

THE WORD

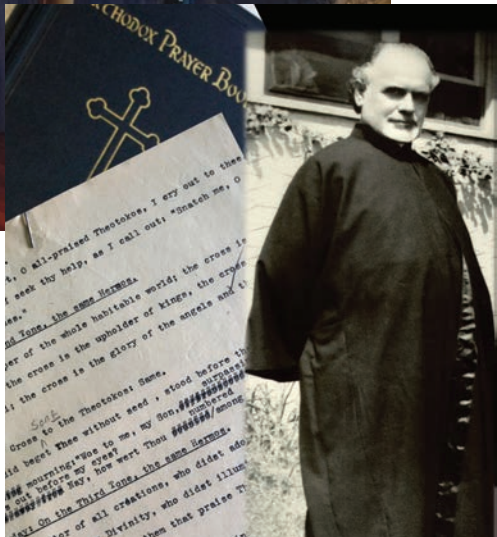
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February 2019
Volume 63 No. 2



THE WORD

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OF OUR LORD
Iconographer
Khouriye Randa Al Khoury Azar
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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.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:
U.S.A. and Canada, \$40.00
Foreign Countries, \$50.00
Single Copies, \$3.00

The WORD (USPS626-260) is published monthly, except July and August, by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America at 358 Mountain Road, PO Box 5238; periodicals postage paid at Englewood, New Jersey 07631-5238 and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster send address changes to The WORD, 358 Mountain Road, PO Box 5238, Englewood, NJ 07631-5238
ISSN 0043-7964 www.antiochian.org.

Canada Post Publication Agreement No. 40043404
Return Canada address to
American International Mail, STN A – BOX 697, Windsor ON N9A 6N4, Canada

Being the Right Kind of Christian Witness

BISHOP JOHN

I like ice cream. That can't be too bad, because Patriarch IGNATIUS and Bishop ANTOUN really liked ice cream a lot. What I like more than ice cream, however, is watching little kids *eat* ice cream. What a delight! It seems that every lick surprises them. If I didn't fear having my intentions misinterpreted, I might go to the mall and just watch kids eat ice cream for a whole afternoon. Another thing I love is watching people get excited about God. They seem not to be surprised by the fact that God loves them; when they discover this mystery, they can hardly contain their joy. This joy reflects participation in a relationship that is so totally trustworthy, without fear, and without limit. Such love allows us to get past ourselves and rediscover ourselves. This is possible through the joy and peace of the God who created this world for us out of His love. Such love brings security. We know that God cares so much that He will be with us, no matter what we suffer, whether that suffering comes because of our own errors and sins, or the errors and sins of others. Here is a protection and steadfastness that evil cannot take away, even if we suffer and our bodies die.

As we are loved, so we are called to love in His love. This love is something that takes

much time, practice and experience, before it can mature. We may think that we have arrived as we get glimpses of joy and peace at every stage of our lives. Yet age has shown me that God's love, like the finest things of this world, gets even better with age. Rather than being impatient or frustrated in our youth by the seeming incompleteness or weakness of our love, we should embrace this truth with hope and expectation. What is great, can be greater and greater.

In our relationships with one another, it is our commitment and resolve that grow as the years pass. God, however, is beyond any growth – a fullness, a Oneness of being. As we come to grasp more surely the truth that only what is eternal lives past the grave, we come to recognize what really



matters, and to live and love in this wisdom. God is Truth, and wisdom is an expression of the Truth. Truly, God is love, because in His person he expresses not only selflessness, but a total embrace. An acceptance of God makes us one with Him, and ultimately, one with all who are one with Him.

Marriage is a great blessing and Mystery of the Church, because it can express this oneness of God with His Word and Spirit, this oneness that, through Christ, He extends to us. By His Spirit, through Christ, He joins Himself to us and us to His Son, with whom He is One.

To serve as a leader in the Church, we have to get past ourselves and allow God to express His love through us. This truth extends to all levels of leadership in the Church. Parish Council members and officers, as well as choir members, church school staff, ushers, coffee-hour hosts, and clergy all must serve in the Oneness of God. We must let go of our egos, pride, and sins. Otherwise, we who stand in place of Christ's apostles become a scandal to ourselves and to the world. The world needs to see Christ in those who follow Him. What other source of the truth of the living God can the world encounter, other than the witness of His saints? Although the Church, like Christ, is divine and human, and we fall short, our best is a reasonable offering (cf. Romans 12:1–2). In our humanity we express the God to whom we were united in baptism, and whom we serve, and in whom we live, as Christians. This is particularly important for church leaders. This is our mission – in this world, at this time, and in every place we find ourselves.

Metropolitan JOSEPH often reminds us that the business of our Church is saving souls. Souls are saved by showing others how to receive and share the unity and life of God. We do this by sharing God's love, teaching His truths, showing His mercy to each other, and caring for one another as God cares for us. Anything less than this is a corruption of God's gifts and our mandate as Christians.

Visiting parishes and seeing people love and care for each other in godly ways is for me like watching little ones eat ice cream. I am delighted. I am energized as I visit parishes and see people reaching out to the greater community, caring for unwed mothers, abused families, hungry and homeless people, and students who are failing and need help. Let us continue to delight our bishops with such examples, for to do so is well-pleasing to God.

2019 DIOCESAN PARISH LIFE CONFERENCES

Diocese of Miami
June 12–15, 2019
Hosted by All Saints Church
Raleigh, NC

Diocese of Wichita
June 18–23, 2019
Hosted by St. Peter Church
Fort Worth, TX

Diocese of Toledo
June 19–23, 2019
Hosted by St. Nicholas Church
Champaign, IL

Dioceses of Oakland, New York and Charleston
June 26–30, 2019

Hosted by St. John Chrysostom Church
York, PA
Held at the Antiochian Village

Diocese of Ottawa
July 3–7, 2019

Hosted by St. George Church
Richmond Hill, ON

Diocese of Los Angeles and Eagle River
July 4–7, 2019
Hosted by St. Anthony Church
San Diego, CA

Diocese of Worcester
June 22, 2019
Hosted by St. Stephen (Springfield) and Emmanuel (Warren)
Held St. George Church, Boston

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The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS

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Bishop JOHN

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Founded in Arabic as
Al Kalimat in 1905
by Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny)
Founded in English as
The WORD in 1957
by Metropolitan ANTONY (Bashir)

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358 Mountain Road
PO Box 5238
Englewood, NJ 07631-5238
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LETTER FROM HIS BEATITUDE Patriarch JOHN X of Antioch

TO HIS ALL-HOLINESS, ECUMENICAL
Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW

REGARDING UKRAINE

Translated from Arabic

No: 100/2018

Your All-Holiness, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, beloved brother and concelebrant in Christ the Lord, Kyrios Kyrios Bartholomew. With great joy, we embrace Your Beloved person in the Lord and we say,

In these blessed days of the Holy Incarnation of our Lord, we lift up our warmest supplications for the abundance of your good health and deep prosperity. May this upcoming year bring forth God's mercies and blessings on the Orthodox world and all the world.

We are in receipt of your letter dated December 24th, 2018, in which you inform us of the developments related to the Orthodox Church in the State of Ukraine, with which we are familiar. We do not hide from Your Loving Person that it was alarming to us, not just for the disunity it has generated in the Orthodox Church, but also because it continuously disregards the opinions of the local Orthodox Churches.

Your All-Holiness, out of our love for your noble person, we would like to assure you that it is our desire to see the unity of the Orthodox world strengthened and consolidated during your auspicious era. It seems from your letter that you have resolved to continue the process of granting autocephaly and finalizing it on the day of the Holy Theophany. Thus, we appeal to you not to take any decision that does not carry the consensus of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches. For it is unreasonable to end a schism at the expense of the unity of the Orthodox world.

In this letter, we wish to express to you, with fraternal love, that we continue to consider that it is most beneficial for the peace of the Church and Her unity, and for the common Orthodox witness in our world today, to suspend and postpone this process until the Ukrainian issue is examined, and a pan-Orthodox solution is found.

We therefore adjure Your All-Holiness to call your brothers, the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, to examine these matters, in order to safeguard our Church from the dangers that will not lead to peace and harmony, either in Ukraine or in the Orthodox world.

Our love for our Orthodox Church and for your Beloved Person prompts us to write these words, with our hope to see the Orthodox world united, especially in your auspicious era, attesting to the Truth of our Lord Jesus Who was incarnate for the salvation of the world. I conclude with the best greetings from Damascus, filled with the love of the Holy Church of Antioch's children.

Damascus, 31 December, 2018.

John X
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East





بطريركية أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للروم الأرثوذكس
Patriarcat Grec-Orthodoxe d'Antioche et de tout l'Orient

رقم: ٢٠١٨/١٠٠

الأخ الكلي القداسة، بطريرك القسطنطينية-رومية الجديدة والبطريرك المسكوني، المحبوب جداً بالمسيح يسوع الإله، وشريك ضعتنا في الخدمة، السيد برثلماوس، يغمرنا الفرح ونحن نقبل أخوتكم الجليلة في الرب ونقول، نتوجه إليكم في هذه الأيام المباركة، أيام التجسد الإلهي، بأحر الأدعية أن تكونوا بموفر الصحة والعافية وأن تحمل السنة القادمة رحمت الرب وبركاته على العالم الأرثوذكسي والعالم أجمع.

أيها الأخ الحبيب،

لقد تلقينا رسالتكم المؤرخة في ٢٤ كانون الأول ٢٠١٨ والتي تعلمونا فيها بالتطورات المتعلقة بالكنيسة الأرثوذكسية في الدولة الأوكرانية، والتي نحن على اطلاع على مجرياتها، ولا نخفي على محبتكم أنها قد أقلقتنا ليس فقط بسبب الشرخ الذي سببته في الكنيسة الأرثوذكسية، ولكن أيضاً بسبب ما رافقها من تجاهل لآراء الكنائس الأرثوذكسية المحلية.

الكلي القداسة،

نؤكد لكم، وانطلاقاً من محبتنا لشخصكم الكريم، أن مشتهانا هو أن نرى وحدة العالم الأرثوذكسي تنتبذ وتتوحد في عهدكم الميمون، وإذ يبدو من رسالتكم أنكم قد عقدتم العزم على الاستمرار في إجراءات منح الاستقلال الذاتي وإنهائها يوم عيد الظهور الإلهي، فإننا نناشدكم التمهّل وعدم المسارعة إلى اتخاذ أي قرار لا يحظى بتوافق الكنائس الأرثوذكسية المستقلة. إذ لا يُعقل أن تُنهي انشقاقاً على حساب وحدة العالم الأرثوذكسي.

نودّ في رسالتنا هذه أن نعبر لكم بمحبة أخوية، أننا ما زلنا نعتبر أنه من الأفيدي لسلام الكنيسة ووحدتها، وللشهادة الأرثوذكسية الواحدة في عالمنا اليوم، تعليق هذه الإجراءات وتأجيلها، حتى تتم دراسة المسألة الأوكرانية وإيجاد حل أرثوذكسي جامع لها.

لذلك نستحلف قداسكم بدعوة إخوتكم رؤساء الكنائس الأرثوذكسية لتدارس هذه الأمور لصون كنيستنا من المخاطر التي لن تؤدي إلى السلام والوئام لا في أوكرانيا ولا في العالم الأرثوذكسي.

محبتنا لكنيستنا الأرثوذكسية ولشخصكم المحبوب دفعتنا أن نسطر هذه الكلمات مع رجائنا أن نرى العالم الأرثوذكسي موحدًا، وخاصة في عهدكم الميمون، يشهد لحقيقة ربنا يسوع الذي تجسد من أجل خلاص العالم. أختتم كلماتي بأطيب الأدعية من دمشق محمّلة بمحبة أبناء كنيسة أنطاكية.

دمشق، ٣١ كانون الأول ٢٠١٨.

✙ يوحنا العاشر ✙
بطريرك أنطاكية وسائر المشرق

باب شرقي، صندوق بريد: ٩ دمشق، سوريا، هاتف: ٩٦٣ ١١ ٥٤٢ ٤٤٠٠/١/٢/٣ فاكس: ٩٦٣ ١١ ٥٤٢ ٤٤٠٤

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APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

BISHOP ANTHONY'S SECOND PRESENTATION TO THE CLERGY SYMPOSIUM

TODAY I WILL CONCENTRATE MORE ON THE THEOLOGY OF THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION; LATER WE WILL CONSIDER ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION. THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR PRIESTHOOD, SO I WILL BEGIN WITH IT, BUT BEFORE THAT I WOULD LIKE TO ANSWER A FEW QUESTIONS THAT I HAD AFTER I LEFT YESTERDAY. ONE HAD TO DO WITH WHAT I SAID ABOUT JESUS AS THE REAL ARCH-PASTOR. I HAD SAID THAT HE LED NO SOCIAL MOVEMENT, HE DIDN'T CREATE ANY CHANGE IN THE WORLD, NOR DID HE EVEN ADVOCATE A CHANGE FROM THE TYRANNY OF THE ROMAN IMPERIUM. SOMEONE ASKED, "WELL, HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THE WORLD? ...



Do we have this concern? because I have these worldly concerns about the Church addressing different cultural phenomena that we would say assault the Church, or changes in the culture that concern us." I have a certain perspective on this, as I've been studying Western culture since the Twelfth Century. (This doesn't make me complacent in answering these questions.) I would like to place the question in the eschatological context, or the context of the kingdom.

I said as an aside yesterday that in the Western European Christian experience, you have St. Augustine in the Fourth Century, saying essentially, "I believe, therefore I am." You get to the post-Renaissance and the scientific revolution of Descartes, and he says, "I think, therefore I am." Move six hundred years forward, and it's "Who am I?" Not only "Who am I?" but "What am I?" These are fundamental, existential questions that the world is responding to in almost a rapid-fire, machine-gun way. I would like also to say that I do not believe that this is completely negative. The world is looking for answers, and the only place it knows to look, because of its secular scientific bias, is itself: the world. So it's trying to find, I would say, a utopian solution to a spiritual problem. That's the fundamental situation that we find ourselves in as priests, and that's why, in my view, there's a danger in responding to every incident that happens in the world.

People are looking to replace theology with a

temporary ideology. As soon as we make a response in any of these worldly directions, they want to put us in the category of ideology. "Oh, that's what the Orthodox Church thinks. Oh, they agree with the Catholic Church, or the Protestant Church, or whatever conservative or liberal group there may be." So you face a big problem when you take the fullness of the experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church and try to explain it in terms the world can understand. They're going to put us in a framework that we should never be in.

