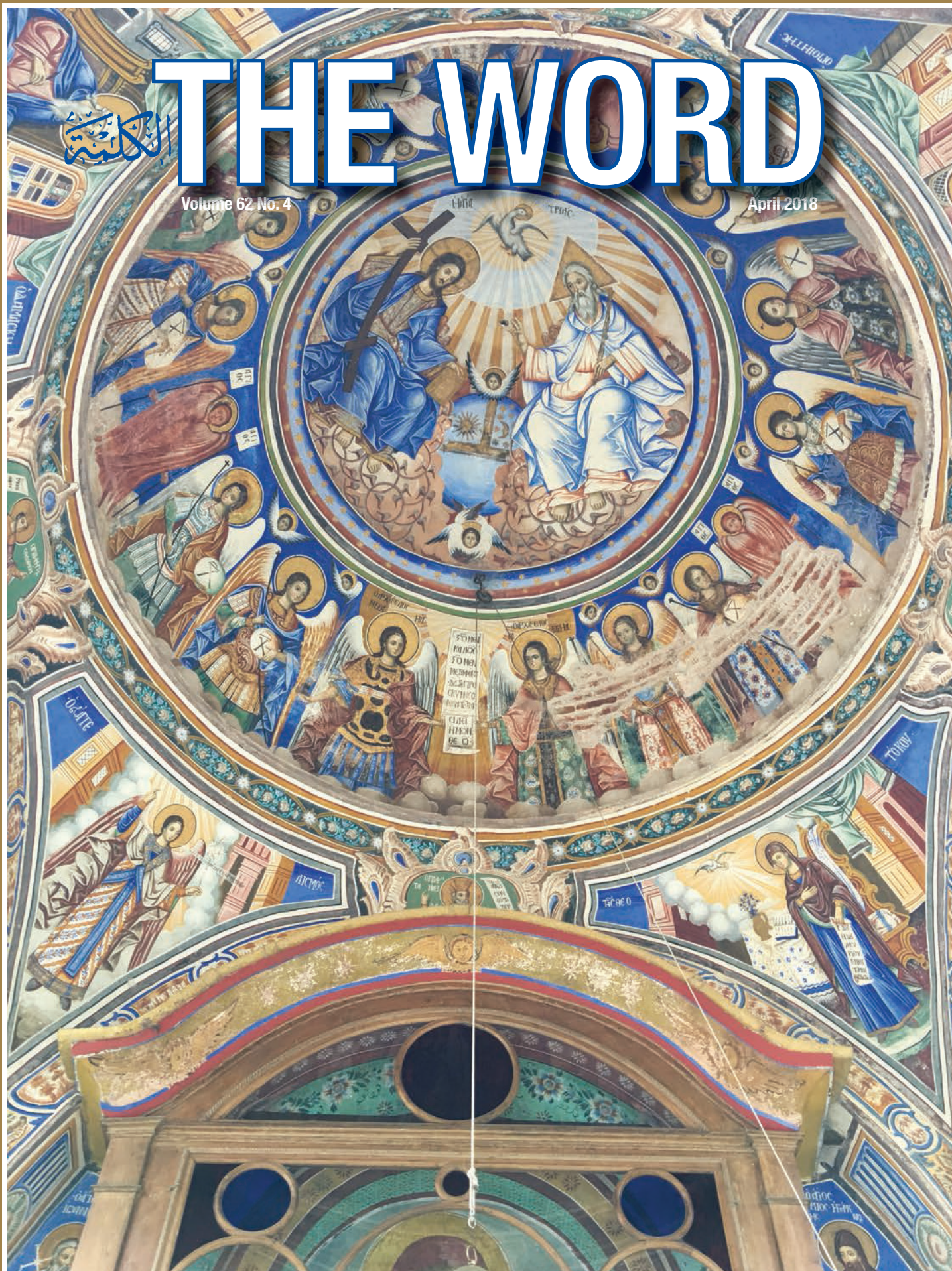




THE WORD

Volume 62 No. 4

April 2018



contents

The Word



COVER: The dome inside a monastery on Mount Athos
Photo by Yazen Fakhouri

- 3 EDITORIAL
by Bishop JOHN
- 4 ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE
- 5 A CONVERSATION:
DESIRE AND LOVE FOR GOD
by Jason Falcone, Th.M.
- 7 ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
ASSOCIATION OF MEDICINE,
PSYCHOLOGY, AND RELIGION
TO HOLD ANNUAL CONFERENCE
- 8 IN UNITED PROTEST, JERUSALEM
CHURCH LEADERS CLOSE
CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE
- 10 ORTHODOX IN THE
CONTEMPORARY WORLD
by Bishop THOMAS and
Peter Schweitzer
- 13 BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH
ON MOUNT ATHOS
by Yazen Ziad Fakhouri
- 15 REPORT ON THE ORTHODOX
WOMEN'S RETREAT 2017
by Tonia Howell
- 16 COLLECTING OUR CHILDREN
by Keidi Lewis
- 18 LENT: A SPIRITUAL DETOX
by Fr. Peter Kavanaugh
- 20 EVANGELISM ACROSS BOUNDARIES:
A WELCOMING HEART
by John R. Gresham, Jr.
- 22 FROM THESE STONES —
DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND
EVANGELISM:
THE MESSAGE OF THE WOMEN AND
THE RE-CREATION OF MEN
by Fr. Joseph Huneycutt
- 24 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY
by Metropolitan JOSEPH
- 27 ST. BASIL THE GREAT
by Fr. Daniel Daly
- 31 ORATORICAL FESTIVAL
by Peter Bondi
- 33 VISITING OUR ORTHODOX
MONASTERIES IN AMERICA

Letters to the editor are welcome and should include the author's full name and parish. Submissions for "Communities in Action" must be approved by the local pastor. Both may be edited for purposes of clarity and space. All submissions e-mailed and provided as a Microsoft Word text or editable PDF. Please do not embed artwork into the word documents. All art work must be high resolution: at least 300dpi.

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CHRIST IS RISEN!

As I proclaim this Truth, this fact, this way of life, this understanding of the world, this revelation of God, I am filled with all kinds of feelings, memories, dreams and hopes. In my mind, I know that Christ is risen and salvation is open to mankind. Christ is risen and heaven and earth overlap. Christ is risen and we are able to share in Christ's own Resurrection and Ascension. What do I feel? Feeling and thinking are not the same. I know that I am supposed to feel joy. We have decorated the Church and taught that this is the feast of feasts, the holy day of holy days. I know I should feel joy. The dictionary defines joy as the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune. On the other hand, St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians lists it as a gift of the Holy Spirit. For St. Paul, joy is more than an emotion; it reflects our sharing in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Further, it requires sharing in God's own ministry. For St. Paul, acquiring joy means gaining self-control, putting away sin, and sharing in heaven now. Joy is not only a gift; it is a fruit of the Spirit of God. It is more than a surface feeling, a temporary happiness. Joy is a deep and enduring way of life: salvation, heaven, being *christs* ("anointed ones" who put on Christ), and living as righteous witnesses. Yes, joy is the way of life that is in Christ's Life.

As I age, I have become more aware of the sadness and anger in the world around me. Perhaps there is more sadness and anger than before, or perhaps I am simply more aware of the fallenness of the world around me. For sure, as more people choose to put their faith in themselves and abandon God, there is less hope and less joy. The world today can appear desperate, chaotic and frightening. People are afraid, sad and angry. So we ask, "Where have all the flowers gone?"

I know where *our* flowers go. They have gone to decorate the bier of Christ! They have gone to Church to proclaim His lordship and his divinity. They have gone to reveal the Pascha that is revealed to us. They have gone to help us encounter the Christ who shares Himself with us as He parades, not on a great horse, but on a humble beast of burden (an animal used for work). Christ is the one who comes to us resurrected and shining in light.

I know this victory of Christ does not exempt us from loss and sadness. Most of us have suffered the loss of at least one loved one. As we celebrate Christ's passion

and death, we remember our own losses. We may become quiet and feel sad, but we know that God has brought the living and dead together in Himself. The victory of Christ does not exempt us from sickness and death. As we celebrate the passion and death of Christ, our own physical pains and mortality come home to us. Understandably, we feel vulnerable – but God is with us. Furthermore, the victory does not protect us from our internal and external enemies: we may be tempted, victimized or even martyred – but God stands by us. We rightly recognize our human weaknesses. We feel afraid. Nevertheless, Christ is risen, and God does not abandon us. He is the Good Shepherd who values and sacrifices Himself for us His sheep. Christ carries us through our times of danger and sorrow.



...joy is the way of life that is in Christ's Life.

Because Christ is risen, I can feel vulnerable and yet not abandoned. Because Christ is risen, when I suffer, the Risen Lord suffers with me. I can feel sad, yet Christ's light fills me with joy, because He has brought us already into heaven and given us back our loved ones. In other words, we can feel whatever we feel, yet also share in Christ and take joy in our relationship with the Risen Christ. This joy permeates our whole being. This Joy is both the result (fruit) of God's work in us, as well as our unity in "knowing" Him. Christ is risen! That is the Truth!

Bishop JOHN

ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDINATIONS AND ELEVATIONS

ANDOUN, Jacob (John), to the holy diaconate by Bishop ANTHONY on March 4, 2018, at St. Mary Church, Palos Heights, Illinois. Dn. Jacob is assigned to St. Mary as the Youth Director and Pastoral Assistant.

BORZGHOL, Fr. Nicholas, to the dignity of Archpriest by Metropolitan JOSEPH on February 4, 2018, at St. Nicholas Church, San Francisco, California.

SWEIS, Deacon Nippon, to the holy priesthood by Metropolitan JOSEPH on February 4, 2018, at St. Nicholas Church, San Francisco, California. He is assigned as Pastor of All Saints Church, Rohnert Park, California, effective February 4, 2018.

APPOINTMENT

HABIB, Priest Michael, as Dean of the Pacific Northwest Deanery, effective February 7, 2018.

LEST WE FORGET: HONOR WALL

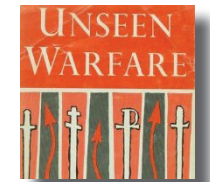
Fr. Antony Gabriel is collecting the names and histories of all of the clergy who have served our Archdiocese from the earliest days until the present. Metropolitan JOSEPH has asked Dimitri Zeidan to work with Fr. Antony to preserve and display the materials collected appropriately. It is Fr. Antony's hope that the collected materials will help tell our story, which is our history. This will allow future generations to benefit from the experience of those who came before, and to help them understand better their spiritual lineage in Christ through His Church. See Fr. Antony's book for examples of the kind of stories that make up our history. These stories make us laugh and cry. They offer insights and data that will allow us to serve our Lord better.

Contact Fr. Antony Gabriel at economosanthey@gmail.com, by phone at 520-389-4668, or by mail, and send materials to his home at 6202 N Via Tres Patos, Tucson, Arizona 85750.



A CONVERSATION

Desire and Love for God



WHILE I WAS TALKING WITH SEVERAL FRIENDS, ONE ASKED ME A PARTICULARLY SERIOUS QUESTION. I CANNOT RECALL HIS EXACT WORDS, BUT THE ESSENCE OF HIS QUESTION WAS THIS: “DURING CERTAIN TIMES IN MY LIFE I FEEL A STRONG DESIRE FOR THE CHURCH, BUT OTHER TIMES I DO NOT FEEL THE SAME DESIRE FOR SPIRITUAL THINGS. THERE IS NO REASON TO BE ANYTHING BUT HONEST: RIGHT NOW THIS DESIRE IS NOT SO STRONG. WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS?”

