

Professor Father Dr. Dumitru Staniloae (1903-1993)
Romanian Theologian*

Father Dumitru Staniloae went from time to time to the Sihastria Monastery [in Romania]. On one such occasion, in July of 1977, he spoke to the monks in the *monastery* trapeza (refectory), saying, in summary, the following:

“Now, there are some who say that there is no longer monastic life today; but Orthodoxy cannot exist without this necessary way of life. Orthodoxy is not a concept or a science that deals with worldly things, but a decisive personal dedication to the way leading to Christ.

“Committed with the whole of their existence, the monastics on this path are the forerunners of humanity, since these same become, through their struggle, a paradigm of the virtues, without which the world cannot survive.

“Otherwise disaster would befall us! For this reason, the Church has need of as many more monastics as possible, dedicated decisively, with a heroic spirit, to following the path that leads to Jesus, so as to inspire us with the example of their lives, showing us with works that it is possible in our day to tread this path of holiness.

“To fulfill this calling, Christ pours out—like the light of the rising Sun—His divine power through the Holy Spirit, in order to cleanse us from our passions and lift us up to ever higher levels of holiness, that there might be born within us a new man, according to the measure of His fullness.

“This path was shown to us by our Lord Jesus Christ by His obedience unto death. The way of obedience, which was trodden by Christ, is the path to the fulfillment of all of the loftiest levels of virtue. Humility, love, and gentleness, and all of the virtues born of obedience open this way to us. Obedience is a great force: the fullness of freedom in Christ.

“Obedience brings the communal life to fruition through true communion, prayer, fraternal relations, and love. The bond of the spirit is thereby made stronger than that of the body. Only through communion in Christ can we help each other, and this by our love for others and, foremost, by our love of God.

“By way of this communion, the monastic life becomes a paradigm of the fullness of life, a prototype that the whole of the community of the Faithful follows, a heroic and an exemplary life.”

I met with Father Dumitru when he had just been released from prison [the Communist leadership imprisoned him from 1958-1963, sentencing for some time to solitary confinement in barbaric circumstances—*trans.*], and when I asked him give us a word of spiritual counsel, he told us the following:

“Be optimistic, believing without exception, in the providence of God.

“Pray unceasingly, committing yourself to the will of God, thanking Him for all things.

“Rejoice, if the Lord finds you worthy of tribulations. Pain is necessary for him who suffers and for the good estate of the whole world.

“Do not bind yourself to anything that is transient.

“Serve your neighbor with all of your love and devotion; not only with regard to what he needs but even, beyond that, to his every need. Be an example of Christian living.

“In your life be decisive, without compromise or confusion, clear and consistent.

“Make your belief alive within you: life, not theory.

“Are you ready to die for Christ?”

“Always ask yourself what are running after in your life, so as not to drown in the sea of life.”

* This translation is from the Greek text published by the Brotherhood of the Monastery of St. Gregory on the Holy Mountain of Athos, taken from the files of Monk Damaskinos of the same monastery. Taken from the public domain: <anavaseis.blogspot.gr>.