying. Suddenly something big and dark approached him, he looked carefully — it was a bear.

‘He will eat me!’ — the thought flashed through his mind, but he had no strength to run, and where to? But the bear approached him, sniffed at him and calmly lay down at his feet. The beast was in good temper, it emitted warmth. He moved, and turning his belly towards His Eminence, stretched out and began to snore. The Bishop hesitated for a long time, looking at the sleeping bear, but then could no longer bear the paralyzing cold and lay down next to the bear, cuddling up to the warm belly. He lay, turning one or the other side to the beast to get warm, while the bear was breathing deeply in its sleep and enveloping him in his hot breath. When it grew light, the Metropolitan heard roosters crowing in the distance. ‘Habitation is near,’ - flashed the happy thought in his mind, and he carefully, without waking the bear up, rose to his feet. But the bear got up, shook himself and waddled to the forest. His Eminence soon reached a little village.

After knocking at the first door, he explained who he was, and asked for asylum. He was allowed in, and lived for more than half a year in that village. He wrote to his sister, she visited him, and then they came for the Metropolitan and took him away.

The Image of the Savior in the Sky.

In 1941, when I was 22, I was sent to the front. I was a signalman. I took part in the Leningrad defense. The Nazis were trying to take the city, which was surrounded. Trying to take the city at any cost, they sent an avalanche of fire on us. My battle friends were dying one after another. And then, during one of the bombings, when the barrage swooped on the city and, it seemed, that the end of the world had come, a real miracle happened. The night sky was suddenly illuminated with pink light, and the image of the Savior appeared on the rosy sky. All the soldiers in the dugout, without any mutual agreement, fell on their knees from the suddenness of it, and started to pray... The image of the Savior disappeared. The sky became normal, but the hell on earth stopped. And we could not regain our senses for a long time... I started to believe in God from that moment. With this faith, I survived the entire war and, after the Victory, returned home without a wound. The image of Christ remained in my memory forever.

‘Father Alexis, Save Me!’

At the beginning of the Second World War, I was taken prisoner by the Nazis. They locked us in a church, and then started to take us out in groups to shoot us. They took me with the others. At that moment, I remembered Father Alexis Mechev. In despair, I begged: ‘Father Alexis, save me!’ and crossed myself. I saw that the Nazis, who were leading us, started to talk about something, then they separated me from the others and did not take me further.

Everyone was shot, except me. From then on, in any trouble and difficulty, I appealed to Father Alexis for help, in my prayers.

‘Our Father...’

One seaman, fighting against the Nazis at the Baltic Sea, found himself in the ice-cold water. He swam, tiring out. The cold waves were submerging him. His clothes were wet. His arms and legs grew numb, became uncontrollable. Where could he swim? Where was north? South? The fog was like an impenetrable wall. His heart beat at top speed.

He had exploded the enemy’s ships, now they exploded his launch. Nobody survived. He would die, too. He had to face the truth: those were the last moments of his life. Even if any ship passed by, he wouldn’t be noticed: there was impenetrable fog. He was far from shore. The cold was piercing. It was getting harder and harder to breathe. There was nothing to hope for, except a miracle. But all his life he thought, — and he was so taught at the Moscow University, by very intelligent professors, — that miracles did not exist, that there was no God, that all that was a lie and the invention of illiterate fools or swindlers.

In those moments he remembered his dearly beloved grandmother, who had said just the opposite when he was a child: ‘Just say — Our Father. Call God your Father... And can the Father leave His child in trouble?’

And the seaman, hardly recollecting the words of the prayer, gathered his last strength, whispered: 'Our Father Who art in the Heavens! Hallowed be Thy name...'

Before the seaman even finished the prayer, the dense fog suddenly dissipated, revealing a Soviet ship which was in that region accidentally. They noticed the seaman and took him aboard. This rescue from inevitable death, particularly after he had read the prayer, appeared to the seaman to be so miraculous, that he believed in God.

The Second Oath.

The Motherland sent me to the front in the very first week of the war. I participated in the fierce battles at Kursk.

I will remember November 23, 1941 all my life. We found ourselves surrounded. The fascists brought a storm of fire down on us. The land shook and smoked from artillery, mortar shells and aviation bombs. The air was densely filled with fumes, the sky — was covered with the smoke of fires.

The howling of the German fighters and bombers, the bursts of bombs and shells, machine-guns' crackling — it all looked like hell; moreover, it was drizzling, and in the evening it started to snow. Many of my fellow soldiers sprinkled the legendary ground of Kursk with their blood that day, and some found eternal peace in it.

Those left alive, separated, morally depressed, led by the instinct of self-preservation, tried to find shelter and salvation in the forest tracts. That day, we met with a group of soldiers in exactly the same situation, at one forest ravine. There were 13 of us, — exhausted, dirty, cold, and soaking wet.

Among us there was a commander, a native of Novosibirsk. We gathered around him, waiting for some decision. When darkness came, it became really cold, and we did not even dare to set a fire, afraid to give our presence away. It seemed that death was inevitable: if not from an enemy bullet, then of cold and starvation. Suddenly the commander addressed us in a stentorian voice, with no shadow of irony: 'Brothers, who knows any prayers?' — 'I do, — I said, — I am Nicholas Melnikov.' — "And my name is George. So there are two Guardian Angels, the wonder-workers, with us. Let's pray for help.' He started to read a prayer first, and I echoed him loudly. As for all the rest, some were repeating it in a whisper; some knelt, and crossed themselves, bowing to the ground.

When we were done with the prayers, it was already very dark. Suddenly we saw some kind of light to our right, behind the fir-grove, a few meters away from us. We all rushed that way and saw a small peasants' hut, with a kerosene lamp shining inside. We knocked at the door. A gray-haired old man met us at the doorstep. Without asking curious questions, we unanimously took him for a local forest ranger. The host of the well-heated hovel warned us: 'Forgive the modest shelter. May I treat you to boiled water and rusks. And there is some straw for you to sleep on.'

Warmed up, we lay down on the straw "down" in a row, huddled close to each other, and slept till the morning. And when we woke up, we found ourselves in the same place in the ravine, where we had grieved the night before. The hut had vanished. The commander thanked God for the miraculous shelter and, making three bows toward the rising sun, said: 'So, brothers, from now on do not be "Lone Ivans". Do not forget God, protect the Church of Christ, remember each other and pray for each other till the end of your lives.'

We took these words like a second military oath. Unfolding the map case and finding our bearings, we set off. We made around 15 kilometers under the noise of the cannonade, passing through ravines and coppices, in the direction of Poltava. And all 13 of us rejoined our own units.

'Go, My Daughter!'

Aunt Shura was born, and grew up, in a village. She came to Moscow as a young girl, and went to work at a factory. She shared a room in a hostel with the other workers. You can imagine what kind

of life it was. 'I was a prostitute,'- she used to say about herself. Lively, witty, loving singing, dancing and laughing, Shura became the leader of the factory youth. She did not even think about God. Sometimes she went to church, when there were great Holy feasts and commemorative Saturdays — it seemed to be the thing to do. She gave birth to her son without a husband. With a child, she was able to get a room in a communal flat. Time passed: work, jolly company, admirers.

When Shura turned 40, a miraculous event occurred that changed her whole life. It was summer. For some reason she came home from work early, and went to bed early, too. She felt some incomprehensible fatigue. And she saw a dream, that she was walking in a field and many people were descending the hill. 'I don't want to go down,'- Aunt Shura said to herself and left them. But off to the side, people were going somewhere, too. She joined them. After a while, they reached a church. There was someone on the doorstep. Aunt Shura looked and could not believe her eyes — it was Lord Jesus Christ Himself! He was in white clothes, just like on an icon. He was blessing everyone. She approached Him for a blessing too. The Lord put His hand on her head and said: 'Go, my daughter.' and He gave her a little push toward the church door. At that moment, Shura woke up. 'I don't know what happened to me, but I went to sleep being one person, and woke up completely different,' — she related afterwards.

In the morning, she called her place of her work and took some days off, luckily it was vacation time. She searched all over Moscow for the church which she saw in her dream. It seemed to her that she had to do that. How she searched, how she went from one kind of transport to another, how she walked the streets and lanes — is a long story. I shall only say that that search did not bring any result at first.

During her last day off, Shura found herself in one of the old districts of Moscow. The trolley was passing through a quiet street, — at that time, in 1963, still not congested with traffic. The branches of the old trees, which had witnessed the revolution and the war, were rustling above. The clouds were floating across the blue July sky.

Shura was looking through the window and thought that she would have to ask for some more days off, even if they used her vacation days. Suddenly, from around the corner, a white church floated out like a ship. Around it there was a clean small square. 'That's it, there!' —exclaimed Shura, astonishing the passengers, and rushed to the exit. That same day she started to work there. Aunt Shura has been here in our church for 30 years now.

'God Saved Me From Under the Ice.'

'God does exist,' — the old man, tall, bent, with grayish hair and expressive features often used to say. His name was Theodore Mikhailovich Makhov. At that time, all the schools and universities taught that God did not exist, and considered believers backward or insane. Theodore Makhov started to believe in the existence of God after he was saved from the waters.

Once, he was going home on the ice across the river Pekhorka, which is in Podmoskovye (a region close to Moscow). It was late evening —it grew dark early in the winter. He could not see the road. Somewhere in the middle of the river he fell into an ice-hole. The river was so deep in that place that, even in summer, not every diver could reach the bottom.

When he found himself under the water, he started to drown. If it had been dark on the ice, there was complete murkiness under it. He began to thrash, in order to swim out. In a few seconds he came up, but did not find the ice-hole, he hit his head on the ice. Then he really began to drown, because he had no idea which way to go to swim out. Sinking to the bottom, he appealed to the Lord with all his might:

— If You exist, save me, help me! — He begged not with words (he had no air), but with his mind — his entire essence cried aloft. At that very moment, the water under the ice lit up.

— I saw no one, only it was like daylight, — he was explaining afterwards. — The light approached me. And some force took me by the hair, it seemed, and started to pull me up. I don't

know how, but I was pushed out onto the edge of the hole. Someone helped me to get out. Most likely God or His Angel saved me from under the ice... First I crawled, and then I got up on my feet and began to walk. My coat was heavy with water, and ice-cold. I got home before I had time to freeze...

Yes, whatever they might say, God does exist! Otherwise, I wouldn't be alive.

An Angel Gave Last Rites to the Dying.

In the mountain region of Central Asia there was a church, in which two priests served. Once, a parishioner came, requesting that a priest give Holy Communion to a dying man. One of the priests was sick, the other one refused to go for some reason.

The relative of the one dying returned very sad, thinking that he could not fulfill the last request of the dying.

But when he came back, he found the sick person in a happy, lucid condition.

— Thank you for inviting a priest to visit me, so I that I could confess and receive Holy Communion.

The latter was amazed, and realized that an Angel of God had come to take the confession and give Communion to the dying man in the priest's stead.

About the Importance of the Proskomedia.

A renowned scholar, a medical man, became very sick. The invited doctors, his friends, found him in such a poor condition, that they saw there was little hope of recovery.

The professor lived only with his sister, an elderly lady. He was not completely atheistic, but did not have much interest in religious questions and did not go to church, though he lived near a small one.

Upon hearing such a medical verdict, his sister became very sad, not knowing how to help her brother. Then she remembered that there was a church nearby, where she could go and ask for Proskomedia prayers for her critically ill brother.

Early in the morning, without a word to her brother, she got ready for the early service, told the priest about her sorrow, and asked him to take out a prosphora piece and pray for her brother's health. At the same time, her brother had a vision: as if the wall of his room disappeared, and in its place a church sanctuary appeared. He saw his sister talking to the priest about something. The priest approached the Altar, took out a prosphora piece, which fell down on the discos, ringing. In the same moment the sick professor felt, that some force entered his body. He stood up from the bed, which he had not been able to do for a long time.

His sister came back, and her surprise was boundless.

— Where have you been? — exclaimed the former sick man. — I saw everything; I saw how you were talking to the priest in the church, how he took a piece out for my health.

They both thanked God tearfully for the miraculous recovery.

The professor lived a long time after that incident, never again forgetting about the mercy of God, which He had shown to him, a sinner.

A Revealed 'Piece' of Supreme Reality.

For our summer vacation, our entire family decided to drive round the Golden Ring in our new car. The last city on our route was Vladimir. In Vladimir we separated, agreeing to meet at 7 PM. I walked around the center of the city and came to the Dormition Cathedral. I entered the church....

Remembering what I was like at that time, at the age of 21, — I know that I entered the church like a 'good-for-nothing', an atheist, — in a word, a 'normal' Soviet student.

I remember that, when I entered, I was struck by the following: in front of me, everything was lit

with dazzling light, something was going on — somebody was moving somewhere, it was unclear where. The choir sang in a way that I had never heard before — I was an admirer of rock music. And I forgot everything: forgot about myself, about my troubles and plans. I was standing... and crying without stopping. I remember that there was no constraint, but something melted in my chest, my soul warmed, I felt amazingly light; even crying, I was glad, sweetly relieved.

I do not know how long this lasted. Then I remembered that I should not to be late for the 7 o'clock meeting. I looked at my watch; it was high time that I went.

Have you ever left a warm, cozy house and went into complete, awful dampness? That is how I felt when I left the church, though it was a warm summer evening. I stepped into habitual reality, which had become strange to me, with something unearthly in my soul, with a completely unfamiliar feeling.

Naturally, there was a discotheque close to the church (this was the 1970s). I took several steps toward it, and felt that the music was making me sick, not physically, but somehow internally, in my soul. Throughout my being, I felt how cold and savage and strange it was — the music, and our everyday life, and all our surroundings. All of this was very unclean, unworthy and wickedly mocking us.... It could not be compared to THAT, which was in the church... Then I met my relatives. In our talks and preoccupations THAT receded to the background, was almost forgotten. But It always stays with me — this revealed piece of Supreme Reality. Twelve years later I was baptized in connection with other events, but THAT was the first among them...

'A Glance Cured My Soul.'

There was little joy in our family. I was an only child. I grew alone; my parents were occupied at work. In the evening, when they came home tired, we gathered in the kitchen for supper. Mama and papa often argued. Their irritated voices and offensive, cruel words pierced my heart...I, myself, was an unattractive, unsociable girl with no apparent talents. I did not have friends, though I wished to. A certain constant solitude and sorrow resided in my soul.

I remember that day: my soul was especially cold and depressed. I did not even wish to read, or even to live. I wandered through the city, and saw a notice on the street that an exhibition of ancient books and icons had opened at the museum. I went there. There were almost no people. I remember that I immediately plunged into a special state of concentration and silence. My soul became lighter, brighter.

For an hour, I walked from book to book, from icon to icon. I wanted to stand near each icon for a very long time. I felt, that warmth was exuding from the icons. My soul gradually warmed.

And then — I remember it as if it just happened— I found myself in front of the icon painted by Andrew Rublev 'The Savior Made Without Hands.' As soon as I looked at That Face, something miraculous happened: it seemed that everything around me disappeared, and that time itself stopped existing. A Look was fixed on my soul. A Look of such strength penetrated my soul that I myself no longer existed before It, but my life was all about opening up to meeting It. There were no barriers for that Look: It knew everything about me. And it contained such love, such tenderness, the like of which I had never known. The feeling that that Love, which was addressed to me at that moment, could never be compared to any human love, remained in my heart forever.

This continued for an eternity, and when I came to, there was that wonderful icon in front of me, from which I could not walk away for a very long time. But I had become different. The golden stream warmed that eternal permafrost which lay in the depth of my heart. That look cured my soul, and united it. Now I had something to live for. I felt joy, beatitude, because I was necessary and dear to Him. To Whom? I still did not understand. I knew nothing about Him. I only knew that He is infinitely more wonderful than all people, that He can forgive all, that there was no coldness in Him, that He could send an ocean of warm golden waves of joy and warmth into a soul and revive it. It was a shock, but the shock was not horrifying, but salutary... Remembering that look became

my secret life, and helped me to undergo all troubles until He brought me to Church for Holy Baptism.

‘How I Saved My Son’s Life With Holy Baptism.’

When my son was three months old, he was ill with bilateral staphylococcal bronchial pneumonia. We were urgently hospitalized. He grew worse and worse. After a few days, the head of the hospital department transferred us to a private room, and told me that my small son would not live long. There was no limit to my sorrow. I called my mother: ‘The child is dying unbaptized, what should I do?’ My mother immediately went to the church to see the priest. He gave my mother some Theophany water and told her what prayers to read during Baptism. He said that, in cases of emergency, when the person is about to die, a lay person could perform the Baptism. My mother brought me the Theophany water and the texts of the prayers.

There were glass doors to the room; the nurses scurried through the corridor all the time. Unexpectedly, they had a meeting at three o'clock. Our nurse charged me to watch my son’s condition while she was at the meeting. I baptized my son quietly, without obstacles. After the Baptism, the child immediately came to his senses.

The doctor returned after the meeting and was very surprised: "What happened to him?"

I answered: ‘God helped us!’ A few days later we were discharged from the hospital, and soon I brought my son to church, and the priest completed the Sacred Baptism.

‘How I Started to Believe in God.’

I grew up in a faithless family. I knew nothing about Church and God. In 1972, I was 16 years old, and went to the Resurrection Church in Sokolniki to be baptized. It should be mentioned that this was the first time I was in a functioning church. Now, I can say that God called me, but at the time there was no explanation: suddenly, I just went. Twenty years passed. I was as atheistic as my relatives. Moreover, I laughed at those who went to church. Certainly, I never went there, nor did I wear my pectoral cross. I made many mistakes in my life, went through a great personal tragedy. And then came that black day. Before that day, I tried to understand for nearly a year how I had come to such total ruin. I simply could not understand it.

One day at work, I began to talk to an elderly woman, and she said something about church. I asked her whether she really believed in God. To this day, I remember her smile and her answer, full of dignity, happiness, joy: ‘Yes, I believe in God.’ Something moved inside of me. The next day she brought me some brochures. They warmed me a little, though I did not understand much, reading them.

Then that day came. I felt the hopelessness of my life, the loneliness, very deeply. All this is hard to describe. I shall only say, that it was like a flash of light lit up my soul, and I understood, that the root of evils was in egoism, pride, and thence indifference to others, anger, insensibility, etc. The answer to my internal question appeared — only one word: God.

The relief, which I felt, cannot be described. My happiness was immeasurable. Now I, too, could say that I believe in God. I am taking a long time to describe this, but everything happened so quickly, it is impossible to measure it with time. I firmly believe, that the Sacrament of the Baptism, performed twenty years before, rescued me. I am glad when I see how people are going to get baptized, carrying their children. I know that they will be under the powerful protection.

‘We Never Tell the Truth.’

My acquaintance, an elderly woman, became passionately fond of talking with ‘voices.’

The ‘voices’ told her different facts about her relatives, as well as other planets. Some of what they told were lies, or never came about. But my acquaintance did not consider that to be very convincing and continued to believe them. Time passed. She began to feel ill. Apparently, doubts had entered her soul. Once she asked them directly: ‘Why do you often tell lies?’ ‘We never tell the

truth,' — said the 'voices' and began to laugh. My acquaintance was horrified. She immediately went to church, confessed, and never did it again.

'When You Appeal to God.'

Nun Xenia told the following about her nephew. Her nephew was a young man of 25, a sportsman, bear-hunter, karate expert, a recent graduate from one of the Moscow institutes — in general, he was a modern young man. At one time, he became keen on the Oriental religions, and then began to communicate with 'voices from space.' Mother Xenia and her sister, the mother of the young man, tried to dissuade him from doing those things, but he stuck to his guns. For some reason, he was not baptized in childhood and rejected it later. Finally — it was in 1990-1991 — the 'voices' scheduled a meeting at one of Metro ring stations. He was supposed to enter the third carriage of the train at 18.00. Of course, the family tried to dissuade him, but he went. At precisely 18.00, he sat down in the third carriage and immediately saw the person he needed. He understood it, because of the extraordinary force coming from him, though externally that person looked normal.

The young man sat opposite to the stranger, and suddenly he became horrified. Afterwards, he said, that even while hunting, one on one with a bear, he had never been so afraid. The stranger looked at him silently. The train was already on the third round of the Metro ring when the young man remembered that, when in danger, one should say: 'Lord, have mercy on me!' and began to repeat that prayer. At last he rose, approached the stranger and asked him: 'Why did you call me?' 'And what can I tell you, when you are appealing to God?'— answered the man. At that moment, the train stopped, and the young man jumped out of the carriage. He was baptized the next day.

Healed Of Blindness.

A marvelous prayer is read during the consecration of water, which asks for curative powers for those using the water. Consecrated objects contain spiritual qualities, which are not common to usual substances. The expression of these properties is comparable to miracles, and testifies to the connection of the human spirit with God. Therefore, any information about the factual expressions of these qualities is very useful to people, especially during times of temptation and doubts about faith, or, in other words, in the spiritual connection of man and God.

This is especially important nowadays, when the erroneous supposition that such a connection does not exist, and that it is proved by science, is widespread.

However, science operates with facts, and denial of facts on the basis that they do not fall into a given outline, is not **scientific method**.

One more quite authentic case can be added to the numerous displays of the special curative qualities of consecrated water, which took place at the end of the winter of 1960-61.

The elderly teacher-pensioner A.I. had problems with her eyes. She was treated in an eye dispensary, but, despite the diligence of the doctors, became completely blind. She was a believing person. When the trouble happened, she put pieces of cotton wool moistened in Theophany water on her eyes, with prayer, for several days in a row. To surprise of the doctors, on one truly fine morning she began to see clearly.

It is known, that such sharp improvement is impossible for glaucoma patients undergoing usual treatment, and the recovery of A.I. from blindness must be treated as one of the displays of the wonderful curative qualities of Holy Water.

Unfortunately, many miracles are not recorded, even less — published, and we simply do not know about many. The miracle which I have related will, obviously, be known only to a narrow circle of people, but those, to whom God's mercy gives a chance to know it, we among them, — let us give thanks and glory to God.

'I Cannot Drink!'

In one medical book on psychiatry, which was published at the beginning of the XXth century, its

author, a professor, wrote, that he divided insane persons into two categories: those who were possessed, and those patients with physical damage of the nervous system.

He determined the latter in a very simple way. He gave them sacred water to drink: nobody could force the possessed ones to drink it!

Here is a real case, confirming this.

Our acquaintance visited mother E., a very old nun of high spiritual life. Many people from different parts of the country visited her for spiritual help.

The nun accepted visitors only in the mornings. She listened to their questions, prayed, and then gave answers (when it was necessary); she also gave them sacred water.

According to witnesses, even people with incurable diseases were cured by this water.

As our acquaintance told us, she and several other people arrived, when the nun had already finished receiving. The nun's novice told us:

— Find yourselves lodging for the night in the village, the nun will accept you tomorrow.

— I know one old woman who lets people stay at her place for the night, — said one of the women who came to see the nun.

