While driving to the funeral of Dr. John Dalack during Holy Week, it occurred to me that we are the community of God in exile, wandering through a foreign land. Just as when we walked in the desert of Egypt described in Exodus, we are losing our elders, working with our peers and having children. As a community we are trying to keep our faith, struggling with purity and passions, responding to others in the community and confronted with a host of theologies and ideologies in the lands through which we journey. As Christians, it is up to us to share the Truth, who is Christ, with our children. The Truth we share must be that which God, through the Apostles, delivered to us. As Christians, it is up to us to share the Truth, who is Christ, with our children. The Truth we share must be that which God, through the Apostles, delivered to us.

Delivering the faith of our Fathers in our post-Christian world is indeed a formidable challenge. I have faith that the Holy Spirit will guide His Church as we undertake this task.

Bishop John
A s with any vocation or profession, however, the priesthood does provide happy moments. There are plenty of parties and celebrations, births, weddings, and social events included within the life of a priest. Yet the good in the priesthood may not resemble the happy things of life in the least. For a good is often something we glory in. “But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and to the world,” writes St. Paul to the Galatians (6:14).

Trying to grasp the good in priesthood, using the common worldly understanding of good, is like trying to hold onto smoke. Perhaps this is because our view of what is good, and our experiences of the priesthood, seemingly have little in common. Why is this? Perhaps God’s definition of good differs from ours? This is certainly the case.

I believe that unless one is called by the Providence of God to the Holy Priesthood, he will fall. Fr. Alexander Schmemann wrote: “No one can take it upon himself to become a Priest, to decide on the basis of his own qualifications, preparation and predispositions. The vocation always comes from above – from God’s qualifications, preparation and predispositions. It is not ‘Priesthood’ that the priest receives in his ordination, but the gift of Christ’s love, that love which made Christ the only Priest and which fills with this unique Priesthood, the ministry of those who have converted to Orthodoxy, and her husband was flirting with a vocation. What did I say? I laughed. I had no answer. I later asked the question of several colleagues. They howled.

“Okay, you’ve told us about the ‘bad’ regarding the priesthood. There’s something ‘good’ about being a priest, right? What’s good about the priesthood?” This query came from a woman who had converted to Orthodoxy, and her husband was flirting with a vocation. What did I say? I laughed. I had no answer. I later asked the question of several colleagues. They howled. What’s the ‘good’ in priesthood?

More stories follow us the soul of the priest than the gate which distorts the sea.1 It is difficult to speak of the “good” in priesthood, chiefly because a “good” is something we normally take pride in. Yet, pride is the sin that wipes away humility, and that is the very priesthood will not provide earthly riches.

The Good in Priesthood

When, in St. Matthew’s Gospel, the rich young ruler approaches Christ and asks how to inherit eternal life, He sends him away, saying, “Go and sell what you own, and give to the poor.” What a powerful lesson in the priesthood. It is not “Priesthood” that the priest receives in his ordination, but the gift of Christ’s love, that love which made Christ the only Priest and which fills with this unique Priesthood, the ministry of those who have been converted to Orthodoxy and her husband was flirting with a vocation. What did I say? I laughed. I had no answer. I later asked the question of several colleagues. They howled. What’s the “good” in priesthood?

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One thing must be said at the outset: by good, we are not meaning happy. In other words, this good is not an emotion or a possession. For most, the priesthood will not provide earthly riches.

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about the priesthood, God. The immeasurable joy that one experiences when he and others are drawn into the never-ending Mystery, which is God, is truly the good that faith one's priestly ministry.2

The faith of the priest is continually enhanced by the faith of the flock. This faith understands its creator as a God of mercy, compassion, and love for mankind. God works through people and the experience of this, sinful though we are, is a good that passes human understanding. The sacrificial priest reveals God to his flock and reconciles the people to God. This is the ministry of Christ which is made manifest in His Priesthood. For it is not our ministry, but God's. It is not 'Priesthood' that the priest receives in his ordination, but the gift of Christ's love, that love which made Christ the only Priest and which fills with this unique Priesthood, the ministry of those whom He sends to His people.2

For God, great in might and inexcusable in wisdom, marvellous in counsel above the sons of men: Do thou, the same Lord, fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit this man whom it hath pleased thee to advance to the degree of Priest; that he may be worthy to stand in innocency before thine Altar; to proclaim the Gospel of thy kingdom; to minister the word of thy truth; to offer unto thee spiritual gifts and sacrifices; to renew thy people through the love of regeneration. That when he shall go to meet thee, at the Second Coming of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, thine Only-begotten Son, he may receive the reward of a good steward in the degree committed unto him through the plenitude of the goodness.3

The Holy Spirit is invoked upon the candidate in order for him to proclaim the Gospel, to minister the word of truth, to offer spiritual gifts and sacrifices, and to renew the people of God. Then, and only then, are the true good things of God bestowed upon him – and that at the Last Day! Yet, the good that is found in between this life and the next is in being obedient to the call and charism. It is the struggle, the spiritual warfare, the unceasing love of God, and the promise of His Kingdom, that are the good things this side of the grave. Without any of these, we have only Satan, sin, and death.

In obedience to God, the priest leads his flock toward their eternal reward with the Triune God. Again, St. Gregory writes, “But the scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image, if it fails, to take it by the hand, if it is in danger, to restore it, if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit; and, in short, to defy, and bear down, and blus, upon one, who belongs to the heavenly host.”4 The good in the priesthood is the Priesthood of Christ.

The good in the priesthood is the 'already-and-not-yet' of the Kingdom of God. The priest re-presents the great High Priest, Jesus Christ, Who is the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of the world and its salvation. This same Christ, Who is God, is the Good of the priesthood. The priest must be ever mindful of this in order to serve faithfully his ministry in Christ.

In the process of re-presenting and sacrificing, however, the priest will experience his own pain and suffering on behalf of all and for all to the glory of God.5

The pastor therefore ought to be of noble spirit, so as not to despise, or to despair of the salvation of the wanderers from the fold, but continually reason with himself and say, “Prayadventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.”6

Thus, the priest ought to be protected on all sides by a kind of adamantine armor, by intense spiritual warfare, both within the priest and among his flock, by the Spirit; and, in short, to defy, and bear down, and blus, upon one, who belongs to the heavenly host.7

What is good in this? Salvation. In the struggle of spiritual warfare, both within the priest and among his flock, the good fight is fought amid pain and suffering, with the constant remembrance that God is with us. God's presence does not always feel warm and fuzzy. Sometimes God is present on the Cross. Sometimes the priest is made the 'sacri/ficial lamb' by his peers, or even his own flock. At other times, the weight of suffering, both his own and that of the flock, hones his ministry. This good leads to compassion.

