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SEEKING TRUTH:
FORMING CHILDREN IN THE LOVE OF TRUTH

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“Educating Children Within an Orthodox Ethos”

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Venerable Fathers, Esteemed Colleagues, Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is in our Midst!

Our discussion today is concerned with how we as parents and as teachers can form our children in the love of Truth. In unpacking this for you, it is apparent we must:

1. Determine of **what** the love of truth consists and why it is necessary for us to impart it.
2. Determine the way in which we impart truth to our children.

To determine of what the love of Truth consists we have nowhere else to turn but to the Incarnate Truth, Who is Love and Who first loved us. We find Him in the Divine record of His Coming, the Holy Scriptures, and in the continuation of His Incarnation in the Church, in the lives of the “little Christs,” who were made Him by His Grace.

Our love for Christ can be expressed in an endless amount of ways. In the Lives of Saints we have every kind of example of how the Truth Incarnate dwells within and transfigures men.

All of them, these images of love, had one thing in common: they were spiritual athletes. They were all ascetics, that is, they excised that which is contrary to nature and exercised in that which was according to nature, so that they were made partakers of divine nature. And all of them had this in common: their ascetic life was an expression of their love for Christ. They had no part in the hypocrisy of the legalist or the egotism of the practitioner of sick religiosity.

As Saint John of the Ladder writes:

Hypocrisy is the mother of lying and frequently its cause. Some would argue that hypocrisy is nothing other than a meditation on falsehood, that it is the inventor of falsehood laced with lies.

The Saints eschewed even the slightest measure of hypocrisy for they knew that it would deprive them of the divine “insanity” of communion with God, as Saint Porphyrius describes it:

“Whoever lives Christ becomes one with Him, with His Church. He lives a kind of “madness.” This life is different from the life of people. It is joy, light, exultation, resurrection. . . Christ comes within us and we are within Him. It is like what happens to a piece of iron that is placed

in the fire: it becomes all fire and light. Yet, outside of the fire the iron is dark, darkness.”

Hence, to be a true Orthodox Christian we must go far beyond being a moral person, far beyond religion, to embrace wholeheartedly CHRIST, to be in total love with the Incarnate Truth.

We live in the midst of mass apostasy and many of us are survivors from the shipwreck which is Western civilization. As Saint Justin Popovich, that great lover of the God-man, has said of our age:

“Never was there less God in man than today, never less God on earth than today.”

The mystery of iniquity which has been at work among the Heterodox since the Great Schism has brought us to the point where we are now swimming in a sea of lies: lies about the world, about human nature, human origins, our neighbors, our country, and about God Himself.

Perhaps worst of all, we are swimming in a sea of lies about ourselves. We are pushed daily by a narcissistic, nihilistic society to make an idol of ourselves, to live in delusion about who we are, both in terms of our nature and our personal spiritual state.

This brings me to the first step toward forming our children in the love of Truth: seeking and attaining **αυτογνωσία**, or SELF-KNOWLEDGE, without which no true spiritual life can be established. As long as we are in darkness about our own selves, our passions, our weaknesses, and the path which leads out of this state of

un-truth and delusion, we will be powerless to inspire the love of Truth in our children.

Self-knowledge is obtainable, however, only by coming to **Θεογνωσία**, or the knowledge of God. One who sits in the darkness of ignorance of Revelation and has yet to see the great Light of Christ appear in his mind's eye, can never truly come to self-knowledge. He can make progress on the path of truth in ideas and creation, but it will forever remain an external and non-salvific, non-transfiguring knowledge of truth, even if his love of it brings him to the door of initiation into the Mystery of Christ, which is the Church.

It is only by becoming one with the fire of Divinity in the Holy Mysteries of the Church that one can come to the true knowledge of God - and, consequently to the true knowledge of self. Outside the Eucharistic synaxis there is no Church; "there is the rest of humanity being carried to and fro by the prince of this world" to a lesser or greater degree, and "only God can know if there is any salvation" (Romanides, The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius).

