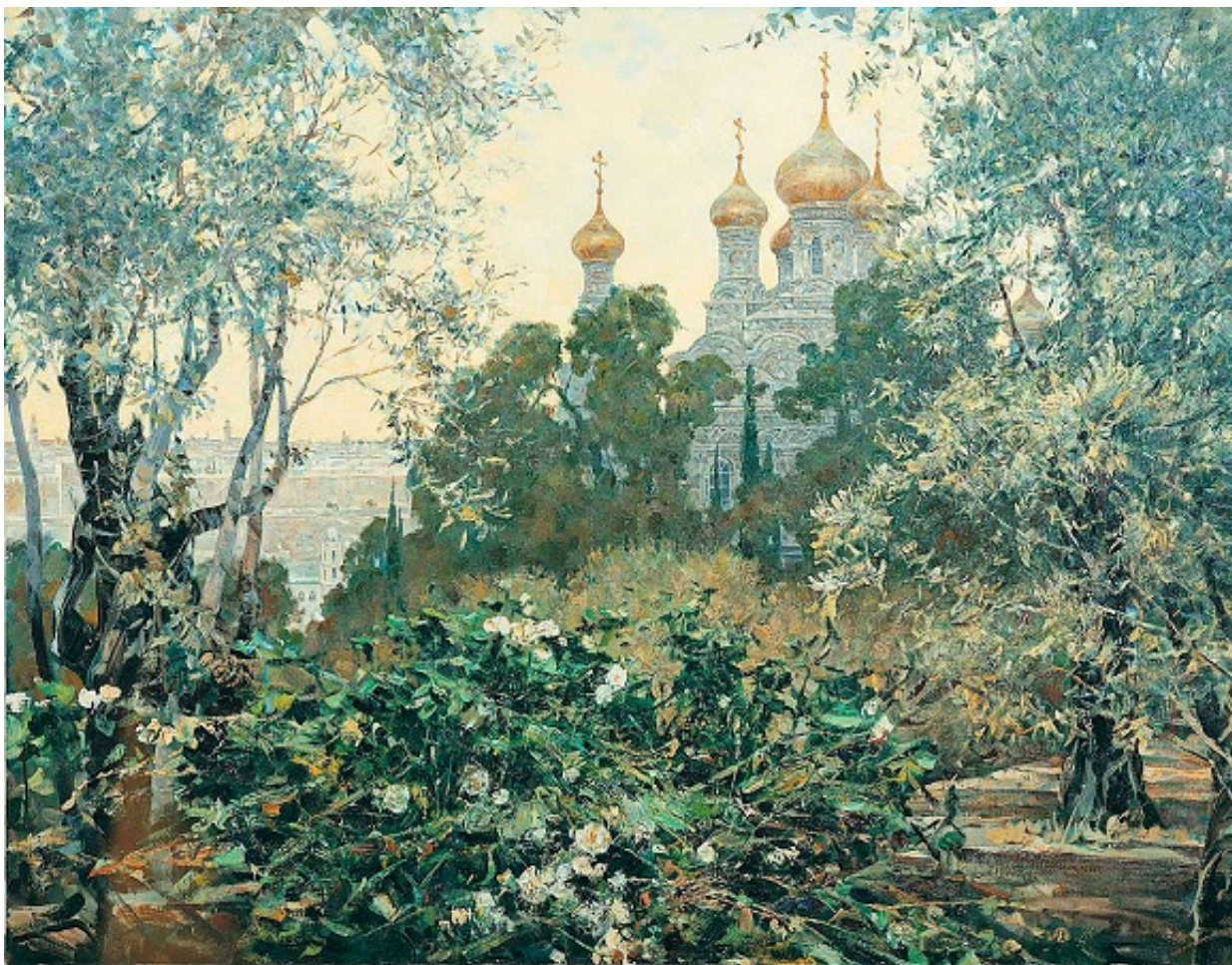




A Vacation... From Orthodoxy?

Summer is here. More and more parishioners are approaching me with the request: “Batiushka, bless me to go on vacation.” Following this request, as a rule, come a great many questions about how to combine rest with our faith.

When replying to the majority of these questions, I take a personal approach. The personalities, situations, and state of health of my parishioners vary a great deal. Nonetheless, there are some principles and frequently asked questions that are worth talking about in general, in the hope of making life easier for those going on vacation.



Taking a rest is not only permissible, but necessary. Ideally, our rest from the vanity of this world should consist of prayer and communion with God. We need a vacation from whatever we consider work. When prayer is a joy, when fasting has become as habitual as breathing, and when we wait impatiently all year to go on pilgrimage, then the question of the compatibility of vacationing and faith simply does not come up – and no rest from faith is required.

The reality is that a certain portion of our spiritual lives is taken up by labor and discipline. Everyone has his own boundary between spiritual joy and ascetic struggle. Therefore, advice should be offered primarily on an individual basis.



But some general principles remain in place. Most often, when running into difficulties, we approach a priest for advice on how to fit our faith into our coming break. But what if we were to try to do the opposite? What if we were to try to plan our vacation while taking into account the possibility of observing the fast; to try to arrange going to a less crowded part of the beach – where, incidentally, the water might be cleaner? If that is not possible, then one can go to the sea mornings and evenings, which is good not only for the sake of chastity, but also for tanning safely.

As for bars and nightclubs, no one is dragging us there. It is up to us to decide what to do. Here common sense can come to our aid. After all, we use it so successfully in thinking up a host of excuses and pretexts for disregarding the commandments.

However, there is still a whole series of specific questions. How should one perform one's prayer rule? Should one lessen the fast? How extravagant can one be with one's spending while on vacation? The general principle is that one should avoid taking breaks from one's spiritual life. A weakening of spiritual effort can lead to laziness and unfaithfulness in the future. However, everything here is individual and dependant upon the degree of one's churching. These questions should be discussed personally with one's spiritual father or with the priest to whom we regularly confess.

Approached in a reasonable fashion and with a strong determination, our usual (non-pilgrimage) holiday can stop being an occasion for compromise with Orthodoxy and simply become a way to strengthen us in our labor and our prayer.

Translated from [the Russian](#)