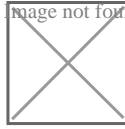


## Stability of Place (Abbot Tryphon)

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*Car Packed to Move*

An Elder said: Just as a tree cannot bear fruit if it is often transplanted, so neither can a monk bear fruit if he frequently changes his abode.

In an age when people change addresses as often as those in past generations changed their socks, stability of place is almost unheard of. When I was a young man I moved from city to city quite often. One year alone I lived in New York City, Berkeley, California and Portland, Oregon. If I hated a job, I'd move. If my social life was on the rocks, I'd move. Reinventing myself in a new location became the norm. In my attempt to discover my place in this world, I couldn't stay in one place for very long.

As I grew older and wiser, I realized that the issues which needed to be dealt with had been avoided with each move. If I was ever to grow psychologically and spiritually, I needed to put down roots.

In Orthodox monasticism there are four vows: poverty, chastity, obedience and stability of place. Monks from the very beginning of monasticism realized that

spiritual growth was not possible without struggle and a good way to avoid change was to move from place to place. If you are living with others who know your weaknesses, it is not easy to avoid change. Frequently moving from one job to another, one relationship to another, one neighborhood to another, or one city to another, is a sure way to avoid spiritual growth.

Many marriages end in divorce because the couples lacked the necessary stability of place which would have allowed them to confront those issues that needed to be changed. Moving from one parish to another is also a way many people avoid maturing in their faith. Moving from one church to another is just as destructive to the spiritual life as moving from city to city. Avoidance is the enemy of change.

Stick with the priest or confessor who really knows you. Spiritual transformation takes time and changing confessors inhibits growth, since you waste time letting the new priest get to know you. You wouldn't consider changing medical doctors every few years, not when your doctor knows your health history and is watching out for changes in your body that need attention. How much more the soul needs the guidance of a priest who really knows us, having established a relationship of trust. We all need the guidance of one who doesn't allow us to avoid working on that which inhibits growth in our relationship with God.

Stability can be for us the vehicle by which we are able to confront the habits, sins and vices that inhibit God from transforming our lives and making us whole. Constant movement allows us to hide from ourselves.

*By Fr. Tryphon, Abbot of All-Merciful Savior Monastery*

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