Saint Gregory Palamas provides with an essential delineation of the boundaries of truth and of the Church, when he writes:

«Ποῖος κλῆρος, ποία μερίς, τίς γνησιότης πρὸς τὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκκλησίαν τῷ συνηγόρῳ τοῦ ψεύδους; Ἐκκλησίαν ἢ "στύλος καὶ ἐδραῖωμα τῆς ἀληθείας" κατὰ Παῦλον ἐστίν, ἢ καὶ μένει χάριτι Χριστοῦ διηνεκῶς ἀσφαλῆς καὶ ἀκράδαντος, ἐστηριγμένη παγίως οἷς ἐπεστήρικται ἡ ἀλήθεια; **Καὶ γὰρ οἱ τῆς Χριστοῦ ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἀληθείας εἰσὶ· καὶ οἱ μὴ τῆς ἀληθείας ὄντες οὐδέ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκκλησίας εἰσὶ,** [they are of the Church of

Christ who are of the truth, and those who are not of the truth, are not in the Church of Christ] καί τοσοῦτο μάλλον, ὅσον ἄν καί σφῶν αὐτῶν καταφεύδοιντο, ποιμένας καί ἀρχιποιμένας ἱερούς ἑαυτούς καλοῦντες καί ὑπ' ἀλλήλων καλούμενοι· μηδέ γάρ προσώποις τόν Χριστιανισμόν, ἀλλ' ἀληθεία καί ἀκριβεία πίστεως χαρακτηρίζεσθαι μεμυήμεθα». (Ἀγίου Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ. Συγγράμματα Τόμ. Β', σελ. 627)

For St. Gregory it is clear that “being of the truth” refers to the Hypostatic, Incarnate Truth, that is communion in the Mysteries and confession of the Faith, and not simply holding true doctrines or expressing the truth in the realm of ideas. It is BOTH/AND, as always.

So, in so far as we swim in the noetic sea of lies, exchanging and retaining them within us, or are victims of them due to our ignorance and indifference to Truth, we are voluntarily or involuntarily working for the enemy of our salvation, the father of lies, of whom Christ said:

“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

On the contrary, the number one characteristic of a Christian is abiding mysteriologically in the Truth; speaking the truth as an expression of Him Who dwells within us; having a clear vision of the Truth, having discernment of the spirits: understanding not only who God is, but who we are and what is going on in us, around us, and in the world of ideas.

Thus, it should be clear that the first and most important step we can take in becoming fountains of “truth-loving” for our children is to go deeper in αυτογνωσία - unveiling the truth about ourselves - and Θεογνωσία - knowing the Hypostatic or Person of Truth, Christ, mysteriologically, experientially.

Perhaps it would be helpful to make the following distinction. We could say that Truth is manifested to us in two different ways. One could say that there is Truth with a capital T and truth with a lower case t:

- 1) Truth with a capital is, of course, Christ Himself
- 2) Truth with a lower case t is that in creation and the realm of ideas.
 - A. We could say that the first is Truth on the Vertical Plane
 - B. And the second is Truth on a Horizontal Plane

Truth, as a Person, Who is God, is one, and thus both expressions of Truth are essential and inseparable, just like the two bars on a cross.

Saint Justin Popovich writes the following with regard to Truth as a Person:

“In Christianity **truth is** not a philosophical concept nor is it a theory, a teaching, or a system, but rather, it is **the living theanthropic hypostasis—the historical Jesus Christ** (John 14:6). Before Christ men could only conjecture about the Truth since they did not possess it. With Christ as the

incarnate divine Logos the eternally complete divine **Truth enters into the world**. For this reason the Gospel says: “*Truth came by Jesus Christ*” (John 1:17).”

And elsewhere:

For all of [the Holy Fathers] there is but **one Truth**, one Transcendent Truth: the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, the holy ecumenical councils, **from the first to the last, confess, defend, believe, announce, and vigilantly preserve but a single supreme value: the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Loving and knowing the first: Truth as a Person, enables one to know the second, truth in the realm of ideas. Loving and knowing the second, truth in ideas, leads one ever closer to the first, Truth as a Person, Christ the Incarnate Logos.

How do we know if we love Truth as a Person, Christ Himself? We live *in Him*. We acquire His mind.

St. Paul: The truth of Christ is *in* me, it dwells IN me:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, **but Christ liveth in me**: [ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, **ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός**] and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me

Likewise, when the Lord speaks of confessing Him before men, He speaks of confessing IN Him:

**πᾶς ὃς ἂν ὁμολογήσῃ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν
ἀνθρώπων,**

And when He speaks of the Son of Man confessing the confessor of Him in heaven, He speaks of confessing IN him before the angels of God:

**καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁμολογήσει ἐν αὐτῷ
ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ θεοῦ .**

Whereas, when he speaks of those who deny Him, he simply says, the one who denies me:

**ὁ δὲ ἀρνησάμενός με ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀνθρώπων
ἀπαρνηθήσεται ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ θεοῦ.**

Obviously, then, to confess the Lord is an INTERNAL event, a mystery of theanthropic unity, of the Incarnation, where .

