



The teaching of Christ is one and the same for nuns, monks, hermits, priests, and laymen

Genesis 1

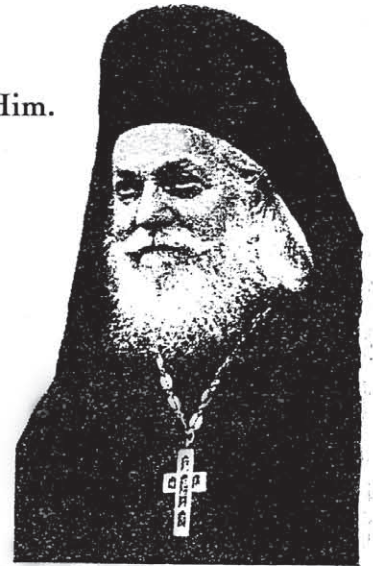
27 So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

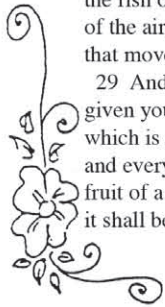
29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.



We are all one and the same in Him.

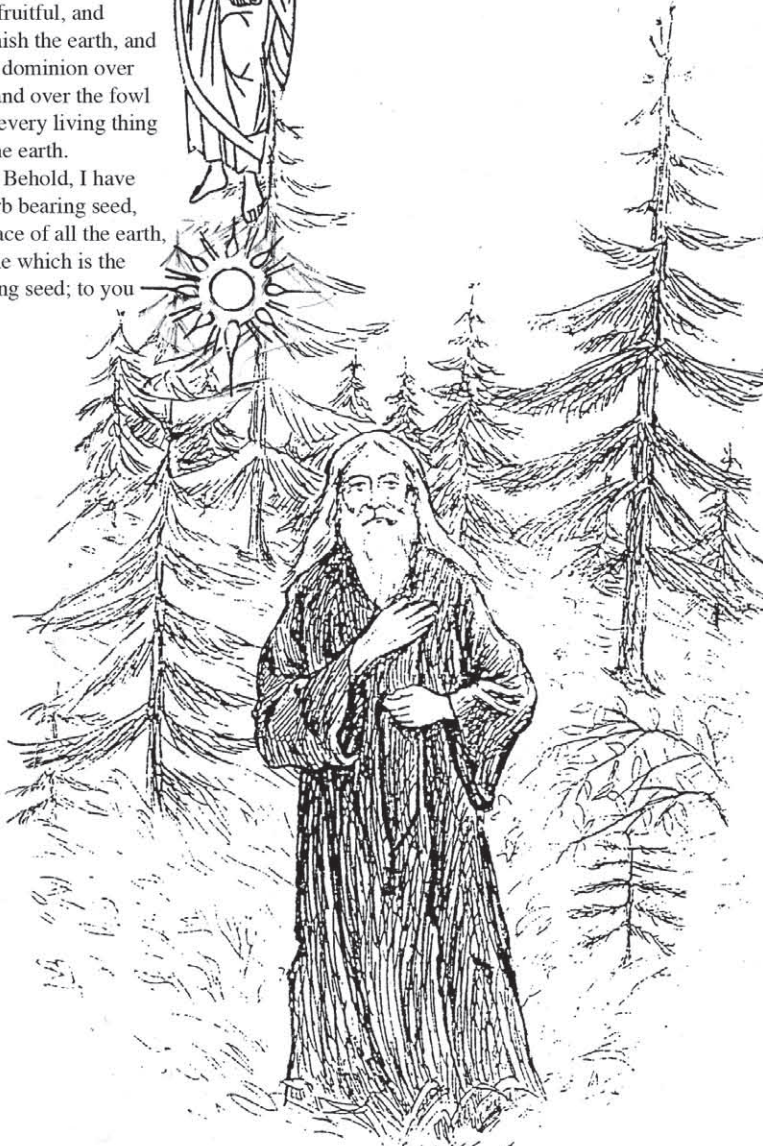


Fr. Theodulus Varzare of Agapia Convent (1899-1981).



from "The life of Antonios" by Athanasios of Alexandria, p. 50

"His food consisted of bread and salt, and he drank only water. Meat and wine is unnecessary even mentioning since such things was not to find by the other masters either."



The gospel of St. John 6

²⁷Do not work for the food that spoils but for the food that lasts to life eternal, such as the Son of Man will furnish you; for God the Father has placed His seal of approval on Him."

²⁸Then they said to Him, "What should we do to accomplish the works of God?" ²⁹Jesus replied, "This is God's work, that you believe in Him whom He sent."³⁰They then said to Him, "What sign then will You work, so that we may see and believe You; what work will You do?" ³¹Our ancestors ate manna in the desert as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'³²Then Jesus said to them, "Truly I assure you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the real, heavenly food; ³³for what comes down from heaven and furnishes life to the world, that is the Bread of God."