— Aren't you going with us? — we asked her.

- The old woman will not let me in, —the woman said confidently.

We did not believe her, and persuaded her to go with us. The old woman met us pleasantly, and agreed to give us shelter for the night... When she noticed the woman who had told us about the

lodging she waved her hands at her:

— And you go, go — I shall not let you in.

Not understanding what was the matter, we began to ask the elderly lady to let the woman spend the night at her place.

— You do not know her, — said the old woman, — why, she never drinks the nun's water, she pours it out in the forest.

To prove this, the old woman took out a bottle from behind the icons, poured a glass of water and gave it to the woman whom she did not want to let in.

— Take, drink, and then I shall let you in.

The woman took the glass in her hands, held it for some time. We could see from the expression of her face, that some kind of a struggle was taking place in her soul. She returned the glass, not even trying to take a sip out of it.

— I cannot drink, — she said.

'God Rescued Me!'

Most of us, who passed through the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations during their school days, were brought up in atheism. And few and far between begin to believe in God. In daily life, we repeat the name of God in vain and inappropriately: 'God grant,' 'So help you God,' 'God knows!', 'Swear to God', etc., not fully understanding, what we are saying.

Many do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord, do not believe in the miracles performed by Him. A person wants a miracle, and, besides, one that he can see with his own eyes, — then, maybe, he will believe in God. We live according to the saying: 'Until it thunders, the peasant will not cross himself.'

I lived about the same way. Though I was baptized in infancy, I started to wear a pectoral cross only about five years ago. I attended church once every six months, had confession even more rarely. I attached an icon of the Holy Mother of God on the front panel of my car. In time, I began to pray to God and His Holy Mother before each trip, with my own words (not knowing any of the traditional prayers).

And once, in the middle of the summer, in July, 1995, ‘thunder’ struck.

I was approaching an abrupt turn on the way out from Vysokovsk toward Volokolamsk. My speed was just under forty kilometers an hour. The pavement was wet after the rain. The approaching car, not being able to navigate the turn, hurled out into my lane — and our cars collided almost head-on. Only the two back wheels and the right back door remained undamaged.

I only regained consciousness after they had pulled me out of the car, having broken out the rest of the door. When I saw the condition of the driver's seat, I was amazed. In what position could I have been in there? I got away with several bruises, and the icon of the Holy Mother of God was somehow found clasped in my fist.

How could I not begin to believe? God had rescued me.

The Formidable Sign.

That is what one priest told me. On the day of Theophany, he was pouring the newly consecrated water into the parishioners’ vessels in the church. A woman approached him and gave him a bottle. As soon as the priest began to pour water into it, the bottle exploded in his hands and scattered into fine splinters. The amazed priest asked the woman:

— What kind of bottle is that? What had it held before?

The confused woman answered:

— Father, I wanted one youth to marry my daughter. To charm him, I took some magic water from an old woman, but was afraid to give it to my daughter. To be sure, I wanted to add some Holy Water to that water.

A Prayer's Strength.

In 1994 I had a chance to work, unfortunately not for long, in the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. This church is the one of the most ancient and beautiful ones in Moscow. There was much that was amazing there. I witnessed several miracles. Here is one.

The service ended. I stood at the door. A woman approached me and, choking with tears, began to beg to be shown what icons were in the church and where. Her husband was dying, and she had just come from the hospital. Valentina’s (that was the woman's name) husband, — Alexis, had a very serious kidney disease, which somehow began with no warning. And so, we began to go from icon to icon, and lit candles at each one. I told her about the saints who were portrayed on the icons, trying to console her. How that woman cried, how she asked God to help her husband, to forgive him for his difficult disposition, for everything, that he had done bad in his life! Nobody around existed for her: only God, His Holy Mother and the saints. This is impossible to forget! I had never seen anything like this.

When she was leaving, I do not know why I asked her to give me her phone number. That evening, something made me call her. Suddenly, I heard her cheerful voice. She told me the following.

A distant relative just called her, who miraculously found a professor-urologist that specializes in that particular disease,. Even though a complete stranger had called, the professor agreed to examine the patient. He immediately set everything up with the Burdenko military hospital, where all the necessary equipment was kept, as well as with that hospital where Alexis was staying. And so, they were about to meet and go for Alexis, in order to transfer him to the Burdenko hospital. The relative’s conversation with the professor, and the negotiations with the hospitals, coincided with

the time when Valentina was in church. Hope appeared! The professor examined Alexis till nearly midnight and prescribed treatment. It was very complex treatment. Valentina stayed in the hospital around the clock. Alexis survived.

We still call each other, and I know that he is safe and sound, from time to time repeating the treatment. Alexis is already quite active and does things about the house, he is even going to start working. This, when in fact, he had been given only days to live: the kidneys had already almost stopped working.

A Warning to Parents.

Hieromonk John served in the church of Zosima and Savvathias. He used to say, that we, adults, by not following the Christian way of life, are in the power of Satan, and demons attack our children through us, since they are not protected.

We turned out to be the witnesses of a case, which proved the truth of these words.

A boy of four or five was brought to the church to be baptized. A small child, cute, but his face was angry. They began to undress him, and then it started. He shouted, squealed, growled, he twisted and turned, struggled to get free. Six adults could hardly hold him. The child's strength was inhuman, as well as the voice with which he shouted. Only after they dipped him into the Baptismal Font, he calmed down and his little face brightened.

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'Voices.'

A woman of forty-five held conversations with 'voices,' which led her to mental disturbance. When they advised her to be baptized, the 'voices' began to try and convince her that she would die on the way to the church. After Baptism she felt better, but she was absolutely cured only after Communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

The Mentally Retarded Girl.

A mentally retarded girl was brought to the church on a cart on Sundays and feast days: she did not perceive anything, and her face showed absolutely no sense. The girl became transformed as soon as she was brought into the church. She examined everything around her, and when was given Communion, her little face became joyful.

'Do You Want to Join Me?'

This occurred in the 6-th City hospital in Moscow, in neuropathological department of the spine. We — several parishioners from the ElohoVo Cathedral — visited that hospital, and helped the priest and patients in any way that we could. I remember, I entered one chamber and immediately saw a young man, who was, probably, the most seriously ill patient in the entire wing. He lay motionlessly on his back. I sat down by him, and we began to talk. This is what he told about himself.

One evening, he was coming home from work. He entered his building's foyer, which was dark. Suddenly, he was attacked by several strangers, who started to beat him. He lost consciousness from the blows.

The first thing that he saw was the Lord, Who stood next to him, — so kind. The Lord asked: 'Well, do you want to join Me, or to stay on the Earth?' And he answered: 'But what about my wife and daughter: how will they live without me?' The Lord, without saying a word, smiled at him very tenderly — and everything disappeared...

After that vision, the man returned to life. That sickest patient, completely motionless, had a wonderful face, friendly and joyous (though it was hard to reconcile it with those pains which he had to be suffering), and very clear eyes.

God's Help to the Atheist.

This happened to my older brother. He is 10 years my senior. He was a typical modern businessman, successful. He has a family: a wife and two children. Once he became overanxious and had a heart attack. He had severe pains. The ambulance arrived; he was taken to a hospital. He was in rehabilitation for some time, then they put him in a double room. The hospital was good, equipped with the latest technology. Above everyone's bed there was a panel with a bell, to call the nurse, switches, etc.

On the second night, his roommate was transferred to the rehabilitation wing because of a severe deterioration of his condition. My brother was alone in the room. He could not sleep. Then, in the middle of the night, lying on his back, he suddenly felt coldness creeping up along his body, starting from the fingertips and toes. My brother rang the bell to call the nurse several times, but nobody came: the nurse had either gone somewhere, or had fallen asleep... But the cold kept rising up, coming closer to the heart. And my brother distinctly thought: 'When this cold reaches my heart, I shall die.'

At this point, I have to mention, that my brother is an absolutely non-believing person. Moreover, he denies the Church. Any positive words about the Church cause a negative reaction in him.

But the cold continued to rise upwards, and then my faithless brother cried out: 'Lord, rescue me!' — And then? The movement of the cold stopped, faltered, then it slowly retreated the same way it began.

My brother was soon discharged from the hospital.

The Miracle with a Parachute.

I did not believe in God. When it came time to join the army, my mother, frequently going to church and praying for me, gave me a piece of paper, with a prayer written on it, and said: 'My son, let it always be with you.' Later, I found out that the 90th Psalm was written on the piece of paper. I was assigned to the paratroopers. One is not allowed to have superfluous things in their pockets in the army, so I sewed the prayer into the lining of my uniform jacket, near the left shoulder.

I was making my first parachute jump.

I shall never forget that moment when, having fallen down to the air abyss, I pulled the ring and... the parachute did not open.

I pulled the ring of the spare parachute — it did not open either.

The ground was approaching fast.

In those few seconds I could not, naturally, take out my mother's prayer and read it. Therefore I only slapped the place where it was, and cried: 'Lord, rescue me!'

In reply, I heard the flapping of the opening parachute.

Everything would come later: the inquiries of officers and friends, my mother's joy and tears, but even before I reached the ground, I promised myself that I would enter the seminary.

Later, upon graduating from the seminary, I joined a monastery, now I am a hieromonk.

The Miracle of the Holy Fire.

One nun, living in the Russian Gornensky monastery close to Jerusalem, told me the following. She was transferred there from the Puhtizky monastery.

She stepped onto the Holy Land with trembling and delight...

Then came her first Pascha in the Holy Land. Almost a day ahead, she occupied a place closer to the entrance of the Lord's Tomb, in order to see everything clearly.

Midday of Great Saturday arrived.

All the lights were switched off in the Church of the Lord's Tomb. Tens of thousands of people waited impatiently for the Miracle.

Reflections of light appeared in the Cuvuclia. The happy Patriarch took out two clusters of lit candles from the Cuvuclia to pass the fire on to the jubilant people.

Many people were looking up at the dome of the temple —blue lightning was flashing across it...

But our nun did not see the lightning. And the flame of the candles was common, though she eagerly looked, trying not to miss anything.

Great Saturday passed.

What feelings did the nun experience? There was disappointment, but then came the understanding that she was personally unworthy to see the Miracle ...

One year passed. Great Saturday came again.

Now the nun took the most humble place in the Temple. She could barely see the Cuvuclia. She lowered her eyes and decided not to lift them, thinking: 'I am unworthy to see the Miracle.'

The hours of expectation passed. The shout of triumph shook the Church again. The nun did not raise her head.

Suddenly it seemed that someone forced her to look. Her glance fell on the corner of the Cuvuclia, where there is a special opening through which the burning candles from the Cuvuclia were transferred outside. And so, a bright, twinkling cloud came out of that opening - and there and then the cluster of 33 candles in her hand lit up by itself.

The tears of joy that came to her eyes! What gratitude to God she felt!

That time, she saw the lightning in the dome, too.

The Joy of the Suffering, the Patroness of the Offended.

The Unexpected Joy.

It was the year 1921. Nadia and I lived in a dark room in Constantinople, whose window faced a lavatory. We were emigrants, who had run away from Russia. Nadia had a small son, whom she managed to place in an orphanage, and I had nobody: my husband was killed on an armored train, and I was alone in the world.

All the belongings were sold, in fact, I had none, I lived on Nadia's money, but now she had nothing, and we had not eaten for three days. We simply put a finger in salt, sucked it and lay down on our mutual wide bed.

What were we to do? Nadia found herself a job, because she knew foreign languages, but I didn't, and nobody hired me. But many tried to buy us, and we were so frightened of the impudence of the surrounding people, that we were afraid of everyone and asked our landlady, a fat old Turkish woman, not to let anybody in.

We did not give our address to anyone —we were so afraid. Why, recently, we were nearly sold to a public house by our own compatriots. We were accidentally rescued by a French officer.

How I wanted to die!

Nadia believed in God, and that our life would change for the better. I, too, believed in God, but thought that He had forgotten us... I was sick of staying in bed, sick of the dirty walls, and though I was afraid of everything in Constantinople, I rose and, putting on my only suit, went out. I walked,

reeling from weakness, but I felt better in the fresh air. Suddenly, someone caught me by the hand. It was Kolya, who had been my husband's comrade on the armored train.

We greeted each other, told each other about our sorrows. He offered to take me to a familiar merchant N. — who had opened a restaurant for the emigrants, and to ask him to employ me.

— Oh, , Nadia and I will die of hunger before I find a job, in fact, we haven't eaten for 3 days, — I said.

— Maria Nikolaevna! And you say nothing! Here, take this, — Kolya exclaimed, worrying, handing me a coin.

— Do you have more?

Kolya hesitated.

— Well, no.

— Then I shall not take it.

We argued for a long time and at last decided: Kolya and I bought bread with all the money, one third he took to himself, and I ran home with the other two thirds.

— Nadia! — I shouted directly from the doorstep. — Bread!

We ate the soft fragrant roll, and could not have enough.

—Angelic bread, — Nadia was saying, filling her mouth full.

She was happy and already full of energy, while my heart was heavy again, and I did not want to go to Kolya's merchant: I was always so unlucky in life, that I was sure that it would end up as a failure.

Still, Nadia succeeded to persuade me; I went to N — but received a cold refusal from him:

— There are no vacancies...

Ah, why did I bother to humble myself...? I lay down and cried... Nadia had some luck finding a job, and I again had to live at her expense. How long could such an existence last? I had had enough; there was only one way out — the Bosphorus. There were many like me at its bottom...

For some reason I slept very soundly that night, and at daybreak I saw a dream: it was a dark room, in the corner — there was a shining icon of the Heavenly Queen, and I heard a voice from it:

—Go to the Church this Friday...

I woke up feeling joyful, pious...

For a long time I lay and relived what I had seen, then I began to wake Nadia:

— Hear what an unusual dream I saw. Wake up, I ask you.

Nadia was rubbing her eyes, not understanding anything. But my story quickly brought her to her senses.

— What a marvelous dream! — she whispered rapturously. — the Heavenly Queen is foretelling you something good. Wait; is there any Holy Feast this Friday?

Nadia grabbed the only book taken from home, — 'The Life of the Holy Mother of God'- and started to thumb through it.

— Today is Tuesday, which means that on Friday there will be a feast day in honor of the icon 'The Unexpected Joy' — on the first of May (old calendar, - *editor's note*).

I spent that whole day, inspired by hope, but towards evening I became melancholy again. What is a dream, and how can it be trusted? I went to our embassy church on Friday only in order to not upset

Nadia

The Liturgy ended... Where was the miracle? There was no miracle...

I was going home, blinded by tears. Suddenly, I heard Kolya's voice in my ear:

— Maria Nikolaevna, I have been searching for you around the city. What kind of behavior is this — not to give your address to anybody! In fact, I have asked all the Russians, I am run off my feet, and came here today, thinking: maybe you are in the church? Let's go to N. — he has sent me for you...

— Again to that moneybag? Never!

— But he had some change of heart; he came to me himself, and begged me to find you.

Finally, I agreed, though I knew, that nothing would come out of it...

N. met us like treasured guests, invited us in, acquainted us with his wife, then said:

— Listen to me, much-respected Maria Nikolaevna, and then judge, as you will. I refused you, because all the waitresses' places were occupied, and I did not have any other work. I refused you and was at ease: formally, I was right. Night came, and I dreamt that I stood before the icon of the Heavenly Queen and heard her voice, so formidable, that I trembled all over. 'You, — I heard, — did not give a job to the woman who had come to you, and she may die, and you will be guilty of that.' I woke up petrified. The Heavenly Queen Herself came to protect you! I could hardly wait until morning, when I went to Nikolai Petrovich: I asked him to bring you, and he refused, — he did not know when and where to search for you. I cannot describe how my wife and I worried. Thank God, you came. And I have already planned out, that the tables can be moved a little closer together in the dining hall to add one more, while two of them we shall take outside and put them near the entrance, so there will be work for you, and I ask you to start tomorrow, I shall make you the senior waitress.

I listened and could not understand, and something glorious, powerful, inaccessible to the mind, was growing in my soul — the feeling of unexpected joy.

'Rise and Lift It!'

My great-grandmother lived in her manor in the Yaroslavl province. She lay immobile in bed for more than ten years— her legs were paralyzed. In the corner, above her bed, there hung a Vladimir icon of the Mother of God, which she frequently appealed to in prayer.

Once she heard a noise, as if something fell, and heard the voice: 'Rise and lift it.' She looked around — there was nobody there. 'Just my imagination,' — she thought.

And again she heard the words: 'Rise and lift it.' Fear and surprise overwhelmed her: 'How can I stand, when I lie immobile for so many years?'

Then she heard the voice for the third time, firm, like a command: 'I tell you, rise and lift it.'

Then she felt strength inside her, put her legs on the floor and went to that corner from which she had heard the voice. So what did she see? The icon (a board without overlay, but very well painted — the Face was life-like) lay on the floor, split in two parts.

She bent fearfully, lifted the icon and began to connect the two halves, and it was as if the icon grew together. But because she connected the parts imprecisely, the Mother of God had one part of the face higher than the other.

My grandmother has been well ever since. The icon was transferred to the church, and it started to work miracles.

Help from the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God.

My mother was a pious woman, and took in pilgrims. I remember one elder — a priest with long

gray hair, dressed in a white linen under-cassock. On his back he carried a heavy bag, as if filled with sand, and in his hand — an iron staff so heavy that we, children, could not lift it.

Our father died, leaving my mother with six small children. The mother decided to open a seamstress workshop in order to feed her children. She borrowed some money, bought fabrics, hired skilled workers and hung a sign at the main entrance about taking orders. She began to wait for customers, but they did not come. The month was coming to an end, she had to pay the workers their salary, and there was no money. My mother began to despair.

Suddenly, this pilgrim comes. She tells him tearfully about her sorrow. ‘Don't worry, Ulyanushka, — the pilgrim said, — I shall give you a great assistant, you will have plenty of orders. Send someone to help me.’

Mama sent our nurse, and they brought a large Vladimir icon of the Mother of God from the pilgrim's cell. He did not stay in his cell much, more often he went on pilgrimages to sacred places.

The pilgrim ordered that icon hung in the workshop, and said that a votive lamp should always be lit in front of it.

When the icon was hung and the icon lamp lit, mother gathered all of us children. The pilgrim-priest read prayers, and we prayed with him for a long time. Mama prayed with tears. Then Father blessed all of us, told mama not to despair, and left.

Suddenly, customers started to call. Call after call — they accepted 12 orders before lunch. The next day they temporarily stopped taking orders: enough orders had come in on one day to last a whole month. Later, it even became necessary to expand the workshop.

The Officer's Conversion.

I knew one family, in which there was a pious mother and a young officer-son. During military service, he forgot God, and started to lead a carousing life. His mother, as much as she tried, could not influence him, and only prayed hard to the Mother of God for the salvation of his soul.

Dying, she called her son to her, and asked him to promise to fulfill her last wish. The son agreed. The mother asked him to go to the church after her funeral, and to kiss the wonder-working icon of the Heavenly Queen.

That request of the dying mother struck the son like a lightning bolt. In view of the dissolute life he was leading and the inclination of his soul, it seemed that fulfilling that request was something awful, because his faith had not yet died completely and he understood that this was blasphemy.

The mother died. Despite the depth of his downfall and his terror of the holy object, the son did not consider it possible to break his word, as an officer, and forced himself to go to the church.

It seemed like a storm rose in his soul, and the closer he came to the church, the more difficult it became for him to go. But his sense of duty made him reach the church. He saw that icon of the Heavenly Queen, which he was supposed to kiss. Beads of perspiration appeared on his face, and he could not move. With great effort he made a step forward and stopped again. It took him an hour to cover the few short steps to the icon, and when at last, with his last strength, he kissed the icon, he fell to the ground unconscious...

When he came to his senses, he was already a different person. It was as if scales fell from his eyes. He saw the depths of his decline and felt all the bitterness, which he had caused his mother.

He changed his life completely, began to attend church and to pray for the pardon of his sins and for the peace of his departed mother's soul, whose prayers saved his soul.

The Encounter.

A priest was serving in one of the Moscow churches. A pious woman named Maria, who had come to Moscow from a village in 1936, was living in his family like a relative.

In the 1930s, the priest and his wife had to leave Moscow for several years. The wife returned first. She had to look for a job, but there was nobody to leave the daughter with.

Maria had come to Moscow just recently and became a servant. She wanted to work for a pious family, one that she could work for until she died.

Nothing seemed to work out for Maria for a long time. Once, she came to one of the Moscow churches, stopped before a wonder-working icon of the Mother of God, and began to beg her tearfully to find her work in a pious family. When she was leaving the church, an unfamiliar woman stopped her. **Her** appearance struck Maria...

The Woman told her: 'Go to church tomorrow, come up to the priest when he will be letting the people kiss the Cross. Ask him to help you; I shall take care of the rest.'

The Woman disappeared, and Maria realized that it had been the Mother of God Herself before her.

The next day the Matushka came to that same church – the wife of the priest. At the end of the service, when she approached the priest who was giving the cross to the parishioners, she asked him to help her find a servant that could look after her young daughter during her absence. The priest said, that he wasn't familiar with anyone like that, and she went to kiss the icon of the Mother of God.

Maria approached the priest after her, and asked to find her a job in a pious family. Surprised by such a coincidence, the priest told her: 'Go to that woman that is standing in front of the icon, she is looking for a servant.'

So the Mother of God Herself united Maria and the priest's family.

Aunt Polya.

The church in Selenskoe, near Klin, was shut down before the war, and Aunt Polya remained its warden. During the war, the authorities wanted to set up a warehouse in the church, but she would not give them the keys. At that time it was considered, that the church was of no benefit and that the parish should pay taxes.

What did Aunt Polya do? She had a cow. She raised calves, sold them, and used the money obtained from their sale to pay the church tax.

Once she sold a calf and prepared the money to pay the tax. Thieves entered her house during the night, attacked her and began to strangle her. She prayed then: 'Mother of God, help, help!' And suddenly, buckets fell somewhere in the house. The din was terrible. She thought then: maybe a cat jumped from the attic, but she did not even have a cat. The swindlers dropped everything and ran away... She paid the tax.

There was another incident. She had a calf. But at that time the "contracting" of cattle was being carried out, and the cattle was taken by force and sent somewhere. She was not home, while the calf broke loose and went away with the herd. She cried for a long time: 'Now I cannot pay for the church.' She had holes in her boots, and her door was all in cracks. She froze in the winter. 'When I come home, I tap my legs with a stick, and my legs revive,' — she used to say. And so, she cried for some days. Suddenly, there was a knock at a window. She approached the window and saw someone's hand leaving a packet, and a voice said: 'Take, God's servant.' Everything disappeared. She opened the packet, and there lay some money — the exact amount needed to pay the tax.

'If Not for Her...'

The war was in its second month. The news from the front was alarming; the factory began evacuating, and I started to prepare the laboratory, of which I was in charge, for that.

The director sent for me at the end of August.