We must concentrate on the kingdom that is come. "Thy kingdom come": that's how God's will is done. That's why it seems like the Eastern Church doesn't have the kind of preoccupation with the world that the Western Church does, or that the Western Church is perceived to have. Having said that, I personally admire when they do speak out on certain issues. But they have more of an affinity for it anyway, since they taught the world how to *be* the world, since the whole educational system was founded on the great twelfth-century Renaissance and university life, especially in northern Germany.

We must see the reality of the eschatological kingdom. Christ has come; Christ is still here with the Holy Spirit; and Christ will come again in a second and glorious coming. The kingdom of God is already inaugurated and initiated through Divine Liturgies, especially in the gathering of the Divine Liturgy around holy Communion, which is

the *raison d'être*, the very purpose, of the apostolic succession, referenced already by all our hierarchs, in particular His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH.

Let me bring out some of the things in the Liturgy, to hear exactly why we are concerned with a dynamic movement from glory to glory, in a never-finished communion with God for all eternity. Salvation is not a static thing; it's not a finished thing. That's why I said the priesthood is that prolongation of opportunity for redemption and renewal. We must know, then, that it is not the movement of temporary history with which the Church is really concerned; it's the dynamic growth of each individual soul, the saving of souls, that the Church is interested in. This mystical unity is already taking place. Saints are everywhere in the Church at this moment, and they're being formed, they're being born into the other world. It's very, very important that we see ourselves as priests, and as all together giving birth to people for the kingdom of God, especially in the mystery of holy baptism, the sacrament. Of course, we continually form them: didn't St. Paul say, "I am in travail until Christ be formed in you"? That's our main preoccupation, and occupation.

This is really shown in such a beautiful way in our Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which puts all the events of Christ's life – the cross, the grave, the resurrection, the ascension, the sitting at the right hand, and the second and glorious coming – all accomplished, in that moment of the *anaphora*. Isn't that true? And we pray for patriarchs, apostles, prophets, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and every righteous spirit made perfect, especially the most-holy and glorious ever-Virgin Mary and Theotokos? Isn't that wonderful? Even we can see she's the completion of all holiness, more honorable than the cherubim, more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim. Even then we still pray, especially in the eucharistic service, even for her, because she is in a dynamic state of ever getting closer to her own Son, and that is a huge mystery.

That is the most important thing: the kingdom of God with us.

I also wanted to finish what I said in regard to the Scriptures and the sacredness of the priesthood in its absolute beauty. I want to look at it more in its mystical sense. I know that Bishop JOHN just talked about it in its broadest sense, which includes the laity, but I want to concentrate on the exclusivity

of that priesthood. I want to use the Fifth Chapter of Ephesians, to make a direct connection between the priest and marriage, the mystical marriage, to the altar, Christ being the first High Priest, and we reflecting that marriage in our life. The altar of Christ *is* the spouse of Christ; it's the bride of Christ. It's in Scripture itself. When we celebrate the divine mystery, we are celebrating the marriage of heaven and earth. We are giving our total and complete devotion and love to Christ, the High Priest. I think this is the mystery that St. Paul talked about in Ephesians 5, even more than in the marriage between man and woman on earth. **"As the Church is subject to Christ, so let women be subject to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (the bride walking down the aisle) ... He who loves his wife loves himself."**

Because the priest gives, *in* himself and *with* himself, to this altar, to this mystical marriage, then this is it: **"This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church."** This refers to Christ and the Church. Now I'll go to Revelation 19:6 and following: **"Alleluia! The Lord Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. It was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure, the linen of the righteous deeds of her saints."**

The reference to linen, scarlet and fine stuff is interesting: this is the tabernacle's construction in the Old Testament, as they left Egypt and went to the Promised Land. This is the marriage that's really talked about. I repeat what I said: At our ordinations, we are sort of elevated out of the world. We're from the world, but we're out of the world. We have a divine and celestial place at the one, eternal throne in heaven. There are innumerable earthly altars, but it's that one altar that really draws our identity and is the reflection of Christ to the world.

So there is a real exclusivity, in my view, about the ordained priesthood.

Now for the apostolic succession itself: I want to do a Bible study first on the apostolic succession, because I think it's very interesting, and I want you to follow the sequence and the chronology according to the synoptic gospels [Matthew, Mark,

Luke] and all the way through in the gospels. I may include a number of surprising passages, ones that you wouldn't necessarily have thought relevant. Of course, we have His genealogy, His birth, and then we have His baptism. Immediately after His baptism, He makes a very short exhortation: **"Repent, for the kingdom of God has come to you,"** or "has come upon you," and, depending on your translation, "repent" or "change." He immediately calls not "the world" to change, but each person.

Then after the call to change, we move into the temptation scene. The two most detailed accounts are St. Matthew's and St. Luke's; I want to use St. Luke's because the part regarding the kingdoms of this world is more elaborate than that in St. Matthew's. We read, **"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil, and He ate nothing in those days. And when they were ended, He was hungry, and the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.'" And Jesus answered in complete alacrity and calmness, in the peace that He had from His Father, "It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone." "And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said, 'To you I will give all authority and glory, for it has been delivered to Me, and I will give it to whom I will. If you then will worship Me, it will be yours.' And Jesus said, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve'" (compare Deuteronomy 6:3–8).** Here our Lord gives a perfect, exact quotation to the devil, with complete clarity, without any sign of tiredness, startling the Adversary's spirit.

Let me tell you a little theology, which you may know, to put this in context. Jesus is going to call these Apostles, these special people, right after the temptation, to take them out of the world. The world is as described by the Adversary's spirit: *bread*, which means prosperity; *popularity*, supposedly gained by jumping off the Temple peak; and *power*, which is ruling the world. Plenty, popularity, power: all that the world can give us, Jesus has now officially, purposefully, consciously, rejected in Himself.

What, then, is the purpose of all of this? He comes to call the Apostles in a particular way to leave the world. St. Maximus the Confessor gives us a text on this theme which is bulky and ponderous, but full of beauty. He was reflecting on the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil in paradise, and said something so outstanding and balanced and beautiful. He said that Adam and Eve ate from a tree that was *good*, but they had a *bad* motive for eating a *good* thing. It was a good tree, but, because man was made both spiritual and material, and the tree was more immediate to the gaze and more essentially beautiful, and it didn't take as much work to see that God was the Giver of this gift, just to take it as an autonomous thing of its own was evil.

He took that fruit for itself, and then they were trapped by the pleasure it gave him, by the passions. Once he was trapped by that, he became imprisoned by his present satisfaction in that thing. St. Maximus says that God would eventually have allowed him to take pleasure in the material world, but only after he could detach himself from that by thanking God – *eucharistos* – and then appreciating it from a distance.

Then St. Basil the Great – we celebrated the feast day of St. Macrina, his sister, and St. Emilia, his mother – said man treated the gifts that God gave him so casually that he became lazy. Because he was lazy, he ate of the tree. Both those explanations apply: man had an unusual desire to have the things of the world, to think that those things in themselves could make him happy. As we all know, however, "I can't get no satisfaction." It was impossible. This is why he had to leave, on Forgiveness Sunday, paradise itself.

Let us keep this in mind as we go on. Now, Jesus was rejecting that reverse order that the Adversary spirit had offered. He wasn't looking at the bread first; He was looking at His Father first. He was looking at the word before the bread. He was looking at obedience before the popularity of His own gifts. He was looking at God's authority, and He wanted to be a servant, rather than a master. All of that was what the first Adam had missed. This is why He faced and overcame the temptations.

Consider next the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus teaches the disciples. It says that they were around Him. We don't learn what "the disciples" means, but there's a certain exclusivity to the notion of the Apostles hearing the Sermon on the Mount. We can say that the Twelve were there, and even others beyond that, but certainly the Twelve were there. They were given certain prescriptions for how to live that life. Immediately, Jesus tells them they must pray, they must fast, and they must give alms (Matthew 6). He was *introducing them to the*

What did He teach them? Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. I think those are the two main beatitudes that apply directly to the priesthood.

ascetical struggle, to the struggle to reverse the love, the misdirection of affection, the *misfire of desire*.

What did He teach them? Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. I think those are the two main beatitudes that apply directly to the priesthood. (Of course, you can't really discriminate; they're all great.) St. Symeon the New Theologian, or perhaps Isaac the Syrian before him, said that there are three levels of priesthood. There is the carnal level, there is the righteous level, and there is the spiritual level. The spiritual level is the state of deification and sanctity that you can even achieve to some degree on earth. The righteous level is doing the commandments of God with dutifulness and willingness, though all our thoughts are not conforming to our actions. And the third, the carnal, is not even knowing what to do.

I think we should all be striving in humility for the righteousness of the priesthood. "Illumine our hearts, O Master, with the light of thy Gospel teachings. Implant in us also the fear of thy blessed commandments, that, trampling down all carnal appetites, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto thee. For thou art the illumination of our souls and bodies." The illumina-

tion of our bodies comes through the brightness of our souls, which comes through the purity of heart, which comes from prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (the final sections before Chapter Seven in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of St. Matthew).

that there is a super-hierarchy, though there are distinctions among hierarchs. For example, we have Peter, James, and John, who our Lord trusted greatly, so even among the Twelve, they were especially close. Sometimes Andrew was included in that group, and then the beloved disciple John was told to take care of His mother at the crucifixion. What more can you say about that? My belief is the belief of the Church: you cannot conflate or coalesce personal relationships of Christ with the Apostles, with an institutional order of superiority.

Of course, there were no vicars; there were no substitutes. Neither was St. Peter, although he was clearly a spokesman for the Apostles, and perhaps had a position as an elder among them. We see this in Scripture, because, when Jesus asked them, "Who do men say that I am?" Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and, of course, Peter was speaking for *them*. So it wasn't a prerogative of the one; it was a consensus of the whole.

We have this understanding that the Twelve are really equal in their love for the Lord, and that's the basis for the hierarchy as they go forward. What did He say to be with them? He sent them out to preach and to have authority in the same way that He had authority (Mark 3, 10, 11, and the other synoptic gospels). For this reason, already when Christ was here with us He gave the Apostles to be over the future community, because they were the ones who in fact gathered the crowds. They were the ones who discovered who had the bread, who had the fish. They were already active members in the ministry, even before they were invested with that special power to bind and loose (the twentieth chapter of the Gospel of St. John). They were active in ministry even before they were invited to the Last Supper, which was a radical change in the Seder meal of the Passover.

Therefore Jesus confers upon them His own authority. "All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to Me so that you can make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And I am with you always, even to the close of the age." "I am with *you*, and with everyone that's with *you*, until the close of the age." The apostolic succession itself

is a guarantee of Christ's continuing presence in the community. I think that's really the meaning of that last sentence: "I am with you always, even unto the ends of the earth."

This kind of close relationship is remarkable. "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (Luke 10:16). Indeed, the light of that resurrection was given to the Apostles in all that Jesus did. Their mission was not theirs; it was Jesus' mission, and that's why He took them from a state in which, if I may say, they were always obedient. Remember, they were obedient to their father, the sons of Zebedee, and He said, "Come, I will make you fishers of men." Immediately, they left the boat of their father, and they followed Him, because they were already trained in that kind of obedience. As we know from the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, they were ready, prepared by the Father to be received by the Son, already providentially prepared by the Father Himself. So when Jesus came to them, they were already known, in a very charismatic call from the Father.

The writings of the Old Testament provide the background to this notion of stone and rock and the foundation of the Apostles. The Scriptures report on the liturgical garments and adornment of the Aaronic priesthood, laying particular weight on the stones that are placed on the shoulders of the ephod worn in the service for the most holy place, and particularly on the Day of Atonement (Numbers 16 [Exodus 39]). "The onyx stones were prepared, enclosed in settings of gold filigree, engraved like the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the sons of Israel. And he set them on the shoulder-piece to be stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, the Lord commanded Moses." *Anamnesis*, or *remembrance*, isn't a past event, but is actually to bring before God all these people remembered, which points to our *proskomedia*. Certainly this is significant for the statement made by our Lord to the Apostles in the famous verses of Matthew 16:13–16: "Upon this rock I will build my Church." "I will build it on my own high priesthood, on my own sacrifice on the cross, on my own blood that I offer to the Father on behalf of all and for all." The Church is built on Christ who is the rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), as St. Paul declares. St. Peter says in his first letter: "Come to him, that living stone, rejected by men, but God's chosen and precious

vessel, and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be that holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God."

This is his messianic mission, and there are so many Scriptures that emphasize this. Here are a few: Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22, 1 Peter 2:4–6. The foundation stone, the corner stone, spreads out like a concrete floor that includes the Apostles, who are made in the same composite aggregate, if I can extend the metaphor, as the Son. You are fellow-citizens with the saints, members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and the prophets: Jesus Christ, being the cornerstone, in whom the whole temple is held together, being built up to the glory of God in the Spirit. This is being grafted into Christ directly, the city of the true and spiritual Jerusalem, the city of God, the kingdom of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Here is one more verse, from Revelation 21, to tie it all together: "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lord." There cannot be a king unless there's a kingdom. There cannot be a kingdom unless there's a city, the heavenly Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven to the earth, the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of truth. The foundation of the golden city of Jerusalem, come down out of heaven (Revelation 21 and 22) is of course the Apostles themselves.

A kind of a basis for the priesthood is that the Apostles are being considered by Jesus to be His brothers, as having an equal access to the Father (Romans 8), "Abba, Father." Then we learn that the Holy Spirit comes to teach them prayers, how to pray, because we do not know how to pray as we ought. Then in Galatians, that same "Abba, Father" called for them. This is particular to the Apostles, that they can teach us. In a way, they're taught the Lord's Prayer first so they can teach the people. How do we know? That's preserved beautifully in the Orthodox Church, in the liturgy itself, where the hierarch leads: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." That's why Orthodoxy has kept it resplendent and pure. Just as Jesus gave the prayer to the Apostles, He gives it to those in the apostolic succession, and we lead it.

It's not diffused, or diluted, or neutralized in a kind of vague priesthood of everyone. There's nothing wrong with the "priesthood of all believers," but that is not the main thing here. It has to come

A kind of a basis for the priesthood is that the Apostles are being considered by Jesus to be His brothers, as having an equal access to the Father (Romans 8), "Abba, Father."

through the font of grace that’s delivered to the Apostles, to the hierarchs, to the priests, to the people. Isn’t it interesting that He calls them friends in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. John. He’s getting them ready to take up His ministry. “Truly, truly, I say to you: greater works than these will you do, because you have loved Me, because I send you the Spirit.” The possibilities of power on earth, for the ordained clergy, I think are far greater than we envision, because we are enshrouded by this tent of scientism that says, “Okay, you’re a material thing. You may have a soul, but it’s so vague.” Christ spends all His time building up the spiritual power of the Apostles before He invests them with the breath of life, that’s renewed in the twentieth chapter of St. John’s Gospel.