It is quite dizzying for the modern, materialistic, secularist mind to comprehend suffering as a good. Yet if we read Church History and the lives of the saints, we see that suffering is necessary for salvation in much the same way that death is necessary for Resurrection and life eternal. This is the ministry of the Compassionate One, Who leads us toward compassion.

Compassion is the good fruit born of faithful ministry to God and His people. This ministry begs us to recognize Christ in others. As God is compassionate, so are we to be. The Priestly ministry is permeated with love and forgiveness. For there is no other way for us to reside in the will of God than to be loving, loving, and forgiving. We either come by this willingly—or through hard knocks. Either way, it is the will of God and will be done, often in spite of ourselves.

The glory of the priesthood is the glory of the Cross. The good in the priesthood does not belong to the priest nor to this earth. What is good about the priesthood is the revealing insight, provided by God's grace, that one is doing the will of God. The good of the priesthood is in continually realizing that God is Good. The good of the priesthood is in sharing the goodness of God, even His precious Body and Blood, with others who, along with the priest, are unworthy of this great good. “No one is good but One, that is, God.” St. Gregory of Nazianzus states:

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him, yesterday I died with Him; today I am quickened with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise with Him. But let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us ourselves, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image. Let us give all, offer all, to Him Who gave Himself a Ransom and a Reconciliation for us.8

Thus, the glory which is to come fortifies the present ministry of the sacrificing priest. This is not only good, but necessary for his salvation. Over and over again, the question arises, “What’s good in the priesthood?” The answer is, in a word, Christ. For in this ministry, over and over again, we recognize that apart from Him we can do nothing. If priests are faithful in imparting this wisdom to those in their charge, they shall receive the reward of a good steward at the Second Coming of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Word 7

1. Taken from One Flexe Over the Ocean Dune – American Orthodox Converts, Retriers and Retreads (Joseph Scapinello, Sr. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), pp. 133-141.
5. St. Gregory Nazianzus, Orations 2.54 (NPNF 7:216).
Beloved in Christ,

I greet you with profound sorrow and a great sense of loss at the passing into eternal life of the servant of God, John; and I offer sincere condolences on behalf of myself and my brother hierarchs, as well as the clergy, organizations, departments and faithful of our Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

When I came to this country in 1995 to become the Bishop of Los Angeles, Dr. John Dalack was already an institution in this God-protected Archdiocese. The son of one of the deans of our “Mother Church” – the Saint Nicholas Cathedral of Brooklyn – John grew up to become a leading member of this parish of Saint Mary. He joined the Archdiocese Board of Trustees in 1970. As a lay leader of the Church, he began the still-vibrant ministry of offering “Enliven to Christ” to those he served in his own life – to the clergy and the laity alike with talent and a delicate ear for their needs.

I came to know John through his wonderful ministry as the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. Many would say that in his true vocation he was a dedicated worker, Dr. John Dalack. I also have great hope in the Archdiocese Department of Lay Ministry, with whom he served so profoundly – and witnessed in his own life – that both the clergy, organizations, and the faithful of this parish of Saint Mary. He joined the Archdiocese Board of Trustees in 1970. As a lay leader of the Church, he began the still-vibrant ministry of offering “Enliven to Christ” to those he served in his own life – to the clergy and the laity alike with talent and a delicate ear for their needs.

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I chose to begin my address today with a reading from tonight’s service, the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians. St. Paul teaches that the Body of Christ is in fact a body. Just as the body has various parts and organs, each with its own function, the Church has diverse ministries. John taught us so profoundly – and through his example – that the clergy and the laity have gifts and talents to offer according to their own roles. All are to “enliven” Christ and offer all that they are in service to Him. John offered so many gifts to the Church, but we must not simply remember that about him – we must honor his ministry by following his example of offering ourselves and gifts to Christ. And in whatever profession we have in life, we must “enliven” that profession with Christ into a holy sacred vocation.

But as the Apostle says, there is still a more “excellent way” – the way of self-sacrificial love. Without offering our gifts in love, we become a “noisy gong or clashing cymbal” and even our being ministered could be counted as gaining us nothing. As John so nobly exemplified in his life, our gifts are offered without fanfare, but with humility; without jealousy, but with cooperation; without arrogance, but with meekness. Love also endures, even in the face of suffering. We were all moved by John’s love and care for his beloved wife, Shamseh, during the time of her illness, and the courage and dignity with which he faced his own.

As this Holy Week progresses, we will see the ultimate example of this kind of love in the Passion of Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. We will see the extreme humility of the God-Man, as He is arrested, mocked, tortured, and executed by his rebellious children. Yet, we will also see that the enduring love of God cannot be conquered by evil.

We will soon proclaim on the night of Pascha that “by enduring the Cross for us, He hath destroyed death by death.” The kingdom of Hades could not hold Him who is All-Love, All-Light, and All-Life. And because of His Resurrection, we know that the Gates of Paradise are opened up for us, and we ask in victorious union with the Apostles Paul and John Chrysostom – “O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?”

Beloved faithful, I stand before you today with deep gratitude for the life and work of our friend and co-worker, Dr. John Dalack. I also have great hope in the Resurrection of our Lord. We can be assured that John will be greeted by the love of his life, Shamseh, as well as by the Thentes, the Saints, and the Angels. We may no longer see him with our eyes, but we will know in our hearts that he is with us and praying for us at the Throne of God.

I again offer my sincere condolences to all of the family, as well as all of the loved ones gathered here, and my heartfelt prayers to God to grant you comfort and peace. And in anticipation of the bright night of Pascha, and with firm conviction and hope in the Lord’s Resurrection, I greet you with the proclamation of the Angel Standing at the Empty Tomb: Christ is risen!

ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

HORKIE, Andrei, to St. George Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, effective August 1, 2018.

KEES, Priest Symeon, to St. Paul Church, Katy, Texas, effective July 1, 2018.

MACKOLI, Priest Alexander, to St. Nicholas Church, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, effective August 1, 2018.

MANGUES, Archimandrite John, to St. George Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

POTTER, Deacon John, to the holy Diaconate by Bishop JOHN on June 6, 2018, at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Lynchburg, Virginia. He is assigned to that parish.