The importance of his question has weighed on my mind since then. I think all of us, upon honest and serious reflection, will see ourselves at various points in our lives in my friend's question. The question is a very perceptive one: many people's spiritual zeal will slacken and they will blame it on any number of external factors, rather than reflecting on the true reason for the shift in their interior disposition. The topic touches the very center of the spiritual life: the disposition of the human heart. Our Lord himself teaches in the Holy Gospel that the supreme commandment is to love the Lord with one's entire heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27). While the Lord seeks to fill our hearts with his heavenly grace, the world, the flesh, and the devil would draw our hearts into the illusory darkness of distractions, passions, and false hopes. The spiritual life is really a battle for the human heart, a quest to love God more fully.

How then can one grow in one's love for God? Certainly we have many examples to emulate among the saints of the Church, men and women who showed us the path of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The spiritual classic *Unseen Warfare* (edited by St. Nicodemus) warns us that all our efforts in the spiritual life will meet with failure if we ignore the first step: humble reliance not on ourselves, but upon God.

Not to rely on oneself is so necessary in our struggle, my beloved brother, that without this, be

assured, not only will you fail to gain the desired victory, but you will be unable to resist the smallest attack of the enemy . . . We can expect nothing from ourselves, except stumblings and falls . . . On the other hand, we are certain always to be granted victory by God, if we arm our heart with a living trust in Him and an unshakeable certainty that we will receive His help.¹

The writer further says that even this very reliance upon God is itself His work in us, although we must “ask for God's help in this with warm and humble prayers, for this is His gift.”² There is ultimately nothing we can do of ourselves to love God more, except to cling to Him as closely as we can, and humbly ask His help (and the intercessions of His saints). Then He is sure to aid us and fill us with His love. In the divine words of St. John, “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Unseen Warfare also addresses more specifically the feeling of spiritual warmth in the heart, as well as its absence: “Spiritual warmth of heart is the fruit of feeling for God and for everything divine. It is born at the time when a man turns to God in repentance. In the course of tasks of penitence to purify the heart it acquires more and more strength, and from intermittent feelings of warmth visiting the heart from time to time it gradually becomes constant, until finally it becomes a permanent state of the heart.”³ The writer goes on to say that

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend
Bishop NICHOLAS

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such warmth may come either from spiritual works and prayer, or spontaneously from God.⁴ Perhaps all of us have experienced such moments of spontaneous spiritual warmth, in which we felt a sense of God's presence and a compelling desire to follow Him. These moments are precious gifts of God by which He strengthens us and calls us to love him more fully. However, as the author of Unseen Warfare tells us, we must engage in the work of the spiritual life if this state of spiritual warmth is to become a constant and lasting part of our disposition.

While the spiritual warmth of our hearts and desire for the Lord might sometimes fluctuate, we can take courage knowing that God's presence with us is unchanging. The Lord says in the Gospel, "Lo, I am

fire. Nevertheless, this Spirit has never cooled or died down. Its fire is latent in the hearts that know how to enkindle it with prayer, humility, and love. The fire of the Holy Spirit is alive and needs only to be fanned. It awaits the oil of grace to inflame the charisms and enhance the unction."⁵ Notice that Fr. Matthew points to prayer, humility, and love as the means to inflame the ever-present gift of the Holy Spirit's presence, yet he says it is the "oil of grace" that actually enflames the latent gift of the Holy Spirit. In the words of St. John: "For from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

As we cease to rely upon ourselves and consistently seek the Lord's help to rely upon Him, He fills us with "grace upon grace" so that our hearts are warmed by the



with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20), and again, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18). Indeed, the Spirit of Truth sent to us by Christ following His Ascension is living and active in the Church, and personally in each believer. Fr. Matthew 'the Poor' says, "It is true that the Spirit of Pentecost was tangible and visible as flames of

kindling of the gift of His Holy Spirit that enables us to love Him more fully. The more fully we cling to the Lord and seek His help, the more He transforms us by His grace and the more our desire for Him becomes a permanent part of our disposition.

Jason Falcone, Th.M.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDICINE, PSYCHOLOGY, AND RELIGION TO HOLD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDICINE, PSYCHOLOGY, AND RELIGION (OCAMPR) WILL HOLD ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 8–10, 2018 AT THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH CULTURAL CENTER IN SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY. METROPOLITAN JOSEPH WILL PRESENT THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS.

The Annual Conference will be of special interest to Orthodox Christian clergy, theologians, seminarians, lay ministers, and healthcare professionals.

OCAMPR, an international, pan-Orthodox organization endorsed by the Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, exists to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and promote Christian fellowship among healing professionals in medicine, psychology and religion. Members pursue an understanding of the whole person which integrates the basic assumptions of medicine, psychology and religion within the Orthodox Christian faith in educating and serving Church and community.

OCAMPR welcomes proposals for workshops and papers at the annual gathering, the theme of which will be "Compliance and Resistance: Discerning the Spirit." Proposals for presentations should reflect professional, academic discussion on critical issues regarding the helping professions and pastoral care, specifically as it relates to our Orthodox Chris-

tian faith. OCAMPR wishes to foster an Orthodox approach to the topics addressed, informed by psychology and medicine. Although presentations reflecting the conference theme are encouraged, other related subjects are welcomed.

One-paragraph abstracts with title, author's credentials (one paragraph indicating training, degrees, current place of employment, and jurisdictional or other religious affiliation), and whether the proposal is for a workshop or a paper, should be submitted no later than May 1, 2018, to ocamprinfo@gmail.com. The Program Committee will review these proposals and relay acceptances by June 1.

All presentations will be recorded at the Conference and made available online. After the Conference, written submissions will be considered for publication in the Conference proceedings.

Detailed information on the Conference will be forthcoming on the OCAMPR website at www.ocampr.org.



IN UNITED PROTEST, JERUSALEM CHURCH LEADERS CLOSE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

In a highly unusual action, the leaders of Jerusalem's churches closed the doors of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Sunday. The united protest was in response to moves by Jerusalem authorities to begin collecting tens of millions of dollars in taxes from churches, as well as proposed legislation to confiscate church-owned land.

In a statement, the church leaders described a "systematic campaign" against the churches and the Christian community in the Holy Land.

"Recently, this systematic and offensive campaign has reached an unprecedented level as the Jerusalem municipality issued scandalous collection notices and orders of seizure of Church assets, properties and bank accounts for alleged debts of punitive municipal taxes."

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is jointly managed by a cadre of Orthodox and Catholic churches.

The statement continues: "The systematic campaign of abuse against Churches and Christians reaches now its peak as a discriminatory and racist bill that targets solely the properties of the Christian community in the Holy Land is being promoted."

Earlier this month, municipal authorities in Jerusalem announced their intention to collect back taxes on property owned by churches in the city, totaling 650 million shekels.

The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, said that, with this dramatic and unprecedented action, the heads of churches in Jerusalem are calling for careful attention to a critical situation for the status of the churches there. "We appeal to the government of Israel to terminate these attacks on the future presence of the churches in Jerusalem," said Tveit. "This situation should call for support and action from church leaders as well as from governments that are concerned about Jerusalem as a shared Holy City of the three religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam."

Photo: Ivars Kupcis/WCC
February 26, 2018





ORTHODOXY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Bishop THOMAS (Joseph) and Peter Schweitzer

IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLDVIEW, NOTHING IS SO PRIZED AS PROGRESS AND CHANGE. THEY ARE SO HIGHLY REGARDED THAT CALLS FOR CHANGE AND PROGRESS ARE EVEN HEARD WITHIN OUR ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH. THOSE WHO CALL FOR PROGRESS AND CHANGE WITHIN THE CHURCH OFTEN DEMAND CHANGE SO THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BE MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THE CHURCH. THESE DEMANDS OFTEN INCLUDE THAT THE ORTHODOX CHURCH MODIFY OR COMPLETELY ABANDON THE TRADITIONAL FASTING PERIODS, SHORTEN THE DIVINE SERVICES, AND BECOME MORE “OPEN” AND ACCOMMODATING ON MORAL ISSUES, SUCH AS MARRIAGE, GENDER IDENTITY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

These winds of change and progress are undoubtedly a result of contemporary man’s embrace of Enlightenment thinking, in which man replaces God as the ultimate arbiter of truth and human life. Yet our Christian Tradition tells us that such notions are fundamentally flawed, embracing, as they do, two fundamental misconceptions of Sacred Tradition and the ascetical and mystical character of the Christian life.

Unlike human customs and traditions, Sacred Tradition is revelatory. It is something we receive from Almighty God. In saying that Sacred Tradition is a divine revelation, I mean that it was given to men by God, whether directly, by the God-man, or indirectly, through the Prophets and the Apostles. The incomparable superiority of Sacred Tradition is due to its revelatory character. This cannot be said of human traditions, which originate from the mind of man.

Constantine Cavarnos writes in his work “Orthodox Tradition and Modernism”: “The term ‘Tradition’ is used by the Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers in a broader sense to indicate the written Divine word, namely the Old Testament and the New Testament, and also the unwritten Divine word of the Apostolic preaching, which is not written in Holy Scripture, but was preserved in the Church and was written in the Proceedings of the Synods and in the books of the God-bearing Fathers.”

The fact that Sacred Tradition is essentially revelatory, originating from the triune God, means that it must be received and then preserved without addition or subtraction. The following words of Saint Athanasios the Great are characteristic of the line which the Fathers deliberately and persistently followed: “I have taught according to the Apostolic faith handed down to us by the Fathers, devising nothing outside it” (*Epistle to Serapion* 33; PG 26:605C).

Professor Carvarnos concludes by stating,

The Orthodox always regarded the unchanging persistence of the Orthodox Church in Sacred Tradition as her boast. On the contrary, the heterodox – with exceptions, especially in recent times – regarded this persistence as a sign of decline, as a sign of deficiency in her inner life. In particular, the Protestants hurled the reproof that the Orthodox Church is ‘dead’ and likened her to a ‘petrified mummy.’ This demonstrates the ignorance which the heterodox customarily have about the true essence of Christianity, and shows to what degree they confuse the revealed faith with the different worldly systems, with the different human contrivances and creations. Since in the crafts and the sciences there is a continuous development and perfection, they think that the same thing ought

to happen in the Christian religion, that here too there should be a continuous revision, change, and replacement of the old by the new – in a word, ‘modernization.’ Looking at Christianity rationalistically, they misunderstand its revelatory character and demote it to the level of the systems which the mind of man has formed on the basis of reason and the observations of the five senses.

This leads me to the second fundamental flaw which is often overlooked in discussions about change and the so-called need to “modernize” the Orthodox Church. It is a flaw in understanding the true nature of things, which is also revelatory and is derived from Sacred Tradition. The state of nature and the state of man were corrupted as a result of the Fall. No amount of human progress and development can change that fact. Death entered into our human reality as a result of sin. Humanity and nature itself can only be restored through the salvific work of Jesus Christ.

Saint John Chrysostom writes, “Before the fall men lived in Paradise like angels; they were not inflamed with lust, were not kindled by other passions either, were not burdened with bodily needs; but being created entirely incorruptible and immortal, they did not even need the covering of clothing.”

From the writings of St. Maximus and St. Gregory of Sinai, we learn that the first-created man possessed God-given wisdom; his mind was not impressed by imagination; his memory was not diversified but one-pointed, being recollected in God. By drawing ever closer to God in love, by seeking spiritual pleasure in God rather than physical pleasure through the senses, he was to become ever more holy and spiritual, ever more in the likeness of God, ever more transformed by the grace of God.

As God-bearing fathers and guardians of Sacred Tradition, the holy fathers describe precisely and in great detail the state of humanity prior to the Fall and the dreadful consequences that followed after it. Perhaps more importantly for our purposes, they detailed the manner in which we are

“I have taught according to the Apostolic faith handed down to us by the Fathers, devising nothing outside it”

Saint Athanasios the Great

to be restored to communion with God. This curative restoration was detailed in their preaching and their writings. It involves repentance and *ascesis*, a life-long spiritual struggle to rid ourselves of the passions and apply the salvific events of the God-man Jesus Christ whom we encounter in the Orthodox Church.