“I am the vine; you are the branches,” He says to the Apostles. “He who abides in Me and I in him, it is he that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” They’re a part of Him; they can’t be apart from Him. Bishops are connected to this vine as well, as additional branches that fill out the tree. If bishops stay in grace, they are like the Apostles and possess the power of the Apostles. “If you abide in Me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you.” Those are powerful words, “Ask whatever you will,” because by the time Jesus begins His departure from this earth, He has to leave them with confidence despite the fact that He was leaving. They have stayed with Him through everything.

Remember how, in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, when He talked about the manna from heaven, He said, “I am the bread of life. No man comes to the Father except by Me,” and, “You cannot live without this bread. Unless you eat of my body and drink of my blood, you have no life in you.” Many of the disciples who had followed Him up till that time could not follow Him anymore. They said, “This is a hard saying. Who can do it? Who can hear it?” But the Twelve stayed, so by the time they got to this point, they were completely *for* Him, so He could open to them the confidence that they could go to the Father: “Whatever you ask, it will be done for you,” because He already knew they only were there for Him. It could be done for them because the Apostles were there for Him.

In Christ, the Apostles have a direct relationship with the Father and access to Him. “You have received the spirit of sonship. When you say, ‘Abba,

Father,’ it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God (the Father), and if children, heirs: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:15–17). The words of Jesus reveal an ever-deepening relationship with the Apostles. “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide. So whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it unto you” (John 15:16).

After this, Jesus expands and broadens this authority, universalizing it – and it’s hard to say this – making it identical with His own, as long as they remain in the Holy Spirit, the Consecrator of their spiritual gifts, the Counselor to make sure that they remain in Christ, and the Comforter, that when they suffer for Christ He will be in their midst. It’s so beautiful to think about these things in the life of St. Peter himself. You recall from the Gospel of John, that, following Peter’s denials of Jesus, the Lord brought Peter back to Himself so beautifully. Somewhere, perhaps in *The Medicine of Repentance*, I read that, for the rest of his life, whenever St. Peter heard the rooster crow in the morning, he cried all over again, but he never stopped trusting that the Lord had called him back. He returned to communion and as the elder and leader of the Twelve. Also, when they were bringing him in Rome to crucifixion, he insisted on being crucified upside-down, “because I do not deserve to be crucified like my Lord.” So the Spirit of Jesus is all three: He is the consecrator, He is the counselor, and He is the comforter.

Later in St. John’s Gospel, Chapter 20, when they receive the Holy Spirit, He re-creates them, these people. We read in Genesis, “Then God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being” (2:7). In the Gospel of John, Chapter 20, even before they get to the fullness of the Book of Acts, Chapter 2, and the Pentecost event, He breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” They’re re-created, for the new man to develop in them.

Let me go back to the beginning: we see that the ascetical training now does not let the things of the world dominate. Plenty, popularity, and power are not to be the touchstones of their identity in Him; now they are going to look to a heavenly life first. Once that is established, because they are prepared as new men, He gives them a new spirit. “The first

man, Adam, became a living being, and the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. As is the man of heaven, *so will those be who are of heaven*,” *those* being the Apostles (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47).

This is the grace for *these* Apostles; then the line of succession is given to the Church: *this* power and authority, to create new men and women in Christ, by being ourselves ushered into the very throne room of God in that mystical way, but holding the glory that He has before all the ages, even seen in the vestments of the bishop and the priest. When the bishop makes His entrance prayers, He brings his cane and his staff, the *worldly* staff. When he comes out, it’s *golden*. Before he goes in, he’s in the garments of penitence and the sacrifice on the cross. He is Isaiah 53. When he comes out, he is Daniel 7, the Son of man coming from heaven, and Isaiah 11, the Messiah, the conquering hero, the real “superman.” The real “superman,” the image of Him: that’s the great thing. That’s the apostolic succession, to bring that to the people.

I want to say that in other Christian bodies – and you know what they are – this idea of priesthood in any exclusivity is so diffused and diluted that *charismata* can become emotion. It’s like taking a glass of water, and spilling it on the ground, and saying, “Well, there’s the water,” but it’s so thin, it evaporates before the sun goes down. In the Church, however, there is a legal, institutional carrier of *charismata* in the sacraments themselves, given by the hierarchy, especially the bishops, at the consecration of the holy things. This really determines the future of the whole world. It’s only within this body that the *charismata* are maintained.

Because they lack the apostolic succession, over time, those in other Christian bodies came to believe that you did not really take the body and blood of Christ, that it was enough to accept Him as your Lord and Savior, and you come just as you are, however you are. Now, I’m not making a value judgment on that, but when you hold this attenuated idea of the *charismata*, soon the sacraments become so ethereal, unreal, invisible, and without tangibility, palpability, or availability, that they don’t matter. All that matters is what you think about Him. How can that save?

How many of you are doctors? Perhaps somebody is a doctor. Well, you’re spiritual physicians. We travel so much in hotels, don’t we, brothers, that we often get those bronchial colds? The whining

and wheezing of the furnace or the air conditioner becomes ever-present. I try to forget them. People say, “Put earplugs in.” It doesn’t work. Then you get chest colds, and you have to take azithromycin, which is a *great* medicine. If you take five of them, you’re good. Sometimes I just go to the doctor. But my analogy is this: The doctor can say to me, “If you take this antibiotic, you’ll be better.” I could say, “Okay,” but if I kept it on the shelf, I wouldn’t get better. I can say, “Christ is our Lord and Savior, and He has saved me,” but if I don’t take that body and blood of Christ, if I am not *in* the kingdom of God through baptism, if I am not being disciplined by the holy orders, if my marriage has not become sanctified and the two become one flesh, and so forth, that is not really a *partaking*. That is a *thinking* of partaking. It’s not the same thing. So this is the guarantee of the apostolic succession, and the only way forward, it seems to me.

I’m going to end with a reflection on the *epiklesis*. Remember when Jesus said a startling thing in John 16? He said, “You no longer have to ask the Father in my name. Whatever you ask the Father, He will give it to you because you have loved Me and He has loved Me.” What did they ask for? “Send down thy Holy Spirit upon these gifts here spread forth, and make this bread the very body of thy Christ, and that which is in this cup the very blood of thy Christ, changing them by thy Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen.”

As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the Teachers have dogmatized, as the universe has agreed, as Grace has shown forth, as Truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as Wisdom has presented, as Christ awarded: thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ our true God, and honor His saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in holy icons; on the one hand worshiping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring His saints as true servants of the same Lord of all, and accordingly offering them veneration.

This is the Faith of the Apostles; this is the Faith of the Fathers; this is the Faith of the Orthodox; this is the Faith which has established the universe!

All of the talks of the Clergy Symposium are available at Ancientfaith.com. Special thanks is given to Ancient Faith for transcribing and making these talks available.

THE GLORY OF THEOPHANY

Fr. Josiah Trenham

OH, THE SMELLS OF THE SEASON! THESE ARE HAPPY DAYS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, AND THE SMELLS OF NATIVITY AND THOSE INCREDIBLE POINSETTIAS IN THE CHURCH, AND THEN YESTERDAY, THE SMELL OF THE MAGNIFICENT BASIL AND THE ROSEMARY AND THAT SCENTED GERANIUM, SPEAKING FORTH NEW LIFE AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE WATERS. SPLENDID DAYS . . . NOT THE BEST, BUT SECOND BEST. PASCHA'S THE BEST, AND NATIVITY AND THEOPHANY A CLOSE SECOND. YET JUST AS IN THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS, THAT SUBLIME NIGHT, THERE WERE ANGELS REJOICING AND A FEW MEN, THOSE HUMBLE SHEPHERDS, PIPING AND SINGING PRAISE TO THE LORD, THERE WAS ALSO SCHEMING. HEROD WAS ABOUT HIS NASTY BUSINESS. THERE WAS A MIX OF JOY AND SADNESS; AND THERE ALWAYS IS, IN OUR CELEBRATIONS OF THE FEAST OF THE LORD IN THIS FALLEN WORLD. WE ALWAYS HAVE A MIX; WE FEEL THE POTENCY OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND HIS MIGHTY ACTS THAT HE HAS DONE FOR US, THAT THRILL US, AND ESTABLISH US IN JOY, AS THE NORMATIVE WAY WE CHRISTIANS LIVE. WE CARRY THAT JOY CAREFULLY, IN THE MIDST OF MANY SORROWS.

I had a conversation with someone. It ended very beautifully. One of our young ones was sent by his or her parents to come see me, because he was having a hard time with going to church, and staying in church. I said, "What's the hard time?" This little one said, "Church interrupts my fun time." We had a nice conversation about reasonable fun time and what "reasonable fun time is," meaning that nice time for relaxation when your duties as a person, as a son or daughter of God, and as a member of a family, a friend, and maybe a student, or worker, are done. *Reasonable fun time.*

I'm afraid that Christmas, especially the services to commune with the Son of God who has become a man, in some places "interrupt our fun time," those other seasonal things we do. I really don't think that is going to fly. It certainly doesn't fly for me or for any priest I know, and it's certainly not going to fly on the day of judgement. How backwards, that the celebrations supposedly in honor of Christmas, steal from the actual celebration of Christmas!

Recently during Royal Hours, because no chanter was available, I found myself at the chanter's stand, reading the psalms. Royal Hours are served

before Christmas, Theophany and Pascha. We read three psalms at the hours in preparation of the feast (at the first hour, the third hour, the sixth hour, and the ninth hour), followed by a magnificent collection of hymnody about the feast itself. We prepare ourselves both mentally and spiritually by these beautiful hymns. At the third hour we read Psalm 41; here is the heart of a God-lover, the heart of a believer, thirsting to be near God, to stand before His face, considering the church to be a place that is a wondrous tabernacle. Therefore he goes with a voice of rejoicing and thanksgiving. At the sixth hour we read Psalm 73. It describes exactly the opposite mentality, a "God-hater." The psalmist describes the mentality of those that can't be bothered with God. They certainly can't be bothered by the feasts; they want them out, gone. It is sad, of course, when we ourselves abolish the feast days, for ourselves and for our families, by choosing to be distracted by the externalities of life, and to miss the heart. Theophany cannot be neglected by God-lovers.

Theophany has to be jealously held onto and cherished, as is Christmas and Pascha. On this day, as we celebrate our Savior's Baptism, we remember

the preciousness of the hand of a priest. The Theophany service mentions several times St. John the Baptist's hand, and it says something unusual about it – it was trembling. The hand of a priest is an awesome thing. And it's awesome to be touched by the hand of a priest. I remember the very first time the hand of a priest touched me. I remember making my first confession, as a twenty-five-year-old young man. I remember the first time, when I was done, I thought I was going to die! I did. Nervous is not even a word sufficient for describing my experience. And, I remember when I was done, the priest putting his *epitrachelion* on my head, and then I felt his hand, I can feel it now, for the first time on my head. What a relief!

It's awesome to be touched by the hands of a priest. It's even more awesome, as a priest, to touch heads, to be able to touch them regularly in the confession, and especially on Great Saturday, to be able to stand at the font as a witness and a participant, a servant of the sacrament of baptism, and to be able to bring people into a union with Jesus' death and resurrection, to be an agent, to help people attain eternal life. It's an awesome thing.

It's most awesome, however, to touch the head of Jesus, and that's what is happening today. John was undone. He was used to baptizing. He had baptized more people than he could count. He was a preacher, *par excellence*, of repentance. People came to him in tears, wanting to change their lives. And he altered their lives and he brought them to be able to receive Jesus, by helping them take their sins seriously.

He had baptized so many, but One he was not prepared for. When Jesus drew near to the waters of the Jordan, and John saw him, he must have been absolutely breathless. How did he even speak? How did he even form any words? Somehow he did. He said, "Lord I have need to be baptized by You." Here

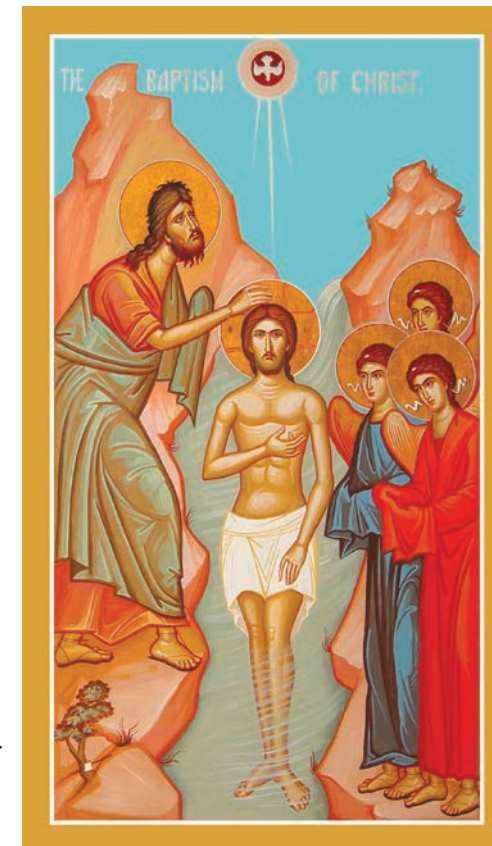
was the humble one, being humbled. This is the man who lived in the wilderness his whole life. He was so pure he refused even earthly marriage. He lived literally with the angels, but in the presence of Jesus, all he could think about was his need of the forgiveness that Jesus came to bring. "Lord, I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" Jesus said to John something very similar to what He said to Peter before He went to the Passion, when He told Peter that He was going to wash his feet. Peter said, just like John, "No, No!" Jesus said to Peter, "Peter

you'll have no part in Me unless I wash your feet." Jesus said something very similar to John: "It's necessary. It's necessary for us to fulfill all righteousness."

Jesus didn't just humble Himself, brothers and sisters, to become one of us. That is past amazing. He also humbled himself to take on the very condition of a sinner. He presented himself to John, in the condition of a sinner, the sinless One. He went into those waters, for us. When he went under the waters, He foreshadowed His going under the earth, to plunder hell. When he came up out of the waters, He foreshadowed His resurrection and His bestowal of life. As soon as He did it, the heavens broke open! He revealed in a blaze of light His Father, who spoke and said, "This is my Beloved Son,"

and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove. The Baptism of Christ opened for us the truth that He had come to save us and to induct us, to invite us into a life of the knowledge of God.

