

St Tikhon Con't

himself a third time.

Almost a million people came to say farewell to the Patriarch. The large cathedral of the Donskoy Monastery in Moscow could not contain the crowd, which overflowed the monastery property into the square and adjacent streets. Saint Tikhon, the eleventh Patriarch of Moscow, was primate of the Russian Church for seven and a half years.

On September 26/October 9, 1989, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church glorified Patriarch Tikhon and numbered him among the saints. For nearly seventy years, Saint Tikhon's relics were believed lost, but in February 1992, they were discovered in a concealed place in the Donskoy Monastery.

It would be difficult to imagine the Russian Orthodox Church without Patriarch Tikhon during those years. He did so much for the Church and for the strengthening of the Faith itself during those difficult years of trial. Perhaps the saint's own words can best sum up his life: "May God teach every one of us to strive for His truth, and for the good of the Holy Church, rather than something for our own sake."

Question:

Every time I say I don't worry about anything because my Lord is in control, people tell me that it's not true, because God gives us the intelligence to choose right from wrong! And since He gives us the intelligence and rules to follow, then He must be in control of our choices. So why does He allow us to make bad choices that eventually harm us?

Answer:

You said it very nicely that God gives us free will to make choices. You are also right that God is in control. However, just because God is in control and is capable of dictating our

choices, out of His extreme love for us, God chooses instead to allow us to make our own choices. And to help us make the right choices God provides us with the tools that we need to ensure that our choices are good for our soul.

Through His Holy Church, God provides us with (rather makes available for us if we choose to accept them) all that we need, to understand what our choices are, and their respective consequences. He is also continuously sharpening our skills. To that end, God may even allow evil to enter our life as a way to strengthen and discipline us (the Old Testament story of Job is an example).

By the very definition of "choice," once others dictate how we choose, there is no longer choice or free will; and that goes contrary to God's plan for mankind. That's why God never interferes with man's free will. Twentieth century Russian Theologian Vladimir Lossky explains that "God becomes powerless before human freedom; He cannot violate it since it flows from His own omnipotence."

May God give us all that we need to do good in the face of adversity: the courage to always choose what is right; the compassion to forgive and seek forgiveness when we fail; the wisdom to be continuously advancing in our knowledge of God; the patience to endure when God allows suffering in our life; and the serenity to accept God's will in all things. Amen.

Metropolitan Tikhon Issues Statement on the Tragedy in Las Vegas

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, issued the following statement in response to the tragic events in Las Vegas last night. The statement reads:

"On behalf of the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, we offer sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the mass shooting in Las Vegas. It always brings great sorrow to hear of such senseless killings in the supposedly civilized world. Our hearts ache for the families and friends of the victims and we offer fervent prayers for the repose of the souls of those whose lives were tragically cut short. We pray for the victims and the grieving families and ask that God send down upon them the spirit of peace and consolation. We also offer thanksgiving for the timely and heroic actions of the first responders. Finally we offer our prayers for the city of Las Vegas and all of those who have been effected by these tragic events. We ask that all Orthodox Christians remember the victims and their families in their prayers."

Luke 7:11-16 (Gospel)

Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people."

Five Steps to Forgiveness

Step One: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." (Eph. 4:26)

Do not go to bed angry. Never allow yourself to fall asleep with the poison of bitterness and hate in your heart. Pray and forgive everyone from your heart, the same way Christ forgave us when we did not deserve it.

Step Two: Erase the negative tape.

Erase the negative tape that you play over and over again in your mind rehearsing and repeating to yourself what people did to you and reminding yourself of the anger and the hate that you have against them. Instead, say in a loud voice to yourself, "With God's help I now forgive so-and-so." Or, "Lord Jesus Christ, help me to forgive those who have sinned against me as you forgave those who crucified you."

Step Three: Pray and bless.

Practice praying for the person who offended you, asking a specific blessing for him or her. Over time, through the sweetness of heartfelt prayer, your attitude will change toward the person.

Step Four: You take the first step.

Take the first step in forgiveness even when you feel that you are the one wronged.

Step Five: Ask for God's power and grace to forgive.

Sometimes forgiving seems impossible. When this is the case, we need to reach out to God in prayer in order to receive his power to forgive. Just ask, and He will give you the power of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will work wonders in your life.

THE PENNY

You always hear the usual stories of pennies on the sidewalk being good luck, gifts from angels, etc. This is the first time I've ever heard this twist on the story. Gives you something to think about...

Several years ago, a friend of mine and her husband were invited to spend the weekend at the husband's employer's home. My friend, Arlene, was nervous about the weekend. The boss was very wealthy, with a fine home on the waterway, and cars costing more than her house.

The first day and evening went well, and Arlene was delighted to have this rare glimpse into how the very wealthy live. The husband's employer was quite generous as a host, and took them to the finest restaurants. Arlene knew she would never have the opportunity to indulge in this kind of extravagance again, so was enjoying herself immensely. As the three of them were about to enter an exclusive restaurant that evening, the boss was walking slightly ahead of Arlene and her husband.

He stopped suddenly, looking down on the pavement for a long, silent moment.

Arlene wondered if she was supposed to pass him. There was nothing on the ground except a single darkened penny that someone had dropped, and a few cigarette butts. Still silent, the man reached down and picked up the penny.

He held it up and smiled, then put it in his pocket as if he had found a great treasure. How absurd! What need did this man have for a single penny? Why would he even take the time to stop and pick it up?

Throughout dinner, the entire scene nagged at her. Finally, she could stand it no longer. She casually mentioned that her daughter once had a coin collection, and asked if the penny he had found had been of some value.

A smile crept across the man's face as he reached into his pocket for the penny and held it out for her to see. She had seen many pennies before! What was the point of this?

"Look at it." He said "Read what it says." She read the words "United States of America".

"No, not that; read further."

"One cent?"

"No, keep reading."

"In God we Trust?"

"Yes!" "And?"

"And if I trust in God, the name of God is holy, even on a coin. Whenever I find a coin I see that inscription. It is written on every single United States coin, but we never seem to notice it! God drops a message right in front of me telling me to trust Him? Who am I to pass it by? When I see a coin, I pray, I stop to see if my trust IS in God at that moment. I pick the coin up as a response to God; that I do trust in Him. For a short time, at least, I cherish it as if it were gold. I think it is God's way of starting a conversation with me. Lucky for me, God is patient and pennies are plentiful!"

When I was out shopping today, I found a penny on the sidewalk. I stopped and picked it up, and realized that I had been worrying and fretting in my mind about things I cannot change. I read the words, "In God We Trust," and had to laugh. Yes, God, I get the message.

It seems that I have been finding an inordinate number of pennies in the last few months, but then, pennies are plentiful! And, God is patient...

