

# THE WORD

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# THE WORD

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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.

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# Precious to God

BISHOP JOHN

THIS PSALM EXPRESSES WHAT I WAS STRUGGLING TO WRITE, SO I DECIDED TO SHARE WITH YOU THE WORDS OF KING DAVID THAT, IT SEEMS TO ME, SUIT THIS HOLY SEASON OF CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.

## PSALM 139

O LORD, thou hast searched me and known me!  
2 Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;  
thou discernest my thoughts from afar.  
3 Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,  
and art acquainted with all my ways.  
4 Even before a word is on my tongue,  
lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.  
5 Thou dost beset me behind and before,  
and layest thy hand upon me.  
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is high, I cannot attain it.  
7 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?  
8 If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!  
If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!  
9 If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
10 even there thy hand shall lead me,  
and thy right hand shall hold me.  
11 If I say, "Let only darkness cover me,  
and the light about me be night,"  
12 even the darkness is not dark to thee,  
the night is bright as the day;  
for darkness is as light with thee.  
13 For thou didst form my inward parts,  
thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.  
14 I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful.  
Wonderful are thy works!  
Thou knowest me right well;  
15 my frame was not hidden from thee,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.  
16 Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;  
in thy book were written, every one of them,  
the days that were formed for me,  
when as yet there was none of them.





The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend  
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend  
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend  
Bishop NICHOLAS

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17 *How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!*

18 *If I would count them, they are more than the sand.  
When I awake, I am still with thee.*

19 *O that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God,  
and that men of blood would depart from me,*

20 *men who maliciously defy thee,  
who lift themselves up against thee for evil!*

21 *Do I not hate them that hate thee, O LORD?  
And do I not loathe them that rise up against thee?*

22 *I hate them with perfect hatred;  
I count them my enemies.*

23 *Search me, O God, and know my heart!  
Try me and know my thoughts!*

24 *And see if there be any wicked[d] way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

As I was preparing this Editorial, the word *precious* kept coming into my mind. Like one of those Christmas jingle phrases you just can't shake out of your head, this word filled my consciousness. Perhaps more than my consciousness – my mind, heart and soul. Precious in the sight of the Lord is His saints. Precious are the works of His hands. Precious to David are God's thoughts. Precious to parents are their children. Precious to us all are the important relationships that we have, and no relationship is greater or more important than that with our God – as we see so wonderfully expressed in Psalm 139.

In the last two weeks, I have been asked three times what the Church leadership is going to do to relate to our young people to save them. What will be done to keep them in Christ and in His church? I also happened across several articles and podcasts raising the same question. The Church, I am told, must respond to the modern and post-modern generations. They say, "The old ways are not working. This generation doesn't relate to the Bible and liturgy. They are a throwaway generation. They throw away the old electronic toys and buy new. We need to give them something new."

God knows each of our hearts and He knows best how to call each of us to Him. He is with us and faithful to us wherever we go. Let each of us do our best to respond to God ourselves and follow Him. God knows our strengths and weaknesses. He knows our desires and our fears. As we begin our New Year, let us be more than mindful and deliberate about asking God to guide our ways and to make His thoughts known to us. Let us be deliberate about sharing Who God is to us and what He does in our lives. Let us be better examples to every generation as we worship and study. Let us remember that He is our Creator and that we are precious in His sight. Knowing what is precious to God and to us, let us act deliberately and steadfastly. Let us enter the New Year with confidence and awe, because God walks this path with us.

# The Legacy of Father Nicola Yanney

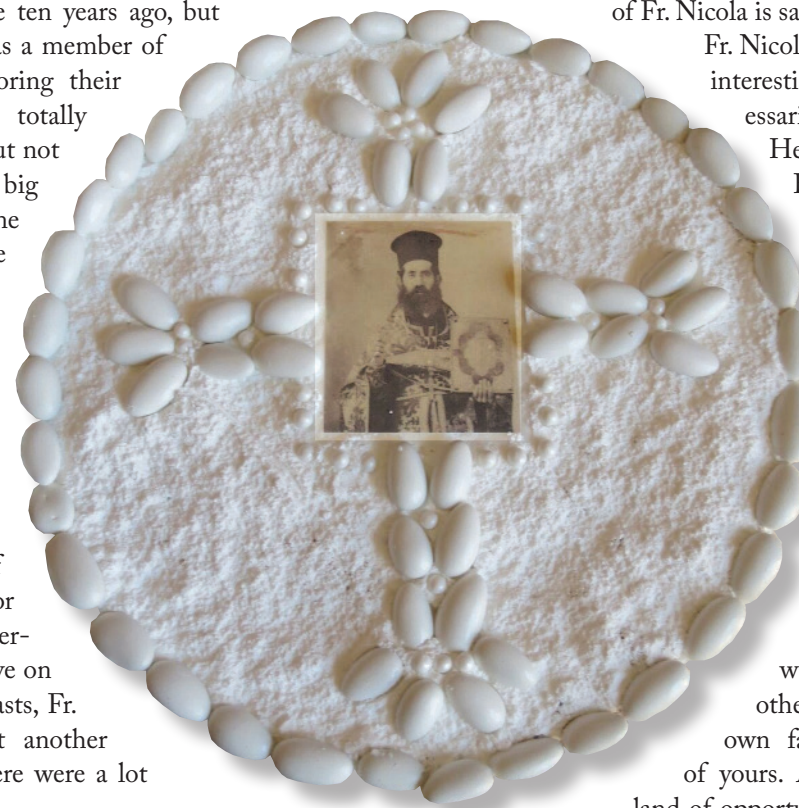
FROM AN ADDRESS PRESENTED AT THE PILGRIMAGE  
ON THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPOSE OF FR. NICOLA,  
OCTOBER 27, 2018, IN KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

I think the first time I became aware of Fr. Nicola was when I read Bishop BASIL's enthronement address, in 2004. He talked about this circuit-riding priest who had a huge territory that basically covered the entire middle of the United States. It was impressive, for sure – but really, I have to be honest, it doesn't stand out. There were a *lot* of circuit-riding Orthodox priests in those days. I wasn't here for the diocesan pilgrimage ten years ago, but it struck me, as a member of a family honoring their forefather, as totally appropriate, but not necessarily a big deal for anyone outside of the Diocese. Fr. Nicola is the ancestor of the Diocese of Wichita, and he's interesting to us because he's *ours*, but if you're Greek, or Russian, or Serbian, or you live on one of the coasts, Fr. Nicola is just another old priest. There were a lot of those guys.

I am not here to talk about Fr. Nicola because he's the forefather of the Diocese of

Wichita, or because he was the first priest ordained by St. Raphael, or because he's a somewhat notable historical figure in American Orthodoxy. Those things are all true, but they're footnotes. The reason Fr. Nicola is important, the reason he warrants the attention, not just of Antiochians in Mid-America, but of all Orthodox Christians around the world, is because he is an icon of faithfulness, and endurance, and sacrifice for the sake of Christ. The legacy of Fr. Nicola is not merely this diocese; the legacy of Fr. Nicola is sanctity.

Fr. Nicola's early history is interesting, but not necessarily uncommon. He grew up near the Balamand Monastery. He got married in his late teens, and he left his village to come to America, to try to make a life for his family that was better than what was available in Syria. In this, he was like so many others, including my own family, and many of yours. America was the land of opportunity, and seeking that opportunity meant leaving behind home and family and community.





He was just Nicola Yanney then, of course – not yet “Father Nicola.” He and his wife Martha went first to Omaha, and Nicola worked as a peddler – again, like a lot of young Syrian immigrants at the time. They had kids, and they moved to a little homestead not too far from Kearney, and they planted modest roots. I don’t know what their expectations were, or if they had expectations. I do know that they were pious Orthodox Christians who had gone years without even seeing a priest, much less confessing or taking communion or having their kids baptized.

And then one day, something unexpected happened. The year was 1899. Nicola and Martha had been in Nebraska for almost six years. A few years earlier, a dynamic young Syrian priest named Fr. Raphael Hawaweeny had come to New York to minister to the scattered Syrian Orthodox immigrants in America. And now, in the late summer of 1899, St. Raphael made it all the way to the remote town of Kearney, Nebraska. I’ll let St. Raphael himself tell the story, from his missionary journal:

On Tuesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, I departed Omaha and went further west to the city of Kearney, where I arrived after midnight instead of arriving at 3:30 PM as planned. [...] When I arrived in Kearney almost all of our Syro-Arabs came to greet me at the station. From the train they took me to the house of their elder in an open carriage. It was so cold that I was shivering all the way and warmed up only at the fireplace in the house of my hosts, and paid for it with sniffles. We all stayed up until four in the morning, after which time everyone went home to get some rest. The next morning, I felt so bad that I wasn’t able to serve the Divine Liturgy, but only a Typica service.

So, pausing there for just a moment – this account starts to tell you something about St. Raphael, and how devoted he was to his people. His train was delayed eight hours; he arrived, exhausted, after midnight; it was cold and he felt sick – and then he stayed up until four in the morning visiting with his people. *Then*, after barely a nap, he woke up in the morning for a church service, even though he felt so bad he couldn’t serve the Liturgy. Anyway, St. Raphael continues,

In the evening, I felt better, and offered to the members of the local community to go

on horses to the farm of one of the Orthodox Syro-Arabs who lives there with his family and brother, located about 18 miles to the northeast of Kearney. At 9 p.m., with 15 people with me on four horse-drawn carriages, we departed for our journey. The weather was beautiful, the road was even, and it was a full moon. My companions enjoyed it so much that the entire trip they were singing church and national songs.

Okay, so St. Raphael, who was sleep-deprived and fighting a bad cold, heard about this farmer – Nicola Yanney – and his family, who were living way out in the country. And he volunteered to travel to them in the middle of the night. This was his own idea. This is the good shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep and seeks after the one who is lost. In this case, not lost spiritually – the Yanneys were spiritually quite strong – but literally lost in the wilderness. He could have sent some of the Kearney Syrians to go bring the Yanneys back to the city, but no – he went to them himself. That’s the kind of pastor St. Raphael was.

We arrived at the house of our farmers at about one in the morning. From all the noises and firing from handguns of my companions, the farmers ran out from their house and learned that their priest has arrived, and they were so overjoyed that, with tears and thanksgiving, they embraced us and kissed the ground, my hands, and my feet, thanking the Lord God, who granted them to see an Orthodox priest after seven years without one. Truthfully, we all cried as well, seeing such joyous greetings from them. The wife of the farmer cried more than anyone from her joy. She was mourning so much that living in such a distant place, she was deprived of an ability ever to see an Orthodox priest who could confess and commune them, and most importantly, would baptize her four children, the oldest of which was six years old. Now her sorrow has turned to joy, and, not believing her eyes, she continually crossed herself, raising her hands to heaven, thanking the Lord for this unexpected mercy.

The home was very small. We all stayed in one room. From exhaustion, some started falling asleep on their chairs, others on the floor, and I was offered a small couch. In the morning everyone, with piety, attended the Matins

service. After that, I served the Blessing of Waters and blessed the house and their entire farm. Having spent the entire day there, we returned to Kearney in the evening. The next day, this farmer, with his whole family and the brother, came to Divine Liturgy and for the baptism of their children ....

This was Nicola’s first encounter with St. Raphael, and more than that, it was his first encounter with a proper Orthodox missionary. He’d known priests and monks in Syria, but Raphael was something different – he was a pastor with a flock that wasn’t concentrated in a village, but was scattered across a continent. Raphael’s devotion and self-sacrifice, to

wasted away and died, too, just days later.

I know that infant death was much more common back then than it is now, and it was also a lot more common for women to die in childbirth. Yet that doesn’t take away from the agony Nicola and his surviving children experienced. As a husband and father – my own fifth child was just born in August – I feel a particular empathy for Nicola. The pain of a loss like that never goes away.

What happened next, what Nicola did after being widowed, however, really begins to set him apart. Before Nicola were at least two paths – one narrow and one broad. The broad path would have been remarriage, and you could hardly fault him for



care for the most isolated of his people, left a deep impression on Nicola that became apparent during his own years as a missionary priest.

Eventually St. Raphael left, and life continued for the Yanneys. They had four little kids, and Martha was expecting their fifth. Nicola was 29 years old – five kids before the age of 30. And then something went wrong. Martha wasn’t well. She went into labor too early. There was no one to help, and even the best doctors at the time probably couldn’t have done anything. Martha died in childbirth. Nicola was a widower at 29, with five kids. Then he watched, helplessly, as his newborn baby

choosing that path. He had little kids who needed a mother. He was a young man, only 29 years old. He easily, easily could have justified mourning for a time and then finding a new wife among the many Syrian immigrants who were flooding into the United States, and even making their way as far as Nebraska.