In writing about the spiritual sickness of twentieth-century man, Saint Justin Popovic illustrates clearly what is needed:

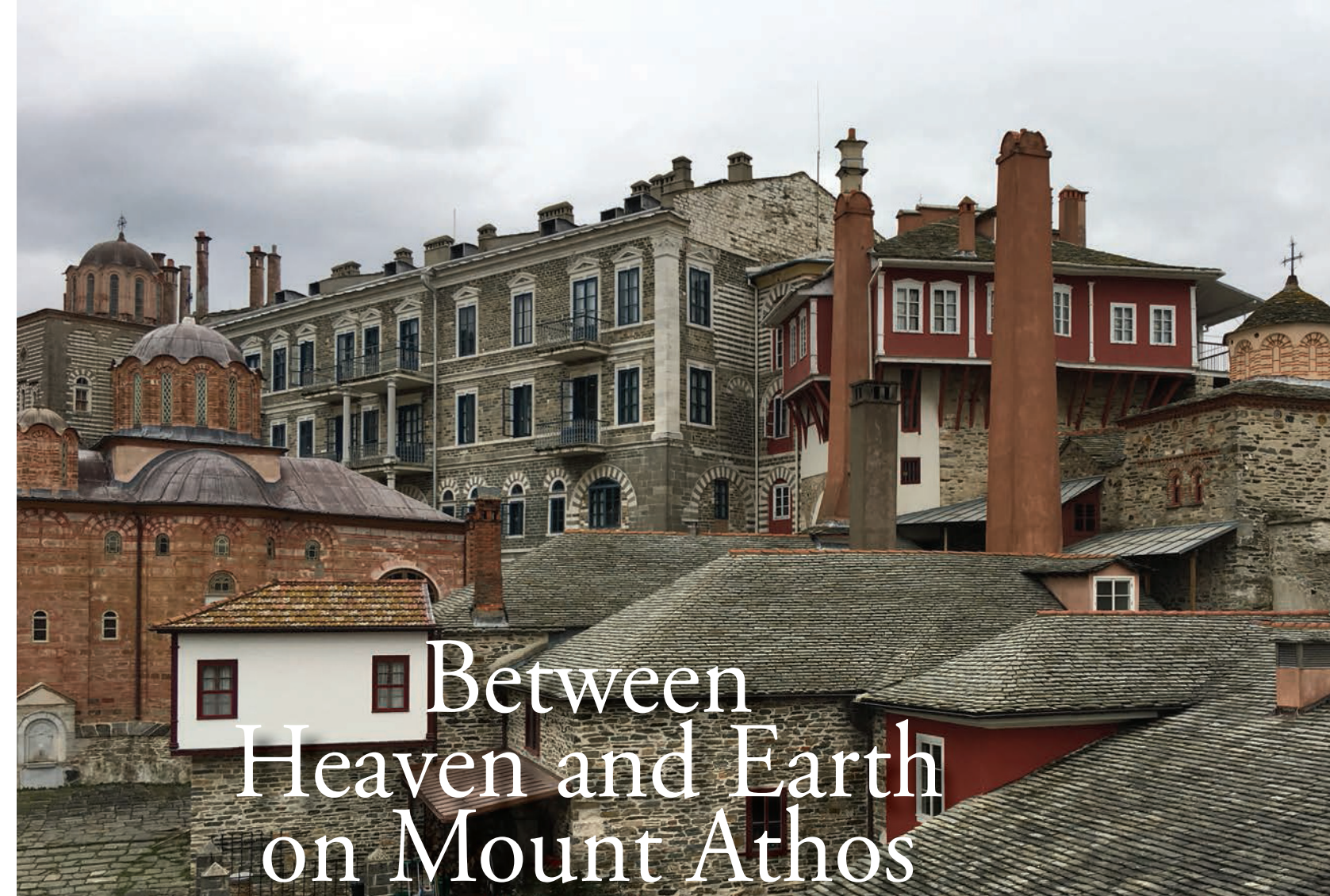
Is there a way out of these innumerable humanistic hells? Is there resurrection from these innumerable European graves? Is there a remedy for those innumerable deadly sicknesses? There is, there certainly is: repentance. That is the eternal message of the Gospel of the God-Man: “Repentance so that you may know the truth” (2 Timothy 2:25). Otherwise, it is not possible for anyone to believe in the all-saving Gospel of the God-man. “Repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). Repentance before the God-Man is the only medicine for the sin, the unique medicine for all sins, even for the greatest of sins. There is no doubt, ... European “infallible” man, European humanistic man, can only be saved through whole-hearted and all-transforming repentance before the wondrous, all-merciful, all-virtuous Lord Jesus Christ the God-man, the only Savior of the human race from all sins, from each evil,

from each hell, from each devil, from each humanistic rationalism, from any of the sins which the human imagination is able to conceive (“Reflections on the Infallibility of European Man,” in *Orthodox Faith & Life in Christ*, 1994).

What was lost in the Fall was relational. It wasn’t an intellectual proposition that went awry. Our communion with Love was broken. Any call for change or progress in this regard is ultimately missing the point and a woeful under-appreciation of what happened in the Garden. Any intellectual exercise or program for self-improvement that relies on man is a tragic error. Are the services long? Yes, they are, but they are intentionally so. Submitting oneself to the long services is the time-tested prescription written by those who enjoy communion with the thrice-holy God as the only cure. Our hearts are divided, our intellect even more so. The long services are such so that we have the opportunity to quiet the mind and calm the stirrings of the heart, so that the Divine Physician can work on us. In the Fall, our eyes were cast downward from the Almighty to earthly, perishable, corruptible things. The fasting periods and the long services are intended for us to re-focus our pleasure in God alone.

The ancient and salvific prescriptions of the Gospel and Sacred Tradition are valid to the extent to which the traditional and revealed truths concerning the nature of man are upheld. When we invert the true nature of things, man becomes God and the ruling human authority can prescribe whatever solution is deemed appropriate. In this scenario, man is the measure of all things. God is not necessary. Yet in this scenario the question remains, “What about death?” There is no technological advancement that can cure all disease, illnesses, or, ultimately, death. We continue to suffer, and to experience injustice, cruelty and oppression. The answer doesn’t lie with man, but with Almighty God, our Creator and Savior. If we abandon God by abandoning Sacred Tradition in our beliefs and our practices, we reject the only cure for death and all the other ills that afflict us. In the words of Saint John of Damascus, “Brethren, let us stand on the rock of faith and the Tradition of the Church, not removing the landmarks which our holy Fathers set, nor giving any place to those who want to innovate and destroy the structure of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of God” (*Concerning Images*, 3.41; PG 94:1356C).

Bishop THOMAS (Joseph) and Peter Schweitzer



Yazen Ziad Fakhouri



Ring finger meets thumb, while index, middle, and pinky are elevated in imperfect symmetry. A single hand with fingers positioned to represent the Holy Trinity and the dual natures of Christ moves north to south, west to east, conferring an ancient blessing consistent with Holy Tradition. The recipient of this blessing is a stray dog weaving among those forming an interminable sea, queuing to board a ship to the holiest of Mountains. To the monks on Mount Athos, all of God’s creation is sacred and worthy of His blessing. The prayers uttered and the angelic voices of chant that proceed from this rocky peninsula have persisted for over a millennium in the face of relentless attacks and innumerable attempts to subjugate them. The grace of God and the intercession of His blessed Mother have preserved Mt. Athos in the face of successive empires that have attempted to pillage and destroy the Holy Mountain.

As we set out from the port of Ouranopouli with His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS of Miami and the Southeast,

and five other Antiochian seminarians, God’s preserving grace was palpable. Mindful of the somberness and sobriety with which these devout monks work out their salvation and aspire towards sanctification, I could not stop smiling. With our sense of God’s grace, we found ourselves hoping, too, for the restoration of a humanity plagued by discord and an increasingly visceral disdain for the name Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit providentially has inspired the vision of our beloved Metropolitan JOSEPH for a greater, spiritual appreciation for monasticism in his Archdiocese.

Arriving at the Monastery of Xenophontos, I was overcome by the immediate serenity and hospitality we encountered. Father Zosimas, a former Antiochian seminarian born in Florida, who has resided on the Holy Mountain since 1996, met us at the port. The warmth of Father Zosimas and the beauty of the Holy Mountain, with its mountainous terrain cascading over ornate iconography that fills the monastery, reminded me of the words of our Lord: “I have given them your word ... for

they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (John 15:19; 17:14-15). These are holy men who are both in the world and outside it.

The many things that please the senses on the Holy Mountain belie the arduous spiritual struggle that goes on there. The Holy Mountain is simultaneously an encounter with bliss and exasperation. Ears hear the rhythmic tapping of the *semantron* summoning the monks to prayer, followed shortly by the euphoric beauty of resounding Byzantine chant. The light from the *catholicon*, with its dazzling display of candles, radiates throughout the physical structure of the Chapel and, indeed through the very hearts of men, accompanied by the fragrance of incense that simulates the experience of heaven. The delectable taste of coffee, grown in a monastery, vibrant fruit, and a multitude of other pastries and foods, offered to inhabitant and visitor alike, seem incongruous with the simplicity and restraint demonstrated by the monks of Mt. Athos. At moments it feels like heaven on earth. Then one is reminded by its inhabitants that heaven remains afar, and we must devote ourselves to realizing it.

Geronda (Elder), Abbot of Xenophontos, made clear the importance of the Holy Mountain for us all. With piercing eyes, a plush white beard, and a deep billowing voice, he proclaimed that, “the problems that plague humanity are precipitated by our own movement away from God and towards ourselves.” “We believe we have the answers and try to impose our own vision and will upon the world. We must deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him. We must above all else, seek the kingdom of Heaven.” The prayers bellowed from the mountainous peninsula of Mt. Athos are intended to unify all of mankind, caught up, as it is, in disparity, division, and dystopia. His voice cracking, Geronda recounted a story pertinent to all who seek the salvation of their souls and the kingdom of God. A monk was approaching the twelfth hour. He had devoted his life to Christ through prayer and obedience. The devil came to him in the night and appeared to surrender, proclaiming to the monk that his obedience to God proved unshakable and that he, the devil, was resigned to defeat. The monk recognized the

evil machination of the devil, a last-ditch effort to get him to let his guard down by appealing to his ego, fell to his knees, and began to pray intensely.

Sitting with Geronda, a man who has heeded the words of Christ as literally as one can, who has eschewed a world characterized by consumption and self-indulgence, it occurred to me that monasticism is not an antiquated, archaic, or anachronistic practice, ill-suited to confront the problems that afflict the contemporary world. Rather, it is the remedy, the antidote to the virus of egotism that characterizes our time. Mt. Athos is important not merely for its beauty and history, for its icons or relics, its chant or services, but for its prayerful example to a world looking for answers. As Geronda says,

All this spiritual awareness, the prescription for mankind, God’s economy and His desire to reveal Himself in the heart of man, comes not through a scholastic approach to Christianity, but through prayer, through that which the monks on Mt. Athos endeavor to realize, not only for the salvation of each of their souls, but for the collective salvation of mankind.

The Monks of Mt. Athos, and indeed all monastics, teach us how. Monasticism remains indispensable to Orthodoxy and to our hope for salvation.

We are indebted to our beloved Metropolitan for his recognition that if Orthodoxy is to persist in the face of insurmountable odds, we must have monasteries. We are grateful, as well, to His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS for the resurging interest in monasteries in the Archdiocese, embodied through his annual trips to the Holy Mountain. The monks of Mt. Athos are on the front lines of a spiritual war for the souls of mankind and the survival of the Holy Orthodox Church. Let us thank God that our beloved Metropolitan JOSEPH, through the grace of God, remains steadfast, resilient, and courageous, ever ready to preserve the sanctity and tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church and to do what is necessary to ensure its spiritual health and well-being.

