

LIVING IN †HE UNCREATED LIGHT OF MOUNT †ABOR

We are all well here, thank God.

As Saint Luke writes:

"Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also?" (Lk. 11:40). The Prophet Jeremias writes, "The heart is deep beyond all things" (Jer. 17:9 LXX). [The rest of this verse applies not to ourselves, but to the mystery of our Christ, according to the interpretation of Saint Irenaeus of Lyons; thus we follow the holy Fathers.] "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor.2:10, 11). The divine Spirit, through the holy Scriptures, unveils not only the things of God to us but also the very deep things of our own hearts. Why do we *consistently insist on withholding the things of our own spirits*—when the Lord has shown us that our knowledge of Himself is given to us through the way He allows the struggles, strivings, and, yes, even the falls and stumblings of our spirits to serve as indices of our efforts to unite ourselves with Himself in His divine energies. He wishes to crown the Strugglers through their spiritual struggles; and also to enable us to be able to discern whether these interior struggles are pleasing to Him or not. And is this not the be-all and the end-all of the brief span allotted to us here?

"Prove me, O Lord, and try me; prove with fire my reins and my heart" (Ps. 25:2 LXX); and again, "Prove me, O God, and know my heart; examine me and know my paths. And see if the way of iniquity be in me, and guide me in the way everlasting" (Ps.138:22, 23). With what fire are we examined? Before our Orthodox Baptism we were in darkness (1 Peter 2:9). What light is given to us from our Baptism forward so that we may in His strength move consistently forward (including our backward-and-then-forward steps)? This is the uncreated light of Mount Tabor, when our Christ's "*face did shine as the sun*" (Mt.17:2). This is the uncreated light of the Son of Righteousness that, once having arisen, never sets and, filling us with unseen powers, shines in a day without sunset. On that day the people in the valley below did not see this light; they only saw the light of the noonday sun. Only those who were with our Christ on the mountain: Moses, Elias, Peter, James, and John—for whom He prayed that their eyes might be opened—saw Him, "*The Son of man coming in His kingdom*" (Mt. 16:28).

Someone once asked the question, "Why is this light uncreated?" It is uncreated because it streams from the face of Christ Who is uncreated God. We chant in the Creed. "Light of Light true God of true God; begotten, not made". As St. Romanos' Kontakion for the Nativity of Christ tells us, the Father and the Son are "pre-eternal God". This uncreated light comes from God Who, before creation, is the "pre-eternal God".

We can tell that this is uncreated light because of the peace that now reigns in our lives. Everything that we have springs from our holy Orthodox Baptism and our continual communion in the divine mysteries which are themselves full of uncreated light. "Abiding joy!"

A simple story illustrates this presence of Uncreated Light in the Church's Holy Mysteries. Papouli Nektas at Saint Nectarios' Church in Seattle was baptizing a lady. She stood on the little ladder propped up against the outside of the Holy Baptismal Font, ready to take the next step into the waters that had been blessed by the prayer of the Church. But she wouldn't take that step. Papanektas, not aware of what was going on, asked her if she would not please go ahead and step into the Holy Font. She replied, "How can I? There is a ring of fire all around the edge of it?" "Abiding joy!"

Not all of us are given even to see the Uncreated Light of Mount Tabor, even if we are all baptized into this Uncreated Light of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Saint David prophesies of this Light, "God shall come visibly, yea our God and shall not keep silence. Fire shall blaze before Him, and round about Him shall there be a mighty tempest" (Ps. 49: 3, 4 LXX). Such are the prophesies of Mount Tabor and the Uncreated Light which is Christ, Who Himself is the Kingdom of God (Lk. 9:27). Did He not "come to send fire on the Earth?" (Lk. 12:40). We can ask Saint David the Psalmist to lead us again: "And I said: surely darkness shall tread me down, and the night shall be turned into light in my delight. But darkness will not be darkness with Thee, and night shall be bright as the day; as is the darkness thereof, even so shall the light thereof be" (Ps. 138:10, 11 LXX). This is one of the fruits of our Baptismal Illumination: the darkness of the Uncreated Light, the darkness in which the Master, our Christ, God and man, dwells and dwells in us, "hidden even in His manifestation" (St. Dionysius the Areopagite, Letter III).

The movements of our own spirits are known in this Light as well. God Himself in His divine, Uncreated Illuminations within us reveals to us the significance of each of our actions. Are we pleasing to God in our thoughts, words and deeds? God knows and shows these things to us. We cannot see these things unless we allow Him to bring us to that place where "In Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 35:10).

As *The Way of the Pilgrim* teaches us the following: 1) Prayer is First. If it is not, it is not Prayer, it is no more than an afterthought. 2) We can pray without ceasing. Can we not, at the crack of dawn, say "Thank you God" for the created light of day and then keep on thanking Him for every single thing we see, for all that happens to us during that day? And then the next? And the day after that? Lastly, 3) we see the power of prayer that brought the gout-stricken Navy Captain's godson from Kazan to the

Crimea—2000 mi. in summer clothing through a Russian winter in a short time (had he a horse it would have to have made 70 miles a day!) to his destination—without either a passport (a Russian civil requirement) or a penny to his name.

Beloved, is not our destiny always in the hands of God? We can pray and commit all our lives to Christ our God.

So pray, pray, pray, just pray: Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me. Amen.
Thanks be to God for all things.