— Yuri Pavlovich, the Germans have broken through the line of defense and have quickly moved in

our direction. The factory will be evacuated at night, but now we must take the children out. You will be responsible for the evacuation of the factory daycare and its personnel. There are 102 children. You shall go in two trucks; a third will carry food and necessities. Our best drivers will be behind the wheels — Pinchuk, Michael Stepanovich, and Constantine Ryabchenko, in the third vehicle — Svetlana Utkina. You must leave now, without delay. Well, have a safe trip!

Trucks covered with canvas were standing in the factory yard; I looked inside — they were packed with children, frightened, anxious, many of them were crying.

I walked up to the first vehicle. Michael Stepanovich, a broad, strong person, sat at the steering wheel with a calm, focused look. We have known each other for a long time.

I jumped into the cabin, and we took off. Mothers, fathers, grandmothers were running behind the trucks, shouting something. The children cried and stretched out their hands to them.

The trucks left the city and went down a highway. Soon a German plane began to circle above us. The first shell fell nearby on the side of the road.

— We have to make a run for it with our cargo; — Michael Stepanovich grumbled and drove the truck into the forest next to the highway.

We remained in the forest until the bombardment ended, then we drove on, but within an hour a German plane began to chug above our heads again. The region was heavily forested, and we managed to hide in the thicket of trees.

Fully understanding the danger of our position, I began to consult with the drivers and the head of the daycare as to what to do next.

Michael Stepanovich suggested: "This is my opinion: we shall reach the Krasniy embankment while the road passes near the forest, there we shall wait for night, because further on there will be ninety kilometers of open country. The Germans will not see us at night, so we shall leave at night, —

— How will you go in the dark without headlights, is it not dangerous? — I asked.

— If the night is clear, then it is very simple, but if it will be cloudy — we shall stray, — said Kostya with a short laugh.

When darkness fell, we continued our trip.

— Do you know this road well? — I asked Michael Stepanovich.

— No, I never had a chance to drive here. But do not worry, the highway leads right to Vetvichka, we shall pass it by morning, and farther on, the road leads through such a thicket, that no German will see us.

The rain pattered quietly. I was dead tired. The whisper of the rain was lulling me to sleep, I could hardly keep my eyes open, my head persistently began to nod, and I fell asleep. I woke up because the truck stopped.

— What happened?

— We are in a field, we have left the road, — Michael Stepanovich answered angrily. — It's totally dark. We shall follow the compass, we can't just stand here.

We hardly started before I fell asleep again. A strong jolt of the truck and a loud shout woke me:

— Why is this person getting under the wheels? He has lost his mind! What does you want?

I looked through the window. There was a female figure a few steps from us, with the arms stretched out to both sides, starkly white in the dense blackness of the night.

— Comrade, what do you want?

The woman was silent. The driver jumped out of the cabin, but a minute later he returned.

— There's no one there. Could I have imagined it?

— No, a woman was standing right here, — I said.

— Tall, and all in white.

— Then, she has hidden. What a time for jokes. It is enough to make my flesh creep; —said Michael Stepanovich, suddenly becoming nervous.

He started the vehicle, but the wheels did not even make the second turn before the white figure appeared again, and I felt fear, bordering on mortal horror, from her appearance, especially from the warning sign of her stretched hands.

— Michael Stepanovich, stop! — I cried desperately.

We jumped out of the cabin, Kostya ran up to us:

— What happened?

Without waiting for us, Michael Stepanovich rushed to the woman ahead, and in a second they both disappeared from my sight.

— Come here, quickly! — he suddenly shouted. We ran to his voice.

— Careful, stop! — he whispered in a constrained voice, pointing at something next to us. We looked and recoiled — it was an abyss. We stood at its edge; small stones fell down with a rustle when we made a careless movement.

— Why did we stop? — Svetlana ran up to us.

— Because of this, — said Kostya, pointing at the abyss.

Svetlana exclaimed and waved her hands.

— If not for Her, — Michael Stepanovich took off his cap, — all of us would be there, at the bottom, now.

His voice trembled; he hardly stood on the legs.

— Uncle Misha, who is She? — asked Kostya, frightened.

— What are you, a fool or insane? Don't you understand? Who could it be if not the Mother of God?

— Where was She? — Svetlana whispered timidly.

— Here, now, — answered Kostya with a whisper, and also took his cap off...

In the Belovezh Forest Preserve.

A wonderful event occurred in the Belovezh forest preserve during the war. On September 27, 1942 Soviet paratroopers landed in the forest near the village of Rozhkovki in the Kamenetskii region of the Brest area. The Germans found out about that and started to comb the forest. Two German soldiers died in the shooting, while the paratroopers left safe and sound.

The infuriated fascists decided to take the entire village hostage — to shoot 100 peaceful inhabitants for each German soldier.

On the night of 27 — 28 of September, the fascist soldiers surrounded the village and let nobody out. They ordered all the inhabitants to gather with their carts and things at the edge of the village within two hours. Sixteen persons were appointed to dig holes of 2 meters to 20 meters in size and two meters deep. The youth over 16 years old was separated out to be taken away to Germany. All the rest of the inhabitants of the village were put in a column and driven to the hole.

The Germans put the people on edge of the hole, and placed machine guns around them. People fell on their knees and began to cry and pray.

At that moment, a German plane appeared above the village, which soon landed not far from the hole. The officers supervising the reprisals ran up to it. An high ranking officer came out of the plane. He said that he had to take off right away, and if in two hours he did not return, all the hostages were to be shot.

Precisely two hours later, the plane returned and landed at the same place. The same officer came out. The people were told that they should have been shot, and the village — burnt, but thanks to the officer who came, everyone would be released; the children, cattle and all the property that had been confiscated, would be returned. The hole was not to be filled for a year. If during that time anything happened, everyone would be shot. After that, everyone was released and could go home.

Two weeks later, the officer who had arrived on the plane came again and brought an icon of the Mother of God with the Babe in Her hands, carved out of wood. The village church was not completely restored yet, but services were already being held. The officer said: 'When the plane flew above the field, The Virgin appeared and pointed down. Keep this icon — She is your Savior!'

Our village celebrates this day — September 28 — annually. A service is held in the church.

'Turn Back, You Have Lost Your Way.'

I worked with Natasha in a sewing factory since 1922. She was not only an atheist, but also laughed at believers, though she was by nature kind and helped others. After 1927, we now longer saw each other — she was transferred to another factory. I met her again in 1947. She greeted me affectionately and told me the following:

— In 1942, I worked in a studio on Kaluzhskaya Street. It was a long commute, and during the war —difficult. I suffered both cold and hunger. Once I was on my way to work, and came out of the subway at six o'clock in the morning. It was late fall, frosts had begun. The streets were dark and deserted. Crossing the square, I stepped into a large puddle and fell in it. I tried to get up — and I could not, I rose — and again I fell, as though someone was pushing me. I was exhausted, I began to cry and exclaimed: 'Lord, if You exist, help me.' Suddenly, I see what seems to be a large icon descend from the sky and stop in front of me. It was the icon of the Mother of God "The Sign." And I was kneeling in the middle of the puddle and shouting: 'Mother of God, help me!'

She addressed me from the image and said: 'Natalie, you have lost your way, turn to My Son. "

With those words the image began to rise, and the whole time, till it disappeared from my sight, I heard the voice saying: 'Turn back, you have lost your way.'

Then people ran up to me, began to lift me up. I asked them: 'Did you see the icon, coming down from the sky?' But nobody saw it except me.

I came to work all dirty, wet, and tearfully asked for a day off, as I was in no condition to work. They let me go. I came home and went to the Novo-Devichi Monastery church. There I found the icon of the Mother of God "The Sign," put a candle in front of it and sobbed for a long time, noticing nothing else.

Then I confessed and took Communion.

'Lucky you, — said the priest, — apparently, you have a kind soul...'

Now I go to church frequently, and baptized my daughter and my grandchildren; I partake of Communion often, and my life has become easy and happy, — I do not know how to thank God for His mercy.

The Quick to Help.

Two sisters known to me — very devout women who prayed diligently — lived in the country. Many miracles happened in their lives. Once, during the war, having exchanged something for potatoes, they put them on the sled (this happened in winter) and went. They had to go a long way. Hungry and exhausted, they were worn out. They begged: 'Most Holy Virgin, help us.'

They stood on the road with no strength left, and saw that a noble-looking Woman approached them and said: 'You are very tired, I will help you with the potatoes.' And She started to help them. It became so easy with Her, — they were amazed, looking at Her, and were afraid to ask, Who She was. As soon as they reached the house with them — She disappeared.

Only then they understood that it was the Most Holy Virgin — The Quick to Help.

The Sign in the Sky of Stalingrad.

In world history there are events, which remain forever in the memory of mankind, they make up the golden fund of the history of nations and kingdoms. The brilliant victory of our nation in the Stalingrad battle belongs to their number. It surpassed all previous armed battles in its scope, force and consequences. The Stalingrad battle became the turning point of the entire Second World War.

Researchers analyzed mainly the correlation of techniques, human reserves, combat training and level of morale of both the Soviet and Hitler armies. However, behind the frames of scientific monographs there was something beyond the limits of human knowledge, therefore carefully hidden in confidential folders of special repositories in the state archives.

While I was working in the State Archive of the Russian Federation I found a document, unique in its way: it was the report of the representative of the Council on the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church Comrade Hodchenko to the then-chairman of the Council G.G. Karpov. In it, a regular atheist, an opponent of religion, informed the higher bosses about things which contradicted his own ideas and beliefs. The representative reported no more no less a Miracle, which a whole military unit that had come to the Ukraine from the Stalingrad front had witnessed...

After the shattering defeat near Moscow, the German command was counting on delivering the main blow to a southern region, in order to break through Rostov to Stalingrad and the Northern Caucasus, and from there to the Caspian Sea and north along the Volga River. Therefore the defense of Stalingrad appeared to be the major strategic task to the Soviet leadership. In the middle of July, 1942, the army of general Chujkov was sent to the Stalingrad region, which took on the major brunt of the struggle against the enemy, whose force was made up of 26 divisions.

In September of 1942, the fascists prepared for the last, "decisive" storming of the fortress on the Volga. By that time, the greater part of the city was already in their hands. There were heavy street battles for every district, house, for each meter of the Volga grounds throughout the month. On November 11 the Nazis made their next attempt to storm the city. Our armies found themselves divided into three parts. But during the most critical moment of the battle, the soldiers of one part of the celebrated army saw something that made them shudder: a Sign appeared in the autumn night sky of Stalingrad, indicating the rescue of the city, the army and the swift victory of the Soviet armies.

Unfortunately, in the report of the representative, it does not say what exactly the soldiers saw in the Stalingrad sky. It can only be assumed, that the Stalingrad sign and the appearance of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God in Stalingrad (the miraculous icon was among our armies on the right bank of Volga, and moliebens and panikhidas were constantly served in front of it) are somehow connected. In any case, the Stalingrad sign clearly showed, that God's help does not abandon the Russian people in the most critical moments of its history. The further succession of events — the encirclement of the enemy and counterattack of the Soviet army — served as the best proof of that.

After all that happened, the legendary commander, subsequently the celebrated marshal, Chujkov, could be seen in Orthodox churches. The hero of the Stalingrad battle stood in church; put candles before the icons... Certainly, he remembered the night before the battle and the marvelous Face of the Mother of God, which had appeared in the clarified autumn sky!

Who Helps the Russians?

In 1941, Vasily Grigorjevich Kazanin was sent to the front. He fought near Smolensk, participated in the attack on Velikie Luki. He took part in reconnaissance operations many times, he was

wounded four or five times. One of the bullets passed through his body, just several centimeters below the heart. He took part in the liberation of Königsberg. Then, the Germans occupied trenches. Shells bounced off the stone bastions like balls. Russia sustained great losses.

Then the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God was brought. The priests served a molieben and went on a religious procession to the front line, completely upright. The Germans were shooting. Suddenly they stopped — the enemy appeared frozen. Our armies began the full attack on Königsberg. Leaving their shelters, thousands of Germans surrendered. Later, they related that their weapons stopped functioning, while the Most Holy Virgin appeared in the sky, and they understood, Who was helping the Russians...

After the war Vasily Grigorjevich, answering the call of his soul, entered the Pskov Monastery of the Caves and toiled there as schema monk Irinarch.

The Heavenly Queen Will Not Abandon.

The terrible year of 1937 arrived. Father Sergius at the time was forty-four years old. His wife had four children, and they were expecting their fifth. Father Sergius loved his children very much, and when he spoke of them, his face lit up with a gentle smile. One evening he visited us, and my mother asked him:

— Father Sergius, how did you decide to become a priest, with such a big family? And what if they send you to exile, to whom will you leave the children?

Father Sergius shuddered, looked at my mother with his clear eyes and answered:

— To the Heavenly Queen! If I die, then for Her Son, — how can you even consider the idea, that She would abandon my children? Never. She will save and protect them!

Two months later, Father Sergius was arrested, and he perished. And what was about his children?

In 1956, I met his daughter Tania and son Alex. They told me, that their senior brother became an officer and fought throughout the war without a wound. Sister Vera graduated from the institute with excellent grades and received an important job at one of the Ural factories. She took her mother with her. Tania herself graduated from the Polygraph Institute and stayed in Moscow, in the family of her childless uncle. Alexis graduated from the higher educational institution with honors.

The third son of Father Sergius, who was born right after his death, was named Sergius in his honor. By Alex's words, he was a very gifted young man; he just graduated to the tenth grade.

I do not know the further destiny of Father Sergius' children, as I have not met any of them since, but I know for sure, that they will remain under the Protection of the Heavenly Queen till their deaths.

The Heavenly Teacher of the Daughters.

The husband of one woman was killed in the Great World War, when her two girls were 5 and 6. The widow had to go to work and leave the children for almost the entire day. Their surroundings were spoiling them and they began to steal.

But the widow was pious. Seeing her helplessness in raising the girls, she brought them to church, put them on the knees in front of the wonder-working icon of the Mother of God and, going down on her knees herself, turned to Her with bitter tears and a passionate request:

— Mother of God, you see my sorrow and inability to bring up my daughters in honesty and faith. I cannot do anything with them. I hand them over to You; do what You want with them. If You want, let them die, but if they live, raise them Yourself.

I met them 15 years later. Everyone who knew them praised them for diligence, good conduct and piety. 'How did their mother manage to raise them so?' — I heard about them constantly from other people.

'I Beg You for the First Time...'

As a result of difficult trials in my life, my health was completely undermined. I began to suffer chronic diarrhea. But the state of full nervous exhaustion was especially dangerous. I lost the ability to read or to talk more than ten minutes. Extremely bad headaches appeared. The doctors told me that my condition was serious and a long treatment was necessary: complete peace and rest in sanatorium conditions. I had no opportunity to receive either. The condition of inactivity to which I had been doomed (at thirty years old!), horrified me.

I lived in Murom at the time. On one of the big Holy feasts devoted to the Holy Virgin, I attended a celebratory vigil service. For the first time in my life, I addressed the Mother of God with an ardent prayer: 'I can endure a constant illness of the stomach if the Lord needs to send me this cross, but I cannot live without work, without reading the Holy Gospel and spiritual books, with no opportunity to communicate with people. Most Holy Mother of God, I beg you, I beg you for the first time — give me the chance to work, to read and to socialize with people.'

When I approached the priest, I kissed the icon of the Mother of God, was anointed and ate the blessed bread, then I felt that something special happened to me, — the thoughts in my head became completely clear, as if some strength had entered me. From that moment on, there were not even the slightest traces of illness in the head and nerves. The stomach infirmity remained, but I patiently tolerate it, remembering the Lord's words in the epistles of the Apostle Paul: '*For My strength is made perfect in weakness*' (2 Corinthians, 12:9).

The Mute Started Talking.

In a village, there lived a pious peasant family — a husband, wife and adult deaf-mute daughter, who could only mumble. They had a cow. In that severe frosty winter the cow was about to calve, and the shed was cold. They were afraid that the calf would freeze, if the cow calved at night. One evening, the husband wanted to go and guard the cow at night, but the wife dissuaded him: 'Wait, it is still early.'

At night they heard the voice of their daughter from the oven: 'Go to the shed, quickly!' They rose and ran to the shed, not realizing that their daughter had spoken.

In the shed they found a new-born calf, brought it into the house and only then thought: why did their daughter start to speak, and who told her about the calf?

The daughter told them, that the Mother of God Herself appeared and ordered her to wake them and to send them to the shed. Since then, the mute girl began to speak fluently.

'The Mother of God Came to Us!'

Snow, snow, snow... It blinded, while I was running down a village street as fast as I could. I was sixteen, and the secretary of the school Komsomol unit. That day our self-motivation group performance was giving a performance at the factory club, and I played the leading role. I knew it by heart, but my costume was not ready and I needed to hurry.

There was nobody at home, my father was on a business trip, my mother supposedly went to visit my grandmother.

I opened the chest and I pulled out a theatrical skirt of immense width. It was necessary to attach a frill and a braid to it. Oh! I wished Kate could come to help! Kate was the favorite of all my friends; she was a daughter of a priest, but I never believed in God, and how was it possible to believe, if religion was a narcotic? Kate was also going to participate in the amateur performance, only she was not lucky: she wanted to play the leading roles, and was always getting the most insignificant ones. But she found a way out: she learned the ones she liked, and acted them out for herself. She was laughed at, but she did not care! Well, it was necessary to sew faster; the girls and boys would come for me to go to the club together. Why does my head ache so badly, and I feel so hot? This frill seems endless, while my head hurts so badly, that my fingers do not obey me.

I could not sew more; I lay down, for I felt worse and worse...

Behind the door I heard voices, the tramp of feet, and a noisy crowd of performance participants rushed in. Seeing me in bed, they began to fuss around it uselessly. But then someone gave me a thermometer, someone pulled off the felt boots which I could not take off, and covered me with a blanket.

— Basil, — I heard Kim's voice, — run for a doctor. Maya, find Lucy's mother. Katya, pull the thermometer out. How high? 41! Oh-oh!

My mother came. I was so ill, that I could say nothing to her. Kim put a pill in my mouth.

— Swallow, the nurse from the clinic sent it, and the doctor has already gone: today is Saturday.

I spit the bitter medicine out with disgust and cried from pain, from the heaviness throughout my body and from a kind of oppressing anguish.

Everyone left for the club. Kate lingered and told my mother:

— Nadezhda Andreevna, after the performance, I shall come to you and spend the night with Lucy, so you can peacefully go on the night shift.

Yes, Kate would have to play both her role and mine that night.

There was a terrible ringing in my ears...I felt so bad! I was most likely dying... Mama would put a wet towel on my forehead, but I would throw it away and toss and turn in the bed.

The bed sheets were burning my body; the pillow was burning hot, too. I needed something cool!

Where did such a light come from in the room?. Bright, and at the same time soft and gentle. What is that? In the very center of the light was the Kazan icon of the Mother of God. I knew it well, one like it hangs at my grandmother's. Only this is not an icon, but the living Holy Virgin, and waves of joy were radiating from Her to me.

— Mama, — I said unexpectedly loudly, — the Mother of God has come to us.

Mama approached me and was crying:

— My child, you imagine it before your death, — you are dying.

But the glow became more triumphant, brighter, and in its light to the right of the Virgin I saw the Face of Christ. It seemed to be painted on a towel, I could even see golden brushes at the edge of the towel. But at the same time I feel, that the Face is alive and is looking at me with meek, extraordinary eyes.

— Mama, God Himself is here, — I whispered, and I heard her cries and lamentations from afar.

Powerful joy overwhelmed me entirely. I lost the sense of time, of place. I wanted only one thing: that this never end. The Two Faces in the unearthly glow and I... Nothing else was necessary...

But the light vanished as suddenly as it appeared. I lay a long time and did not move.

Something new had entered my world; I was like a cup filled to the brim...

I pressed my arms to my breast and rose. But how is it possible, I had been very sick, dying, and now I was completely healthy? Mama, frightened, approached me:

— Lucy, dear, what is the matter with you? Lie down, dear.

— Mummy, everything is fine, feel me: my hands and my head are cold, and nothing hurts. Let me help you collect your things and go to the factory quickly, or you will be late. Do not worry, I am completely healthy.

Mama left and I waited for Kate. I could tell only her, and no one else, what had happened to me. Ah, that she would come soon!

There was the crunch of snow under the window, the clatter of Kate's quick feet — and there she was, on the doorstep. She had snowflakes on her scarf and coat, her face was in make-up, and she looked at me anxiously.

— Kate, Kate, do you know, what happened? — I shouted. — Just listen!

We talked all night long, and early in the morning Kate led me to her father. First time in my life I confessed and took Communion...

That was how my new life began.

The Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God.

I was an atheist in my youth, my parents — believers. Shortly before my father's death I dreamt, that I was kneeling before an icon of the Mother of God and I was praying.

Called by telegram to my dying father, I did not manage to see him alive. My mother told me about the last days of my father's life. He was distressed that his son Kostya lived without God... But a few hours before his death he said, joyfully: 'Well, now I die in peace, I dreamed, that we, together with Kostya, were on our knees praying in front of the icon of the Mother of God. It means, our son will come to believe in the Lord.' When I heard this, I told the mother about my dream and from then on became a believer with the help of the Heavenly Queen. But that was not all. A few months later I had to be in the Paraclete (this is a monastery seven kilometers from the Trinity-Sergius Lavra). When I entered the church, on the right side near the column, I saw the image of the Mother of God that I had seen in my dream. I went down on my knees before the Heavenly Queen and cried in front of Her a long time. That was the Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God.

'I Shall Ask Nothing of Her...'

I had the beginnings of a serious throat disease, which, judging by previous attacks, would make me unfit for work for around 10 days and would disappear no sooner than a month from now.

The feast of the Nativity of the Virgin arrived. I was standing at the All Night Vigil in the church in Sokolniki, that has the Iberian Icon of the Mother of God (the Hostess of Moscow, as She is called). At the time I felt particularly strongly about this feast, and thought: "If we celebrate the birthdays of our relatives so festively, what significance does the Birthday of the Virgin Mary — the Mother of the Lord Himself, the Son of God, the Savior and the Expiator of mankind have?!" I had the desire to bow before the Theotokos to honor Her with the whole Church, and to ask Her to accept only the silent reverence of Her, as the image of Incomparable among humans Sacred Beauty and Spiritual Majesty. And though I felt seriously ill, I decided that that day I should not ask Her anything.

After kissing the icon, the anointment and taking in the blessed bread, I suddenly felt that my throat stopped hurting me.

At first I could not believe that I was healed, and observed my condition attentively. But that evening, and the next day, and later, I did not notice any signs of the illness.

The Miracle on a Path.

A young friend of mine told me this story. She studied and worked in Moscow, but lived in the suburbs, somewhere near Nemchinovka. She was returning home late, and she had to walk along a deserted road which at one point went through a forest. The worst part was that it was known to be unsafe — people had been undressed, robbed, and even raped.

