

## **“God, Where is the Wound?”**

A Review by Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

(*God, Where is the Wound?* by Sister Siluana Vlad, Sebastian Publishing, 2022)

Mother Siluana is a radiant face – an illumined person. She is a witness to our times of what divine grace does in those who allow it to dwell within them—when that grace encounters a person open to both human beings and the knowledge of their era, discerning wisely what is good to receive.

Mother Siluana was born during the Second World War, in 1944. In her youth, she experienced deep suffering caused by the lack of meaning in life, and the emptiness and dryness of the soul. She sought to confront this void. After discovering Christ, she experienced the work of divine grace through prayer and self-knowledge. She became certain that He had accompanied her in her pain, waited for her, forgiven her, and—most importantly—loved her with an infinite love. She consecrated her life to Him, striving to love Him passionately and limitlessly with all her heart.

Her wounded heart, healed by the grace of faith, found great consolation in the writings of St. Silouan the Athonite. Metropolitan Theophan of Moldavia and Bukovina, Romania, said of her: “Saint Silouan offered her the image of true prayer, the icon of the love of God and neighbor, and the strength to rise from the hell of despair.”

She studied philosophy and taught it for a year, after which she engaged in social work among youth. In 1999, she entered a period of monastic discernment while continuing her charitable and social efforts, focusing especially on street children and offering spiritual guidance to young people.

She was tonsured a nun in 2001 and, with the blessing of Metropolitan Theophan, she founded the Center of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel for Formation and Counseling, serving as its coordinator. In 2008, she moved with the center to the city of Iași and, together with several nuns, founded the Monastery of St. Silouan the Athonite in Iași, Romania.

She gave important lectures at many conferences and workshops in Romania and abroad, addressing topics such as relationships among youth, stages of love, family

and contemporary society, the causes of depression in modern man, self-knowledge, the spiritual life, etc. She reposed in the Lord in 2021.

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Her explanations of Christian anthropology are profoundly attractive. Readers discover with amazement, through her precise descriptions of psychological experience, how deeply they relate to her insights. She uses concepts from modern science to make it easier to understand the common human experiences with which every reader can identify.

She distinguishes between *life as mere survival* and *life as a gift from God*. The life for which God created us becomes possible only when we open ourselves to His grace through prayer and the keeping of His commandments. She gives great importance to discovering God as a living Person, active in every moment of the soul and life of Orthodox Christians. She writes, “God is enamored of us.”

Her book *God, Where is the Wound?* contains the texts of three conferences she delivered in Germany in 2012. In this work, she addresses the common difficulties modern people face in their relationship with God: what prevents them from receiving or even desiring divine grace, what preserves that grace once received, and how it operates within us. She addresses anxiety, stress, depression, trauma, suicide, relationships, sexuality, and the consequences of inherited family traumas that remain unresolved.

She speaks of the effect of deep-seated trauma stored in the subconscious, noting that some philosophies suggest avoiding or ignoring it. She explains that the thoughts emerging from repressed wounds *poison the soul*. Therefore, “we must pay attention to them, to what lies beneath them, to what we feel through them—and we must offer them to the Lord for healing.” She calls this offering to God “the body of prayer.”

She writes:

“Emotions are the fire, and thoughts are the logs—the combustible material. Let us note that the devil does not attack us through our emotions. Sin does not enter us through sadness, fear, hatred, or pride expressed as feelings. These are the energies

of a sick soul, bursting forth from our fallen nature, beyond the control of our will. Sin enters through evil thoughts that promise deliverance from the pain caused by those feelings—thoughts that lead us to the Evil One, to evil words, and to destructive actions.”

She continues:

“There is addiction to negative emotions just as there is addiction to alcohol; therefore, healing is difficult.” (p.93)

And she adds:

“What matters to me is the pain of the person before me. When I come into contact with another’s pain, I can transform it into the ‘body of prayer’ on their behalf. Their pain reverberates within me—it hurts me without becoming my own pain—but I experience it, and this makes my prayer for them possible, just as I pray for myself when I am in pain.” (p.95)

Throughout her book, she stresses the importance of *listening* and the modern person’s deep need to be heard. She insists that one must not suppress the effects of trauma but instead bring them before God. She writes: “When we repress the effects of trauma and do not offer them to God, we contribute to passing them on to our children and grandchildren.” (p.101)

She adds: “We must remember that every child who enters a family is a potential savior for that family and its descendants.”

Mother Siluana teaches that the mystery of Orthodoxy lies in transforming all that we are—everything we have received from God—so that it may return to Him. The human heart is the arena where created energies are transformed into divine-human energies by the power and operation of grace.

This is a book well worth reading, especially for all those involved in education, pastoral work, and spiritual guidance.