We love Christ and we acquire Him Who is Truth.

As St. Seraphim of Sarov says:

Acquire the Spirit and a thousand around you will be saved.

But the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and the Lord Himself said “I am the Truth.”

Christ said before Pilate:

To this end was I born, and **for this cause** came I into the world, that I should **bear witness unto the truth.**
Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Here is the reason for the Incarnation: to witness to the Truth, to witness to Himself; to make God known to man, that he might have COMMUNION with/in God.

“Every one that is **OF THE TRUTH** heareth my voice...”

So in this second part is illustrated the **inter-relationship** of Truth as a Person and truth in our daily lives, in ideas and relationships.

THIS IS KEY: Christ came to set us free by giving us to know the Truth. Thus, being a Christian is NOT defined by becoming a good moral person only, or by performing acts of religion, or by carrying out acts of charity. These are all fruits of a life in Christ, but the defining characteristic of being a Christian is being IN and expressing the Truth; LOVING the Truth, loving Christ and being *of the truth* in all things.

A sure sign that we love Christ is that we have *acquired His mind*. The Apostle says these extraordinary words:

“We have the mind of Christ.”

*τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου, ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν; ἡμεῖς
δὲ νοῦν χριστοῦ ἔχομεν*

Nous not Dianoia: So, the “mind” of Christ here refers not to the rational intellect but to the nous, which the Apostle elsewhere refers to as “our spirit”:

*The Spirit itself beareth witness with **our spirit**, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:6)*

And:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? (1 Cor. 2:11).

Therefore, to “have the mind of Christ” is not an intellectual but a spiritual state in which the eye of the soul, the *nous*, is lucid, communing with the Spirit of God, filled with The Light of God, knowing the reasons of beings and discerning the spirits; being of, and witnessing to, **the truth** of all things.

It is clear here that the man of the Spirit who has the Nous of Christ is not a rationalist. The Apostle refers to a man bereft of the Spirit of God as a “ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος,” translated as “the natural man”:

But the **natural man** (ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

The Rationalist does not hear the preaching of repentance, which calls for not a change of his *dianoia* or mind, but a change of his nous or spirit:

Μετανοεῖτε γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἤγγικεν.

The Lord is not calling us to change the way we think - that will happen of a course - but first of all to change our spiritual stance and orientation, to enlarge our hearts so that the Hypostatic, Incarnate Truth, Who is the Kingdom of Heaven, can establish His Spiritual Reign within.

The rationalist, the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος, the category in which most people fall today, does not receive the call to repentance and the things of the Spirit because he has exalted his διάνοια or mind above his νοῦς or spirit, thus closing off the path to spiritual life. In a word, he does not live in the realm of true life, of reality, and thus has no humility, which is another way of saying does not recognize the truth of things. [*A note about why movies and fiction often do not encourage the love of truth.*]

Knowing this should help us to better encounter our selves, our spouses and most of all our children, who are immersed in a sea of

rationalism. Countering their refusal to embrace the things of the Spirit with rationalistic arguments succeeds in nothing but to reveal about our lack of spiritual understanding. As the Apostle said, the things of the Spirit “are foolishness unto them: neither can they know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Can one be inspired to nail the rational man to the Cross of Love when he has supplanted the Crucified One with himself? If our children do not first taste of the fruits of the love of Truth, offered lovingly to them at our spiritual table, how can they be expected or inspired to commend themselves and their whole life unto Christ our God? The rationalist is insecure and we are expecting him to step off a cliff and trust that which is mind’s eye has yet to discern: the spiritual realm. There is a security and peace, false and delusional thought it be, in the “natural man’s” clinging to earthly life.

To have the mind of Christ, then, one will be speaking and witnessing to the Truth, able *to discern the spirits*. It is here that, as Fr. Seraphim Rose once wrote, the difference between Orthodoxy and heterodoxy is most apparent, namely, that the Orthodox Church (in Her Saints) is able to discern the spirits. This discernment of the methods of the fallen spirits is, in fact, a requirement in the formation of Christology and Ecclesiology. As the Evangelist John writes, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

Insomuch, therefore, as one has reoriented his spirit to receive the Dayspring of the Orient, and has been purified from the passions and illumined by the Spirit of God, so much so is his spiritual vision open

and discernment acquired. This great gift of discernment - separating the wheat from the chaff, the lie from the truth - presupposes initiation into the death, resurrection and life of Christ which is lived within His Body, the Church. That few Orthodox Christians possess a good measure of this gift is a testament to the inroads of the spirit of anti-Christ, which, by another name, is secularism. The end of the worldly spirit is the denial of the theanthropic nature of the Christ and His Body, “the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” before the ascent of the man of iniquity, the Antichrist. This temptation is coming upon the world primarily through the spread of the ecclesiological heresy known as ecumenism.

