

An Admonishment for Catechumens & Neophytes

Part 1

I know everything now. Therefore:

(1) I want spiritual visions now!

(2) Let's go and convert the world now!

Coming into Orthodoxy is not without struggle and temptations. As Fr Seraphim Rose says this is the 'Coca Cola Generation' who want everything now. We don't want the trials and the struggles. We are tested to see whether we are doing it out of pride, and out of a puffed-up ego, or out of genuine love to embrace God. We are tested to see whether we have fantasies that we think we are great Christians or holy Christians...etc.

Many who fall into the 'Crazy Convert' category are full of energy, and raring to go to tell everyone they have found the Truth and that others should also come to this knowledge of the Truth by hook or by crook. But this is crazy convert mentality again. Full of one's own pride and ego, rather than approaching this in a spirit of love and humility.

Rather than approach the faith with humility as basic beginners, we dive into the shallow end of an empty pool just because we are now baptised and think we now know everything. The baptismal waters still wet behind our ears. Typical of the 'Coca Cola Generation' and of the 'Crazy Convert,' as Fr Seraphim Rose says.

We have been brought up wanting everything now. I want to be Orthodox now. I want to be spiritual now. I want to see visions now. As St John of the Ladder says, "Only a fool believes in dreams."

We ignore dreams and visions, because if we fall for them and believe in them, we will become deceived. We take notice of such visions and dreams once that person who has had these dreams has died, and if and when the Church has declared that person a saint. And what happens when we are deceived by these dreams and visions? The Holy Fathers and the Church generally says that such a person becomes extremely proud and disobedient. They become angry because others do not believe their dreams. They become angry because they want to be acknowledged that their visions supposedly come from God. And these people rarely become obedient to the Church but only to their own false opinions and deception.

Our spiritual practices are geared towards sanctity and Heaven, not towards 'experiences' (which can easily be co-opted by less desirable spiritual forces, i.e., the demons). Our spiritual practices are a by-product of this struggle for holiness, and not something that we engineer nor an end in themselves.

If we want to be in the presence of God, we will need lifelong dedication, striving as well as we can in the context we have.

And yet, we have been brought up wanting everything now. "I want to be Orthodox now. I want to be spiritual now. I want to see visions now. I want to fly through the air now. Now that I am Orthodox, I can do all this. Now that I am Orthodox, I am spiritual and my dreams and fantasies and visions are true."

This is utter delusion. Let us not fool ourselves. Let us have humility and discernment and keep vigilant.

The spiritually deluded one may have ideas and temptations and may come out with statements such as, "More bishops and priests should know and understand..." or, "Let's go and convert the world now that we have the truth (and why aren't we doing this already?)...etc. By doing this, we are not confessing the Orthodox Faith, but instead confessing our ego and ignorance. Again, a typical 'Crazy Convert' move, one that is full of anger and pride. Again, this is utter delusion. We have now become the pope of our own opinion. We must be alert. We must discern our thoughts and be vigilant and obedient to the Church and its Holy Tradition.