Here is the very essence of the Christian life: To know the Father, and His Son, and the Holy Spirit, to know and love the Holy Trinity. "This is eternal Life," St. John writes in Chapter 17, quoting Jesus, "this is eternal Life that they might know Thee, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Those dragons, as described in the Psalms, that hid in



the waters, those demons who possessed the waters and the lower parts of the earth, were terrified, when Jesus broke their necks. When He went Himself into the waters, He sanctified them and He turned the waters from “cauldrons of darkness” to “bearers of light,” literal spiritual electricity. The energy of grace was now being carried by water, communicating life – which is what baptism is all about. This is what He did, He came not because He needed the waters, He came because the waters needed Him! And He made them Holy, and He made them capable of giving us life, so that we can be born of water and the Spirit.

John was thrilled. Yes, he was frightened, and his hands trembled, but he also saw the very thing he had been looking for his whole life: he saw the Holy Spirit descend, he saw salvation in the Messiah and he laid aside his baptism. From this moment, he stopped baptizing. He recognized everything that he was preparing people for was done. The reality is here. Then he says these beautiful words, “He who has the bride, is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom who stands and hears him, rejoices exceedingly, and for this reason, my joy is full!” That’s John the Baptist.

When you think of John the Baptist, do you usually think of joy? Or do you think, rather, of extreme asceticism? Usually we think of extreme asceticism, the man who ate hardly anything. He ate bugs and *akrida* (?) that grew in the desert. He was a man who didn’t even allow himself human company

for most of his life, a man who conducted himself in such an intimidating way that he confronted a king, and then gave up his head for the Lord. When we think of John the Baptist, we usually think first of his great efforts, of his great devotion, his *ascesis*, but we should also think of his immense joy, because, this is the witness from his own mouth!

Why did he have so much joy? All of his efforts were for one purpose. He wasn’t trying to buy salvation; he wasn’t trying to be ascetical and fast so much that God would owe him something. He did all of those things because, with prophetic foresight, he knew the result would be that he would be near God. He would be able to stand next to his friend, the Bridegroom, and hear His voice. His joy at being near Christ would overflow.

This is what’s behind us, brothers and sisters, and all of our spiritual efforts; this is why we come to church: isn’t it to be near God, to stand near Christ, to hear His voice? When we fast, when we labor, it’s for this reason. It’s to be near Him, so that the result could be that everything He is just splashes over on us. His joy can be our joy. That’s why we do it, and that’s what we miss when we somehow allow the feasts of God to be abolished from our lives. We’re just thinking wrongly when we assume that worship somehow is interfering with our fun time. In fact, worship is the means of securing joy for the rest of your life!

Christ is baptized – in the Jordan! Amen.

Orthodox Christian Fellowship Real Break 2019

Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), the official campus ministry of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, opened registration for OCF’s Real Break 2019.

OCF’s Real Break aims to prepare college students to be socially-informed Orthodox Christian citizens of this world, while directing their focus on the world to come – the kingdom of heaven. Built on a foundation of fellowship, education, worship, and service, Real Break provides students the opportunity to understand the true meaning of seeing Christ in the other – traveling to all parts of the world deepening their faith, serving those in need, and cultivating relationships with like-minded peers.

OCF will offer nine Real Break trips in 2019.

Destinations for the Spring Break trips in March include Romania, Albania (OCMC), Houston (IOCC), Project Mexico, Jerusalem, Thessaloniki, and Alaska. OCF will also offer two trips in the summer of 2019: one to Mt. Athos (men only) and one to Jerusalem (women only).

Registration costs vary according to the trip and limited scholarships are available for those who qualify.

For more information about Real Break 2019, or to register, visit <http://www.ocf.net/real-break-2019/>. In addition, please feel free to contact OCF’s National Programs Manager, Donna Levas, for more information: donna@ocf.net or (617) 850-1227.

Deacons Meet for Training Workshop

Rev. Dn. Vasily Hinkle

On October 12, 2018, at the request of our father and Metropolitan JOSEPH, deacons and ‘soon-to-be’ deacons from throughout the Pacific Northwest Deanery (as far away as Homer, Alaska, and Twin Falls, Idaho) gathered together for a Training Workshop for Deacons, at Holy Cross Orthodox Church in Yakima, Washington. Our well-qualified instructor was Fr. Michael Habib, our Dean and the Pastor of St. Ignatius of Antioch Orthodox Church, Twin Falls. Fr. Michael, who spent years traveling and serving as a sub-deacon with Sayidna JOSEPH before his ordination to the diaconate and then to the priesthood, provided a very thoughtful and informative program focused largely on rubrics of hierarchical services, along with some other general questions.

Fr. Michael started our day by reading a letter from Sayidna, sending all his blessings, support and love to all of us and our families, and reminding us of what our diaconate means. “It is a holy office; it is a holy *diakonia*. You have to do your service with fear of God, love, faith, obedience, faithfulness, prayerfulness, honesty, and without preconditions or complaints, but rather with joy. Your ministry is no less than my ministry.”

Before we got into the meat of our instruction, Fr. Michael emphasized the core matter: serving with prayerful humility should be our focus and this, as much as education and practice, will help free us to serve, as Sayidna said, “seriously, sincerely, faithfully, devoutly, prayerfully, joyfully, gloriously, victoriously, in order to get the reward from God which is no less than the heavenly Kingdom itself.”

One of the recurring themes of the day was “muscle memory.” Each deacon took turns practicing the movements and duties of the deacons in various parts of the various hierarchal services. We would start with theory and then move to the practical, hands-on movements, developing that muscle memory that we hoped would be recalled during the actual services with our hierarchs. This practical portion was very helpful to all of us. When some of us only see a hierarch once every couple years or so, this kind of workshop is very important.

We finished the day with common questions about general rubrics in the various services of the Church. The conversations and clarifications were extremely helpful for all of us, and we enjoyed some wonderful fellowship with our brothers. At the end of the day we unanimously agreed to make this workshop an annual event, and set our calendar for next year’s date!

Rubrics education is very limited in most of our training, so having a forum to clarify issues and practice the movements of the services not only can be very helpful for the clergy, but help bring consistency in our liturgical life. This was a welcome workshop for all of us, even those who have served numerous hierarchical services. I would encourage deaneries throughout the Archdiocese to consider workshops like this for their deacons.



The Importance of Scripture

Fr. Aaron Warwick

Growing up in an evangelical community, I was taught to love Scripture from a young age. When I went to college and took classes about the Bible and learned more about the early Church and converted to Orthodox Christianity, my previous understanding of Scripture was challenged. By the time I went to seminary, I certainly had not forgotten about the Bible, but I was learning more and more about patristics, canon law, Church history, and the many other topics we evangelical converts to Orthodoxy discover as part of Orthodox tradition.

Thankfully, in seminary I was reminded of my first love as a Christian – Holy Scripture – by Fr. Paul

While emphasizing the value and importance of Scripture, Fr. Paul did not treat Scripture as a magical book that fell directly from the heavens. As a scholar, Fr. Paul analyzed every chapter and verse to help make sense of the book as a whole. After six decades of this strenuous and holy labor, Fr. Paul has left us with a gift, the culmination of his life’s work, his most recent book, *The Rise of Scripture*. Out of the many concepts and principles discussed in *The Rise of Scripture*, I would like to highlight three emphases that stand out.

First, in an age where biblical scholars and modern skeptics highlight apparent contradictions or different strains of thought in the biblical text, Fr. Paul shows the coherence within all of Scripture, including between Old and New Testaments. Far from being a hastily organized compilation of disparate stories put together by superstitious ancients, Fr. Paul shows how sacred Scripture flows from a wise, erudite school. He convincingly shows that not one dot, not one iota, appears in Scripture by accident. Every chapter and verse leads us to dismiss our pride and to put our trust in the biblical God.

Compared to most other modern scholars who view the Old Testament as being written and (or) compiled much earlier, Fr. Paul convincingly argues that its production was rather late. In fact, Fr. Paul makes the case that Scripture arises in response to Alexander the Great and his empire’s imperialist way of life. In a sense, the Old Testament is an anti-Homeric epic, contradicting the glorification of man and his triumphs found in Homeric epic. While critiquing the way of Alexander the Great, the Old Testament authors do not glorify themselves. Rather, they show humanity – from the very beginning – has lived contrary to God’s will. The Bible’s ultimate “solution” is to denigrate man’s hubris, which is the root cause of human sin and destruction. Instead of trusting in ourselves and our pursuits, the Bible encourages us to remember that we are “dust,” a mere “breath,” that appears for a short time and then returns to its earth. The way to eternal life is not through creating a kingdom on earth, but learning to live at peace with our neighbor.

Related to this point, Fr. Paul points out that the Old Testament Hebrew shows no progression or distinction between the various books. This leads

him to conclude it was one school in one period of time responsible for the text. Moreover, Fr. Paul forcefully argues that this language itself was created by the biblical writers. While this new language was based upon previous Semitic languages, its earliest attested use is in the Bible. By developing this new language, the writers of Scripture made it apparent that no human culture spoke “God’s language,” again underscoring how no human society should exalt itself above others. All humans and all cultures must instead submit themselves to the biblical God.

The second aspect of *The Rise of Scripture* I wish to highlight is Fr. Paul’s approach to Scripture as a *maschal*, a word taken from the Hebrew meaning “parable.” Setting aside the argument of the text’s historicity, Fr. Paul is able to focus on the teaching of each story. Rather than recounting mere historical facts, the Bible presents a *maschal* or parable that should impact the way we understand our lives, our world, and our relationships. For Fr. Paul, the Bible is not philosophical or intellectual *per se*, but functional. While Fr. Paul’s expertise in biblical cultures and languages illumines our understanding of the texts and their composition, his approach is always with an eye on the function of the text – answering the question, How then we shall live? By emphasizing Greek and Hebrew and the culture of biblical times, Fr. Paul helps the reader understand how the text would be heard by an original reader. When we understand this, it is no longer necessary for us to “explain” or “interpret” Scripture; the parable is clear and understandable on its own.

One early example of this approach is found in the story of Cain, Abel, and Seth. Fr. Paul points out the connection between these names and their function in the story. Cain is related to the Hebrew word “acquire;” Abel to “breath” or “vanity” (as in the book of Ecclesiastes); and Seth to “appoint.” Eve’s strange reaction to the conception of her first child, Cain (that she “has acquired a son” – though this is often mistranslated because it sounds so awkward), makes sense in light of the Hebrew. Abel appears and disappears (like a breath or something that happens “in vain”) in the story after being murdered. Meanwhile, by the time the story moves to Seth, Eve changes her approach and realizes God “has appointed her a son.” Armed with this information, the biblical reader can clearly see the default approach of human beings – to constantly acquire and seek after more – leads to destruction. Although Cain survives by God’s

protection, the genealogical line to Abraham goes through the younger son, Seth, instead of through him. While this approach of the line continuing through a younger son was contrary to the custom of its time, the biblical reader can immediately understand why the text does this. We are to view the gifts in this life not as our acquisitions of property, but as gifts appointed to us by God.

The final aspect I wish to stress from *The Rise of Scripture* is the centrality and importance of pastoral life in the Bible. The ideals of the shepherd’s life are so prevalent throughout the Bible that, by the end of Fr. Paul’s book, the reader will intuitively understand why Jesus is referred to as the “Great Shepherd.” He or she will also see why our Orthodox bishops hold a staff during the Liturgy. Related to the point above about function, the reader will also discern how we in the modern world may live more like shepherds, even though most of us find ourselves in cities or on farms, far from the life of an actual shepherd.

Related to the previous discussion about acquisitions, we humans tend to live as kings rather than shepherds. For some of us, our kingdom may be as small as our home, or even a room within our home. For others, more “successful” in the eyes of the world, our kingdom might be our business or other place of employment. No matter how large or small our realm of influence, we tend to behave as kings. Fr. Paul emphasizes the Bible’s “anti-kingly” approach. Instead of treating other people, the animals, and the larger world around us as our possessions, the Bible calls us to behave as “shepherds of the flock.” A shepherd of the flock benefits by cooperating with other shepherds, not by destroying them. Furthermore, the shepherd has no need to protect or defend “his” land because he roams around as God commanded the first man: to scatter upon the earth. Ultimately, Fr. Paul’s insight into the Bible’s glorification of shepherd life is one of his key contributions to understanding Scripture.

In the end, *The Rise of Scripture* presents a unique and novel understanding of Scripture to the modern reader. Even those not entirely convinced by all of Tarazi’s theses in the book will benefit from his wisdom and biblical vision. *The Rise of Scripture* challenges us to delve deeper into the sacred texts, to dismiss our pride and idols, and to live according to the precepts of the biblical God. I am indebted to Fr. Paul Tarazi for rekindling in my heart the love of the sacred Scripture. I thank God he has now shared the culmination of his life of ministry, teaching, and study in *The Rise of Scripture*.

Fr. Aaron Warwick is the pastor of St. Mary, Wichita, Kansas, where he resides with his wife and four children.



Nadim Tarazi, now Professor Emeritus at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. Fr. Paul rekindled the love of Scripture in my heart. In addition to learning about the content of Scripture in his classes, we were reminded how our Orthodox liturgical practice revolves around the sacred texts. For example, at the “Little Entrance,” we process with Scripture and “worship” and “fall down” before Christ, who is found in the text. As a priest offering the Sacrament of Unction on Holy Wednesday, I say the appointed prayer over the heads of the faithful, holding the Gospel over them: “I lay not my sinful hand upon the heads of those who approach Thee ... but Thy strong and mighty hand *which is in this Holy Gospel*”

ORDINATIONS

ANDREWS, Deacon Demetrios (James Peter), to the holy priesthood by Bishop JOHN on January 13, 2019, at St. Columba Orthodox Church, Lafayette, Colorado. He is attached to that parish.

BECK, Steven, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on December 16, 2018, at St. Ignatius Church, Twin Falls, Idaho. He is assigned to that parish.

BLIZZARD, Constantine, to the holy diaconate by Bishop BASIL on December 15, 2018, and to the holy priesthood on December 16, 2018, at St. George Cathedral, Wichita, Kansas. Father Constantine serves as a chaplain with the U.S. Air Force at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

BRUCE, Benjamin (Beau), to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN on January 6, 2019, at Holy Advent Mission, Atlanta, Georgia. He is assigned to that mission.

COLEMAN, Michael, to the holy diaconate by Bishop BASIL on January 6th, 2019, at the Church of St. John the Forerunner, Cedar Park, Texas. He is assigned to that parish.

GRESHAM, John, to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS on December 9, 2018, at the Church of St. Basil, Hampton, Virginia. He is assigned to that parish.