The narrow path was kind of an unheard-of path. It wasn’t like the priesthood was a viable career option – we didn’t have seminaries at that point, and there wasn’t even an Antiochian bishop in America yet. Orthodoxy had barely begun to take root, and there was only a smattering of parishes in the whole country, of any ethnic background. A little over a





year after Martha's death, however, the Orthodox Syrians in Kearney wanted a parish of their own, and they decided as a group that Nicola should be their priest. And he agreed to bear this cross. It meant that he would never remarry, and it also meant that he'd have to sacrifice time with his children for the sake of his priestly ministry. He could hardly have foreseen just how big that sacrifice would be.

While all this was going on, St. Tikhon, the Russian Archbishop, had arranged for St. Raphael to become a bishop himself, giving the Syrians their own hierarch. In early 1904, Nicola traveled from Kearney to New York City, to be present at Raphael's consecration, and then to be ordained a priest. This was his first big trip away from his kids, and they stayed with family. After his ordination, Fr. Nicola spent time with St. Raphael in Brooklyn and then returned home to Nebraska, but he wasn't just coming back to pastor the fledgling parish in Kearney. St. Raphael gave him responsibility for an enormous geographic area, covering a territory that's roughly equivalent to the modern-day Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America. St. Raphael may have been the shepherd to the lost Antiochian sheep of North America, but as a practical matter, that was too much territory for one man to cover in an effective way. So Fr. Nicola would be his deputy, himself a shepherd to the lost Antiochian sheep of the Great Plains.

Fr. Nicola's missionary travels are exhausting to read. If I actually tried to convey an accurate sense of these travels, your eyes would glaze over, and I would never finish this talk. I will just say that he routinely spent six-plus months away from home, leaving behind his four children in the care of his

brothers. And we're talking about trips across vast areas of land, mostly by train and sometimes by horse and buggy, nights spent in all manner of uncomfortable and makeshift beds, in cold, heat, loneliness, and discomforts of every sort. Again, this would go on for many, many months at a time.

Fr. Nicola didn't travel so much because wanted to be away from his family. It's important to understand this, and to understand the difference between Fr. Nicola and St. Raphael. I've spent a lot of time studying the life of St. Raphael, and praying to him. He's a great saint who sacrificed a lot, but he also was restless by nature. He didn't like to sit still. So his work in America suited him perfectly – he was always on the move, and when he wasn't on the road away from New York, there were always projects to occupy him there, like building a cathedral and establishing a cemetery. Moreover, he was a monk, with no children and nothing to really miss when he was traveling.

Fr. Nicola was very different: from all the evidence we have, he seemed to be more of a homebody, happy to spend months on end working diligently on his little farm (which he had to give up when he became a priest). He was a single parent, with four small children whose mother had died. His correspondence with his children reveals how deeply he loved them. He was not some kind of escapist who wanted to be away from home to avoid family life. He wanted to be with his children, farming the land, and he sacrificed that for the sake of his ministry, to bring the sacraments to Syrian immigrants who otherwise would starve spiritually.

Three years into his priesthood, in April 1907, Fr. Nicola set off on one of his long missionary trips. He expected to be away from his children for many months. In June, however, he was in Colorado when he received word that his 11-year-old daughter Anna was very sick, indeed, near death. He rushed home, but by the time he arrived in Kearney, she was unconscious. She died on June 7, and Fr. Nicola had to serve her funeral. He wasn't able to say goodbye, or hear her confession, or give her communion. It is hard to imagine what he must have felt. Surely, an event like this would have broken some men – his service to Christ meant that he wasn't there for his daughter as she lay dying. But Fr. Nicola did not curse God, nor abandon his post.

It would have been completely understandable if Fr. Nicola had cancelled his long missionary journey

at this point. His daughter was dead, his sons needed him, and his parish in Kearney needed him, as they too mourned the loss of Anna. How could you blame him for staying home for a long while? But no – Fr. Nicola remained in Kearney for only two or three weeks, and then he was back on the road, back to seeking out those scattered Antiochians and serving liturgies and baptisms and weddings and funerals. Again, he was not an escapist, running away from his grief – he no doubt wanted to be home, but his duty to God came before all else.

In all this, Fr. Nicola's model was St. Raphael. Over the coming years, Fr. Nicola continued his dual ministry as priest of St. George parish in Kearney and as a traveling missionary throughout the Great Plains. St. Raphael's Syrian diocese was growing, and with more priests, there was a hope that Fr. Nicola might have fewer travel obligations. Raphael himself made a return visit to Kearney in September of 1914, and he pushed for the parish to build a new church. Things were looking up.

On the very day of St. Raphael's arrival in Kearney that September, storm clouds began to appear over the Syrian diocese: Metropolitan Germanos Shehadi, an Antiochian bishop from Syria, arrived in America. Germanos was ostensibly here for a fundraising trip, to raise money for an agricultural school in his diocese back in Syria. But he also conveniently came to the safety of the United States just as World War I erupted in the Old World. St. Raphael was wary of the hierarch's true motives, but he gave him a blessing to visit the Syrian parishes. For a few months, everything seemed relatively stable.

St. Raphael was only 54 years old, but all his missionary work had put a great strain on his body. He started showing signs of weakness not long after he returned to New York from Kearney, and by the end of 1914, he was bedridden. The end came in February: on February 27, 1915, Fr. Nicola received a telegram in Kearney, informing him that the great Bishop was dead. He served a Trisagion for Raphael's soul on Sunday, and on Tuesday he boarded a train for Brooklyn to attend the funeral.

The Syrian diocese pretty much collapsed right then, at the funeral. Syrian priests streamed into Brooklyn in the days following St. Raphael's death, and as they gathered together, they found themselves in disagreement. Some said that Raphael was under the Russian Church, and so the Russian hier-



archy would consecrate a new Syrian bishop. Others disagreed, pointing out that St. Raphael himself had said that his diocese was – and I quote – “a diocese of Antioch, notwithstanding its nominal allegiance to the Russian Holy Synod.” So which would it be – Russia, or Antioch? The Russy-Antacky schism had begun.

Part of the problem was that St. Raphael had no obvious successor. The main pro-Russian candidate was the highly ambitious, highly political Archimandrite Aftimios Ofiesh. His rival or ally was the very young Archdeacon Emmanuel Abo-Hatab, in his early-to-mid-twenties, who had been St. Raphael's assistant in his final years. Neither of these men was remotely qualified to be a bishop.

On the other side, there was the troublesome but charismatic Antiochian Metropolitan, Germanos Shehadi. Germanos had taken a shine to America, and America had taken a shine to Germanos. Many, many Syrians thought that, of course, Germanos should be Raphael's successor, but there were two problems: the Russians weren't on board with this, and the Patriarchate of Antioch didn't actually want Germanos to stay in America. Over the years, they would keep ordering him to return to Syria.

No one has suggested it, to my knowledge, but it seems to me that the best candidate to succeed St. Raphael may actually have been Fr. Nicola himself. He never would have been nominated: he was far too apolitical, too humble, too unambitious. He wasn't part of the circle of influencers in the Syrian diocese: people like Ofiesh and Abo-Hatab and Fr. Basil Kerbawy of the Brooklyn Cathedral. Still, he was canonically eligible, morally upright, and completely self-sacrificing as a pastor. Who knows what



would have happened had the Syrians at the time been more open-minded and considered him? He would have been much more worthy than any of the men who were actually in the running, and much more in the mold of St. Raphael himself.

That's all speculative, however, as no one considered Fr. Nicola as a candidate. Everyone was forced to pick a side – did you want Aftimios, or Germanos? This question was also framed as, should we

options. He suffered for that choice – Emmanuel Abo-Hatab, on behalf of Aftimios and the Russey faction, went around suing all the priests that sided with Germanos, trying to seize their parish property. He filed a lawsuit against Fr. Nicola and won, and in 1918, Emmanuel's lawyers were in the process of trying to seize Fr. Nicola's house, when the Spanish flu pandemic hit.

In 1918, as troops returned home from the first

wave of the flu during his travels, in early October. He visited Wichita, where there was already a city-wide quarantine in place. He couldn't serve the Divine Liturgy in the new church of St. George – the first Orthodox church in Wichita. While he was in Wichita, he anointed the sick, and he served a funeral for a 16-year-old Syrian girl who died while he was in town. It's likely that Fr. Nicola caught the flu there, in Wichita.

Then he went back up to Nebraska, visiting scattered groups of Syrians, and returned to Kearney just in time for the flu outbreak to hit the town. The local and state governments imposed a quarantine. Some of Fr. Nicola's parishioners were sick. Despite the quarantine, Fr. Nicola took the reserve sacrament and began going house-to-house, anointing them and giving them communion. A young man in the parish died, and then a toddler. Fr. Nicola served the funerals. More and more people came down with the flu. Fr. Nicola's own health continued to deteriorate: he was weak, and his breathing worsened. He had to have known that he was dying.

Yet he did not rest. I wonder if it even occurred to him to rest. Would it have even been a temptation to a priest who had already so crucified his own will, his own self-interest, for the sake of Christ and his flock? A lesser man – a normal man, really – could have rationalized the need for rest. After all, he had great responsibilities. His parishioners needed him, and all the other Syrians throughout mid-America. His grandchild would be born any day now. His family needed him, but Fr. Nicola did not stop visiting his people, anointing them, giving them communion, helping them either to heal or to prepare for death.

This, in fact, was his own preparation for death. He ministered to his people until he physically could not continue and literally collapsed. This calls to mind the Lord himself, whom Fr. Nicola imitated and served: "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). His last words to his sons were, "Keep your hands and your heart clean." He died at midnight, as October 28 turned to October 29.

The local Kearney newspaper reported, "During the past week Rev. Yanney worked faithfully among his parishioners here, many of them being stricken with the influenza. Considerable exposure to the disease was inevitable and although he had complained of not being in the best of health he

continued his work uninterrupted until the last." The Brooklyn Arabic newspaper *Al-Nasr* wrote of Fr. Nicola's death, "It was the worst hour when we received the telegram from the children of Father Nicola. They told us that we had lost him because he was always the first to serve the people and the congregation."

Fr. Nicola lived in the United States in the Twentieth Century. He was not given the opportunity to die a martyr's death, but we cannot doubt that he would have embraced martyrdom. The manner of his death, too, echoes the martyric end of another great Antiochian saint, Joseph of Damascus, Dean of the patriarchal Cathedral where St. Raphael's parents were parishioners. In 1860, Druze madmen rioted and massacred Orthodox Christians in Damascus. Amidst this chaos and bloodshed, St. Joseph took the reserve sacrament and literally jumped from rooftop to rooftop, going into the homes of his parishioners to prepare them for martyrdom. When he was finally cornered by the Druze, St. Joseph consumed the rest of the sacrament, moments before he was brutally murdered.

Fr. Nicola was not killed by an anti-Christian mob, but his faithfulness, his courage, his patient endurance of suffering, his selflessness, and his devotion to his people to the very end, demonstrate without question that he would have embraced martyrdom, had he been presented with the opportunity.

What, then, is the legacy of Fr. Nicola? He was a pioneering priest, a founder of parishes, a notable historical figure for Antiochian Orthodoxy in America. To me, however, his legacy is much more than that: he is an icon of what a priest should be, and a model for all of us – clergy and laity, married and celibate, all Orthodox of whatever jurisdiction. For all of us, he is a model of what true faith looks like in practice. That legacy belongs, not just to the Antiochians of mid-America, but to all Orthodox Christians, everywhere in the world.

I should close by saying, "May his memory be eternal," but there can be little doubt about that. Better, perhaps, to say: "Holy Father Nicola, pray to God for us!"

Matthew Namee



be under Russia, or under Antioch? In hindsight, there was no right answer. St. Raphael had been highly ambiguous when he talked about Russia and Antioch, and he'd left behind no protégé, no successor. To be blunt, both Aftimios and Germanos were unworthy – *anaxios*. World War I was raging. The Russian Church waited two years before consecrating Aftimios, and by then Russia itself was in the throes of revolution. In the meantime, Germanos kept picking off parishes and refusing to go back home to Syria.