The girl highly revered the Heavenly Queen, and especially loved Her image 'The Unexpected Joy'. She prayed before that icon whenever she had troubles.

Once during the winter she returned late. She walked, entered the forest and hurried along the narrow path, broken in the deep snow. Suddenly, she saw a man approaching her. It was a moonlit night, she could see that he was laughing and stretching his arms out to seize her. She felt inexpressible horror and loathing.

— Heavenly Queen, the Unexpected Joy, save me, — she whispered, and at once peace overwhelmed her, and no trace of fear remained.

The man came closer and suddenly looked with surprise, —not at the girl, — but at the One Who was behind her. Suddenly he turned directly into the snow and walked away very quickly.

The girl did not dare to look back, but she felt a Companion behind her, and when the forest ended, she glanced back —nobody was there, only the already very distant figure of the person who wanted to attack her walking away.

The Diligent Protectoress.

My grandmother was a believing person. And I, when I was still a girl, observed how she prayed, standing in front of the icons. She always prayed silently, what prayers she read — I do not know, at that time I was not especially interested in that (this was the 1960s). When grandmother died, the icons were lost somewhere.

Ten years passed. My brother from Moscow came to visit me and began to do something in the shed. When my mother went there, she saw that he was holding an icon in his hands, wiping the dust from it. He said that the icon could be worth a great deal. Mama told my brother to put the icon back, because it was a great sin to sell such icons for money. He obeyed her.

Five more years passed. I got sick. I had the thought that I should put up icons. I found that icon in the shed — it was the Kazan icon of the Theotokos — and one more — of the Savior. I put both icons in my home and prayed, appealing for help in my sickness. The disease receded.

Some time passed. One acquaintance noticed my icon and suggested bringing it to Moscow to sell it. I gave it to him. He left, and two weeks later came back and returned the icon. I did not recognize my icon. It was painted upon wood, and had been dark brown. Now I saw just a light-yellow board on which some contours were barely visible. My acquaintance said that the icon was not worth any money. But deep down for some reason I was even pleased, though at that time I did not have any particular faith and I appealed to God in prayer only when I felt sick, and then forgot about it all.

Three more years passed. That person who had taken my icon was arrested, and I again — and this time very seriously — became sick. Then came the day of November 3. I again felt very poorly, and on the night of November 4 at 2:30 in the morning I became worse. I heard a voice saying: ‘Wake up the children, you are dying!’ Everything inside of me began to quake, I stopped feeling my body. I had two sons. The older at that time was fourteen, the younger — eight. In general, I did not know what to do. Mother ran to call the ambulance. The doctor arrived; she gave me an intramuscular injection. The medicine did not work, and I felt worse and worse. Then for some reason (now I understand why) a thought came to my mind. I told my older son to take candles and light them before the Kazan icon of the Theotokos, — before that much-suffering icon, which everybody wanted to sell for money. I told the children to ask the Virgin for my forgiveness on their knees. They begged the Holy Virgin with tears. I felt that my body was becoming soft and was coming off the floor, even though I was standing at that time. I shouted: ‘Children, hold me!’ They seized me and begged the Theotokos even more.

My mother ran to call the ambulance again. This time I somehow knew that a man would come. When the doctor came in, I already knew, that all this had taken place because I wanted to sell our Protectoress, our Mother, for money. It was five minutes to five in the morning. And then true repentance and prayer came into my soul— it seemed that an internal voice was speaking, it said, that in two minutes I would feel better. I understood that due to my prayers and repentance, and more — by the prayers of my children, I was forgiven. The doctor gave me an intravenous injection and left, unable to understand, what had happened to me, he even asked my mother, whether I was seeing a psychiatrist. I began to come to life little by little. While praying before the Kazan icon of the Theotokos, I began to notice, that the image was gaining new outlines. A month later the icon regained its original appearance, and the image of the Baby-Savior was simply marvelous.

Three years passed. A lot changed in my life during that time. God gave me an experienced spiritual father. Recently (the same as then, on the eve of November, 4) on the eve of the Kazan icon of Theotokos feast, the icon bid me travel. I neatly wrapped the icon and took it to the church. It is there now. I understood that it is impossible to keep such a sacred thing at home — let people pray and know, how merciful and generous the Lord is to us, sinners.

‘The Most Holy Theotokos, Save Me!’

A young girl, a bookshop saleswoman, related the following. She occasionally went to church, knew how to pray a little. One evening she lay down to sleep. She was alone in the room. Suddenly she heard footsteps behind her door; they were very strange, like slapping. She became alert. She heard the door squeak, but she felt paralyzed. She did not even have the strength to turn around and look, but the steps came closer and closer to her bed. Then something heavy, black, sticky fell upon her from behind and began to choke her. She started to suffocate and realized that she was going to die. And then she remembered a prayer and began to pray to the Mother of God: ‘The Most Holy Theotokos, save me.’ She whispered the prayer with increasing frequency. Then the thing that was choking her seemed to snort with great hatred and rage, rose and left. It went out the door and its steps died away...

‘Mother, Dear, It Is Still Hurting Me.’

I have a younger sister, born in 1949. She was born with a congenital heart disease, and was constantly ill. Nevertheless she married, had a son. With the passing of years, her heart began to hurt more often. It turned out the cardiac valve was blocked, and she was alive thanks to an expanded aorta. She had headaches increasingly often, and took pills every hour. She was advised to go for tests. The computer exam showed, that she had a brain swelling: on the cerebellum and three jugular vertebrae. The professor from Moscow said that they did not do such operations. It was Monday, and the doctors prepared her discharge papers by Thursday. They also said, that she had three months to live.

Around that time I met a matushka. She advised me to take some sand from the tomb of St. Matrona and told: ‘If you pray to the Lord, our Mother the Theotokos, and Blessed .Matrona, you should be cured.’ I did what was necessary.

We were not great believers, my sister was not church-going, but agreed to drink the consecrated water and to pray.

My sisters and I began to pray diligently to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother of God (in front of her Kazan icon) and St. Nicholas. We read akathists and prayers. Three days later, the professor told her: ‘We have discussed your case and decided to do an operation.’ The operation was scheduled for a week later. We started to pray even more. The operation was postponed three times and was only performed a month later. It lasted six and a half hours, and was done with a local anesthetic: the doctors were afraid for the heart. My sister felt and heard everything. When she was being wheeled out of the operating room, she was even smiling. The professor said that it was a unique operation.

My sister and I began to care for her alternately by days. Four weeks passed after the operation. They did not take out the stitches, and she lay on one side. She took a lot of medicine...

She received injections every two hours, she tolerated everything and only said: ‘I shall bear it all, if only I could remain alive.’ We tried to read prayers near her every free minute.

Once during my shift, at two o'clock in the morning, she began to cry and said: ‘My liver hurts, it hurts more than I can bear.’ I went to the nurse, and she said: ‘I can not give her an injection: she had one only half an hour ago.’ I began to read the Akathist to the Theotokos, of Her Kazan icon, and told my sister: ‘Read ‘Oh Theotokos and Virgin, rejoice...' as many times as you can. Read, ask the Intercessoress. She will help you a bit!’

She began to read that prayer to herself. Then suddenly she said: ‘Mother, dear, it is still hurting me.’ Then she opened her eyes and asked: ‘Do you believe that I am in my right mind?’ I said:

‘Certainly, I do.’ She said: ‘I shall sleep now, and tomorrow morning I shall tell you something very important.’ A while later the nurse came and was surprised: ‘What did you give her?’ I said: ‘Nothing.’ The nurses, certainly, knew that we pray, moreover, there were icons on the wall above the bed.

At six o'clock in the morning she woke up, smiled and said: ‘Can you believe, the Mother of God visited me. When I prayed, I did not see, but clearly felt, that a Woman of Heavenly Beauty approached me and put Her hand on my side, pressed and stroked downward. The pain followed Her hand but did not disappear completely. Then I said: ‘Mother, it is still hurting me,’ so that you could understand, that I was conscious and it was the truth. She pressed against my side once again and led Her hand down — and the pain stopped. Then She told me: ‘Sleep.’ And I fell asleep. I slept like a healthy person.

God’s Saints Come to Help.

St. Nicholas

‘St. Nicholas Stands Instead of You.’

Those were the difficult years of the civil war. V.P. — then a young girl — stood in the garden by her house, and a peasant was pointing his shotgun at her (at that time peasants all across Russia were retaliating against the landowners). The girl, trembling, pressed her hands to her breast and, with great belief and hope, repeated fervently:

— Father Nicholas, the Holy Bishop of Christ, help, protect me.

And so? The peasant threw the gun away and said:

— Get out of here this minute and don’t let me see you again.

The girl ran home, took some things, ran to the station and left for Moscow. Her relatives found her a job there.

Some years passed.

Once, the doorbell rang. The neighbors opened it — a thin, raggedy peasant stood there, shaking all over. He asked whether V.P. lived there. They answered in the affirmative, invited him to come in and went for her.

When she came out, that person threw himself down at her feet and, crying, began to ask for forgiveness. She was confused, did not know what to do, she began to raise him up, saying that she did not know him.

— Matushka V.P., don't you recognize me? I am the one who wanted to kill you. I lifted a gun, pointed it at you and just when I wanted to shoot you I saw, that instead of you, St. Nicholas stood there. I could not shoot at him.

He fell down again.

—I have been ill so long, and decided to find you. I have come from the village on foot.

She took him to her room, calmed him down, and said that she had forgiven him everything. She fed him and gave him clean clothes.

He said that now he could die in peace.

Suddenly he became weak and lay down. She called for a priest. The peasant confessed and took Communion. A few days later he fell asleep peacefully in the Lord.

How she cried over him...

‘The Fast Helper.’

One servant, a pious woman, lived with our family a long time. She had a contract with us, and we

made the insurance payments for her.

When the woman grew old, she went to live with her relatives. When the new law on pensions was issued, the old woman came to us to get the documents necessary to receive the pension.

I had carefully stored those documents, but when I began to search, I could not find them. I searched for three days, rummaged through all the drawers, closets — and I could not find them anywhere.

When the old woman came again, I bitterly told her about my failure. The old woman was very upset, but humbly said: ‘Let’s pray to St. Nicholas so that he could help us, and if then you do not find them, then, apparently, I will have to accept it and forget about the pension.’

In the evening, I ardently prayed to St. Nicholas, and that same evening I noticed some sort of paper roll under the table by the wall. Those documents were the same documents which I had been searching for.

It turned out, that the documents fell behind the desk drawer, and fell out only after we fervently prayed to St. Nicholas.

All turned out well, and the old woman began to receive her pension.

So did St. Nicholas, the Fast Helper, hear our prayer and lead us out of trouble.

‘Where Are You Going, Girl?’

My acquaintance, Elena, is now an old woman, a pensioner. This happened to her in the days of her youth when she, being a member of a geological expedition, was researching the Solovetsky islands. It was late autumn, and ice floes were beginning to cover the sea. Hoping that she still could return to her base, E. went to one of the islands alone to finish her work, hoping to return by evening.

Returning in the evening, she saw that there was so much ice in the sea, that it was impossible to cross the water by boat. That night, the wind and ice floes carried her boat away and she was washed up on an unfamiliar shore. E. was a believer from childhood and continually prayed to St. Nicholas about salvation. She decided to walk along the beach, hoping to run into at least some dwelling.

She met an old man, who asked:

— Where are you going, girl?

— I am walking along the beach, looking for a dwelling.

— Do not walk along the beach, dear, you will not find anyone for miles. But see the small hill there, go, climb it and then you will see where to go.

E. looked at the hill, then turned back to the old man, but there was no one there. E realized that St. Nicholas himself had shown her the way, and she went to the hill. From it, she noticed some smoke in the distance and went to it. There she found the hut of a fisherman.

The fisherman was surprised by her appearance in that completely deserted place, confirmed, that she would not find a dwelling for hundreds of kilometers along the beach and would certainly die of cold and hunger. In that way, St. Nicholas saved the careless, but pious girl.

‘The Quick Helper to Those In Trouble.’

I knew one worker’s pious family, consisting of the husband, wife and seven children. They lived near Moscow. This happened at the beginning of the Great World War, when bread was rationed by cards and in very limited quantity. In addition, monthly cards were not renewed if lost.

The oldest child, Kolia, thirteen, was the one who went to fetch the bread from the shop. That winter, on St. Nicholas day, he got up early and went to get the bread, of which there was usually

only enough for the first buyers.

He was first in line and began to wait at the doors of the shop. Suddenly, he saw four fellows approaching. Noticing Kolya, they went straight towards him. He thought in a flash: 'Now they will take my cards away.' That would doom the entire family to starvation. In horror, he cried in his thoughts: 'St. Nicholas, save me.'

Suddenly an old man appeared, approached him and said: 'Come with me.' He took Kolya by the hand, and before the eyes of the stunned and thunderstruck men led him home. Near the house he disappeared.

St. Nicholas remains the same "Quick Helper to Those in Trouble."

'Why are you sleeping?!'

One participant of the Second World War, a man called Nicholas, told this story to a priest.

— I managed to escape from German captivity. I made my way through occupied Ukraine at night, and during the day I hid somewhere. Once, having walked all night, I fell asleep in the rye. Suddenly someone woke me. I saw an old man in priest's vestments. The old man told me:

— Why are you sleeping? The Germans will be here momentarily.

I was frightened and asked:

— Where should I run?

The priest said:

— See the bushes over there, — run there fast.

I turned to run, but suddenly remembered, that I had not thanked my rescuer, and turned around... He was already gone. I realized that St. Nicholas, my patron saint, was my rescuer.

With all my might I ran to the bush. In front of the bush I saw a river flowing, but it was not wide. I dived into the water, climbed out on the other side, and hid in the bushes. I looked through the bushes and saw the Germans going through the rye with a dog. The dog led them directly to that place where I had been sleeping. It turned in circles there and then led the Germans to the river. I began to steal further and further away behind the bushes.

My trail was lost in the water, and I successfully avoided the pursuit.

'How Can You Look at This?'

My grandmother told me how St. Nicholas saved our family in wartime Moscow, in 1943.

Being left alone with three children, swollen with hunger, not being able to get food even with cards, she saw the icon of St. Nicholas, darkened from time, in the kitchen. In despair she addressed him: 'How can you look at this?'

After that she ran out on the staircase, having decided not to return home any more. She did not even reach the main entrance door, when she saw two ten-ruble bank notes on the floor. They were lying cross-wise. That money saved the lives of her three children, one of which was my mother.

'St. Nicholas, Help Me, Dear!'

Maria Petrovna started to believe in God, and especially in the help of St. Nicholas, after one incident.

She decided to visit her cousin in the country. She had never been there before, but that July, her daughter and son-in-law left for the Crimea, both grandsons went on a guided tour, and, left alone in the apartment, Maria Petrovna became lonely immediately and decided: 'I'll go visit my relatives in the country.' She bought presents and sent a telegram, that tomorrow they should meet her at the station Luzhki.

Having arrived in Luzhki, she looked around, but nobody had come to meet her. What should she do?

— Put your luggage in our storage area, dear, — the station guard advised Maria Petrovna, — and go directly along this road about eight, or even ten kilometers, until you see a birch wood, and near it you will see two pines on a hill, by themselves. Turn directly towards them and you will see a path, and behind it — a log road. You will cross the log road and come out on the path again; it will lead you to a small forest. You will walk through the birches for just a bit and you will come to the village that you need.

— And what about wolves? — Maria Petrovna asked cautiously.

— There are some, dear, I will not lie. But they will not touch you in daytime, but towards evening, certainly, they can harm you. Well, perhaps you will slip through!

Maria Petrovna set off. She had been born in the country, but after twenty years of city life she was out of practice walking and got tired quickly.

She walked, walked, not ten, but all fifteen kilometers, and saw neither two pines, nor the birch wood.

The sun disappeared behind the forest; it became chilly. ‘If I could meet someone...’ — Maria Petrovna thought. There was nobody! She grew frightened: what if a wolf jumped out? Maybe she had already passed those two pines long before, or maybe, they were still ahead...

It grew dark... What should she do? Go back? She would only reach the station towards dawn. What a mess!

— Saint Nicholas, look at what has happened to me, help me, dear, the wolves will tear me to pieces on the way, — Maria Petrovna begged, and began to cry from fright. Everything was silent; there was not a single soul; only the stars were looking at her from the darkening sky... Suddenly the noise of wheels was heard somewhere on the side.

— Goodness, someone is crossing the log road; — Maria Petrovna realized and ran toward the sound. She ran, and saw two pines on the right — and the path leading away from them.

I missed it! And here is the log road. What joy!

On the log road she saw a small wagon, driven by one horse. An elderly man sat in it, only his back and white head, looking like a dandelion surrounded by light, were visible.

— St. Nicholas, it's you in person! — Maria Petrovna cried and rushed to catch up with the wagon, but it had already driven to the forest.

Maria Petrovna ran with all her might and kept shouting only:

— Wait!

The wagon was already gone. Maria Petrovna ran out of the forest — she saw some huts, with some old men sitting in front of the last one on logs, smoking. She asked them:

— Did a gray grandfather pass by in his wagon just now?

— No, dear, nobody passed by, and we have been here, oh, about an hour.

Maria Petrovna felt her knees buckle — she sat down on the ground, silently, only her heart beat wildly and tears came to her eyes. She sat for a while, asked, where her sister's hut was, and quietly went over there.

The Salvation of a Mother and Her Baby.

Alongside the village where my grandmother lived, flows the river Veletma. Now the river is shallow and narrow, the deepest places are knee-deep for children, but then, the Veletma was deep, full of water. The banks of the river were boggy and marshy. And once, it so happened that the little

three-year old boy Vanechka slid off a log into that bog in front of his mother and went to the bottom. Elizabeth rushed to him, jumped into the bog, and seized her son. But she herself did not know how to swim. By the time she remembered, it was too late. Both of them began to sink.

She appealed to St. Nicholas, the Wonder Worker, asking for the salvation of their sinful souls. Then a miracle happened.

A big strong stream, like a wave, raised the mother with the baby above the bog and lowered them on a dry fallen tree, which had fallen across the marshy place like a bridge. My Uncle Vanya is still alive; he is more than seventy years old.

‘Now I Need Help!’

When the St. Nicholas Church in Zelenograd was being restored, a seventy-year-old woman came and said that she wanted to help. The workers were surprised: ‘How can you help?’ She said: ‘No, give me any kind of physical work.’

They laughed, and then saw: she really began to drag something, tried to do the hardest jobs. They asked, what had induced her to do that.

She said that a few days ago, an elderly man suddenly came into her room and said: ‘Listen, you asked me for help so often, and now I need help...’ She was surprised. Then she remembered that the door to her room was closed. She recognized St. Nicholas from the icon, and understood that it was he who came and asked her to help. She knew, that the St. Nicholas Church was being restored, and came...

‘He Descended the Icon, Like a Staircase.’

Our friend Alla had a great-grandmother who was a very believing person. She had many large ancient books and icons. However, her daughter grew up a faithless person after the revolution.

When she was over fifty, she had a perforated stomach ulcer. Her condition was critical, she could die.

They performed an operation and soon discharged her from the hospital. The doctors warned her, that if she did not eat, she would die. Nevertheless, she ate nothing: she could not and did not want to. So little by little she weakened.

The corner where her bed stood, was the sacred corner. And in it was an icon of St. Nicholas.

Once she suddenly saw St. Nicholas descending the icon like a staircase, but he stayed the same small height as image on the icon. Approaching her, he began to console and to persuade her: ‘My dear, you have to eat, otherwise you will die.’ Then he ascended the sacred corner and took his place in the icon.

That very day she asked for food and after that began to recover.

She lived to be eighty-seven years old and departed for the next world a true Christian.

‘Aren’t You An Angel of God?’

Katherine, a parishioner of our church, told us about an incident which happened to her in 1991. She was originally from the city of Solnechnogorsk. Once, in wintertime, she was walking on the bank of the lake Senezh and decided to rest. She sat down on a bench to admire the lake. There was also an elderly woman on that bench, and they began to talk. They talked about life. The woman said that her son did not love her, and the daughter-in-law offended her very much, gave her no peace.

Katherine was a pious, Orthodox woman, and, naturally, the conversation lead to God's help, faith, Orthodoxy, and life under the Law of God. Katherine said, that she should appeal to God and seek His help and support. The woman answered that she had never been to church and did not know any prayers. It turned out that Katherine, not even knowing why, had put her prayer book in her bag that

morning. She remembered that, took the Prayer Book out of the bag and gave it to the woman as a present. The old woman looked at her in surprise: 'Oh, but you, darling, won't disappear now?' 'Why?' — Katherine asked. 'Aren't you an Angel of God?' — the old woman was frightened and told, what happened to her one week before.

The conditions at home were such, that she felt completely unnecessary and decided to commit suicide. She came to the lake and sat down on a bench before throwing herself into the ice-hole. An elderly man of very righteous appearance, with gray, curly hair and a very kind face sat down by her, and asked: 'And what are you planning to do? To drown yourself? You do not know how terrible it is there, where you plan to go! It is a thousand times more terrible than your life now.' He was silent for a while and asked again: 'And why don't you go to church, why don't you pray to God?' She answered, that never had been to a church and nobody had taught her to pray. The man asked: 'Do you have any sins?' She answered: 'What sins? I do not have any particular sins.' Then the old man began to recall her sins, unkind deeds, done by her; he named even those which she had forgotten, about which nobody could know, except for her. She could only be surprised and horrified. At last she asked: 'How shall I pray, if I do not know any prayers?' The old man answered: 'Come here in a week, and you will get the prayers. Go to church and pray.' The old woman asked: 'And what is your name?' He answered: 'Among you I am called Nicholas.' At that moment she turned away for some reason, and when she turned back — there was nobody next to her.

The Petrified Girl.

This story happened in a simple Soviet family in the city of Kuibyshev, nowadays Samara, at the end of the 1950s. The mother and her daughter were going to celebrate New Year's Day. The daughter, Zoya, invited seven of her friends: girls and young men — to the party with dances. It was the time of the Nativity fast, and the believing mother asked Zoya not to have a party, but the daughter insisted. In the evening the mother went to church to pray.

The guests arrived, but Zoya's fiancé Nicholas had still not arrived. They did not wait for him, they began dancing. The girls and youths formed pairs, and Zoya was left by herself. Vexed, she took an icon of St. Nicholas the Wonder Worker and said: 'I shall take this Nicholas and dance with him,' — ignoring her friends, who advised her not to perform such blasphemy. 'If there's God, He will punish me,' — she said.

They began the dancing, completed two rounds, when suddenly there was unimaginable noise and whirlwind, a dazzling light flashed.

Fun turned into horror. Everyone ran out of the room in fear. Only Zoya remained standing with the icon of the saint, pressing it to her breast, — petrified, cold as marble. Nothing that the doctors who came tried could bring her to senses. Needles broke and bent upon injection, as if coming on a stone obstruction. They wanted to take the girl for supervision to a hospital, but could not shift her from the spot: it was as if her feet were riveted to the floor. But her heart was beating — Zoya was alive. From that moment on she could neither drink, nor eat.