HENNISNGHAM, Deacon Michael, to the holy priesthood by Bishop JOHN on January 5, 2019, at St. George Cathedral, Worcester, Massachusetts. He is appointed Pastor of St. Stephen Church, Springfield, Massachusetts.

LASSATER, Herman (Phillip), to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN at St. George Cathedral, Worcester Massachusetts on January 5, 2019. He is completing his seminary work at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston.

LISTON, Deacon Ambrose, to the holy priesthood by Metropolitan JOSEPH on December 9, 2018, at St. Raphael Mission, Thousand Palms, California. He is assigned as Pastor of the St. Paisius Mission Chapel in Yuma, Arizona.

MAHER, Patrick, to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS on December 2, 2018, at St. Paul Church, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. He assigned to that parish.

NASRALLAH, Nicholas, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on December 2, 2018, at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles, California. He is assigned to that parish.

ROBINSON, Jesse, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on November 11, 2018, at St. Ignatius Church, Mesa, Arizona. He is returning to seminary.

ROMERO, Matthew, to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH on December 13, 2018, at Holy Transfiguration Church, Boise, Idaho. He is assigned to that parish.

ELEVATIONS

FENN, Fr. Mark, to the dignity of archpriest by Metropolitan JOSEPH on December 13, 2018, at Holy Transfiguration Church, Boise, Idaho.

DEPARTED

CHAHOUD, Father Ibrahim, of St. Mary Mission in Murrieta, California, on January 13, 2019. He is survived by his wife Jouhayan and son Georgio. Memory Eternal.

KARAM, Deacon John A. Sr. of Hanover Township on December 1, 201. Wilkes-Barre, PA. John Karam was born December 2, 1937, in Wilkes-Barre, the son of the late Abraham and Eva Saba Karam. He was a graduate of G.A.R. Memorial High School, Class of 1955, and served in the U.S. Army. He worked in various manufacturing jobs throughout the Wyoming Valley area. As a member of St. Mary’s Antiochian Orthodox Church, Wilkes-Barre he served as deacon for over forty years, and also held Boy Scouts meetings there. Deacon John was a member of the Foreman and Superintendents Association. As a fourth-degree black belt in karate, too, he was a *sensei* at the Wilkes-Barre YMCA. Deacon John and his wife, the former Judith A. James, celebrated their sixty-first wedding anniversary on October 4, 2018. He was preceded in death by his sisters, Olga Higgins, Dorothy Abda, Adele Macey and Mary Romanauski; and by his brother, Abe Karam. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his son, John Karam Jr., and his wife, Diana, of Hunlock Creek; by his grandson, John III; and by several nieces and nephews.

SAM, Jean, on January 8, 2019, in Bonita Springs, Florida. Jean was born in Detroit on September 1, 1928, to parents George and Catherine Sam. Jean received her education at Wayne State University up to a post-graduate level, and worked at General Motors in Detroit. A longtime member of St. George, Detroit, Jean sang in the choir, was a member of the Ladies of St. George, served as the bookstore manager and as a member of the Parish Council, and also chaired the Council. She also became involved in the greater Archdiocese in many ways, serving as President of the Antiochian Women in the Midwest and then as President of the NAB of the Antiochian Women, conducting workshops and seminars throughout the Archdiocese. Jean also collected articles prior to the building of the existing structure of the Museum at the Antiochian Village, before serving as Curator. She was also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Archdiocese, and Co-Chair of the 1987 Archdiocese Convention in Dearborn, Michigan. Jean was a dame of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. She was also a tireless supporter of the Department of Charities. In honor of her outstanding service to the Archdiocese, Jean was awarded the Antonian Silver Medal. In 1990 she moved to St. Elias, Atlanta, Georgia, and later to Bonita Springs, Florida. There, she was a founding member of the St. Paul parish in Naples, Florida.

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES: Seventy Years of Ecumenical Fellowship

Anne Glynn Mackoul

This past summer, in Geneva Switzerland, His Holiness Pope Francis, His All-holiness Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, and church leaders from around the globe gathered to celebrate the founding in 1948 of the World Council of Churches. This unprecedented gathering bore witness to seven decades of work and witness, during which Christian churches entered into a fellowship of churches “which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (WCC Basis).

On the occasion of the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to the WCC, the Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the WCC, observed, “Walking, praying and working together is not only the theme chosen for Pope Francis’s visit to the WCC in June 2018 on the occasion of the Council’s 70th anniversary; this describes and celebrates our long history. It is our promise for the future, our road map for the coming years, and our policy direction in our activities, and it signals the renewal of our common commitment to continue together our pilgrimage of justice and peace.”

His Holiness, in remarks to the WCC during the 70th anniversary gathering, remarked,

If we are here today, it is also thanks to all those who went before us, choosing the path of forgiveness and sparing no effort to respond to the Lord’s will ‘that all may be one’ (cf. John 17:21). Out of heartfelt love for Jesus, they did not allow themselves to be mired in disagreements, but instead looked courageously to the future, believing in unity and breaking down barriers of suspicion and of fear. As an ancient Father in the faith rightly observed: ‘When love has entirely cast out fear, and fear has been transformed into love, then the unity brought us by our Saviour will be fully realized’ (Saint Gregory of Nyssa, “Homily XV on

the Song of Songs”). We are heirs to the faith, charity, and hope of all those who, by the non-violent power of the Gospel, found the courage to change the course of history, a history that had led us to mutual distrust and estrangement, and thus contributed to the infernal spiral of continual fragmentation. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, who inspires and guides the journey of ecumenism, the direction has changed and a path both old and new has been irrevocably paved: the path of a reconciled communion aimed at the visible manifestation of the fraternity that even now unites believers (June 21, 2108, Geneva).

The history of the ecumenical movement is very closely linked with the Orthodox Church, as the first concrete proposal to establish a “*koinonia* of churches” was issued through a 1920 encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, calling on all “Churches of Christ” to form such a fellowship. The World Council of Churches today numbers among its 350 member churches (representing more than 550 million people in 120 countries) most of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches. Much could be said about the contributions of Orthodox theologians to the work of overcoming misunderstanding and divisions, and about Orthodox perspectives helping to shape consultations on modern issues. The faithful, active and committed participation by Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches in the contemporary ecumenical movement continues to provide a crucial voice and perspective from places where Christians are under stress.

Orthodox ecumenists, including those from the Church of Antioch, have brought to light the reality of Christians living outside the West, including the inter-religious context of indigenous Christians of Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, for example. Perhaps the Church of Antioch best demonstrates the witness of the Orthodox Church as not self-contained, but “dispersed like salt,” demonstrating its identity

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She also serves on
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Committee Chair.

in its vocation.

We should recall that the ecumenical movement took form during the early Twentieth Century, with intensified urgency in the post-world war era, as Christians took account of the horrors of war among their nations, and searched their own souls for missed opportunities to reject the evils that led to war. The WCC’s seventieth anniversary year notably marked other milestones: the centenary of the end of the First World War, eighty years since Kristallnacht, seventy years since the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, fifty years since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., among many others. Seventy years has also passed since the founding of the modern state of Israel, a development experienced by displaced and occupied Palestinians as the “Nakba”; leaving a region still awaiting a peaceful, just resolution. In the Twenty-First Century, there has been no lessening of urgency or importance for Christians to consult and work together on various issues; the rise of strident nationalisms, religious fanaticism, open racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. These chasms opening between “we” and “they” call upon Christians to speak about what we know.

Inter-faith initiatives have provided opportunities for the Orthodox, especially from the Middle East, to demonstrate leadership in a world that aches for reconciliation, rejecting the instrumentalisation of religion for political purposes. WCC initiatives for peace and justice in Israel and Palestine have provided important coherence to churches and organizations

working there, and has offered accompaniment for Palestinians living under occupation. WCC efforts for reconciliation on the Korean peninsula brought together delegations this summer from both North and South Korea in a powerful symbolic presence together during the anniversary celebration. WCC leadership in Africa supports initiatives for peace and reconciliation by member church leaders among Christian communities, and through interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

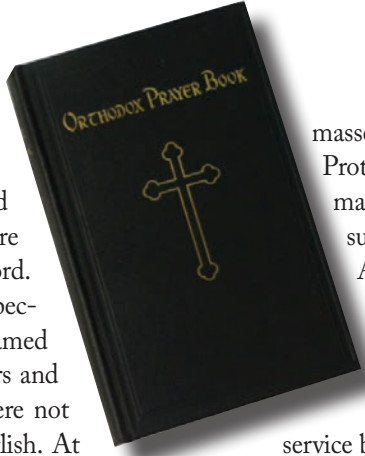
Ecumenical (inter-Christian) organizations, such as the World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, and the Global Christian Forum, (and in the United States, the National Council of Churches and Christian Churches Together), to name just a few among many, as well as interfaith organizations such as Religions for Peace, bring into dialogue those who recognize the importance of addressing the disunity of Christendom and humankind, and those who would understand both their modern historical vocation and their ancient calling. Seventy years of engagement by Orthodox theologians and representatives, of continuity with the living tradition of the undivided Church, have demonstrated the possibilities for bringing Orthodox theological and spiritual resources to the elaboration of ecumenical thought and ecumenical encounters.

Without doubt, the ecumenical movement has encountered challenges. Some, who misunderstand or do not share Orthodox ecclesiology, would prefer different models or expressions of not-yet-achieved unity, yet throughout its history, thoughtful, faithful ecumenists have searched for language that respects and reflects the integrity of the tradition in which he or she is rooted, while being respectful of those from other traditions. This mutual respect could be understood as founded not in a “suspension of all judgment,” but rather in faithful recognition that the grace of the Holy Spirit cannot be confined by the human boundaries established by mankind. Orthodox engaged in consultations and work together with Christians from other traditions are mindful of the possibility that the very presence of Orthodox Christians in those settings may become for the other a door opened into the Orthodox Church, an element of the “liturgy after the Liturgy.”

CRITICAL MASS: AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE FIVE-POUNDER

THE EPIC STORY OF HOW A SMALL-TOWN PRIEST, A HARVARD GRADUATE, AND A DEVOUT TRIO OF SISTERS CREATED THE ORTHODOX CHURCH’S LANDMARK ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TEXT BOOK OF DIVINE PRAYERS AND SERVICES.

Jake Malooley



In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. But by 1935, there was a problem with the Word. The problem, from the perspective of a small-town priest named Seraphim Nassar, was that the prayers and services of the Orthodox Church were not written down and presented in English. At St. George in Spring Valley, Illinois, where in 1925 he was assigned as the seven-year-old congregation’s first full-time priest, Nassar ministered to his flock in Arabic – his native tongue and that of the elders of the congregation, many of whom had immigrated to the United States from Lebanon. Arabic was also the language of the most comprehensive service texts available to priests and chanters. The all-Arabic services presented younger generations, for whom English was their first language, with a significant obstacle to understanding, quite literally, what in God’s name was going on as they sat in the pews every Sunday.

Nassar was sharp enough to recognize that the language barrier was present not just at St. George in tiny Spring Valley (population 5,000) but in Orthodox churches across the whole of North America, where services were conducted in the mother tongue of their people – Greek in Greek Orthodox churches, Russian in Russian Orthodox churches, and so forth. The priest shuddered at the thought of native English speakers becoming progressively alienated by a religion they were unable to follow. He imagined people across the U.S. and Canada abandoning Orthodoxy en

masse and converting to Catholicism and Protestantism. Nassar resolved that dramatic action had to be taken in order to sustain the Orthodox Church in North America and ensure its survival in the English-speaking world.

In Nassar’s view, Orthodoxy had two choices: adapt or die. In order to adapt, it would need an all-purpose service book in the English language. And so, in the mid-1930s, Nassar set about to translate Bishop of Brooklyn (and future saint) Raphael Hawaweeny’s The Book of True Consolation in the Divine Prayers, a wide-ranging Arabic service text first published in 1898. The years-long project would ultimately yield Book of Divine Prayers and Services of the Catholic Orthodox Church of Christ, published in 1938 with the imprimatur of Antony Bashir, archbishop of New York and all of North America. To assist with this massive undertaking, Nassar tapped Habib Katibah, a Syrian-born graduate of Harvard’s school of theology and an outspoken writer and activist in the Syrian diaspora of North America. (Notably, Nassar did not acknowledge Katibah by name in the preface of the book, referring to him only as “a capable person” that helped “fulfill my long cherished desire to bring this project to completion.”) The priest also sought assistance among his own flock, namely sisters Mary, Elizabeth, and Sadie Abraham, whom Nassar taught to sing the liturgical hymns in Arabic. In the book’s preface, Nassar wrote that the sibling trio “both in virtue and number represent the most essential of Christian graces – faith, hope, and charity.” The Abrahams were also named on the edition notice page as owners of

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the copyright as members of a new body with a rather prolix name: Sisters of the Sisterhood of the Propagation of Divine Services and Religious Teachings in the United States, of which Nassar served as president.

The 1,146-page doorstopper of a volume would come to be known colloquially among generations of priests and chanters as “the Nassar Five-Pounder,” or simply “the Five-Pounder.” A book identified by its weight certainly doesn’t scream “page-turner” – but due to its comprehensiveness, the elegance of the translation, as well as Nassar’s promotion of the book and English-language liturgy throughout the U.S. and Canada, the Five-Pounder became standard for Orthodox altars and has been widely acknowledged as the text that, for at least half a century, helped Orthodox Christianity survive and thrive in North America.

Even as the Five-Pounder has fallen out of favor during the past two decades with the release of new service-text translations, the Five-Pounder continues to be an everlasting source of pride among members of St. George of Spring Valley, a conspicuously modest church on a residential street in a two-stoplight town nestled between the Illinois River and Interstate-80 precisely 100 miles southwest of Chicago. That is where I grew up, where my family continues to attend services, where the Five-Pounder is still everpresent. During my years of service as an altar boy, that brick of a book, bound in midnight-black cloth, was always within reach of the priest. It was ceremonially presented to all Sunday school students upon the occasion of their high school graduation. As a child, before I learned to read, I conflated the Five-Pounder with the Bible; whatever was written on its hundreds of pages seemed utterly fundamental to unlocking some mysterious understanding of the divine.

As St. George celebrates the 100th anniversary of its founding this year, the service book the church produced stands as a kind of monument, an eternal reminder to parishioners that their humble congregation can have an outsize impact on the world. But because everyone who worked on the Five-Pounder is now deceased, what is less remembered with each successive generation is the book's dramatic creation narrative. This is that story, as told by clergy of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, liturgical scholars, and the daughter of one of the Abraham sisters. You will also read the words of the late Elizabeth Abraham Forsa, a member of the Sisters of the Sisterhood of the Propagation of Divine Services and Religious Teachings in the United States,

who decades ago discussed the work of the translation on a tape recording that was recently unearthed by her family.