In the end, Fr. Nicola chose Germanos, which to him would have meant less about Germanos personally (he didn't really know him that well) and more about choosing Antioch (and not choosing the completely unacceptable Aftimios). I can't fault Fr. Nicola for that choice. He was totally removed from church politics, trying to make the best decision in an impossible situation, with two, really poor

World War, they brought with them a deadly strain of the flu. It is estimated that the Spanish flu killed up to a million people globally, and in America, about 28 percent of the population caught it, and over half a million people died. There was widespread panic, and at various times, governments would order quarantines. The flu spread in three waves. The first and least deadly wave came in the spring of 1918. The second began in late summer, peaking in October, when it killed 195,000 Americans in one month.

As all this was happening, Fr. Nicola was busy. He was dealing with the Russey-Antacky lawsuit, and the prospect of losing his house. His son and daughter-in-law were expecting their first baby – his first grandchild. In September, his new bishop, Metropolitan Germanos, visited Kearney. After Germanos left, Fr. Nicola went on his usual missionary journeys. He probably first heard about this new



# FEAR AND HOPE

EVERY GENERATION, UNFORTUNATELY, IS A SINFUL AND ADULTEROUS ONE, EVEN THAT INTO WHICH CHRIST WAS BORN. YET IN EACH GENERATION, THERE ARE GODLY PEOPLE STRUGGLING TO BE FAITHFUL TO GOD. WHEN ELIJAH TOLD GOD THAT HE WAS THE ONLY ONE LEFT WHO BELIEVED IN HIM, GOD INFORMED HIM THAT HE POSSESSED A “REMNANT” OF SEVEN THOUSAND SOULS STILL FAITHFUL TO HIM (1 KINGS 19:13–18).

**O**ur present generation is no different. It is sinful, adulterous, and evil. Some would call ours one of the worst, if not the worst, considering our public rancor, human trafficking, drug

culture, wholesale murders, wars, domestic violence, hackers, identity stealers, and intolerant and uncompassionate leaders. Yet this generation has its share of godly people, including our congregation, who struggle to follow Christ, who are compassionate, loving, law abiding, faithful, and kind. We see them helping neighbors after a hurricane, reaching out to others, and caring for one another in times of sickness and hospitalization: first-responders, ambulance squads, hospital professionals, social workers, nursing home and hospice personnel, teachers, and volunteers.

Still, our generation suffers from the malaise of fear. Why? We have accepted going through metal detectors to board an airplane or attend a concert or ball game, and we carry concealed weapons. We purchase guns, install security systems for our homes, and live in gated communities, because we are fearful of our neighbors who are of a different race, religion, or ethnic group. We incarcerate more people than any other country, and put up road blocks for people who want to become citizens or register to vote. Why?

We do so because we are anxious, uncertain, in-

secure, and living in a world dominated with fantasy. We no longer know our neighbors; we have no sense of community; and most importantly, we have lost our grounding in reality. We fear death when death is to us Christians merely an extension of life.

Perhaps another reason for our fearful malaise is that we have lost hope, especially hope in God. God is no longer part of our public culture. We have elbowed Him aside, or those who have used God for their own ends have not acted as God expects us to act toward His other children. As a consequence, to be truly religious today is to be considered hypocritical, anachronistic and unsophisticated. Did not Christ tell us that, if they persecuted Him, they will persecute us? (John 15:20). Did He not in the Sermon on the Mount bless those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and those who are reviled and persecuted for His Name's sake? (Matthew 5).

Hope gives us confidence, security, peace, and comfort. Most people today are looking for just those things, but, truth be told, they are looking in the wrong places, places that promise good things but are really dead ends. These places include fantasy games, movies, wizardry, black magic, scientism, idols, and “spirituality.” In some cases, happiness and security is pursued by purchasing the latest fashion, cars, shoes, condos, houses, watches, jewelry, and whatever else is advertised for our “happiness.”

What can give us the things we long to possess?

The answer is a return to reality, a reality that includes God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are born, we live, and we die; that is reality. What do we do between the day of our birth and that of our death? We should search for wisdom. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom Scripture tells us (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7). If we fear God, what else is there to fear?

What is wisdom? *Wisdom* is a word rarely spoken these days. We tend rather to seek learning, scholarship, and intellect. Wisdom, some say, comes with age, and in most cases that is true, but wisdom can come to someone young. Wisdom is to see things as they really are. It is to know what life is about, to distinguish the solid and concrete from the ephemeral. The reality is that we will die, and that God is there to rescue us from death for life eternal. As followers of Christ, we are promised that those who believe in Him will have ever lasting life (John 3:16). In the Creed, we profess that we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. These are manifestations of reality. We no longer fear, for “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). Moreover, Christ tell us that we should not fear the one who kills the body, but not the soul. Rather, we should fear the one who can kill both the body and the soul (Matthew 10:28).

And so we have hope. Did not David tell us in Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want .... He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness .... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” I will no longer fear. Did not Christ tell us many times “Do not be afraid?” This phrase, or one of its variants, appears many times throughout the Old and the New Testament. God is reality!

There is no reason to fear, because God is with us all the time. So are our patron saint, our guardian angel, the Theotokos, and all the saints. Like the martyrs, we can face our demise – if it should come to that – with confidence in God. We need to get to the point as did St. Paul when he told the Philippians that he was torn between dying and being with Christ or staying alive for them (Philippians 1:21–26).

We have been side-tracked by the media to leave and to ignore God. Our current movies, song lyrics, news programs, advice columnists, and television situation comedies give us a warped view of reality.

The thoughts they provoke in us are not godly thoughts. Without realizing it, we incorporate the messages of these programs into our thinking and then our actions. They take us miles away from the Scriptures, particularly the Wisdom Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. They also take us away from the writings of early church leaders who attained a certain level of holiness and then wrote about their holiness experience as did St. Paul for our edification (II Corinthians 12:1–4). These were not academic theologians who write from the outside, looking in. Rather, they were prayerful, fasting, ascetical men and women who wrote from within the Christian tradition.

One other question we need to ask is, Who profits from this culture of fear? Who benefits? Gun manufacturers, security companies, and politicians who use scare tactics to denounce their opponents, among others. Do we not have a Constitution that precludes a king or tyrant, and a royal family? Do we not have a Constitution that ensures that all the citizens have representatives who are to enact laws for our “commonweal,” and for protection from foreign invasions and domestic insurrection? As Franklin Delano Roosevelt said during the dark days of the Great Depression, “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.”

Stay true to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who is the only One to offer us peace and hope! As St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (6:10).

God be with you!

Fr. Michael Massouh  
St. Nicholas Church, St. Petersburg, Florida

## 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

**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 at the Cathedral in Worcester, MA





**O**n our recent vacation we had the greatest joy in visiting children, grandchildren, friends, and relatives. With many we had extended, meaningful conversations that satisfied our longing to connect. We also re-remembered our need to stay in touch with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Staying in touch is so much better for one's soul than possessing things. In one conversation with friends, I raised the question about what brings more satisfaction and happiness: things, or conversations with people. Do things like new cars, clothes, houses, jewelry, resorts, furniture, and so forth, bring happiness beyond the initial five minutes, five days, or five weeks? Or does spending time with a person over a meal, or socializing during an evening, bring more lasting joy, considering that we can recall what we discussed years later? One brash friend immediately asked, "You mean, 'stuff'?" I was taken aback, but I agreed: Yes, stuff, or conversations? We live in a culture that glamorizes stuff that we may acquire. Does that really bring happiness in the long term? Or, more importantly, does it bring us closer to God?

I need to confess that for two Sundays in a row we were not near an Orthodox Church. As we were

in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, we went the first Sunday to the Congregational Church that dates back to the early Eighteenth Century. There was no communion that day, but there was a baptism. I immediately thought, "How appropriate!" as we started out as Christians baptizing and marrying people during the Liturgy and occasionally still do. So, I was anxious to see one during the worship service. I was a little disappointed, as the service was reduced to the very basic element of sprinkling the baby with (unblessed) water three times in the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was over in ten minutes. There were no exorcism prayers, no confession of faith, no blessing of the waters, no tonsuring, no communion, and no chrismation. It was for us Orthodox a baptism done in an emergency and valid for that reason, but there was no emergency that Sunday.

Compounding our disappointment was reading the *Sunday New York Times* for several Sundays. Now, it takes a couple of days to get through the entire paper. All that I read were troubles in America and throughout the world. It was depressing, and I became despondent for the next two weeks, until we were able to attend St. George Orthodox Cathedral in Worcester, Massachusetts. Here Bishop ANTOUN had ordained me a priest.

How refreshing it was to be in an Orthodox church to hear the chanters and the choir, to listen to the petitions and prayers, to smell the incense, to see and kiss the icons, to hug and kiss each other during the kiss of peace, and to taste the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. I was connected again

to reality. Before going to the Divine Liturgy I had spent the time between Orthodox services with the Psalms. Reading Scripture and participating in the Liturgy restored my equilibrium.

I had experienced not being in touch with our Lord, and remembered that an early canon of the church – Canon 80 of the Council of Trullo in 692 – states that unless one is sick or disabled, if one does not attend Liturgy three Sundays in a row, he or she will be denied communion. I could see the wisdom of this canon. Without being in touch, we tend to drift away from the Gospel and Christ. We tend to follow the latest fads and theories. Just look at our world today. People are looking for authenticity, honor, goodness, kindness, well-being, peace, and comfort, and the absence of tribulation, anxiety, and fear. They are looking, however, in the wrong places, places that are temporary, fragile, fleeting, and impermanent.

Yes, staying in touch! With both friends and relatives, and with the Lord! We need to do this; we need to stay in touch for our own sanity, and clearly for our own salvation. It becomes a cliché to say it, but we do live in troubled times, as the *New York Times* reports every day. Yet in reading Scripture, we learn that times have always been troubled. Do not the Psalms speak of injustices? Do not the prophets admonish their leaders? Does not Christ call His generation "adulterous and sinful"? There has never been a joyous, peaceable time in human history. There have always been tyrants and rulers who oppressed the people with taxes, or who persecuted them. That is why Christ came into the world to teach us a better way. Yet, we fail to listen to our Savior.

So, how did godly people survive over the centuries? How did our parents and grandparents survive Turkish hegemony? How are we to survive our present troubled times? I think the answer is clear. All these people from the time of Moses to the present day stayed true to God, and not man, to the Creator, and not the creature. They were conscious of God being in their lives; so, too, should we be, as He is everywhere present waiting for us to return to Him.

Now, that will not be easy, and for some it will mean martyrdom. We who live in a country that lets us express our faith unhindered are blessed. We need to practice our faith. That means we need to turn not only to God, but to our fellow Orthodox Christians. When we gather for coffee after Liturgy, we should

be asking each other what we can do to assist him or her on the spiritual journey, and offer a good ear.

Those Christians in countries where it is all too easy to be singled out for persecution have to be more on guard each day. When a terrorist bombs a church, they become martyrs. In fact, there are some churches even in America that have been bombed or singled out for shootings. If we are to die for our faith, so be it. We need to cultivate the fervor of the early Christians and of the martyrs that followed, those whom we read about in the lives of the saints, and those who went to their deaths bravely.

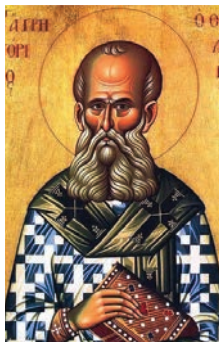
Two martyrs of the last century are Maximilian Kolbe and Mother Maria Skobtsova – Saint Mary of Paris – who each volunteered to die in place of someone else. Fr. Kolbe was a Roman Catholic priest and Mother Maria was a Russian Orthodox Christian. These are modern day martyrs who demonstrate that they are "wondrous" in God's eyes.

Can we cultivate the fervor of these martyrs? Should we not try? As we begin a new Ecclesiastical Year, let us contemplate making the effort to stay in touch with friends, relatives, strangers, and, of course, Christ Himself.

Fr. Michael Massouh  
St. Petersburg, Florida







# ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, THE THEOLOGIAN

*“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair . . .”*

– A TALE OF TWO CITIES

**T**he words of Charles Dickens on the prelude to the French Revolution could be very aptly applied to the fourth-century life of the Church. That period began with persecution by the Roman Empire. It became a time of hope, as Emperor Constantine gave new freedom to Christians. The heretic Arius of Alexandria ushered in a time of “incredulity” by denying the divinity of Christ. The century could be called a season of Light, as it gave rise to the greatest of Christian theologians. In the West were Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome; in the East, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cyril of Alexandria. This century of struggle and confusion would firmly establish the trinitarian faith of the Christian Church. It began with the Council of Nicea in 325, and ended with the First Council of Constantinople in 381, which finalized the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

Each of these theologians was great in his own right, but only one has been given the title “*The Theologian*.” This was Gregory of Nazianzus. Other than St. John the Evangelist, no other Theologian was accorded this august title.

