



STANDING I

FALLING IN CHURCH



OUR life as Christians is centered around His Holy Church—His Body—which He provides for our nourishment. We observe in the life of the Apostles and Martyrs, such as Sts. Anicetas and Photius commemorated today, a single-minded determination to keep Christ and His Church as the center of their lives. This is no small achievement, for they, like us, lived in a world that offers many “sensible” and seductive alternatives. However, on the other hand, it is not so difficult at all; for God’s grace is quite near and sustains us. Besides, if we have lived long enough to be able to read these words, we will come to understand the hollowness of the alternatives.

We look to the Church, then, to teach us how to live. We bring Church to every other aspect of life, for “Church” is a way of being. This is, for example, why we look to how we do things in the Church in order to model how we should do things “outside” the Church, for we are never truly outside the Church. For example, *we stand in prayer in Church upright, with our hands to our side, our feet a foot or two apart and we do not cross our hands behind our backs. Our attention is inward, on the Spirit.* This is the posture of attentiveness learned from a hundred generations of Christians. This posture of attentiveness, therefore, should naturally be adopted when we converse with others, not because of a rule, but because we learn what respectful attentiveness is like from how we pray. Similarly, given that one does not cross one’s legs when sitting in church, when, one might ask, would one cross one’s legs while sitting? When is one outside the Church?

The Church, also, can teach us how to fall before Christ. We sing, “*O come let us worship and fall down before Christ, O Son of God...*” in every Divine Liturgy. Our worship is a rhythm of standing in vigil and then falling down in worship before God. We worship nothing other than God. If we fall down before anything else in our life, we replace God with an idol.

The Church can even teach us how to react when we fall away from Christ through sin. One can note that the Psalms are filled with honest confession, but they are not filled with storytelling. King David, their author, is not taking pleasure in recounting his transgressions, he is not telling us a story. Instead, he is confessing before the Lord (Ps. 31:5) because to so do is to acknowledge that with God we cannot do anything. Without God, we end up being consumed by the passions that led us astray.

There is an ethos—an attitude and sensibility—behind everything we do. Whether we stand, fall, eat, pray, or work, everything is done from within the Church, because our Christian ethos is formed, shaped, and completed through the Church. To acquire this ethos, one must look to Christ for all things, not only for help or assistance when one needs it, but for all things. We come to Christ to be transformed, reshaped, and recast. To be molded, a material must be liquid and pliable. Therefore, in humility, we must come to Christ willing to be remolded, for to stand or fall in the Church, is to stand or fall in Christ.

Fr. Daniel

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A PRACTICAL NOTE ABOUT PROSTRATIONS

Normally we reverence the Lord, his House of Worship, and his saints with the sign of the cross and bow, often with the fingers touching the ground. During the four fast periods of the Church (Nativity Fast, Great Lent, Apostles Fast, and Dormition Fast), prostrations with our forehead to the ground replace the bow. However, we never prostrate on the Day of the Lord’s Resurrection (Sunday), even during fast periods. Prostrations are also not allowed: 1) From Nativity through Theophany, 2) From Pascha through Pentecost, 3) On Transfiguration, and 4) on the Exultation of the Cross (except for three prostrations before the Cross). We do prostrate on Sundays if we are venerating the Cross on a feast of the Cross.