

ZEE MOST BEAUTIFOOL FACE!

by
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Our seminary classes were just beginning as autumn was drawing nigh in Massachusetts. The students of the theological division were looking forward to their classes that year, especially because the eminent professor of theology, Father Georges Florovsky, would be teaching at our institution. Father John Romanides, another renowned instructor, was teaching there already, so there was a lot to look forward to.

Finally, the big day arrived, and Father Georges entered the lecture room. Out of reverence and in deference to him, the class stood as he walked through the door and came to the podium.

As we have mentioned on other occasions, Father Georges himself had never attended classes at any seminary or theological academy in his youth. As he often affirmed, he had gained all his theological knowledge by studying the service books of the Orthodox Church. Yet, in academic and church circles, he was one of the most famous voices and representatives of the Church, if not *the* most famous, throughout the whole world during the twentieth century.

As the lecture began, the students understood immediately that some adjustments and accommodations would have to be made, primarily because of Father Georges' accent in speaking English.

Anyone who tries to speak a foreign language knows that some sounds in that language are going to be tough, chiefly because that language may have sounds that ours does not. So often, what we come up with is an approximation.

For example, we know that the Chinese have no "r" in their language, so they will often replace it with an "l" sound when they are speaking English. Greek-speaking people, on their part, are completely bewildered with our innumerable English vowels and consonants, and so what they come up with is the subject of countless hilarious anecdotes in Greek-American homes, especially among the children, who, of course, grew up speaking English.

Well, in the case of people who speak Russian, the "th" sound is the killer. For example, the Greek name "Theophilos" has become "Feofil" in Russian. "Theodore" has become "Fyodor" for the Russians.

With this in mind, let us return to our much anticipated, first lecture with Father Georges Florovsky.

As he was speaking, at one point he turned towards us and, with particular emphasis, declared: "I have zee most beautifool face in zee world."

Now, it must be said that Father Georges appeared to be, and, in fact, had the reputation for being, a very modest man. So, this astounding claim that had just escaped his lips seemed completely out of character.

Caught off guard by Father Georges' remark, I thought to myself, "Well, maybe his presbytera thinks so."

However, as the lecture continued, and we slowly became accustomed to his manner of speech, it finally dawned on us that Father Georges had not been bragging about his looks (which were sort of pleasant, to be sure). No, as a matter of fact, he was proclaiming his pride that he was an Orthodox Christian! It was his confession of faith in the depth and beauty of Orthodoxy.

What Father Georges had actually said to us, as it soon became abundantly clear, was:

"I have the most beautiful faith in the world!"

Phew! Thank God! Father George's modesty was still intact. And, by the way, so was his confession of faith.