

## Orthodox driving

In these days when “road rage” seems to be such a problem, it might do us some good to think about our own attitudes when we drive. As in all other aspects of life, we are not responsible for the behaviour of others, but we are responsible for ours, and driving in traffic is not too unlike every other human interchange. Nevertheless, driving, somehow, seems to be able to release in us certain behaviours we otherwise do not manifest, and the most notable of these is, of course, anger.

Since we tend to be alone in driving, we can have some opportunities to look at ourselves and ask ourselves why we react in one way or another, and whether it does or does not conform to behaviour expected of a Christian, especially an Orthodox Christian, in the light of the Gospel and our experience of the Saviour. And if we are reacting angrily at such times, we might not be surprised to find that it usually is because we are angry about something else; or that, as is so often the case, we have not forgiven someone somehow, and we are consciously or not consciously holding a grudge. Perhaps, in the solitude of the automobile, we have opportunities to see our symptoms, and prayerfully come to a better self-understanding, opening the door to our own ability to forgive, and to be healed in heart.

Recently, I read a parish bulletin which reproduced a report about the Diocese of Voronezh-Lipetsk in Russia. Here, the youth department has involved itself in auto driving schools, and introduces the background of Christian morality into the relationship between drivers and pedestrians, and promotes mutual respect among persons. It also warns against taking God’s protection and the work of guardian angels for granted. As it is reported, and as I have myself seen, in Russia and in Ukraine, already a large number of drivers have both icons and prayers on their dash-boards or visors, and many people have their vehicles of all sorts blessed.

For the aid of all, the Voronezh-Lipetsk diocese provides a series of “ten commandments” for drivers, which is offered here, since it is so practical:

1. Always begin a trip with prayer. For Orthodox believers, any business begins with prayer. We have a special prayer in which drivers ask the Lord to preserve them “from the evil spirit of recklessness, from inattention and carelessness, and from the destructive passion of drunkenness,” so as to return “whole and serene.”
2. Remember that alcohol in the system [and certain drugs] will lead to sad consequences for both person and machine.
3. Never try to shorten the time of a trip. If you started out late, you will arrive late. This commandment can be stated more briefly: never increase speed.
4. Give a wave of thanks to a driver who makes way for you.

5. Apologize to a driver whom you have interfered with, even when you did not intend to. After all, when we are walking, and bump someone, we apologize without thinking. So, why should there be a different ethic behind the wheel?
6. Always yield way to someone who is in a great hurry, or is acting aggressively. If you do not yield, he will still pass you, and create a more dangerous situation.
7. Drive a car in such a way that you will be genuinely happy if a police car appears.
8. Stay as far away as possible from cars that have traces of accidents.
9. Never speed up when another driver tries to pass you, or to get into your lane. Even if there is no fine for this, a believer, and a simply conscientious person, never should act like that. What is the motive for it-ambition, pride? Do not treat your neighbour in a way you do not want to be treated.
10. After every trip, thank God for its safe completion. Be thankful after any trip, and not just a successful one. After all, almost always it could have been worse!