When the mother returned and saw what had happened, she lost consciousness and was taken to a hospital, from which she returned a few days later: faith in the mercy of God, ardent prayers for the forgiveness of her daughter restored her strength. She came to her senses and prayed for mercy and help.

At first, the house was surrounded by crowds of people — believers, physicians, ecclesiasts, the simply curious. But soon the house was closed to visitors by order of the authorities. Two militiamen guarded it in 8 hour shifts. Several of the guards, still very young (28-32 years old.), turned gray from horror when at midnight Zoya shouted terribly. At night, her mother prayed beside her.

Before the holiday of the Annunciation (that year it was on the Saturday of the third week of Great

Lent) a righteous-looking elder came and asked permission see Zoya. But the militiamen on duty refused him. He came again the next day, but again, different attendants rejected him.

The third time, on the very day of the Annunciation the attendants allowed him to enter. The guards heard him ask Zoya tenderly: 'Well, are you tired of standing?'

Some time passed, and when the militiamen on duty went to let the elder out, he was not there. Everybody was convinced that it was St. Nicholas.

So Zoya stood for 4 months (128 days), till Pascha, which was on April 23 that year (May 6 by the new calendar). After Pascha, Zoya revived; softness, vitality appeared in her muscles. She was put to bed, but she continued to call out and ask everybody to pray.

All these events struck the citizens of the city of Kuibyshev and its vicinities, so that many people, seeing these miracles, were converted to faith. People hurried to church to confess. The non-orthodox were baptized. Those without a pectoral cross began to wear one. The conversion was so great, that there were not enough crosses in churches for those who asked for them.

On the third day of Pascha, Zoya departed to God, having gone a difficult path — standing for 128 days before the face of God for the redemption of her sin. The Holy Spirit kept the life of the soul, having resurrected it from mortal sins, so that in the coming day of the Resurrection of all the living and the dead, it could rise in the body to eternal life. Even the name, Zoya, means "life."

The Epilogue.

The Soviet press could not hide this incident: while answering letters to the editor, a certain scientist confirmed, that, truly, Zoya's case was not an invention, however, it represented a case of tetanus, not yet known to the science.

But in the first place, with tetanus, there is no such stone-like rigidity, and doctors can always give an injection to the patient; secondly, with tetanus it is possible to move the patient from one place to another, and he can lie down, while Zoya stood, and stood for so long, that even a healthy person would not able to do so, and besides, she could not be shifted from the place; and, thirdly, tetanus itself does not convert a person to God and does not give revelations from above, while in Zoya's case, not only were thousands of people converted to faith in God, but also confirmed their faith with deeds: were baptized and began to live like Orthodox Christians. Clearly, tetanus was not the reason, but the action of God Himself, Who makes faith strong through miracles to relieve people of sins and punishment.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov

The Mine.

Father! — I said, — we have all long wanted to know, how God led you to monasticism, but somehow none of us had the courage to ask you about it.

All of us knew, certainly, that Father Nicholas used to be a seaman, the commander of one of the battleships of the Russian fleet, a brilliant future awaited him, the Sovereign knew him in person. His uncle — Akimov — was the chairman of the State Council. Some unknown, but apparently extremely serious reason, made Father Nicholas change his life and become a monk.

Naturally, that circumstance interested us extremely.

Father did not answer at once.

— Though I was brought up in an Orthodox family, I was a long way from the Church and its doctrine. Secular life with its constant temptations and emptiness muffled that little which was left over from childhood.

During my first cruise around the world I made lots of new acquaintances. I also became familiar

with the so-called esoteric secret teachings of the East. I shall not say when and where it happened. I shall only say, that from then on my life went in a completely different direction. I began to meet people whom I completely trusted as the carriers of supreme knowledge and whose words were absolute law for me. It was as if one of the main postulates of esoterism was justified: 'When a pupil is ready, a teacher will always appear. "

With all my soul, I sincerely longed to be a bearer of kindness, of which, as it seemed to me then, I was a proven servant. And God —I, great sinner, now strongly believe, — seeing my sincerity and not wishing my spiritual death, miraculously saved me. It happened this way.

One day I unexpectedly received an urgent demand to come the Naval Ministry. The conversation was short.

— You, — they told me there, — have been assigned an extremely responsible task. It is absolutely necessary for us to deliver a cargo of mines to the one of the Far East ports. The cargo is completely confidential. All measures have been taken so that interested states, especially England, would not find out about it. This time, you will be commanding the cargo ship, loaded with lumber as camouflage. You will learn the route and the name of the ports, which you will have the right to enter only for loading coal, only when you put out to sea. You understand, of course, how much confidence we put in you, and will make the appropriate conclusions.

In two weeks, everything was ready for sailing. My personal preparations were short.

The most necessary things had been packed, and I only asked my nurse's aide to pack the books which had I selected for myself, mainly on topics that interested me at the time.

And so, we were at sea. We safely passed the Baltic and entered the wide-open space of the ocean. And there it began...

At this place in the story, the voice of Father Nicholas faltered, and we felt the bottled-up anxiety, involuntarily being transferred to us.

— The ocean, — continued Father, — met us with a storm the like of which we, seamen, rarely saw. For two days we struggled with the elements, straining with all our strength in that struggle, but the storm did not weaken.

Exhausted, I went down to my cabin to warm myself up with a cup of tea. My cabin was in great disarray, because many things, including books, had dropped to the floor from the swaying, and were chaotically moving there.

Barely able to keep my balance, I automatically lifted the first book lying under my feet, opened it — and immediately saw a portrait of some elder in monastic vestment and the title of the book: 'The Life and Feats of the Sarov Monastery's Elder, Hieromonk Seraphim.' How that book got there, I did not think at all at that moment. The appearance of the stooped elder somehow drew my attention. I had never heard of the Hieromonk Seraphim before. In fact, I knew very little about our ascetics.

Precariously settled on the bed, I began to read. A new and, until now, completely unknown inner spiritual world was revealed to me.

The calm light and spiritual peace, which I had been thirstily searching for and could not find, now mysteriously pervaded my soul with inexpressible sweetness.

I finished reading, once again looked at the portrait of the elder and involuntarily kissed his image. For the first time in many years tears were streaming from my eyes...

The storm seemed to calm down. I started to doze, then suddenly someone began to wake me cautiously. It was my assistant. Pale and worried, he whispered: 'We are in great trouble. One mine is torn off its nest and is rolling in the hold.'

We ran down. At each roll of the vessel, we could clearly hear the dull thud of the loose mine

against the sides, torn from its nest by the waves.

An explosion could follow any minute and destroy the ship with its lethal cargo and all of its crew, which still did not fully realize the danger. What were we supposed to do? The ship was loaded with lumber; it was completely impossible to reach the hold of the ship, particularly in such bad weather conditions. If a miracle happened and the ship was not destroyed, we would still need to go to the nearest port, which could only be English, but it was strictly forbidden to enter it, according to the confidential order. I made the only possible decision — to disobey the order and to go into port, in order to save lives. Even now it is painful to remember my qualms, but what was it like then?

Father Seraphim was the only ray of light. I knew only too well, that nothing in the world happened by accident, that at that moment God sent me His Heavenly Protector in the person of Father Seraphim. I put all my strength into my weak prayer, asking the saint of God to rescue us from the certain death.

And a definite and great miracle happened. We safely reached one of the nearest English ports, and there again God's mercy and the prayers of St. Seraphim miraculously protected us.

Despite the most painstaking survey of our vessel by the port authorities, nothing was found. Needless to say, after the survey we took apart the lumber above our lethal cargo, and I saw for myself, how great the danger was: our lives were within a hairbreadth of death. I would not be talking with you now, if St. Seraphim had not helped us.

The Wonderful Conversion of the Young Man.

One priest had a son named Nicholas who, after entering the university, began to lose faith, stopped praying and attending church services. Christmas Eve arrived.

— Kolya, you should go to the All Night Vigil — tomorrow is a great feast day, — his mother told him. — Your father and I would be so glad if you went to church.

The son answered in an annoyed tone:

— I have already told you many times that there is nothing there for me to do... What can I get from being in such a crowd and stuffiness?

— Be careful, Kolya, that God does not punish you for such words, — his mother said mournfully.

That same evening, the following happened to the son: he stretched his arm to take something from the shelf, and screamed from pain. It was impossible to move his arm from the pain in the armpit.

The pain grew stronger, and a swelling began to grow quickly in the armpit.

The doctor who was invited in the morning diagnosed a serious illness, hidradenitis. The doctor said, that it was necessary to wait for the swelling to come to a head, and only then would it be possible to operate.

For Kolia, it was the beginning of severe torments and sleepless nights. However, Kolya did not forget, that the illness began after his mother had predicted God's punishment on him. He had not absolutely lost his faith, and his conscience had awakened.

He noticed, in his mother's room, a new icon of Saint Seraphim, who had just been glorified. That evening, he asked his mother:

— Give me the icon of St. Seraphim for the night.

That night, Kolia's cry awakened the mother. Running to his room, she saw Kolya sitting on the bed, and the bed and the floor in front of him were covered with pus.

Kolya was agitated and spoke confusedly: — Saint Seraphim was just here, and said that if I do not repent and change my life, I will perish. Then the Saint touched my sick arm, and the swelling burst immediately. Now my arm is completely healthy.

This experience changed Kolia's soul and life. He left the university and entered the Theological Seminary, and then entered the Academy. Upon graduation he became a monk with the name Seraphim, and subsequently became the Bishop of Dmitrovsk — one of the most righteous people of our time, 'the elder of the Theotokos', as he was called for his particular reverence of the Mother of God.

'The Water is Ice-Cold...'

The now-deceased Lydia Nikolaevna told me, in the late 1920s, about her trip to Sarov soon after the canonization of St. Seraphim.

Her husband, Ilya Michailovich, a professor, was a deeply religious person. He died an archpriest. He honored St. Seraphim long before his canonization. The idea of the trip to Sarov and Diveevo was his. L.N. herself was indifferent to the forthcoming trip, particularly since her husband was scheduled to go to Munich on a business trip.

They were to depart for Sarov in the beginning of June. The day before, L.N. felt sick — she had a headache and sharp pain in her throat; her temperature was 39 degrees Celsius. She was subject to anginas with boils, — these bouts of illness were always severe.

But L.N. decided to hide her sickness from the husband, so as not to delay the trip.

On the way, L.N. began to feel very bad: she could not even swallow any water and began to choke.

From the station, they traveled to the monastery on horses. Due to the fresh air it became easier to breathe, but the pain in her throat grew progressively worse.

They arrived a little bit before the All Night Vigil and stopped at the monastery hotel. I.M. was talking to the monk in charge of the hotel, while L.N. went to their room and decided that she would not go to Vigil, but would lie down.

I.M. returned and said, that before they go to the service, they should visit the spring of the Saint and take a bath there. From then on, L.N. said, everything was taken out of her hands, as if everything occurred aside from her.

They came up to the spring, L.N. entered the woman's half of the bath, and the first thing she heard was: 'The water is ice-cold, it scorches.' She thought: "It's insane to go into ice cold water while running a high temperature." But she undressed, crossed herself and dipped into the water. The water truly "scorched" her. L.N. dressed swiftly and left the bath. I.M. stayed behind. While waiting for him, L.N. looked around. Only then did she feel the inexplicable blessedness that pervaded the place. I.M. said that he would stop at the hotel, and suggested that L.N. walk slowly to the cathedral and wait for him there. She came up to the cathedral and met I.M. at the door. They entered the church, bought candles, kissed the coffin of the saint. The service started.

— Let's stand closer to the exit, — asked L.N., — that way, I can go out if I get tired.

It was as if L.N. was half-asleep, she did not remember the beginning of the service and was surprised, when I.M. asked her while the Six Psalms were being read:

— Are you tired; maybe you should go out and sit in the fresh air until "Praise"?

— No, I am not tired at all.

Only during the reading of the canon did she realize that her throat did not hurt and she felt unusual vigor and lightness throughout her body. 'I probably have a high fever, that's why there is no weakness, but why doesn't my throat hurt?', — she thought.

After the Great Doxology I.M. suggested again:

— Let's go to the hotel, the service is long, you must be tired.

— No, no, I feel fine, let's stay till the end.

The vigil ended. The faithful began to leave; they went out, too. At the hotel, they served tea, and L.N. for the first time since the beginning of the sickness not only had a cup of tea, but ate some monastery bread.

Secretly from her husband, she took her temperature, — it was normal. She slept like a log all night. In the morning, before the Liturgy started, she told her husband about her illness and being healed. They both prayed ardently before the coffin of St. Seraphim. The few days spent in Sarov, were full of inexplicable beatitude for L.N. She kept a small icon in memory of the healing. The icon portrays St. Seraphim praying on the stone (it was cut out of a magazine at the beginning of the 20th century). I.M. glued the icon to a piece of cardboard, and it accompanied them wherever their difficult lives led them.

The Coat.

Once, when I visited the Sarov monastery, they gave me Father Seraphim's coat, the one he wore while he lived, to cover myself during the night.

All night I could not sleep, because I heard heavenly singing. In the morning, I told one monk that I could not sleep and heard remarkable heavenly singing.

The monk said: 'This coat always causes the same effect that you experienced, no matter whom we give it to.'

'Drink Some Water From My Spring.'

In the year 1950 I had a severe liver disease. Once or twice a year I had extremely acute attacks from passing stones. The year 1953 was the most difficult: I had daily attacks of pain. It was difficult to work 8 hour days in a fairly responsible job.

I could not even think of a disability pension, because I had to look after my sick mother, who lived in the suburbs. Frequent visits to her with heavy bags only increased the pains.

Finally it was summer, and time for my long-awaited vacation. But just before it I had a worrisome time, and right at the start an attack began, which lasted for 5 days. I found myself without any medical assistance or painkillers. The stones went out, and a liver inflammation began. I was so weak, that I could hardly take care of my sick mother.

In the evenings, lying in bed, I loved to read my favorite book, 'The Life of the Holy Father Seraphim of Sarov.' Once, upon reading about his numerous healings, I addressed the saint in my thoughts with approximately such words: ' You cured so many people, why don't you cure me, for you see how I suffer, but I have to work for others.'

At that moment I saw St. Seraphim with my inner sight, standing beside me. He pressed his big copper cross against my sick liver, and I heard his voice, again inside of me: 'Now, drink some Holy Water from my spring, and then you will be completely healthy.'

I came to. I had a habit of analyzing my spiritual experiences, so as not to fall into temptation, that was why I thought that it could be only the product of my imagination due to the influence of what I had just read. The final words — 'drink some water from my spring' confused me most of all. From where could I get that water, if I was in Moscow and knew, that it was forbidden to approach the spring?

But the words of the wonderful elder came true the next day: I received a bottle of the Holy Water, brought that day from Sarov. They obtained the water completely 'by chance.'

In a word, I experienced a miracle, I drank that water and since then I do not have any pains and do not stop thanking the dear elder for the miraculous healing.

'Stand Firmly, Don't Fall.'

I heard this story from the deceased Olympiada Ivanovna. While she told it, she was agitated, and

the son, whom the story was about, sat next to her and nodded his head affirmatively, when she turned to him for confirmation. This is what I heard from her:

— Vanya was 7 years old. He was very lively, smart and mischievous. We lived in Moscow, in the Ground Bank, and Vanya's godfather — across from us, in a five-storied house.

One evening I sent Vanyusha to his godfather — to invite him to tea. Vanya ran across the road, went to the third floor, and as he could not reach the doorbell, he climbed onto the banisters and was just about to stretch his hand to the bell, when his feet slipped and he fell down the stairwell.

The old hall porter, sitting downstairs, saw how Vanya fell like a sack on the cement floor. The old man knew our family well and ran to us, shouting:

— Your son is dead!

We rushed to Vanya, but when we approached the house, we saw him slowly walking toward us.

— Vanechka, dear, are you alive? — I took him in my arms. — Is anything hurting you?

— Nothing hurts. I only ran to godfather and wanted to ring the doorbell, but fell down. Then an elderly man approached me, the one that is on the picture in your bedroom. He raised me, put me

on my feet very firmly, and said: 'So, my lad, stand firmly, don't fall.' I walked, only I could not remember why you had sent me to my godfather.

After the accident my Vanyusha slept very soundly for 24 hours, and when he woke, he was absolutely healthy.

In my bedroom, there was a big icon of St. Seraphim of Sarov.

'Who Is That Elder?'

A friend of mine sent me a letter in French, in which an Alsatian woman asked him to send her something about the Russian Orthodox Church: a book of prayers or something similar. They sent something to her in response, and there the matter ended.

Afterwards I was in Alsace and visited that woman to get acquainted, but just then she was out of town. I met her mother-in-law, an elderly woman of great Christian mercy and with a pure heart.

She told me the following. Their family was of an ancient noble Alsatian lineage, of the Protestant faith. It must be said, that in that region of Alsace the inhabitants are divided in belief: half Catholic, half Protestant. They share a common church, where they hold services in turn. At the back of it stands the Roman altar, with all the statues and necessary things, but when the Protestants serve, they draw a curtain in front of it, roll their table into the center and pray.

Recently, the Alsatian Protestants began a movement in favor of reverencing saints. That happened after reading the book of Sabbatier about the Catholic saint Francis of Assisi. Being a Protestant himself, he was impressed by the way of life of that righteous man when visiting Assisi. My friends' family was also under the influence of that book. Though remaining Protestants, they still felt dissatisfaction. They wished to reverence saints and take part in the Sacraments. When the pastor taught them, they asked him not to close the curtain on the Catholic altar, so that they could at least see the statues of the saints. Their thoughts were seeking the True Church.

And so once, that young woman, being sick, was sitting in the garden and reading about the life of Francis of Assisi. The garden was all in bloom. There was country silence... Reading, she fell lightly asleep. 'I don't know how it happened,' — she said afterwards. — Francis himself approached me, together with a glowing hunched-over elderly man, like a Patriarch. He was all in white. I became frightened. But Francis came very close to me and said: 'My daughter! You are looking for the True Church — it is there, where he is. It supports everything, but doesn't ask anyone for support.'

The white elderly man kept silent and only smiled affirmatively at Francis's words. The vision ended. She woke up. And for some reason her thought told her: 'This is connected to the Russian Church.' And peace descended on her soul.

It was after that vision that she wrote the letter, mentioned at the beginning of this story. In two months I again visited them, and that time she herself told me the following. They hired a Russian worker. Wanting to know if he was well-situated, the hostess came into his room and saw an icon in the corner, on the wall, and she recognized the same elder, that she had seen in the vision with Francis. Astonished and frightened, she asked: 'Who is he, this elder?' 'This is St. Seraphim, our Orthodox saint,' — the worker said. And only then she realized the meaning of St. Francis's words that the truth is in the Orthodox Church.

The Book.

I have a book about the life of St. Seraphim of Sarov. I love this book. I have not only reread it often, but gave it to my friends and acquaintances to read. The book became so worn, that I decided not to give it to anyone anymore.

Once a good friend came. He saw the book on the shelf, and begged so hard to borrow it, that I gave in and gave the book to him.

— I give it to you under the condition, — I said, — that you won't give it to anyone else. Look, how shabby it is; only small pieces are left of the cover.

— Only I will read this book, and I will show it to no one else, — he assured me, but ... he did not keep his word.

His neighbor saw the book and begged him so much to give the book about her favorite saint to her, that he gave it to her, demanding:

— Don't give it to anyone, because if it gets lost, what will I say to its owner?

The neighbor and her daughter read it gladly and did not rush to part with it.

The neighbor's daughter had an admirer, a young engineer, who finally asked her to marry him. It seemed that the girl liked him a lot, but she refused him, saying:

— I am a believer, and you are not even baptized. You won't marry me in church, will not allow me to go to services, and when we shall have children, you won't let me bring them up the way my mother did. I shall not marry you, — we are too different.

After the denial, the young man tried to persuade her several times, and then, at a time when the girl was at work, came to her mother and began to ask her to influence her daughter.

The mother treated him well, but refused to persuade her daughter. Seeing that he was upset, she invited him to have a cup of tea and went to the kitchen to prepare the necessary things.

While she was doing that, the young man sat at the table and began to leaf through the book about St. Seraphim. When the hostess sat down at the table with him, he began to ask her to give the book to him. She would not budge. Then, thanking her for the tea and having said good bye, he seized the book and ran out, promising to return it soon.

The poor woman was afraid to meet my friend, because days went by, but the young man did not appear. At last she confessed to him, what had happened, and they both thought sadly what to do next.

One month passed, then another one. The fifth week of Great Lent came. Suddenly, the young man turned up in the house of his beloved.

-My dears, — he exclaimed happily, — I am now yours, yesterday I was baptized, and all this is due to St. Seraphim. When I started to look through this book at your place, it interested me so, that I could not tear myself away from it. Then I had a desire to learn something about the faith, about

Christ. I began to read, believed and was finally baptized. And the book is fine, here it is.

He put it on the table. The book was brought in complete order; it had a beautiful new expensive cover. It was returned to me in this marvelous condition. I decided to give it to the bride and groom as a present.

The Bread.

One elderly nun from the skete of the Seraphim-Diveevo Monastery told me this story.

— We do not have any transport, and nobody comes to us during the winter. Sometimes there are no cars for months, all the roads are deep in snow. Once we had eaten all the bread, and were eating only rusks, for a long time. So I said to Father (they all call St. Seraphim 'Father' or 'Father Seraphim'): 'Father Seraphim, if you could only send us some bread, the girls are tired of the rusks' (almost all in the skete are very young girls).

A few hours later a car arrives, full of bread; a person well-known to them from Diveevo gets out and approaches that same nun:

— Mother, accept the bread.

He seemed to be worried, his hands were almost shaking, and he said: — I was coming from Diveevo, bringing bread to... (And he named another skete). Then I hear a voice saying: 'Take it to...!' (and it mentions the sisters' skete). I asked the driver: 'Did you hear anything?' He said, 'No.'

Some time later, the voice repeated the same words again, but more sternly. He asked the driver again: 'How can it be, that I hear it, and you don't?'

A little more time passed. Father Seraphim this time very sternly shouted at him, so that he made the driver turn around, and here they are.

'It Won't Hurt Anymore.'

Not so long ago a girl (there are some 10-12 year old girls in that skete in the Seraphim-Diveevo Monastery) had a severe toothache, and her cheek swelled up. But her task was to keep the church in order. She was sweeping the floor, there was nobody in the church, but the tooth hurt her so, that her head was splitting, the cheek was swollen. She even sat down from the pain and cried. Suddenly an elderly grandfather comes out of the altar, like on an icon, bright and all in white. He came up to her and asked: 'Why are you crying?' She said: 'My tooth hurts.' He stroked her on the cheek and said: 'It won't hurt anymore.' And he went into the altar again, closing the door behind him. The pain disappeared immediately, as if it had never been.. The girl told everything to the sisters.