³⁴Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread all the time."³⁵Jesus replied, "I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me will never hunger and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

BISHOP IOAN, DESERT-DWELLER OF THE AGAPIA MOUNTAINS OF MOLDAVIA

see text below about the importance of the food for the true christian



While our Lord Jesus was teaching among us people on earth he accepted our habits concerning for example food. He said for instance that what man eats goes in through the mouth and comes out in the privy, but the evil that comes out through the mouth comes from the heart. But how did it come there? Does our food affect even our hearts and in that way also our condition of the soul? If not the holy times of fasting of church would be useless!

Everything we eat and take part in through our senses affects our inner life somehow. About this we read and learn from the holy fathers and mothers of the early church. This is why church order fasting, not to return to worldly feasting as soon as possible, but to come closer to a conscious experience of, and surrendering to Him, whom we are baptized to be an expression of, Lord Jesus Christ, God's image in our hearts.

Greetings from Simon in Christ

From "the Orthodox Word" no. 162, page 48.

Teaching from the Bishop Ioan, hermit and hesychast* in the mountains at the Agaia monestary in Moldavia.

About the importance of the food for the true christian

In the Karpat Mountains in Moldavia bishop Ioan lived around the 1940's, as a hermit. Father Theodulus, who was confessor at the Agapia monestary at that time, met this hermit some times up among the mountains, when wandering on the path between the Agapia and the Sihastria monasteries. His stories about his meetings with the bishop and hermit, is to read in the book "Spiritual conversations with Romanian Elders".

In one of these conversations father Ioan was teaching among other things about the vital importance of food for the true practising christian.

This is how the great hesychast* give the food different kinds of qualities;

A. *Carnivores*, who always eat meat. These are in the lowest degree of fasting, even if they sometimes restrain themselves from food. They are never able to advance in prayer.

B. *Lacto-vegetarians*, who never eat meat, but only milk, cheese, eggs, and all kinds of boiled vegetables. These are in the second degree of fasting, which is kept by monks in coenobitic monasteries and, very rarely by laymen.

C. *Vegetarians*, who eat only vegetables and boiled or raw legumes. This arrangement forms the third degree of fasting, and the most zealous monks of the common life keep it.

From here on begin the strictest degrees of fasting, which are usually kept by hesychast monks and the most ascetic desert-dwellers.

D. *Fruit-eaters*, who eat bread and uncooked fruits once a day, without otherwise ever tasting food. He who attains this degree of fasting is able to master his body and thoughts without difficulty and can advance rapidly on the path of prayer.

E. *Cereal-eaters* comprise the fifth degree of fasting. To this degree belong monks – especially hesychasts* and desert-dwellers – who eat once a day only black bread, cereals, and soaked grains of wheat, corn, millet, lentils, beans, peas, etc.

F. *Dry food* is the sixth degree of monastic fasting, which is usually attained only by the most zealous desert-dwellers. Those who live in this harsh asceticism eat only dried bread soaked in water, with salt or a little vinegar, once a day and by measure. This is how the hesychasts of the Nile valley lived.

G. *Divine food or manna* is the last and highest degree of monastic fasting, which is attained by very few ascetics after prolonged asceticism, being strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit. These are satisfied with the Most Pure Mysteries alone, that is, with the Body and Blood of Christ, which they receive once or twice a week, without tasting anything else but water only. After difficult temptation and asceticism, and by the grace of God, I have come to be satisfied with the Most Pure Mysteries alone, and no longer feel hunger, or have need of bread and vegetables. "The Lord takes care of me, I feel neither the cold of winter, nor the intense heat of the sun, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor any other earthly need."

Father Theodulus continues; "I noticed then that this great hesychast* did not want to talk long, so as not to interrupted the Jesus Prayer which he had in his mind and heart, I thanked him from my heart for the counsels and profitable words he had given me. I made a prostration to him, kissed his hand and asked his blessing to leave. And the holy Bishop Ioan blessed me with the sign of the holy cross and said to me: "May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you and forgive me".



* The inner continous Jesus Prayer is characteristic of the hesychast (from Greek *hesyikia*, state of piece, resting in God) spiritual activity of the eastern piety and mystery.



Revelation 2

¹⁷ "Whoever has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the victor I shall give some of the hidden manna..."



"The Fathers, being kindled spiritually, naturally did not need much of material food with calories. Their usual food was nuts, dried fruit and honey. They never ate meat, eggs, milk, butter or cheese, nor food cooked with oil...and they were very healthy.

Even for Easter instead of eggs they boiled potatoes and dyed them red."

From "Elder Hadji-Georgis The Athonite 1809-1886"



Elder Hadji-Georgi

Athos, Greece