ELEVATIONS

CHALUPA, Priest Christopher, to St. Luke Church, Erie, Colorado, effective July 1, 2018.

MALES, Archpriest John, to the holy Diaconate by Bishop JOHN on April 12, 2018, at St. George Church, Terre Haute, Indiana. Archpriest John continues to be attached to this parish.

MORGAN, Archpriest John, to the holy Diaconate by Bishop ANTHONY on March 11, 2018, at St. George Church, Akron, Ohio. Archpriest John is attached to that parish.

REPOSED

BEGLEY, Archpriest Thomas, effective May 1, 2018.


MACKOLI, Priest Alexander, effective August 1, 2018.

PETER, Priest Richard, to St. Paul Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota.

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BELL, Priest Michael, to the Archdiocese of South Florida, effective August 1, 2018.

DARLAK, Priest Daniel, to St. George Church, Akron, Ohio, effective August 1, 2018.

DARLAK, Deacon John, to St. George Church, Akron, Ohio, effective July 1, 2018.

DARLAK, Sister Maria, to the Archdiocese Department of Lay Ministries.

SHAHID, Archimandrite John, to St. George Church, South Glens Falls, New York, effective August 1, 2018.

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On The Ladder of Divine Ascent

S t. John spent forty years as a solitary before writing the book. His thoughts are the fruit of those long years of spiritual struggle. The book was written after he left his hermitage and returned as Abbott of St. Catherine’s Monastery. This classic was written by a monk for other monks, but over the centuries it has been read by both monastics and non-monastics alike. Orthodoxy does not have one spirituality for monks and another for clerics and those not called to monasticism. All struggle to attain virtues and avoid vices in our common path toward union with God. The Ladder of Divine Ascent has stood the test of time.

It is remarkable that a man who spent forty years alone as a hermit would have such an understanding of our common human nature. After nearly eight decades of life, I personally find what he says very much on the mark. Inspired by Jacob’s ladder in Genesis and the thirty years of the hidden life of Christ, St. John describes this struggle as thirty steps in a ladder leading to the Kingdom of God.

The first three steps of the ladder speak of leaving the world and entering into the monastic life. These he describes as “renunciation of the world, detachment and exile.” If the monk is to “keep the mind inseparable from God” (3:3) he must leave his life in the world. A place and time of solitude is vital for spiritual reflection. This separation is much more than physical or geographic. Although living in a monastery, the heart and mind of the monk can still be in the world.

Although this kind of physical separation may not be possible for non-monastics, what St. John says here holds true for all of us. In ways not imagined by St. John, we today are surrounded by sounds and images that prevent us from even thinking—not to speak of reflecting spiritually. Through the ubiquitous cell phone, we constantly seek to “be connected.” Our lives are under a constant visual and auditory assault. (I do not know what the famous painting of the “Scream” by Edvard Munch was intended for, but I have found myself identifying with the “screamers.”) Monk or layman, we all need a time of detachment and exile, even for the sake of our own sanity.

St. John insists that those who would live the monastic life are in for a struggle. They cannot do this alone. They need the guidance of a spiritual father to whom they owe their willing obedience. Throughout life, all are called to many forms of accountability. As members of the Church we choose to be accountable to the laws of God and to the guidance of the Church. We may not be called to monastic obedience, but to neglect the pastoral advice of our priest, particularly as our father-confessor, is to forfeit his pastoral guidance and the graces of the sacraments. The monastic guides of the monks were not perfect people, but God worked through them.

In steps 5 through 7, St. John speaks of the state of mind that monks must have. They must be people of repentance who live out their lives with the awareness of death. Here St. John gives us one of his wonderful insights. “Repentance is the daughter of Hope and the renunciation of despair” (5:1). Only those who hope are capable of repenting. For those in spiritual despair, repentance is beyond them. Hope drives out despair. Those who have achieved this state of spiritual maturity will be filled with St. John’s call: “joyful mourning.”

Although this may sound contradictory, sorrow for one’s own sins as well as the fallen condition of all men and even creation itself, is a sign of holiness. In steps 8 to 17 St. John presents the struggle. The battle is the engagement with the seven deadly sins (pride, greed, lust, gluttony, anger, envy and sloth). He begins with the sin of anger. Here again he offers a spiritual insight. What is it that makes us angry? It is, as he says, “the remembrance of wrongs.” “Remembrance of wrongs is the consummation of anger, the keeper of sins, hatred of righteousness, ruin of virtues, poison of the soul, worm of the mind . . . a nail stuck in the soul, pleasureless feeling cherished in the sweetness of bitterness . . .” (9:2). How often have we seen those (perhaps ourselves), who simply cannot “let go” of the wrongs committed against us?

What follows are the sins of slander, talkativeness, and lying. These are the sins so easily committed by the tongue. (How familiar we are with these:) St. John then speaks of “that clamorous mistress, the stomach” (14). His language is graphic. “Know that often a devil settles in the belly and does not let the man be satisfied, even though he has devoured a whole Egypt and drunk a River Nile” (14:27). Gluttony, he says, leads to sensuality which opens the person to further evils, including the spirit of fornication.