It is interesting to note that the door, which the elder shut behind him, always hung loose on its hinges, would open because of wind, but after that incident they did not know how to open it, they were barely able to budge it, though nothing was visibly holding it.

The Rusk.

I want to tell about a miracle, which recently happened to me. When I woke up, I felt a sharp pain on my right side. I thought that it was my radiculitis again. I applied some ointment, put on a dressing as usual. But towards evening the pain intensified. I rubbed and bound it — nothing helped. The pain was becoming intolerable; I needed to call a doctor. I realized that he would put me in the hospital, and I didn't want that at all. So I decided to tolerate the pain. But day by day the pain grew stronger, — it was impossible to lie, sit or walk. I had no desire to eat or drink. But I continued to bear it, and I continued to pray in the morning and evening, as usual. But one night of the second week the pain became so strong, that I could not bear it any more. Then I prayed: 'Lord!! I cannot bear it any more. Help me!'

At that very moment I remembered about the rusk from Diveevo that was sanctified in the kettle of St. Seraphim of Sarov. (This kettle is kept in the altar of the Diveevo church now). When Father Seraphim was alive, he gave everyone, as a blessing, pieces of dried bread, which had curative

powers. Even now, the Diveevo nuns put rusks in his kettle, and then give them to pilgrims. A religious woman had brought some rusks to Klin, gave a couple of them to my neighbor, and then the neighbor gave one to me.

So, having remembered it, I barely got up, found the rusk and a prayer to St. Seraphim, went down on my knees, read it 3 times and asked the saint to help me. I took the rusk and ate half of it. Then I lay down and waited to see the result.

And then the miracle happened. I felt as if I were hanging about ten centimeters above the bed, not feeling the weight of the blanket. I had no pain. A kind of black shadow came down upon my eyes, and I fell asleep.

The doorbell woke me up or brought me to. I rose, went to open the door, came back — and only then I realized that there was almost no pain. A week later, the pain disappeared as if it had never been. At the same time, the customary pain from my hip to the heel of my left leg was gone. So, thanks to the prayer to St. Seraphim, I recovered. Our Church of All-Sorrows has his icon. I went there immediately and thanked Father Seraphim and God.

Go to 'The Queen of All.'

This happened during a trip to Diveevo. At that time I had severe headaches. I visited the graves of N.M. Motovilov, schema-nuns Martha, Elena Manturova and the first abbess of the monastery — Mother Alexandra. We kissed all the crosses on the graves. It so happened, that I came up to the grave of Nun Elena last. I always include her in panikhidas. She became etched in my memory after reading 'The Chronicles of the Seraphim-Diveevo Monastery.' When I kissed her cross, I felt as if I embraced a dear person: I stood, crying. When I stopped crying, I felt so light. We started off and met a nun; she stopped opposite me and greeted us: 'Christ Is Risen!' It was Great Lent, the Week of the Exaltation of the Lord's Cross. We were surprised: here it was fasting time, and she greets us like that. The nun explained to us, that Father Seraphim greeted everyone that way. She asked our names. We told her. Suddenly she said to me: 'Elenushka, there is an All Saints Church in Moscow, on Krasnoselskaya Street. There hangs an icon, 'The Queen of All', which was brought from Athos. It cures all diseases, even cancer. Go there, buy an icon, an Akathist, and if possible, read it every day, and everything will be all right.'

I also prayed to Father Seraphim, for him to cure me, cried fiercely and complained.

I could not go to see 'The Queen of All' for a long time. Still, after four months I went there. I arrived while the Akathist was being read. I did everything the nun had said: bought an Akathist and an icon. But for some reason there was no service that day. I became very upset. But the nun, working in the church, seeing me in tears, said, "Order a molieben for tomorrow. But now read the Akathist by yourself." We kissed 'The Queen of All', and at that moment I quivered, something unusual happened to me. Then we read the Akathist. But it would not be read: somehow we simply began to sing it.

My niece Svetlana went with us. On the way to the church she could not even speak normally, she had lost her voice. She could only 'hiss' the whole way. We even laughed at her. But when we were singing the Akathist, she sang with all of us, at the time nobody noticed, we were too occupied.

After the Akathist the nuns gave us some oil and Holy Water. The Heavenly Queen arranged it so. And when we left the church, my niece said to me: 'Don't you notice anything?' I answered, "No." 'My voice...' she says..

Our Intercessor helped me, too. I never had such severe attacks of pain again. I had suffered greatly before this, functioning only because of painkilling injections.

Miracles of Different Saints

Righteous Saint John of Kronstadt.

‘Thank Father...’

My parents had two children: myself and my sister Nastyenka, with whom I was very close, but we had different personalities — she was fond of admirers and married early, while I dreamt about the monastery and always tried to cover my head with a black scarf. I especially wanted to get into the Ioannov Monastery. It was under protection of Father John of Kronstadt, Father himself visited it often, and I had revered and loved him since childhood.

He had been to our house, though we were among the simplest people — our father was a bank courier.

And so, my dream came true: I was accepted to the Ioannov Monastery. It was situated in Petersburg, at the very edge of town, on the bank of the small river Karpovka, and was very beautiful and well-built: merchants had built it as a token of their love for Father John, and they spared no expense.

When the grounds for the monastery were being designated, the abbess asked the dear priest for land for the sisters' cemetery, but he sadly shook his head and said:

— You will not need it.

The abbess was very surprised, but did not dare to ask why. And so it turned out— not a single sister died before the nuns were scattered... The monastery was in the city, it was rich, and the nuns' tasks were not like those in the country monasteries.

When I came there, I was young, cheerful and healthy. They checked my abilities to know what task to give to me. I drew fairly well and could sing. They put me in a drawing class and assigned me to the choir as a prima. It suddenly became so difficult to sing, it is hard to describe, but I had to sing a lot.

Once dear Father came to visit us. We surrounded him as usual, and he talked to us kindly. He saw me and asked:

— Varyusha, how are you, you aren't bored?" I could not resist and said:

— I'm fine, I'm not bored, but I can't stand singing in the choir...

Father John looked at me piercingly and said:

— One has to work in the monastery and bear tasks uncomplainingly. You will love singing, you will sing octave yet.

— What do you mean? What octave? I sing prima, — I said.

But he only smiled. Time passed, I sang in the choir, suffering, but singing. That autumn, the old choir director left, and a new one was appointed. He was famous all over Petersburg, but came to us out of love for dear Father.

He listened to all the members of the choir, each one separately, and told me:

— Why did they make you sing prima? You are a bass." With those words, he gave me a tone, and I started to sing so lightly and freely, that I laughed from joy and began to sing bass, then I achieved an octave. The choir director appreciated my voice a lot, and I began to sing quite willingly, remembering dear Father and how he foresaw my octave.

Another time I had the following incident. A swelling appeared on my neck. First it was small, and then it started to grow so much, that soon it was hard to put my head down and I began to feel bad.

I showed it to the Mother Abbess, she became concerned and said she was going to take me to a doctor.

Two days later, Father John came to the monastery. We met him festively and immediately went to sing a molieben — traditionally, Father always served a molieben first.

I was going to the church with the choir, when the abbess stopped me, took me to Father John and said:

— Dear Father, pray for Barbara, for she is sick, — with those words she lifted my veil and showed him the swelling. Father looked carefully, drew his hand over it and said:

— It's nothing, God grant, it will pass. Go, Varyushka, sing!

After the molieben Father talked to us a lot, then I was called to help in the dining room, and I returned to my cell later than usual. I undressed, took off my veil and out of habit touched my swelling — but it was not there! I went to the mirror, — my neck was smooth. I could not believe my eyes, for the swelling had been the size of a fist.

I could hardly wait till morning and ran to the abbess. She examined my neck, crossed herself and said only:

— Thank dear Father!

‘You Will Marry Soon.’

We had the following rule at the Ioannov monastery: our relatives and friends could visit us on certain days and hours of the week. So once, a young girl came to visit one of the nuns. It was obvious that she was disconcerted: she was pale, upset and answered questions incorrectly. We wondered at her, but did not have time to ask her anything: our dear Father arrived. We were glad and ran to the staircase to meet our dear guest. That girl went out with us, too. Father was ascending the stairs, looking anxious, but greeting everyone kindly. And when he reached the girl, he said:

— I came because of you, how I hurried....

Of course, we did not understand his words, but noticed that the girl became confused and looked scared. He continued:

— First, we will serve a molieben, then I shall talk to you. Do not go anywhere, hear? — he said formidably, and went to put his vestments on.

We prayed, and the girl prayed with us. Then Father came out, took her by the hand and said:

— Are you out of your mind, what have you planned? Ha? Well now, come here.

They stepped aside, and he talked to her for a long time, and the girl was sobbing dreadfully.

Then Father became cheerful, blessed her and we heard him saying:

— So, have you calmed down?

She was thanking him, kissing his hands and kneeling at his feet. Father John bid farewell to everyone and said:

— I have nothing else to do here today, — and left.

Of course, we all started to ask the girl what dear Father had said to her. She said that she had had a fiancé, the wedding was already scheduled, but he fell for someone else and left her. She grieved terribly and decided to commit suicide — to throw herself under the train. It took her a long time to finally decide to go through with it, but the day she came to the monastery, she had firmly decided to commit suicide. But her heart was heavy, and she came to us, in order to go to the station afterwards.

Dear Father felt her sorrow, came and began to scold her for deciding on such a step. When she promised him not to go through with her plan, he said to her:

— You will soon marry a good man, and you will have children.

She left us happy, joyful. Soon after she did marry and lived well with her husband, and they had children.

The Incomprehensible Prayer.

My father was greatly prejudiced against Father John of Kronstadt. He considered his unusual popularity and miracles hypnosis, stemming from the illiteracy of the people surrounding him, etc.

We lived in Moscow, and my father was a lawyer. At that time I was 4; I was the only son and was named Sergius, for my father. My relatives adored me. My father often went on business trips to Petersburg. So that day he went there, too, and as usual stopped at his brother Constantine's place.

He found his brother and his wife worried, because their younger daughter Lenchka was sick. She was extremely ill, and though she felt a little better, they invited Father John to serve a molieben. They were waiting for him to arrive momentarily.

My father laughed at them and went to court, where his client's case was being tried.

When he returned at 4 o'clock, he saw a big crowd of people and a sledge close to the house. Realizing that Father had arrived, he made his way to the front door with difficulty and, entering the house, came into the hall where Father was holding the service.

He stood aside and observed the famous priest with curiosity. He was very surprised that Father John, rapidly reading the commemoration with the name of sick Elena, lying in front of him, knelt and started to pray ardently about some unknown seriously ill infant Sergius. He prayed for him a long time, then blessed everyone and left.

— He is just insane, — my father said in rage, after Father left. — He was invited to pray about Elena, and throughout all the molieben he was praying for some unknown Sergius.

— But Lenchka is almost healthy again, — said the sister-in-law timidly, trying to defend the priest, revered by the entire family. The same night my father left for Moscow.

Arriving at home, he was struck by the disorder in the house, and when he saw the exhausted face of his wife, became frightened.

— What happened?

— Darling, your train had probably not even left Moscow, when Sergius became sick. He had a high fever, he was vomiting and had convulsions. I invited Peter Petrovich, but he could not understand what was wrong with Sergius, and asked for a consultation., I wanted to send you a telegram immediately, but I could not find your address. Sergius became worse and worse. Three doctors were by his side all night and finally agreed that his condition was hopeless. Nobody in the house slept. It is better not to mention what I experienced.

But yesterday, after 4 o'clock, he began to breathe more evenly, the fever left him, and he fell asleep. Then he got better. The doctors could not understand it, neither could I. Now he is only weak, but he eats, and at the moment is playing with his teddy bear in his bed.'

Listening to my mother, my father bent his head down lower and lower: so this was the sick infant Sergius Father had been praying for yesterday!

The Recovery.

This incident was once published in the press. In the south of Russia there lived a wealthy Jew — a merchant, and at the same time the rabbi of the local synagogue. His wife became sick with cancer of the esophagus. Toward the end, the disease made the esophagus impassible not only to food but to water as well.

The local doctors declared that the woman's state was hopeless, and she lay completely depleted and exhausted.

Fearing death, she began to beg her husband to save her life. Seeing the great sorrow of the Jew, his pious Russian business partners began to suggest: "Send a telegram to Father John Sergiev — he helps everybody."

The rabbi agreed and soon sent the telegram and some money. Soon a telegram arrived: 'I pray. She will be cured. John Sergiev.'

When the Jew read the telegram to his wife, she became disturbed and started to reproach her husband: " You are a rabbi. Couldn't you pray yourself? Did you have to turn to an Orthodox priest?"

Seeing his wife in such a state, the Jew was at a loss and, in order to calm his wife, offered her a glass of water. The woman took it and, forgetting that she had not able to drink for a long time, drank the water easily.

Only then did they both realize that a miracle had occurred. After that, the wife felt hungry and asked for food. To her husband's surprise, she ate without any difficulty.

The doctors were amazed upon learning of the recovery of the hopelessly sick woman,.

It could be supposed that the woman was sick, not with cancer, but with a hysterical spasm of the esophagus. However, with the latter, doctors say the esophagus does not lose its ability to drink water, which is what happened to the rabbi's wife.

Father Theodore.

At that time, — Father Theodore said, — I wandered like a thief in the night, not knowing where to lay my head. True, kind people hid me, but I became sick of living this way, and then I heard of the ancient Russian Orthodox Valaam Monastery, which was on Finnish land, not far from St. Petersburg. I had a great desire to go there, to bow to Sts. Herman and Sergius and to ask for advice of the local elders. I was very low in spirit and faint-hearted. I knew that it would be fatal if the authorities would catch me, especially at the border: there would be no mercy then. If they simply kill you, it is still better than being tormented, tortured, and taunted before death. Nonetheless, I decided to go.

I had to pass through a marsh, and there, beyond a small river, was foreign land.

The night was dark, it was pouring, and I walked, whispering prayers and recalling Father John. I should have reached the river by this time, but there was no sign of it. I was exhausted and soaking wet, but I had no idea where to go, — I had lost my sense of direction. I huddled under a fir tree and decided to wait till morning, and then — come what may. I dozed a little, when suddenly I heard a dog barking somewhere. I opened my eyes — the barking was coming nearer and nearer. Apparently, the dog had caught my scent, and was straining at the leash. I realized that I was about to die, I fell on my knees, my heart contracted painfully: I was to die without confession. They took me and dragged me somewhere. Well, I thought, these are the last moments of my life. I hear one chekist saying to another:

— This must be that spy they had been waiting for.

They brought me to their post, searched me and threw me into some cellar in just my underclothes. The phone rang above; they were probably informing someone about my capture. A car with the authorities arrived an hour later. The door opened, and a chekist appeared: short, shaking with rage, with the eyes of a savage animal.

— OK, priest, you are done for, confess, with what task did you try to cross the border and who sent you?

I remained silent, they would not believe me anyway, I only prayed to God in my thoughts, that He send me a quick death. My silence utterly enraged the chekist, he grabbed his revolver and shouted:

— Speak, or I will kill you.

I was silent. The hand with the revolver swiftly approached my face, he pulled the trigger — a misfire, then again, — another misfire. He struck me with a curse.

I only came to my senses in the car. As I learned afterwards, they were bringing me to the Leningrad national police headquarters for punishment — they thought me to be a very important criminal.

And so, they brought me, sick, wounded, and threw me into isolation, and that, as you can guess, is the end, — there was no way out of there.

I only prayed that the Lord would take my soul without torture.

I fell asleep, and saw Father John. He bent over me and said kindly: ' You had wanted to suffer for Christ, so the Lord is fulfilling your wish.' I woke up and felt better. The Lord is protecting me, and Father is not abandoning me.

Several days passed, I don't remember how many, only one night they came for me and took me for an interrogation. They were pulling me by the arms: I was too weak from pain and hunger, and only cried in my heart:

— Father John, you never left me while I was alive, in my hour of death, pray to God, that I shall not fear to accept His righteous punishment for my great sins.

They led me to a room, and threw me onto a stool. The window had bars, and there was a table under it, with a pile of papers, a lamp lit under a shade which almost completely covered the face of the interrogator. All I could see, was that he was not old. He bent over the documents, leafing through and, apparently, reading my case.

We sat like that, silently, and then the investigator, without looking at me and not raising his head, said:

— So, old man, tell me the truth, do not lie, we will find out everything anyway. What organization sent you?

I kept silent.

— You think that we will not be able to make you speak. Don't you know where you are?

I crossed myself and said:

— I know you will not believe me, but no one sent me, I was trying to get to Valaam to live in the monastery.

Then he lifted his head and stared at me. He was looking me straight in the eyes, and I looked at him, I could not tear myself away, as if I was charmed. And it seemed to me, that time had stopped, and everything around us was like in a fog, and I had no thoughts — only his eyes pierced me through and through.... How long this lasted, I do not remember. Maybe it was a minute, maybe — an hour... I gathered all my strength, and with great difficulty started to call to God. Suddenly I heard his voice again:

— Tell me, old man, were you in the Trinity village in the summer of the year...?

That question scorched me. I must mention that at that time I was hiding all the time, my parish was long gone, and I secretly went from village to village, among kind people. I held services, consoled our much-suffering people, and cried with them about our lost righteousness. People loved me, hid me willingly and passed me on to each other, and the Lord protected me.

In that way I found myself in the Trinity village, living there about two weeks among kind people, and was about to leave for another place, when once, late at night, someone knocked at my host's house, then the host came up to the attic where I spent my nights, and said timidly:

— Father, I do not know, really, how to tell you this. The matter is a little unusual. The head of our school is an atheist, does not believe in God, and is an inveterate communist. His only son is constantly sick, his leg does not function, and has been suppurating for more than a year. He was taken to doctors, was kept in a hospital, and nothing helps. But he has a grandmother, who is the

mother of the Head's late wife, a pious, quiet, uncomplaining person, who cries all the time that the Lord is punishing the child for the sins of the father. And so she decided, while his father is away, to ask you, Father, to come and pray for the son. I do not know what to do. The school is in the middle of the village; the village militia and the village council are right next door. We don't want anything bad to happen.

I did not want to go, but remembered that I was a priest, and it was my obligation to go to anyone in need when called.

The grandmother and I set off, and she cried the whole way, asking if I was not angry with her, — that grandson was all that she had left, she had buried her daughter recently, and now he had tuberculosis of the leg and the doctors were threatening to amputate it. What a misfortune!

We finally came to the school. I saw a boy of 15; his face was very thin, only his eyes were shining feverishly. The leg was bandaged and gave off a bad smell. Tears came to my eyes from pity.

I took out my epitrahilion, the cross, and a small Gospel, while the grandmother took icons of the Heavenly Queen and Healer St. Panteleimon out of a chest, and I began the molieben, appealing to God with tears for the recovery of the greatly suffering boy: the boy himself remained silent, only sometimes moaning so pitifully, that it tore at our hearts. We prayed, I gave him the Cross to kiss — he kissed it. I anointed his forehead with oil, blessed him — and we went back home.

Early in the morning, there was an alarm. People ran to tell us, that the militia was searching for me. Someone had informed on me. Fortunately, the hut of my host was at the edge of the village. Later, people told me that my hosts were arrested, and I was so sad that, because of me, a sinner, innocent people had suffered. To this day, I cannot forget them and pray for them.

I remembered all that, when the investigator asked me, if I had been to the Trinity village. Lord, would I again let innocent people down? Do not permit such terrible agony!

— I was, — I said.

— And were you in the school? — the investigator asked again, as though cutting me with a knife. I see that he knows everything, there is no reason to hide anything.

— Yes, I was in the school, — I answered.

— And, did you pray there?

- Yes, I did.
- Did you go yourself, or did someone call you?

— Great sorrow and hopeless human suffering called me.

I shuddered, when he stood up and began to walk across the room, like a beast, only the light of his cigarette was moving up and down between his teeth.

I saw that the anger was starting to boil inside of him and soon was ready to burst out, while I myself somehow felt no fear because of pain and weakness. I knew that I was at the end of my rope. He walked about for a while, then sat down at the table again.

— Do you remember that you anointed a sick boy? That was I.

I was completely at a loss when I heard those words, and only prayed to myself.

— Now see, old man, where we met. You're lucky, that they sent you to me and I recognized your voice. You will get a permit to leave the city — then run as far away as you can. Remember, I will not be able to save you twice.

These are the unknown ways of Almighty God, down which He leads men to good, if only they do not lose faith in Him, —Father Theodore concluded his story.

St. Ioasaph of Belgorod.

At the time I was studying at St. Petersburg Theological Academy. I had much knowledge, but no real faith. There were ceremonies associated with the opening of the relics of St. Ioasaph and I attended them unwillingly, thinking about the tremendous crowds of people thirsting for a miracle. How could miracles happen these days?

I came there and something moved inside of me: I saw something to which one could not remain indifferent. There were sick people and cripples from all over Russia — there was so much suffering and pain that it was hard to look at. Moreover, the universal expectation of something miraculous was conveying itself to me, in spite of my skepticism towards the forthcoming ceremony.

Finally the Emperor came with the Family and the celebration began. By this time, I stood with profound anxiety: I did not believe and still, I waited for something to happen. Now, it is hard to imagine that sight: thousands and thousands of sick, bent, crippled, possessed, and blind people stood and lay on both sides of the road, along which the saint's relics were to be carried. One cripple in particular drew my attention: he could not be observed without a shudder. All his body parts had grown together — he was like some kind of ball of flesh and bones on the ground. I waited: what could happen to that man? What could help him?

Then the coffin with the relics of St. Ioasaph was brought out. I never saw and will probably never see anything like it again — almost all the sick, standing and lying across the road, were cured: the blind began to see, the deaf — to hear, the mute began to talk, to cry and jump for joy, the cripples' body parts stretched and healed. I looked at all that was happening with horror, trembling and reverence — and did not let that particular cripple out of my sight. When the coffin with the relics reached him, he separated his arms — a terrible crunching of his bones was heard, as if something was tearing and breaking inside of him, he started to rise to his feet with an effort — and finally stood up. What a shock I experienced! I ran up to him with tears in my eyes, then caught some journalist by the hand, begged him to write that down...

I returned to Petersburg as another person — a believer.

St. Euphrosinia of Moscow.

At the time I was around 12 years old. I lived in Moscow and liked to go to church on Sundays, both morning and night, but my family did not let me to go to the night services. So, having attended both early and late Liturgies, I went to those churches which were open till night, and in the evening I went to 'my' church for the vigil.

I had no place to eat, and I was hungry all day long. My father often got angry with me for my church visits. If I did not come home during the day, he ordered my stepmother not to give me food in the evening. She pitied me and, opening the door for me in the evening, whispered: 'You have a piece of bread and a boiled potato under your pillow.'