Yazen Ziad Fakhouri



FOR THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN DRAWN BACK YEAR AFTER YEAR TO THE ORTHODOX WOMEN’S RETREAT, OUR EXPECTATIONS OF THE SERENITY OF THE GROUNDS AND GATHERING AREAS, OF THE CARE FROM THE ORGANIZERS AND STAFF, AND OF THE WISDOM IMPARTED BY THE SPEAKER AND CLERGY, ARE FILLED TO OVERFLOWING. FOR THOSE WHO MADE THEIR FIRST RETREAT THIS YEAR, I TRUST THAT THEIR OUTWARD SENSES AND INWARD BEING WERE TOUCHED BY THE BEAUTY OF BOTH THEIR PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS AND THE MESSAGES INTENDED FOR THEIR HEARTS.

Our co-ordinators took seriously the saying, “A day hemmed in by prayer is less likely to unravel,” by providing for us evening, morning, and mealtime prayers. Thank you to Matushka Barbara Eriksson and her choir for lending an air of the angelic to our praise.

Friday night is always a fine introduction to the weekend. We locate our sleeping quarters, meet our roommates, and taste the first-fruits of the kitchen fare – cinnamon buns beyond delicious. All this sets the stage for us to receive our speaker and begin the essential work of feeding our souls.

Presenter Carole Buleza, Director of Christian Education for the Antiochian Archdiocese, holder of a Master’s degree specializing in religious education, and author of curricula for Orthodox education, captured our attention immediately in the first session as she began to develop her theme of “Sharing the Faith Heart to Heart.” She engaged us in participatory thinking, as she would do throughout the weekend, in this session encouraging us to compose a haiku poem on one of the great events of our belief, such as the Resurrection. She sought to instill in us a deeper love, joy, and excitement

for our faith, and a greater ease in using these as tools to speak naturally about it to others. Her mention of miracles as faith-builders provided for us another way to engage our listeners. One of her concluding thoughts was, “If you are Orthodox ... you live in your heart.”

In the second session, Carole focused on making time in thoughts and prayer for God each moment of each day. Morning prayer is of utmost importance in “launching your day.” Our to-do list always needs to be subject to God’s plans for us. She provided us with copies of the prayers used by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, which expresses that need so eloquently: “Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that your will governs all.” Recognizing that we will encounter those who frustrate us, the prayer also asks that we not “embitter or embarrass others.” We were challenged to provide ourselves with helpful actions and reminders to initiate prayer. For example, we could establish routines, such as praying to put on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:11) while dressing, using post-it notes and online devotions, memorizing Scripture, and practising the Jesus

Continued on Page 26





COLLECTING OUR CHILDREN

Keidi Lewis

The mother of a boy who attended my aunt's pre-school would routinely pick him up with her cell phone glued to her ear. She would nod to my aunt, take the child's hand and guide him out to the car without interrupting her phone conversation. This is an example of a missed opportunity for connection between mother and child. As Gordon Neufeld and Gabor Maté say, parents of children of all ages need to *collect* their children, daily:

At the top of our agenda we must place the task of collecting our children – of drawing them under our wing, making them want to belong to us and with us. We can no longer assume, as parents in older days could, that a strong early bond between ourselves and our children will endure for as long as we need it. No matter how great our love or how well intentioned our parenting, under present circumstances we have less margin for error than parents ever had before. We face too much competition. To compensate for the cultural chaos of our time, we need to make a habit of collecting our children daily and repeatedly until they are old enough to function as independent beings.¹

Collecting or *attaching* is done in many ways, like the threads that make up a cord. Neufeld and Maté give practical suggestions and encouragement. One way to tether parents and children that seems obvious is sharing time and space together in a friendly way. Here, the relationship is the most important thing, and *who* the child is – not what the child does or doesn't do – is the focus. We are the leaders in this ongoing building of a relationship: it is up to parents to pursue the child and carve out opportunities for positive interaction. An example of this kind of *collection* is how we reconnect after physical or emotional separation. Greeting our child lovingly when we wake them up in the morning or get home from work (or pick them up from school) is a way to rebuild what psychologist Gershon Kaufman calls the “interpersonal bridge,” over and over again.

Another thread in the cord of collecting our children is to give them something to take in, to hold dear. We need to make sure we are offering them something valuable to attach to. Freely given attention, interest, signs of affection, emotional and physical warmth, enjoyment, support, and delight are treasures children can hold on to. *Smile into their eyes.*

The ultimate gift is to make a child feel invited to exist in our presence exactly as he is, to express our delight in his very being. There are thousands of ways this invitation can be conveyed: in gesture, in words, in symbols, and in actions. The child must know that she is wanted, special, significant, valued, appreciated, missed, and enjoyed. For children to fully receive this invitation – to believe it and to be able to hold on to it even when we are not with them physically – it needs to be genuine and unconditional.²

Another way to foster attachment is to let a child need and appreciate us. Just as an adult appreciates someone coming alongside him to complete a difficult task – even if he *could* do it on his own – a child is buoyed by an adult joining him in his struggles. Being there for her, letting her know that we are dependable, trustworthy, and willing to be needed, are attachment gifts that do not interfere with her future independence. Children will naturally do things on their own when they are mature enough to want to do so: until then, if we watch them struggle without lending aid, we are pushing away someone who could benefit from our help, or who will look for help from someone else.

The last way to collect our kids is to act as their compass point. We introduce them to the world around them and steer them through their early lives, telling them what to expect and how to maneuver. As Orthodox Christians, we direct our children toward our point of orientation, Christ and His Church. We introduce

our children to the tenets of the faith as youngsters and continuously support and guide them in dealing with challenges to their faith. Our children need us to maintain this role as they grow, as if we are a guide for a traveler in a foreign land.

While fostering this deep attachment and collecting our children is hypothetically easier for families who home-school – they have less peer interaction and more time as families – home-schooling parents must also be intentional about connecting with their kids. Children who attend public schools and children with parents who work full-time can also be collected, but parents must work vigilantly to generate connections in the precious time they have with their children. Sacred family times like prayer, sit-down meals, game nights, and vacations are important for all families, and should be protected from the competition of peers, electronics, or recreation (such as a cruise) that separates children from adults.

Ultimately, we know that each child has God-given free will, and he will exercise it. As the realm of this exercise increases over time, we pray that the strands of his attachment to us, his parents, and to God and His Church, will prove to be a tightly woven rope. Let us seize every chance to draw our children to our hearts, continually strengthening our connection to them with prayers and our outstretched arms.

1. *Hold On To Your Kids: Why Parents Need To Matter More Than Peers* (2004), p. 179.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 184.



LENT A SPIRITUAL DETOX

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse."



You can imagine what the devil thought before heading off to the desert. Like Don Corleone in the Godfather, he was playing with a full deck and he was used to winning. There was nothing cheap in his offer, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." It is the challenge we all have to face.

Jesus had been fasting for forty days and nights. He was not supplementing his abstinence with vitamins or protein shakes. He was hungry. Nothing would relieve the empty gnawing in His stomach more than a fresh loaf of bread. Satan's offer cut deeper than that, however. Have you ever asked yourself, "Why couldn't Jesus have made a little bread?" He did, after all, have that power. So why not turn every stone into bread? Why not end hunger and starvation once and for all? In this light, the devil sounds like the true humanist: "Can you cut out all that religion, and just feed the poor?"

Is not this the spirit of our times? The American Humanist Association has the mission "to advance humanism, an ethical and life-affirming philosophy free of belief in any gods and other supernatural forces." "Advocating for equality ... to alleviate poverty, increase access to healthcare, empower women, promote education, ensure environmental sustainability and advance human rights." The Richard Dawkins Foundation believes it has found the solution to hunger. Google is endeavoring to end death itself. "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread," the devil tempted. Christ did not fall for it: "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

What is it that makes life worth living? Hunger, poverty, inequality – no one can deny that these are real problems. In our own lives, we have all kinds of needs. Some of us are searching for gainful employment or struggling financially. Others are lonely, or depressed, or exhausted. Society is haunted by an epidemic of drugs, pornography and school shootings. Yet, we have food and education in plenty. In fact, we live in one of the most prosperous societies in history. So what is lacking? Perhaps Christ was right after all. There is more to life than bread.

This is what Lent is all about. In our Gospel, the devil hoped to substitute God with a loaf of bread. What, in your life, has replaced God: your career, self-image, newest iPhone, or perhaps your overwhelming schedule? Soren Kierkegaard once said, "If I were a physician, and if I were allowed to prescribe just one remedy for all the ills of the modern world, I would prescribe silence. For even if the Word of God were proclaimed in the modern world, how could one hear it with so much noise?" So, Lent brings us a profound freedom to step away and listen.

If you are looking for a good Lenten reading, you should consider Arthur Boers' *Living into Focus: Choosing What Matters in an Age of Distractions*. This short book takes an honest look at our modern lifestyle. We have reached a standard of living far greater than anything fathomed in past generations. Yet we are far from happy or fulfilled. "I meet a lot of folks," he writes, "who are unhappy, stressed, and depressed Our lives are marked by 'pathological busyness, distraction, and restlessness....'" According to statistics, North Americans are working more and more hours. The modern life feels like a frenzied rat race. Every culture has its own spiritual challenge. Could ours be an addiction to technology, to noise, or to endless busyness?

Is there a solution? Boers suggests that we re-examine our focal points. That is a fancy way of saying, Be deliberate about your priorities and focuses. In the distant past, the fireplace was a focal point of every home. It was a place to gather and interact by playing games, talking, or just sitting together in peaceful silence. Today, the fireplace has been replaced by a television set. Ten years ago, going on a walk meant watching the sunset or the birds in the trees. Today, it means playing Pokémon Go. Instead of using technology, we are used by technology.

There's an old-fashioned word called 'idolatry.' Nowadays, we usually think of figurines of Zeus or Baal. However, idolatry simply means loving anything more than God. St. Paul described the enemies of God as those who "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). The Psalms say our idols "have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see; and ears, but do not hear," and those who make and trust these idols become like them, dumb and blind (Ps. 115:5–8). "Idolatry," Arthur Boers suggests, "is a problem of directing reverence and regard in the wrong direction We easily spend too long looking the wrong way at the wrong things.... Our lives are shaped by our focus." What are your habits? What is the first thing you notice when you walk in your house? Is it an icon of our Lord and Savior or is it a television set? What is the last thing you do before going to bed? Do you check the news or your Facebook profile, or do you light a candle and say a prayer? Do you spend more time worrying about tomorrow, or praying in the moment at hand? Do your values determine your schedule, or does your schedule dictate your values?

Lent is spiritual detoxification. We do not all have to go out to the desert or meditate in a cave. Perhaps we simply need to shut off the television set and go on a walk. Through this season, the Church has holy work for us to do: to spend more time fasting, praying, giving alms, and simply sitting in silence and wonder. We must not think of this as mere obligation. Rather, this is our chance to find freedom. So what are your idols? Can you give them up and replace them with the sweet grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Fr. Peter Kavanaugh
Fr. Peter is the Pastor of St. Benedict of Nursia Church in
Wichita Falls, Texas.

However, idolatry simply means loving anything more than God. St. Paul described the enemies of God as those who "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25).

EVANGELISM ACROSS BOUNDARIES

A WELCOMING HEART



FR. MOSES BERRY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. MOSES THE BLACK, HAS OFTEN BEEN ASKED FOR ADVICE ABOUT SHARING THE ORTHODOX FAITH WITH AFRICAN-AMERICANS. HE FREQUENTLY RESPONDS, “YOU EVANGELIZE TO BLACKS THE SAME WAY YOU WOULD TO WHITES OR ANYONE ELSE. YOU MAKE THEM FEEL WELCOME IN YOUR PARISH.” IN THIS DIVISIVE AND CHARGED ATMOSPHERE OF DIFFERENCES IN OUR NATION, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE CHURCH DEVELOP AND CULTIVATE A HEART THAT WELCOMES ALL WHO COME THROUGH OUR DOORS.