In step 15 St. John warns the monks in their struggle for purity and chastity. “Let no one thoroughly trained in purity attribute its attainment to himself. For it is impossible for anyone to conquer his own nature” (15:7). Our spiritual life is a synergy of our freedom and the Grace of God. “The beginning of purity is refusal to consent to thoughts . . .” (15:8). “I say to you, that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Each year on the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent the Orthodox Church takes us back to the seventh century desert of Sinai to commemorate St. John of the Ladder, the author of one of the greatest Christian classics, THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT, given the fact that only St. Mary of Egypt and St. Gregory Palamas are given this annual distinction, the commemoration of St. John and his book are certainly remarkable. This is a rare recommendation for a spiritual book. I hope my words will encourage people to read it.
Spiritual despair, repentance for the reasons that some commit unspeakable crimes, was amazed how this tyrant, this stinkpot of gluttony, tears still in their eyes they eagerly go to a meal. And I example. "I have seen many people like this hear about every virtue, but keep none. He gives one very graphic image. An agnostic may seriously struggle with whether God exists; the proud person could care less. His sense of self-worth is so far above our understanding that it remains a nameless, unenlightened, and unnameable state, which he calls "a destiny that is eternal. His message is simply the gospel of heaven without any other passion except pride . . . ." A parent may be be proud of his child. 1. St. John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2001). The spiritual insights offered in this book go far beyond this paper: I have selected only a few which I believe are pertinent for us in the 21st Century. The prideful person is certain about everything. Any faith includes these gifts. Discernment, understanding and knowledge, Discernment, which includes these gifts, is something worth praying for mortals; in its activity it is inebriation of the soul; for it is by its distinctive property a fountain of faith, an illumination, and which can enlighten with its lamp what is dark in others." This is the 26th step in the Ladder. 4:20). The form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in all, he emptied himself, taking the form of a human being. And being found in human form, he humbled himself, and lived as one of young children whose friends give them a few hours in sleep, (19–20) St. John then comes to the most important of spiritual struggles, the battle between pride, the deadliness of the capital sins, and its most effective opponent, the virtue of humility. (22–25). St. John says, “But when I had listened to all this and had attentively and soberly investigated it, I found that I had not been able to attain to the blessed perception of that virtue from which had been said. Therefore, last of all, I gave my definition of it and said: ‘Humility is a nameless grace in the soul, its name known only to those who have learned it by experience. It is unspeakable wealth, a name and gift from God, for it is said: Learn not from an angel, nor from man, nor from a book, but from Me, that is from My indwelling, from My illumination and action in you; for I am meek and humble of heart . . . .’ (25:3). This is very much in keeping with the words of St. Paul, who exhorts us to "Consider the humility of Christ, it is so far above our understanding that it remains a nameless and undefinable grace as we truly learn from Him. It is not just a gift, but an entire state of grace that we can truly call "humility," (26:49). Humility is the one virtue that the demons cannot imitate. (25:17). Pride opens our lives to the disaster of vainglory is one that tempts the monks (and anyone who strives seriously in the spiritual life). "The spirit of vainglory (rejoices at the sight of increasing virtue." As the person believes that he is growing in virtue, vainglory becomes a serious temptation. The monk can be vainglorious when he fails. The vainglorious person "apparently honors God, but he wants to please not God but man" (22:6). The vainglorious monk lives a double life, "outwardly he lives with monks, but in mind and thought he is in the world" (22:28). St. John concludes his remarks on vainglory by saying, "When vainglory increases, it gives birth to pride, the origin and consummation of all evils" (22:35). One may ask, “Why is pride the consummation of all evils? It is always bad!” A parent may be proud of his child. St. John addresses one of the most important parts of life. 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May 20, 2018

Very Rev. Fr. Herbert Nahas
c/o St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church
905 S Main St.
Wilkes Barre, PA 18702-3470

Dear Fr. Herbert,

Blessings and Greetings in the Name of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. I pray this letter finds you in good health. On behalf of the hierarchs, clergy, Archdiocese Board of Trustees and all the faithful of our God-protected Archdiocese, we would like to wish you a happy and blessed 100th birthday!

This is indeed a great blessing not only for you, but for your family, friends and former parishioners who also share in the joy of this day. Needless to say, you have witnessed much in your lifetime, from the building of this great nation to the growth of our holy Archdiocese. You have seen periods of depressions and times of prosperity, disastrous wars and the hope of peace, along with countless great inventions that have made life better for all of us. You are the son of a priest, and between both of your ministries in the Lord’s vineyard, we can count back to the early beginnings of our presence here in North America. You have seen people you have baptized grow up, have children of their own, and even grandchildren. Together with your late Khourieh Alice, you opened your heart and your home to those in need and served your flock faithfully, especially during those early years when things were much more difficult for the life of a priest and his family than they are today.

I pray that the wisdom you have gained through all these years can continue to be imparted to those around you for their benefit. May God grant you peace, health, salvation, length of days and furtherance in all good things as you both reflect on the past 100 years and move forward to begin a new century!

Your Father in Christ,

+JOSEPH
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America


“WHAT does one day matter?” I asked myself. Many days, and for many circumstances, one day doesn’t make a difference. The day in question, however, was Holy Saturday, right after the beautiful and glorious Holy Saturday Divine Liturgy, with flower-throwing, black-drape removing, and exuberant singing. Our priest made the comment in his homily that the Holy Saturday morning service sometimes confuses people, as we sing, “Christ is risen from the dead,” and then wait twelve more hours for Pascha. He explained that the two services are so similar in spirit because one was the Paschal celebration for the Cathedrals, and the other was the Paschal celebration for the monasteries. When

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one more day, a few more hours, matter? With my tidy excuses all lined up, I dug into non-fasting food. Because really, I’d made it so far, what difference was one day going to make? (Embarrassing to report, it wasn’t even a glamorous breaking of the fast. I poured myself a bowl of cereal with milk.)

Nothing tremendous happened, no lightning flashed around my head, or sirens went off. I was just another person eating whatever they felt like whenever they wanted to. Which is the problem, I quickly found. My instant feelings of regret were trumped down by plans for Agape Vespers and the Paschal Picnic, but swelled again during Agape Vespers, because one day does matter. The luminous joy of those who had embraced Lent and all of Holy Week was tangible, because they knew after weeks of fasting culminating in the Paschal Divine Liturgy, that this was the one day that mattered. By not waiting, by not participating, I excluded myself from the whole measure of God’s grace.

The episode compelled me to look anew at the places where one day matters within the Christian life. What a significant gift we give our children when we teach them the idea that we hold off, wait, and ask for a blessing from God, before “dabbing in” on many occasions in our lives. There are countless instances within Orthodoxy where we wait: it’s not the right time . . . not the right time . . . wait . . . there’s a blessing . . . and finally, it is time. One sacred moment changes everything.

The smallest “practice field” for acknowledging that one moment matters is prayer together before eating. This is not a daily exercise in delayed gratification, although that’s what I remember it felt like as a kid: waiting for the moment that matters.

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Now to the choices. Some have liturgical topics, such as libraries, and will be discounted. Larger quantities, with or without display materials, are will be sent in a nice box. It is the special this month and configurations. One option is to choose 15 books which would also have had these little books and made a special the series we have another way to maintain the Orthodox together with us when we celebrate Divine Liturgy. With loved God above all else, and our hearts are inspired to do stories show how they of God's abiding presence. Their stories show how they are many good storybooks for young children, their aim is reading level, especially for the young. And while there is difficult to find sufficient books on saints at any one reading level, for very young children. They are numbered, and grouped by tens on the left sideline. They are not arranged by topic. Unfortunately, I could not find a search bar, but did see "Catalog" on the home page, and preferred to that using the sideline. Having not been on their website for a long time, I was amazed at their growth. They have many, many titles in coloring books, activity books, "starter" books, and both paperback and hardbound titles about saints and our faith. There are at least some titles in 14 languages, including French and Arabic. All are printed in Greece by Orthodox families.

