BOOK REVIEW
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TITLE: Living in Christ: Essays on the Christian Life by an Orthodox Nun

AUTHOR: Mother Raphaela (Wilkinson)

Mother Raphaela, Abbess of Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery in Otego, New York, presents here a rare and compelling collection of essays on the Christian life. With a firm foundation in Scripture and the Fathers, Mother Raphaela sets out the clear, yet strenuous path of the Christian, especially in relation to today’s society. She stresses the many subtle dangers that are ever-present in the current culture, especially the false, though seductive, notion that one can live a full life in Christ while at the same time strive for the things of this world.

The life in Christ is not a partial decision, but one which embodies the full person; and to be Orthodox is not simply something one does, but who one is. To embark on this narrow and unpaved way, the Christian should expect to enter into a fierce spiritual battle, one which requires great discipline and steadfastness in the faith, but which ultimately will be one’s final and greatest joy, Christ Himself. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

This book is especially good for those considering the monastic life. Mother Raphaela explains in detail the discipline and obedience required of the monastic, and the necessity that the monastic’s only goal be to serve God and his neighbor. She warns against the many enticing, though incorrect, draws to the monastic life. This compilation of essays is also important for lay persons who question the place and function of the Monastery in the Church and society.

While Mother Raphaela focuses on the monastic calling, she does make the point that there is no real higher calling among Christians. All Orthodox are called to give their lives completely over to God, and to renounce all that which separates them from Him. The whole of life is a working out, with the grace of God, of one’s salvation, and sometimes the very incident of being turned away from monastic life may lead a person to an eventual higher calling. She explains that everyone is required to go into a wilderness of sorts. While the monastic separates himself physically from the world, the Christian living in the world must also create a wilderness for himself where he is completely still and alone to hear the word of God.

What is especially sobering about these essays is how unwaveringly they are grounded in reality. There is no argument against the Christian life that is not at least touched upon by Mother Raphaela in this book. Reading them, one is at first overwhelmed with the discovery of what is ultimately required of him, but at the same time understands that there is no alternative for one desiring to live a life in Christ. Here, it is God’s truth unarguably which pours from the pages, and will serve as a guidance and inspiration to all who read them.

Reviewed by Matushka Katherine Gaudreau

Dear Parishioners, if you would like to share with us a book you have read from the parish library, please fill out a “review form” which can be found downstairs in the library.
Orthodox Christianity in the West: the ecumenical challenge JOHN A. JILLIONS Glossary Bibliography Index. Cambridge Collections Online © Cambridge University Press, 2009. Notes on contributors. Sister Nonna Verna Harrison, an Orthodox nun and theologian, is currently Assistant Professor of Church History at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. Her writings include Grace and Human Freedom according to St Gregory of Nyssa () and St Basil the Great on the Human Condition (), as well as scholarly articles in the fields of patristics and Orthodox theology. His writings include Kontakia: On the Life of Christ. St Romanos the Melodist (). Nevertheless, the predominant focus of this book will be on the Orthodox theological tradition as it is understood and lived today. St. John's diary, My Life In Christ, has been called a manual of weapon training for this warfare which every Christian must fight in order to reach the heavenly homeland. In the following excerpts from this diary may be seen not only the emphasis which Saint John placed on true prayer as the greatest weapon of every Christian and his deep understanding of the human soul, but also the very practical aspect of his teaching which is of such value to Christians today. Those who attend the divine service of the Orthodox Church must bear in mind that its purpose is to prepare us for the joyful service of God in heaven; that in serving God with the body, it is still more necessary to serve God with the soul and a pure heart; that in hearing divine service they must learn to serve God as. Your offer must be higher than £100. living.in. VAT 0% Learn more. Total. £0. Send your offer. Your offer must be higher than £100. living.in. VAT 0% Learn more. Total. £0. Send your offer. PSListed by.