For a non-specialist to write about St. Gregory is more than a bit daunting. His biographer, Fr. John McGuckin, says he was “perhaps the most brilliant man of his times.” He was a theologian, an orator and a poet. He is counted as one the *three great hierarchs* with St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom, who are commemorated in the services of the Church. He became the Archbishop of Constantinople. He chaired the Second Ecumenical Council which finalized the Creed in 381. The Byzantines made more copies of his works than any writer, other than the New Testament authors. A few paragraphs cannot begin to do him justice. My hope is that the reader will be moved

to learn more about St. Gregory and to read his writings, many of which are now available.

The Life of St. Gregory

In 325 A.D., in the year of the First Ecumenical Council, a Christian woman in Southwest Cappadocia (modern day Turkey) converted her husband to the Orthodox Christian faith. Her name was Nonna. Her husband’s name was Gregory. Gregory had belonged to an obscure sect called the Hypsistarians. Gregory and Nonna were people of wealth and position, a patrician couple living in Arianzum in southwest Cappadocia. Gregory was baptized by Bishop Leontius of Caesarea on his way to the Council of Nicea.<sup>1</sup>

Within four years of his conversion, Gregory would be a bishop, known as *Gregory the Elder*. He and Nonna were the parents of three children: a daughter Gorgonia, a son also named Gregory, and a second son, Caesarius. Although all three children would lead noteworthy lives, it was their son Gregory who rose to greatness. Gregory’s parents were in a position to give him the finest education available in the Roman Empire. His early education was under a tutor named Carterios. As a young teenager he went to the regional Capitol of Caesarea, where he studied grammar and rhetoric and very likely came to know the man who would play a most important role in his life, Basil of Caesarea. Gregory and Basil (the future St. Basil the Great) shared many things in common. They were both Christians. Both were wealthy aristocrats. They both had very influential women on their families. Gregory had his mother Nonna. Basil’s family was dominated by his ascetical sister Macrina.<sup>2</sup>

After studying in Caesarea, in c. 347 Gregory, his brother Caesarios and his tutor Carterios left for what would be a study tour of Palestinian Caesarea, which had become a famous center of Christian learning. This was due to Origen of Alexandria. From Caesarea

they proceeded to Alexandria. Carterios remained there for several years to study medicine. In 348, at about the age of 18, Gregory left Alexandria and sailed for Athens to study at its famous university. En route to Athens, Gregory’s ship encountered a fierce storm on the sea which terrified him. “Gregory, huddled in the covered prow, was lamenting all his secular aspirations of so shortly before, filled with terror at the thought of dying unbaptized.”<sup>3</sup> Gregory vowed to God that he would dedicate himself to Christ.

Arriving at Athens, Gregory was soon joined by his friend Basil. They lived together among the aristocrats of the empire which included Prince Julian, the later Emperor known in history as “Julian the Apostate.”

Gregory, according to McGuckin, “studied at one of the greatest schools of antiquity for almost ten years. He had absorbed the whole gamut of literature, philosophy, ethics, and the liberal sciences.”<sup>4</sup>

Although Gregory was disappointed, Basil left after about five years. The wisdom of Athens left him dissatisfied. He beheld the light of the Gospel. After returning home to Cappadocia, Basil journeyed to the monasteries of Syria, Palestine and Egypt to study firsthand the monastic life. Inspired by the *common life* taught by Pachomius in Egypt, he returned home again to establish his monastery at Annesoi.

Gregory left Athens several years later. He returned to Cappadocia about 358, living in semi-solitude for the next two years. During this time he visited his friend Basil in his monastery. Basil would have liked Gregory to join him in the monastic life. Gregory certainly esteemed the celibate life, but he and Basil had very differing ideas about monasticism. “However much I wanted to be involved with people I was seized by a still greater longing for the monastic life, which in my opinion was a question of *interior dispositions, not of physical situation*,” he wrote.<sup>5</sup> “Gregory wanted to combine a gentlemanly solitude, in which he could study and contemplate, with a ready access to civilized society as befitted his rank.”<sup>6</sup> “For the sanctuary, I had reverence. But from a distance.”<sup>7</sup> Gregory was trying to resolve his vocation. Should he be a solitary ascetic? Should he serve the church as a priest or a bishop as his father? The pastoral life would necessarily involve working among a people. Solitude would not be possible for him as a priest.

St. Gregory As a Priest

Having spent a great deal on St. Gregory’s education. Gregory the Elder understandably wanted St. Gregory to take over the management of their vast estates. St. Gregory insisted that his interest in religious matters prevented this. Gregory the Elder called his bluff. If religion were to be his life, he would have to be a priest. Things came to a head in the celebration of Christmas in the year 361, when St. Gregory was forcibly ordained by his father. His ordination prevented him becoming one of the monastics in their estates and gave him a recognizable position in society. St. Gregory was humiliated and angry. He never forgot it.

Before he was to preach his first sermon, St. Gregory ran away. Predictably, he ran to St. Basil. Now that he was a priest, however, St. Basil did not want St. Gregory to join him in his monastery. St. Gregory owed obedience to his Bishop, who was his father. After several months spent together, it was time for St. Gregory to leave. How could the prodigal son return home with dignity? An opening appeared: it seemed that, in this era of theological confusion, his father had signed a less-than-orthodox statement about Christ. Gregory was needed as a theologian and orator to bailout his father. Many, especially the local monks, were refusing to attend his father’s church.

St. Gregory returned home in 362 and accepted his pastoral duties on the great Paschal Feast. Here he preached his first sermon, *Oration I*, which celebrates Christ’s resurrection, and also restored his relationship with his father and the congregation.

“It is the day of resurrection and an auspicious beginning. Let us be made brilliant by the feast and embrace each other. Let us call brothers even those who hate us and much more those who have done or suffered anything out of love for us. Let us concede all things to the resurrection. . . . let us grant pardon to each other, I who have been tyrannized by the good tyranny. . . .”<sup>8</sup> He now defends his father as “the venerable Abraham, this patriarch, this honored and respected head. . . . who today is bringing to God willing sacrifice, his only son. . . .”<sup>9</sup> Gregory now accepts his pastoral responsibility, assisting his father in Arianzum.

After his return, St. Gregory wrote his defense for running away, *De Fuga*, (*Oration II*),<sup>10</sup> a treatise which turns out to be one of the most important writings on the pastoral life of the patristic era. It was later used



1. St. Gregory Nazianzus, *On God and Christ, The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham (Crestwood, N.Y.:St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2002), p. 10.
2. Fr. John McGuckin makes some interesting observations about the Christian women of Cappadocia. They “were almost a new breed . . . Gregory’s grandmother, mother and sister, as well as Basil’s extraordinary female relatives . . . give us . . . a strong sense of feminine identity rooted both in the power base of marriage and that of dedicated virginity” (*St. Gregory of Nazianzus, An Intellectual Biography*, Crestwood, NY.: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2001, p. 5). I am very indebted to this very readable book by Fr. McGuckin.
3. Ibid., p. 49.
4. Ibid., p. 82.
5. Ibid., p. 87.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 89.
8. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Festal Orations*, ed. John Behr, trans. Nonna Verna Harrison (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 2008), p. 57.
9. Ibid., p. 60.
10. “In Defense of His Flight to Pontus” (*De Fuga*), ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 7 (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), pp. 205–227.
11. Ibid., p. 206.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 195, footnote 16.
14. See McGuckin, op.cit., pp. 235–236.
15. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWhp-QpbV1o8>
16. *On the Love of the Poor and Those Afflicted with Leprosy*, in *Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, trans. M. F. Toal (London: Longmans, Green 1955; Chicago: Regnery, 1957), vol. 4, pp. 43–63.

by John Chrysostom and Pope Gregory Dialogus in their treatises on the pastoral life. He tells us why he ran from the priesthood: “Nothing seemed to me so desirable as to close the doors of my senses, and, escaping from the flesh and the world, collected within myself, having no further connection than was a absolutely necessary with human affairs, and speaking to myself and to God. . . .”<sup>11</sup> Life as a priest would never allow this. He did not believe that he was capable of being a pastor. But there was another reason. Gregory was scandalized by the lives of the clergy: “They lay claim to the sanctuary, and they push and thrust around the holy table, as if they thought this order to be a means of livelihood. . . .”<sup>12</sup>

#### St. Gregory as a Bishop

The year 371 brought dramatic change to the life of St. Gregory. His friend Basil had been recently consecrated as bishop of Caesarea. The Arian Emperor Valens changed the political landscape of Cappadocia by dividing it in two. The city of Tyana now became the capitol of *Cappadocia Secunda*. Its bishop claimed to be a *metropolitan* equal to St. Basil, claiming jurisdiction over some of Basil’s suffragan sees. Basil responded by consecrating more bishops in his own jurisdiction. Among them were his brother Gregory, whom he made Bishop of *Nyssa*, and St. Gregory, who he named Bishop of *Sasima*.

St. Gregory describes Sasima as “a horrible and narrow village; everywhere dust and noise and carts . . . . Such is my Church of Sasima, to which I was presented by a man who is not content with fifty *chorepiscopi*. What munificence!”<sup>13</sup> Gregory felt betrayed by Basil and never took possession of his see but remained as an auxiliary bishop to his father in Arianzum. The future relationship between St. Gregory and St. Basil would be problematic; still, in his Eulogy for St. Basil, St. Gregory had only high praise for his friend.

Gregory the Elder and Nonna died in 374. Gregory remained in Arianzum for about a year, when a serious illness forced him to retire to Seleucia in Isauria. He was attached to the Monastery of St. Thekla. Little is known of his activity there.

#### Eunomius and the Arians

At this point the City of Constantinople was an Arian stronghold. They controlled all the churches in the city. Although Arius himself was long dead, those who espoused his theology were often called Eunomians. Eunomius had been a disciple of Aetius, who

taught that the Son was *totally unlike* the Father. Although there were those who taught that Christ and his Father had a *similar* or like nature, this claim of complete unlikeness was an extreme position. Eunomius had been driven out of his see at Cyzicus and went to Constantinople.

The fight against Arianism begun by Athanasius of Alexandria was continued by St. Gregory’s fellow Cappadocians, St. Basil the Great and his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa. All taught that Jesus was of the *same nature (homoousios)* as the Father.

In 379 Gregory was called to Constantinople to support the surviving Nicene Christians. Their adversaries included not only Eunomius, but also Macedonians who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and Apollinarians who denied the full humanity of Christ. St. Gregory seems to have been recommended for this task by St. Basil on his deathbed. Meletius, Bishop of Antioch, had called a synod of the pro-Nicene bishops to bring an end to Arianism. It is most likely that this synod appealed to Gregory to go to Constantinople to defend the Nicenes; the Arian Emperor Valens had died, and the Nicenes were returning to the city. Gregory insists that he was called by a synodal decree.<sup>14</sup> His call to Constantinople may have come from the Nicenes in Constantinople as well.

Arriving in Constantinople, he set up his own chapel in the home of a wealthy relative. He called his church the *Anastasia*. The presence of this erudite theologian was very troublesome to his adversaries. The Arians hired an assassin to kill him. At the Easter Vigil in 379, Gregory and his community were attacked. He was wounded and one bishop was killed.

Nonetheless, Gregory relentlessly preached the Holy Trinity. It was in the Anastasia that Gregory delivered his famous *Five Theological Orations*. These firmly expressed the Orthodox understanding of the Trinity. It was for these that he would be accorded the title *The Theologian*. In 380 a new Emperor, Theodosius, arrived in Constantinople. He was a follower of the faith of Nicea. Having driven out the Arians, he put Gregory in charge of the Cathedral of the Holy Apostles. In 381 an Ecumenical Council was called under the presidency of Meletius of Antioch. Gregory was enthroned as the Archbishop of Constantinople. Meletius died shortly after and Gregory took over the presidency of the council. Although his enthronement as Archbishop had been approved by the Council, Gregory’s position was challenged on the basis of one of the canons of Nicea, which did not

allow the translation of a bishop to another church. Gregory willingly resigned and left Constantinople. He returned to Arianzum, where he spent his remaining life in seclusion. The Council reaffirmed the Nicene condemnation of Arianism. It condemned Eunomius, the Apollinarians, and those who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

#### His Writings

St. Gregory has left the church forty-five Orations, over two hundred letters, and over five hundred poems. Although he did not leave us scriptural commentaries, or writings as extensive as those of St. John Chrysostom or St. Augustine, his works are of great importance in the history of Christian theology. Among these, the *Five Theological Orations* given at Constantinople are the most famous. These orations set forth the divinity of each the Three Persons of the Trinity. When we pray, “This is the faith of the church, this is the faith of the fathers,” it is the Cappadocian theology that we are affirming.