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My experience of being restored to Holy Communion was restoring the series of the Eucharist, which happened at the Passover meal before His Crucifixion (Mark 14:12). I came across an article on the rituals of the Passover meal that recalled the details of the eucharist from Egypt. Before Moses went to the Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelites, the Lord, wanting to assure them of his faithfulness, issued four promises for Moses to announce to the people (Exodus 6:6-7).

• I will bring you out;
• I will deliver you;
• I will redeem you;
• I will take you to Myself.

I thought about how Christ's Passover, or Pascha, fulfilled those promises: our deliverance from the bondage of sin, our redemption from sin by Christ's death on the cross, and finally His embrace of love on the Cross, which brought us salvation. As the priest cuts around the prosphora seal, which is called "the Lamb," he recites phrases1 taken from this passage of Isaiah.

"Although He was ill-treated, He opened not His mouth; He was led like a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb is silent before his shearsers, so He opens not His mouth. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth, and because of the lawlessness of My people He was led to death" (Isaiah 53:6-8). When we consider and are reminded of Christ's sacrifice for us, how can we take Holy Communion lightly? In Holy Communion we receive Christ, and He takes us to Himself. "Oh, how great the Mystery!" St. Nicholas Cabasilas exclaims with wonder. "What a thing it is, for Christ's mind is mingled with ours, our will be blended with His, our body with His body, and our blood with His blood."2 Can anything compare with Holy Communion? Yet, because we are in a world filled with distractions,
I have been to many parishes and observed communion however, is a difficult feat. We do not judge.

participating in the Eucharistic service is not just the don't receive if we come into Church after the Gospel; the night before and prepared accordingly We typically were thinking about our desire to receive the Eucharist Arriving on time for the Divine Liturgy shows that we body not filled with other food.

fast from any food from midnight (or dusk) of the previous day, and on Fridays, recalling Christ's Crucifixion. We also Wednesdays, recalling Christ's betrayal by Judas on that day; and on Fridays, recalling Christ's Crucifixion. We also fast from any food from midnight (or dusk) of the previous day so the Body and Blood of Christ are received into a body not filled with other food. Arriving on time for the Divine Liturgy shows that we were thinking about our desire to receive the Eucharist the right night before and prepared accordingly We typically don't receive if we come into Church after the Gospel; participating in the Eucharistic service is not just the Anaphora. Arriving on time with young children or infants, however, is a difficult feat. We do not judge.

I have been to many parishes and observed communion practices in each of them. In some parishes, nearly everyone participates in Holy Communion. I cannot judge, except myself, and I know it is easy to take for granted even what our Lord offers us.

On the other hand, in parishes where only a few receive each Sunday, and in my experience from my youth, the problem often is a feeling of unworthiness, either vague, or tied to an experience. I did not believe that I was worthy to receive Holy Communion. The fact is, I was never worthy. We are never completely without sin, and always in need of healing. We are never worthy of salvation, yet it has been accomplished for us by the Son of God.

We must not stay away from Holy Communion from a vague sense of unworthiness, but rather take to heart the words of the Prayer Before Communion, "Not unto Judgement nor unto condemnation be my partaking of the Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto the healing of soul and body." Let us anticipate and prepare each week so that we approach Holy Communion – the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ – "not unto judgement nor unto condemnation be my partaking of the Holy Mysteries, O Lord, but unto the healing of soul and body." Let us anticipate and prepare each week so that we approach Holy Communion – the Sacrament of Sacraments – with "reverence and fear," love and joy. 1. Service Book, pp. 85-86. 2. Nicholas Cabasilas, The Life in Christ (Crestwood, SVS Press, 1974), p. 116.

Robert Snyder is the Christian Education Coordinator for the Diocese of Toledo and Mid-America, and the author of Celebrations: Feasts and Holy Days, a high school text published by The Orthodox Christian Education Commission.

INTRODUCTION

IN 1884 AN ITALIAN ARCHEOLOGIST MADE AN REMARKABLE DISCOVERY. GIAN FRANCESCO GAMURRINI FOUND A VERY OLD NARRATIVE OF A PILGRIMAGE, WRITTEN BY A WOMAN WHO TRAVELED TO THE MIDDLE EAST TO VISIT THE HOLY PLACES MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE. HIS DISCOVERY LED TO WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED A “CHRISTIAN WHODUNIT” THAT WOULD FASCINATE SCHOLARS FOR OVER A CENTURY. THESE INCLUDED HISTORIANS, LITURGISTS, LANGUAGE SCHOLARS, AND THOSE INTERESTED IN THE LOCATIONS OF THE VARIOUS BIBLICAL SITES. THE FACT THAT IT WAS WRITTEN BY A WOMAN MADE IT INTERESTING IN AND OF ITSELF. THIS WAS A RARITY. THE MANUSCRIPT WAS FOUND IN A CODEX WHICH ALSO CONTAINED THE WRITINGS OF ST. HILARY OF POITIERS (460). GAMURRINI FOUND THE DOCUMENT IN THE LIBRARY OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF AREZZO, ITALY WHERE HE LIVED. THE CODEX WAS TRACED TO THE FAMED MONASTERY OF MONTE CASINO.

Unfortunately the opening pages of the manuscript were missing, as were several pages in the middle. The absence of the opening pages left many unanswered questions. Who was the woman who wrote the journal? Where was she from? When did she live? Was she a nun? The document did not offer ready answers. The text was a narrative of her travels written in the form of letters to her “sisters” who lived in her unnamed homeland.

Sixteen years after Gamurrini published his find in 1884, another discovery was made that provided further clues regarding the mysterious journal. In 1903 Dom Marius Feron, the French Benedictine scholar, discovered a letter written in about 650 in Spain. This letter spoke of...
The writings of a pious woman named Egeria, who had made a pilgrimage to the East. It was written by a Spanish monk named Valerius, who lived in Galicia in north-western Spain. Scholars have concluded that Valerius had a copy of the mysterious journal. Additional copies of Valerius’ letter have been found. In these letters the author was named Aetheria, Echeria, Etheria, Aetheria, and Egeria. These names led to a scholarly debate, which eventually concluded with the view that her name was most likely Egeria. Valerius described the author of the pilgrimage as beatae matronae sanctissimae et virginae. One text calls her an abbatissa. Egeria was most likely a nun.