Once, on Sunday, having attended both Liturgies and after wandering around the Kremlin, I went to the coffin of St. Euphrosinia, the Great Duchess of Moscow. There was nobody in the church, except for a nun that was cleaning the church.

I came up to the coffin of the saint, knelt and started to pray: 'Mother Euphrosinia, help me, make it so, that I don't want to eat.' I rose, kissed the icon and turned around.

I looked — and could not believe my eyes. A tall, venerable, reverent nun stood before me holding such a big prosphora, that I never had seen one like it before in my life. I stood paralyzed, bewildered, silent, my mouth wide open, looking at the nun.

She told me kindly: 'This prosphora is for you, girl. Take it and eat.'

I took it silently, daring neither to say a word, nor to take my eyes off the nun. But she turned around and walked calmly to the sanctuary, as if floating on air, and disappeared behind the doors.

Only then I came to my senses.

Then I went to a church, where I knew there was Holy Water. There I drank some of it and ate the prosphora, given to me. It is impossible to describe how tasty it was...

St. Anthony of Voronezh.

Father, do you remember Ulinka? She was a righteous person, though little was known of her. She carefully hid her deeds from strangers and only rarely would she open up, and the spiritual beauty of her soul would flare with heavenly light.

— Undoubtedly, she was righteous, the servant of God, and her prayer was strong before the face of the Lord, which I experienced personally more than once.

She appeared in Kiev before the revolution, but only a few people knew about her then. Almost nothing was known of her life, because with each attempt to talk to her she would start to speak in allegories, and it was absolutely impossible to understand the meaning of her words. But, during confession, she always read her sins definitely and clearly.

At the time, I was a parish priest, and suffered much sorrow during that difficult time of unceasing persecution of Christ's Church. In addition, there was a family tragedy: my wife became seriously ill. Her life was in danger, she needed a difficult operation. Plunged in my sad thoughts, I walked that winter, sinking into snowdrifts, to the church for a service.

My heart was heavy: I was losing the mother of my children, whom I would not be able to bring up alone.

In the darkness of dusk, I suddenly saw the outline of a figure. Soon, I recognized Ulinka in that figure. How happy I was to see her at that moment.

— Ulinka, dear, pray, I am in terrible grief: my wife is dying, the kids will remain orphans!

Ulinka shuddered, shrank into a ball, drew her head in, and some time later answered completely reasonably:

— I shall pray. God is merciful; He will not leave your children orphans.

I came home to an even more alarming picture. A professor had just been. My wife's condition was so serious, that it was decided to operate her in the morning. She was suffering terribly, and could not find relief even in drugs. Crying, I begged God to have mercy on me and save me from this trial. How I fell asleep, I do not remember, but I suddenly saw the late elder Nectarios, accompanied by an unknown holy bishop, who looked like the late archbishop Anthony of Voronezh. With a cry, I rushed to the elder.

— Father, what will happen — my wife is dying!

The elder pushed me a little aside with his hand: 'It's all right, don't be afraid.' Then, coming up to the patient, he slowly made the sign of the cross on her forehead with oil.

At the same moment I woke with a cry.

My wife sighed: 'How easy and calm I feel,' — she said.

In the morning it turned out that the operation was no longer necessary.

Happy, I hurried to the church to thank God for such an obvious miracle. Coming up to the church, I saw how Ulinka jumped out of a snowdrift on someone's grave and rushed to me:

— So, how is your wife?

— A miracle, Ulinka, a miracle! God cured her. You prayed, Ulinka?

— Now how could I pray, — she answered, and began to murmur something incomprehensible.

St. John the Baptist.

Because of the lack of priests, one young hieromonk was appointed to be an assistant priest in a village parish. But the inclination to the world and life's pleasures had not yet died in his soul. A temptation would come over him — the desire to have a family.

Once he was invited to a village to baptize a child, born to a young couple.

Entering the house, he witnessed family happiness. His heart began to ache and grieve, and he was filled with envy at the happiness of the young couple. His spirit became so confused that he did not dare to perform the Mystery of the Holy Baptism in such a state.

Saying that he had forgotten the Myrrh, he refused to baptize the child and promised to come back later or to send another priest.

His house was about three kilometers away.

There was a storm in his soul.

He appealed to God, asking for help in this temptation, and began to cry. Then he saw an elder in monastic apparel, with an exhausted, stern face, approaching him. When he reached the hieromonk, he stopped and said:

— How dare you refuse to perform the Mystery? Don't think that your spiritual and mental dirt can desecrate the Holy Mystery of Baptism. Return immediately and perform the Mystery.

Saying this, the elder became invisible.

The young hieromonk felt that this was St. John the Baptist himself. Amazed by the words and the vision, the hieromonk returned immediately to baptize the infant.

Not even a shadow of the unclean thoughts remained in his soul, and he performed the Mystery of Baptism reverently.

This miraculous appearance of St. John the Baptist and his words confirm the Church's opinion, that the unworthiness of a priest cannot in any way disturb the fulfillment and great sanctity of all the Church mysteries.

Holy Great-Martyr Panteleimon:

The Miraculous Healing.

My arm became ill in 1920. A sore appeared on a vein and grew quickly. I would visit the doctor, he would dress the sore, the next day the bandage would be taken off and the sore (round, like herpes) would be larger and deeper. Finally the doctor told there was no remedy: the sore would penetrate the vein and I would have blood-poisoning. He refused to treat me. What was I supposed to do? I went to Nikolskaya Street, to the Chapel of the Great-Martyr Panteleimon... The monk who was there came up to me and delicately asked what was wrong, and why was I crying.

— Father, my arm hurts me; the doctor refused to treat me and said that I could die soon.

He comforted me kindly, took some oil from the votive lamp in front of the icons of the Mother of God "The Quick to Hear" and St. Panteleimon, gave me a little to drink from a spoon, and put some oil on the sore under the bandage. He gave me a small bottle of oil to take with me, too.

In the morning I took the bandage off — a miracle! Instead of the putrid sore, which remained on the bandage, new pink skin had appeared. Tears of gratitude and affection flowed from my eyes. I knelt in front of the icons and thanked God.

The Renewal of St. Panteleimon's Icon.

There was almost no image on the icon. There were only two or three spots where pieces of the flaked-off paint remained. For all practical purposes, it was simply a board. It appeared to be from

the 19th century. The former owner decided to give it away so that a new icon could be painted on it.

For some reason, the painter decided that it was an icon of the Great-Martyr Panteleimon. Maybe a trace of ochre at the bottom of the icon made her think so. It was the color with which the coffer — an inalienable element of the Healer's image — could possibly be painted.

Nothing more was visible on that board except, maybe, two more little pink spots on the upper part.

So the painter decided to paint a new icon.

The next day a miracle happened.

After the fresh base coat, with which they had covered the board, dried, a clear image of St. Panteleimon appeared. But it was not in color, but in the form of a dark outline with half-shadows on a light background. The coffer did appear just where the traces of ochre were, and the pink spots were found exactly on the saint's cheeks.

The painter brought that icon to the Church of the Prophet Elias in Cherkizovo. There it was sanctified.

That unusual event became a reason to meet with the painter. She showed me the renewed icon. In answer to the question, did she go to see the holy relics of Holy Great-Martyr Panteleimon when they were brought to Moscow, she said, that a week after her last pilgrimage to the relics, she was cured of kidney disease.

That very day, the 'board' was brought to her.

Blessed St. Xenia.

Right after the sanctification of the Church in honor of St. Xenia, in the 6th district of Klin, a woman named Ludmila came to the editorial office of 'Orthodox Klin' and told the following story about her father.

In 1946, when he was 14 years old, he started working at the brick factory, to work the diesel tractor. He was a tall, strong, muscular fellow.

Once they sent him to drive peat from the Golikov marsh to the brickyard on the tractor. Captive Germans loaded the peat.

And so, the trailer got stuck in the marsh mud. The next day, my father returned, with Serezha Nikitin from Talizi, on the tractor, taking a cable along to pull the trailer out of the marsh. My father took the cable, put it on the trailer device and stepped on it with his foot — he wanted to get into the cabin. But the tractor driver suddenly took off, the cable got hooked on the caterpillar track, his foot became trapped in a noose, which pulled his leg between the tractor's body and the track. My father screamed: 'Serezha, stop!' but his friend could not hear. While falling, my father struck Sergej on the back with his hand, and only then the tractor stopped and went into reverse.

When he took the foot out of the boot, there was a lot of blood inside. The heel was like cotton wool. He told the tractor driver that he would walk home himself, but it was six kilometers to his house in Napurgovo. He made two steps vigorously, and fell. He began to crawl on his hands and knees. It was July, and hot. When he managed to crawl to the road, he went into shock. He lost consciousness from the loss of blood. When he came to, he took off his shirt, wrapped the foot with it, then threw it away. Then he took off his undershirt. He threw that away, too. He lost consciousness again. Whenever he came to, his vision was foggy. Then he came about, and he saw a woman, going toward the city. He called for help, cried, but she became frightened and passed him by. He lost consciousness again.

He came to, when someone touched him on the shoulder and he could not believe his eyes: he could see everything around him and he stopped feeling pain. In front of him, there was a small thin

elderly woman, a little stooped, in a long black skirt, white kerchief, with a bundle and a cane.

She did not say a thing, doing everything silently. She put him on her shoulders and carried him. He was even surprised — how she carried him. But she carried him a little, then motioned that she was tired. My father thought that she was mute. He could not step on one foot, but he did not feel any pain. He motioned to her that she could take the cane in both hands, while he could follow her, by holding onto the cane and hopping after her on one leg. Thus they moved towards Klin, until they met some horse-drawn wagons. They laid him in one, and though it was going toward the village, the woman, motioning, persuaded that wagon to return to Klin, and then the woman disappeared. My father never saw her again. When he was brought to the clinic, 7 hours had passed from the moment that he fell under the tractor's track. They made a splint, bandaged the foot and kept him in the hospital for 3 months.

My father is thankful to that woman to this day. She saved his life; otherwise he would have died from loss of blood. If she had not saved his life, Ludmila would not have been born. And this is what happened later. Once, Ludmila happened to buy the Akathist of Blessed Xenia of Petersburg. And, by chance, her father saw the image of St. Xenia on its cover. He was amazed to no end. 'I, — he said, — visited monasteries and churches all over Russia (he was a bus driver and drove people on excursions, including to sacred places), put candles in front of the icons and asked the Lord to give me a chance to meet that elderly woman and thank her. But I never met her. And here she is, on the picture — it is definitely she.' Her father realized who had helped him. On the Nativity in 1998 he came to the church of his own volition, stood through the entire service, and kissed the Cross.

"Blessed St. Xenia helps me greatly in my life, too. — continued Ludmila. — I constantly feel her presence and the warmth, that she emits..'

Appearances of the Departed

'Death is the Rebirth to Life.'

My uncle, Ivan Alekseevich Belyaev, was a military doctor. He was amazingly handsome and had deep faith, humility and meekness. When I was studying at the Institute, he visited me, brought me presents, talked with me about high spiritual topics and, in general, took care of me, a part orphan (my father died were young), with fatherly attention and care.

In 1905, during the Japanese war, he was working in the field hospital. A young nurse was also working there, the relative of a General, — a beauty, too. She was so in love with my uncle, that she told him:

— Ivan Alekseevich, if you do not marry me, I shall commit suicide. I cannot live without you.

—But I was not planning on marrying, — he answered.

— Well, by the time you give me a definite answer, I will no longer be living.

When he heard of the possibility of such a tragic end, my uncle wrote to his mother, my grandmother. This was the content: 'Mamochka, a nurse who works with me in the hospital is so in love with me that she told me if I don't marry her, she will commit suicide. But I don't want to marry. Advise me how to get out of such a difficult situation.' His mother answered him: 'Have mercy, Vanya, marry her.' The wedding took place. But then there was an epidemic on the front line. Ivan Alekseevich was sent to a field hospital where patients with typhus lay. Some time later, he caught the disease and died. When that news came to his deeply loving young wife, who did believe in God but was not yet engrossed in prayer and did not recognize God's Will, she fell into depression and despair.

There she sat in her room one day, and suddenly saw her dear Vanya enter. She jumped up, forgetting, out of joy, that he was dead.

He came up to the table, took a pencil, but he was not holding it normally, like we do, but vertically, and wrote something. In another instant, he disappeared.

His wife grabbed the paper.... —‘ It is his handwriting, he came to me, I saw him. Oh, thank You, God.’

This is what he wrote: ‘Death is the rebirth to life, to that life, where there is no death.’

She still has that note, written by her husband, who appeared after his death, and keeps it like a sacred thing. Her faith has become stronger and deeper.

‘There is, there is, there is!’

Two sisters, Irene and Nastya, lived in Moscow during the Civil War. Another friend, Nadezhda, was living in their apartment, too. The latter was not strong in faith.

Nastya went to the front line as a nurse. She caught typhus and died.

When Irene and Nadezhda got the sorrowful news, Nadezhda thought:

— ‘If only Nastya would come to me and say, that there is something in that world, I would believe.’

The same night, Irene saw the late Nastya in her sleep, who said:

— Tell Nadezhda: ‘There is, there is, there is!’

Then Nastya disappeared.

When Irene awoke, she was perplexed: ‘What do those strange words mean?’. When she told Nadezhda about what she had seen, the latter grew pale: Nastya had answered her question.

Thanks to the wise Will of God, Nastya appeared not to Nadezhda, but to Irene, who could not know Nadezhda’s thoughts. That assured Nadezhda that the dream was not accidental, but was a direct answer to her thoughts, about which no one else knew.

Father George’s Story.

At the time I was the abbot of the Mtsensk Monastery. I often had to go to Kaluga on business. On one such visit, I was walking along the street and saw a woman in a warm kerchief, carelessly put on, near a fine, large house. Her pale face was so sorrowful that I immediately looked at her attentively, and she said to me:

— Father, my husband is dying, I cannot leave him for long, but he needs to be confessed. Do not refuse, I beg you, come inside.

Fortunately, I had the Holy Gifts with me. She took me inside, I looked at her husband: he was very ill, he was not going to live long. I confessed him and gave him Communion. His mind was completely clear, he thanked me with tears, and then said:

— I am in deep trouble. I am a merchant, but something came up that I had to borrow on my house, but I have no money to repay the loan, and in two days it will be sold at an auction. Now I am dying, and the family is not provided for.

I felt pity for him.

— Don’t worry, — I said, — maybe, God grant, I shall be able to help you somehow.

I left him quickly and went to the telegraph office: I asked one of my spiritual sons, also a merchant, to come to my hotel.

That evening he was already in my room, understood the state of things, and when the auction took place, he was able to push the house’s price up to 35 thousand. The city bought the house, 7 thousand went to pay off the loan, and 18 thousand was put into the bank account of the dying merchant.

I put off my departure for the monastery and, after all the financial procedures, went to the sick man to tell him about the successful outcome. He was still alive... He thanked me for saving his family from poverty, and died towards evening... I did not stay to bury him, but hurried to the monastery and forgot about him, busy with other occupations.

Several years passed. The revolution thundered by. The Soviet power eliminated many people for their faith. They took me, too.

One night the jail guard came up to me and whispered:

— Get ready, Father, I received a list for all of you today, this night they will take you away.

I passed the guard's words on to my fellow inmates. Is it necessary to say, what was happening in each of our souls? Though we knew that we were condemned to death, but till then it was waiting beyond the doorstep; now we were about to cross it.

Not being able to bear staying in the cell, I put on my epitrachelion and went out to pray in the windowless corridor. I prayed and cried like never before in my life, I cried so much, that my tears drenched the silk embroidery on the epitrachelion; it faded and ran in multi-colored streaks.

Suddenly I saw an unknown man close to me; he looked at me with sympathy, and then said:

— Don't cry, Father, they will not shoot you.

— And who are you? — I was surprised.

You, Father, forgot me, but good deeds are not forgotten here, — said the man. — I am that merchant, whom you prepared for death in Kaluga.

And just as soon as that merchant disappeared, I saw that a hole appeared in the stone wall of the corridor, and through it I saw the edge of the forest, and above it, in the air — my late mother.

She shook her head and said:

— No, Egorushka, they will not shoot you, but we will see each other in 10 years.

The vision ended, again I found myself close to the blank wall, but it was Pascha in my soul. I hurried to the cell and said:

— My dears, thank God, we shall not be shot, trust the words of a priest (I understood, that the merchant and my mother were talking about all of us).

The deep grief in our cell changed to irrepressible joy. They believed me: someone kissed my hands, someone — my shoulders.... We knew, that we would live.

The night passed, and at dawn we were transferred to the forwarding jail.

From there I was sent to B., and soon they set me free, thanks to an amnesty, and lived in the Danilov Monastery these last few years. Six of my fellow inmates became my spiritual children.

The Appearance of a Departed to Michurin.

I was living in the same city with the famous I.V. Michurin and attest to the truth of the described event. This happened one summer during the First World War. Ivan Vasilyevich lived in a house, surrounded by a big fruit orchard. It was night, and the dogs were unchained in the orchard. There was a knock at the door. Michurin, surprised by the late visit and that the guest was not touched by the dogs, came up to the door:

— Who's there?

— It's me, Theodore. Open up, Ivan Vasilyevich.

Ivan Vasilyevich recognized the voice of his acquaintance Theodore, who had gone to the war, and opened the door.

There stood Theodore in a soldier's overcoat.

— I have a favor to ask of you, Ivan Vasilyevich. Please, go to my parents and tell them that I was killed in the war today. I was over there, but they did not let me in. Go and tell them that they should not worry and pine about me.

After that, he became invisible. Coming to after what had happened, Ivan Vasilyevich went to Theodore's parents, but they did not believe him.

But not even a week later, they received an official notice that their son Theodore had been killed at the front. The date of his death was precisely the day his soul had appeared to I.V. Michurin.

The Girl in a Pink Dress.

The popular surgeon, Vladimir Nikolaevich Rozanov, lived in Moscow at the beginning of the 20th century.

He was receiving patients at his house. After the next patient left, a girl between 10 and 12 years of age, in a pink dress and with a bow in her hair, came in.

— Doctor, — she addressed V.N., — my mother is very sick, she needs urgent help. I ask you to visit her immediately.... — and the girl gave him her address.

V.N. was surprised both by the unusual dress of the girl, and with the persistence, with which she asked to visit her mother immediately. He promised to visit her directly, and the girl left.

Upon leaving the office, V.N. told his other patients to wait for him, because he needed to visit the mother of the girl who had just been at his office.

— What girl? — the patients asked in amazement. — Nobody came in or out of your office, and we wondered, whom you were talking to.

V.N. was even more surprised by these words and hurried to the address, given by the girl. He found confusion in the apartment.

— Doctor, it's so good that you came. Who told you, that we need you so? — the inhabitants of the apartment wondered.

They led him to the hall, where a woman was lying in a deep faint, with almost no signs of life ...

And on the table lay a corpse — the small girl in a pink dress and with a bow in her hair, with whom Vladimir Nikolaevich had just spoken in his office.

The Shamed Atheist.

During the Civil War, my husband and I had to live in Sochi for a long time. There we became closely acquainted with a doctor, a co-worker of my husband and a confirmed atheist.

Soon after returning to Moscow, my husband died. After his death, I received a letter from our friend, the doctor from Sochi, which contained the description of the following incident.

'Early one morning on this given date I was going to work. Walking on a small bridge across the river, I saw in the ravine that your husband was coming on the bridge from the other side. I was very surprised to see him, knowing that he was in Moscow then. But then I thought, that he probably came to Sochi again for some reason.

I took off my hat and greeted him from afar. We were gradually approaching each other. Then something extraneous caught my attention, and the next moment I could no longer see your husband.

I was amazed at that vision. I was absolutely healthy, sober, in sound mind. At the same time, I can fully affirm that I really saw your husband. I ask you to inform me whether he is healthy.'

The date and time of the doctor-atheist's vision, were the date and time of my husband's death.

'Mama, but you are dead...'

My father, Doctor of Medicine S.V.V. told us, his children, about the following interesting event in his experience.

— I studied in the university on a scholarship. My mother had 18 children. My father was unworldly — we were poor. After graduating from the University, I was put to work in a forsaken place where typhus was raging, to work off my scholarship.

At the same time, my mother became fatally ill. I received a telegram about it, but was not permitted to go home.

My oldest sister Tanya, who was already a bride, sat almost constantly beside the bed of my dying mother.

The mother turned to her daughter with the following request:

— Tanechka, bury me, dear, in my wedding dress. It was consecrated. I was married in it in church, and I want to lie in the coffin in it.

The daughter sobbed:

— Mamochka, don't die, I am a bride, and I have so many younger brothers and sisters.

— That's the will of God, do not be sad, God will help you, and fulfill my request about the dress.

— Don't you worry, I will do everything just as you want it.

A few days later my mother died. I got a telegram again, but I was not permitted to go home because the typhus epidemic was spreading.

I only made it home two months later. I was walking in our garden. It was summer, the sun was shining, and it was 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I walked and thought: how does Tanya manage to do the housekeeping, do the younger children obey her? How was father? It had to be difficult for him: his health was weak and we did not have much money. I was even not thinking of our mother at that moment.

Suddenly I saw: my mother was coming right toward me on the path. What is this — a hallucination? I slapped myself on the forehead. No, she was alive and was coming closer to me. One step was left — I stopped, astonished, and my mother spoke:

— Serezha...

— Mama, but you are dead...

— That does not mean anything, Serezha, I am more alive now, than when I was with you. I did not come accidentally — the Lord allowed me to do it. I feel sorry for Tanya. She did not fulfill my last wish, though she promised: she did not bury me in the wedding dress. She was sorry to give it up. Tell her, Serezhen'ka, that she must give the dress to a beggar today. Don't think that I need that dress. There everyone is dressed differently, in accordance with our faith and virtues.

— Mama, what dress, I do not understand? You died, but I see you like one living. I have probably gone mad.

— Don't fret, Serezha, and don't worry, I am alive, only my body died, and that is temporary, too, until the mutual Resurrection. Tanya herself will tell you about the dress, only tell her about our talk. Tell her that I forgive her, only she must give that dress to the poor today.

Looking at me kindly, mother crossed me with the big sign of the cross and said:

— When you will mature, Serezha, and when you marry and have children, bring them up in the Christian faith, in love to the Orthodox Church. To whom the Church is not the mother, God is not the Father.

She crossed me once more and became invisible.

Disturbed, I went to the apartment and rushed to Tanya.

— Tanya, my sister, I just saw mama, alive, and talked to her.

— What do you mean, alive? How did you talk? Maybe you saw mamochka in a dream? Do not worry, I saw her twice in my dreams, too.

— No, Tanya, not in a dream, but in reality. Right now, in the garden, on our path, I met her. And this is what surprised me: she said that you did not fulfill her last wish — did not put her in the coffin in her wedding dress, but dressed her in another one. Was it really so, Tanechka?