The dearth of the discernment among men is a sign of the times, to be sure, but it is also an opportunity for all Orthodox Christians to speak truth in the realm of ideas, in society, and lead many toward Truth as a Person, to Christ Himself. Our children rejoice in seeing their parents love the Truth more than security, risking the status quo for the *statu patriae*, the heavenly state.

Saint Paisios of the Holy Mountain:

“In former times, if a pious Christian was involved in public life, he probably wasn’t too well. They would have considered him crazy. Today, it is the opposite. If a pious person isn’t concerned and pained by the way things are in the world, he is the one who has lost his mind.”

Two points:

1. Today's leaders are out to destroy the Church, the family, the youth. You can't trust them, you can't leave matters to them as if they are benevolent and working for our good.
2. The Elder sees witnessing to truth in society as a form of confession of our faith in Christ, of **an expression of our love**.

Elsewhere he says the following:

“Too many Christians don't want to take on and remove an evil in society, so as to maintain their peace and quiet, the status quo. This means that they have no love. But, later we these same people working hard for their own interests. That is why a certain spirit reigns today: with so-and-so we need to have good relations, so he will say good things about us, with others we need to have it good so he doesn't drag us throw the mud, and so on. And others keep silent, they don't talk, for fear they will write about them in the newspapers, etc.”

Notice here that the elder equates silence before iniquity in society as lack of love. How different that is from the prevailing view of love in our society, which speaks of love only in romantic or fleshly terms (and they usually mean self-love).

Here love means love of the brethren, love of the truth, and sacrifice for them and for Christ.

This means that our love of Christ, of Truth of a Person, cannot mean that we are indifferent to truth in ideas and actions, in society. Just the *opposite* is the case. When we are pain and suffer for the lack of truth in society, then we are approaching Truth as Person.

The lover of Truth as a Person, of our Lord, is all the more concerned with truth in the realm of ideas, with the fate of his brethren mired in the muck of delusion, all the more ready to speak a *prophetic* word to the world.

We cannot be indifferent to questions of our day, to the questions of truth on the horizontal plane, and think that we love *Truth* as a Person, Christ Himself.

The words of the Apostle John are clear:

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (I Jn. 4:20).

So, just as one cannot claim to love his brother when he stands indifferent to him as he stands hungry or naked, so too, and even much more, one cannot claim to love his brother and yet be indifferent to him as he is fed lies and is bereft of the Truth.

Christ Himself said that He was sent:

“to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Lk. 4:18; Isaiah 61:1).

Here He is clearly not speaking only about political liberties; he is speaking primarily about spiritual liberation.

If we are to be His disciples, and He is to dwell within us, then we must imitate Him in this deliverance from spiritual captivity.

Everywhere people are held captive today in the realm of ideas, blind to the truth, and enslaved. This slavery, this blindness, on the horizontal plane, makes it nearly impossible for them to know truth on vertical plane - to draw near to Christ.

The Church - you and I - must stand and speak truth to them with boldness and in a prophetic way. If the Church ceases to be prophetic in this world, it ceases to carry out its mission; ceases to be the Church and loses its ring of authenticity, which is most precious to the children.

This boldness will inevitably mean - as Saint Paisios says - that many will feel uneasy, whether among the believers or the heterodox, but this is a “good uneasiness.” This is a *necessary*, a *beneficial* uneasiness, which awakens the conscience and brings the soul to salvific knowledge. For many of our children this is going to be the first step on the path of loving the truth. It will be painful it will be salvific.

In speaking of the last times, the Apostle Paul gives us the very instructive and revealing teaching to guide us. He says:

The spirit of delusion works with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of Truth, that they might be saved (1 Thess. 2:10).

Clearly, the Apostle has the love of truth as the criterion of salvation, of our salvation, in the Church. In the kingdom of lies, in which we all live today, the love of truth is the key to heaven.

THE END.

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