Where did she come from? Valerius lived in north-western Spain in Galicia. He tells us that the author came from “the farthest shore of the west,” which would place her homeland also in Galicia.

Egeria tells us that she had spent three years on her pilgrimage. This offers further clues to her identity. She must have been a woman of wealth. A woman who spent three years away from home would hardly have been someone with a husband or children.

George E. Gingras notes, “Certain aspects of her diary point to a more than ordinary religious status for our traveller. She was very conscious of the monastic milieu, seeking the monks in the more remote areas such as the Sinai peninsula . . . . She was familiar with all aspects of the liturgical life at Jerusalem, including the services attended especially by monks and virgins, such as the nocturnal offices.”

**HER MOTIVATION**

The Fourth Century saw the greatest development of Christian monasticism. By the end of this period the Nitrian desert of Egypt was home to thousands of monks. Large numbers of tourists sought out the monastic settlements. Egeria’s pilgrimage was not unique, but she is quite clear about the reason for her journey. No doubt she was interested in monasticism, but her desire was to see for herself the sacred places of the Bible.

“Each of the journeys undertaken by Egeria was a true pilgrimage motivated by a specific religious objective. The relationship of man to God in both the Old and New Testaments is generally existentialized in a particular historical site, and the religious pilgrim wishes to realize anew, for himself and in his own time, the truths of the faith commemorated in a specific place. With increasing frequency throughout the fourth century, men and women from both the Greek and Latin worlds traveled outward to look upon the sites of the Nativity, the Mission, the Passion, and the Resurrection of Christ and to visit the numerous churches and shrines built since Constantine’s day.”

**THE DATE**

Most scholars have concluded that the journal was written in the late Fourth and early Fifth Centuries. This was the era of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine in the West, and St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome in the East. One wonders if she heard the great St. John Chrysostom preach? Did she visit St. Jerome in his Bethlehem monastery?

**THE FOUR-PART JOURNEY**

The existing document contains two main parts. The first 23 chapters describe her four pilgrimages to the various places of interest. The next 26 chapters describe the liturgical life of the Jerusalem church. This is a goldmine for liturgical scholars.

Judging from Valerius’ letter, Egeria went first to Constantinople then to Antioch. From Antioch she traveled down to Jerusalem. Gingras observes, “Presumably Valerius was acquainted with a more complete text than the one preserved in the manuscript of Antezo. Thus he speaks of a journey lasting many years to different provinces, cities, and isolated spots inhabited by solitaries. Specifically, he mentioned visits by Egeria to the Thebaid, to the other provinces of Egypt and to various sites in Judea and Galilee. Egeria may also have given an account of the journey from her homeland to Constantinople, and from there to Jerusalem, along with a description of the Holy City and its environs.”

**THE TEXT**

The first page of the existing text finds Egeria approaching Mt. Sinai. At this point Alexandria and the monastic settlements of the Thebaid would have been well behind her. “As we moved along, we came to a certain place where the mountains through which we were traveling opened out to form an immense valley, vast, quite flat, and extremely beautiful; and across the valley there appeared Mount Sinai, God’s holy mountain.”

“…” (1). “When one reaches this place, it is customary,” said the holy men who were guiding us to say a prayer when, for the first time and from this place, the mountains of God come into view: ‘And that is what we did” (11).

(1) Coming to the mountain, Egeria and her party were received “very hospitably by the monks dwelling there, and they offered us every courtesy. Since there is a church there with a priest, we stopped for the night. Early on Sunday morning we climbed with very great difficulty…”

On her third pilgrimage, Egeria journeyed along the Jordan River, visiting the site which was believed to be the grave of Job, and then to a village named Sedima. This was believed to be ancient Salem, the city of Melchisedech. From there she traveled along the Jordan, to the place where the washing of the burning bush, Egeria and her companions were shown where the golden calf was made, where manna and quail rained down upon the Israelites, and where the tabernacle was set up. And so we were shown everything written in the holy books of Moses.”

At this point the pilgrims return to Phraem, expressing their gratitude to God for being able to see the holy places, and especially for the assistance of the “holy men who dwelt on the mountain of God and around it.” They then guide Egeria and her fellow pilgrims to Phraem.

“It was my purpose to see all the places which the children of Israel had touched on their journey, from their going forth from Rameses until they reached the Red Sea at a place which is now called Cysum” (7). From Cysum, the group made a four-day journey across the desert to the city of Arabia, guided by soldiers as they went from fortress to fortress.

Traveling through Tanis and Pelusium, they finally reached the frontiers of Palestine. “From there, in the name of Christ our God, I traveled still some distance through Palestine and I returned to Aelia, that is, to Jerusalem” (9).

Egeria’s second pilgrimage was to “Mt. Nebo in the land of Moab, over against Jericho, which God had commanded Moses to climb” (10). This was the site of the death and burial of Moses. From the summit of Mt. Nebo, Egeria was able to see the Jordan valley, Jericho and the “greater part of Palestine” (12). After being shown the historic sites, they descended to the place where the Israelites crossed the Jordan. “And so, after seeing everything which we had desired, in the name of God, we went back to Jerusalem…” (12).

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The Eleona is the chapel, dating from the Greek word for Eleona church which marks the Hebaid, and Syria. Monks, lay people of the dedication of Crusaders in 1149 was built by the tomb of Christ. or Golgatha, and this overall complex than the present the chapters in the parentheses indicate 1970). Numbers in gras, (New York, translated taken from N.Y; Ramsey, N.J.:

At this point in the document Egeria begins her discussion of the worship of the Jerusalem Church. She begins with the daily service. “Each day at cockcrow all discussion of the worship of the Jerusalem Church. She

Egeria then returned to Antioch and set out for Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul. From there she visited the church, which is enclosed by a large wall “for fear of the Isaurians . . . who hold Jerusalem.” Egeria then visited the church, which is the shrine of St. Tekla in Isauria. At the shrine of St. Tarsus, the birthplace of St. Paul. From there she visited

The first service on Sunday morning is called a vigil, when the people assemble “before the cock crow” in the forecourt of the Anastasis. When the bishop arrives, all the doors are opened “and the multitude goes into the Anastasis.” The three prayers are read with prayers. Again there are prayers and blessings. After reverencing the well of the bishop the service concludes. “This is the ritual that takes place on the sixth weekday at the Anastasis and the Cross.” (Av. emphasis mine).