It is not unusual for people from all walks of life to feel that doors are constantly closing in their faces. This applies not only to issues of race, but also to political ideals, economic status, and educational level as well. Even when the things that separate us are minor, our differences can be exacerbated by social media and 24-hour “news” outlets on television, radio, the Internet, and in print. As we seek to be among those who think like us, it is almost impossible for any of us to harbor strong, contrary opinions on any topic. In every part of the country, Christian denominations are made up of people who are alike in every way from the square footage of their homes to the sports teams they follow.

Being a part of an ethnic group gives us a feeling of belonging and a sense of pride. Greek festivals, Black History Month, July 4th, all help to solidify our identity. Yet as Orthodox Christians, we are called to see ourselves and each other as part of the kingdom of God and as persons created in His image and likeness. Politics is not supposed to restrict how much we love each other. The color of our skin and the amount of “green” in our wallets must not determine who is not our brother and sister. Fashion styles, tattoos, taste in food and music should also be insignificant in light of the One who loved the world so much that gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). The Church is uniquely blessed to be this welcoming force in a world of separations.

The God we worship is three distinct Persons who share the same Nature. The Son is begotten and the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Yet the source of their divinity doesn’t rule over them. Instead, they occupy His right hand, a position of equality and shared dominion. Our theology can be compared to a tripod. The three legs work in concert together. To deny the validity of one or two of them in favor of the others is as much a spiritual failure as removing a leg or two from a tripod. Monopods are useful, but they do not stand on their own.

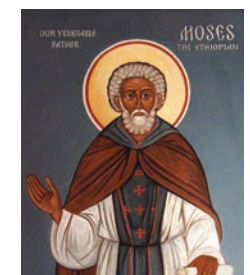
It is not hard for us to come to the Divine Liturgy with a love for God and those to whom we are similar. The challenge for us, however, is to reach out to the visitors and the brothers and sisters who are different and distant from us, with His love. The purpose of this evangelism is not to have an affirmative-action policy, or to form a bi-partisan coalition. Our goal as Christians is not simply to “go to heaven and live with Jesus forever.” We are to seek complete and total union with the One who is Three. He is complete in relationship, lacking nothing. Likewise, as individual Christians and the

Church as a whole, we must seek this bond with those from whom, by worldly standards, we would be separate. This is not to say that such differences do not exist, but that we are called to transcend these things which divide people. Failure to extend our love for others based on our shared nature and the example of the Trinity is to remove one or two legs from a tripod.

This brings us back to the question asked of Fr. Moses. How do we evangelize African-Americans and others who have been traditionally isolated from the Orthodox Church? The Brotherhood of St. Moses directly approaches the topics of the role of the African Saints in Orthodox life and has speakers who address racial issues in modern society. FOCUS North America does not intentionally seek evangelization of any particular race. Nonetheless, poor people of all backgrounds have come to the Church because of the compassionate work of the organization. Any parish can develop a program and strategy to bring in people of diverse backgrounds.

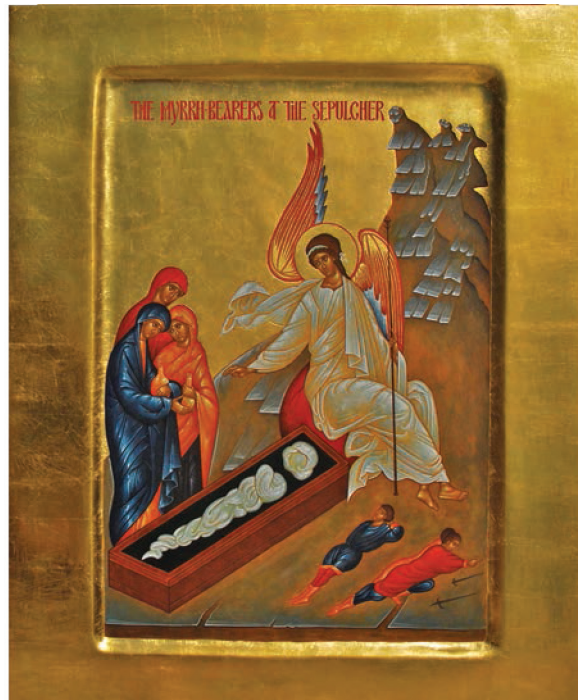
Ultimately, to be welcoming to people of different backgrounds is to be willing to follow the voice of the Lord. Philip had no particular idea of when Ethiopians came to Jerusalem to worship, what scriptures they had questions about, or if an official would welcome a stranger for conversation. Yet he followed the Holy Spirit, ran – yes, evangelism does take effort! – to the caravan, listened to where the man was, spiritually, and the ranking official let this man, whom he had never met before, hitch a ride and talk. We don’t know how or when we will come across a stranger who is beyond our comfort zone. As the Spirit calls us, we must be willing to go out and meet him, listen to where he is, and engage with him.

John R. Gresham, Jr.
John R. Gresham, Jr., is a former Baptist pastor who became a part of St. Basil Antiochian Orthodox Church in 2014. At the time, the parish was located in a town known for its racial divisions. Yet the love of the congregation, the significance of the African Saints, and the doctrine of the Orthodox faith drew him to convert. He currently serves as the Teen SOYO Advisor and Parish Council Chair. He is in his third year in the St. Stephens Program of the Antiochian House of Studies and is a member of the Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black.



The Message of the Women and the Re-Creation of Men

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt



Icon hand written by Janet Jaime eleusa@cox.net

In the Gospel for the second Sunday after Pascha, we read about the women who went to the tomb early in the morning to anoint the body of our Lord. Remember, Jesus had been hastily buried in a tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea, with the help of the other secret disciple, Nicodemus. These two men, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, are included in the full list of Myrrh-bearers, but generally this day is understood as “the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women.”

Of the remaining eleven disciples – all men – not one of them is listed as a Myrrh-bearer. The men who had followed him when He’d said, “Come, follow me,” the men who appear throughout the Gospel narratives, those men? All but one abandoned him after the crucifixion.

Now here we see a band of women disciples making their way toward the tomb, with only God-knew-what awaiting them. This is important, because there is a substantial difference between men and women, as the more astute among you must be aware.

Take men, for instance. Men are all about *doing*. Do this, did this, accomplished that; what next? Women (you all know this) are about *relationships*: this person, that child, my sister, mother-in-law, friend, and so forth.

There was a popular book some years ago entitled *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, wherein it

was stated (and I paraphrase): “When a *man* gets upset he doesn’t talk about what’s bothering him. He never burdens another *man* with his problem unless his friend’s assistance is necessary to solve the problem. Instead he becomes very quiet and goes to his private cave to think about his problem, mulling it over to find a solution. If he can’t find a solution then he does something to forget his

problems, like reading the news or playing a game.”

Or, as was the case with Peter and the disciples, he goes fishing.

When a *woman* becomes upset or is stressed ... to find relief, she seeks out someone she trusts and then talks in great detail about the problems of her day. When *women* share feelings of being overwhelmed, they suddenly feel better.

Women are not ashamed of having problems. Their egos are dependent not on looking “competent” but rather on being in loving relationships. They openly share feelings of being overwhelmed, confused, hopeless, and exhausted.¹

To feel better, women talk about past problems, future problems, potential problems, even problems that have no solutions. We see this in the Gospel story. The women are on their way to the tomb, “and they were saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us

from the door of the tomb?’” (Mark 16:3).

Men are different. Under stress, men tend to focus on one problem to the exclusion of others. Compare the beautiful story of the women at the tomb to that of Peter’s and John’s approach. The men raced each other! It is not recorded that John and Peter, true to their nature, discussed anything on the way; they just tried to get there first! You see, however: they’d already heard the tomb was empty.²

The good news, ladies, is this: thanks to the Good News, men do change! For instance, take the story of the two men walking in the country, who were talking and were sad. The Stranger who comes upon them opens their eyes to the Resurrection. Later, when the two who had been overcome by grief, but were now overwhelmed with joy, “they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, who said, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’” “Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them” (Luke 24:33–36).

This same Simon – Peter – helped make Jerusalem the headquarters of the Church. It was Jerusalem wherein the high holy days and feasts of the Jews were celebrated, where folks from all over the Diaspora would gather. Whereas the Lord was found in Jerusalem for the feasts and had taught there, Jerusalem was never “home base.” Jesus had spent most of His earthly ministry among the rural folk: preaching, teaching, and healing among the men, women, and children in the small towns and villages around Galilee.

With the centering of the mission in Jerusalem after the Lord’s Resurrection, a curious thing happened: Greek-speaking members of the synagogues became attracted to the new community in big numbers! The disciples’ ministry was broadened, so much so that, within a very short time after Pentecost, Samaria and the coastal towns of Palestine were part of the mission field. Eventually this ministry spread as far as Damascus. With the conversions of Paul and Barnabas, the Good News of the Resurrection spread throughout Diaspora-Judaism. All of this happened within five years of the Resurrection and the Day of Pentecost.

The message became the Risen Messiah more than the teaching of the prophet of Nazareth. This Messiah, proclaimed Peter, was foretold by David, slain in ignorance by the Romans at the instigation of the Jewish leaders, and would return and restore all things as had been announced by the prophets (Acts 2:22 ff.; 3:12–26).

This Good News spread beyond Palestine and Damascus through a network of Hellenistic synagogues radiating from Jerusalem. Christianity was transformed from a rural to an urban movement. One consequence of the Martyrdom of St. Stephen was the scattering of Church leadership, which spread the message even further, in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). To make a long story short: Forty years after a young Palestinian girl heard the Good News from the voice of an archangel – by 40 A.D. – Christianity was an established movement throughout Palestine.

One exception to the scenario portrayed above is Saul of Tarsus, who became St. Paul the Apostle. While nothing is recorded about the Mother of God or the women at the tomb having a direct impact on Saul’s conversion, the Apostle Paul’s ministry brought many female converts into the Church! Rest assured that many daughters of those converts have been working in the Lord’s vineyard ever since.

One could speculate that St. Paul, converted in an extraordinary way, was determined to prove himself. It wasn’t easy, nor was he always appreciated! St. Paul fervently believed that the end of history was rapidly approaching. The Messiah had come, though the end was delayed – perhaps to give humankind one final chance to repent. Hence, he was on a mission from God.

Why did the early believers respond in such great numbers to the Good News of the Risen Messiah? In short, they were prepared: the prophets and psalms, mothers and grandmothers, the Lord Himself, and a few good men. They were prepared for the message and longed for a savior. Like the Apostle Paul, too, they believed Christ’s return to earth was imminent. (It still is!)

Because it was the daughters of Eve – the holy Myrrh-bearers – who were chosen to announce the Resurrection, we see the Annunciation in another light. Whereas earlier, a young maiden heard the words of an archangel in private, here an angel announces to the Mother of God and the faithful women the Resurrection. The way to Paradise has been re-opened, for our Lord has destroyed death by death. Go! Announce to the sons of Adam the New Day, the Resurrection. Faithful grandmothers and sisters, moms and cousins, widows and daughters – and, yes, men: With zeal, conviction, and joy, let us through word and example announce to others that, truly, *Christ is risen!*

Fr. Joseph Huneycutt, Vice-Chairman
The Department of Missions and Evangelism

1. John Grey, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* (Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 30–31.
2. Excerpted from *We Came, We Saw, We Converted – The Lighter Side of Orthodoxy in America* (Ancient Faith Publishing, 2009); used by permission.



SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

February 25, 2018

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, South River, New Jersey

HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN JOSEPH'S SPEECH

Your Beatitude
Metropolitan
TIKHON,
Your Eminence
Archbishop
MICHAEL,
Reverend Clergy,
Beloved Faithful:
Christ is in our
midst!