Gregory’s apology for his flight after his forced ordination to the priesthood is more than an apology. A reflection on the priestly ministry, *De Fuga* later influenced St. John Chrysostom in his *On The Priesthood*, and Pope Gregory Dialogus of Rome in his *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*.

Gregory’s *Festal Orations on Christmas, Theophany, Pascha and Pentecost* are still among the greatest sermons for these feasts. They are well worth reading today. The *Poems* of Gregory are on many topics. Some are personal, some theological, and others epigraphs. Gregory has been called the Christian Demosthenes.

Gregory preached funeral sermons for St. Meletius, St Basil, his sister Gorgonia, and his father. His eulogy of his brother Caesarius is a profound reflection on the death of a Christian. It is both personal and theological. I would recommend it to any adult Christian and especially to priests who are called upon to preach at funerals.

In a talk given in the Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New York on February 1, 2013, Fr. John McGuckin made us aware of Gregory’s oration on the *Love of the Poor and Lepers*.<sup>15</sup> Although it has been overlooked, it may be one of his most influential works. In the Roman world, the poor were seen as cursed by the gods. Why should anyone care for them? While Gregory’s fellow Cappadocians had a great influence on the post-Constantinian Church, Gregory seems to have had a unique influence, through his friendship with

Sophronios, the Master of Offices in Constantinople. In his *Love of the Poor and Lepers*, Gregory expresses the unique love of God for the poor and suffering in the Person of His Divine Son. Gregory communicated this teaching to his Christian friend Sophronius. Sophronios had been a successful lawyer in Cappadocia who had risen to high office in Constantinople. He was in a unique position to embrace a revolutionary attitude toward the poor of society.

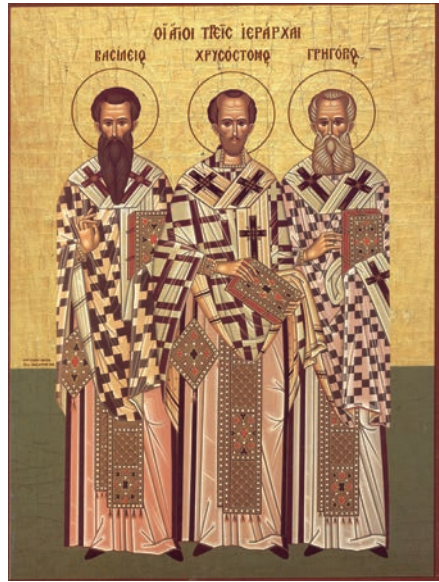
Gregory laments that there are some among our own people, a thing that makes one weep, who, far from helping or having compassion on these poor sick, will reproach them bitterly, insult them, make up empty, foolish speculations about them . . . and say: “Their affliction is from God; and our good health comes from God. And who am I to undo the decree of God, and put myself forward as more kind than God? They are sick! Let them be sick! Let them be afflicted! Let them suffer misfortune! This is the will of God!”

But if we are to believe Paul as well as Christ we must hold that charity, as the end of the Law and the prophets, is the first and greatest of the Commandments, and I find that the most perfect part of this virtue consists in love of the poor, in sympathy and compassion for our fellow man.

We should open our hearts to all who suffer affliction, whatever the cause, who have received so great an example of pity and compassion. . . . For in nothing do we draw so close to God as in doing good to man.<sup>16</sup>

In the opinion of McGuckin, this Christian understanding of the poor, espoused by Sophronios, changed the social policy of the empire. And this in turn changed civilization.

St. Gregory made his world a time of true belief and light. The First Council of Constantinople 381, which he oversaw, brought in a time of light. The faith of the Church was firm. For the poor it was the spring of hope. He was truly Gregory *the Theologian*. He died in Arianzum c. 391. How greatly we are indebted to him!



Fr. Daniel Daly



St. Raphael,  
Bishop of Brooklyn;  
founder of *The WORD*  
(Al-Kalamat) in 1905.



## In His Own Words: St. Raphael Introduces *The WORD*

*We have strong hope in the mercies of our Holy Lord that "The WORD" will find ears to hear and hearts to heed, that it may flourish and bear fruit a hundredfold.*

– St. Raphael, 1905



1907 cover of a loose (unbound) issue of *The WORD* (Al-Kalamat), August 15, 1907. The cover has torn away from the body of the magazine and is in very fragile condition. Collection of the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library.



Right: First page of the very first issue of *The WORD* (Al-Kalamat), published in New York, January 1, 1905. Visible at right is the hinge where this page was bound into a hardcover book containing all the issues from that year. These bound volumes contain the interior pages of each magazine, but not front or back covers. Collection of the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library.

In his introduction to the very first issue of *The WORD* (Al-Kalamat), St. Raphael expressed his goals and hopes – both for the journal itself and for his flock of believers as a whole – during a formative time in the history of our Archdiocese. Published in Arabic in January, 1905, the first issue of *The WORD* came less than a year after St. Raphael became Bishop of Brooklyn. The translation provided here is a culmination of the efforts of two priests of our Archdiocese, Rev. Fr. Jean El-Murr of St. George in Montreal, who provided a first draft, and V. Rev. Edward W. Hughes of St. George in Lawrence, Massachusetts, who worked to fine-tune it. To both we are truly grateful.

In recent years, a number of people have asked whether there were English translations of St. Raphael's writings from early issues of *The Word*. We have also seen increased interest in the translation of his writings. People have called the library at Antiochian Village to ask if we know of anyone who has already translated a particular article, or whether we think they should try. By presenting this particular translation, we hope to accomplish a few goals:

1. To inspire and inform readers today as we contemplate the words of St. Raphael and his purpose in establishing *The WORD* nearly 110 years ago;
2. To spark interest in pursuing other translation projects;
3. To establish the library at Antiochian Village as a hub for those who wish to undertake the translation of St. Raphael's writings in the future.

By inviting people to contact the Library about translating, we hope to avoid duplication of efforts. The library also holds early issues of *The WORD* which may be used for research and translation purposes. For questions or to discuss a potential translation project, please contact Julia Ritter at [julia@antiochianvillage.org](mailto:julia@antiochianvillage.org), or call 724-238-3677 x 425.

When St. Raphael sat down to write this introduction to his first issue of *The WORD*, he was not yet 45 years old. He had been in the United States for just ten years, serving most of that time as a priest. Having been consecrated Bishop of Brooklyn just the year before, 1904, he faced the challenge of leading a faithful flock of Arabic-speaking Christians who were spread far and wide across the

Americas. It was in this context that he penned this introduction to his new journal, which he hoped would be “beneficial to the unity of all our spiritual children in New York, beyond, and everywhere they have emigrated.” He envisioned the journal as part of his ministry, designed to reach people wherever they lived. “Since it is impossible for us to carry out this spiritual ministry speaking face-to-face with each of our beloved spiritual children spread over a distance far from the headquarters of the Archdiocese ... we saw that the only means of fulfilling this ministry to everyone is the creation of this spiritual periodical to act in our behalf in preaching the word of salvation to those who are close by and to those who are far away.”

#### ST. RAPHAEL'S INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF *THE WORD*, JANUARY 1, 1905

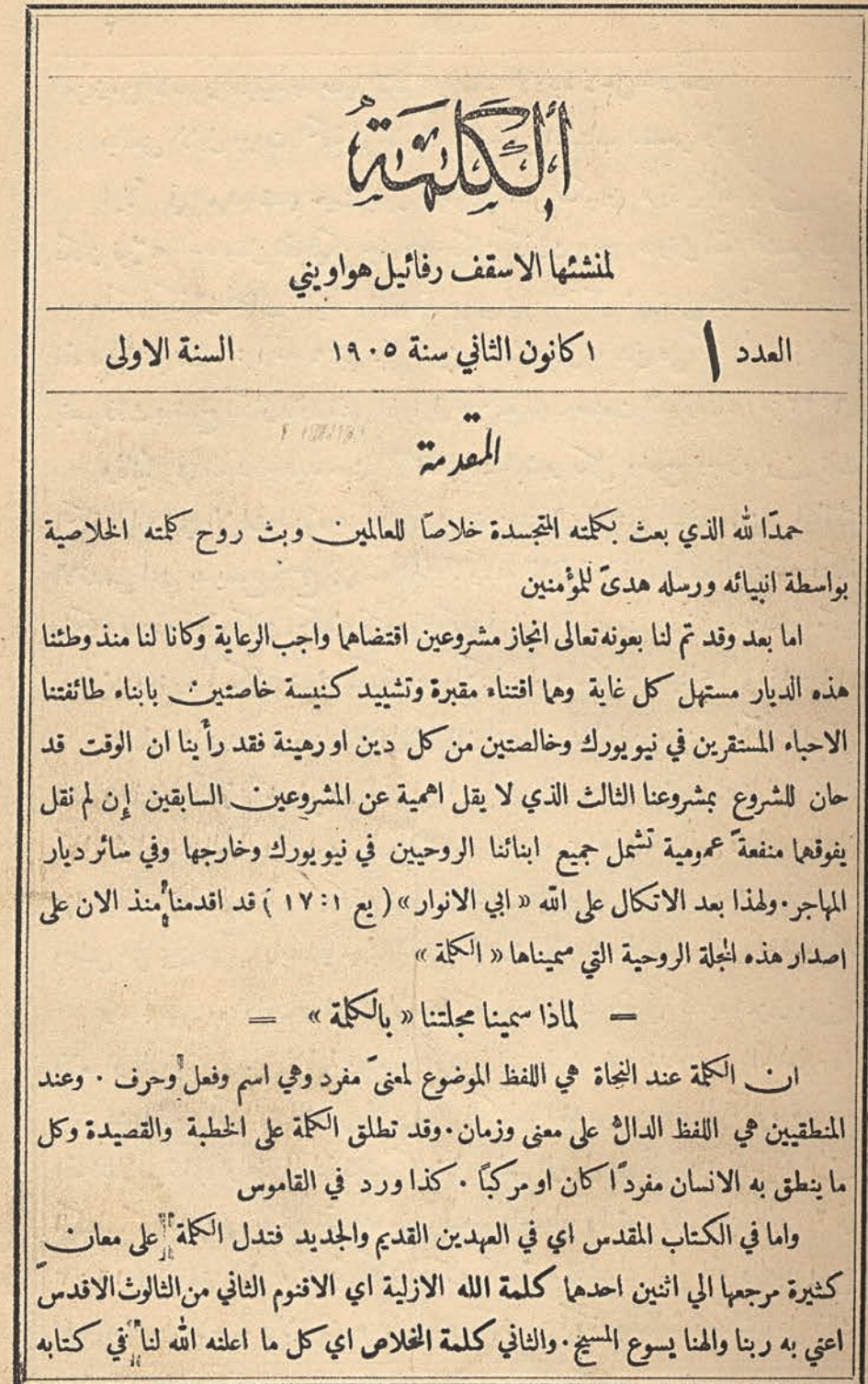
Praise be to God, Who sent His incarnate Word as the Savior for all the world, and sent the Spirit of His saving Word through the mediation of His Prophets and Apostles as a guide for the believers.

Now then, since we have completed with His help the two most important projects necessary for the flock since we arrived in this land (the purchase of a cemetery and the construction of a Church, both the exclusive property of the beloved children of our Communion who live in New York, free of debt or mortgage), we saw that it was time to begin our third project. This is no less important than the first two, nor more generally beneficial to the unity of all or our spiritual children in New York, beyond, and everywhere they have emigrated. Therefore, being guarded by God “the Father of lights” (James 1:17) we have begun now to publish this spiritual periodical which we have named *The Word*.

#### WHY WE CALL OUR PERIODICAL “THE WORD”

“The Word,” according to grammar, is a term or expression with a particular meaning, be it a noun, or a verb, or a letter. To rhetoricians, it is an expression or term indicating meaning or time (*sic*). The term *word* is applied to a speech, to a poem, and to “anything that may be spoken or uttered by a human being, whether simple or compound.” So it is found in the dictionary.