The bishop removed the cross from the gilded alabaster casket and placed it on a table. The cross was held by the bishop, and the deacons kept “watch over it.” (Egeria tells us that, at one point, someone took a bite and stole a piece of the Cross.) The people approached, touching the Cross with their forehead and their eyes. After kissing the Cross they departed, not touching it with their hands. In our present service on Holy Thursday night, the reading of the 12 Gospels commemorates the same events as those observed by those early Christians. “The Easter vigil is observed exactly as we do at home . . . “The neophytes are baptized and clothed and then led to the bishop. The liturgy takes place during this vigil. A second liturgy is offered later in the morning, Vespers are held later in the afternoon, at which the confession of St. Thomas is read.” Today we call this the Agye Vespers. “The eight days of Easter are observed just as at home.” From her description, the Feast of Pentecost was for the most demanding of all liturgical celebrations. A vigil was held with the reading of the Resurrection Gospel. The first two of divine liturgies were held in the major church. Another Divine Liturgy was held in the church of Sion,” after which the people went home to rest. After lunch they went up to the Mount of Olives, where several services were held. After Vespers, the people came down from the mount for two more services, which ended at around midnight. Egeria observes “there is the greatest strain on the people” on this day. One can only note what faith and what dedication!

At the end of the existing text Egeria gives her sisters a detailed account of the instructions given to them on the way to the church reserved to testify to the life of the candidate. Only then could they be baptized. After their baptism they were given an explanation of the holy mystery of baptism. The final pages of the document are missing. One would hope that a complete document may someday be found.

Egeria has left us a great treasure. She is the only witness to the liturgical life of Jerusalem in the late Fourth Century. Her journey is a testimony not only of her faith, but of the fullness of the liturgical life of that era. These services were attended by very large numbers of lay people, who remained for many hours. Although the services were held in Greek, translations were provided for Syrians- and Latin-speakers. Reading her journal is an inspiration for any present-day Christian. Her book would make most interesting reading for those making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Her journal has much to say to us as Orthodox Christians.
With Fear of God and Faith and Love, Draw Near

THESE ARE THE WORDS PROCLAIMED BY THE PRIEST AS HE TRANSLATES THE HOLY GIFTS FROM THE ALTAR TABLE TO THE FAITHFUL. THEY ARE INSTRUCTIVE FOR EACH OF US, FOR THEY BOTH ARE A COMMAND AND REVEAL THE DISPOSITION WITH WHICH WE COMMUNE THE HOLY GIFTS.

I will address the command first — “Draw Near.” Many holy fathers encourage frequent communion as it is the path to repentance, illumination, and dedication par excellence. Saint John Chrysostom writes,

“I entreat you: a royal table is set before you, angels minister at that table, the King Himself is there, and yet, you take no account of it. Are your garments clean? Then fall down and partake! For everyone who does not partake of the mysteries is standing here in shameless falsity. When you behold the curtain drawn, then imagine the heavens are let down from above, and that the angels are descending! Why stay at liturgy and yet not partake of the table? I am unworthy, you say. Then you are also unworthy of that communion you also have in prayer. Come!”

Echoing the teaching of Saint John, Saint Makarios of Corinth exhorts the faithful:

Some persons say: “Look, we fulfill the commandment of the Lord, for we commune two or three times a year, and this is enough to justify us.” We reply that this is good and beneficial, but to commune more often is much better. For the more one approaches the light, the more one is illuminated; the more one approaches fire, the more one is warmed; the more one approaches water, the more one is cleansed. My brother and sister, if you are worthy to commune two or three times a year, and this is enough to justify us.” We reply that this is because of their great piety. Indeed, there are people who do not eat or drink for days before they take the Eucharist. Their confession before taking the Eucharist is intense. It is for this reason that their participation in these sacraments is sometimes limited. On the other hand, there are people that simply take confession and the Eucharist once a year so that they can maintain their church membership. Their church participation, to them, is of no greater importance than their membership, to them, is of no greater importance than their citizenship of their city, state, or country. This is a sin. We need to guard against this sin. The holy prophet Joel reminds the Israelites, “And rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, and abundant in kindness” (Jel 2:11).

The faithful should be serious about their participation in these sacraments. They should seriously hunger and thirst for the Body and Blood of Christ for the remission of their sins.

The merciful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is disposed to offer us an abundant life in Him if we commune frequently with the proper disposition of repentance, but this requires our full participation and struggle against sin. Repentance is not simply something we consider
on the weekend of April 28–29, His Grace Bishop Nicholas made his first official visit to the parish of St. Anthony the Great in Melbourne, Florida. He had previously made a brief unofficial visit on Holy Thursday, and we were very blessed to have him with us that evening for our Office of the Redempting Passion of our Lord.

The Antiochian Women had been looking forward to meeting with His Grace. They were not disappointed as he shared his vision and answered questions. After this very productive meeting, many came to worship at Great Vespers. This was followed by a Parish Council Dinner Meeting, hosted by our parishioners Eyad and Joyce Smeen (the owner of Skewers Restaurant, and personal childhood friend of Bishop Nicholas).

His Grace Bishop Nicholas presided over the Sunday Hierarchical Divine Liturgy—the highlight of the visit. He was assisted by our own pastor, the Great Economous Fr. Elia Shalhoub, by Archpriest Fr. Christopher Davis, Pastor of St. John the Divine, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, by Fr. Cassian Newton, who is attached to our parish, and by Sub-deacon John Najjar, Chairman of our Parish Council.

Between Matins and the Divine Liturgy, His Grace blessed our chief altar boy Michael Liberman to be a Sub-deacon in our church, which is a great blessing.

At the end of the Hierarchical Liturgy, a five-year memorial service was held in memory of Fr. Elia’s brother, the late Archimandrite George of blessed memory, and a sixth-month memorial for Gusty George of blessed memory, and a brother, the late Archimandrite Abraham, a parishioner of St. Anthony.

Following the Liturgy, the Parish celebrated the second anniversary of the consecration of our church, and the 38th anniversary of Fr. Elia’s ordination to the priesthood, with a BBQ luncheon prepared by our own people.

Everyone in our parish, from the youngest to the oldest, fell in love with the newly ordained Sub-deacon John Najjar, Chairman of our Parish Council.