We are blessed to gather together today in this beautiful church on this Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, having traversed – by God's grace – the first week of the Great Fast. Earlier this week, the Church called us in her sacred hymnography:

Let us begin the pure fast, O people, which is the salvation of our souls. Let us serve the Lord with fear; let us anoint our heads with the oil of good deeds. Let us wash our faces with waters of purity. Let us not use empty phrases in prayer, but as we have been taught, let us cry out: Our Father in heaven, forgive us our trespasses, for You are the Lover of Mankind.

This beautiful hymn reminds us that our fast should be a *pure* fast, not merely a fast. To have a *pure* fast, we should add to our fasting from foods, asking forgiveness of one another, repenting of our sins, increasing our prayer, attending divine services, refraining from idle chatter, doing good deeds, and bringing our focus to the “one thing needful.”

From a worldly perspective, our ascetical endeavors in Lent seem to be borne of self-hatred, a morbid deprivation of all the things that make life enjoyable. Furthermore, the “triumph” we are celebrating today is a restoral of artwork that is not sensual or passionate, but otherworldly and spiritual. Critics of our Church – sometimes even fellow Christians – may argue that our spiritual practices during Lent and the sacred art we honor on its first Sunday are in some ways “anti-human.”

We answer that nothing could be more beneficial to our souls and bodies – to our humanity – than this time of the Great Fast. Our journey in Great Lent should not be simply a rush to “do it all” – attend all the services, strictly observe all the dietary rules, and say all the correct prayers. We are reminded that we need to *repent* – to truly change our ways of thinking and being. To truly repent, we need three things: reconciliation, purification, and restoration. Without these three things, our fasting and prayers are – as the hymn says – *empty*. To be forgiven, we are called to forgive. When our hearts are softened by this reconciliation, they can become purified. Once our hearts are purified, we are granted restoration. Let us delve more deeply into the meaning of this process of restoration.

As we reflected last weekend on the casting out of our

forebears, Adam and Eve, from their perfect communion with God in paradise, we were reminded that we live this life *in exile*. By chasing after our own egotistical desires, we become inclined to more and more shameful passions. We become more and more enslaved. We continue to cover over the image and likeness of our Creator. We lose our dignity as sons and daughters of God and become incapable of seeing that divine dignity in our neighbors.

So much of our human life – what the secular world may describe as “living life to the fullest” – is really nothing more than *learning to cope* with this estrangement from God. Whether or not we are conscious of it, we all are thirsting for the communion our forebears had in the Garden of Eden. Yet, instead of returning to the Father, as we saw the Prodigal Son do a few short weeks ago, our world wants us to continue to live in the mire of the pig sty. The late Father Thomas Hopko would often say that we read self-help books and magazines in order to learn how to live a happier and better life *in the pig sty!*

When we forget our Creator, and his high calling for us to live as His sons and daughters, we lose His image and likeness, and we lose our *humanity*. During this time of the Great Fast, we rise up, like the Prodigal Son, to come to our senses and realize that we are living in the mire of the pig sty. We run home to live as servants in our Father's house, yet He runs to embrace us and give us a robe of virtues, a ring of divine contemplation, and a banquet consisting of the Holy Eucharist. When we free ourselves from slavery to our passions, God restores to us our freedom, our true humanity.

This is why our celebration of the Holy Icons is so important on this first Sunday of Lent. Why? Saint Athanasios, in his work *On the Incarnation*, teaches about how Mankind had lost its knowledge of the True God. It had forgotten what human beings were supposed to be like. He asks: What was God to do? He answers in terms of art: “You know what happens when a portrait that has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated through external stains. The artist does not throw away the panel, but the subject of the portrait has to come and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn on the same material. Even so was it with the All-Holy Son of God.” In other words, we are meant to reflect our Creator as a portrait is meant to reflect its subject. We are called to be holy as God is holy, perfect as God is perfect. Our Lord Jesus

Christ came to show us once again what it means to be *truly human*: to be restored to that pristine image and likeness; to rise up from the “pig sty” and return again to communion with God in our Father's House.

Our Lord did not come merely to model what it means to be truly human. His taking flesh meant the deification of our human nature. As Saint Athanasios so profoundly taught, He took on all that we are by nature, that we might take on all that He is by Grace. By destroying death by death, He opened the gates of Paradise and welcomed us once again into participation in Divine Life.

These holy icons are in our churches today because of this unshakeable belief in the actual incarnation in the flesh of the Son and Word of God. The iconoclasts attributed the prohibition of images in the Old Testament to the icons, because they had forgotten that the prohibition was against portraying God, whom no one at that time had seen. When Christ became man, *man was able to see God*. This celebration today is a very powerful affirmation that God truly became a human being. He truly ennobled our human nature. He truly united Himself to us.

What do we see around us on this Sunday? Not merely artwork that portrays the physical reality of some people we admire. No, we honor holy icons of saints who became *truly human*. These icons are not a rejection of human nature – as lovers of Renaissance art may claim – but a proclamation of *what human nature is meant to be* because of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God.

We live in a world that is actually full of *images*. We have our television sets, our smart phones, our tablets, bulletin boards along the highways, posters on buildings – we are *inundated with images*. These images are often glamorous and pleasing to the eye. Many times they are highly sexualized with persons of great earthly beauty. The images often come with passionate music, witty banter, rousing speeches. In a world like this, our Holy Icons may seem boring at best, or as we said earlier, a rejection of human “nature.” But what kind of nature is this? It is a human nature that is *full of itself*; full of its fleeting outward beauty at the expense of eternal inner beauty; full of its outward show at the expense of inner depth; full of its self-promotion at the expense of self-sacrificial love.

What of the world we see around us? It is full of madness. We see violence throughout the world: persecution of Christians in the Middle East; destructive civil wars; threats of nuclear annihilation. We see racial enmity, and unimaginable shootings of the most innocent, most precious, most God-like of our humanity – our children – as we have tragically witnessed most recently in Parkland, Florida.

Without honoring the holy images of true humanity within the grace-filled life of the Church, we see how the world descends into demonic insanity. We see how we become unable to recognize the image and likeness of God in the other – not even in pure and innocent children. When we lose sight of the image God in one another, we witness the way in which we destroy one another.

Beloved in Christ, let us not process today with the Icons and reverence them merely out of habit. Let us not mindlessly take part in the Great Fast, as though we are merely on a diet to lose weight. This Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, let us embrace a triumph of our *true human nature*. Therefore, if we honor the icons, we must honor the Savior who took on our flesh to sanctify us. Let us embrace that sanctification through our fasting, prayer, and good deeds. If we reverence the icons of the Savior and His Mother and the Saints today, let us reverence *the living icons* of the people

we see in our everyday lives. If we claim to honor God in the images we have on the icons, it is a great blasphemy to refuse to honor the image of God in our neighbor!

We proclaim today that the Orthodox Faith established the universe. Let us, as those who have inherited that Faith, strive during this time of Great Lent to live that Faith. When we live that Faith – as taught St. Seraphim of Sarov – a thousand souls around us will be saved.

May Our Lord Jesus Christ grant to all of us a holy and blessed time of the Great Fast! May the Holy Icons provide us with spiritual inspiration and may those whom they portray intercede for us! May

we be found worthy to worship His Life-giving and Saving Passion and His Glorious Third-day Resurrection! And by participation in these great saving acts of God, may we be ever more *truly human!*

+Metropolitan JOSEPH



To truly repent, we need three things: reconciliation, purification, and restoration. Without these three things, our fasting and prayers are – as the hymn says – empty.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of us unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Continued from Page 15

Prayer. The Diving Liturgy (“liturgy” meaning the work of the people), is the culmination of our prayer life, in which we express so beautifully our praise to God and our petitions for others.

As part of our third session, we spent time in reflection upon our path of salvation, facilitated by a series of printed terms – baptism, struggle, prayer, sacrifice, almsgiving, confession, wisdom and theosis – placed on the



floor. As we made our way from one to another, we considered how each had affected our spirituality and contributed to our current state before God. For many of us the journey was heartfelt, as we do not often take the time to think of what is at the core of our being. At our final stop, we stood before the profoundly moving icon of the Holy Trinity written by Rublev. Tears were evident in many eyes as we in our unworthiness came face to face with the deep peace and love of our Lord.

Journaling was encouraged in the fourth session as a way of making present our day-by-day walk with God. The thinking and doing that crowd our life often overshadow our remembrance of the precious gifts and little

miracles from our Lord; keeping a journal can be an antidote for that as well as grounding us and moving us forward in our faith.

Carole's methods of engaging us to answer her questions actively and to relate the stories of our faith-journey, of organizing small-group discussions, and of asking us to write our reactions to studying an icon helped us to articulate our faith in personal ways, which was the goal of her presentations.

The Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, served by Rev. Fr. Stephen Keaschuk, was a most fitting conclusion to our weekend. We joined with our sisters in Christ in the moving worship and communion of the Eucharist. Father's homily, “Seeking the Face of God,” was very powerful. Quoting the Psalmist, “Be still and know that I am God,” he urged us to spend time daily (even five minutes) in wordless silence before our Lord. He ended by praying the beautiful Hebrew blessing upon us: “The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:24–26).

Beyond those already mentioned, our gratitude extends outward. The Women's Retreat Committee (Joan Popowich, Ghada Ziadeh and Matushka Barbara Eriksson) do an incredible amount of behind-the-scenes planning of all the retreat details. We thank Archpriest Fr. Taras Krochak from St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who served the opening prayers for us on Friday night and for Dob. Donna Krochak, who assisted Fr. Taras by leading the music that evening. As well, we extend our gratitude for the priests who sacrificed time away from their parishes: Archpriest Fr. Phillip Eriksson of Holy Martyr Peter the Aleut Orthodox Church, and Rev. Fr. Timothy Chrapko of St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who so patiently heard our confessions. In addition to those who tended to us spiritually, we must remember the Entheos Retreat staff, who provided clean and neat living quarters and such fine cuisine.

My appreciation for our retreats has increased each time over the years that I have attended. My “take-home bag” of blessings grows with each retreat. I look forward to an increase in God's abundance poured out upon us during the 2018 Orthodox Women's Retreat. Come next September and receive living water for your thirsty soul.

Tonia Howell
St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, Kamloops, Alberta

ST. BASIL THE GREAT

Fr. Daniel Daly



WHY IN HUMAN HISTORY ARE SOME MEN AND WOMEN REFERRED TO AS “THE GREAT”? WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES SOMEONE *GREAT*? THE REASONS CERTAINLY VARY. PETER THE GREAT OF RUSSIA CERTAINLY CHANGED RUSSIAN SOCIETY, BUT THE FACT THAT HE WAS SIX FEET, EIGHT INCHES, TALL MAY HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIS “GREATNESS.” ALEXANDER THE GREAT OF MACEDON CONQUERED EVERYTHING BETWEEN MACEDONIA AND THE INDUS RIVER, BUT AT WHAT COST IN HUMAN LIVES? THE STANDARDS OF GREATNESS SEEM NOT VERY CONSISTENT. AMONG THE CHRISTIAN SAINTS WHO ARE KNOWN AS “THE GREAT,” ST. BASIL THE GREAT OF CAESAREA IS RENOWNED. WHAT IS IT ABOUT HIS LIFE, HOWEVER, THAT LED TO HIM BEING CALLED “THE GREAT,” EVEN IN HIS LIFETIME?’

Throughout history the Church has been blessed with the lives of countless holy men and women. Some were Apostles. Some were martyrs, such as St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp. Some, like St. John Chrysostom, were great preachers. Others were great pastors who cared for their people both in soul and body. Others were examples of the ascetic life. St. John the Almsgiver of Alexandria was famed for this philanthropy. All who have been recognized as saints led remarkable lives. Each in his or her own way was known for something exceptional. The church has accorded different titles to these saints (for example, “equal to the apostles,” and “great martyr”). A few saints have been

described as “the great,” and among these was St. Basil of Caesarea (329–379 A.D.).

