

To Our Readers

The collective weaving of Orthodoxy's cultural fabric is an important theme of this second issue of *THE WHEEL*. Articles in this volume consider how the richness of our faith is deepened through shared narratives and communal expressions of creativity and how these practices contribute to every aspect of Christian life, from our ethical frameworks to our liturgical life. As we explore the literary and cultural deposits of the Church, it is revealed to us how change, mercy, and vulnerability are all central to the fulfillment the promise of God.

Too often, Orthodoxy is confused with static rigorism. Many of the following articles underscore how change and cultural diversity, rather than being in opposition to the tradition of the Church, are instead essential to its revelation and fulfillment. Similarly, the transgression of socially accepted boundaries may in fact be a means toward reconstituting a covenant with God that has been broken by human sinfulness and ossification, insofar as such transgression often reveals hidden mercies that lie in the cracks made in otherwise rigid systems.

The personal and spiritual vulnerabilities that get uncovered by change, diversity, and boundary transgression, while often uncomfortable and unnerving, are critically necessary for creating an openness to God. Such an openness is revealed most completely in the liturgical life of the Church, which offers the faithful a communal experience of transcendence that bridges the gulf between heaven and earth, endeavoring a passage that forges God's community of saints. This community exists as a living and authentic reality in the rich heterogeneity of its past and in the vibrant multiplicity of its present, while being open to the unexpected possibilities of its future. Accordingly, in exploring the complex and vital reality of Orthodox tradition, the present issue of *THE WHEEL* looks forward to the ways in which the Church, in all of its great variety, may continue to build itself as the Body of Christ. ✱