PART 1: PUBLISH OR PERISH

“I, Father Seraphim Nassar, son of George, son of Elias Nassar, Orthodox in doctrine, born in Mar-sine, having long realized the dire need of my Ortho-dox Christian brethren in the lands of their dispersion, and especially of their offspring for whom the English language has become the mother tongue, was moved by religious zeal and Christian love to undertake the translation into English of an unabridged prayer book, unlike the compendiums that are now in use, for these latter do not include such prayers and services as the Great Horologia, the Psalms, the Prophecies, the Epistles, the Gospels, the Oktoechos, the Menaion, the Triodion, the Pentecostarion, the service of the Holy Mass, and the Typicon, all of which are neces-sary for every Orthodox worshipper, especially chant-ers, lectors, and, of course, Priests.”

—Father Seraphim Nassar, from the preface of
Book of Divine Prayers and Services of the Catholic
Orthodox Church of Christ

“Since most of the children of our Orthodox Church in these American countries are occupied with their worldly affairs, deserting their Church, and turning away from the worship of their Creator, on the pretext that they are ignorant of the language of their parents’ Church, religious zeal and Christian love have moved your son the Priest, Seraphim Nassar, most unworthy sinner and captive to iniquity, to translate the services of our Orthodox Church into the English language, for their enlightenment, and to arouse them from the slumber of their inadvertence, and to lead them to worship their Creator.”

—Nassar, from his petition to Antony Bashir, archbishop of New York and all of North America, seeking permission to publish Book of Divine Prayers and Services

Subdeacon Peter Samore (online liturgical guide of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America): The emigration from the Middle East to North America began around the 1870s, 1880s. So by the mid-1930s, three or four generations later, their descendants were speaking English and not even a lick of Arabic. Orthodox Christians in the English-speaking world, especially in the United States and Canada, needed a service book that would help the churches at that time perform the divine services

in their new mother tongue. Nothing much was available at that time. There had been one other book made available in the English-speaking Orthodox world, by a lady named Isabel Hapgood.

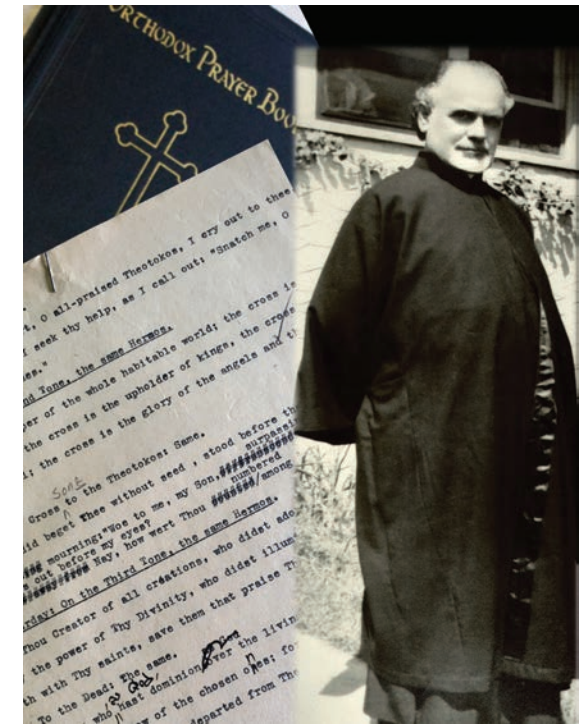
Father Edward W. Hughes (former chair of the Archdiocese Departments of Liturgics and Translations): Isabel Hapgood did a translation from Slavonic into English at the end of the 19th century. And her text is heavy, ponderous, very difficult to sing. Before the Five-Pounder, that was what people were trying to use. But it isn't useful. And there isn't as much in it. It's a much smaller book and had a smaller scope. There was nothing else, absolutely nothing else that had the amount of stuff you needed.

Ansysia Ziady Medawar (daughter of Five-Pounder assistant and St. George of Spring Valley chanter Sadie Abraham Ziady): Seraphim Nassar came to St. George in 1925, early in the life of the church. The church building, which was purchased in 1918, was a remodeled house – it wasn't really a church. And then in 1932, the congregation did what they had to do to demolish the house and build an actual church.

Samore: This was a time when the Antiochian Orthodox Church in North America was in flux. From the end of 1934 until 1936, there was no Antiochian bishop on North American soil. Eventually they got a metropolitan from Lebanon to sort of shepherd them until the churches could come up with a way to nominate candidates for the episcopacy and the Holy Synod of the Church of Antioch would elect them. They elected Metropolitan Bashir as well as Metropolitan Samuel David in 1936.

1 Something tells me that Father Seraphim Nassar went to Metropolitan Antony Bashir and said, "Look, I can do this for you." Nassar had to be a man of tremendous vision. He saw what was happening. He saw children leaving the church because they didn't speak their parents' language or the language that the clergy were using in the church. He knew English is what the children and the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren and all the subsequent generations would be speaking in this country and what they would be using to evangelize others to bring converts into the faith. Of course, Metropolitan Antony blessed the project and by 1939 he had declared English as the official language of what is now the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

Father Edward: Nassar wanted to do it. It was his vision. He wanted to do it for the young people that didn't understand Arabic. The young folks didn't



understand literary Arabic anymore. In fact, a good deal of the adults didn't either, to tell you the truth. There's a good bit of difference between literary Arabic and colloquial spoken Arabic. If people aren't educated in literary Arabic, they can't understand it. It's just noise to them. Not every parish had an Arabic chanter – and some of those weren't of very good quality. They didn't know much Arabic, so they were torturing the Arabic when they were singing it, making it even more incomprehensible.

What would it have meant to church life if there would have been no English text? It would've been a disaster. A huge disaster. The services might've actually stopped because there wouldn't have been anybody in a lot of parishes who could have even read, let alone sung, the Arabic. Church life would've come to a stop. Thank god for the sake of the Archdiocese that Nassar saw this coming.

Bishop Anthony Michaels (Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest): Nassar was a pioneer. I guess the metaphor would be that he established the first textual settlements in America. Kind of like a Lewis and Clark or something like that – somebody who planted the flag, got everything going, purchased the territory. And then people built on it from there.

Father Edward: What Nassar did was absolutely unique. In the whole Orthodox of America, what he created was absolutely unique and 100 percent

necessary for everyone. There would’ve been nothing in English, nothing, if we hadn’t had his work. The Spring Valley church – you can almost credit them with the survival of Orthodoxy in this country.

PART 2: DOING THE HEAVY LIFTING

“After years of search and investigation I was successful, by God’s help, in finding a capable person to

fulfill my long cherished desire to bring this project to completion. This solemn undertaking was begun and finished in the town of Spring Valley, Illinois, in the United States of America, with the efforts and assistance of a group of God-fearing and devoted daughters of religion, who both in virtues and number represent the most essential of Christian graces – faith, hope, and charity. Thus I was enabled to complete this book according to the pattern I had laid down, so that it fulfills all the indispensable requirements of a full service book for use in Orthodox Church.”

—Nassar from the preface of Book of Divine Prayers and Services

Medawar: When Father Seraphim came to St. George, the three Abraham sisters were so religious and so was the Abraham family, and he knew that. He picked the sisters to assist with the Five-Pounder because he knew they would

put in tons of work for him. He had to choose assistants who knew the Arabic, which the sisters did. I think the whole Abraham family was taught Arabic, because my grandfather, their father, as I recall, only spoke Arabic in the house. They had to speak Arabic in the house. And Nassar had to know people could sing those songs, so he had to translate the text into English with the Byzantine tone in mind. I’ll tell you, the three sisters were very good when they sang, especially my mom [Sadie Abraham]. My mother used to be quite a singer. She had training in that, and she and her sisters felt so strongly that the church needed music and singing. Mom loved to sing it and her sisters completely harmonized with her. Mom was the lead and the other two had their parts. I can’t even explain how she felt about it. Very strong feeling. All three of them were very much into whatever the church wanted them to do. So that’s what I think Father Nassar saw when he picked them.

Samore: Even though women were gaining more rights at that time and more respect, it still wasn’t a lot. But here come three sisters, who Nassar saw modeled after the Christian graces of faith, hope, and charity. They saw to it that their Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters would be helped in this country and in Canada. For three sisters to have that much influence and foresight and grace and perseverance to see this project through is a tremendous testimony to them and to their efforts.

Elizabeth Abraham Forsa (late Five-Pounder assistant and chanter at St. George of Spring Valley): The Five-Pounder really was a lot of responsibility. That really was, but I enjoyed it because the teaching we had received at home through my father and mother about prayers and that the best thing in life is to remember your creator. So that was kind of embedded in us. Love for God was a natural thing.

My father had set up on a table an icon, a candle, a little incense, and he would read the vespier prayers. That was every night. We could play all we wanted to, but when we were commanded to come into the house for prayers we had to. Many, many, many evenings we sat in our family room at home – we called it the sun parlor – my father would take out the book of psalms and he would read that to us, but it was in Arabic. He’d say to us: “Now, remember, there’s no English speaking at this table. You cannot speak English. If you have to discuss something between yourselves in English, you wait until you go outdoors.” The purpose of this was because he wanted us to understand Arabic. If we

didn’t know what dad had said, mom would explain it to us. She knew a little bit more English than my dad did. He never did care to learn how to speak better. He got by with a few words, but my mother was much, much better in the English language than he was. So she would explain it to us and we would sit there and listen. If we hadn’t understood Arabic, this whole thing would never have started.

Father Edward: Nassar had the genius, and there he was in Spring Valley, and he used the people around him. Because that was his parish, that was his family, and he could do that. Every priest does stuff like this for the church. They use the the parish, they use the facilities of the parish, they use the people in the parish to work for the diocese, to work for the greater church. It’s your contribution to the greater church. And because Father Seraphim was there in Spring Valley and he was doing it, the parish went with it.

The Abraham sisters had secretarial skills. At that time, generally, it was only women who had those skills. So when a priest needed somebody with basic secretarial skills, that was going to be women. And thats why he had them. They knew how to type. They probably could take shorthand notes too.

Medawar: Elizabeth was the one I am sure, I am positive, did most of the typing. I’m pretty sure she was instrumental in that. The other two sisters were also instrumental, but not as much as Elizabeth. She had typing skills. Aunt Elizabeth was very smart. She was extremely smart and could catch things right away from Arabic to English. The other sisters, I think, were more focused on the music.

Father Edward: Nassar also hired Habib Katibah, a graduate from Harvard’s school of theology, to spend several summers with him out in Spring Valley and make the English right. It’s a shame that Nassar didn’t write down Katibah’s name in the book. That would have been the right sort of thing to do. He worked with Nassar for, like, four or five summers. He went out to Spring Valley, lived there. He might’ve stayed with the priest or one of the parishioners at the time, and Nassar paid him for the work.

Medawar: Katibah was very learned. Aunt Elizabeth said that he was very instrumental in helping them and helping Nassar with the translation. He stayed in Spring Valley a long time.

Father Edward: Saint Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn, when he was in this country, put together a service book in Arabic called The Book of True Consolation in the Divine Prayers. It was published in 1898 in New

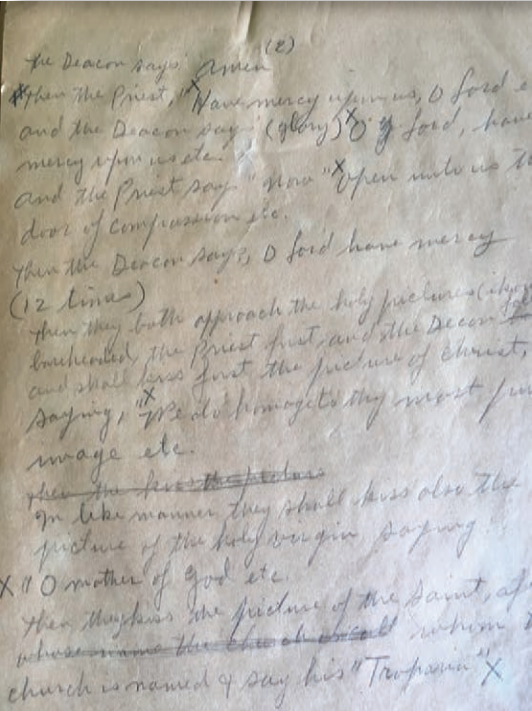
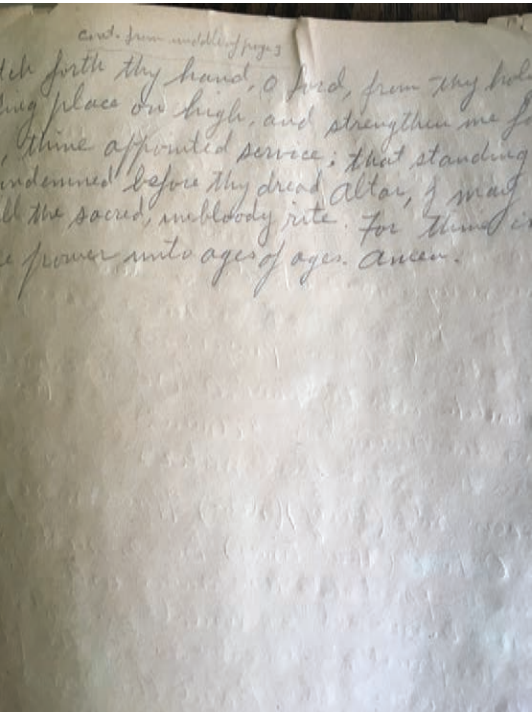
York City. That was edited down to make it a little bit smaller. And it was that second version that Father Seraphim Nassar chose to translate into English.

Samore: Greek is predominantly the original language of all of our services, all of our hymnography in the Orthodox Church. I don’t think Father Seraphim spoke much Greek, if at all. So he translated from Saint Raphael’s Arabic translation of the original Greek.

Father Edward: A translation of the Five-Pounder’s length is a huge deal. And for each one of the people involved, it was a huge deal.

Samore: It was a huge undertaking. People think it’s just translating from one language to another, simple phrases, get the gist of it. Good translators know better than that. There’s an expression we all know of: “lost in translation.” There’s such tremendous meaning in the words that we use, especially in Orthodox Christian hymnography. You have phrases that refer to scripture. You have phrases that refer to lives of the saints. You have the very doctrine of the Orthodox Church that’s told through our hymnography. One mistake, one misstep could render a whole translation either unreadable or even heretical. It’s that important to get it right – to get the context right, to get the meaning right. The depth of the hymnography that expresses theology, doctrine, dogma, lives of saints, events in church history – it is so important to get right that when we don’t, we get confused.