It is likely that this great saint did not live to see his fiftieth birthday. His life as a priest and bishop numbered only about twenty years. Yet what he accomplished in that short lifetime is astounding. He has left his mark on virtually every aspect of Church life: theology, monasticism, liturgy, the canons, social justice, care of the sick and homeless, preaching, and defending the faith against heresy. We might call him “the saint for all seasons.” He is, without question, St. Basil the Great!

St. Basil was born at Caesarea, Cappadocia (in modern day Turkey). His maternal grandfather was a martyr.

His paternal grandmother, Saint Macrina the Elder, had been a disciple of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus. His parents were Basil the Elder, a very successful lawyer, and St. Emmeilia. Along with his brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and his friend, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Basil was one of the three Cappadocian Fathers His brothers, Saint Gregory of Nyssa and St. Peter of Sebaste, became bishops. His third brother was the famous Christian jurist Naucratius. His sister, St. Macrina the Younger, founded a monastery for women with their widowed mother on their family lands at Annesi. His was a most remarkable family.

St. Basil was born a child of privilege. His parents were large landowners, and he enjoyed the best education available in the ancient world. As a youth he was sent to Caesarea for his early education, where he met his lifelong friend St. Gregory Nazianzus, also of the patrician class. From there he went to Constantinople and finally to the university in Athens in 351 A.D., where he spent about five years under the tutorship of the most learned people of his time. His education in the field of rhetoric prepared him for a life in public service, law or teaching. Any career in public life was open to him, but St. Basil was dissatisfied with his life. He abandoned his secular life and career and chose to dedicate his life to God. Basil had undergone a spiritual awakening. He describes what had happened: “I had wasted much time on follies and spent nearly all of my youth in vain labors, and devotion to the teaching of a wisdom that God had made foolish. Suddenly, I awoke as out of a deep sleep. I beheld the wonderful light of the Gospel truth, and recognized the nothingness of the wisdom of the princes of this world.”

ST. BASIL THE MONK

His sister St. Macrina had become a follower of the noted ascetic Eustathius of Sebaste. She was undoubtedly influential in the spiritual development of St. Basil. Although he says nothing about her influence on his life, what we know of her derives from his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his eulogy for Macrina.

When the mother had arranged excellent marriages for the other sisters, such as was best in each case, Macrina’s brother, the *great* Basil, returned after his long period of education, already a practiced rhetorician. He was puffed up beyond measure with the pride of oratory and looked down on the local dignitaries, excelling in his own estimation all the men of leading and position. Nevertheless Macrina took him in hand, and with such speed did

she draw him also toward the mark of philosophy (i.e., Christian thought) that he forsook the glories of this world and despised fame gained by speaking, and deserted it for this busy life where one toils with one’s hands. His renunciation of property was complete, lest anything should impede the life of virtue.

St. Basil’s life changed radically after he encountered Eustathius of Sebaste. Abandoning his secular career, he was baptized in 357 A.D. The following year, wishing to learn more about monasticism, he travelled to Syria, Palestine and Egypt. It was there that he found the *coenobitic* form of monasticism founded by St. Pachomius. Cenobitic monasticism, differing from the life of the solitary, established the monks in a common life of prayer and labor. St. Basil brought the rule of St. Pachomius back to Cappadocia, where, after a time of living as a solitary, he formed a monastic community. He was joined in his monastic life by his friend St Gregory Naziansus, with whom he produced an anthology of the writings of their controversial master Origen.

St. Basil’s influence on Eastern monasticism is profound. Throughout the centuries of the Church, St. Basil’s teachings have guided the men and women monastics of the Orthodox Church. St. Benedict of Nursia, the Father of western monasticism, held him in high regard. At the request of his monks, St. Basil wrote two “rules” for the life on the monks, the “longer rule” at Annesi and the “shorter rule” after he became a priest.

Advocating a more moderate approach to the ascetical life, St. Basil established a balance between a life of prayer and manual labor. He is, without question, one of the greatest figures in Christian monasticism and is regarded as “the Father of Eastern monasticism.” Although he eventually became a bishop, he continued to live the life of a monastic.

THE PHILANTHROPY OF ST. BASIL

St. Basil insisted that those who lived the monastic life, with its ascetical practices, should also live lives of philanthropy. “Basil decreed that monasticism should not be divorced from the needs of human society, and that the practice of philanthropy ought to become an element of the monk’s life.... As a result of the new monastic philosophy of . . . service to mankind, the monasteries became centers of hospitality, almsgiving, and care for the sick, the pilgrims, and the wayfarers.”²

Philanthropia had been an important part of the pre-Christian Hellenistic world. It expressed the responsibility for one’s fellow man. “While philanthropy in the

ancient Greek world was mostly anthropocentric, in Christianity, it became eminently theocentric. The principle of philanthropy was the love of God rather than the love of man.”³ For St. Basil the ultimate philanthropist is God, “the lover of mankind.” (The philanthropy of God is spoken of throughout the liturgical prayers of the Church. This is very clear in Greek. The adjectival form of the Greek *philanthropia* is translated as *compassionate* in English.)

THE BASILEIAS

One of the great philanthropic achievements of St. Basil was the *Basileias*. “St. Basil established a general philanthropic institution known as the Basileias in honor of its founder (i.e., the emperor Valens who oddly was his theological adversary). It included a hospital and is believed to be the first organized charitable system in the Christian Greek East. It was established circa 372 while Basil was Caesarea’s bishop. According to the historian Sozomen it was ‘the most celebrated hospice for the poor’. But Gregory Naziansenos (sic), Basil’s contemporary, implies that Basileias was a multi-purpose institution which besides the hospital, also has rooms for lepers, travelers, physicians, cooks, and others. . . . A third contemporary source adds that the fate of lepers was especially miserable. Consequently, Basil included a leprosarium in the Basileias, appealing to the rich to grant him the money to establish and support it.”⁴

PRIEST AND BISHOP

In 364 St. Basil made the second of his life-changing decisions. The Metropolitan of Caesarea asked him to be ordained to the priesthood, and he agreed. Within six years he became the Bishop of Caesarea. The life of a priest and bishop would be very different from that of a monk. Why did St. Basil agree to these changes? His reasons are no doubt complex, but one thing is certain: the Church needed him. As Bishop, St. Basil would have an important role both in the church and in the civil society. Coming from a wealthy and important family, he was especially suited for this role.

Despite the decisions of the Council of Nicea in 325, the rest of the Fourth Century continued one of the most controversial periods of Church history. Many bishops were not satisfied with the language of Nicea. Many preferred to say that Jesus had a nature which was *like* that of the Father, and not the *same* nature. Many were regarded as “semi-Arian.” Even St. Basil preferred this early in his life. The remark of St. Jerome (347–430 A.D.) is noteworthy for understanding the tenuous position of

Orthodoxy.... “The whole world groaned and marveled to find itself Arian.” The battle for Nicea also involved the family of Emperor Constantine, which was actively against Nicea. St. Athanasius of Alexandria had been the unrelenting champion of Nicea. St. Basil became his theological ally, and St. Athanasius supported St. Basil in turn. Both men took on the fight theologically and pastorally against Arianism. They laid the ground for the victory of the First Council of Constantinople in 381.

As a bishop, St. Basil instituted a much-needed reform of church life in Caesarea. The situation is best described by St. Basil himself in his letter to the Italians and Gauls.

It is not only one Church which is in peril, nor yet two or three which have fallen under this terrible storm. The mischief of this heresy spreads almost from the borders of Illyricum to the Thebaid. Its bad seeds were first sown by the infamous Arius; they then took deep root through the labours of many who vigorously cultivated the impiety between his time and ours. Now they have produced their deadly fruit. The doctrines of true religion are overthrown. The laws of the Church are in confusion. The ambition of men, who have no fear of God, rushes into high posts, and exalted office is now publicly known as the prize of impiety. The result is, that the worse a man blasphemes, the fitter the people think him to be a bishop. Clerical dignity is a thing of the past. There is a complete lack of men shepherding the Lord’s flock with knowledge.

Ambitious men are constantly throwing away the provision for the poor on their own enjoyment and the distribution of gifts. There is no precise knowledge of canons. There is complete immunity in sinning; for when men have been placed in office by the favour of men, they are obliged to return the favour by continually showing indulgence to offenders. Just judgment is a thing of the past; and everyone walks according to his heart’s desire. Vice knows no bounds; the people know no restraint. Men in authority are afraid to speak, for those who have reached power by human interest are the slaves of those to whom they owe their advancement. And now the very vindication of orthodoxy is looked upon in some quarters as an opportunity for mutual attack; and men conceal their private ill-will and pretend that their hostility is all for the sake of the truth. Others, afraid of being convicted of disgraceful crimes, madden the people into

1. St. Basil is a giant among the Fathers of the Church. The many events of his life and work are beyond the scope of this paper. The World Wide Web contains a great deal of information in English for the interested reader.

2. Demetrios J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1968), p. 89. This is an excellent source for those interested in the social programs of Orthodoxy in the Byzantine state.

3. Ibid., p. 11.

4. Ibid., pp. 154–155.

5. Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p. 36.

6. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics Inc., 1992), p. 228.

7. Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1963) p. 97.

fratricidal quarrels, that their own doings may be unnoticed in the general distress. Hence the war admits of no truce, for the doers of ill deeds are afraid of a peace, as being likely to lift the veil from their secret infamy.

All the while unbelievers laugh; men of weak faith are shaken; faith is uncertain; souls are drenched in ignorance, because adulterators of the word imitate the truth. The mouths of true believers are dumb, while every blasphemous tongue wags free; holy things are trodden under foot; the better laity shun the churches as schools of impiety; and lift their hands in the deserts with sighs and tears to their Lord in heaven. Even you must have heard what is going on in most of our cities, how our people with wives and children and even our old men stream out before the walls, and offer their prayers in the open air, putting up with all the inconvenience of the weather with great patience, and waiting for help from the Lord.”

In response to these challenges, St. Basil sought capable men to serve as priests and bishops. Priests trained by St. Basil were sought by other bishops.

St. Basil was also a devoted preacher. His sermons addressed the theological issues of his day, but they were pastoral and addressed the moral issues facing his people. Among his most famous sermons are those based on the Psalms and on the six days of creation, the *Hexameron*. Here St. Basil, against the prevailing belief of the Greek world, emphasized the positive nature of the created world. He also stressed the literal meaning of scripture along with the allegorical interpretation of the Alexandrians. In our own times he has been called “the prince of the patristic pulpit.”⁵

ST. BASIL THE THEOLOGIAN

St. Basil was without question a theologian. Arianism was not the only heresy of the era. There was the battle for the Trinity itself. Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil fought both heresies by defending both the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as One of the Three Persons of the Trinity. These two truths were absolutely essential to Christian faith. The two major works of St. Basil are his *On the Holy Spirit* (375) and his three books, *Against Eunomius*. The latter were written in opposition to Eunomius of Cyzicus (364 A.D.), the spokesman for Arianism. These are among his most important works.

St. Basil also worked toward the clarification of the theological terms *ousia* (nature) and *hypostasis* (person).

On the doctrine of the Trinity, St. Athanasius used the terms *ousia* and *hypostasis* for God *in the same sense*; even the synod of Alexandria (362) still permitted one to speak of *one and three* hypostases in God. Basil was the first to admit only the formula *mia ousia* and *treis hypostases* (*one nature and three persons*) in God.⁶ How easily we take this clarification for granted.

St. Basil died two years before the Nicene victory at the First Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D., at which his lifelong friend St. Gregory of Nazianzus presided. St. Athanasius and St. Basil had paved the way for the definition of the Council. Today, when we profess not only that God the Son is of one essence with the Father, but also that the Holy Spirit “who, with the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified,” it is due to the work of St. Basil.

Most Orthodox Christians are aware of the “Liturgy of St. Basil” which is used during the Sundays of Lent as well as several other times in the year. Although many prayers are attributed to him, this liturgy has established his liturgical position in the life of the church. The Anaphora or central prayer of this liturgy is a masterpiece. It expresses the whole story of our redemption in one majestic prayer.