In the Holy Scriptures, that is, in the Old and New Testaments, however, *word* can have many





meanings. We will refer to two in particular. One of them is the eternal *Word of God*, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Our Lord and God Jesus Christ. The other is the *Word of Salvation*, being all that God revealed to us in His precious Book of religious mysteries, divine commandments, and moral or ethical teachings for our salvation.

The first meaning of *word* is found in the following verses of Holy Scripture:

1. In the Old Testament, where Moses says in Genesis, “And God said: ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. ... ‘and let there be a firmament’ ... and it was so ... and God said: ‘Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together’ ... and it was so.” And so forth, where Moses continuously repeats the words, “and God said,” at the creation of each thing at a time (see Genesis 1:1–29), conspicuously repeating “said,” meaning the eternal Word of God, as the Prophet David explains more clearly when he says, “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made” (Psalm 32:6).
2. In the New Testament, where the Evangelist John preaches to us in all clarity and plainly that this word appearing intentionally in the verses of the Old Testament is no one other than the second Person of the Holy Trinity, even Jesus Christ the only Son of God and His eternal Word, when he says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:1–14).

Therefore *Word*, according to the first meaning, is the only Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, through Whom all things were made, and Who for us men and for our salvation came down at the fullness of time from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, and He shall come again in great glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose Kingdom shall have no end.

According to its second meaning, however, indicating all that God revealed to us in His precious Book of religious mysteries and divine commandments and moral or ethical teachings for our salvation, “Word” is found in many verses of the Holy Scripture. Nay, rather, all the Holy Scripture, from the beginning to the end, is the saving Word of God or His revealed will to humans, as Paul the Apostle says to his disciple Timothy: “All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), until he says to him, calling the entire book “Word”: “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but, have itching ears, will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:1–5).

Therefore we have named our periodical *The WORD*, first in reference to the name of the eternal *Word of God*, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, Who, although He was Divine and the Son of God, nevertheless out of love for us men and for our salvation, has emptied Himself, taking on the form of a servant in the likeness of men, and humbled himself unto death, even the death of the Cross. “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Philippians 2:9–10). [We have done so], secondly, alluding to the most necessary priestly obligations, the obligation to teach and proclaim the *Word of Salvation* in all places especially within our God-protected Archdiocese, as the Apostle Paul enjoined his disciple Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, as mentioned above; which we took as the motto of our periodical and as an ongoing principle in accordance with the support of God, Whose strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

THE REASON FOR THE CREATION OF THE PERIODICAL

The reason for the creation of this periodical is the love of spiritual ministry to Syrians in general, and especially to the children of our Communion spread out over our entire God-protected Archdiocese. It is impossible for us to carry out this spiritual ministry, speaking face-to-face with each of our beloved spiritual children spread over a distance far from the headquarters of the Archdiocese, though those who are far away have every right to hear the word of God which we are giving to their brothers who are near to us. Therefore, we saw that the only means of fulfilling this ministry to everyone is the creation of this spiritual periodical to act in our behalf in preaching the word of salvation to those who are close by and to those who are far away.

THE SUBJECTS AND GOALS OF THE PERIODICAL

The subjects of this periodical will be confined, as its name implies, to a compendium of spiritual, moral and ecclesiastical topics, both historical and informational, “according to the authority which the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down” (2 Corinthians 13:10). The editorial policy which will govern this periodical, however, has both positive and negative elements.

The positive are the following: [contributions to the periodical shall]

1. support religious teaching and true Christian morality;
2. spread the spirit of love and moderation among Syrians in general, and especially those in the emigration.
3. portray the conditions of the Christian people, particularly the Orthodox, in every place and time, and in particular those inside the circle of our God-protected Archdiocese.

The negative [elements] are the following: [contributions to the periodical shall]

1. avoid irrational talk and baseless discussions;
2. avoid personal defamation and slander; and contain no political conflict or conflict with those in authority or leadership;
3. avoid excess and exaggeration (“false statements”).

DIVISION OF THE SUBJECTS OF THE PERIODICAL

We have divided the subjects of the periodical into five divisions or sections. The first section is devoted to spiritual topics, covering the fundamentals of religion and the doctrines of the true Christian Faith according to the teachings of the Bible and the Church, and what is in agreement with it of current scientific truths. “So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles” (Ephesians 4:14).

The second section is devoted to moral topics of education and instruction, making use of spiritual guidance and awakening desire and admonition, according to circumstances as is expedient. “That you put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22–24).

The third section is devoted to topics of the Church, including historical and informational, as far as we are able to clarify, examine and ascertain the truth.

The fourth section is devoted to a presentation of events happening throughout the world, what is happening among Syrians generally and the Orthodox particularly, especially in their places of emigration, regarding Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, the opening of Churches and Schools, and the establishment of organizations, and of whatever else we become aware.

The fifth section is devoted to official news concerning the affairs of our God-protected Archdiocese. And we have allocated the last four pages of each issue to publish one spiritual, moral or Church-related story that is suitable for teaching, instruction, and building faith in Jesus Christ.

We have strong hope in the mercies of our Holy Lord that *The WORD* will find ears to hear and hearts to heed, that it may flourish and bear fruit a hundredfold.

–Translated text of St. Raphael’s introduction to *The WORD*, 1905

*Note: For the project presented here, we did not employ professional translators, but volunteers, one a native speaker of Arabic, the other a native speaker of English. We may not have published a “perfect” translation of St. Raphael’s words, but we are deeply thankful for the time and talents of these two priests in helping to create this very readable translation.*



# The Relevance of St. Ignatius to American Christianity

IN AUGUST OF 1801, IN CANE RIDGE, KENTUCKY, BARTON STONE, A PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER, HELD A CAMP MEETING OF OVER TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE. MINISTERS FROM PRESBYTERIAN, METHODIST AND BAPTIST BACKGROUNDS PARTICIPATED. THIS CAMP MEETING WAS A SEMINAL EVENT IN A MOVEMENT THAT WOULD TRANSFORM AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM. THE MOVEMENT IS CALLED *RESTORATIONISM*.



Members of the American Restoration Movement aimed to *restore the church* and sought “the unification of all Christians in a single body patterned after the church of the New Testament.” They wished to transcend denominational divisions. No longer wishing to be called Protestants, they wished simply to be called “Christians.” No long wishing to “reform” the Church in the tradition of the sixteenth-century reformers, they sought to “restore” the church to its New Testament model. This movement is regarded as part of the *Second Great Awakening* of American Protestantism.

Stone was soon allied with Alexander Campbell of Virginia who headed a movement with similar ideas, but some differences, too. Campbell and his followers believed in the possibility of a reconstruction of the early Church. The followers of Stone emphasized freedom and a lack of dogmatic teaching. Both, however, were in favor of the restoration of the early Church. The two movements were united in 1832 with a handshake. Tradition and creeds were rejected. The Bible alone would be their guide.

The followers of Stone and Campbell were not alone in their efforts to “restore” the Church. Restorationist organizations have included Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, the Shakers, as well as the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement.

Churches that follow (unintentionally) the

model of Stone and Campbell are now widespread across the United States. Many refer to themselves as “non-denominational.” Two hundred years have passed since the events at Cane Ridge. Their wish for a unification of Christians has not been realized. Their hopes for a New Testament church were indeed laudable, but Protestant Christianity is even more divided than it was in 1800. Some may argue that the restoration movement has been superseded by the “Emerging Church” movements (which have further blurred American Protestantism); however, the “New Testament Church” is still the fond hope of many Christians.

## CAN THE “NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH” BE RESTORED?

This question raises one very serious theological issue, which is more than an historical question. If the Church is understood to be a living organic reality, which has lived an ongoing life in communion with the Holy Spirit for the last two millennia, “restoring” the Church would be tantamount to restoring the childhood of an older adult. It is certainly possible to *describe* the early days of the Church, but theologically, an actual restoration of the “New Testament Church” seems hardly possible nor desirable.

The New Testament gives us the “big picture” of the life of the first-century Church. We know that the early Christians were “faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the fellowship and to the breaking of the bread” (Acts 2:42). St. Paul speaks of bishops, presbyters and deacons. The New Testament letters give us an understanding

of the life and death of Jesus Christ, and its implications for Christian life. But we would like to know more.

The Church began its ministry after the event of Pentecost in c. 30 A.D., but the New Testament Church did not cease to exist after the death of the last Apostle. (The canon of the New Testament books was only finalized in the latter part of the Fourth Century.) Did not the Lord promise that the Holy Spirit would be with the Church forever, leading it into all truth? (John 16:13). Historians might divide the history of the Church into handy periods, but the permanence of the Church was promised when the Lord stated that “the gates of Hell would not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

However well-intentioned, the Restoration Movement never achieved a consensus about what the “restored Church” would look like. Is there another path to a more detailed picture of the first-century Church? If we are willing to look beyond the books of the New Testament, the early Church Fathers are of immense help in our knowledge of the New Testament Church. Among them, the *Seven Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch* are especially revealing.

## ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

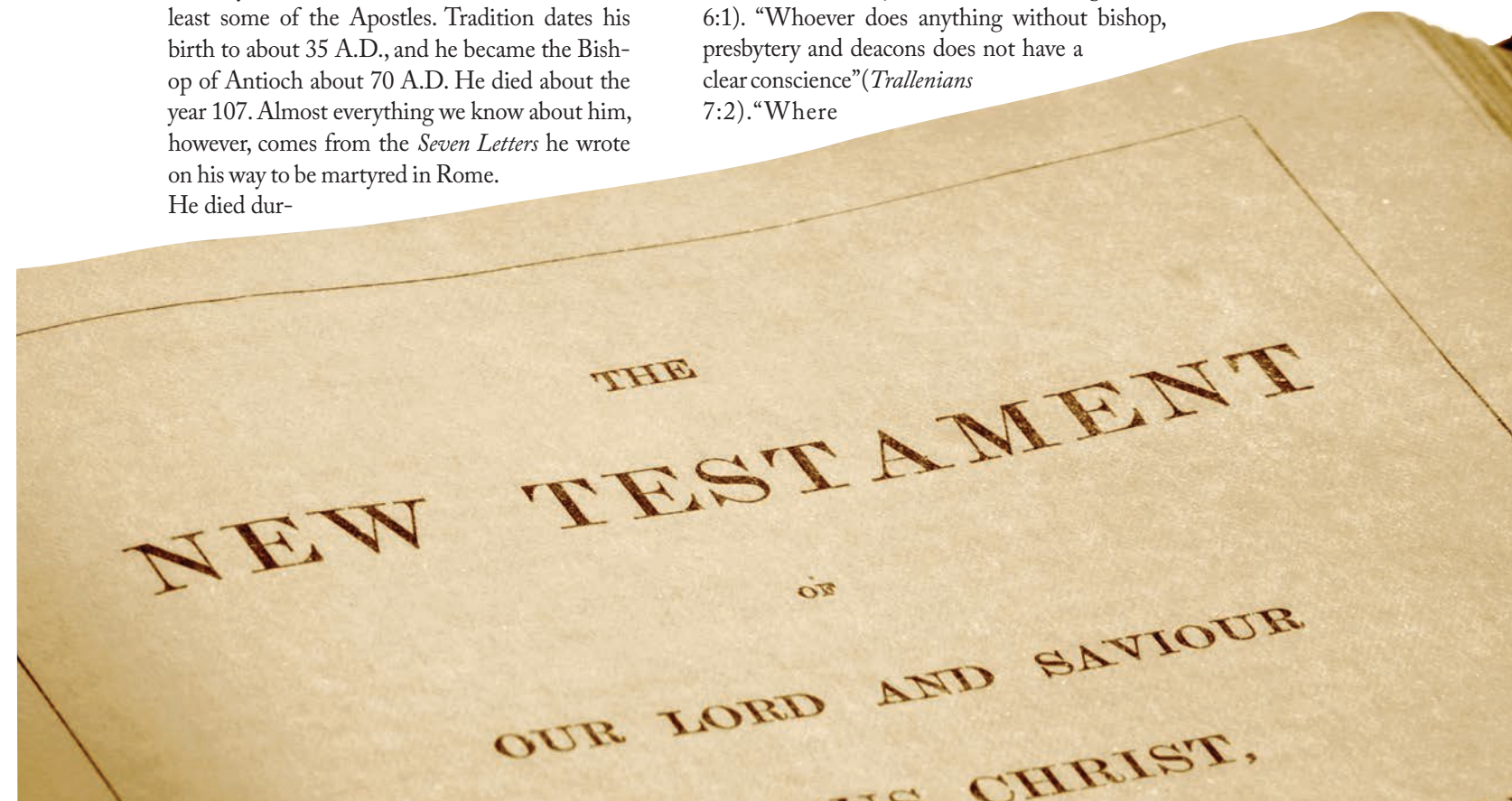
Ignatius of Antioch is a unique witness to the life of the Church in the final years of the First Century, which is still within the lifetime of at least some of the Apostles. Tradition dates his birth to about 35 A.D., and he became the Bishop of Antioch about 70 A.D. He died about the year 107. Almost everything we know about him, however, comes from the *Seven Letters* he wrote on his way to be martyred in Rome. He died dur-

ing the reign of Emperor Trajan (98–117). The fourth-century Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (265–339) notes that Ignatius followed Evaristus as the third Bishop of Antioch (St. Peter being the first). Later Christian writers believed that Ignatius was appointed by St. Peter and ordained by the Apostles. He certainly would have been very much aware of the life of the Church in these years, as the Church passed beyond the life of the Apostles and the early disciples.