Another thing is they had to get the syntax correct. Sentence structure has to make sense. What we might say in Greek or Arabic may not come out the





same way in English. And in Greek and Arabic, the adjectives go after the noun. In English it's the other way around. So they had to make sure the conventions of each language were honored so that it was faithful to the original meaning and to the meaning as it comes across in the new language so that the people speaking that new language, English in this case, didn't miss a thing.

Forsa: It was difficult to put it, to say it in English because the words in Arabic sometimes – it takes one word in Arabic to maybe three words in the English.

Father Edward: For Nassar, whose English was a learned second language, this is a huge undertaking. Huge.

He clearly was a gifted, gifted man. I've corrected stuff that Arabs from the old country had translated from Arabic into English, but their English wasn't sensible enough that you could even make sense out of it. I don't think, even today, there are more than two or three clergy in the archdiocese born in the old country whose English is good enough to be able to do this.

Forsa: This was years and years of work. After it was translated into English by Habib Katiba, it was in rough copy. The rough copy of the translation was typed by me on the typewriter. This was a bunch of work that alone took up at least a year or a year and a half. Imagine a thousand-and-some sheets in the rough, how much work it took to go through it. You had to go through it in order to type it intelligently and know exactly the wording and whether there's an error in spelling or whatever the case may be. I had to look the word up and be sure it was down correctly.

Father Edward: As I understand it, it's possible that Father Seraphim dictated directly to Katibah, who then wrote it down, reworked it, edited through it, corrected all the English, and made it the beautiful message you see there now. The Abraham sisters then typed up what Katibah had written out, so that it could be used for publication.

Forsa: Habib Katibah would be busy doing his

translating. After he turned the sheet over to Father Nassar for me to type, Father would want know for sure, "Well, is this all correct?" Certain phrases from the Bible, certain chapters from the Bible, certain verses from the Bible. He'd ask me, "Do you think this version sounds better or the other version sounds better?" Then I would tell him what I thought.

Father Edward: I don't know exactly how long it took to do the translation. I know it was years. It just shows how big of a project it was. It was a huge job, an enormously huge job.

Medawar: I think it took them at least three years to produce the Five-Pounder. The least would be three years. In 1935, my mother was married, and I know they were working on the book. And then I was born in 1938, the year the book was published.

Forsa: The publisher, Blackhawk Press, was in New York. That was set up by Mr. Katibah for Father Nassar like a year in advance. So when all of the work was completed, we started sending completed translations for Blackhawk Press to print.

The distribution, a lot of it, was mailed from Blackhawk Press through the authority of Father Nassar. He gave them names and addresses and Blackhawk sent them direct. But most of the books were sent to Spring Valley. My father had a little sewing factory behind Father's home. When those books were first shipped, we put them in the factory building. So from then on, the Five-Pounder was quite established and we shipped books to every point in this country: Alaska, Europe, and abroad.

Medawar: The Sisters of the Sisterhood of the Propagation of Divine Services and Religious Teachings in the United States was my mother and my aunts. Nassar gave them the copyright to the book, kind of handed it over. The book was theirs. It belonged to them. Nobody could infringe on that.

Father Edward: Ladies guilds did all sorts of amazing things to raise money to support their parishes. If it hadn't been for them, the parishes wouldn't have survived. And I really don't doubt that this society mentioned in the book's copyright, the Sisters of the Sisterhood of the Propagation of Divine Services and Religious Teachings in the United States, really was propagating the church in Spring Valley.

PART 3: WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

"Finally, I trust that this work of mine may receive the commendation and call forth the satisfaction of my superiors and the rest of my revered brethren the

Priests. I pray that they meet my weakness with their kindness; that they correct my errors with their gentle reprovals, pointing out my mistakes; and that they cover my shortcomings with their gracious indulgence; and that they encourage me with their prayers."

—Nassar from the preface of Book of Divine Prayers and Services

Samore: Who started calling it the Five-Pounder? That's a good question. I don't know, but I do know it's not five pounds. It's two and a half pounds. I know this because one time I was traveling and my suitcase weighed 52 pounds, which means it was two pounds over the limit to fly for free. So I opened my suitcase at the baggage check real quick and pulled out something I knew would probably bring the weight down. And I pulled out my copy of Nassar. I put it in my carry-on bag, reweighed the suitcase, and it came out at 49 and a half pounds – just under the limit. It looks like it could be five pounds and maybe the earlier editions did weigh five pounds based on the thickness of the paper and the cover. But the edition I have is from 1993. I think that was the last of four times it was reprinted.

Medawar: When the Five-Pounder was published in 1938, Sadie was 30, Elizabeth was 33, Mary was 36. Everyone knew it was important, and my dad, Kenneth Ziady, traveled the country with Father Nassar selling that book and trying to help parishes and the priests understand it.

Forsa: The priests from most – well, I'll say all of the churches – all of the Orthodox churches had copies of the Five-Pounder to see exactly what was done.

Father Edward: Nassar produced a really top-notch piece of work. Unimaginable. It was so gifted and so marvelous and such a commitment of time and energy that he put into it. Unbelievable. Without a doubt, it was a huge thing. A huge thing. Without this book, every parish would've continued in Arabic, and people wouldn't have known what was happening. They just wouldn't have known what was happening at all.

Father Nicholas Dahdal (St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church of Cicero, Illinois): To gather all these services and translate them properly and nicely to be understood, the task was enormous. Especially for an immigrant such as Nassar. The task was also enormous for those who were around to help put it together. I mean, that book is, what, nearly 1,200 pages? I always admired Nassar for that. It's a gift from God, actually, that he was able to put the book together. In his own way, I'm sure he had in mind the future of the

Orthodox church and what the book could contribute to that.

Father Edward: When I was younger the only English book in the houses of many Greek parishioners was a Five-Pounder. Nobody had anything in English except the Five-Pounder in this country until, oh my gosh, the 1990s.

Father Nicholas: It was very much used in all of our churches, from the time when it was published all the way until, I'd say, the late 1990s. When I was ordained a priest 41 years ago, the first gift was a Five-Pounder. It was a book everybody should have. It was a very important document. Every church you go to, there's a Five-Pounder somewhere. I think I have three or four of them in my church.

Samore: I like to say the Five-Pounder got us through the 20th century and into the 21st century, because of all the content that it has. Imagine, you know, going to church on a Sunday and we can only have liturgy because we don't have English materials for matins or vespers. A lot of people can't envision that nowadays because we have all the English materials for these services. Nassar even added an appendix at the end of the book explaining the terms and beliefs of the Orthodox Church – an explanation of vespers and even an explanation of making the sign of the Cross.

Father Edward: The biggest mistakes ever found in the Five-Pounder were typesetting mistakes. There's only, like, four of them in the book. A couple lines are missing or a couple words left out – because the typesetter, when he typeset it, left them out, and nobody caught it when they proofed it. The rest of the thing is perfect. Just perfect. Marvelous in so many ways. And some of the stuff in there has never been matched. One of those is the Prayer of the Sixth Hour written by Saint Basil. I think the English version in Nassar is the absolute best of anything I've ever seen anywhere for capturing the real sense of it. Not just the exact



words, but the feeling that was in it. And to understand the sense of what Saint Basil was trying to say, Nassar’s got it. He’s absolutely got it. It’s perfect. And nothing can match it anywhere.

Samore: There are a few things that have some mistranslations, so to speak. I don’t really want to embarrass Nassar and the Abraham sisters too much. There are typos here and there. There were things that were left out in some of the services for the saints that should have been included. And as a result, over the decades, as the Antiochian Archdiocese relied only on this book, they developed practices that were incomplete.

Since I use this book on a regular basis to compile my services, I make notes of everything I correct. Here’s a typo I just found. There’s a hymn on page 414 of the book. It reads “plead thou with Christ God to have our souls.” It should read “to save our souls.” Different meaning. “Save” and “have” are totally different words, but that one typo set things off. If we go to page 301, it says, “O thou thrice-blessed tree,” referring to the tree of the Cross, “whereon the Lord Christ the King was stretched, and through which he who was beguiled by the tree fell, having been beguiled by thee, by the God that was nailed upon thee in the flesh, who granteth safety to our souls.” This could easily be misread because, again, the syntax is confusing here. If you read it as is, it’s saying basically that the Devil didn’t fall, Christ did. So the Department of Liturgics and the Department of Sacred Music for the Archdiocese had to get together and figure out how to make sense of this. So we had to reword it so that it said, “and through which he who beguiled by the tree fell.” The Devil tricked Adam and Eve with the tree in the Garden of Eden. So now the new tree, the tree of the Cross, supersedes that and defeats the Devil. So the new tree on which Christ was stretched defeated the old tree in the Garden of Eden. So we have to make that work out.

If you go down lower on that page, it says, “Let us praise, bless, and worship the Lord.” The actual accurate translation is, “We praise, we bless, and we worship the Lord.” That’s directly out of Psalms. Stuff like that.

Father Edward: I like Nassar very much, because I think that Saint Raphael, even if he changes the word order, he captures better a lot of times the internal meaning of the Greek than other translations that go directly from the Greek do. And maybe that’s genius on his part and maybe it’s divine inspiration, because he’s a saint after all. I’ve always felt that for us

in this diocese, his Arabic version should always have precedent over everything else. And so Nassar’s translation of his Arabic, I think, should be the standard. But that’s my opinion. And that was the opinion of Metropolitan Philip. That’s not the opinion of the current administration. And therefore, the current department feels that the Greek should be the standard and that we should be using translations that come directly from the Greek and follow the Greek word order and all the rest of that. And that’s why we see the changes we’re seeing right now. They don’t sense that there’s anything special about Saint Raphael’s work, and therefore Nassar’s work. And I think that’s sad.

Samore: Other translations – dare I say, more accurate translations – have come out from other sources, meaning outside the Antiochian Archdiocese. For example, Holy Transfiguration Monastery did translate all 12 volumes of the Menaion, and that took them 20 years. Twenty years from Greek to English, combining over it meticulously. They were also translating not only from Greek to English but to make sure that the English translation matched the original Greek meter for many of the hymns. Something Father Seraphim and the sisters couldn’t do was match the meter. Holy Transfiguration Monastery came out with other, more accurate translations that are more faithful to the meter, and the Archdiocese had to incorporate those into the liturgical text, the service text that we produce on the Archdiocese website at antiochian.org/liturgic-day, for the benefit of the choirs. Other translations have succeeded Father Seraphim’s work. And we have to use those where they are more accurate and, again, when they fit the meter. But whenever we can, we stick to what Father Seraphim and the Antiochian Archdiocese produced.

Father Edward: Right now we’re in the midst of this big recovery of the Greek-style music, not just here but in the old country too. It’s a big movement. The need for translations that are metered is more important than the need for translations that are accurate. And there’s no doubt, absolutely no doubt, that the monks of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery are trying to compromise. They’re doing their best to meter the translation and be accurate to the Greek. But when push comes to shove, the meter takes precedent. So you’re getting not a translation of the Greek, but a kind of general sense of the Greek – a gloss, more or less. Whereas Nassar gave you an exact translation of the Arabic, capturing only the words that were on the page, and making that into beautiful

English. His accuracy from the Arabic is spectacular. And if there’s any discrepancy with the Greek, it’s because the Arabic varies a little bit. The Greek will say the Virgin was “weeping and wailing,” but the Arabic is going to say, “she wept and she wailed,” and throw in a couple more descriptors, sometimes doubling all the adjectives and adverbs, giving you two or three words with a similar sense, so that you can get the whole play of the thing. And you clearly get the sense that the Arabic culture is very emotional and spends time on the descriptors that convey all of that emotion. The Arabic is much richer with the adjectives and adverbs – and sometimes even two verbs. Where there’s one verb in Greek, Arabic will give you two verbs that are similar, but each have a slightly different sense to them, in order to give you the fullest sense of what the Greek is trying to say, because these things are important in the Arabic culture. Greek can convey a lot more in a few words. To go from Greek to English is almost impossible to do, just because we don’t have words that mean exactly what those mean. How does the Arabic fix that problem? If we don’t have one word that means it, we use two words, and together they mean it. It makes it a little easier to bring things from Arabic into English and catch the sense of it than it does to bring it from Greek.

Bishop Anthony: The Five-Pounder really didn’t die out so much, but it was superseded. The book was the basic text of the services that most people used at the time. As Orthodoxy grew in America, there were more services being served. So it wasn’t neglected. It was added to. Now there are fuller texts built upon what he started. You know what it’d be like? You know how cars have different packages? There’s the basic standard package and then you have all the extras put onto it. That’s really what happened. His was the basic service texts. He started it as a foundation. Other people added on to it. Now all kinds of texts are being translated from the Greek and from the Russian and from the mother languages, and they’re being used in America.

But the Five-Pounder wasn’t neglected. It was superseded. At one time, Father Seraphim’s book was the one everyone had to consult in order to create their own services by using each of the books contained in the Five-Pounder. But now every week the Archdiocese puts the text for the services on antiochian.org, from which it can be downloaded, and that’s what most of the priests do. So the electronic opportunities now have made that book less used because people can

get texts from the Internet.

Father Edward: In 1939, a year after the publication of the Five-Pounder, Archbishop Antony declared that the priests had to serve 100 percent in English. No matter what the choir or chanters answered – he couldn’t control them, but he did control the priests. He said he wanted the priests serving 100 percent in English, so that the young folks could follow. All those twentysomethings were getting married and having children. Literary Arabic to them was just noise in the air. The Bishop wanted them to be able to understand the service, so they wouldn’t all become Protestants. That was a huge possibility at the time. It was a whole rush to Americanize the way we did things here. The switch to English was a big part of it.

Samore: The Five-Pounder really gave us tremendous help. It set the foundation and the start of English-language materials for Orthodox Christians on this continent. It’s a classic, a landmark in the Antiochian Archdiocese even 80 years after it came out. Everyone talks about it still: “What does the Nassar say?”

Father Seraphim’s work was not only important to North America but was also groundbreaking for our churches in the Archdioceses of Great Britain and Ireland, and also in Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines. It’s due to the work of Father Seraphim and the Abraham sisters that we have something that we can share. We have something that we can give to people so that they can worship God in trinity properly. That’s what this comes down to. It’s all about worship. It’s all about knowing who God is and worshipping Him, adoring Him, in trinity, properly.

Jake Malooley

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William Ozone

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42). In writing this, Saint Luke, the author of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, gives us one of the most powerful verses in the Bible. As an Orthodox Christian teen, I feel the need to uphold this standard as it is fully realized in the creed. In the United States today, we can see cultural and spiritual differences between our social life and Saint Luke's doctrine in Acts 2:42. In many cases, the culture in which young people are formed is contradictory to our faith. We are told that bad things are good, and that whatever we want is the top priority, instead of what is right.