Tanya grew pale and cried:

— Yes, Serezha, I was sorry to put that dress into the coffin. It is made of silk, I am a bride, and you know yourself, how poor we are. So I dressed mama in her new satin dress. Nobody besides me knew that mother asked me to dress her in the wedding dress. How it amazes me that she herself came to you from the other world to tell you about that.

— And not only about that, Tanechka, but she told me to inform you, that she worries about your soul, that you behaved wrongly, having given a promise to your dying mother to fulfill her last wish, and then begrudged her the dress.

Tanya sobbed bitterly.

— I am guilty, Serezha, guilty.

— Don't cry. Mamochka also wanted me to tell you, that she forgives you. But you must give the wedding dress to the poor today.

She, apparently, calmed down somewhat, hearing that her mother forgave her, and said fervently:

— How shall we, Serezhen'ka, give that dress to the poor? Not one beggar visits us; everyone around us knows that we are poor. Father is sick. We are in debt; I can hardly manage the household and the orphans.

— No, Tanya, if mama ordered us to give the dress to beggars today, it means that some poor person will come to us. Take mama's dress out of the chest.

Tanya took the dress out and put it on the table.

Not two hours later, someone knocked at the garden gate. An old man came in and with tears in his eyes said:

— Please, donate something to a poor bride, for Christ's sake. There is nothing to dress her in for the wedding. She is my great granddaughter.

Our mother's dress was given to the beggar there and then.

'Little One, God Exists!'

One elderly lady told the following: 'My husband and I were not firm in faith, though we conceded God's existence. We gave each other a promise, that whichever one of us dies earlier, will appear to the other one after death and tell them, if God exists.

My husband died first.

One afternoon, I was sitting in my room, in full consciousness. Suddenly the door opened, and my late husband approached me.

— Little one (he always called me that while living, because I was short), God exists.

Then he disappeared.'

One often hears about similar cases, when during life someone gives a promise to reveal something

to the other after death. Usually this really takes place. It is possible, that the dead person's soul feels somehow bound to fulfill the promise given in life and cannot calm down till it fulfills it. Showing indulgence for the anxiety of the soul that left the body, the Lord God gives it an opportunity to fulfill the promise through His Infinite Mercy.

Pascha Night.

In April of 1942, I went to Uglich when my sick father called me out. My mother was in Kazan. On the night of April 4th to the 5th, I was at the Paschal service. I was reading the Acts of the Apostles from 8 o'clock in the evening to 12, to everyone waiting for Matins.

Finally the priest asked everyone to leave the church for the Rush procession, even though we couldn't walk with lighted candles because of the blackout. Everybody went out, but I stayed, there was no one else near me.

In the vestibule, Father exclaimed 'Christ is risen!', and at the same time my mother's voice repeated: 'Christ is risen!' next to me.

I recognized her voice immediately, and looked around quickly, not having time to realize what had happened... I wanted to see her, but there was nobody there.

A week later, I returned to Moscow and asked my friends about my mother. Someone from the hospital officially informed me, that my mother had died on the night of April 5, 1942, i.e. on Pascha.

'Come up Here With Us.'

My friend's 4 year old son died. A few days before his death he started to ask her to go to church. They had been there before, but he asked very persistently, so they went to the Elohovskiy Cathedral for several days in a row. Every time they came there, he would be so happy: 'Oh, how good it is here, how good!' His mother suffered greatly after his death. A month or two passed, and her daughter, who was only 2 years old, began to say: 'Mama, Alesha is here, don't cry!' Once the mother and daughter sat on the bed and played, suddenly the daughter stopped playing and said: 'Alesha, come up here with us, it is easier to play that way.'

Now Tanya and her children (she gave birth to one more child) go to church regularly.

Examples of High Christian Spirit.

Elder Iraclius.

Elder Iraclius was sitting in a wicker chair at the doorstep of his house. The habit of sitting in the yard of his house in the evenings and observing the surrounding world, recollecting the past, developed during the last few years. Weak gusts of warm wind brought the smells of the autumn grasses and the last flowers, they gently touched his face and stirred his gray hair. The first stars appeared on the still light sky. Yes, life has passed! A lot had happened in his life, quite a lot. Elder Iraclius was going over the days of his life, like rosary beads. He tried to put a value on the deeds of the past, repented of his misdeeds, and regretted that he had not done more good. He thanked and thanked God for everything. Yes, soon, very soon he would be giving Him a greater account.

Lately, the idea that maybe not everything possible has been done in his life, that he could still do something that he missed, haunted the elder. Even now, sitting by the doorstep and looking at the darkening sky, he appealed to Him in his thoughts: 'I had a wonderful life. I had strength, health, bravado and beauty. I had enough reason to try not to do evil, I tried to live by Your commandments. True friends surrounded me. I brought up a handsome son. This was Your gift to me towards the end of my days. You gave me an heir, when I thought that I shall leave my house empty when I go to the other world. Soon I shall see You. But I feel that I have not done something very important. What? Tell me. I want to leave, having done everything that is in my power.'

The thoughts of the elder were interrupted by the clatter of the hoofs on the road. Someone was flying at full speed. Then a rider stopped in front of the fence on a horse, covered in lather. 'Father, hide me. They are chasing me. I shall die,' — said the stranger, gasping.

The elder hid the guest and his horse in the shed behind the house. As soon as he closed the shed doors, someone called to him again. Beyond the fence there were some horsemen, they were discussing something anxiously. One of them addressed the elder: 'Father, have you seen anyone? We are chasing a man. He is a scoundrel.'

'No,' — answered the elder.

The riders left, and silence again shrouded the world. It was already dark. Iraclius did not hurry to leave, though a chill came together with the night. He loved those hours, when the world was quieting down and the breath of God could be heard. But that night he was not to enjoy the silence.

The squeaking of the wheels, the footsteps of many people and troubled voices were heard on the road. 'Something happened!' — thought the elder, and apprehension overwhelmed him. He stood up and went to the fence: he tried with all his might to look into the night. The anxiety grew, and he went out on the road. 'Why do I feel so uneasy? — he thought. — These are probably our people returning from the holiday.' In the absolute darkness of the southern night he could not see anything, and people were still far away. It was just that the sounds carried perfectly in the silence. But it seemed to him, that it was trouble, talking with many voices, and it had many legs, too. The procession stopped right in front of him. Nuzgar was at the head of it. Back in their childhood, they used to run to swim in the river together, they were the leaders of all the village children. Now Nuzgar was as gray as Iraclius. He became the messenger of trouble for his childhood friend. They had both been on the front line together, fought in the same division and came back to the village together. They saw many terrible things during that war. But now it was more terrible. Pressing his friend's hands, Nuzgar exclaimed, gasping: 'Iraclius, Thomas is killed.' No, Elder Iraclius neither cried, nor moaned. He slowly approached the wagon and looked at his son's calm face for a long time. He had brought him up alone. His wife died when the boy was two. Iraclius himself was far from being young. He had no relatives. They were the two closest people. And now...

'Lord, Lord!' — whispered the elder and fell, embracing his son's body.

Three days passed like in a dream. There was the funeral, the commemoration. People from his village said, that during the feast in the neighboring village, Thomas had laughed at one young man's horse. That young man had become an orphan several years before, and that horse was a memento of his father. The youth left, but soon returned with a weapon and shot Thomas. They looked for the killer but did not find him.

Everything ended. The elder was left alone in the house. Once again he was sitting by the doorstep in the evening and was looking at the surrounding world, but now tears streamed from his eyes. Suddenly he remembered about the man in the shed. Remembered, and understood who he was. Iraclius slowly entered the house and looked at the ancient weapons hanging on the wall for a long time. These were mementos of his father and grandfather. Then he went just as slowly out of the house and made his way to the shed. When Iraclius opened the shed, he saw the large scared eyes of a child. The skinny figure was doubled up in a corner. The boy looked at the elder in horror and grief. During those three days he, while sitting in the barn, heard the funeral music, the crying and discussions. He understood, in whose house he was and awaited retribution. Elder Iraclius was silent, and then said in a low voice: 'Come out.' Then he left. The boy came out of the shed and came up to the elder. 'I am sorry, father. I am guilty. I shall go to the militia myself and tell them everything,' — he addressed Iraclius. Not looking at the boy, he led him to the house and ordered him to eat and drink wine, in commemoration of Thomas. Then, without looking at him, asked him who he was, how old he was and with whom he lived.

It turned out, that the boy was 16. A few years ago, his father had died in the mountains, his mother had died earlier. He lived completely by himself, he had no relatives, nobody. He had only a 5 year

old sister whom he was bringing up himself. He worked on the state farm. The horse was a memento of his father, whom he adored, and Thomas laughed at it rudely, calling the horse a jade. He, of course, was wrong and would go to the militia right away. The elder was silent for a long time. At last, the words coming like rocks, he said: 'It will be dark soon and you will go home. Don't let anyone see you. Bring the girl here. You will hide for a while, until the people will forget everything.' He paused and continued: 'I'll show you where to hide.' He stopped talking, and the boy, afraid to move, stood by and looked at him. 'Lord, help me,' — whispered Iraclius, looking at the starry sky and at last glanced at the skinny, trembling boy. 'When everything calms down, you will come to us, son...'

— So that was elder Iraclius? And the girl was the sister of that boy? — we asked the steward, interrupting each other. — Why didn't you warn us that we would visit him?

— He does not like when everyone looks at him, praises him, begins to ask him questions, — answered the steward.

— And where is that boy?

— He studies at a technical school, in the city. He often visits Iraclius and his sister.

My companions discussed the incident, sighed over it, were enchanted. But I remembered the kind blue eyes of the elder, his smile and the little girl, who would not leave him for a moment. I thought then: what love, what peace and quiet are in that family.

But now I thought about something else. How often, at the end of the life, we have a feeling that we have not fulfilled everything that we could. As though a touch, a small stroke is missing from the painting of our life. Often, not having found out what it is, we leave with the sense of being incomplete. Elder Iraclius turned out to be wise. He asked for advice from the Main Critic of our paintings.

The summer wind, filled with the scents of flowers and grasses, the sun's warmth and the reflections of the blue celestial expanse, birds' singing, rustles and sighs of the world, embraced us by the shoulders, stirred the hair, fondled our faces. The Main Artist continued to paint His great masterpiece.

'Take Me as a Hostage...'

One evening, in the store of the correctional-working colony in the city of Plavsk in the Tula region, two women were working: a salesperson and a bookkeeper,. Right before the end of the working day, two convicts, armed with files, broke into the store and took the women as hostages. The bandits demanded that they be given two automatic rifles, grenades and a bus to leave the colony. If their requirements were not met, they threatened to kill hostages. For that, they prepared knives found in the store and built gallows. Negotiations with the authorities were unsuccessful. When he heard about what had happened, a priest arrived on the scene and ... asked permission to see the bandits...

In order not to weary the reader, I will say, that it was finally necessary to take extreme measures — storming the store; the hostages were freed, the bandits were killed; there were no victims among the colony workers or the rescue team. However, the conversation is about something else. It is about the fact, that the priest participating in the negotiations, Father Basil Zakharov, proposed that he be taken as a hostage in place of one of the women, who was pregnant...

This is what Father Basil told us himself: 'I attempted to save five lives: those of the hostages, the yet unborn baby and the criminals themselves, but we were only able to save three of them. To this day, those youths stand before me. At that moment they lost everything human. I and Father Ephraim, an hieromonk who came with me, both tried to persuade them, using all our eloquence, recalling more and more examples from the Holy Scripture, the lives of saints, telling them about how sinners, robbers and killers turned to God, repented — and became righteous. But it was impossible to reach those souls. Now we can only pray about their salvation. And do you know who

did that first? — That pregnant woman, Zhanna, whom they jeered at, first threatening to knife her, then forcing her to drink vodka with them. She came to my church, put up candles, ordered a panikhida for the repose of her tormentors. Later, I baptized her son. He was born a healthy boy. Isn't that a miracle? Indeed, after such a nervous break-down anything could happen. Was it not a reward to Zhanna for her prayer, for the fact that she, Christian-like, did not begin to hate her enemies? The other woman remained in the hospital for two months after that incident.

After we proposed ourselves as hostages, hieromonk Ephraim told me: 'Stay. Better if I go alone. You have a family, a three year old daughter.' I did not agree. For some reason I was not afraid. That could be because my wife prayed for us in the church the entire night, together with our psalm-reader. I only remember that these words distinctly sounded in my soul: 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' I believed that the Lord would save us. But if not, we were ready to accept death...' Thank God, Father Basil and Father Ephraim are alive. The criminals did not accept their proposal. But to this day, Father cannot get rid of the torturing feeling of guilt: he was not able to save the lost souls...

Instead of the Epilogue.

As a matter of fact, God's miracles surround man from his birth to death itself. It is even possible to say, that man lives within God's miracle, which is called the created world. The surrounding visible world is marvelous, harmonious, it has everything that is necessary for the life of man. The Lord put laws into the foundation of the world that control it, which man can get to know, but cannot abolish or create new ones. Despite the fact that people constantly sin, God does not cease to manifest His love and concern towards them. The embodiment of Christ the Savior, His dreadful sacrifice on Golgotha, the Resurrection on the third day, His glorious Ascension and the advent of the Holy Spirit into the world— this is a string of incomprehensible miracles.

The Lord founded His Church among people and established the Sacrament of the Eucharist. And this miracle of miracles is being performed for us, sinners, every day for two thousand years— Christians receive the Communion of the Body and the Blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine, becoming a part of God's Kingdom on earth. This miracle is given to each and everyone on earth; one only needs to believe and turn to the Giver of the Eternal Goods with penitence. At this blissful and holy moment the Highest — spiritual — and material worlds are being united within man, and the Holy Spirit animates and enlightens the unreceptive matter. This is the real content of any miracle — the interaction of the invisible Spirit with the visible matter.

The great miracle of the Eucharist is accomplished mysteriously, in a manner inaccessible to our sensory organs, but anyone, that partakes of the Communion of Christ's Mysteries, feels the movement of God's grace in his soul, attesting to the miracle. Keeping this greatest of God's miracles concealed is no accident: The Lord protects our freedom, so that we would follow Him not slavishly, not under compulsion — but of free will and with filial love. During the devil's temptation in the desert the Lord *rejected* a miracle, which would enslave the human spirit, and repeated the commandment, given in the Old Testament: *Do not tempt the Lord Thy God*. However, during His terrestrial life, the Lord performed many miracles, by His inexpressible mercy, coming to the help of the sick, the suffering, and the obsessed by evil spirits. Some of them are described in the Gospel, information about the others did not reach us, because as the Evangelist John writes: *But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written* (John 21:25).

The laws of the material world retreated before God's love to the suffering; the dead were resurrected, people were healed of incurable diseases, those born blind regained their sight, the mute and deaf from birth began to hear, demons left the possessed people, tortured for years, with a howl, loaves of bread were miraculously multiplied, and fierce storms were tamed. But that, which

to us appears to be a violation of the laws of the material world, turns out to be natural, harmonious, 'usual' in the reality of the spiritual world, living a Godly life. Therefore, any miracle of God's is a revelation of His future Kingdom. That, which is for us, and even for the angels, a marvelous miracle, as it is frequently sung in the church, — is a simple, 'usual' matter for the Lord: *...the works, which the Father has granted Me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear Me witness that the Father has sent Me* (John 5:36).

And after His Ascension to Heaven, to this day, the Savior does not cease to perform miracles — there are thousands and thousands of witnesses of these, recorded in church history. Moreover, He granted the wonder-working force to His disciples: *he who believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do* (John 14:12). In the majestic cathedral of our holy protectors The Ever Pure and Holy Mother of God comes first, who was prepared, by Her longsuffering life, to know our infirmities and sorrows, and She was given the special blessing of intercession for mankind. The blessed help of our Intercessor and of God's saints of our Church was and is being manifested so abundantly, that it can be said to have become normal, everyday. But it is a tremendous event in the life of a person, who for the first time truly experiences the miracle of God's help. It strengthens faith, turns one towards repentance; it fills man with happiness and filial gratitude to the Celestial Father, who does not abandon us in our terrestrial life. And a human heart, not hardened by disbelief, when touched by any news of a blessed miracle, responds to it by reverential amazement and joy in God, Who shows one *the Way, and the Truth, and the Life* (John, 14:6).

Archpriest Boris Balashov

The Attachment

St. Isaac Sirin About Miracles and Signs (A Retelling).

The Lord is always the close defender of those who believe in Him; however, when there is no need, He does not show His power through any physical signs, so that His help won't become a common thing for them and so that people would not lose the feeling of proper reverence towards Him. That would be ruinous for them.

When providing for righteous people, He gives them the chance to perform feats, which correspond to their abilities, and to take some pains in prayer in any difficult circumstances, and strength. At the same time, He does not cease to take care of them for a minute. When any test exceeds their powers and understanding, and if they are exhausted and lose the ability to act, then He Himself accomplishes what they need — by His omnipotence, as is proper, and as He knows.

Mostly, He secretly strengthens the righteous, giving them the power to overcome sorrows. In addition, He solves the problem, helping them to comprehend the ways of His Providence, moving them to glorification. When a given difficult circumstance requires His explicit help, then He gives it, and then the means and methods of His help are the wisest.

The person, who dares to ask God for the accomplishment of something extraordinary without any obvious need, and wanting the miracles and signs to be performed through him, is vain and has yielded to a demonic temptation, possessing a sick conscience.

One should appeal to God for help during any sorrow; however, it is disastrous to tempt him unnecessarily. The one who demands the supernatural is truly sinful. There are examples in the lives of the saints, when the Lord, expressing His disfavor, nevertheless fulfilled such requests. But it is evident from these examples that those who seek a miracle without a serious reason, lose the protection of God and fall away from the truth. When the person demanding the supernatural is heard, then the evil one gains access to that person, as one who walks before God without reverence

and with impudence, and then plunges him into larger temptations. Therefore, true righteous men not only do not want to become wonder-workers, but when they are given this gift, they reject it — and they do not want it not only before others, but even in the secret corners of their hearts.

One of the holy fathers, by reason of his spiritual cleanliness, received the blessed gift of seeing the innermost secrets of the people who came to him; but he asked God to take away that gift, begging his friends to pray for the same thing. If any of the saints did accept the gifts, then they did it because of a need, or because of their simplicity; others accepted it by instruction of the Holy Spirit acting in them, but not by their own effort... True righteous men constantly realize that they are unworthy of God, and precisely due to their humility we can conclude that they are on the right path.

Bishop Ignatius (Bryanchaninov) about Miracles and Sorrows.

Miracles, performed by our Lord Jesus Christ, are the gift of God to humanity. Seeing them, people had to treat the Giver of the gift with the greatest reverence and appreciation, because He came to them from Heaven for the salvation of their souls. Each person is given the possibility to observe Christ's miracles, to discuss their authenticity and quality, to reach a conclusion about their Executor, so that their acknowledgment and acceptance of the Redeemer would be the result of a free, positive conviction, not a quick, frivolous, sort of forced infatuation.

Christ's miracles had complete certainty and tangibility: they were obvious to the simplest people; there was nothing mysterious about them; anyone could easily observe them; whether in doubt and bewilderment; whether it was a miracle, or not. At Christ's word the dead were resurrected again, incurable diseases were healed, lepers became clean, those born blind began to see, the mutes began to speak; food was multiplied instantly for those needing it; the waves of the sea and the winds ceased, the nets of the fishermen, who worked the entire night in vain, were suddenly filled with fish. The miracles of Christ had many witnesses, among whom there were people hostile to Him. But even they, not being able to deny their existence, tried to at least diminish their significance.

There was nothing trivial in the Lord's miracles, no special effects; not one miracle was done to show off; they all were covered by Heavenly humility. They make up a chain of good deeds for suffering humanity. At the same time they showed, with total persuasiveness, the authority of the Creator over nature and over the fallen spirits, expressed and proved the merit of God, Who took human nature on Himself.

The miracles of the Lord pursued a holy purpose. Although they were great blessings by themselves, but in the sights of Godly Providence, they served as evidence of a greater good deed. The Lord, after becoming a man, brought people the eternal, spiritual, priceless gift: healing from sin, resurrection from the dead and eternal salvation. The Word of God and the example of His life revealed this gift with the entire obviousness: in life, the Lord was sinless and ever-holy; His word was filled with power. But people had fallen deep into the haze of carnal wisdom, their hearts and minds were blinded. Special leniency towards the sickly state of people was necessary; it proved to be necessary to provide them with the clearest evidence for their physical feelings. Miracles were given to people to support the Savior's teaching, so that they could appraise and accept the spiritual gift.

Sin is the reason for all the ailments in man — physical and spiritual; it is the reason for both temporary and eternal death. Carnal wisdom sees neither spiritual ailments nor eternal death, but recognizes physical illnesses and death, which cause it great anxiety. The Lord, healing with a single word, a single command, many sick persons, resurrecting the dead, ordering the evil spirits, showed His Heavenly power over sin and the fallen spirits — He showed it very clearly for human understanding. People, seeing and perceiving His power, logically had to recognize the power of the Lord above all the evil in the world, over death itself and over the soul's lot in the other world.

The Lord could make all people healthy with His one omnipotent word — and one day will not only make them healthy, but also immortal. Nevertheless, in this temporary life, ailments and different

sorrows are permitted by Him as a remedy for our spiritual treatment. Spiritual experience testifies that they contribute to our eternal prosperity much more effectively than external miracles. Frequently, very frequently an ailment is a greater blessing than a cure, if such occurred. In the hands of God's Providence, the physical ailment is sometimes such an essential blessing, that taking it away by healing would be taking away the greatest good for the renewal of the soul and for spiritual growth.

Poor Lazarus, mentioned in the Gospel, was neither healed from his heavy illness, nor was he relieved of poverty, but passed away in the condition in which he suffered for many years. However, he was then taken by angels to Abraham's bosom for his patience.

The Holy Scripture testifies from beginning to end, that God sends different sorrows, as well as different ailments, to those people whom He loves. The Holy Scripture asserts that all saints, without exception, completed their terrestrial wandering along a narrow and thorny path, full of diverse sorrows and deprivations. By looking at life's sorrows in this way, true servants of God behaved themselves in respect to them with patience and hope in God. Any grief, no matter what, they met as a necessity, believing that it would not have come, if it had not been permitted by the All-Good God.

Therefore, as soon as a sorrow occurred, they convinced themselves that they deserved it. They specifically searched and found the reason for the grief within themselves. However, recognizing themselves as weak, they would ask God to free them from it, leaving it up to Him to fulfill or neglect their request. Thus, the Apostle Paul prayed to God three times, asking that the demon, which prevented him from teaching Christianity, would be removed. His prayer was heard; however, God's decision on that subject was different, from that of the God-inspired Apostle.

Many servants of God, when they became ill, accepted them as God's goodness towards them, and they tried remain grateful to God. They did not seek healing, although many wonderful healings occurred where they lived. They preferred to bear the disease, sent by God, patiently and humbly, believing that it was better for them than any voluntary feat.

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