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### Food for Hungry People Program

#### 2016-2017 Donations

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**Parish Life Conference**

*They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer.* Acts 2:42

Diocese of Worcester and New England • June 23, 2018

- 9:00 AM  Service and Liturgical Dances at Church of the Redeemer
- 11:30 AM  Lunches for Antiochian Women, Teens and Conference Attendees
- 1:00 PM  Keynote Address by Michele Fracassi of Faithlife Ministries, Followed by Discussion of the Bible Bowl
- 3:30 PM  Great Vespers and Eucharistic Presentations
- 7:00 PM  Parish Awards and Entertainment
This year’s theme comes to us from the Gospel of Mark: My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. This verse, like all the others, is an invitation for us to become more like God wants us to be.

First, let me point out that Jesus is quoting Isaiah, the prophet, who reflected upon the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of foreigners. Jesus quoted him because of the false practices of Isaiah’s time, as this verse from the Old Testament applied to His day. The verse promised that God’s temple would be an inviting house of prayer.

The Lord continues in the same verse, Mark 11:17, “But you have made it a den of thieves.” This is a quote from the prophet Jeremiah, who also reflected upon the destruction of Jerusalem. How did it become a den of thieves? Jesus cleansed the temple during the preparation for Passover. The men in the temple were selling and buying animals, such as doves, to sacrifice. Animal sacrifice is an important theme found throughout the Scripture, because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22). These men and others were corrupting the temple worship by making the sacrifices God commanded a business. Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy that was connected with their practice. They made the temple a place of financial gain for them. Instead of being a sanctuary for the broken and the prayerful, it became a workplace for the wicked and the selfish. The Son of God, who is the real Temple Himself and whose blood is the only necessary sacrifice, came to rid the world of corruption, beginning with His Father’s house of prayer. God’s design for the temple was that it be a house of prayer, a place to meet with God and worship Him. When Jesus stepped into it, however, He found not prayer but greed and oppression. Jesus rejected the false practice of the traditions which they observed so minutely. He knew that they were man-made rules that had not come from God. It was Jesus’ disregard for their false understanding of such things as the Sabbath that caused outrage.

Why was Jesus so against these practices? Jesus knew what it took to reach salvation, and these man-made traditions, as presented in the Gospel of Mark, were not going to help them. “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men” (Mark 7:8). They held the tradition of men above God. Jesus knew the right way from God; they should follow His commandment, rather than falsely practice the traditions of the elders. Jesus wanted them to follow Him, but many thought He was speaking blasphemies. Jesus wanted to call people to His house of prayer. Christ Himself was a house of prayer and He was teaching His disciples to become one by modeling this for them. He continually withdrew and was talking with His Father and drawing strength from that intimate relationship He had in heaven. This same intimate relationship is one we can have because Jesus Christ came and hung on a cross. He paid the price for us with His life, a perfect sacrifice, shedding His blood for the forgiveness of all of our sins. People today have continued to choose the cares of the world and material possessions over the spiritual rewards of a life dedicated to Christ. Many of us, without thinking, get so wrapped in the cares of this life that we forget to work on our spiritual relationship with God. As Christians we should work on prioritizing our relationship with God and focus on the riches of heaven, rather than on worldly desires. Prayer is one way we can start.

Jesus cares so much about His house being centered around prayer. Prayer is the evidence that His house is God-centered and based on relationship. The more focused we are on ourselves, the less we pray. The more God-centered we become, the more we pray. As the church becomes more God-centered, prayer and worship increase in the church. Heaven is the most God-centered environment, and every time we get a glimpse of heaven we see the centrality of the beauty of God and the response of His people. Jesus asked us to pray with Him that earth would become like heaven, and that is precisely why He wants His church to become known as a house of prayer. Many think the “house of prayer” is an actual building. We all become a house of prayer as we receive Jesus Christ during the liturgy, first by listening to His voice in the Gospel reading, and then by asking Him to receive us at His table. Everyone receives this invitation to enter the house of prayer.

Today, through Christ, the Church, the Body of Christ, is the Temple of God. The function of the Church is to be a house of prayer for all nations. People of any nation may find fellowship with God. In his commentary on Galatians, St. John Chrysostom reminds us that God is for all nations, when he says, “He that was Greek, or Jew, or bond man yesterday, carries about with him the form, not of angel or archangel, but of the Lord of all, yes, he displays in his own person the Christ. And if you are Christ’s, then you are of Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise of God.” God wants anyone who is willing to follow Him to receive eternal salvation. God established His “house” to redeem the world and all who have strayed away. Just as the prodigal son came back to his father, God wants His children of all nations to come back to Him too.

Therefore, the Church must always be a house of prayer as the Lord commands, for prayer is our connection with Him, our language with Him, our bare thoughts as He knows them. The church must remain true; we must remain true. The truth of the Gospel will bring the nations to His house, the house of prayer where He is present.

ORATORICAL FESTIVAL
MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS
JUDGES’ CHOICE FROM THE DIOCESE OF MIAMI AND THE SOUTH-EAST
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65th Annual Parish Life Conference
Hosted by
Saint Antonios Antiochian Orthodox Church
Halifax, Nova Scotia
June 28 – July 1

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... Being a camp counselor the past two years has been some of the most phenomenal weeks of my life. Knowing that so many children want to deepen their faith gives me hope for the future of the church. Thank you for all that you do. You’ve helped change my life as a counselor and I can only imagine how the campers feel.
- Camp St. Thekla Counselor, 2016

... 3 years ago I lost my job during the financial turmoil. Thank God my husband was able to keep his job but it was difficult living on a single income. Many things we enjoyed giving up this year. One of them was sending our daughter to camp. The financial difficulty we went through affected us all and especially our daughter. Through the camp scholarship offered by the Order of St. Ignatius through our parish we were able to send our daughter to camp. Thank you.
- Parish Life Conference. Again, thank you.
- Parent of Antiochian Village Camper, 2010

... As a seminarian it is difficult at times to financially maintain a home life and pursue God's calling of service. Last month, my wife and I were contemplating how we were going to make ends meet. Two days later the check for seminarian assistance arrived. The reassurance that God will provide through the generosity of others such as the Order, Thank you for all that you’ve done for us.
- Married Seminarian, 2015

... God bless them for being so willing to contribute... God bless them for being so willing to contribute.
- SOYO when I'm an adult.
- NAC SOYO Officer, 2016

Thank you for all that you do. Without y'all I wouldn’t be able to go to camp and wouldn’t know some of my closest friends. Thanks to the Order of St. Ignatius, I have been able to go to camp for 6 years and grow in my faith.
- Antiochian Village Camper 2016