As I see it, society today is adversarial to Orthodoxy. We have a moral problem in this country! As young Orthodox people, we are called to resolve these problems, or at least not to adopt the views and behavior that lead to them. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. So what approach would we use to attempt to resolve these problems? The solution is simply in the aforementioned Bible verse: in the breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayers.

In the breaking of bread, we become one with Christ. When we eat regular food, it is assimilated in our bodies and becomes part of our flesh and blood. When we consume the Body and Blood of Christ through breaking of the bread, the Eucharist, however, the opposite takes place. We become members of the Body of Christ. For this reason, the breaking of the bread is crucial for us to follow Christ,



and in turn to reason in accordance with our Lord's commandments. This approach method will keep us sober, detached from our society's wicked ways, ready to discern our road to virtue, and vigilant within our faith.

Fellowship is another prong in our attack on the moral issues of our country. Fellowship is trust, community, togetherness, safety, love, giving, and, most importantly, sharing in the love of Christ in oneness with our Lord. Fel-

lowship with Orthodox Christians is imperative in creating a spiritual environment and a medium in which the faith is reinforced. Fellowship is the community of Orthodox Christians.

The third pillar of our method is prayer. In the Gospel According to St. Mark, the disciples were unable to cast out an unclean spirit from a person. Jesus told them that they were not able to do so because "this kind can come out only by prayer..." (Mark 9:29). As Jesus proclaimed in St. Mark's Gospel, prayer is a powerful thing. Through prayer, a boy was healed that day, and it is through prayer that our souls are healed. We can pray in a time of crisis, in a time of thankfulness, in a time of sickness, and in the face of any circumstances. It is always important to pray to God. The power of prayer should never be doubted! It produces miracles every day. Saint Dimitri of Rostov gives a fantastic definition of prayer. He says, "Prayer is turning the mind and thoughts toward God. To pray means to stand before God with the mind, mentally to gaze unswervingly at Him, and to converse with Him in reverent fear and hope." Saint Dimitri explains to us

that prayer is a clear communication with God as we give Him our unwavering attention.

To follow the Apostles' doctrine we need the breaking of bread, fellowship, and prayers. Fortunately for teens, we have many opportunities for all three. The pillars of Teen SOYO embody them: worship, which includes breaking of the bread; witness; fellowship; and service. In SOYO, we bring people together who have the same Orthodox faith and we act in accordance with these pillars. We can solve this society's moral issues by supporting SOYO and enlarging it in our communities. If we can create a strong SOYO for those thirteen and up to college-age, it will lead the teens, who are enjoying their time together, to these moral principles. Through their behavior, the truth of these principles will emanate into society and the world.

Ladies and gentleman, I firmly believe that it is as difficult to be a Christian in society today as it was at the time of the Apostles. Today, Orthodox Christian values are under attack as they were back then. For example, the sacrament of marriage between a man and a woman is disrespected and violated. If we stand up for our beliefs, we are ridiculed, made out to be anti-progress, made out to be anti-society, and in some cases silenced. Today, some people are becoming afraid to believe in what the Apostles proclaimed. We need to continue to stand up for our beliefs, regardless of the results or consequences, and despite the fact that they are unpopular.

This is modern-day martyrdom! The faithful don't physically die for the faith in this country. Instead, we are given a kind of death through public scorn. Today Orthodox teens are outcasts in school and society if they don't indulge in sinful acts. For a teenager who is insecure and just wants to be liked, it is very hard to persevere through it. It is even difficult to bless oneself before eating without feeling watched, or called a "weirdo." It is tough to remain true to the Apostles' doctrine. However, it is essential that we keep our views and our beliefs aligned with the Church's. As Saint Jerome said, "If the soul is not clothed with teachings of the Church, it cannot have Jesus enthroned inside it." It is clear that an alignment with the Church's views is an alignment with Christ's. That is why programs like Teen SOYO and Orthodox camps are so important. Following the Apostles' doctrine is pivotal to a life

in Christ and necessary for an eternal life with Christ. Personally, Orthodox camps, especially the Antiochian Village camp, have had a life-changing effect upon me. I first went to camp at the age of ten, and I came back home immediately changed. I was much more involved in church. The Antiochian Village camp involves and empowers fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. Not only does AV have all three, but the staff teaches us how to bring all three home with us. This past year, I had the amazing blessing of having two counselors. Almost every night at cabin time, they taught us concepts that stayed in my mind throughout the entire year as I made decisions.

In conclusion, Antiochian Village camp shows us teens how to make the *right* decision, not the *easiest*! Teen SOYO, working in accordance with the three pillars of Apostle Luke, gives us a way.

William Ozone, St. George Church, Boston

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OCCIF

A NEW WAY TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

As Orthodox Christians, we have been called upon to *give* as part of our daily lives. Tithing our time, talent, and other resources remains central to who we are. When plans are made to build our temples and social halls, we draw together to meet the need, as we have always done. Yet today we have new challenges. The budgets for building or remodeling our places of worship are much higher because of increased regulations governing their construction, and the cost of land. With no sign of these challenges changing, the question is, Can we find a rational, sustainable way to continue the growth of our Holy Churches?

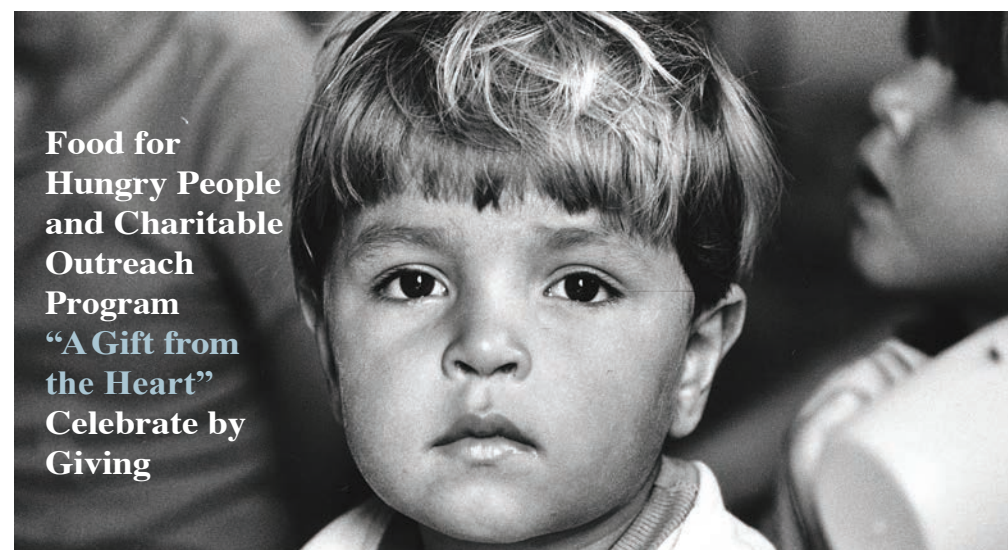
The Orthodox Church Capital Improvement Fund (OCCIF) and its new Investment Certificate Program (ICP) were specifically designed to address this question by providing a way to make development funds more accessible to our Church. One big difference between OCCIF and secular lenders is that now the financial resources are coming from Orthodox Christians for the

use of Orthodox Christians. Since its inception five years ago, OCCIF's operation has helped the Church in many ways. For example, a loan from OCCIF to St. Raphael of Brooklyn in Thousand Palms, California, helped secure a permanent temple in months, instead of the years that it would take using conventional methods. By refinancing the existing mortgage of St. Herman of Alaska in Wasilla, Alaska, OCCIF provided terms to pay off their new mortgage at a much faster rate, significantly moving up their plans for needed expansion. Our growing portfolio contains similar success stories for other missions, established parishes, monasteries – and jurisdictions– of our Holy Church across the country.

As a pan-Orthodox ministry, OCCIF now offers a way for you to invest directly in the growth of our Church. In the secular context of lending, the repayment of a parish's loan and interest makes a profit for the lender and its stockholders. With OCCIF, those same interest dollars are now returned to the OCCIF loan pool, letting us be of greater service to more of our institutions.

Every Orthodox Christian can now invest directly in OCCIF through our new ICP expansion. The ICP was specifically designed to increase the amount of money we can lend. For this opportunity, OCCIF will repay each certificate holder a competitive interest rate over a fixed term. To make this investment opportunity available to as many Orthodox Christians as possible, we have made the minimum you can invest \$1,000. Please visit us at www.occif.org, where you will find all the information you need.

You can help change the way we build our churches. We look forward to helping your community realize its plans for growth in the future, and to welcoming you as a participant in this new endeavor. Our strength to serve our Holy Church comes from the whole Body of Christ!



Food for Hungry People and Charitable Outreach Program
“A Gift from the Heart”
Celebrate by Giving

Here is an additional and special way to give to the poor and hungry and your friends at the same time throughout the year.

You can give your gifts to the hungry in honor of a loved one on any occasion such as a birthday, baptism, anniversary, thank you, retirement or any other special event. “A Gift from the Heart” is also a thoughtful memorial.

Please include this coupon along with your donation. We will send a personalized icon card to the person you designate to inform them of the gift you gave in their honor.

Send coupon and check to:

“Food For Hungry People and Charitable Outreach Program”
 c/o Robin Lynn Nicholas
 4237 Dundee Drive
 Los Angeles, CA 90027

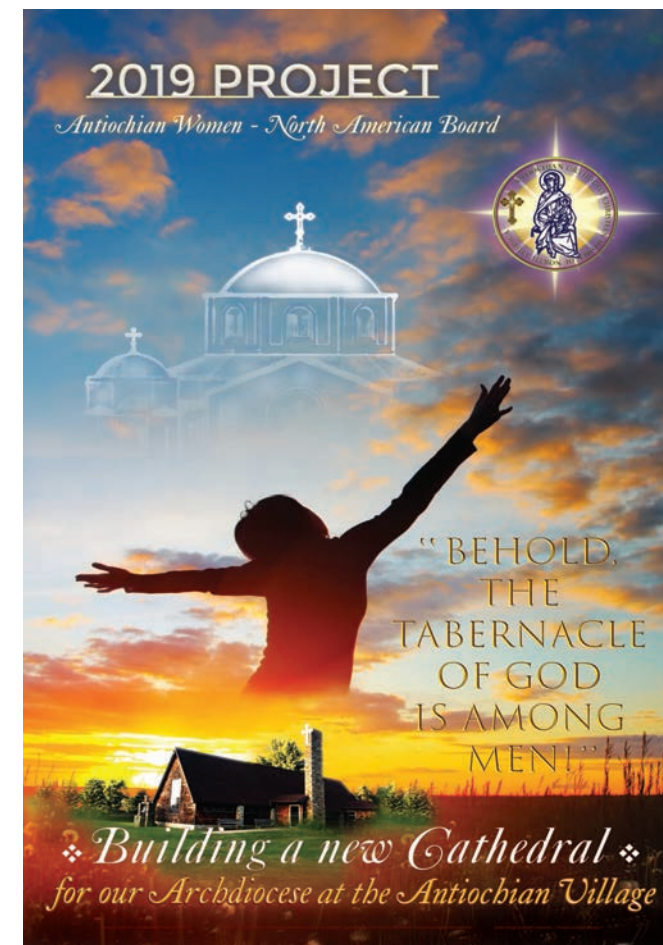
Given by _____

In Honor of _____

Send card to _____

Gift Amount \$ _____ (Please check one)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baptism | <input type="checkbox"/> Anniversary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas | <input type="checkbox"/> Thank you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Birthday | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |



The Antiochian Village welcomes all the parishes of the Eastern Dioceses of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, as well as the faithful of all the Archdiocese,

TO A WEEKEND OF RETREAT AND HOLY DELIBERATION
SPRING RETREAT AND PILGRIMAGE TO RESTING PLACE OF ST. RAPHAEL
 LED BY BISHOP THOMAS

Antiochian Village

BEGINS **CANON OF THE AKATHIST HYMN** FRIDAY

CONCLUDES **HIERARCHICAL DIVINE LITURGY** ST MARY OF EGYPT

ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE | APRIL 12-14, 2019

PARISH COUNCIL RETREAT • FR JOHN DIXON
 DMC RETREAT • FR ANTHONY YAZGE
 YOUNG ADULT RETREAT • FR NICHOLAS BELCHER
 SOYO RETREAT • FR JOSHUA MAKOUL, FR JOSEPH HAZAR, & FR NOAH BUSHELLI

Registration Opens Online December 3rd
<http://registration.antiochianvillage.org/2019EasternDiocesesSpringRetreat>

JOIN US FOR A WEEKEND OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL!
 Call Dr. James Rossetti, DMC Chairman, for additional details | 412.266.3089

A TABLE IN THE PRESENCE

RETREAT FOR ORTHODOX COMBAT VETERANS



Orthodox Christian combat veterans of OEF and OIF:

The dust remains on your boots and in your rucksacks.

Your fallen brothers remain in your hearts and minds.

Combat is a threshold that cannot be uncrossed.

Your stories are not easy to tell. Who can bear them?

**BUT GOD KNOWS THEM ALL.
 AND HIS LOVE FOR YOU ENDURES FOREVER.**

*Your Orthodox Military Chaplains
 and some veteran clergy have planned a retreat.*

No cost – just get to us, if you can. We'll take care of the rest.

**WE GATHER TO TALK. WE GATHER TO PRAY.
 TO STAND SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AND TO FACE GOD.**

Columbus Day Weekend 2019 at the Antiochian Village

Contact Barli Ross at barli@antiochianvillage.org

DIOCESE OF OTTAWA TORONTO PLC 2019

JULY 4 -7,
 2019



HOSTED BY: ST. GEORGE CHURCH, TORONTO

HOTEL BOOKING NOW OPEN

For more information:

www.stgeorgeto.org

Email: plc2019to@gmail.com

Both hotels are located at: 600 Highway 7,
 Richmond Hill, ON

Sheraton Parkway North Toronto \$129 + tax
 Best Western \$109 + tax

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church
 9116 Bayview Avenue, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 3M9

Every Antiochian Orthodox Church has a story...

***The history of Who You Are, Where You Came From,
What You're Doing, Where You're Going***



***We invite you to share your story as we celebrate together in Grand Rapids July 21–28.
Remember those who came before you and think of those who will follow you.***

***Go to AC2019GR.ORG/FORMS and RESERVE YOUR PLACE IN THE
CONVENTION SOUVENIR JOURNAL TODAY!***



Don't forget to register for the convention, buy your event tickets, and book your hotel rooms!