There are three major concerns in the *Seven Letters*: his own coming death, the unity of the Church in the face of the *Docetist* heresy (which denied the full humanity of Christ), and the role of the bishop in maintaining the unity of the Church. Without minimizing the importance of his thoughts about his martyrdom in Rome, or the importance of the Docetist error, this paper will focus on the image of the Church revealed in his letters.

## THE CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS

We note first that the Church was *hierarchical*. St. Ignatius speaks of the bishop more than forty times in these letters. This is his incessant plea to the churches. “I exhort you to strive to do all things in harmony with God: the bishop is to preside in the place of God, while the presbyters are to function as the council of the Apostles, and the deacons who are most dear to me are entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ” (*Magnesians* 6:1). “Whoever does anything without bishop, presbytery and deacons does not have a clear conscience” (*Trallenians* 7:2). “Where





1. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1 (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics Inc., 1992), p. 66.  
2. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1: *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 160. Note: For most of his life, Pelikan was a Lutheran and an ordained pastor in that tradition. In 1998, however, he and his wife Sylvia were received into the Orthodox Church in America at the Chapel of St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York. He died in 2006.

Fr. Daniel is a retired priest of the Antiochian Archdiocese living in Round Rock, Texas.

the bishop appears, there let the people be, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church” (*Smyrneans* 8,2).

The unity of the Church is built around the bishop. “You are to act in agreement with the mind of the bishop, and this you do. Certain it is that your presbytery, which is a credit to its name, is a credit to God; for it harmonizes with the bishop as completely as the strings with a harp. This is why in the symphony of your concord and love the praises of Jesus Christ are sung” (*Ephesians* 4). “Do not let there be anything to divide you, but be in accord with your bishop and your leaders” (*Magnesians* 6:2).

What is clear in these letters is the *authority* of the bishop. His authority pertains to all aspects of Church life. The bishop is more than the one who presides at the Eucharist. “Nobody must do anything that has to do with the Church without the bishop’s approval” (*Smyrneans* 8:1). “For when you obey the bishop as if he were Jesus Christ, you are (as I see it) living not in a merely human fashion but in Jesus Christ’s way who for our sakes suffered death that you might believe in his death and so escape dying yourselves, It is essential, therefore to act in no way without the bishop, just as you are doing. Rather even submit to the presbytery as to the apostles of Jesus Christ” (*Trallians* 2).

“It is not permitted without authorization from the bishop either to baptize or hold an *agape*; for whatever he approves is pleasing to God. Let no one do anything touching the Church apart from the bishop. Let that celebration of the Eucharist be considered valid which is held under the bishop or anyone to whom he has committed it” (*Smyrneans* 8:1). “For those who contemplate marriage it is proper to enter the union with the sanction of the bishop” (*Pol.* 5,2). This unity also involves those who have sinned. “As many as repent and enter the unity of the Church, they shall be God’s” (*Phil.* 2:2).

As noted above, St. Ignatius refers to the bishop more than forty times in his letters. It is interesting that in his *Letter to the Romans*, his esteem for their church is without question. Yet in this letter the word *bishop* only appears once, and this in reference to himself. There is no mention of the Bishop of Rome.

THE CHURCH WAS SACRAMENTAL

“Take care, then, to partake of one Eucharist; for one is the Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one the cup to unite us with his Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants” (*Phil.* 45). “The Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ” (*Smyrneans* 7:2). “Try to gather more frequently to celebrate God’s Eucharist, and to praise Him. For when you meet with frequency, Satan’s power is overthrown, and his destructiveness is undone by the unanimity of your faith” (*Ephesians* 13:1). St. Ignatius has a very “realistic” view of the Eucharist. It is not simply a memorial meal.

The patristic scholar Johannes Quasten makes an interesting observation regarding *the liturgical dimension of the Church*: “The Church is called ‘*the place of sacrifice*’ (*thesiasteriou*)” (*Eph.* 5:2; *Trall.* 2; *Phil.* 4). It seems that the conception of the Eucharist as the sacrifice of the Church suggested this designation, for in the Didache, the Eucharist is called *thesia*.” (*Didache* 14:1).<sup>1</sup> Most scholars believe that the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* was of the First Century. What is striking is the fact that Ignatius, a first-century bishop, and the *Didache*, a first-century document, both understand the Eucharist as sacrificial. Both the Orthodox and Catholic Church speak of the Eucharist in sacrificial terms as the “Mystical Sacrifice” and the “Sacrifice of the Mass.”

THE CHURCH WAS CORPORATE

The Church has a “corporate life.” In writing to the Smyrneans, St. Ignatius asks them to send a delegation to his home church in Syria “to congratulate them at being in peace, or recovering their original numbers, and on having their own *corporate life* restored to them.” (*Smyrneans* 11:3). There is no mention of a spiritual Church over and above the Church in the world.

The erudite Church historian Jaroslav Pelikan observes, “For both Ignatius and Cyprian, moreover, the bishop was the key to authentic unity, and schism was identified as party spirit in opposition to him. Therefore the efforts to superimpose upon the second or third centuries the distinction made by Augustinism and especially the Reformation between the visible and

*Continued on page 31*

“FROM THESE STONES”

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

A Catechism for North America

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND EVANGELISM

We need to include the moral teachings of the Church in our catechism classes. Would it be accurate to say that most of us focus on two main areas in our catechetical approach: Theology and Liturgy, perhaps including some history and spirituality in those contexts? But what about morality? We would do well to remind ourselves that the early Church used the book of Proverbs to teach the morality of the Church to her adherents. What prevents us from doing the same?

In 1988, the V. Rev. Richard Ballew of blessed memory delivered an address at the very first Missions and Evangelism Conference in Goleta, California, entitled “The Holy Spirit and Evangelism,” in which he proposed an approach to catechism for North America which gave Theology, Morality, and Liturgy equal weight. I’ve revisited this address countless times over the years. Although it was delivered thirty years ago, it could not be more relevant to our current cultural milieu.

Please allow me to share with you much of what he said in that memorable presentation, which began with three Scripture verses by way of introduction:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams (Acts 2:17).

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions (Joel 2:28).

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).

He then pointed out that all peoples are the object of the Holy Spirit’s work and endeavor, and that all

peoples are invited to come, and that no one is forced, emphasizing that the Spirit and the *bride* say come. Many people leave out the Church from that invitation. It is the Holy Spirit *and* the Church, not the Holy Spirit without the Church. Both the Holy Spirit and the Church are involved together in evangelizing the world.

Before a person can be saved, he or she must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit from the darkness of this world, from 1) theological (Christological) darkness, that is, ignorance of Christology – the doctrine of Christ, 2) moral darkness, that is, ignorance of God’s righteousness in Christ, and 3) liturgical darkness, that is, ignorance of how to worship and how to pray.

THEOLOGICAL DARKNESS

Many people say that it’s not important *what* you believe, only that you are sincere, but what do the Apostles of Christ say?

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (2 John 9).

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (2 Corinthians 11:4).

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (Galatians 1:6–8).

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies,



even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (2 Peter 2:1–2).

There is such a thing as *another* Jesus and *another* Spirit. We must have the right Jesus, because the world is loaded with “Jesuses.” So, where is North America, Christologically? Fr. Richard observes, “For over two centuries, the emphasis of the Christian message in North America has been on what Jesus did, but very little on Who He is. The most important question in history is: ‘Who is Jesus Christ?’ North America has heard what He did, that He died on the Cross, but the essential question is ‘Who died on the Cross?’

“We might ask people ‘Do you believe in Jesus?’ ‘Yes’ they say. ‘What did he do for you?’ ‘He died on the Cross for me.’” “But when we ask the question, ‘Who died on the Cross?’ they start scratching their heads, because the average person thinks that a man did; that a man shed his blood. And that’s partially true, but that does not answer the question: ‘Who died on the Cross?’

“In the Book of Acts when St. Paul warned the Ephesian presbyters about those who had come into the flock teaching falsehoods, he said, ‘Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood’ (Acts 20).”

“Who died on the Cross? God died on the Cross, and frankly, I believe that North America is sick and tired of hearing that Jesus died on the Cross without really knowing Who it was Who died, because they think this poor, weak man died on the Cross for our sins. No...it was God that died on the Cross. He did not die in His divine nature, he died in his human nature, but it was God who died.

“The Gospel begins in the womb of Mary, not on the Cross. The reason people don’t know who died on the Cross is because they do not know who was in the womb of Mary. Her name is so critical here: Theotokos, the Mother of God. And so, Who was in her womb? God was in her womb. Therefore, who died on the Cross? God died on the Cross!

“If we begin our Gospel with the Cross, we are immediately faced with a problem – we don’t know who’s on it, but if it was God in her womb, assuming human flesh, then it was God dying on the Cross in

His flesh for the sins of men – and I could listen to that forever!”

MORAL DARKNESS

For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (Romans 10:3).

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened (Romans 1:18, 21).

Fr. Richard recalls how in the mid-1960s, Joseph Fletcher took the country by storm with his book, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*. Theologians both in Europe and America brought situation ethics to America. It is rooted in the modernist philosophy of nominalism, which teaches that words do not correspond to reality but are only a convenient way of expressing thought. Fletcher built his system on that philosophy, stating that “everything hangs on it” (nominalism).

The main point of situation ethics is this: “The Law of love is the only law that governs all decision-making.” Another way of putting this might be “Just love, just love everybody – then do whatever you want to do.”

The Holy Spirit’s morality, on the other hand, is the righteousness of God, keeping the commandments of Christ. Quoting John 14:15 “If you love me, keep my commandments” Fr. Richard said, “Apart from those commandments and keeping them, there is no love.”

We learn in our participation in the Daily Services to say this:

Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes.  
Blessed art Thou, O Master; make me to understand Thy statutes.  
Blessed art Thou, O Holy One; enlighten me with Thy statutes.

The best expression of our Lord’s commandments may be found in the Sermon on the Mount. We need, by the grace of Christ, to teach and live out this sermon in our own lives.

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him (John 4:22–23).

Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26).

The Holy Spirit wants to enlighten man regarding how to pray. Quoting John 16:9–11, Fr. Richard implies that the Holy Spirit wants to enlighten the darkness of pluralism in these three mentioned areas:

- And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:
1. Of sin, because they believe not on me (Theology);
  2. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more (Morality);
  3. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged (Liturgy).

How in the world can we get ready for the coming judgment apart from liturgies; apart from worship and prayer, in other words? If future judgment takes place at the throne of God, does it not behoove us to get acquainted with that throne? And where do we get acquainted with the Truth, except at the throne of God? We need to teach North Americans an all-encompassing liturgical life, all the way from the cradle to the grave. This means, we must be committed to this liturgical life.

In summary, we need to give equal weight in our catechism to the moral teachings of the Church. We need to go on the offensive in deconstructing the prevailing philosophies of situation ethics, nominalism, and post-modernism that are deeply influencing, not only seekers of the true Faith, but also our own parishioners, especially our youth. We need to teach the Proverbs as a way of life, as an exhortation to embrace spiritual fatherhood, guidance and direction, and the Sermon on the Mount as Christ’s instructions on how to become like Him. May we be so bold as to say that right faith and right worship will topple unless they are propped up by the third leg of the catechetical school – an upright life.

