

Many Years, Master! Elder of One Century

Last Thursday, July 6, 2023, Metropolitan Georges (Khodr), the former Metropolitan of Mount Lebanon, turned one hundred years old—a whole century spent in the striving for repentance, the love of God, and the revival of the Church.

Below is a small anthology of quotations from his charming book *If I Tell the Path of Childhood* (the English translation is called *The Ways of Childhood*). But first, let us read what His Beatitude JOHN X has written about him on the back cover of this book:

Just a few words cannot summarize the story of the master of the word. . .

Georges Khodr is more than a writer and more than a scholar. Before all else, he is a pastor who used well his talents to introduce Christ into the human heart as well as into the intellect.

Born in a multicultural and multi-confessional orbit, he kept a well rooted faith without being hemmed in, either within strict conservatism or within an atmosphere of liberalism.

The Antiochian Church is grateful to this man as he also is grateful to the Church in which God planted him as a child, a youth leader, a priest, an orator, and a pastor of souls.

Well rooted in the tradition like the cedar, and the adopter of an open approach to other religions and confessions, exactly like the cedar extending its branches to all, he can worthily be called the “cedar of the Antiochian Church.”

An Anthology of Quotations from Metropolitan Georges
(with page numbers from the English translation)

“His paradise was not made of flowers. It was a face.” (p. 15)

“My friend’s people were characterized by these indelible features. A flame illuminated their homes. This flame is an icon, nothing in it burns, unless you give it a kiss of betrayal.” (p. 16)

“On one of the most beautiful days of his life, it dawned on my friend that the Church into which he had been born had never fallen captive to verbal sophistication, nor had it been frozen by canons, nor seduced by a carefully arranged rational structure. Through its unifying vision of the elements of existence, the Church makes us sensitive to what God continues to reveal to every creature around us, whether living or inanimate. This vision mainly takes shape through worship and celebration.” (p. 23)

“People are forever wounded by history. Time brings forth one misfortune after another.” (p. 31)

“My friend was irritated to see the West give such importance to humanism as opposed to God. Is humanism of any effect, if God does not make man his resting place? Is there a true God without the human face formed in his image?” (p. 37)

“In submitting to God in obedience, my friend and his companions affirmed their identity and reinforced their freedom. God does not alienate man from his identity. Alienation comes from the passions that man, in his cowardice, considers an integral part of himself.” (p. 37)

“Understanding is not enough to lead people to repent. They never cease to ruminate on their desires, even when they know they are harmful. They fall into the same sins, either out of weakness or enjoyment.” (p. 45)

“Everything here is iconic. Everything invites apophysis. I seek in particular the impassibility of the monks, that peace which comes from the depths and which only compassion—the desire to encourage a visitor, the willingness to help him combat his anguish—may transform into modest speech. Their refreshing words are like a gentle breeze. The monks dislike turmoil and the clamor of loud rhetoric. They

believe in persuasion and the power of direction. Their speech, freighted with meaning, avoids pointless and trivial topics, or anything that might distract or divert them from the contemplation of the Kingdom to which they have consecrated themselves.” (p. 121)

“A believer, above all, is a lovelorn being. The one who loves cannot help but bear witness. But the witness is also a martyr; he must always be ready to give his blood. What do you see in the priests of this generation? Should we speak of mercenaries? Should we not think of their churches as “dens of thieves”? If the Lord were to return in our day, would he prove to be even more severe than he was with merchants in the Temple of Jerusalem?” (pp. 123–24)

“I go into seclusion a few times a year with my elder because I am afraid of being locked inside my own ideas, desires, and dreams, which may be nothing more than suggestions of the evil one. I do not seek to negate my reason, but rather to restore it to its proper dimensions.” (p. 127)

(The English translation, [*The Ways of Childhood*](#), is available from St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.)