Some have observed that St. John Chrysostom was the better preacher and that St. Gregory of Nyssa was the more astute theologian. St. Basil, however, did not have the privilege of a life of quiet reflection. We have 365 of his letters, many homilies, and his canonical letters, along with his ascetical and dogmatic writings. St. Basil addressed the needs of the Church when they were needed most. “It was his very devotion to the needs of the hour, the necessity of adapting himself to the difficulties of the situation, which compelled him constantly to vary his tactics and made it impossible for him to develop his rich talents in peace or follow the bent of his spirit as he wished.”⁷

Without question, St. Basil achieved so much in an otherwise short life. His icon is most interesting. Unlike so many of the Fathers of the Church, who are shown as old men with long gray beards, Basil is depicted as an ascetic man whose beard had yet to turn gray. On any given Sunday in the Orthodox Church, the prayers we pray, the Creed we profess, the liturgy that is served, are all in some way the work of St. Basil, and if one is in a monastery, virtually everything has been influenced by this great saint.

Fr. Daniel Daly
Fr. Daniel is a retired Antiochian Orthodox priest
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ORATORICAL FESTIVAL
MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

JUDGES' CHOICE FROM THE DIOCESE OF OTTAWA, PETER BONDI



The warm sun smiles on the reeds. A cool breeze rustles through the trees. The honeybees buzz around a flower patch. In the distance, the crows call and the woodpeckers tap. Suddenly, a motorboat coughs to life. Smiles are barely contained by its passengers. The water roars past the hull as the boat clears the headland. A crowd, still standing in lines after liturgy, cheers. The motorboat floats to a stop. Then, a glint of golden light flies through the air into the lake, immediately followed by splashing campers. They hold up the shining cross together. Chants of “O Lord, Save Thy People,” drift across the water.

Welcome to camp.

It is dusk now. The crickets chirp and the water laps against the shore. A moth floats along, attracted by a speck of light farther inland. The speck grows into a candle-lit window. A censer chimes, punctuating the chant of “O Lord I Have Cried.” The building emanates a sweet smell, and a peacefulness rarely felt.

Welcome to camp.

Your Grace Bishop ALEXANDER, Reverend Fathers, distinguished judges, brothers and sisters in Christ, I stand before you today with a task: to affirm and explore a promise God made to his people. Recorded in Isiah 56:4–7, this promise reads: “Thus says the LORD... My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” This passage was quoted by Jesus as he drove out the merchants from the Temple in Mark 11:17.

To understand this promise, we must examine each part: What is meant by God’s house? What is a house of prayer? What is meant by all nations?

In 1 Corinthians 12:27, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we “are the body of Christ, and members individually.” Also, an older understanding of the term *house* means all family relations, or those under one’s care, and, when referring to God’s house, it is right to include

Orthodox Christians. God’s house is primarily the living body of the Church, and secondarily a physical building.

The Church, in both the physical and communal sense, is a house of prayer. The House of God, each physical church, as well as the Body of Christ, the Church community, is made a house of prayer through weekly services. In 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, the Apostle Paul reminds us that “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit,” and exhorts us to “glorify God in your body.” Just as the physical church building is a

house of prayer, so is one’s own body. In turn, each person’s heart and *nous* can also be a house of prayer.

Besides the literal reading of “all nations” as an extension of God’s promise to different ethnicities and cultures, the original text in which this year’s theme is found reveals another meaning. In Isaiah 56, the Lord outlines his promises to those who “keep [His] covenant, keep justice, and do righteousness.” He specifically mentions the “foreigner ... and outcast” and promises to give them “in [His] house ... a place and a name” and to make them “joyful in [His] house of prayer.” God is reaching out to different nations as much as He is reaching out to different people in difficult situations. This is reminiscent of the famous quote in Matthew 11:28: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” God is offering a lifeline to all nations and all peoples: it is an individual choice to accept it.

I have thought long and hard about what it is I could offer to you in my oration concerning prayer as an Orthodox Christian teen. Buffeted on all sides by secular twenty-first-century culture, perhaps the most valuable thing I could offer is my insight. In this turbulent and demanding atmosphere, there is a house of prayer that has proved invaluable to who I am today: church camp.

Here, where one can go weeks without looking at one’s phone, where one is involved in constant service of one’s brother, where one is “praying without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), it is possible to find the focus necessary to reengage with a neglected spiritual life. I have. Here, instead of shirking one’s prayer rule, or forgetting to thank God before each meal, campers are immersed in a true house of prayer with over 200 minutes of spiritual focus each day. Camp provides an anchor in a culture of chaos and distractions. It also provides campers and staff alike with role models who inspire discipline and service. In Romans 12:1–2, St. Paul states that our bodies are to be a “living sacrifice ... acceptable to God.” Campers and staff can serve one another and sacrifice for each other, a basic principle of our Christian faith.

Many times, however, even basic principles of our Christian faith are hard to stand by. The Church’s ethos of love, humility and service is scorned by its ideological opponent: today’s vain and narcissistic culture. This year’s theme, as a declaration of faith, affirms the responsibility that each believer bears: to be staunch in our faith and act it out. We are reminded in James 2:17 of how action reveals true belief: “Faith, if it does not have works, is dead.” As the saying from St. Francis goes, “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.” St. Seraphim of Sarov has said, “Acquire a peaceful spirit, and around you, thousands will be saved.” What a great purpose this is! It is hardly easy with many distractions occupying our attention, but through prayer, other such works, and the grace of God, it is possible to achieve goals like these.

Another principle of our Christian faith concerns

the concept of the Logos. From a secular perspective, the Logos is that which shines in the darkness, revealing corruption and illuminating the hidden path. In our Orthodox Christian faith, this concept is realized in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Logos, or Word of God, commands us to humbly take up our cross, simply put, our individual moral responsibility, and to transform the world through our actions as we advance in *theosis*. The passage from which this year’s theme originates contains this concept. In Mark 11:17, Christ recalls the festival theme, and then declares, “but you have made it a den of thieves.” The Logos beckons us to ask ourselves: How, through my own fault, am I making a house of prayer into a den of thieves?

I hope and pray that this festival theme allows us the opportunity to refocus our spiritual fight, and to cherish the houses of prayer that have shaped who we are. I eagerly await the yearly reunion and loving community at camp, and continue to be strengthened spiritually by the rich community. Until then, individuals, families and church communities need our unwavering attention, commitment and prayers. In doing so, we will be joyful in God’s “house of prayer.”

Peter Bondi

VISITING OUR ORTHODOX MONASTERIES IN AMERICA



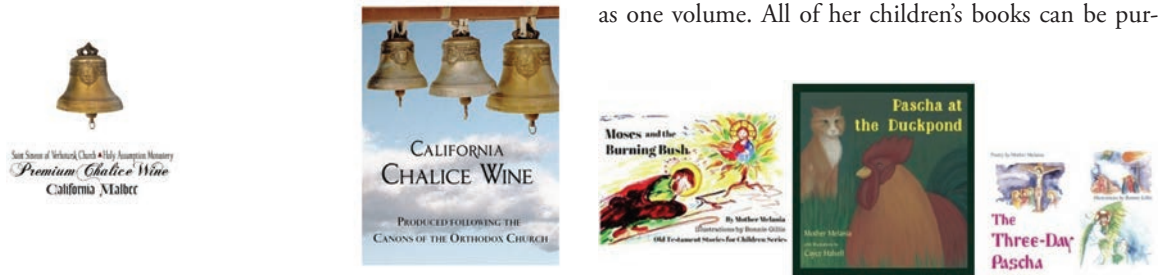
Holy Assumption Monastery (OCA) welcomes faithful pilgrims and visitors of all backgrounds to its home on the Napa River in Calistoga, California. Founded in the early 1940s, the monastery is the oldest women’s monastery in the United States. Because of various problems, including their health, however, the last nuns left in the early 1980s, and the monastery functioned as a parish until October 2009. Then the current community arrived. The sisters and the local parish (St. Simeon Verkhotursky Church, ROCOR) were both in need of means of support. As they were living in the Napa Valley making a high-quality chalice wine was an obvious choice. Thus Calistoga Orthodox Wines began in February 2011, with a mission to provide affordable, high-quality chalice wine to Orthodox churches.

Two different labels are produced – Premium Chalice Wine and California Chalice Wine. Premium Chal-

ice wine at an even more affordable price. Both wines are made according to the canons of the Orthodox Church for chalice wine.

Both wines are currently available, and can be shipped to roughly half of the states in the U.S., with plans to expand as God wills. For more information, see calistogaorthodoxwines.com.

Another form of support for the sisters is children’s books written by the abbess, Mother Melania. Her most recent books – *The Three Holy Youths in the Furnace* and *Moses and the Burning Bush* – continue the *Old Testament Stories for Children* series originally published by Conciliar Press (now Ancient Faith Ministries). Mother Melania has also recently published *Pascha at the Duckpond*, a Lenten story for children featuring the characters from her *Fearless and Friends* series, and *The Three Day Pascha*, which presents the *Three Day Pascha* series now as one volume. All of her children’s books can be pur-



ice Wine is an authentic Kagor. This name originally referred to a high-quality chalice wine made from grapes from the Cahors region of France. It now is used loosely to refer to any Russian liturgical wine made with Malbec grapes, the New-World name for the Cahors varietal, from California wine country. California Chalice Wine

chased through the monastery bookstore (holyassumptionmonastery.com/childrensbooks.html) as well as on Amazon in softcover or Kindle editions.

The sisters cordially invite you to visit, either in person or via website (holyassumptionmonastery.com).

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June 23-24, 2018

Diocese of Miami

Hosted by: St. Mary Church, West Palm Beach, FL
June 13-16, 2018

Diocese of Wichita

Hosted by: Holy Trinity Church, Santa Fe, NM
June 13-16, 2018

Diocese of Toledo

Hosted by: St. Elias Church, Sylvania, OH
June 20-24, 2018

Dioceses of New York and Washington D.C. & Oakland, Charleston and Mid-Atlantic

Hosted by St. Philip (Souderton, PA); St. George (Upper Darby,

PA) & Holy Ascension (West Chester, PA) Churches; at Antiochian Village
June 27-July 1, 2018

Diocese of Ottawa

Hosted by: St. Anthony (St. Antonios) Church, Halifax, NS
June 28-July 1, 2018

Diocese of Los Angeles/Eagle River

Hosted by St. George Church, Portland, OR
July 4-8, 2018

Clergy Symposium

Antiochian Village July 16-20

2019 Archdiocese Convention

54th Bi-annual Archdiocese Convention
St. Nicholas Church, Grand Rapids, MI
July 21-28, 2019

Parish Life Conference, Diocese of Worcester and New England June 23, 2018 held at Saint John of Damascus Church, Dedham

9:00 AM	Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
11:30 AM	Luncheons for Antiochian Women, Teens and Conferees
1:00 PM	Keynote Address and discussion led by Michelle Moujaes of Faithtree Ministries
3:30 PM	Bible Bowl
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7:00 PM	Dinner, Awards and Entertainment

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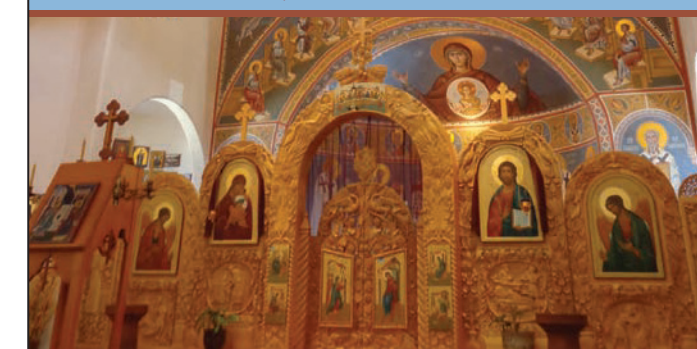
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- Saint Ignatius of Antioch

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