Fr. John D. Finley, Chairman  
Department of Missions and Evangelism

THE RELEVANCE OF ST. IGNATIUS *continued from page 28*

invisible churches has proved quite ineffectual....*On earth there was only one Church, and it was finally inseparable from the sacramental and hierarchical institution.*”<sup>2</sup>

St. Ignatius is well known for having been the first to use the term *catholic* (“universal”) for the Church. “Wherever the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic Church” (*Smyrneans* 2). The Church, which exists visibly in one place, is also catholic. The fullness of the Church exists in the local community. That same catholicity, however, unites the local church to the other local communities. No local church exists in isolation.

THE CHURCH HAD MEN AND WOMEN  
LIVING A CONSECRATED LIFE

In addition to the clergy and laity of the Church, St. Ignatius twice speaks of persons living a consecrated life. “Greetings to the families of my brothers, along with their wives and children, and to the virgins enrolled with the widows” (*Smyreans* 13:1). “If anyone is able to remain continent, to the honor of the flesh of the Lord, let him persistently avoid boasting” (*Polycarp* 5:1). Consecrated celibates were part of the apostolic Church (cf. Mathew 19:9–12; 1 Corinthians 7).

CONCLUSION

The *Seven Letters* have stood the test of time. Scholars are in agreement that we have the letters as written by Ignatius. Like all historic documents, they have been the subject of scholarly debate. Nonetheless, there is a simplicity to the letters. They are not the product of a contemplative. They are the letters of a man on his way to death, one who is concerned for the unity and orthodoxy of the Church. What he writes can be understood by any adult Christian person. His remarks unequivocally reveal a Church that is hierarchical and sacramental. The Church of Ignatius is very much the Church of the Apostles. Ignatius is not introducing a new kind of church. He is a witness to the final years of the Apostles and the continuity of the same Church into the Second Century. Many Christian men and women are sincerely searching for that “New Testament Church.” It is there in the pages of Ignatius’s letters.

If one takes seriously the statements of Jesus Christ regarding the permanence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and His promise that the gates of Hell would not prevail against the Church, then it is not a matter of restoring or recreating the Church. Rather it is a matter of discovering the *historic Church*, among the myriad of denominations, which is one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

Fr. Dan Daly  
Austin, Texas



# Steadfast, in Fellowship

Judges' Choice, the Oratorical Festival from the Diocese of Miami and the South-East

Cecilia Bleam

In the magical land of Middle-Earth, long, long ago, a famous fellowship embarked on an epic journey, a journey to annihilate evil in the land of Mordor, and uphold the good. This fellowship was united in pursuit of one goal: to destroy the “ring of power,” forged in the fires of Mordor, that plays on the selfishness and weakness of men. This fellowship is the focus of the first *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, by J. R. R. Tolkien. This fellowship can serve as a metaphor for what



to support and guide us towards God and away from the wiles of the Evil One. Unlike Frodo’s journey, however, which no-one had ever completed successfully before, we have many examples of people who reached deification in the saints. The saints’ lives are templates for how to live a godly life, and their writings give us every detail for what we need to do to reach our destination.

The fellowship of Orthodox Christians also helps us to stay honest with ourselves and to come to repentance, as

I want to speak about today, which is the fellowship of Orthodox Christians who endeavor daily to “continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.” It is crucial for us as Orthodox to worship as a fellowship, because it keeps us on track to the Kingdom of Heaven, and leads us back if we stray. A tightly-knit fellowship is what preserves our doctrine.

It’s easy to sin and to stray from God without a second thought when nobody physically tells you not to, which is one reason that the church is essential to our spiritual well-being. Like the fellowship’s journey to Mordor, our journey to Heaven is fraught with obstacles to make us stumble and fall. The Fellowship of the Ring is a diverse group of characters; four hobbits, an elf, a dwarf, two men, and their leader, the wizard Gandalf. We need help, too, from our Orthodox friends. Frodo (the main hobbit) needed Samwise, his best hobbit friend, and the Fellowship to support him; he could not accomplish his goal without their protection and companionship, because the power of the Ring would have overtaken him. He needed Gandalf for guidance, to show him the evils of the Ring, and how to destroy it. We have our own diverse fellowships of godparents and our spiritual fathers, the priests,

seeing our fellow parishioners is a constant physical reminder of God’s presence. It is encouraging to see people choose to go to Confession. It is encouraging when, on the Sunday of Forgiveness before Great and Holy Lent, everyone in the church exchanges a kiss of peace, and the words, “forgive me a sinner,” and, “God forgives,” echo throughout the nave. Positive Orthodox peer pressure is key to bringing us to repentance, as we may feel reluctant, embarrassed, or doubtful about whether we can be forgiven for our sins. Simply knowing that we are not alone, but in a fellowship, can often persuade us to repent.

It is imperative that we as Orthodox Christians “continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” through fellowship. Recently, the St. Andrew’s Teen SOYO, my parish fellowship, met with His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS, who told us that unity is emphasized in Orthodoxy, and that one name for the Devil, *diabolus*, means “the divider.” The Devil is trying to divide the Church, to make it weak. The Devil can more easily distract individuals who don’t have spiritual support from other people. Ecclesiastes 4:10–12 states, “For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he

falls, For he has no one to help him up. Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” These verses encourage us to seek out spiritual companionship in our peers and to combat temptation together. In other words, they call us no longer to be a fellowship of individuals, but a united community.

How does this united community come into being? It does so in the partaking of Communion, the breaking of the bread, which we share every Divine Liturgy. In the Lord of the Rings, the elves make a certain type of bread called *lembas*. It only takes one bite of it to fill a grown person’s stomach. Likewise, the Eucharist fills our souls with one taste, and strengthens and invigorates us to support each other in the Faith. The Eucharist also gives us the fuel to continue steadfastly in prayer. For example, establishing a prayer rule for ourselves with the guidance of our spiritual fathers is a great way to ensure that we are not cutting prayer out of our lives, either because of laziness or general forgetfulness. Prayer brings us closer to being a part of the fellowship of the saints, and leads us to a close relationship with God.

Having a fellowshiping Orthodox community is also important for the interpretation of doctrine. The Church interprets the Bible, not individuals, because individuals will not necessarily interpret Scripture correctly, and may fall into heresy. Our doctrine has remained constant throughout the years. For example, the bishops of the seven Ecumenical Councils (a fellowship of bishops) reached decisions regarding doctrine, and those decisions were considered to be of the Holy Spirit. Orthodox hierarchs make doctrinal decisions and interpretations as a united body. Some of our Protestant counterparts change their principles regularly, such as when a church switches pastors, and no two churches believe quite the same thing. Each pastor interprets Scripture individually, which causes Protestant religions to splinter into thousands of different versions of Christianity. Their spiritual fellowships shatter. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, has every church practice the same Divine Liturgy across the world, with small cultural differences. We maintain a worldwide fellowship of Orthodoxy. We keep tradition, and do not change our beliefs haphazardly, which is why Orthodox doctrine is unsullied.

As a fellowship united in its saints, worship and

doctrine are the Church. Unity in the Church enables us to pray for each other’s hardships and souls. It can be difficult, as one of two Orthodox students at my high school, for me to stay steadfast in prayer, so it is refreshing and comforting to come to church on Sunday and be surrounded by people of like belief and lifestyle.

I know that I personally need as much help and prayer from others as I can get, which is why I’m heartened to remember the cloud of witnesses who I can ask to intercede for me, as well as my friends and family here on earth who pray for me daily. In 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Paul beseeches the people of Thessalonica to pray for him. “Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you.” Paul, like all of us, needed help to stay strong in faith as he traveled. What a wonderful thing it is to know that we are not alone on our spiritual journey!

In conclusion, to continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine is a difficult task, but through fellowship in the breaking of bread and prayers, God-willing, we will all reach our goal of the Kingdom of Heaven together.

Cecilia Bleam  
Cecilia, 17, is from St. Andrew Church, Pensacola, Florida

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# Teens Take Officer Leadership Training

Waving good-bye, teens from across North America parted ways after nearly a week of Officer Leadership Training.

The joyous week started with the arrival of the new and returning officers and advisors at Antiochian Village in Bolivar, Pennsylvania. As one of our spiritual advisors told us, “Always begin everything with prayer,” and so we did. Kicking off the week with Vespers and everyday with morning prayers, we focused our time together on God.

We were given the chance to listen and ponder the profound orations given by the Oratorical champions of each diocese. They described the way a simple verse from the Acts of the Apostles (2:42) applies to our own lives. Then we got down to business. We attended to mundane but necessary business, volleyed ideas back and forth, and made decisions concerning the future of SOYO. We relaxed in the evening by cheering on each of our dioceses in the highly anticipated NAC Bible Bowl Tournament.

On Sunday, we were joined by the campers of Antiochian Village for a beautiful Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Afterwards, we learned about the importance of teamwork on the ropes course. We wrapped up the evening by watching, “The Greatest Showman.” We not only enjoyed it but afterwards discussed the types of leaders in it and their good and bad qualities, and what that means to us as Christians.

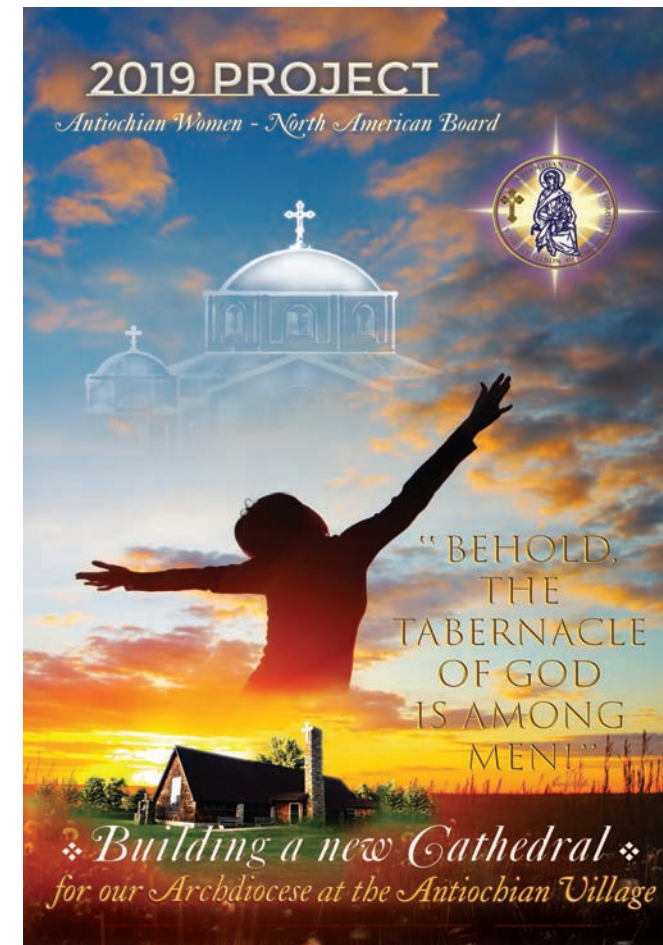
The next day was our trip to Pittsburgh. What an edifying

experience! We met many of the folks at the Focus Center, including Father Paul Abernathy, who advised, “Leave a bouquet of God’s flowers wherever you go.” Our time there really opened our eyes to what was possible with hard work, much prayer, and complete trust in God. On the way back to Antiochian Village, we took the time to pray together during Vespers at The Archangel Michael Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. In our instruction later that evening we learned the essential virtues of a leader. Before we collapsed into our beds after a long day, we had story time! We attentively listened to the life of the recently canonized Saint Iakovos of Evia and were amazed at this man of God.

On our last full day together, we learned so much about our faith. We were informed of our duties as officers. We understood the importance of clear communication, teamwork, and active listening. We attended to business within our diocese. We are becoming, by the grace of God, leaders. Not merely leaders, but Christian leaders; servant-leaders. Having Christ as our ultimate example, we also were given the opportunity to interview a few amazing real-life leaders. Soaking up everything they said, we took their words and applied them to our own lives.

After a fun arts and crafts activity, we all sat down in a circle to discuss all that had transpired over the last few days or so. Much had been heard, felt, and spoken as we tried to grapple with all that we had learned. What does it mean to be a Christian leader? What does it mean to you? In some capacity, we are all called by God to be servant-leaders. We look to our Lord Jesus Christ for guidance. We follow His example by praying, then doing, and only then by speaking. With the potential to bear good fruit, our words should be motivated by love. As Saint Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia says, “Pray, and when you have to, speak ... with love.”

Our last few hours together were spent praying in the Divine Liturgy. Our time together ended just as it had begun, with prayer and hearts full of love. Waving good-bye, teens from across North America parted ways after nearly a week of Officer Leadership Training.



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